The "charnel house of historic memories": Salonica as Site of Transcultural Memory in the Published Writings of Cecil Roth

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1. Introduction

Following his visit to immediate post-Holocaust Salonica in 1946, Cecil Roth became almost certainly the first historian to engage with the significance of the Holocaust in Salonica, and the first English-language writer to focus on the ongoing destruction of Jewish history in Salonica even after the Holocaust.[1] This essay explores Roth's published writings on Salonica—his newspaper and journal articles, his books, scholarly essays, and encyclopaedia entries—to examine how Roth made use of his visit, which he referred to as "the horrible experience of visiting this charnel house of historic memories."[2] Roth's macabre figure for his visit is significant, since it suggests that what Roth finds especially "horrible" as a historian in immediate post-Holocaust Salonica is not simply the destruction of its Jewish population but the destruction of history itself. In support of this view, I will argue that Roth's writings have the effect of presenting the Holocaust as not merely the erasure of people but the extinguishing and entombment of long historic memories.

Roth's conception in relation to Salonica of how the Holocaust also killed historic memories needs to be understood as radically complicating our understanding of Holocaust memory in a number of ways. First, it tackles the subject of Holocaust memory at an extraordinarily early moment after the Holocaust (from 1946), much earlier than the "belated emergence"

1 There are two standard English spellings of the city discussed in this essay: *Salonica* and *Salonika*. Roth uses both interchangeably throughout his writings. For standardization purposes, I use the spelling *Salonica*, except when the alternative appears in quotation.

2 Cecil Roth, "The Last Days of Jewish Salonica: What Happened to a 450-Year-Old Civilization," *Commentary*, July 1, 1950, accessed July 23, 2017, https://www.commentarymagazine.com/articles/the-last-days-of-jewish-salonicawhat-happened-to-a-450-year-old-civilization/.

of the concept most often dated to the 1960s.[3] Second, I suggest that what Roth means by "historic memories" destroyed during the Holocaust is not so much what we normally mean by Holocaust memory (that is, memories *of* the Holocaust) but rather cultural memory *before* the Holocaust, indeed going back to the classical age, which the Holocaust destroyed.[4] Third, Roth's engagement with post-Holocaust Salonica connects the Holocaust perpetrated in Greater Germany during the Second World War with other, distant persecutions and pogroms—both much earlier, from up to half a millennium before the Second World War, and in locations far removed from Germany. In comparing these other anti-Semitic attacks with the Holocaust, Roth's writings thus produce a conception of Holocaust memory as transhistorical.

This third addition to Holocaust memory is the most important for my argument, since Roth's depiction of Holocaust memory as effectively transhistorical leads on to it also being transcultural. I will show how, in the process of conceiving, and with the purpose of heightening, what is a very early notion of Holocaust memory, Roth repeatedly deploys and promotes transcultural, Ottoman memories. He attends to memories of Jews in the Ottoman Empire, and memories of shared or exchanged cultures between Jews and non-Jews within the Ottoman Empire. He also vastly expands this conception of Ottoman transcultural memories, by including Jews' transportation of memories from outside of the Ottoman Empire—in particular from Spain. Roth dramatizes the Holocaust's destruction of Salonica's Jews, and indeed their cultural memory, setting the Holocaust against a contrasting backdrop of transcultural memories of a nurturing, ethnically diverse, and culturally dialogic Ottoman Empire. Moreover, Roth represents the very existence of Ottoman Jewry as itself a memory of a previous "catastrophe," or Shoah: namely, the expulsion of Jews from the Spanish Empire in 1492 and the surrounding Inquisition.

Roth's work on Salonica produces materials that are worthy of attention in and of themselves, particularly for their early moment. But his Salonica publications gain significance by being understood and evaluated in larger—and several—research contexts. First, in the context of the history of Salonican Jewry, his writings engage with this community at the moment

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3 Michael Rothberg, *Traumatic Realism: The Demands of Holocaust Representation* (Minneapolis: Minnesota University Press, 2000), 46. While the triggers for the emergence of Holocaust memory are constantly being revised, becoming more transcultural or in Rothberg's terms more "multidirectional," the date of the 1960s, largely as a result of the Eichmann trial in 1961–1962, has not been. See also Michael Rothberg, "Beyond Eichmann: Rethinking Emergence of Holocaust Memory," *History and Theory* 46, no. 1 (2007): 74–81.

4 For the more common conception of Holocaust memory, see "Holocaust: Memory," *Encyclopaedia Judaica, Encyclopedia.com*, accessed March 25, 2018, http://www.encyclopedia.com/religion/encyclopedias-almanacs-transcripts-and-maps/holocaust-memory.

of its greatest catastrophe. They constitute an outsider, British Jewish historian's record—and, as we shall see, activist attempts to intervene in and stop—the community's near disappearance, in its in-situ presence, when its future seemed unlikely. In this pivotal moment and in his degree of engagement, Roth's Salonica work should be re-embedded as a chapter of Salonican Jewish history. Second, Roth's Salonica work is a contribution to not just Salonican Jewish history, but also Salonican Jewish historio*graphy*: that is, the long history of historical writings on Salonican Jewry. Third, as such, Roth's writings on Salonica serve to mark out Roth's position in Jewish historiography as a whole. They reveal how, here as elsewhere, Roth worked at an angle to dominant prior and contemporaneous trends in Jewish historiography, in his emphasis on the special role for Jewish cultures of a form of historical memory that is reducible neither to Zionist nor diasporic memory. Considering the place of Roth's Salonican writings in Salonican Jewish history, Salonican Jewish historiography, and Jewish historiography broadly will allow me to show how early and prescient Roth's contributions were in these contexts as well.

There is an additional, more interdisciplinary, congeries of research contexts—that of contemporary movements in cultural studies—in which Roth's writings also demand to be read. Analysing Roth's publications on Salonica will help me to test out and advance some recent developments in memory studies, transcultural studies, and Jewish studies. As I trace in detail his idiosyncratic understanding of Holocaust memory, I want to suggest Roth as a figure who develops the intersection between these three fields, all of which might be understood to come under the aegis of cultural studies.

In memory studies, Astrid Erll has built on her earlier conception of transcultural memory as "travelling memory," the latter defined as "the incessant wandering of carriers, media, contents, forms, and practices of memory, their continual 'travels' and ongoing transformations through time and space, across social, linguistic and political borders."[5] Erll calls now for further, radical travels, in particular across memory's deep history. Arguing that we need to attend to the "long-term developments of transcultural memory beyond the span of three or four generations," Erll urges that we move memory studies away from its concentration in the twentieth century and its "predominantly presentist approach."[6] In and beyond his representation of the Holocaust, the dimension of memory in Roth's Salonica engagement is simultaneously transcultural and massively transhistorical. Roth's lens travels swiftly from the city he encounters

5 Astrid Erll, "Travelling Memory," *Parallax* 17, no. 4 (2011): 11.

6 Astrid Erll, "Homer: A Relational Mnemohistory," *Memory Studies* 11, no. 3 (2018): 275–276.

in 1946 in the post German-occupied nation of Greece; to life under the Ottoman Empire from the time of the Sephardi Jews' arrival at the end of the fifteenth century until the end of the Ottoman Empire; to memories of the Spanish Empire before the expulsion. Ultimately, Roth returns to the very first records of a Jewish presence in Salonica, namely in the classical age.

In terms of transcultural studies, Roth shows that transcultural presence and dynamics themselves become targets under the Holocaust. If Roth's work discovers in Jewish Salonica cultural memories that have been shaped by and preserve its earlier stages of existence, in particular both the Ottoman and the Spanish periods, transcultural memory here can be understood as the manifest recalling of Jewish communal life, and of its catastrophic ending or near ending, under other cultural groups or states. In Roth's Salonica work, transcultural memory is thus memory that survives geographic migration and the termination of state structures; it is, moreover, multiply trans-imperial; and it remembers catastrophes, as well as co-existence, for Jews living as subjects ruled under other cultural groups. It is this combinative form of transcultural memory, and its *longue-durée* value for Jewish as well as coexisting communities, that Roth's work highlights as subject to near erasure in, and after, the Holocaust.

In relation to Jewish studies, equivalents to the transcultural turn that have taken place more broadly in memory studies have transformed a conventionally exceptionalist conception of Holocaust memory by bringing it into connective relation with colonial and postcolonial histories. This Holocaust/postcolonial dovetailing is exemplified principally in Michael Rothberg's "intercultural […] multidirectional" memories; and in Bryan Cheyette's juxtaposition of "celebratory" and "victim-centred" diasporic memories.[7] Roth's Salonica work draws together the Holocaust and colonialism (colonialism much further back in history than in Rothberg's and Cheyette's twentieth-century-focused studies), Jewish studies, and in particular Ottoman Empire history. Roth's work is of especial value to current work such as Rothberg's and Cheyette's on transcultural memory in and beyond Jewish studies. Even immediately after the Holocaust, Roth is not pulling towards some notion of Jewish singularity. Instead he pushes against nationalism and exceptionalism broadly in the effort to remember and sustain transcultural exchange. As I will provide enough information to show, this strikingly comparative approach to cultural history is characteristic of Roth's work as a whole.

Finally, in reading Roth's Salonica publications I want to offer Roth

7 Michael Rothberg, *Multidirectional Memory: Remembering the Holocaust in the Age of Decolonization* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2009), 3; Bryan Cheyette, *Diasporas of the Mind: Jewish and Postcolonial Writing and the Nightmare of History* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2013), 1: Introduction, loc. 221 of 6321, Kindle.

himself as a significant but underrated figure for contemporary Jewish studies, memory studies, and transcultural studies particularly in their intersection, and also for the humanities broadly. Roth was prolific in his output. The entry for him in the *Dictionary of National Biography* cites nearly eight hundred items, many of these significant books, including ground-breaking scholarly studies. These include *History of the Jews in England* (1941), *History of the Jews in Italy* (1946), *The History of the Marranos* (1932), and *The Jews in the Renaissance* (1959). Several more popular, crossover works, are also included, such as *The Short History of the Jewish People* (1936) and *The Jewish Contribution to Civilization* (1938), which were successful enough to be multiply reprinted, and/or reproduce similar material under different titles and for different audiences.[8] The venues for his essay publications likewise run the gamut of pitch and audience, from Jewish-directed or Jewish-inflected press, such as the *Jewish Chronicle* in the UK and *Commentary* magazine in the US, to firmly academic journals, such as *Jewish Quarterly Review* and *Jewish Social Studies*. Roth was also for most of his writing life considered the touchstone of popular writing about Jewish history—"the embodiment of *general* Jewish history writing," as the obituary essay appearing in *Commentary* on his death in 1970 noted.[9] This range of reach for his writings was a significant factor in the focus and tone of his successive Salonica pieces, as we shall see.

In addition to his authorship, Roth was (in 1932) co-founder of the Jewish Museum in London and throughout his life a significant collector of Judaica.[10] However, the key marker of his foundational role in Jewish studies is that, from 1965 until his death in 1970, he was the editor-in-chief of the first edition (1971) of the *Encyclopaedia Judaica*.[11] Oxford's Chabad Society (Roth was based at Oxford University, which created its first post in post-biblical Jewish studies for him, for most of his academic career)[12] is one of the few contemporary organizations, interestingly again more popular or community-oriented than academic, that rightly celebrates Roth as "one of

8 "Roth, Cecil (1899–1970)," *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, accessed February 28, 2018, https://doi.org/10.1093/ref:odnb/37917. Full references are provided for Roth's works whenever I discuss them in detail.

9 Chaim Raphael, "In Search of Cecil Roth," *Commentary* (September, 1970), emphasis in original; accessed May 5, 2019, https://www.commentarymagazine.com/articles/in-search-of-cecil-roth/.

10 The Jewish Museum was founded by Roth, Alfred Rubens, and Wilfred Samuel; "History of the Museum," Jewish Museum, London, accessed July 23, 2017. http://www.jewishmuseum.org.uk/history.

11 Cecil Roth, ed., *Encyclopaedia Judaica* (Jerusalem: Macmillan, 1971).

12 Cecil Roth, *Opportunities that Pass: An Historical Miscellany*, eds. Israel Feinstein and Joseph Roth (London: Vallentine Mitchell, 2005), inside rear cover copy.

the greatest Jewish historians in the twentieth century, recognized expert in Jewish art and educator."[13] Appropriately for a scholar and collector with a vast purview (historical and geographical), in engaging with Salonica, Roth assembles a wide array of materials and layers histories diffuse in time and space. His broad skills and interests facilitate his conception of transcultural and transhistorical memory in Salonica.

In spite of his output, Roth's work receives very little attention in the academic fields to which his work best speaks today, namely Jewish studies, transcultural studies, and memory studies.[14] His entry in the *Dictionary of National Biography* sheds light on this underestimation and underexposure of Roth by academics even in his own day, particularly in his native Britain. It suggests that Roth was not recognized in his own time because of his prioritization of, and approach to, Jewish studies. "The academic world in his youth [1920s–1930s; the time when Roth came of age as a professional scholar] was hardly prepared to acknowledge the presence of a specifically Jewish factor in European economic and political history."[15] With a nice irony, the entry goes on to point out that Roth is undervalued precisely because he advanced Jewish studies so substantially, by understanding Jewish history in the context of larger (the implication is transcultural, although this is not stated) history, thereby distinguishing Jewish studies from the subjects to which it had until then been reduced, namely theology and Semitic languages: "that his findings have not always survived the scrutiny of able younger scholars itself attests to his own success in helping to put Jewish history on the academic map."[16] The view that Roth chose to focus on Jewish commonality with other cultural groups over difference is held up by the most substantial "reassessment" of Roth's work on Italian Jewry, which is nevertheless "not a full-fledged defense or advocacy of Roth."[17] If Roth's success in putting Jewish history on the map as transcultural

13 "Cecil Roth," Oxford Chabad Society, accessed July 23, 2017. http://www.oxfordchabad.org/templates/articlecco_cdo/aid/457404/jewish/Cecil-Roth.htm.

14 For instance, searching for "Cecil Roth" in the keyword field in the journal *History and Memory* since its founding in the 1980s yields one result, in which Roth is mentioned in passing as the predecessor to the author's father as the editor of the *Encyclopaedia Judaica*: see Meir Wigoder, "History begins at home," *History and Memory* 13, no. 1 (2001): 19–59, note 48. A search of all journals available in JSTOR under the subject of "Jewish Studies" using "Cecil Roth" in the title field yields two results, by Frederick Krome, both of which I discuss below. A search of *Historical Abstracts* using "Cecil Roth" as keywords produces only one result.

15 "Roth, Cecil," *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*.

16 "Roth, Cecil," *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*.

17 David B. Ruderman, "Cecil Roth, Historian of Italian Jewry: A Reassessment," in *The Jewish Past Revisited: Reflections on Modern Jewish Historians*, ed. David N. Myers and David B. Ruderman (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1998), 133.

led to his being overlooked by his successors in Jewish historiography, this transcultural concept of Jewish history is a key reason for returning to him now as we deepen our thinking about transcultural memory.

Frederic Krome, who has done most to restore and trace the emergence of Roth's status as a historian (although focused on a US Jewish studies context, and not on memory studies, transcultural studies, or Jewish studies broadly as I target here), provides support for this idea that Roth went against the grain of time.[18] Krome writes that, even while Roth was not anti-Zionist—he was "between the Diaspora and Zion" as the title of one of Krome's essays would have it—"Roth was a Diaspora centered Jewish scholar at a time when Jewish historiography was 'Zionocentric.'"[19] Furthermore, "Roth believed that Jewish history was the product of a creative interaction between Jewish and non-Jewish society."[20] In other words, Roth broke ground in Jewish historiography by decentring Israel as a nationalist or mythical/ancient cultural homeland, without yet subscribing to a diasporic nationalism; and also by depicting what we would now call transcultural exchange with non-Jews as absolutely intrinsic to the production of Jewish history and culture. It was along these lines—being between the diaspora and Zion, and being between cultural exceptionalism and assimilation—that Roth distinguished himself from those he acknowledged as seminal in Jewish historiography.[21] He was out of his historiographic time, we can hypothesize, because he was ahead of it, and it is part of my task here to argue how he is valuable for our own time, precisely for the reasons his work was underrated then: namely, in its large purview of Jewish history and Jewish studies as transcultural in these senses. It is indicative of Roth's ongoing undervaluation, for example, that there is still no biography, only a personal memoir by his wife

18 Frederic Krome, "Between the Diaspora and Zion: Cecil Roth and his American Friends," *Jewish History* 20, no. 3–4 (2006): 283–974; Frederic Krome, "Creating 'Jewish History for Our Own Needs': The Evolution of Cecil Roth's Historical Vision, 1925–1935," *Modern Judaism* 21, no. 3 (2001): 216–237.

19 Krome, "Between the Diaspora and Zion," 283–284.

20 Krome, "Between the Diaspora and Zion," 286.

21 Working with Roth in the UK, Elisa Lawson makes a similar argument to Krome, noting that Roth sustained both his "responsibility for the decimated European-Jewish communities […] and his passionate sympathy for the developing Jewish cultural life in Israel." See Elisa Lawson, "Cecil Roth and the Imagination of the Jewish Past, Present and Future in Britain, 1925–1964" (PhD diss., University of Southampton, 2005), 133.

written after Roth's death.[22] And if, as Krome also thinks, Roth has fallen short of academic attention because of a failure to contextualize his work in Jewish historical writings, with responses to him restricted to a pattern of being either "hypercritical, or characterized by excessive reverence,"[23] it is important that this essay, as much as any work on Roth, is undertaken with a view to his critical contextualization in Jewish historiography.

Academically undervalued in his own moment and still in our own, and for the same reasons of preparing the way for a form of Jewish studies that is not exceptionalist and that is neither diaspora- nor Zionist-nationalist, Roth's conception of Jewish studies necessarily intersects with transcultural studies and memory studies, and in the intersection contributes to all three areas. It is especially this intersection of fields—a kind of contemporary interdisciplinarity or what Cheyette has called after Hannah Arendt "thinking without a banister"[24]—that makes Roth's writings on Salonica fresh and worth exploring. Roth's interest in Salonica is drawn towards memory and memorialization as a subject over history, and while this makes him interesting to us today, it is surely another reason for his undervaluation as an academic historian in the past. Indeed, as I will show, he presents Salonica in the manner that other much later writers have described as a "site of memory."[25]

A mid-twentieth-century Jewish historian's connection to late twentieth-century theorists and novelists invested in sites of memory might seem a stretch. However, in seeking to reach as large an audience as possible, Roth aimed principally to make his writing engaging, entertaining, and highly readable. As Krome remarks, quoting Roth on another way in which he sought to distinguish himself as a Jewish historian ("I do not belong to the dryasdust [sic] school of Jewish history, and I think that all historical work worthy of the name must be accessible to the public"),

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22 Irene Roth, *Cecil Roth, Historian without Tears: A Memoir* (New York: Sepher-Hermon Press, 1982). Based at the University of Leeds and working in part with Roth's archive held there, collaborative research began in 2019 to correct this undervaluation of Roth and his legacy. See "The Archive after Cecil Roth: Jewish Studies, Cultural History, and the Cecil Roth Collection," accessed June 14, 2019, https://www.leeds.ac.uk/arts/info/20045/leeds_humanities_research_institute/3216/the_archive_after_cecil_roth_jewish_studies_cultural_history_and_the_cecil_roth_collection; and "Opening up Pioneering Jewish Historian's Treasured Collection," accessed June 14 , 2019, https://www.leeds.ac.uk/news/article/4380/opening_up_pioneering_jewish_historians_treasured_collection.

23 Krome, "Creating 'Jewish History for Our Own Needs,'" 218.

24 Cheyette, *Diasporas of the Mind*, chap. 8, loc. 256 of 6321, Kindle.

25 I draw the following characterizations of memory work from two key conceptions of "site of memory": Pierre Nora, "Between Memory and History: Les Lieux de Mémoire," *Representations*, 26 (1989): 7–24; and Toni Morrison, "The Site of Memory," *Inventing the Truth: The Art and Craft of Memoir*, ed. William Zinsser (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1998), 83–102.

"it was precisely to that purpose, the dissemination of Jewish history to a wide public, that Roth dedicated his career."[26] At the same time, Roth's "thinking without a banister" also means that at times we see him fall down the staircases of both time and place in his views of Salonica's Jews. A critical contextualization of Roth in Jewish historiography requires an attention to the extent to which Roth partakes in romanticizing, being nostalgic about, Orientalizing, and even fictionalizing Jewish Salonica. Such slips do seem both to occur as the cost of his efforts to produce a popular historical writing, and in turn to contribute to his academic historiographical devaluation to date.

We should not be surprised, then, that Roth's engagement of Salonica has much in common with not only contemporary "sites of memory" theory but also fiction. Roth, too, is focused on the local site and interprets it as a memorial less of presence than of loss. He also connects events by theme and motif, rather than setting them in a chronological sequence. His approach to history attends to texts, images, objects, and locations as traces of cultural memory. Most surprisingly for a historian perhaps, his writing is highly expressive of personal, affective, and imaginative involvement. Like contemporary memory studies, most importantly Roth examines memory culturally, for a people (the Jews), but also transculturally, particularly in relation to and across empires (the Ottoman, the Spanish, the Nazi). In this last way especially, in its transculturalization of Salonica as site of memory, Roth's work can also transform the understanding of sites of memory, which emerged as a national and even more local concept.[27] It is worth returning to Roth now, then, less as a historian, and more as a very early memory studies writer.

Further sections of this essay follow the widening and progressively transculturalizing course of what Roth did with his experience in Salonica. In parts two and three, I examine Roth's journal articles, written for an increasingly international Anglophone audience, focusing on the effect of the Holocaust on Salonica, and their significance for the history and historiography of Salonican Jewry. In part four of my essay I examine Roth's publications on Salonica, the Ottoman Empire, and the Sephardim more broadly, to trace the ever more geographically and culturally expansive connections he makes outwards across memories: from very local, indeed personal, familial memory; to transcultural, trans-imperial—and ultimately an ideal of translated—memory. Organizing Roth's work chronologically and close-reading his writings is important

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26 Krome, "Creating 'Jewish History for Our Own Needs,'" 216.

27 Nora's "site of memory" is national; Morrison's also, but with the implication of being even more local (Nora, "Between Memory and History"; Morrison, "The Site of Memory").

for a number of reasons. First, such attention helps to rectify the oversight of all of Roth's work on Salonica to date. Second, this approach helps to trace the progressively widening stages of Roth's interest in and approach to memory—widening both in terms of place and time, from a specific place to the trans-continental, and from very recent time to the very ancient, indeed, Biblical period. In addition, the more extensively Roth's work on Salonica travels in terms of time and space, the more affective, and thus, as I shall argue, the less historical and the more attuned with memory studies it becomes. In my conclusion, I draw together the implications of my analysis of Roth's multiple engagements of Salonica for current understandings of culture, memory, and Jewish history. His key contribution—which should encourage us to consider him as a precedent for our contemporary approaches, I resolve—is to conceive of these fields as transcultural.

2. "Vandalism in Salonika": The *Jewish Chronicle* reports

Roth was not the first English-language writer to report from post-Holocaust Salonica. This role seems to have fallen to Hal Lehrman, a reporter for the Associated Press. Lehrman's essay in *Commentary*, in May 1946—just a few months before Roth's first reports—merits comparison with Roth's work in particular for its discussion of the ongoing destruction of Jewish Salonica.[28] But unlike Roth, Lehrman is not concerned with the destruction of Salonican Jewish history and a long view of this history. Rather, Lehrman reports from the ground on the present situation he finds, including substantially beyond Salonica, in larger Greece. In addition, Lehrman attends more to people, in particular to the returnees from the camps, their treatment, the disagreements among them, and to their possible futures; Roth, it has to be said, is more concerned with places, artefacts, historical education, and memory. Thus, while Roth is not the first English-language reporter on post-Holocaust Salonica, I want to use this comparison with Lehrman to underline my claim that Roth was post-Holocaust Salonica's first English-language historian.

Roth's visit to Salonica in July 1946 provided material for a number of publications. First were three newspaper reports appearing in the *Jewish Chronicle* at the end of the year of his visit.[29] In the first of these,

28 Hal Lehrman, "Greece: Unused Cakes of Soap," *Commentary* (May 1, 1946), accessed May 5, 2019, https://www.commentarymagazine.com/articles/greece-unused-cakes-of-soap/.

29 Cecil Roth, "Vandalism in Salonika: Ancient Cemetery Becomes 'Stone Quarry,'" *Jewish Chronicle* (Nov 22, 1946): 10; Cecil Roth, "Greece, 1946 – Impressions on a Tour (1)," *Jewish Chronicle* (November 29, 1946): 11; Cecil Roth "Greece 1946 – Impressions on a Tour (2)," *Jewish Chronicle* (December 6, 1946): 5.

which was headed “Vandalism in Salonika: Ancient Cemetery Becomes ‘Stone Quarry,’” Roth focuses exclusively on the Jewish cemetery in Salonica. His goal is not to report the expropriation or destruction of the cemetery by the Nazis during the war. Rather Roth recounts, in seeking to stop, the ongoing and indeed “accelerated” destruction of the cemetery after the Holocaust, by the non-Jewish (Greek) Salonicans, in an act of transcultural violence. At the time of Roth’s visit, the cemetery was being used as a “quarry,” its tombstones raided and recycled to make repairs to the city, including to the churches in Salonica. Roth witnessed both the removal of the tombstones from the cemetery and their use in the reconstruction of the post-war city.

It is useful here to provide some context and background for the destruction of Salonica’s Jewish cemetery. As subsequent historians have documented, the extended process of the cemetery’s destruction, from the 1920s to the 1950s, was an expression of the Hellenization of Salonica: the policy of cultural homogenization by Greek Christianity that followed the ending of the Ottoman Empire in 1913 and the city’s subsequent recognition as Greek.[30] Even before the Nazi occupation, then, events at the end of the Ottoman Empire had exacerbated monoculturalism in Salonica. These included the Great Fire of 1917, the Greek-Turkish War, and the subsequent exchange of Muslim and Christian populations between Turkey and Greece as agreed at Lausanne. Particularly in their concatenation, these events left Greek Christians, not Salonican Jews, the majority cultural group in Salonica, and the Jewish minority increasingly threatened in an irredentist Greece seeking to extend its territories in accordance with reclaiming and continuing classical Greece. After the Ottoman Empire, the Jewish community stood as a “reminder of Ottoman times” that Salonica wanted to forget; Hellenizing Greek governments largely sought the city’s “de-Judaization.”[31] Roth’s reports from the cemetery witness, and seek to obstruct, this continuing Hellenization, in support instead of Salonica’s transcultural memories. For Roth, Greek irredentism, symbolized

30 Mark Mazower, *Salonica, City of Ghosts: Christians, Muslims and Jews 1430–1950* (London: HarperCollins, 2005), 299, 458. For historians on the cemetery, see in particular Michael Molho, *In Memoriam: Hommage aux Victimes Juives des Nazis en Grèce*, vols 1–3, especially volume 3 (Buenos Aires: 1953); Leon Saltiel, “Dehumanizing the Dead,” *Yad Vashem Studies* 42, no. 1 (2014): 11–46; Devin E. Naar, *Jewish Salonica: Between the Ottoman Empire and Modern Greece* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2016), 239–276; Carla Hesse and Thomas W. Laqueur, “Bodies Visible and Invisible: The Erasure of the Jewish Cemetery in the Life of Modern Thessaloniki,” in *The Holocaust in Greece,* Giorgos Antoniou and A. Dirk Moses, ed. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2018), 327–358. On Hellenization, see Katerina Zacharia, *Hellenisms: Culture, Identity, and Ethnicity from Antiquity to Modernity* (Surrey: Ashgate, 2008).

31 Mazower, *Salonica, City of Ghosts*, 428.

in the extended destruction of the Jewish cemetery, marked a fall from Salonican Jewry's long and widely transcultural history, inextricable from the Ottoman Empire. Even in his much earlier abbreviations of comprehensive Jewish history, Roth takes the space to write about the negative effects on its Jewish population of the Greek state's acquisition of Salonica. For example, in *A Short History of the Jewish People*, he notes that such nationalism raised concerns that "the Jewish majority which had existed for many centuries" in the city "were in sight of final and definite decay."[32]

As the title of Roth's first *Jewish Chronicle* Salonica report indicates, the long history of the cemetery made it especially important. The Jewish cemetery was a special site of memory for the Salonican Jewish community, and for larger cultural and transcultural history, particularly because, as Roth emphasizes, other evidence of these long histories had been destroyed:

> In consequence of the devastation of the past generation, beginning with the great fire of 1917 and culminating in the Nazi persecution, the ancient records of the [Salonican Jewish] Community have almost completely disappeared. The only thing that remains is the centuries-old cemetery, which has been employed continuously from the beginning of the 16th century, if not earlier. The tombstones here, therefore, constitute one of the most important surviving records of local Jewish history, and indeed of Salonikan history in general.[33]

His article thus ends with an urgent plea that "the entire cemetery be scheduled as an historical monument."[34] Effectively at this point, Roth asks for it to be officially recognized as a memorial site, a physical site of symbolic memory.

Roth understands the cemetery, moreover, as a transhistorical site of memory. It is not only a Holocaust memorial to those "put there in our own generation by persons who are now living, or who have perished in the Nazi gas-chambers."[35] In "the tombstones of many rabbis, scholars, and physicians" buried there, it is also a physical commemoration of Jewish lives dating back before the sixteenth century.[36] In his recognition of the cemetery as a site of transhistorical cultural memory, Roth's report from 1946 bears comparison with oral history accounts from present-day Salonican Jews, for whom "the cemetery physically embodies the long and continuing history

32 Cecil Roth, *A Short History of the Jewish People* (London: Macmillan, 1936), 405.

33 Roth, "Vandalism in Salonika," 10.

34 Roth, "Vandalism in Salonika," 10.

35 Roth, "Vandalism in Salonika," 10.

36 Roth, "Vandalism in Salonika," 10.

of the Sephardic Jews of Salonika."[37] Roth's investment in the cemetery as a site of memory seems to exceed the historical record—certainly a newspaper report—and instead draws it close to subjectively inflected techniques valued by contemporary memory studies, such as these oral histories.

Even at this earliest engagement in the press, Roth is not, in fact, reporting at all but campaigning—for an end to the vandalism but also for a memorial—and his medium, this particular weekly newspaper aimed at a British Jewish audience, meant that his campaigning could have real consequences. As a regular contributor to the *Jewish Chronicle* who would go on to be, just a few years after he filed his Salonica reports in the paper, the paper's first historian, Roth was well versed in the remit of this publication.[38] As his history rightly recognizes, making much of the paper's tagline in its masthead as "the organ of British Jewry," the *Jewish Chronicle* is an institution that developed in tandem with British Jewry. The paper's key brief for not only keeping British Jewry informed of, but also encouraging them to campaign against, anti-Semitic pogroms throughout Europe, from the nineteenth century on, would have been clear to Roth; his Salonica essays for the *Jewish Chronicle* are consonant with this activist, interventionist stance. As David Cesarani notes in his history of the paper (which returns to and updates Roth's study), in reporting the Holocaust the *Jewish Chronicle* managed to obtain accurate information very early on—including on the deportations of the Salonican Jewish community in 1943—that the rest of the British press ignored. The paper's role, inextricably mediating and campaigning throughout its history, was, Cesarani writes, "interpreting the world to the Jews in Britain and representing them to the majority society."[39]

Cesarani's summary underestimates the reach of at least some of the newspaper's reports, for—even in this first piece for the British Jewish audience of the *Jewish Chronicle*—Roth presents the cemetery as a site of memory that is not just Jewish but transcultural:

> The importance of the cemetery is not confined to its Jewish associations, as it appears that fragments dating back to the classical period were originally adapted for use there. In a hurried inspection I noticed several large fragments of what appears

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37 Bea Lewkowicz, *The Jewish Community of Salonika: History, Memory, Identity* (London: Vallentine Mitchell, 2006), 134.

38 Cecil Roth, *The Jewish Chronicle, 1841–1941: A Century of Newspaper History* (London: The Jewish Chronicle, 1949).

39 David Cesarani, *The Jewish Chronicle and Anglo-Jewry, 1941–1991* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994), ix.

> to be a monumental Latin inscription, as well as an ancient Greek tombstone which had similarly been re-employed.[40]

Roth's post-Holocaust Salonican publications begin, then, not with a report on the destruction of Salonican Jewry in the Holocaust, but rather with the call to preserve and recognize a transhistorical site of memory, which, while centrally Jewish, evidenced transcultural borrowings. What is clear also from Roth's earliest writing on Salonica is the symbolic value of the cemetery—and thus the significance of its destruction going far beyond the local site—and the reporter's own attachments and investments in his object going beyond any historical detachment. This co-presence of sites of symbolic memory and revealed affective attachment, the expression of an imaginative response so characteristic of later memory studies work, is amplified in Roth's subsequent *Jewish Chronicle* reports.

After focusing on the plight of the cemetery in his first report, Roth's next two reports for the *Jewish Chronicle*—titled "Greece, 1946 – Impressions on a Tour (1)" and "Greece, 1946 – Impressions on a Tour (2)"—move beyond the cemetery, and, indeed, while still centred on Salonica, move beyond the city and become increasingly international. Roth begins his next report with a confession of his lifelong personal investment in Salonica:

> All my life, I had wanted to visit the famous Community of Salonika – Salonika, the great haven of the exiles from Spain 450 years ago, which was for centuries almost a self-dependent Jewish commonwealth, where Jews constituted the great majority of the inhabitants of the city, where the Spanish language and folk-ways and civilisation of the age of Columbus were preserved until our own day, where there were synagogues bearing the names of every province of Spain.[41]

Roth still does not explain here his reasons for his lifelong attachment to the city; we will have to retrace this from his later writings on Salonica. Instead he reveals that his visit to Salonica was happenstance, made possible when he was commissioned by the British War Office to lecture to the British troops still stationed in the Middle East and found himself scheduled on a flight "from Cairo to Greece: and not merely Greece, but precisely to Salonika."[42]

40 Roth, "Vandalism in Salonika," 10.

41 Roth, "Greece, 1946 – Impressions on a Tour (1)," 11.

42 Roth, "Greece, 1946 – Impressions on a Tour (1)," 11. The lectures and Roth's visit to Salonica are mentioned by Roth's wife in her memoir about him: Irene Roth, *Cecil Roth*, 157. Roth himself also mentions the lectures at the end of "The Last Days of Jewish Salonica."

Yet especially affecting at the opening of his report, the material accumulated in the series of repeated conjunctive clauses, and the reiteration of the city's name as though it itself it holds poetry for Roth, sets up the Salonica of Roth's personal longing as a transhistorical and transcultural Jewish city. Salonica is syntactically constructed as a time-capsule site of memory of Sephardi Jews translated from Spain that mediates between near Jewish autonomy and inter-relationality with its host state ("the almost-dependent Jewish commonwealth"). That Roth writes of managing to communicate with the acting rabbi of Salonica using a mixture of Spanish and Hebrew—effectively Ladino, the ancient tongue of Sephardi Jews—is another indicator of Roth positioning himself in relation to the continuation of Salonica as a transcultural and transhistorical transplantation of the Sephardim from Spain. Deploying Ladino embeds Roth as a present-day participant, less outsider and more now-insider, in the very "language and folk-ways and civilisation of the age of Columbus […] preserved until our own day" that he is writing about and that he admires. Roth's linguistic facility, as a British-born Ashkenazi Jew, in Ladino—a hybrid medium sometimes outlawed in Greece by authorities seeking cultural homogenization[43]—also paves the way for us to examine later in this essay his own inclination to the Sephardim, which will hinge on transcultural and transhistorical memories.

Only after this view of the long and wide Salonican memory do we get some details of the fate of Jews in the Holocaust, which here amount to some of the numbers involved and the roles of some key players. The effect of this order of long history before recent history is to present the Holocaust as destructive of this prior memory. Indeed, the second *Jewish Chronicle* report does not memorialize Jews lost in the Holocaust but, even more strongly than the first report, works as advocacy against the ongoing destruction of a much longer and larger history. Roth's main stated goal now is to call for the rebuilding of the Jewish community of Salonica following the return of Salonica's Holocaust survivors. Roth's emphasis on historical and cultural education appears sharply focused and perceptive, especially given that historians in our own day are still processing the reasons for the lack of community cohesion among survivors.[44] The American Joint Distribution Committee would also recognize, but later than Roth in the 1950s, that the main problem in Salonica, among other post-Holocaust

43 For a discussion of how Ladino (along with Hebrew) had been outlawed in public signs in the 1920s, see Katherine Elizabeth Fleming, *Greece: A Jewish History* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2008), 85. The outlawing of Ladino will recur under the Nazis, as I discuss in the third part of this essay.

44 More general reasons are given in Mazower, *Salonica, City of Ghosts*, 450–451.

communities, was the lack of education. Salonica's historians today write of the "destruction of Jewish references to the past, of which the biggest was the destruction of the old Jewish cemetery" and suggest that the "process of the reconstruction of Jewish memory has only recently begun."[45] In the cemetery as it is being taken apart and seeking to stop this, Roth seemed to grasp these symbolic connections well in advance.

Roth was a historian who, after all, committed his life's work to writing in support of his belief that emotional investment in history was the most important aspect of being Jewish, since knowledge of history shaped the present and would determine the future. As Roth put it in one of three essays appearing in the late 1920s–early 1930s in the *Menorah Journal*, which together act as an early-career declaration of his valuation of the significance of Jewish history,

> To the Jew, history should be more important by far than to anyone else. It is for him not merely a record: it is at once an inspiration and an apologia. Only from his history can he understand the facts of his present being. Only from his history can he be brought to appreciate not only his former glory but also his former degradation, to realize its causes and to sympathize with its consequences. It is only from an appreciation of his past that he can be imbued with self-respect and hope for his future.[46]

Criticizing the historical views of his predecessors, in particular both the diaspora nationalism of Russian historian Simon Dubnov and the seminal Jewish historiography of German historian Heinrich Graetz, Roth steers between the narratives of diasporic Jewish history as triumphant survival or inevitable abjection, as he will later do in the cemetery in Salonica. Roth claimed, in fact, in rejection of Graetz's tragedy of Jewish suffering in exile, to have "initiated […] the wider reaction against what has been termed the 'lachrymose' interpretation of Jewish history," pre-empting his contemporary Salo Baron, the US Jewish historian who is typically credited with, and certainly claimed for himself, this turn against Graetz's tragic influence on

45 Lewkowicz, *The Jewish Community of Salonika*, 208–209.

46 Cecil Roth, "Jewish History for Our Own Needs," *Menorah Journal* 14, no. 5 (1928): 419. The later essays in this historical-manifesto series are: Cecil Roth, "European History and Jewish History: Do Their Epochs Coincide?" *Menorah Journal* 16, no. 4 (1929): 293–306; and Cecil Roth, "Paradoxes of Jewish History," *Menorah Journal* 14, (1930): 1–26, reprinted in Roth, *Opportunities That Pass*, 196–209.

the theme of Jewish history.[47] The point is that, even in the Salonica cemetery, Roth implicitly continues to distinguish himself from other seminal historians by seeking to memorialize a history that, as with his oeuvre, included the vicissitudes of Jewish cross-cultural life in the diaspora.

Similar to that for preserving the cemetery but now thinking on the larger scale of the continuity of the local Salonican Jewish community and its history, Roth's campaign for historical education is thus directed at stopping the destruction of Jewish history itself. He writes that, "without it [historical education], we ourselves will be completing the devastation which the Germans began—we shall become, in short, the deliberate accomplices of the Nazis."[48] In both cases, he sees in the Holocaust the destruction of not just recent lives and history but also the long and expansive Sephardic history that—we are starting to suspect in particular—is what made Salonica so compelling to Roth as a historian. Roth presents this rebuilding of Jewish history and presence in Europe, in Salonica, in quasi-Zionist terms, and yet, importantly, outside of Zion (Israel/Palestine). At the very moment (late 1940s) when Zionism was about to produce a national homeland for Jews in Israel, at what might be considered the historical fulfilment of Zionism as Jewish nationalism, Roth was writing and indeed working towards maintaining a diasporized, international Jewry in Salonica. When Jewish historiography itself was, not surprisingly after the Holocaust, taking on, as Krome notes, a "'Zioncentric' vision of Jewish history" with which "Roth was thus at odds,"[49] such a call was especially notable:

> We need young people who will approach the question in the same Chalutzistic spirit which Zionism has been able to arouse on behalf of Palestine—people of the type of the "Bachad" enthusiasts, willing to divert their attention momentarily to another and less glamorous,

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47 Cecil Roth, "Preface," *Personalities and Events in Jewish History* (Philadelphia: Jewish Publication Society of America, 1953), vii. For a comparison between Roth and Baron that emphasizes their similarity as well as their conscious rivalry, see Michael Brenner, *Prophets of the Past: Interpreters of Jewish History* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2010), 131–134. For explorations of Jewish historiography that perform comparisons between its key practitioners, see David N. Myers and David B. Ruderman, eds., *The Jewish Past Revisited: Reflections on Modern Jewish Historians* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1998), and Moshe Rosman, *How Jewish is Jewish History?* (Oxford: Littman Library of Jewish Civilization, 2007). Again, work on Jewish historiography tends to minimize or even exclude Roth's contribution. The recent *Routledge Companion to Jewish History and Jewish Historiography*, edited by Dean Phillip Bell (Abingdon: Routledge, 2019), for example, mentions Roth only as a founder of the Jewish Museum in London (609), and does not discuss his place in Jewish historiography at all.

48 Roth, "Greece, 1946 – Impressions on a Tour (1)," 11.

49 Krome, "Between the Diaspora and Zion," 284.

> but surely no less important, type of work. For there is a Holy Land to be won back in the Diaspora, as well as in Eretz Yisrael.[50]

Recognizing the importance of Salonica for world Jewry, Roth does not so much borrow, as swipe wholesale, the institutions, language, and messianic vision of Zionism.

Roth's reference to Bachad would have had particular resonance for the *Jewish Chronicle*'s British audience. An acronym from the Hebrew meaning the "Union of Religious Pioneers," Bachad was an organization that trained Jews for religious Zionist pioneering in Palestine, whose training centres had been relocated to Britain from Germany after Kristallnacht in 1938.[51] However, Roth translates or imports Zionism for Salonica instead of for Palestine, producing a kind of diasporized transcultural Zionism outside of, but parallel to, Palestine. As a British subject with a father of Polish heritage born in Russia, and a mother born in Sheffield, Roth himself was, of course, a diasporic, translated Jew. And while Roth died and was buried in Jerusalem, he moved to Israel mostly for professional rather than personal reasons, to edit the *Encyclopaedia Judaica*.[52] His move was not a religiously or nationally motivated "return" to Israel. Writing in the *Jewish Chronicle*, Roth was addressing a similar kind of diasporic, British Jew, at a point—1946, immediately after the Second World War—when the survival of the Jewish diaspora in Europe was a very real concern for his Jewish audience.

At this point and in the context of Jewish historiography, Roth seems to draw close to Dubnov, both in his underlining of the centrality of diaspora sites to Jewish history and in his understanding of the vital importance of historical sources and knowledge for Jewish continuity. However, Dubnov was charged by later historians with "minimizing the interplay of Jews and non-Jews," and "neglect[ing] the impact on Jewish history of important developments in the non-Jewish world."[53] Roth, in contrast, made this cultural interplay his key subject, arguing, in one pronounced instance in *The Jewish Contribution to Civilisation*, that without Jewish migration from the East to Europe, Europe would likely have

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50 Roth, "Greece, 1946 – Impressions on a Tour (1)," 11.

51 For a summary of Bachad, see Rafael Medoff and Chaim I. Waxman, *The A to Z of Zionism* (Lanham: Scarecrow Press, 2009), 31.

52 Irene Roth, *Cecil Roth*, 200–201. About Roth's views on Israeli nationalism, which were complex—distinct, for example, from those of his brother, Leon, who believed in a bi-national Jewish-Arab state—there is certainly more to be said.

53 Samuel Kassow, "Historiography: An Overview," *YIVO Encyclopedia of Jews in Eastern Europe*, accessed May 11, 2019, http://www.yivoencyclopedia.org/printarticle.aspx?id=30.

remained pagan.[54] Moreover, particularly in his first essay for the *Menorah Journal*, Roth charged Dubnov with focusing on German and Polish Jewry to the detriment of the Sephardim, such as in Salonica. "The story of the Sephardim, for example, is studied with romantic devotion up to the generation following the expulsion from Spain. From that period they are almost lost sight of." [55] The Sephardim "cannot be dismissed with a faint sneer at their decadence and a paragraph."[56] Indeed, again arguing for history as a shaper of the present, and now of Sephardi history for the present and future of all Jewry, Roth writes, in clear repartee to Dubnov: "A Jewish history which fails to take fair account of this branch of the race, so prominent in the past and of such potential importance for the future, is self-confessedly a failure."[57] Roth's Salonican writings function in part, then, to correct previous elisions from Jewish historiography such as Dubnov's.

In these early post-Holocaust Salonican writings, we see Roth's intervention simultaneously in larger Jewish historiographical debates, therefore, and in Salonican Jewish history and particularly the debates on Zionism that had been strongest in the city in the first two decades of the twentieth century. In Salonica, as in many other cities in Greece and indeed beyond with a sizeable Jewish population, Zionism tracked, developing in good part in response to, anti-Semitism.[58] Persecution (before the Germans, from the local Greek population) fuelled Salonican Jewish support for Palestine as a national homeland for all Jews. Exceptionally within Salonica, however, there had been a local form of Zionism that felt that, as a major Jewish city, Salonica was a true Jewish homeland. Roth's rallying cry for a Zionism in Salonica, for winning back a Holy Land in diaspora, revives and takes sides in this debate. However, in 1948, in the midst of the devastation of community structures and near extermination of every Salonican Jew in the Holocaust, such optimism seems to go against the tides of history, and even against feeling on the ground among those survivors he encountered—as we see in his next and final report for the *Jewish Chronicle*.[59]

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54 Cecil Roth, *The Jewish Contribution to Civilisation* (Oxford: East and West Library, 1938).

55 Roth, "Jewish History for Our Own Needs," 424.

56 Roth, "Jewish History for Our Own Needs," 424.

57 Roth, "Jewish History for Our Own Needs," 425.

58 Rena Molho, *Salonica and Istanbul: Social, Political, and Cultural Aspects of Jewish Life* (Istanbul: Isis Press, 2005).

59 For accounts of the post-Holocaust debates about Zionism versus reconstruction of Greek and Salonican Jewry, see Philip Carabott and Maria Vassilikou, "'New Men vs Old Jews': Greek Jewry in the Wake of the Shoah, 1945–1947," and Devin E. Naar "'You are Your Brother's Keeper': Rebuilding the Jewish Community of Salonica from Afar," both in Antoniou and Moses, eds. *The Holocaust in Greece*. There is no discussion of Roth in these debates or in this book.

This last of Roth's *Jewish Chronicle* reports finally recounts the Holocaust's devastation of Jewish Salonica. Yet again Roth's emphasis is not on the near extermination of people but on the destruction of the long historic memories of Salonican Jewry. This article offers more details about the ongoing fate of the cemetery. Roth remarks on the "tombstones of the ancient Jewish cemetery, going back to the sixteenth century" and needing to be preserved for that reason, being used for not only churches, but also pavements, parks, and latrines.[60] In an eyewitness record of a series of scenes, Roth confronts the ruination of Jewish Salonica which can be seen in the now-devastated cemetery and in what we might identify as objects of memory: a synagogue chair with a Hebrew inscription, looted from synagogue, now being sold by a pedlar; a small remnant from an ancient Sefer Torah (Hebrew "bible"). Roth views the destruction of these objects and places, textual as well as topographic sites of memory, as the deliberate and subconscious "desire to complete the Hellenisation of this city which had owed so much in the past to Jewish skill and enterprise."[61] In other words, such acts seek to make the city nationalistically and ethnically Greek (to Hellenize it), thereby erasing its transcultural memories, including the presence and creativity of Jews.

The report moves from Salonica to the parallel destruction that had taken place elsewhere in Greece where Jews again had maintained a presence. Roth also chronicles some of the stories of those who survived, relays some of his conversations with survivors, describes the supportive role of the contemporary Greek government toward its Jewish citizens, and underlines the need particularly for the Sephardim internationally to support the regeneration of Greece's Jewish community. Roth brings up Palestine only as a foil in his argument for rebuilding Greek and Salonican Jewry, diaspora Jewry outside of Zion. The report stages a fascinating confrontation between Roth as an outsider British Jew and one Greek Jewish leader's vision of his own community's future. Roth disagrees with the Chairman of the Central Board of Greek Jewish Communities, with whom he had a conversation, not in Ladino but in a "polyglot interchange" of Greek, French, Spanish, English, and Hebrew. The chair had represented Palestine as the only solution to the post-Holocaust devastation of Greek Jewry. "I am no Zionist propagandist," Roth avows in response.[62] Particularly given his first two Salonica publications, which had established the long transhistorical and transcultural memory of

60 Roth, "Greece 1946 – Impressions on a Tour (2)," 5.

61 Roth, "Greece 1946 – Impressions on a Tour (2)," 5.

62 Roth, "Greece 1946 – Impressions on a Tour (2)," 5.

Jewish Salonica, this third and final report for the *Jewish Chronicle* makes clear that Roth was far from willing to follow the local advice he encountered to give up on Salonican Jewry. This turning away from the present facts of devastation of Greek Jewry he was faced with on the ground suggests that Roth invested the survival and revival of this community with larger symbolic significance. Indeed, as I shall show in the next section, Roth wished to maintain Salonican Jewry in good part for reasons of its symbolic significance as a transcultural historical presence.

3. "[A]ll that Salonican Jewry had stood for": The *Commentary* essay

Roth's most substantial writing on Salonica, and his fullest account of what happened there during the Holocaust, emerges four years after his visit. If his first publications, his reports for the *Jewish Chronicle*, were received primarily by a British (his native) audience, his fourth publication, "The Last Days of Jewish Salonica: What Happened to a 450-Year-Old Civilization," his essay published in *Commentary* in 1950, reached a mainly American audience. The American arena was increasingly receptive of Roth's work, in contrast with his native Britain, especially in academic circles.[63] The specific publication context of the essay was again significant. *Commentary* magazine was founded in 1945—the year before Roth's visit to Salonica—by the American Jewish Committee. Still at this point very much liberal and non-denominationalist, as Nathan Abrams writes in his history of *Commentary*, it "covered matters of both universal interest and of specifically Jewish concern, in a non-Zionist intellectual, broad-based Reform Jewish contemporary tone."[64] This outward-turned outlook was pertinent, since Roth's take on Salonica continued to be neither Zionist nor exclusively Jewish, non-nationalist and indeed anti-nationalist, but in support of diasporic, transcultural and interfaith memories and their legacy in shaping the present. Roth's *Commentary* essay declares its own significance as "the first detailed report in the English language" on the near annihilation of Salonican Jews in the Holocaust.[65] In spite of Lehrman's report, published also in *Commentary*, the claim seems largely justified, given that Lehrman does not focus on Salonica, or indeed give

63 Roth's growing appeal for American audiences is analysed in Krome, "Between the Diaspora and Zion," 283–297.

64 Nathan Abrams, *Norman Podhoretz and Commentary Magazine: The Rise and Fall of the Neocons* (New York: Continuum, 2010), 3.

65 Roth, "Last Days."

an account of the Holocaust in Greece. In addition, in the key English-language books on Salonican Jews, no published reports (including Lehrman's report) previous to Roth's essay are cited.[66]

Roth's essay begins with the oversight from Holocaust history of the fate of Salonican Jews: "The fate of the Jews of Salonica at the hands of the Nazis is an episode of recent history that for some reason or other has been relatively overlooked. Yet, even in recent history, there are few stories more terrible."[67] Roth does not directly address the reason for this oversight, but his emphasis here on Salonica as "the greatest center of Sephardic Jewry" up until the war, with its extensive transhistorical and transcultural connections, may indirectly offer an answer.[68] This answer extends Roth's criticism of the minimization of post-1492 Sephardi history generally, which he had already articulated in at least one of his historical methodology essays as discussed above.[69] Namely, Sephardic experiences of the Holocaust were generally "relatively overlooked" because they were overshadowed by the Ashkenazi-centred narrative of the Holocaust, as this began to shape and dominate Holocaust history.[70] This answer holds a question that in turn is a matter requiring more research. However, in brief, it might be supposed that Ashkenazi Holocaust history dominated Sephardi Holocaust history because the former is more local to the main killing centres of the Holocaust (Germany and Poland). In addition, and perhaps as a consequence, the study of the Ashkenazim has dominated Jewish studies even more emphatically since the Holocaust.

Devin Naar, a contemporary historian particularly of Sephardic history, including on Salonica, remarks on the perpetuation of the oversight of Sephardi Holocaust experience even in our present day: "I think the first

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66 For key English-language books on Salonican Jews see Steven B. Bowman, ed., Isaac Benmayor, trans., *The Holocaust in Salonika: Eyewitness Accounts* (New York: Sephardic House, 2002); Mazower, *Salonica, City of Ghosts*; Lewkowicz, *The Jewish Community of Salonika*; Naar, *Jewish Salonica*.

67 Roth, "Last Days."

68 Roth, "Last Days."

69 Roth, "Jewish History for Our Own Needs."

70 The clue to the difference between the Sephardim and the Ashkenazim lies in their names. Sephardim, based on the transliteration of the Hebrew word for "Spain," Sepharad, names the descendants of Jews who left the Iberian Peninsula following the 1492 expulsion; it therefore comes to refer to Mediterranean Jews. Ashkenazim is based on the transliterated Hebrew for a country bordering Armenia, *Ashkenaz*; it thus came to refer to Jews from larger Germany (also including Poland). Roth traces the origins of the Ashkenazim to Palestinian Jewry, and the Sephardim to Babylonian Jewry. I return to this and the differences between these two Jewish cultural groups in section four of this essay, when I discuss Roth's conception of the relative transcultural openness of the Sephardim in comparison with the Ashkenazim.

common assumption about the relationship between Sephardic Jews and the Holocaust is that there isn't any. The Holocaust has generally been studied and remembered as a primarily Ashkenazi phenomenon."[71] Returning to the subject of Salonica four years after his visit and his reports in Britain, Roth continues to correct oversights. However, as a 5000-word essay rather than a short series of single- or double-column newspaper reports, with more extensive space to develop connections between Holocaust memory and the long historical and transcultural memories of the Sephardim, and in a more creative, reflective form, "Last Days of Salonica" also represents the most significant of Roth's Salonica publications. The *Commentary* essay deploys parallels between past and present that support these connections in Sephardi Holocaust memory and makes novelistic use of the role of the image. This publication adds to the previous publications a clearer representation of Salonica as site of memory, one that manifestly prefigures this concept in contemporary memory studies and substantially furthers its transcultural dimension.

Although Roth's article undoubtedly lays some of the groundwork, the fate of Salonican Jews in the Holocaust has since been covered in much more detail in the historiography.[72] Such work has been enriched by the longer research period, the extension of Jewish studies and the emergence of Holocaust studies, new methodologies such as oral and testimonial histories, and of course the development of memory and transcultural studies. Nevertheless, before an analysis of Roth's *Commentary* essay can be given, some basic facts need to be retold. So extreme was the experience, so barely accountable even on the scale of the Shoah, post-Roth historians of Salonica find the statistics themselves speak volumes: "the almost total annihilation of Salonica's Jews during the Holocaust was an unprecedented catastrophe […]. Of the roughly fifty thousand Jews in Salonica on the eve of World War II, almost all perished […], mostly in Auschwitz-Birkenau. Less than two thousand could be counted in 1945."[73] And the deportations of the numbers happened with a horrible rapidity: "In a matter of weeks nearly one-fifth

71 "Telling Untold Stories: Sephardic Jews & the Holocaust," Stroum Center for Jewish Studies, University of Washington, accessed March 1, 2018, https://jewishstudies.washington.edu/sephardic-studies/telling-untold-stories-sephardic-jews-and-the-holocaust/. The same point is made at the beginning of Lewkowicz's *The Jewish Community of Salonika* (6). Naar organized a conference at the University of Washington in 2013 focusing on the Sephardic experience of the Holocaust to correct this omission.

72 Bowman, *The Holocaust in Salonika*; Mazower, *Salonica, City of Ghosts*; Lewkowicz, *The Jewish Community of Salonika*; Devin Naar, *Jewish Salonica*; Molho, *In Memoriam: Hommage aux Victimes Juives des Nazis en Grèce*, vols 1–3.

73 Naar, *Jewish Salonica*, 277.

of the population of a large city had been deported."[74] The destruction of Salonican Jewry also meant the devastation of Greek Jewry and that Salonica would never recover its essential and central Jewish status:

> Before the war, the city had housed two-thirds of the country's total Jewish population and had been the centre of its intellectual and cultural life; after 1945, however, only one-fifth of the approximately 11,000 Greek Jews who had survived the war lived there and the spotlight shifted to the nation's capital [Athens].[75]

A community that was a dominant majority at the beginning of the twentieth century would, a century later, constitute just "0.001 per cent of the total population of Salonika."[76]

Roth's *Commentary* essay also presents some bare statistics and facts concerning Salonica's Shoah. Unlike the *Jewish Chronicle* reports, which do not give an account of the Holocaust in Salonica, nor, indeed, as I have shown, do they even begin with the Holocaust, Roth's essay tells a fuller story, with details of the round-ups, detention, ghettoization, and deportations of the Jewish community. The first time these had been narrated in English in an article dedicated to Salonica's Jews and so early on, the details are especially powerful. But Roth's essay is significant not for statistics or facts but for what he does with them, for treating the Holocaust in a much larger memory context. Above all, Roth's essay evokes the near obliteration of the "50,000," formerly "over 80,000,"[77] by depicting Jewish Salonica as a site of memory of long cross-cultural exchange, a historical layering of coexistence—and its termination—within different imperial geographies.

Roth's essay has received very little attention. This is both in accordance with the overshadowing of Salonican Jewish experience of the Holocaust, with the emphasis on Ashkenazi Jewish experience rather than Sephardi, and also indicates Roth's devaluation in Jewish studies, even in material devoted to the Sephardim. Roth's essay receives just one brief mention in the books on Salonican Jews, in the most recent, by Naar: "Roth recoiled at the sight of the Torah scroll cut into pieces to serve as soles for shoes."[78] (That Roth remains unindexed in Naar's book—and not mentioned in Mazower's touchstone transcultural history of

74 Mazower, *Salonica, City of Ghosts*, 443.

75 Mazower, *Salonica, City of Ghosts*, 456.

76 Lewkowicz, *The Jewish Community of Salonika*, 59.

77 Roth, "Last Days."

78 Naar, *Jewish Salonica*, 277.

Salonica[79]—symptomatizes the continuous elision of Roth as significant source). There has been no analysis of Roth's *Commentary* essay, and his *Jewish Chronicle* reports go entirely unmentioned. And so, as Roth's essay stakes a claim to a kind of firstness, this section of my essay marks the first attempt to attend to and analyse Roth's *Commentary* essay. More particularly I want to show how its vast memory scope is underwritten by connections between Holocaust, Ottoman, and Spanish memories; how this network of memories underlies Roth's attachment to Salonica; and how these connections in turn support his attraction to Sephardic culture.

As suggested by its subtitle, "What Happened to a 450-year-Old Civilisation," Roth's *Commentary* essay responds to the half-millennial historical significance of Salonican Jewry. The essay amplifies the ancient status of Jews in Salonica, in order to tell a more extensive story, both historically longer and geographically wider in scope. Before giving an account of the Holocaust, in his opening summary Roth traces the history of Salonican Jewry, far back before the Holocaust, under the Ottoman Empire, and before the Ottoman Empire, to the expulsion of the Sephardim from Spain in the fifteenth century, and indeed even back to the early Christian and classical period. Roth works hard to establish the pre-eminence, and indeed pre-existence, of Salonican Jewry, depicting Salonica as a site of Jewish memory sustained within a larger, cross-faith and cross-cultural context: "When Paul of Tarsus visited Salonica, in the year 50 CE, he found there a strong Jewish community," and he even preached in the synagogue on Sabbaths.[80] Roth underlines the age and continuity of Jewish life in Salonica. Even during Paul's time, "The community's history may already have gone back some generations; afterwards, certainly, it was uninterrupted down to modern times"; "Down to the beginning of the 20th century, the picture remained almost unchanged."[81] The history is so intact and vital in Roth's essay that it embodies cultural memory as an ongoing practice of transcultural adjustment. He claims that, until almost the time of his writing, in 1950, no ships in Salonica were allowed to unload on the Sabbath; such was the recognition of, and respect for, the contribution of the Jewish presence to Salonica.

Interestingly, this was one of the several facts that Roth got wrong, or at least here, out of date. In the Hellenization of the city following the ending of the Ottoman Empire, during the interwar period well before the Nazis, the Salonican municipality forced out all Jews working in the port. As part of this programme, Greek state legislation made Sunday—and not the

79 Mazower, *Salonica, City of Ghosts*.

80 Roth, "Last Days."

81 Roth, "Last Days."

Jewish Sabbath as it had been before the First World War—the official day of rest for business.[82] Roth's larger and wider narrative scope seems to cost some historical precision and accuracy. Yet the error is revealing of both his general approach as a memory studies-orientated historian, and his specific goals for this rendition of Jewish Salonica for a popular audience expecting to impute culpability to the Nazis in this extension of the story of the Holocaust. Namely, Roth's overemphasis on the longevity, integration, and incorporation of Sephardic cultural memory will make his subsequent account of how the Nazis nearly destroyed this sustained memory of the Sephardim in Salonica—the substance of his essay—much more dramatic, poignant, and affective.

Size also mattered to Roth's view of Salonica as significant. He noted both the comparatively substantial size of the city and the large, but decreasing, number of its Jews: "On the eve of World War II, Salonica, Greece's third largest city, had a Jewish population of 240,000; compared to the past this represented a sharp decline for what was traditionally a Jewish city. The ancient intellectual pre-eminence had waned somewhat."[83] Thus Salonica's importance is due not simply to size but also to its symbolic function. As with the cemetery, which now comes to seem a symbol within the symbol of Salonica, Roth understands Ottoman-period Salonica as the centre, and the defining and essential part of, Sephardic Jewry; but also, as what had definitively most remained of the Sephardim, a site of memory removed and relocated from Spain to the Ottoman Empire. Ottoman Jewish Salonica comprised a representative cross-section of Sephardim that remained unchanged. Attached to the famous synagogues and academies, there were rabbis and scholars, and the Jews "controlled trade and industry."[84] But "the bulk of the community were, as their ancestors had been, peddlers, craftsmen, and manual laborers," and Jews also made up the city's "artisans, the fishermen, the stevedores, and the harbour workers."[85] Roth suggests pre-Second World War Salonican Jewry as a preservation of an ideal and harmonious community: "Economically, the Jewish community was well balanced. Certainly, there was here no excessive proportion of professional men. […] There were now no great fortunes."[86]

This is another inaccurate description. In the most recent history of Salonica, which works with multiple local archives' historical sources,

82 Fleming, *Greece*, 84–85.

83 Roth, "Last Days."

84 Roth, "Last Days."

85 Roth, "Last Days."

86 Roth, "Last Days."

Naar cites a census of 1934 that raises this estimation of the social status of the community, with the majority being made up of "middle-class professionals and small businessmen," while "successful merchants" and "unskilled labourers" were in the minority.[87] Roth's depreciation and levelling out of wealth serve again to produce a single and simple story about the emergence of anti-Semitism: namely, it underlines that there were absolutely no grounds for the anti-Semitic paranoia fomented by the Nazis about Jewish financial control and political influence. Countering Nazi propaganda, Roth paints a reverse picture, using what might be thought of as a rhetorical version of poetic licence (fictionalizing from fact in order to produce intended effect).

Indeed, if Roth slips over a few historical and demographic details on Salonica before the Nazis arrived, his account of old-fashioned labouring Jewish life takes the form of the picturesque, a word he draws on twice in the essay in this context—"old-established, picturesque, hard-working Jewish masses"[88]—and that Roth used elsewhere himself to classify his more popular historical writings.[89] At this point, in practising his methodological goal to render history "in a readable and intelligible form,"[90] Roth moves away from historical authenticity to what we might call authenticity of the image or the imagination. In her essay "Site of Memory," novelist Toni Morrison writes of using the same kind of device in her fiction, as she builds each of her novels around an image to produce a historical truth that is not factual but associated with feelings, which she calls "emotional memory."[91] To describe her historically imaginative mode, her fiction as site of memory, Morrison uses the word "picture": "my reliance on the image—on the remains—in addition to recollection, to yield up a kind of a truth. By 'image,' of course, I don't mean 'symbol'; I simply mean 'picture' and the feelings that accompany the picture."[92] The "picturesque" might be understood as a form of representation that puts the image centre-ground and that suggests, sentimentally or romantically but certainly evocatively, the persistence or continuity of the picture.

87 Naar, *Jewish Salonica*, 42.

88 Roth, "Last Days."

89 Roth, *Personalities and Events in Jewish History*, v.

90 Roth, "Jewish History for Our Own Needs," 431.

91 Morrison, "Site of Memory," 198.

92 Morrison, "Site of Memory," 192.

For Roth, in his imagination of Sephardic Salonica, until the war, "the picture remained almost unchanged."[93]

According to Roth, it was this unchanging picture, this imaginable crystallization of transposed pluralistic Sephardic identity, culture, and memory that the Nazis attacked. At the start of the occupation in 1941, one of the first things the Nazis did was to close down the *Messagero*, as the only "Judeo-Spanish daily paper," the democratic mouthpiece of the Ladino-language—transplanted Jewish Spanish—community.[94] It is significant that Roth's discussion of the Ladino daily itself appears in the magazine set up by American Jews in the last year of the Second World War: to all intents and purposes a marker of continued Jewish engagement in a largely pluralistic and democratic context. In *Commentary*, Roth seems to be writing in a paper that, at this point, bears comparison with that Salonican paper shut down by the Nazis. There is an emotional resonance in his defence of press democracy.

And yet there are also key differences in these press titles, which help to further our understanding of the context of, and audience for, Roth's developing representation of Salonica. *Commentary* quickly went beyond its American Jewish Committee-sponsored intentions of focusing centrally on Jewish culture to become, from the mid-1940s, just a few years before Roth's essay, not only a mouthpiece but, as Abrams argues, a prime mover in shaping the US's anti-communist stance, increasingly addressed to a still-ecumenical, but now conservative, audience.[95] The *Messagero,* on the other hand, even while written for and by the "literate elites"—as Naar sums up the catchment of all of the local Salonican papers that form a key research seam in his study of Jewish Salonica—remained an imprint rigorously focused on Jewish concerns.[96] Moreover, the *Messagero* was necessarily restricted in its readership to the Ladino-speaking community, in a way that *Commentary*, written in English, was not restricted to a Jewish-language audience. The *Messagero*'s readers and writers in their turn represented a minority increasingly threatened with destruction in a rapidly unfurling anti-Semitic national (Greek), and then genocidal imperial (German), context. In *Commentary*, then, Roth's nostalgia for what this minority in Salonica represented—an island of refuge for persecuted Jews fleeing one totalitarian empire (Spain under the Inquisition) for their

93 Roth, "Last Days."

94 Roth, "Last Days."

95 Abrams, *Norman Podhoretz and Commentary Magazine*.

96 Naar, *Jewish Salonica*, 16.

descendants to end up in another totalitarian empire (German National Socialist)—has additional resonance in, and certainly does not contradict, *Commentary*'s increasingly anti-communist, anti-Soviet, and dominant neoconservative stance.

With more time and distance to reflect on the war in Salonica also, Roth strikes a much more melancholic tone in his *Commentary* essay than in his *Jewish Chronicle* reports. The act of stringing together different catastrophes of anti-Semitism under different empires, which makes the losses of the Holocaust that much more symbolic and affective, renders it hard for Roth to avoid succumbing to very theme for Jewish history he sought to set his work against, that of lachrymosity. Here, in *Commentary*, he writes,

> all that Salonican Jewry had stood for – that strange island of 15th-century Spain in a setting of 20th-century Greece – is gone forever. With it has gone, unnoticed and unlamented, the cultural environment which made the city for so long a center of interest for philologists, historians, folklorists, and lovers of the picturesque. It is not only a community that has been annihilated, but also a way of life.[97]

"[A]ll that Salonican Jewry had stood for," in Roth's figurative or indexical conception, in other words all it had functioned as an image or symbol of, was not simply the long and continuous history of Salonican Jewry, or Ottoman Jewry, or even Sephardic Jewry. "Salonica" also stood for the cultural practices (including language of interest to philologists), memories and life, and the state contexts, that allowed Jews to thrive alongside other communities. "[T]hat strange island of 15th-century Spain in a setting of 20th-century Greece": this site is a topographical, transhistorical, and indeed trans-imperial transportation of Sephardic memory.

Near the beginning of his *Commentary* essay, Roth identifies the significance of Salonica on the eve of the Second World War through what it held for historians, collectors—memory studies scholars, we might say, especially of transcultural memory. Early twentieth-century Salonica enables visitors to become anthropologists, effectively time-travelling to pre-Inquisition Spain, or *Sepharad*:

> Moreover, the city was still a happy hunting ground for Spanish philologists and scholars, anxious to trace, in the speech of the descendants of the exiles of 1492, the authentic accent and folklore

97 Roth, "Last Days."

> of 15th-century Castile; and the old folk still paraded along the quayside on a Sabbath afternoon in medieval Spanish costume.[98]

Roth draws repeatedly on such instances of the picturesque and the image:

> The fashions, the habits, the dishes, the languages, the costumes, and even the lullabies of Toledo and Seville [significant Judeo-Spanish cities] as they had existed in the age of Ferdinand and Isabella, were incongruously perpetuated, generation after generation. [99]

The effect is to suggest that Salonican Jewish cultural practices comprised memories of early-modern Spanish-inflected existence historically intact in the twentieth-century Ottoman, and immediately post-Ottoman, Empire. The picturesque, then, serves to construct the sense of an unbroken transhistorical and transcultural world, and a feeling of terrible loss at the destruction of this world in the Holocaust.

Roth notes at the end of the essay, with a mixture of tones at once mournful and hopeful, that even now during his visit, when the Jews of Salonica have all but disappeared as a presence in the city, a symbol of their transcultural practice survives. This cultural symbol takes the form of a Sephardic Sabbath food, and the Ladino/Spanish name for it, now a Greek street food: "But a Greek hawker in the street was selling eggs cooked in the traditional Sephardic sabbatical fashion, *huevos enjaminados* [oven-roasted eggs], now become a local delicacy. Jewish life had been all but exterminated, but this relic of the Jewish cuisine curiously survived."[100] So much was Salonican Jewry the transcultural site of memory of pre-Inquisition Spain that Roth claims that Columbus (who Roth believed was "descended from Spanish Jews converted to Christianity")[101] would have been more at home in Salonica than in Palos, the port of Spain from which he set sail for the Americas. The site of Holocaust memory Roth visits in Salonica just after the Second World War, then, was underlain by the site of memory of pre-Inquisition Spain.

The conception of Salonican Jewry as the memory of Sephardi Jewry rests on a sense of the Ottoman Empire as supporting minority cultural autonomy and cultural exchange within the structures of empire. Roth conveys a pluralist model of the Ottoman Empire both in his *Commentary* essay and in all his

98 Roth, "Last Days."

99 Roth, "Last Days."

100 Roth, "Last Days."

101 Cecil Roth, "Who was Columbus?," in Cecil Roth, *Personalities and Events in Jewish History* (Philadelphia: The Jewish Publication Society of America, 1961), 211. See also Cecil Roth, *A History of the Marranos* (New York: Meridian Books, 1959), 106.

writings touching on the Empire. Roth thus holds up repeatedly in his work this picturesque image of Salonica under the Ottoman Empire as an island of refuge and flourishing for Sephardi Jews expelled from the Spanish Empire. Indeed, the tropes of Jewish thriving in the Ottoman port, of cross-cultural harmony (such as ships not being able to unload on Saturdays) are so recurrent as to form Salonica as one of Roth's *idées fixes*. He even manages to shoehorn this evocation of Salonica under the Ottoman Empire into *A Short History of the Jewish People*:

> The Jewish people must always recall the Turkish Empire with gratitude because, at one of the darkest hours of their history, when no alternative place of refuge was open and there seemed no chance of succour, it flung open its doors widely and generously for the reception of the fugitives, and kept them open.[102]

Space will not allow me here to test out fully the truth of Roth's assumption, but such idealism about the Ottoman Empire as extending an altruistic welcome towards its Jewish subjects has since been challenged by historians of Ottoman Jewry.[103]

For Roth, Ottoman transculturalism seems to have consisted of, first, a broad-brush ideal of folk complementarity between ethnic groups: "The Turks were soldiers and peasants, uninterested in trade and inexpert in handicrafts. The Jews were merchants and craftsmen, long excluded from the land and inexpert in war. Hence the two peoples were in a sense complementary."[104] Second, Roth celebrates the Ottoman Empire, here as elsewhere in his work, particularly for accepting—welcoming, Roth says repeatedly—the Jews expelled from Inquisition Spain. The detail in Roth's account has been much narrated and debated, sceptically interrogated and more simply celebrated, in the histories of Sephardi Jews. Roth certainly adheres to the latter, and a not-uncustomary quasi-fairy-tale retelling of the Sultan's welcome of the Jews:

> and when the Jews were expelled from Spain in 1492 the Sultan tolerantly opened the gates of his empire to them. Most of

102 Roth, *A Short History of the Jewish People*, 277. Compare also Cecil Roth, *A Bird's-Eye View of Jewish History* (Cincinnati: Union of American Hebrew Congregations, 1935), 252–256; Roth, *The Jewish Contribution to Civilisation*, 21; and from the additional chapters, written by Roth, in Lady Katie Magnus, *Outlines of Jewish History: From the Babylonian Exile to the Present Day* (New York: Myers and Co., 1931), 337–338.

103 For the most recent instance of scepticism about Ottoman transcultural ideals toward Ottoman Jews, see Julia Phillips Cohen, *Becoming Ottomans: Sephardi Jews and Imperial Citizenship in the Modern Era* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014), Cohen argues that "the story of the special Ottoman-Jewish relationship is a myth" (4).

104 Roth, "Last Days."

> them settled naturally in the seaports; and above all in Salonica, which from this time onwards was one of Europe's greatest Jewish communities—for a time, indeed, the greatest.[105]

The Ottoman Sultan's rescue of the Jews from the Inquisition, massacres, and pogroms of Christian European persecution from 1492 thus begins, in Roth's accounts, the greatness of Salonica for European Jewry, and begins it as a site of refuge.

That the Ottomans made Salonica a site of refuge for Jews is also a precedent, for Salonica comes to harbour other parts of the Jewish diaspora, first from Spain and then beyond. Roth depicts Salonica as the memorialization of a disparate, diasporized Jewry, the site of memory of successive and successful refuge-seeking of multicultural Jews: "It was a microcosm of the Jewish world. There were refugees from France, Italy, Germany, Hungary, Calabria, Apulia, Sicily, and every province and city of Spain, each group maintaining its own synagogue and congregation."[106] How Roth squares this recognition of the significance of Jewish migration from Northern Europe, including the Ashkenazim, with continuing to see Salonica as the image and symbol of pre-Inquisition Sephardic Spain is not clear—at least outside of the explanation of rhetorical poetic license. Naar's history recognizes the city as much more plural in its Jewish population, with the Sephardim from Spain being, well before the eve of the Second World War, only one among many cultural groups of Jews, including Ashkenazim.[107]

Given his idealistic view of Ottoman transculturalism, the end of the Ottoman Empire in Roth's narrative can only produce a negative impact on Salonican Jewry. Roth therefore dates "anti-Semitic agitation" from "the close of the period of Turkish [Ottoman] rule," when, in 1912, the city passed over to Greek governance and "the exchanges of population between Greece and Turkey brought about a rapid artificial expansion of the Greek population (hitherto a minority), and a forced process of Hellenization."[108] The termination of the Ottoman Empire effects the editing and revision of both history and cultural demographics. As Greek nationalism built on the myth of an ancient and continuous homogenous Greek history, "Hellenization" erases the actual transcultural past, including the definitive Jewish contribution to Salonica. It also sets a precedent

105 Roth, "Last Days."

106 Roth, "Last Days."

107 Naar, *Jewish Salonica*, 53.

108 Roth, "Last Days."

in this elision of cultural difference for the Nazis to fulfil in the Holocaust. When the Salonican Jews were deported by the Nazis, moreover, Roth writes, “with the most profound regret,” that the general, Greek population of Salonica did not intervene and instead “many did not shun a profit from the Jewish distress.”[109] While Roth singles out and relates episodes in which Salonican Greeks did help Jews, there is no doubt that his “regret” stems from his perception that the Holocaust marked the death of the transcultural complementarity and coexistence in the city that began to fail with the end of the Ottoman Empire.

Roth’s idealization of the Ottoman Empire is striking and, I would suggest, worthy of further exploration, beyond the few other examples I will provide in the next section of my essay when I consider Roth’s writings on the Sephardim more broadly for what they reveal about Salonica and transcultural memory. I will briefly say here that his own historical location must play some role in his views. Roth came of age as a historian (graduating in 1922)[110] after the end of the Ottoman Empire. With the Empire itself existing only in history and “the Turks” no longer an enemy, we can make contextual sense of Roth’s Ottoman nostalgia.[111] Moreover, throughout his early academic life, the danger for Jews and other minorities came from Western Europe—as during the Inquisition—and the East apparently offered refuge from persecution. It is notable that Roth makes no mention of and nowhere pays any attention to the genocide of the Armenians that took place at the end of the Ottoman Empire, a particularly conspicuous absence in light of his attention to the Holocaust and his highly euphemistic mention of “the exchanges of population.” This omission is, however, consistent with Roth’s idealization of “Turkey’s” inherent transculturalism and his nostalgic view of the Ottoman Empire.

In Roth’s essay, then, the end of the Ottoman Empire seems to return Salonica’s Sephardim to conditions that compelled them to seek refuge in the Empire in the first place: that is, an ideology of homogenous nationalization and the assumption of Christianity, albeit now in 1912 Greece, rather than in 1492 Spain. This joining of historically disparate

109 Roth, “Last Days.” On Greek anti-Semitism before, during, and after the Holocaust, see especially Antoniou and Moses, eds., *The Holocaust in Greece*, and Fleming, *Greece: A Jewish History*.

110 “Roth, Cecil,” *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*.

111 “Ottoman nostalgia” is a much more recent coinage, born in good part to describe the recent direction of Turkish politics and cultural representation. See for instance David Shariatmadari, “Middle East Turmoil is Fuelling Ottoman Nostalgia,” *The Guardian*, October 6, 2013, accessed May 18, 2019, https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2013/oct/06/middle-east-turmoil-nostalgia-ottomans.

and geographically dispersed events, an approach to time and space that works in thematic overlay rather than chronological sequence or topographical proximity, is key to Roth's imaginatively driven, affective, transcultural memory studies approach. It draws Roth's work close to the realm of "zahkor," or Jewish memory, and away from historiography, as these two terms and traditions were distinguished by late twentieth-century Jewish historian Yosef Yerushalmi. [112] According to Yerushalmi, in *zakhor*, or Jewish memory, the past is understood as the recurrence of archetypes, with the effect that historical specificities are lost to ongoing poetic themes. The repetition of catastrophes that brings together both dates and locations is a strong feature of this tradition of Jewish memory, which resists historiography's linear narrative of singular events. As Yerushalmi writes, "Memory here is no longer recollection, which still preserves a sense of distance, but reactualization."[113] In an instance of this schema, in the preface to his 1937 book *The Spanish Inquisition*, Roth states that history repeats itself in different locales: "The Spanish Inquisition was until yesterday an antiquarian diversion. The events of the past few years, and above all the past few months, have converted it into a dreadful warning."[114] However, while Yerushalmi sees the Spanish Inquisition as an attempted break with the tradition of Jewish memory and the beginnings of a more linear Jewish historiography, for Roth the Spanish Inquisition is a very powerful recurrent trope—including, crucially, when he comes to write on post-Holocaust Salonica.

Roth's temporal parallelism between the Holocaust and the Spanish Inquisition appears at various points in the *Commentary* essay, where its effect is to idealize the Ottoman Empire further. In telling the story of the final deportations of Jews from Salonica to the German death camps by train in 1943, Roth joins this moment, in a chiasmic inversion, with the miraculous salvation from Spain in 1492:

> Four hundred and fifty-one years before, their ancestors had been the victims of one of the greatest tragedies in the history of medieval Europe when they had been driven out of Spain, hoping in vain

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112 Yosef Hayim Yerushalmi, *Zakhor: Jewish History and Memory* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1996).

113 Yerusahalmi, *Zakhor*, 44. There is more work to be done on the several ways in which Roth pre-empts Yerushalmi's schema for Jewish memory. Roth is not mentioned in *Zakhor*, contrasting with the attention the book gives to Baron, among other signal Jewish historians. It is not insignificant, perhaps, that Yerushalmi was a student of Baron, Roth's rival, and inherited Baron's chair, renamed, in Baron's honour, the Salo Wittmayer Baron Professor of Jewish History, Culture and Society at Columbia University.

114 Cecil Roth, *The Spanish Inquisition* (London: Robert Hale, 1937), vii.

> for a miracle that would save them at the last moment. Now an age had come when miracles were no longer even hoped for.[115]

In another example of chiasmic inversion of times and regimes, when he relates the details of the beginning of the deportation, in the summer of 1942, Roth again sets up the Ottoman Empire as the blessed but expired counterbalance of the Nazi regime:

> orders were issued for all adult male Jews […] to present themselves to be enrolled for forced labour at Liberty Square, where in 1908 the Young Turks had proclaimed the new regime for all the peoples of the Ottoman Empire – fraternity between Jews, Muslims, Greeks and so on, under the ideal of Ottomanism.[116]

The location of the Nazis' anti-Semitic round-ups is in Roth's writing revealed as an ironic site of memory for the transcultural ideals of lost "Ottomanism." Precisely in this upholding of the Ottoman Empire as a transcultural ideal for all communities, Roth's valuing of the Ottoman Empire here distinguishes his work from the Jewish memory identified by Yerushalmi, since *zakhor* is distinctively and homogenously Jewish "collective memory."[117]

The effect of this overlaying of times and places, what we might call Roth's transcultural Jewish memory work, is irony, poignancy, and affect. It serves not only to relate a much longer and much larger history than what took place in Salonica during the Holocaust, but also to insert emotion into the telling of history. In this way, Roth's approach is close to Morrison's "emotional memory,"[118] and also shares common ground with Morrison's related term, "rememory." "Rememory" comprises memories that embody the emotional dimension of traumatic historical events. The prefix suggests the endless repetition and presence of memories. As Morrison defines it, "rememory" captures those memories that do not "pass on," but instead that are still there, in the places where they happened, and can be encountered and felt, even by those who did not experience them first hand.[119] More than Morrison, however, Roth collides places as well as times, building a network out of different

115 Roth, "Last Days."

116 Roth, "Last Days." The 1908 Liberty Square event is discussed in Mazower, *Salonica, City of Ghosts*, 275.

117 Yerushalmi, *Zakhor*, passim.

118 Morrison, "The Site of Memory," 99.

119 Toni Morrison, *Beloved* (New York: Penguin, 1991), 44.

sites of memory where the events seem to echo each other. The Spanish Inquisition appears to Roth in his visit to Salonica as rememory in the Holocaust, a catastrophe that has not "passed on," and the Shoah ("catastrophe") is in turn a horrible emotional memory of the Inquisition. The Ottoman Empire's welcome of Sephardi Jews is as much paired and contrasted with the events that follow it, the Holocaust, as it is with those that preceded it, the Iberian Expulsion. Roth's transcultural memory work shows us the imagistic, narrative, thematic, and affective connection of historically and geographically dispersed events, collapsing chronological history and eliding discrete national, and even imperial, borders. In these connections based on image, narrative, theme, and affect, Roth's work on Salonica becomes in itself novelistic, or at least more transcultural memory studies, rather than documentary or historical.

On "the last days" of Jewish Salonica, Roth's approach in his *Commentary* essay is to interweave events from the Holocaust with other historical anti-Semitic events in addition to those from the Inquisition. Again these present the Ottoman Empire as a space of acceptance and rescue, a symbolic inversion of transhistorical anti-Semitism. In 1943, deportations took place from the Hirsch quarter of Salonica, which, continuous with the Ottoman Sultan's welcome of the Jews from Spain in the fifteenth century, had, at the end of the nineteenth century, welcomed Jews fleeing Eastern Europe. Roth's syntax underlines the parallels and the ironies—the historical palindromes—of the Holocaust as a symbolic antithesis of these earlier, Ottoman events: "Some half-century before, the charitable Baron de Hirsch had paid for the construction near the railway station of a number of little houses, to give shelter to Jewish refugees from the Russian pogroms. This was to be the scene of the final tragedy."[120] The space of the Ottoman quarter, Jewish and otherwise, is also transformed and inverted under the Holocaust: from unpoliced and not strictly bordered, now to fenced in, with searchlights and machine guns, a "ghetto in a fuller sense," similar to those the Nazis had created in Eastern Europe, in Warsaw, for instance.[121] Roth's unpublished papers concerning Salonica[122] reveal that he had been briefed by the regional director for Salonica of the American Joint Distribution Committee, also a member of the Central Board of the Jewish Communities of Greece, that Salonica under the German Occupation was a historical volte-face of Ottoman Salonica. Under the Ottoman Empire, Jews were organized into self-governing communities. There was no anti-Semitism,

120 Roth, "Last Days."

121 Roth, "Last Days."

122 Cecil Roth, Salonica papers, Cecil Roth Collection, University of Leeds Library. I am currently completing research on Roth's unpublished Salonica papers.

a memorandum to Roth in his papers claims; yet "the seeds of anti-Semitism planted by the Germans are now bearing fruit all over Europe and even in Greece."[123] In his *Commentary* essay, where his point is the contrast between the welcome of the Jews by the Ottoman Empire, Roth passes over any Greek responsibility of the destruction of the cemetery, so loyal was he to his ideal of Ottoman and even post-Ottoman transculturalism. Yet as Roth well knew and as his unpublished papers in fact document, the seeds of anti-Semitism were planted before the Germans arrived, with the dismantling of the Jewish cemetery in Salonica begun by the Greeks in the 1920s. In his *Jewish Chronicle* reports Roth only implicitly addresses Greek anti-Semitism post-Holocaust, evident in the continued destruction of the cemetery and the erasure of Jewish memory from the city after the war. Here, in *Commentary* also, any detailed account of Greek anti-Semitism in the Holocaust is left out, since it would complicate his neat symbolic contrast between culturally inclusive Ottoman Salonica and the segregationist Nazi occupation.

Roth notes that Salonica's place in history, and particularly Jewish history, was recognized even by the Nazis. But the Nazis were bad historians of Jews in the Near East, since they distorted history, nationalizing it, engaging in a form of assimilation of cultural difference. The Nazis "looked at everything from the point of view of German history," he writes, and they failed to understand the Ottoman Empire.[124] While this is surely another simplification and generalization, Roth suggests that because they did not see or value transculturalism, the Germans did not see the reality of the Ottoman Empire, which was, in Roth's optimistic conception, built on transculturalism. The Nazis' historical revisionism thus becomes equivalent to the Greeks' "Hellenization," and in contrast to "Ottomanism." Roth singles out the Nazis' misunderstanding of the Ottomans' non-ghettoization of Jews as a particular misrepresentation of Salonican Jewish history.

> They were making frenzied inquiries into the exact position of the ghetto that they assumed had once existed in Salonica, and seemed disappointed when they discovered that in this quasi-Jewish city, which had formed part of the tolerant Turkish Empire, there had never been (and indeed could not have been) anything of the sort. Why this exaggerated antiquarian interest? The reason was very soon to become apparent.[125]

123 Alfred H. Cohen, Memorandum on the need for combating manifestations of anti-Semitism in Greece, April 1, 1947. Cecil Roth Collection, University of Leeds Library.

124 Roth, "Last Days."

125 Roth, "Last Days."

A better historian of the Ottoman Empire than the Germans he writes about, Roth suggests that in contrast he understood the "tolerant" Ottoman Empire, in particular here, the porous, autonomous millet-system quarter organization of Ottoman cities on which he knew at least in ideals the Ottoman Empire was based—hence the parenthetical "indeed could not have been." It was these autonomous, culturally porous building blocks of the Ottoman Empire that the Nazis transformed into culturally segregating and imprisoning ghettos: "There was no longer any question of these districts being autonomous units; they were obviously intended only as prisons or condemned cells, pending the execution of sentence."[126] Roth was drawn to any evidence he found of the Ottoman Empire as transcultural, indeed to the extent that he was willing to state that Salonica was not Jewish but "quasi-Jewish."

Based on his *Jewish Chronicle* reports from the ground of post-Holocaust Salonica, we have already evaluated Roth's contribution to the history of the Salonican Jewish community, above all as an attempt to intervene and save it at the moment of its greatest catastrophe, and we have situated Roth in Jewish historiography. But what might be said of Roth's contribution to Salonican Jewish historiography—that is to the body of writings specifically on Salonican Jewish history? While it could be shown that Roth borrowed from local Salonican historians, one of whom, Michael Molho, accompanied him on his visit to the cemetery and with whom he kept up a correspondence after his visit to Salonica, Roth's emphasis on transcultural and transhistorical memory in historiography again seems pronounced and prescient.[127] Until very recently—the last decade—contemporary historians have noted, Salonican Jewish history was "almost a taboo subject."[128] From very early on, indeed from his first popular historical work in the 1930s, Roth's writings broke that taboo repeatedly.

Beginning in the nineteenth century, Jewish historiography at large marginalized the study of the Sephardim, and, as I have suggested, in spite of recent additions, continues to do so, with the expected detrimental effects on the study of Salonican Jewish history.[129] German-originating in the work of Graetz and continuing as Eurocentric as Roth himself had suggested in his early essay on historiography discussing Graetz and Dubnov, the study of Jewish history in Western Europe sought to "Europeanise" the

126 Roth, "Last Days."

127 Naar mentions that Roth's work was read by at least another Salonican Jewish local historian—and that Roth in turn read this historian's work—in his chapter on Salonican Jewish historiography, "Paving the Way for Better Days," *Jewish Salonica*, 189–238.

128 Rena Molho, *Salonica and Istanbul*, 9.

129 Aron Rodrigue, "Salonica in Jewish Historiography," *Jewish History* 28 (2014): 439–447.

Sephardim.[130] Historians in the West depicted the Sephardi exodus to the Ottoman Empire following expulsion from the Iberian Peninsula as the beginning of a tragedy and the Ottoman Empire as a "Jewish dark age."[131] For Roth, the decline of the Sephardim was threatened by the end of the Ottoman Empire, under nationalism in Greece, and then under the Nazi Occupation, rather than the post-Inquisition Expulsion to the Ottoman Empire and the attendant deracination from Spanish culture. Beyond Roth, Western historiographical perspectives on the Ottoman Empire were thus strongly Orientalist. In their turn, in accordance with history itself once the city became part of Greece following the Ottoman Empire, "Greek historians have engaged in a systematic effort to hellenize [Salonica's] history."[132] On all sides, therefore, historical writings valued cultural homogenization. Roth in contrast, critical of nationalism and the forgetting of cultural and historical heterogeneity, has much in common with contemporary historians' calls for the *future* direction of writings on Jewish Salonica: "Salonica's Jewish history demands a field of inquiry that is not circumscribed by the contours of local history but, more interestingly and ambitiously, is also open to the interactions between the local and the general."[133] Writing in the West and inheriting the Germanic tradition of Jewish historiography, Roth in his representation of Jewish Salonica from 1946–1950 is nevertheless in this regard a precedent for historical writings today.

Roth, too, opposes what he condemns as his historiographical predecessors' "impression that Jewish history took place in a vacuum, because they are ignorant of the very atmosphere of the external world in which it was enacted."[134] His valuing of non-exclusive or non-exceptional Jewishness will powerfully shape his attraction to the Sephardim generally, both in relation to Salonica, and beyond, as I will show in the next section.

4. "[A]mple contributions": Roth on the Sephardim

Roth's later work on the Sephardim produces sometimes uncanny parallels between the Second World War and the Inquisition. Even if Roth does not explicitly make the connection as he does in his preface to *The Spanish Inquisition*, his rendering of details, and sometimes also the dates of his

130 Roth, "Jewish History for Our Own Needs."

131 Devin E. Naar, "Fashioning the 'Mother of Israel': The Ottoman Jewish Historical Narrative and the Image of Jewish Salonica Jewish History," *Jewish History* 28 (2014): 344.

132 Anthony Molho, "Introduction," *Jewish History* 28 (2014): 252–253.

133 Anthony Molho, "Introduction," 258.

134 Roth, "Jewish History for Our Own Needs," 427.

research and publication, sets up the relationship between the separate catastrophes as repetitive, memorial. In a 1967 essay, Roth analyses an elegy recording the anti-Semitic attacks and massacre of the Jews of Toledo in 1391. Using the term "catastrophe" here for the persecution leading up to the Spanish Inquisition—*Shoah*, an alternative, Jewish name for the Holocaust, is Hebrew for "catastrophe"—Roth's summary details: slaughter, including *auto-da-fé* (in order to pre-empt even more horrific anti-Semitic attack) by other Jews; conversion or concealment of Judaism; and attacks on the symbols of Judaism.

> The first victims included the eminent Rabbi Isaac and R. Judah (who previously slew his wife and children) […]. Other martyrs were R. Israel the Singer and a certain Hazan named Saul, who committed suicide, as did his brother Solomon […]. The youth Abraham ben Ophrit was stoned and his body flung into the river […]. Synagogues were desecrated […]. The pitiful state of the survivors, forced to dissemble their faith […]. [T]he desecration of the Torah.[135]

Published and presumably also written in the wake of the 1961–1962 Eichmann trial that was a key trigger in developing "Holocaust consciousness,"[136] the essay cannot help but suggest a historically travelling relationship between Holocaust and Inquisition, the former a horrible quincentennial memory of the latter, the latter carried over, to be repeated traumatically in the former. And Roth's scholarship, too, appears prefigured, or continues a memorial tradition and a tradition of memorialization, here of a chain of tradition in Jewish memory—of "zakhor": his work on Salonica, and on the Sephardim, is in the canon of this fourteenth-century Jewish elegy that he analyses.

As might be guessed from his criticisms of his historiographical predecessors for their omission or minimization of the Sephardim, Roth's interest in Sephardi Jewry was long-standing and profound, shaping his professional and intellectual choices as a collector and a scholar. Material related to Sephardim makes up a substantial proportion of his Judaica collection and the Sephardim are a recurrent subject of his writing. As Roth himself reflected, in an essay devoted to the Sephardim published also in *Commentary* a few years after his Salonica piece, "I have made rather more ample contributions to Sephardi history than the average historical

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135 Cecil Roth, "A Hebrew Elegy on the Martyrs of Toledo, 1391" in Cecil Roth, *Gleanings: Essays in Jewish History, Letters and Art* (New York: Hermon Press, 1967), 93–94.

136 Rothberg, *Traumatic Realism*, 46.

scribbler."[137] In fact Roth's work on the Sephardim, on Ottoman Jews, and on *Mizrahim* too—Jews from the Middle East—amounts to a significant contribution to non-Ashkenazi Jewish studies at a time when, as Roth himself wrote: "the history of the Jews in Turkey and the Near East has as yet, [sic] been inadequately explored."[138] As has been charted lately, there were in fact scholars before Roth who pioneered the study and historiography of the Sephardim.[139] However, most often they originated from and/or settled in the Ottoman or post-Ottoman Empire and therefore wrote in languages other than English—Hebrew, Spanish/Ladino, French, Italian, and Turkish especially. Roth does not acknowledge these scholars, and we sense that, even though Roth was highly proficient in the first four of these languages, he thinks of himself as making key contributions *in English* to the study of Sephardim. While Roth's baton for work on "Jews in Turkey and the Near East" has undoubtedly passed to later scholars, Roth was, therefore, one of the first English-speaking authors to recognize the key role of Jews in the Ottoman Empire, a field that is now considerably burgeoning.[140] He remains one of very few to see those Jews as trans-imperial subjects connecting the Ottoman and British Empires.[141] In this part of my essay, I explore Roth's interest in the Sephardim in other of his writings to reveal how, in his conception, the Sephardim bore a unique connection to transcultural memory, a connection that is the key basis for Roth's attraction to Salonica.

If all his life Roth wanted to visit Salonica, as he confessed early on in the *Jewish Chronicle*, it is in good part because his investment in Sephardic

137 Cecil Roth, "Were the Sephardim Hidalgos? History Disputes Their Claim to Aristocracy," *Commentary*, August 1, 1955, accessed March 3, 2018, https://www.commentarymagazine.com/articles/were-the-sephardim-hidalgoshistory-disputes-their-claim-to-aristocracy/.

138 Cecil Roth, "Salusque Lusitano (An Essay in Disentanglement)," *Jewish Quarterly Review* 34, no. 1 (July 1943): 65–85, reprinted in Roth, *Gleanings*, 199.

139 See Julia Philips Cohen and Sarah Abrevaya Stein, "Sephardic Scholarly Worlds: Toward a Novel Geography of Modern Jewish History," *Jewish Quarterly Review* 100, no. 3 (Summer 2010): 349–384.

140 A roll call of scholars writing in English on Ottoman Jewish history would certainly include Norman Stillman, Stanford Shaw, and Avigdor Levy. See Norman A Stillman, *The Jews of Arab Lands: A History and Sourcebook* (Philadelphia: Jewish Publication Society, 1979); Norman A. Stillman, ed., *Encyclopedia of Jews in the Islamic World*, accessed March 17, 2019, https://referenceworks.brillonline.com/browse/encyclopedia-of-jews-in-the-islamic-world; Stanford J. Shaw, *The Jews of the Ottoman Empire and the Turkish Republic* (London: Macmillan 1991); Avigdor Levy, ed., *The Jews of the Ottoman Empire* (Princeton: Darwin Press, 1994); Avigdor Levy, ed., *Jews, Turks, and Ottomans: A Shared History* (Syracuse: Syracuse University Press, 2002). Other notable contributions include Bernard Lewis, *The Jews of Islam* (Princeton: Princeton University Press 1984) and, more recently, Cohen, *Becoming Ottomans*.

141 Roth, "Salusque Lusitano."

culture was profoundly religious and emotional as well as intellectual. Roth adopted a Sephardic identity for himself, against his parents' Ashkenazic practice, with which he was raised. Two decades before the Holocaust, including the catastrophe for Salonican Jews, Roth had taken on the Sephardic liturgy and other Sephardic religious practices and had attended Sephardic synagogues. In effect, Roth translated, or transculturated, from the Ashkenazi heritage on his mother's and father's side to Sephardi. In so doing he was returning to an older, albeit mythological, family memory. As Irene Roth writes in her memoir of her husband's intra-Jewish transcultural translation: "Cecil had been raised in a tradition closely akin to the East European Jewish ritual," his mother having been born in Sheffield, his father's records showing a forebear born in Kalisz, Poland.[142]

This new adoption in fact remembered an imagined old genealogy. Part of the family lore about the paternal line was that the Roths were descended from Joseph Caro, the sixteenth-century Sephardic author of *Shulchan Arukh*, or the code of Jewish law. *Shulchan Arukh* turns out to be the book that Salonican rabbis had used to argue against the destruction of the Jewish cemetery in Salonica, first in 1920s, at the moment of Roth's Jewish–Jewish, Ashkenazi–Sephardi "conversion."[143] Thoroughly versed in Salonican history, Roth cannot have been unaware of this familial connection to Salonica and to the preservation of the Jewish cemetery. Irene Roth certainly conveys her husband's spiritual choices in the language of profound affective investment. In her memoir she remarks that it was while undertaking research in Florence as an Oxford undergraduate that Roth "had come to love" Sephardic liturgy and history, and further that his "involvement with the Sephardic tradition and history of Sephardic Jewry" then "continued for the rest of his life" and was both "intellectual and emotional."[144] If the Sephardim held out what, drawing on his wife's description, could be described as a kind of emotional memory for Roth, it is not surprising that from then on Roth attended Sephardic synagogues as much as he could. He became a member of the central Sephardic congregations in both London and New York—the Lauderdale Road Spanish and Portuguese Synagogue in Maida Vale, and the Shearith Israel on Central Park West.[145]

Why was Roth so drawn, personally as well as professionally and with so much emotion, to the Sephardim? This is an important question for me

142 Irene Roth, *Cecil Roth*, 16.

143 On the Salonican rabbis' deployment of the *Shulchan Arukh*, see Naar, *Jewish Salonica*, 248.

144 Irene Roth, *Cecil Roth*, 16, 53.

145 Irene Roth, *Cecil Roth*, 54–55.

here, since, as I have suggested, it is implicit, if unconscious, in Roth's early conception of Holocaust memory, as transcultural memory, in Salonica. Although a vital and engaging writer, Roth was, as his wife says, rarely emotional. He sought, as the title of her memoir on him states and, as I have indicated, he announced himself, to be—in opposition to the lachrymose framing for Jewish history he inherited—a "historian without tears." Yet his writings on the Sephardim, and especially on Salonica as I hope to have shown, are shot through with affect and, particularly in their historical and geographical parallelisms, work to reproduce an affective response of shock, dread, and loss in the reader. There may be a suspicion that Roth's intra-Jewish "conversion" was motivated by class-climbing, based on the putative status of the Sephardim as of higher class than the Ashkenazim.[146] But the later essay in *Commentary* on the Sephardim sets out precisely to dispute and instead reveal as myth the assumption of the Sephardim as of greater social rank. In answer to the question that is its title, Roth argues that Sephardim were not "Hidalgos," meaning "One of the lower nobility; a gentleman by birth."[147] Roth's essay reverses the assumption, revealing the Ashkenazim to be of purer origin and more noble. Since the Sephardim descended from Babylonian Jewry and the Ashkenazim from Palestinian Jewry, and even the Hebrew of the Ashkenazim has a direct connection back to the authentic Hebrew of Palestine, Roth argues, "It is the Ashkenazi Judaism rather than the Sephardi which preserves for good or ill the pure fountainhead of the Palestinian tradition, with all that it implies."[148] The Sephardim were, Roth goes on, in the face of Christian or Islamic persecution also more likely to choose conversion, at least ostensibly, over dying as a Jew; while the Ashkenazim were "more steadfast, to the point of death, than their southern coreligionists, who […] tended in large numbers to compromise their consciences rather than to 'sanctify the Name' by accepting martyrdom."[149] Thus, in Roth's reasoning, the Sephardim were less noble in both social class and religious practice.

Roth's essay in *Commentary* on the Sephardim instead suggests that their proclivity to transculturation, and yet retention of the many-layered sites of transcultural memory, is a distinction of the Sephardim and part of their appeal. What is emphatic is Roth's admiring view of the way

146 I am grateful to Eva Frojmovic for suggesting class as a reason for Roth's adoption of the Sephardic tradition.

147 "Hidalgo, n." *OED Online*, January 2018, Oxford University Press, accessed March 3, 2018, https://www.oed.com/view/Entry/86707.

148 Roth, "Were the Sephardim Hidalgos?"

149 Roth, "Were the Sephardim Hidalgos?"

in which, whenever and wherever they migrated—from Babylonia, which was already a place of exile for these Jews; to Spain; from Spain to the Ottoman Empire—the Sephardim survived by transporting cultural memory with them. In turn, in their migrations, the Sephardim influenced local cultures. Roth describes diasporic translation as "delocalization" and "geographical expansion," and the influence of Sephardic cultural memories on the indigenous or autochthonous in the new locale as "annexation," with the two processes linked: "This delocalization, and geographical expansion, of Sephardi Jewry was accompanied by the beginning of what may be termed a process of annexation."[150] While Roth sees a parallel in dissemination of Ashkenazim—he writes that Ashkenazim also "'Ashkenazized' (if one may use the term)" where they migrated—he holds out for the greater success of Sephardim in their influence especially, not surprisingly, in the Ottoman Empire, and again Salonica:

> With their superior relative (if not absolute) numbers, and their superior culture, they exercised an overwhelming influence on the native Jews, and on other immigrant elements, in many of the lands where they found refuge—especially in the Balkans (in particular at Salonica) and the Turkish Empire generally.[151]

Roth's term "Ashkenazized" is noteworthy, as are his scare quotes holding its literality at a distance. By using the term "Ashkenazize," Roth is describing the transformation by Eastern European Jewish immigrants of "autochthonous elements" of the cultures to which they migrated throughout Eastern Europe. The process is also crucially one of transculturation: the inflection of immigrant culture on local culture. Sephardi-zation (if this is the noun parallel for the idea that the Ashkenazim "Ashkenazized" other cultures) cannot be equivalent to Ashkenazi-zation because, according to Roth's schema, the former (Sephardim) from the start lack purity. For the same reason Sephardi-zation is even less comparable to the Hellenization which Roth had already criticized when this was enforced in Salonica in an attempt to erase the city's transcultural past. Salonica comes again to stand as the exemplar of transculturation, and the Sephardim, in the plural outlook Roth attributed to them, equivalent to his ideal of the Ottomans.

I would propose that Roth's identification of the importance of transcultural memory for the Sephardim underlay his interest in and admiration for the Marranos, about whom he also wrote extensively, including

150 Roth, "Were the Sephardim Hidalgos?"

151 Roth, "Were the Sephardim Hidalgos?"

a seminal history.[152] These crypto-Jews of Spain and Portugal were in effect former, or transculturated, Sephardim. Roth does not view the phenomenon of Marranism as the loss or assimilation of Jewish culture, as might be expected of a Jewish historian. Rather he is interested in how the Marranos, even after usually forced conversion, kept Jewish practice alive, moreover passing it on as cultural (effectively, within the disguise of Christianity, transcultural) memory: "The phenomenon of Marranism is more, however, than the commonplace occurrence of forcible conversion, followed frequently by the practice of Judaism in secret. Its essential element is that this clandestine religion is passed on from generation to generation."[153] Far from depicting this cultural translation as a tragedy, then, Roth's foreword to *A History of the Marranos* casts Marranism as "what may fairly be described as the most romantic episode in all history."[154]

What is particularly "romantic"—as emotional and imaginative as the meaning of its root word, *roman*, of course a "novel"—is transcultural memory: cultural translation but the ability to keep cultural memory alive, in a new faith/cultural or even geographical context. As Roth notes, "The submerged life which blossomed out at intervals into such exotic flowers; the unique devotion which could transmit the ancestral ideals unsullied, from generation to generation, despite the Inquisition and its horrors."[155] For this transcultural picturesque romance, Roth claims of his book in its original preface, "the interest in it will not be confined to the Jew."[156] It is therefore "an inseparable part of the stories of Spain and Portugal," and, moreover, "touches on the life of every country of Western Europe."[157] The romanticism is necessarily diminished in Roth's 1958 preface to a post-Holocaust edition, where he is now able to draw characteristic transhistorical parallels: "Pathetic parallels to Marrano history were known in Europe during the tragic period of Nazi oppression."[158] Roth's interest in the Marranos provided another connection to Ottoman Salonica, for some of these secret Jews, he writes elsewhere in his studies of the Marranos, escaped further persecution with help from other Jews—"especially in

152 Roth, *A History of the Marranos*.

153 Roth, *A History of the Marranos*, 8.

154 Roth, *A History of the Marranos*, 6.

155 Roth, *A History of the Marranos*, 6.

156 Roth, *A History of the Marranos*, 6.

157 Roth, *A History of the Marranos*, 6.

158 Roth, *A History of the Marranos*, 6. See also Cecil Roth, "Marranos and Racial Antisemitism: A Study in Parallels," *Jewish Social Studies* 2, no. 13 (1940): 239–248.

Salonica."[159] In the welcome extended in Salonica to the Marranos by the previous refugees among the Salonican Sephardim, there is a confirmation of Salonica as a site of Jewish memory, as well as of transcultural Jewish exchange, that Roth no doubt found appealing.

Although it shaped his professional interests, Roth's embrace of the Sephardim can sometimes feel like a disavowal of his Ashkenazic heritage and emotional when expressed as animus against elements of the Ashkenazic tradition. As Ivan Davidson Kalmar and Derek J. Penslar indicate, there was among significant Jewish figures, including historians, a tradition of Jewish "orientalism," which could take several forms, including not only Western oppositions to the East, but an idealization of the East involving "self-orientalising fantasies."[160] While there is no mention of Roth in this or any other context of orientalism, Jewish or otherwise, the fact that this romanticizing orientalism could travel between the professional and personal does raise questions about the extent to which Roth was part of this tradition, as described by John M. Efron:

> For many central European scholars, among them Jews, orientalism was more than a system of domination. It could be genuinely celebratory and inspirational, as orientalism sometimes entailed a valorization of the Muslim Other. For Jews, such an exercise was often tantamount to a search for roots, for authenticity, and for oriental role models. Thus, rather than a straightforward means of asserting colonial, corporeal, and cultural authority, orientalism could be a profound expression of one's own anxiety and insecurity.[161]

Certainly in relation to Salonica in his journal publications, Roth is very hard on any role the Ashkenazim played in the near loss of Salonican Jewry—the Sephardim who survived so much transculturation and diasporization and yet remembered and practised their heritage.

In "Last Days of Jewish Salonica," Roth singles out as Ashkenazi, and considers the significance of this heritage and his training, the former rabbi of Salonica: one Dr Koretz, who became the rabbi and president of the Jewish community of Salonica at the start of the German occupation. Roth is reluctant even to write about Koretz: "It is necessary to devote a few lines

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159 Cecil Roth, "Immanuel Aboab's Proselytization of the Marranos," *Jewish Quarterly Review* 23 (July 1932): 121–162, reprinted in *Gleanings*, 167.

160 Ivan Davidson Kalmar and Derek J. Penslar, "Orientalism and the Jews: An Introduction," in *Orientalism and the Jews*, eds. Kalmar and Penslar (London: New England University Press, 2005), xxxi.

161 John M. Efron, "Orientalism and the Jewish Historical Gaze," in *Orientalism and the Jews*, eds. Kalmar and Penslar, 80.

to this unhappy figure."[162] Koretz was "not a Salonican in origin," by heritage, birth, or even accommodation, Roth makes a point of saying, but "Eastern European Ashkenazi, trained in a German rabbinical seminary."[163] Again, destruction in Roth's vision seems to come from a failure of transcultural pluralism, namely Koretz's inability to maintain Salonica's pluralism in the face of German nationalism and Koretz's own assimilation of Jewish difference:

> Regarding Germany with the fundamental deference that was once universal among Eastern European Jews; brought up in that country, and imbued with veneration for its intellectual achievement; speaking German, and thus able to enter into personal contact with the occupying authorities and had tended from the first to temporize.[164]

With his belief that "by unquestioning compliance the Nazis' resentment […] might be mollified," Koretz was suspected by some surviving Salonican Jews of being "a German agent."[165]

Given that Roth did not pass judgement on the Marranos, who did convert, at least ostensibly, damnation of Koretz, who did not convert, at least ostensibly, is startling. Noting that Koretz did not survive his own eventual deportation to the camps—and that this was just as well—Roth does not withhold his utter condemnation. Survivors blamed him, and "It certainly seems that he displayed not only a deplorable weakness but also a degree of compliance that, in the circumstances, verged upon treachery."[166] In the second report appearing in the *Jewish Chronicle*, Roth declares that Koretz "showed what can only be considered at the most charitable interpretation a deplorable and almost criminal subservience."[167] Treachery, one feels sure from Roth's writing on Koretz in the context of Salonica, begins with the failure to maintain pluralistic transculturalism, assimilation into a nationalist ideal, and a will to forget. When the Nuremberg laws were implemented in Salonica and Jews were confined to specified districts and ordered to wear the yellow star, "Rabbi Koretz had obediently proclaimed to his flock, from the pulpit of the

162 Roth, "Last Days."

163 Roth, "Last Days."

164 Roth, "Last Days."

165 Roth, "Last Days."

166 Roth, "Last Days."

167 Roth, "Greece, 1946 – Impressions on a Tour (1)," 11.

synagogue," the new ordinance.[168] The Jewish population was told, again by Koretz and again in the synagogue, from where they were deported, that they would be going to the equivalent of Salonica in Poland, as if to find refuge, after that Jewish community had already been annihilated. Roth strongly suggests that Koretz must have known of the prior annihilation: "With what was, at the most charitable interpretation, naivety, he informed them that they would find a new home there, among their own people; the great Jewish community of Cracow (could he have been unaware that Cracow Jewry had already been destroyed?)."[169] What happens to the Salonican Sephardim, Roth thus bitterly suggests, becomes a repetition (or rememory) of what had already happened to the Cracow Ashkenazim, which should have been prevented by this Ashkenazi rabbi who should have known better.

In singling out Koretz so harshly five years after the Holocaust, Roth again anticipates historians and even the judicial processing of this history. It was only in 1961–1962, at the Eichmann trial, that Koretz was publically condemned as a traitor for acceding to German commands. As the main entry on Salonica at Yad Vashem notes, there is now extended debate about Koretz and his role in the fate of Salonican Jews.[170] Historians since Roth generally recognize that he was never fully trusted within the Salonican Jewish community. While sometimes this perception was inextricable from his being Ashkenazi, from Poland, trained in Vienna, and largely German-speaking, many condemnations of Koretz, by historians and by survivors from the Salonican Jewish community, make nothing of his non-Sephardi background—unlike Roth, for whom it features as a crucial explanation, even cause, of Koretz's betrayal of the Salonican Jewish community. The recent debate includes efforts, based on new documents coming to light, to exonerate Koretz and to see the distrust of him as a result of Salonican communities' (both Jews and Greeks) retrospective need for a scapegoat to explain the Holocaust in Salonica. The degree and rationale in Roth's condemnation of the rabbi—his

168 Roth, "Greece, 1946 – Impressions on a Tour (1)," 11.

169 Roth, "Greece, 1946 – Impressions on a Tour (1)," 11.

170 תודוא האושה, Yad Vashem, "Salonika," accessed August 2, 2019, https://www.yadvashem.org/odot_pdf/Microsoft%20Word%20-%205991.pdf. For the scholarly debate on Koretz, see, in order of extent of discussion, Minna Rozen, "Jews and Greeks Remember Their Past: The Political Career of Tzevi Koretz (1933–43)," *Jewish Social Studies*, 12, no. 1 (2005): 111–166; Fleming, Greece, 118; Lewkowicz, *The Jewish Community of Salonika*, 139–140; Rena Molho, *Salonica and Istanbul*, 64–66; Naar, *Jewish Salonica*, 131; Daniel Carpi, "A New Approach to Some Episodes in the History of the Jews in Salonika during the Holocaust – Memory, Myth, Documentation," in Minna Rozen, *The Last Ottoman Century and Beyond: The Jews in Turkey and the Balkans, 1808–1945*, trans. Karen Gold (Goldstein-Goren Diaspora Research Center: Tel Aviv, 2005), Vol. 2, 266.

undisguised anger and his emphasis on Koretz's Ashkenazi and German affiliations—immediately place Roth's writing outside of these discussions and in excess of objective historical research.

In spite of Roth's undisguised anger against Koretz, I think that Roth's embrace of Sephardi Jewishness is neither a rejection of his father's lineage in an Oedipal act of symbolic patricide, nor is it a form of self-orientalization, even in his personal choices. Rather, Roth's other writings on the Sephardim offer detailed reasons for this attachment, which both confirm and add to what we learn from his work on Salonica. Tellingly and in contrast to other entries, for his 1971 *Encyclopaedia Judaica* Roth wrote the Sephardic-centred items himself, as if, with the Sephardim, he was on home ground (even though he was non-native to Sephardi culture); as if, as he said in *Commentary*, knowledge of the Sephardim was indeed the result of his own "ample contributions." Roth's entries hold a cluster of clues for his Sephardic attachment and, in so doing, clarify his conception of the Sephardim.

I have mentioned already that the Sephardim practised a form of Judaism Roth traced to the exile in Babylonian Iraq, a cultural memory of the first diaspora. In addition, Roth writes in the entry on the Sephardim in the *Encyclopaedia*, the Sephardim were more open to others. They reflected the culturally dialogic Jewish identity to which Roth was drawn in his approach to history. Compared with the Ashkenazim, Roth declares, the Sephardim have a "more sympathetic attitude to outside culture," and that "all Sephardim follow the codification of Joseph Caro (*Maran* 'our master') […]. a more liberal and permissive trend than that approved by the Ashkenazi authorities."[171] Again, Salonica, which is prominently discussed in the entry on Sephardim as an important Jewish community and the largest in the Ottoman Empire, plays a key role for Roth in preserving the memory of Sephardi Jewry; again the mythical family forebear of Caro makes a return in this memory. Two further biographical points, about Roth and Caro respectively, add to this personal/professional interpretation of Roth's inclination for the Sephardim. First, as Irene Roth states in her memoir, it was beginning his historical studies in Italy and in Italian studies—rather than in Jewish studies: Roth came to Jewish history obliquely through other, non-Jewish cultural histories—that encouraged Roth to take on the Sephardi tradition.[172] Second, Caro himself was of Spanish origin and after the Expulsion found refuge

171 Cecil Roth, "Sephardim" in *Encyclopaedia Judaica*, ed., Roth, vol. 14, 1170. A comparable view is expressed in H. J. Zimmels, *Ashkenazim and Sephardim: Their Relations, Differences and Problems as Reflected in the Rabbinical Responsa* (London: Oxford University Press, 1958).

172 Irene Roth, *Cecil Roth*, 11–16.

in the Ottoman Empire, including in Salonica. Roth's own "Sephardification" (becoming Sephardi) thus seems an embrace less straightforwardly of the orient per se and more of repeated and intersecting personal and professional transcultural transformation and adaptation.

In *Encyclopaedia Judaica*, the city of Salonica itself is a symbolic site of memory for Sephardim that yet makes Jews comparable to other minorities in the Ottoman Empire:

> In the Ottoman Empire the Sephardim still preserved their ancestral traditions, and their economic and political position was favourable. They had the same rights in the Ottoman Empire as other minorities. Salonika continued to be the greatest center of Sephardi Jewry in the world.[173]

With a note on the *Ottoman Empire* in the *Encyclopaedia*'s index redirecting us to *Turkey*—a marker of Roth's time of writing well after the end of the Empire—Roth again presents the Ottomans as the counterforce to Spain. After the expulsion from Spain, most Jews went to "Turkey, the only major country that opened its doors to them."[174] In the "Salonika" entry, Salonica especially is the refuge of those Sephardim; and here in the Ottoman Empire they preserved the language and culture of Sepharad, of Jewish Spain.[175] The "Salonika" entry, which includes a mention of the desecration and expropriation of the cemetery, revisits some of Roth's Salonica work from the 1940s and 1950s. The entries in this first *Encyclopaedia Judaica*, which make up some of the last writings Roth wrote and which were published posthumously (the *Encyclopaedia* was published in 1971; Roth died in 1970), sustained and deepened his attachment to Salonica as a site of Jewish transcultural memory. The late writings of Roth thus mark an intellectual and emotional memorial return to textual sites of memory, to his seminal Salonican work and visit from decades before.

5. Conclusion

The significance of Roth's to-date unanalysed publications on Salonica is deep and wide-ranging. This first engagement in English of Holocaust memory in Salonica both broke ground and yet, in memorializing Jewish Salonica and the Sephardim, is undoubtedly elegiac. However, Roth is also forward- as well as backward-looking: ahead of his time, as I have argued, in several ways, as much as his work responded to and sought to understand

173 Roth, "Sephardim," 1172.

174 Cecil Roth, "Spain," in *Encyclopaedia Judaica*, ed. Roth, vol. 15, 242.

175 Cecil Roth, "Salonika," in *Encyclopaedia Judaica*, ed. Roth, vol. 14, 699.

the losses of his times. Indeed, in layering Ottoman and Holocaust (and indeed other imperial) memories, Roth's work on Salonica is predictive of our own time's interest in "travelling"—transhistorical and transcultural—memories. Today, the story of Salonican Jews is much less of a forgotten story than in Roth's day. Yet, as I have sought to demonstrate, what reading Roth now adds even to the work subsequently written is the development of several fields in reading Salonica: namely, Holocaust memory, memory studies, transcultural studies, and Jewish studies, and especially the nexus at which these fields intersect.

Undoubtedly, there are costs to Roth's time- and place-travelling, wide-angled view of Salonican Jewry, and to his approach to Jewish history more generally. In his bid to render history readable, relevant and popular, as I have shown, he gets some facts and dates wrong. His temporal parallelisms risk the charges of anachronism and presentism. His historical accounts can read more like novels, replete with heroes and villains and picturesque imagery. Also, Roth does not pretend to objectivity. And yet, by tracing how Holocaust memory echoes the Inquisition and contrasts with the Ottoman preservation of a transcultural Jewish presence, Roth's work on Salonica is especially important, I want to underline in conclusion, for extending, deepening and redefining Holocaust memory. His contribution re-historicizes and relocates the emergence of Holocaust memory beyond its conventionally posited times and places: that is, the concentration camps of Greater Germany after the Holocaust; or Israel and Europe and the US in the 1960s. Holocaust memory in Roth extends geographically beyond more obvious, single locales, instead carried across from and conjoining empires. It is both temporally immediate after the war, in 1946; but it also encompasses Holocaust memories from centuries before this twentieth-century Holocaust.

Travelling rapidly between past and present and reading the past in the light of the present and vice versa, connecting ancient and modern cities and old and recent empires, Roth's Salonica does not allow us to forget that the city's history being told has the shadow of a very resonant historically and geographically extensive history of anti-Semitic persecution behind it. Importantly for memory studies, Roth reveals how memory can form not only part of a methodological approach or subject but also an object, in its material form and in cultural history a target for destruction in addition to the Jewish people themselves. What was very nearly destroyed in the Holocaust was this long historical transcultural memory extending back to the Sephardim, so that, for Roth, "travelling memory," connecting events by image, picture, and theme, travels across catastrophes, cultures, empires, and ages. In accordance with the goals of transcultural studies, but again covering much greater terrain and moreover understanding the

multifarious dimensions of the transcultural, Roth's Salonica writings bring together sites often not thought together—trans-imperial: Ottoman Empire, German Empire, Spanish Empire; cultural: Jewish in relation to Greek experiences of the war; and of intra-Jewish difference: Ashkenazi versus Sephardi.

Perhaps the greatest gain in reading Roth's Salonica work is to be made for a Jewish studies that embraces transculturalism. Roth, so out of sync with his own, traditional, moment in this discipline, has much more in common in his idea of Jewish studies with the idealistic, expansive encompassing of this subject in our own moment. That is, he is concerned with the specific history of Jews in the context of larger national and world histories. His approach examines cultural exchange between Jews and non-Jews, and/or the contribution one cultural group made to another. And his analyses encompass all kinds of representation (from tombs to texts, from ancient elegies to street food) for what they reveal of this connected cultural history.

In Jewish studies, memory studies, transcultural studies, and the humanities broadly, Roth should be returned to and re-examined as an innovative thinker and a lively storyteller. His works contribute to many subjects of interest to us in these areas now, and they should be reframed critically in terms of subsequent specialist research on topics on which Roth was a pioneer, or near pioneer. In understanding how the past can resurface traumatically (or be subject to nationalist forgetting) in the present, thinking about the relations between, as well as difference within, cultural groups and recognizing their interdependence, in his interest in the big picture, pictures, and the picturesque, in his valuing of great storytelling to communicate affectively and therefore effectively with an audience, Roth deserves the comparison I have already suggested, with novelist Toni Morrison. Roth is a very literary writer as I hope to have shown, aware of the power of images, parallels, juxtapositions, and character portraits (and assassinations) for getting across his larger historical point. In all of these aspects, then, Roth also merits comparison with the popular historian of our moment, of Jewish and other histories: Simon Schama.[176] Far from being outdated, Roth is very much our contemporary.

176 See, for example, the first two volumes of Schama's still in-progress trilogy, *The Story of the Jews: Finding the Words, 1000 BCE–1492 CE* (London: Bodley Head, 2013); *Belonging, 1492–1900* (London: Bodley Head, 2017). Indeed, in the beginning of his trilogy, Schama himself sets up Roth as his predecessor, explaining how this work originated when he "agreed to complete a history of the Jews left unfinished at the death of […]. Cecil Roth, whose entire life had been devoted to the subject" (*Finding the Words*, Foreword, n.p.).

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