

Rose and Salomon Reinach and that Certain Special Something (Part 4 of 4)

[Part 1](#), [Part 2](#), [Part 3](#)

by [Norman Simms](#) (August 2018)



Old Couple, Mike Svob, 2005

The Secret Language of a *Nervenkranken*

The flower maidens (*blumenmädchen*) . . . are like Proust's "young girls in flower" (*mädchen in der blume*) who seduce and tease the protagonist . . . *À l'ombre des jeunes filles en fleurs* (In the Shadow of Young Girls in Flower) . . . is a book filled with sensual longing . . . The narrator feels tortured by the Sapphic love that is not his to take part in—he is only in the shadows ([à] *l'ombre*) of their affection. [\[1\]](#)

Unlike Proust's narrative *persona* Marcel in *À la recherche de temps perdu*, Salomon Reinach was fascinated by the *Nachleben* or afterlife of these flowery nymphs. Long after they were deflowered as fashionable lesbians and elite prostitutes and, in the final years of their lives as death approached, they gathered together to gossip and recollect their glory days. This was not because Salomon was tortured by a forbidden and impossible desire to make love to them, but rather by a profound curiosity to understand their intimacies and friendships. [\[2\]](#)

Perhaps it was a curiosity sparked by a need to understand his wife, Rose Margoulieff, the sensitive and highly intelligent woman with whom, in a marriage with secret intimacies and silent communications, he transcended the normal languages of romantic or domestic love. Throughout their childless married life, [\[3\]](#) they loved and supported each other, shared many professional interests, and created a womb-like home that protected them both.

If Reinach learned anything about the secret languages of voluptuous women [\[4\]](#) through association with retired "horizontal" like Liane de Pougy, it was not a sensuous or even an intuitive mode of speech. Such a private, even

wordless, discourse, may be thought of as analogous to that which existed among those fading mistresses of the recent past. It would be like the distant humming of an electronic (telegraphic) wire.[\[5\]](#)

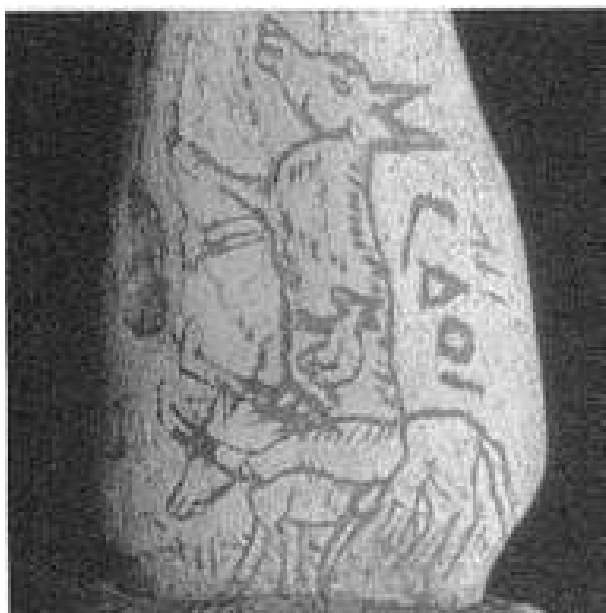
Geo-parler femme used to communicate sexual meanings is one of several coding strategies used by these women writers; other techniques include the implementation of a roman à clé genre and the use of French language or purposefully convoluted language . . . to “hide” meanings amidst “telling” them. The repeated choice to restart coded meaning indicates that there as a real need to do so—mainly due societal [*sic*] and punishing norms that would not accept the lesbian ideas expressed.[\[6\]](#)

What Amy Wells-Lynn says of the sexually-coded language of Djuna Barnes, Natalie Barney, and Radclyff Hall, three of the lesbian writers Salomon Reinach associated with during the last two decades of his life, can be adjusted to apply to the ordinary spoken, and extraordinary unspoken, communications between Rose Reinach and her husband.

The private discourse of domestic love between the married couple is also a kind of Jewish dialect, a coded language of exile and suffering. Such a special language developed between Lucie and Alfred Dreyfus, each acting different roles to each other, to censors presumed to be listening and reading their communications, and to their families who shared the letters and the children who would eventually come to learn of their parents’ bravery under extreme conditions of separation.[\[7\]](#)

It is a symbolic and perhaps mostly unconscious means of communication embedded in scholarly articles, official letters, and repeated inaccurately by unsympathetic or misunderstanding witnesses. We can thus add to the few pieces of Madame Reinach's written texts the traces and echoes of her voice in things Salomon says about his own Jewish identity. It is as though he were speaking on behalf of his wife in imagined conversations conducted with her in his mind. In addition, what was discovered in Glozel and in the controversies it stirred up reflects the relationship between the married pair.

Matrixial Space as a Thinking Room



In a discussion of Rachilde's (*nom-de-plume* of Marguerite Eymery Valette) mode of communicating more and other than what seems to be the purported themes and events in her controversial novels, Melanie Hawthorne points to "deliquescent walls" or "speaking silences." In addition to the prevalence of wet, leaky, and decomposing boundaries in *fin-de-siècle* Symbolism,

Walls can also be abdominal, after all, and the menstruating uterus as a natural form of deliquescence. For the foetus, the walls of the womb are a *mis en abyme* of domestic architecture, but the constant exchange of fluids in the womb are a reminder of the porosity of wall in

general. [\[8\]](#)

Rachilde's novels depict situations in which male and female bodily characteristics and personalities seep into one another creating zones of ambiguity and confusion—plots that revolve around gender-mixing love affairs and disintegrating traditional family structures. They also point to where the separation between fiction and biography slide into one another. This generic slippage rarely appears in explicit form. It makes itself felt in various types of silence, not just the absence of noise but also the deceptive noise that drowns out annoying or diverting noise. [\[9\]](#) The silence of gaps and bumps that distort the smoothness of walls, rough places and stains that discolour textures, mounds of debris where structures meet, and yet always, as Hawthorne says, the signs of excess—moments of reticence and hesitation, denial and distraction, discomfort and disease.

But for those who can deal with the untidiness of heaps, who are willing to put up with bumps in the road, the excursion may reveal how autobiographical reading can transform a lack into an excess, how something can come of nothing. When walls begin to break down—uterine walls, domestic walls—you never quite know what is going to leak out. [\[10\]](#)

For Rose and Salomon Reinach, instead of the strict boundaries between male and female roles being breached in public and private spaces, or the messy breakdown into adulterous affairs and betraying and disloyal domestic relationships, there is a strengthening of love and a deepening of understanding.

Theirs is a marriage that defies the generalizations projected by Gal Ventura as typical, idealized, and neurotic in nineteenth–and early twentieth-century France, except insofar as she explains the invention of the term *comfortable* to characterize the domestic space and experience of bourgeois marriage, “finding its source in the Latin word ‘*confortare*’ (meaning to console, support, or encourage).”[\[11\]](#) Rose and Salomon support one another in their professional lives, console themselves for the harsh and hostile world outside the home, and encourage the full expression of a Jewish love above and beyond sexuality and parenthood.

Letters to Her Boys

Letter sent to Dr Rose Margoulieff by a wounded soldier:

Le 8 Octobre 1915

Madame,

Je m'empresse de venir vous remercier du petit paquet que vous avez remis à Marie pour moi c'est me gâter. les chocolats sont très bons. Je pense que Madame va bien mais probablement avec beaucoup de travail car Je pense qu'il a été dirigé un peu partout des blesser depuis l'attaque qui a commencer le 24 Septembre. Je crois que nous avons pas eu des pertes trop élevées mais beaucoup de blesser. Je crois que nous avons fait beaucoup de prisonniers et comme butin de guerre Je ne sait pas ce qu'il y a mais Je crois que nous avons pris pas mal d'artillerie. Il y a encore certains travaux a prendre qui sont ~~je crois~~ très fortifiés nous les avons déjà même je crois pris et repris et nous

les avons reperdus ensuite c'est bien embêtant car dans les attaques il est forcer qu'il y reste toujours quelqu'uns c'est surtout quand l'Infanterie est obligée de se replier que les mitrailleuses fauchent en quantité les pauvres fantassins Je les plains vraiment car ils subissent un tas de choses désagréables. Quand il fait mauvais temps ils sont couverts de boue depuis le bout des pieds Jusqu'en Haut de la tête et en plus ils ont a subir les gaz asphixiants qui sont tout ce qu'il y a de désagréable. sa pique sans cesse les yeux et on peut plus fournir a essuyer les larmes mais avec les lunettes qui prennent très juste sur les yeux en ayant bien soin d'adapter à l'intérieur une peluche quelconque on se défend très bien...

8 October 1915

Dear Madam,

I hasten to write to thank you for the small package you sent through Marie to me, you spoil me, the chocolates are very good. I think that Madam is doing very well but probably with a lot of work because I think many casualties were sent to you after the attack that began on 24 September. I believe that we did not have so many losses but lots of wounded. I believe we took many prisoners and, regarding war booty, I don't know what it was, but I believe we took not a bad amount of artillery. There are still certain [earth]works which are ~~I believe~~ very fortified which I believe we have already taken and retaken and then have lost again which is really bothersome because in the attacks forced on us there are always some left behind it's always when the Infantry is obliged to retreat when the machineguns mow down heaps of poor foot soldiers I am sorry for them as they have gone through a pile of

disagreeable things. When the weather is bad they are covered with mud from head to toe and worse suffer asphyxiating gas attacks which are most disagreeable. It stings the eyes without a stop and they weep continuously but with glasses fitted tightly over the eyes and one can insert some sort of a fluffy material to protect oneself well . . .

The sender of this awkwardly written letter [\[12\]](#) is not one of the *fantassins* or infantrymen referred to as bearing the brunt of the fighting near “*la Brosse à Dents*” (Toothbrush Hill) at the Second Battle of Champagne during September-October 1915, [\[13\]](#) but an officer with sufficient knowledge to see the larger picture of the war as it was still taking shape.

Something in what Dr. Rose Margoulieff wrote to him was more than words of sympathy for his wounds. The unnamed officer seems to catch a sincere empathy and concern for his condition and thus opens his letter with a sense of truly wishing to respond to her; and, once he does, he allows his emotions to tumble out and tries to provide her with a description of the battle as he experienced it in all its confusion and horror. He expresses more than just concern for the men who serve under him; he also feels for her as a woman and a doctor who must be dealing with an increasing number of casualties—and says there will certainly be more because of this new kind of warfare, of crowds of young men charging out of fortified positions into the face of machineguns and of frightened soldiers trying to protect themselves from deadly fumes of gas rolling over them from the German lines. The unnamed writer of this letter may also intuit Rose’s long-repressed maternal instincts reaching out to him and other young Frenchmen fighting in the trenches. Meanwhile, the ill-formed sentences and repetitions of the letter convey the emotional intensity

of the writer, and probably also manifests both the physical and psychological pains recollected by the soldier in responding to Rose Reinach's motherly letter to him and generous gift of chocolates.



So far as we can tell, after her thesis, this was Rose's most prolific piece of writing. Whereas many mothers who lost their sons and wives their husbands in the field of honour (as the expression went) compensated for this loss through visiting wounded soldiers (as Sarah Bernhardt

did,)[\[14\]](#) training as nurses (as Lucie Dreyfus did), or sending packets of foods and clothing to men in the trenches. Rose Reinach, who had no children, sent hand written letters, hundreds of them, to lonely men and boys on the front or in field hospitals. She did this during 1915-1918 when she served as military doctor, *medicin au service des blessés* (doctor in the service of the wounded).[\[15\]](#) This activity went above and beyond her professional duties and manifests an outpouring of maternal love by proxy that shows her most emotional moment.

A One-Way Ticket Out of the Universe



The excavations along the Western Front during World War One were the scene of terrible fighting and grotesque death. The scarred landscape would be etched into the memory of all who served there as well as their families, and the citizens learning the traumatic news of this war to end all wars.

Later, the excavations in Glozel and the trenches in which various objects were found provide access to a community of desperate people anxious to collect and salvage memorials to their own presumed past and present. How important these prehistoric, ancient and archaic objects are, on their own and with the later scratchings or carvings of alphabet-like marks on them, may be measured by the virulence of the resistance and denial that they garnered, and the attempt to eradicate the evidence itself. It is therefore one thing to see an analogy between the Dreyfus Affair and the Second Affair of Glozel, as Reinach did and another to see in the "War of the Stones" [\[16\]](#) a proleptic vision of the Second World War and, at its heart, the Holocaust.

Salomon was lonely and in grief over his brother Théodore's recent death, as well as his barely mentioned fear for the life of his wife Rose, whose worsening heart disease would carry her off just a few months after his passing. In such a condition, Salomon lost his enthusiasm for work and his enjoyment of life diminished.

Did Rose and Salomon find consolation in their Jewishness? If so, they do not mention it, and we can only infer vaguely that, because they took no steps to disavow their affiliations with the rabbinical community, they fell back on each other's faith in the trustworthiness of each one's *haymisch* (warm, emotional, mutually-respectful) character. It was not something they had to discuss: it could always be felt. It could be felt, too, as we noted in Liane de Pougy's remarks observing the Reinachs together, through both the silences of an elderly married couple and through the almost incoherent mutterings and complaints of a husband in pain.[\[17\]](#)

From their involvement in charitable and educational work for the Jewish community, sometimes with a political edge, they always remained positive toward Judaism as a moral system of values.

When he and Rose joined the Dreyfus cause, or when they organized missions and money-raising events to help Eastern European Jews recover from and escape pogroms, or when they worked assiduously in other French Jewish community causes throughout their lives, they did so not as alternatives to their sense of pride in and belonging to the French Republic but as an identity continuous with one another. That anti-

Semites of varying intensity and throughout these historical stages of modern European history did not see the continuities or allow them legitimacy did not deter Salomon and Rose from their commitments, and neither of them ever contemplated stepping back from the Jewish community or withdrawing from it altogether through conversion. Nor did they allow differences of opinion with Zionists and other rabbinical organizations to draw back from their public identities as Jews.

I suggest that, just as Lucie Dreyfus had to introduce Alfred to a cosmopolitan and sophisticated version of Jewish communal life in Paris which his own family had not fully appreciated or understood—the Hadamards and their intimate friends were musicians and artists, as well as merchants and academically-qualified professionals; so did Salomon draw Rose into a more cultured and intellectual version of Jewishness than she had known in Odessa or anticipated on her arrival to study medicine. Lucie and Alfred grew up into their moral and physical strength through supporting one another through the Affair and beyond, having worked out a coded language that permitted them to signal their Jewish knowledge and feelings below the radar of the censors who monitored their letters.

Rose and Salomon developed a relationship in marriage which offered mutual respect and moral support through all the various controversies and strains of their professional lives; despite having no children of their own to help bind them into the expanding connections of the Reinach clan after the Dreyfus Affair, Rose's sense of being cut off from her own family in Odessa and the dangerous and violent winds swirling around them in Europe.

Farewell to Salomon and Rose

L'homme, acteur influent de l'Alliance Israelite universelle et de la "Jewish Colonization Association," ne fut jamais indiffèrent à son siècle. Il s'engagea dans l'affaire Dreyfus, en y jouant un rôle occulte, mais décisif. Ennemi de toutes les injustices, soucieux de combattre l'intolérance...[18]

The man, influential actor in the *Alliance Israelite Universelle* and the Jewish Colonization Association, was never indifferent to his century. He involved himself in the Dreyfus Affair, playing a hidden but decisive role. Enemy to all forms of injustice, concerned to combat intolerance . . .

Founded in 1860, the *Alliance Israelite Universelle* sought to renew the "cohesion" of the Jewish people all over the world by spreading literacy and modern education, particularly in parts of the Levant and Middle East that were thought to be locked into darkness and poverty under the Ottoman Empire.[19] In practice, the Alliance, spread knowledge of French culture (under the rubric of "moral progress") and helped Jews in Arab and Turkish-speaking lands help to migrate to Western Europe.

Though he was not a Zionist for two main reasons, one being his loyalty to the ideals and institutions of the French Republic and the other to his perceived notion of the Zionist organization being founded on racial theories he could not accept, Salomon Reinach was deeply concerned with the rescue of East European Jewry and their resettlement elsewhere. The Jewish Colonization Association had, in its foundational document of 1891, the following goals which were, of course,

superseded by events leading up to the Second World War:

To assist and promote the emigration of Jews from any parts of Europe or Asia, and principally from countries in which they may for the time being be subjected to any special taxes or political or other disabilities, to any other parts of the world, and to form and establish colonies in various parts of North and South America and other countries for agricultural, commercial, and other purposes. [\[20\]](#)

Like the Alliance, the Colonization Association was a forerunner of Theodor Herzl's Zionist Movement. However, rather than a grass-roots organization that was able to gain political traction with various western governments (and laid the groundwork for the promulgation of the Balfour Declaration and then the establishment of the State of Israel in what was then called Palestine), these two Jewish organizations to which Reinach gave time and money were elitist ventures operating within the structures of the hierarchical community's authority.

Like her husband, Rose worked on behalf of Russian Jewry, raising money and sending food, clothing and other parcels to people who were suffering in new waves of pogroms and other forms of discrimination, and also in assisting Jews fleeing from oppression by both Communist and Fascist groups. She was also a Dame of the Legion of Honour.

In Lieu of a Conclusion, Analogies and the Distant Sounds of Silence



This silence seemed to cause suffering to itself—it wanted passionately to speak, but something strong and blunt like a machine, kept it immovable and taut like a wire. And somewhere far in the distance the wire began to vibrate and ring softly, timidly, pathetically, and Father Ignatius in fear and delight tried to catch these just awakening sounds, and supporting his hand on the arms of the chair bent his neck forward and waited for the sound to come nearer to

him, but the sound suddenly stopped and died away. [\[21\]](#)

There is no hard evidence to substantiate my claim of a special certain something that made the marriage successful. Our argument rests on teasing apart the very few and oblique hints that remain. As stated at the very start of this four-part essay, Rose is often not mentioned or only in passing as Salomon's wife.

In his letters to Salomon Reinach—none of Reinach's are extant—Henri Bergson twice refers to Rose. In a letter dated 20 January 1893, the philosopher remarks:

Je regrette vivement de manquer cette occasion de causer

avec vous et d'être présenté a M^{me} Reinach ; mais si vous voulez bien m'indiquer les jours et les heures ou j'aurais quelque chance de vous rencontrer chez vous, je me ferai un plaisir de venir vous voir. [22]

I deeply regret missing this occasion to chat with you and to be presented to Mrs. Rainach; but if you would tell me what days and hours I could have a chance of meeting with you at home, it would be a pleasure to come to see you.

Bergson is being very polite in wishing to meet with Reinach's wife when he comes to visit with his friend. He does not mention her first name or the name she goes under as a doctor and makes no assumptions about her professional hours or any particulars about her background.

Then more obliquely, Rose is included in the perfunctory greetings sent by Bergson on 4 August 1926 to "*pour vous mêmes et les vôtres*" [23] (to you and yours), an unclear plural to indicate more than one other person in the household besides Mrs. Reinach.

Who this person or persons may have been was at best alluded to in a letter written by the then twenty-six-year old Jeanne Adèle Bergson on behalf of her father undated but probably sent in 1920 in which she asks to be remembered to his wife: "*N'oubliez pas auprès de M^{me} Salomon Reinach*" [24] (Don't forget to [pass on our greetings] to Mrs. Salomon Reinach). Even after more than twenty years of acquaintance, neither Henri nor his daughter Jeanne Bergson seems on first name terms with the Reinachs.

They seem to have a more personal connection, however, (according Henri Bergson's letter of 26 February 1926), through their deaf and dumb daughter Jeanne who it seems has recently met "*votre charmante nièce*" [\[25\]](#) (your charming niece).

This friendship between the unnamed niece of the Reinachs and Jeanne suggests another quality of the couple and of their home life that is at the best merely hinted at. On the one hand, there is the question of who the young relative taken into their household was—one of the two other Reinach Brother's daughters or part of the Margoulieff family, such as the nephew who became Salomon's executor after his death.

On the other hand, the friendship between the two young women is indicative of a generosity, patience and empathy by the Reinachs to the disabled daughter of a friend they had only occasional correspondence with over many years. From her letter to Salomon, Jeanne showed herself quite articulate in the written word; and the sisterly friendship between Jeanne and the unnamed niece suggests a means of communication other than the spoken word, such as signing, and also a shared interest in art.

Claude Collin reports that Henri Bergson was immensely proud of his daughter and her attainments.

... il fut père d'une fille, Jeanne, qui ne parlait pas, n'entendait pas, et qui fut pour lui sa fierté et son épreuve : « je suis sûr, écrit Jean Guilton, [\[26\]](#) que

plusieurs traits de la philosophie de Henri Bergson s'expliquent par cette source inconnue ».[\[27\]](#)

...he was the father of a daughter, Jeanne, who neither could speak or hear and who was for him his pride and test: "I am sure, writes Jean Guitton, that many of the philosophical features of Henri Bergson's philosophy can be explained in this unknown source...

In other words, through the difficulties of raising a handicapped child and finding her bright, intelligent and articulate in other ways, the philosopher was able to shape many of his thoughts about the nature of language and the dynamics of creativity itself. That Jeanne, who studied sculpture with her god-father Emile Antoine Bourdelle,[\[28\]](#) became an accomplished artist is no small way a credit to her parents' love and support, as well as of the welcome she found at the home of Rose and Salomon Reinach. In 1921 Jeanne was exhibiting at the Salon d'Automne and continued to show her work from 1923 to 1934 at the Tuileries, shows Bourdelle helped to organize. When she met the niece of the Reinachs she was already a recognized up-and-coming artist. Her drawings, water-colours and sculpture are redolent with a decidedly three-dimensional touch[\[29\]](#) learned from her mentor Bourdelle—but also a product of her need to communicate with her hands and eyes. In evaluating her work, the teacher wrote:

Les dessins ont l'élan du Geste, leurs masses s'activent entre elles, leurs masses vibrant, leur détours sont purs, si bellement cursifs qu'ils ressemblent à la pensée lorsqu'elle est en naissance créatrice.[\[30\]](#)

Her drawings have the vitality of gestures, their mass interact between themselves, their mass vibrates, their curves are pure, so beautifully flowing that they seem like thought as it is in the creative process of being born.

Jeanne lived all her life with her parents, and they were collectively referred to as “*les trois inseparables*” (the inseparable three).[\[31\]](#) After Henri Bergson’s death in 1941, after several years as an invalid, half-paralysed by deforming rheumatism, his daughter preserved his study and bequeathed it, along with his archives and manuscripts, to the



Bibliothèque littéraire Jacques Doucet.[\[32\]](#) (Drawing of nude is by Jeanne, Galerie Saphire.)[\[33\]](#)

As Collin observes, it was at the time these letters between the philosopher and the museum director were sent that Bergson was grappling with the fundamental problems of language, creation and the connections between soul and body:

. . . au moment où son père étudiait avec patience, avec génie, les troubles du langage pour édifier une nouvelle interprétation des rapports de l'âme avec le corps: il concluait à l'indépendance de la mémoire et de la matière, à la survie possible [\[34\]](#)

At the very moment when her father applying his genius to

the difficulties in language to build a new interpretation of the relationship between the soul and the body: he concluded [by positing] an independent memory and matter as possible survivals.

Whatever qualities she may have brought to the home of Rose and Salomon—and at whatever age and for how long—the niece's instinctive empathy for others, her sympathy for their inherent moral goodness, and her capacity to communicate through non-verbal means was fostered and developed. We see her presence in the Reinach household as another oblique proof of the couple's special inner character. Her achievement as an artist may also have been a reflection of the support she received from the Reinach family, at the same time as it suggests the part she played in mediating between the needs of the childless couple and their niece's role as surrogate daughter.



How important this sharing and supporting of emotions and ambitions may be is hinted at also in the case of Daniel Paul Schreber (L). Until fairly recently Schreber's *Memoirs of a Nervous Illness* (or a better translation: *Memories of a Man Suffering from a Disease of the Nerves*) was dismissed as the ramblings of a madman or, following Freud, the confused remembering of a repressed homosexual. The latest studies of the man and his book are more positive. Several factors now

make harsh judgments against Schreber untenable, not least new attitudes towards homosexuality, transvestism, and rigid

Freudian paradigms.[\[35\]](#) For our purposes, two avenues of approach are most relevant: one is the rediscovery of Schreber's childhood experiences and family life leading up to and following his incarceration as a mental patient. His father Moritz Schreber was much less (if at all) the violent abusive parent whose books on child-rearing were not precursors of Nazi ideology that certain historians want to argue.[\[36\]](#) There is, in fact, no evidence that Moritz was more than strict or that he ever tortured his young son in one of his infernal machines; and especially not that his teachings in any way were influential or instrumental in forming Hitler's social and political policies.

Further, Daniel Paul's wife Sabine and he had a more loving relationship than usually assumed, and their childlessness was due to a series of miscarriages rather than to impotence, sterility, or abortions. After he won a discharge from the mental asylum, the couple adopted an orphan in her teens, Fridoline, whose place in their lives brought them happiness and fulfilment, until his final lapse into a more acute state of severe depression.[\[37\]](#)

There is an analogy here, as we shall see shortly, to the way Rose and Salomon welcomed a niece into their household and cared for her as though she were their own child. Just as Freud misled generations of followers into a false evaluation of Schreber's illness because the founder of depth psychology never attended to the role of the mother in the household in which the young future judge grew and barely recognized the existence of the wife in the sick man's marriage,[\[38\]](#) so historians have overlooked a whole dimension in Salomon Reinach's life and career by marginalizing his wife Rose to the point of near non-existence.

In terms of understanding his *Memoirs*, more careful and close readings of the book dismiss the notion that it is merely the bellowings of a mad man. These new approaches give it structure, purpose, and meaning in ways previously undetected or expected. They also show that the author was “an extraordinarily distinguished lunatic.”[\[39\]](#) That, for legal purposes, Schreber chose to publish a version of the book without details of own childhood or domestic relations are part of the reason for the misreading. Much more so are the fact that the argument for release from incarceration—and thus for a new definition of mental responsibility—though it convinced the court to return his civil rights, was overlooked by Freud and other psychoanalytic readers. They failed to grasp the special terms and concepts that Schreber as a lawyer, judge, and theoretical jurist used. These same readers either did not notice or misunderstood the witty genre of the *Memoirs*. As Zvi Lothane points out,

The book is a work of art written in two styles, sober prose and poetical-magical realism evocative of Goethe, but also of James Joyce’s *Ulysses* or Salman Rushdie’s *Satanic Verses*. It is also Schreber’s *Zeitgeschichte*: bearing witness to his “era of contemporaries,” i.e., “all of the past that touched directly or indirectly”. . . on Schreber’s life.[\[40\]](#)

In addition to those categories of *Zeitgeschichte*, the *Memoirs* also recapitulate, often inadvertently, many other themes and motifs of literary dramatic and poetic works in the nineteenth century. To understand the questions raised by Schreber’s case, as for those in evaluating the certain special something in the marriage of Rose and Salomon Reinach, we must return

our approach from the social and medical sciences to the Humanities.

Thus, mad as he might have been while he was writing, [\[41\]](#) Jean Paul Schreber was not a voice crying in the wilderness and propounding insane theories out of nothing. To read his memoirs is to find oneself sliding from one familiar set of themes, images, and circumstances to another. These are often in echoes and allusions to fiction, such as to Vsevolod Mikhaylovich Garshin's short story "A Red Flower" (1885), in which a deranged young man is brought to a mental asylum. Once there, the young Russian realizes he is in a state of mad confusion, and begins to construct a moral program for himself of rescuing the world from destruction by stealing a red flower from the institutional garden and sacrificing his life to protect its cosmic powers. The analogy to Schreber's elaborate cosmic conceits is compelling:

He felt a fever and a pain in his outstretched hand toward the poppy plant, and later in his whole body, as if a strong current of some mysterious power escaped from the red petals and penetrated his entire system. [\[42\]](#)

Even earlier authors began to grapple with the moral problems of distinguishing between the incoherent screams and babblings of crazy patients and seeing in their efforts to make sense out of the confused discharge of ideas and images the signs of a normal human being suffering from an uncontrollable disease, that is, someone who deserves legal respect, along with sympathetic treatment and care rather than punishment and separation from society.

In Louisa May Alcott's American short-story, "A Whisper in the Dark" (1877) [\[43\]](#) a seventeen-year-old orphan is driven mad by her putative uncle-guardian attempting to "gas-light" [\[44\]](#) her mind with false sounds and images of madness. On the verge of womanhood and caught in a situation beyond her ability to cope, Sybil for the first time in her life finds herself unable to assert her individuality, express her developing sexuality, and trust her own common sense and reason. In a series of shocks and surprises, the first section of the narrative goes from her arrival at her putative uncle's house—and what is supposed to be her inheritance as soon as she marries her cousin Guy according to the stipulations of her deceased father's will. Step by step her childish naiveté is under attack and the nature of the plot against her starts to become evident, climaxing in a moment of violence: enraged by the lies and limitations imposed on her, she throws the wedding ring given back by her cousin when he sees (or thinks he sees) Sybil and her guardian in an embrace. The ring breaks a mirror on the far side of the room, and this signals that, from then on she is unable to see herself as she really is or the world-order as she had grown up believing it be—where people are inherently good and society essentially just. [\[45\]](#)

Foreshadowed in the first section, where Sybil thinks she is in a game whose consequences will not be taken seriously, she now discovers everything she says or does is easily misconstrued either by malice or induced errors prompted by the male authority figures around her. "My mind was in dire confusion," she recalls from a later time and place of security, but in the unfolding moment of "this crisis" "my hot temper rose past control, and womanlike asserted itself in vehement and voluble speech." Even to her sympathetic cousin, the girl, her actions and her screams seem to mark her as a hysterical female. [\[46\]](#)

Once Guy goes off, aware of the baseness of his father's character and designs on Sybil, but in his youthful pique unable to offer sympathy or practical help, the girl is trapped. Her guardian, aided by a Svengali-type doctor, continues to isolate her from what is familiar, alienate her from what she has always taken as standards of rationality and justice, and pushed her into an almost constant state of nervousness. Every word and gesture to declare her sanity or assert her will becomes an occasion for proving her legal incompetence and to justify having her locked away in a mad house. These men treat her like a child, a ghost, an irrational being. The second section of the story climaxes in a self-deluded moment of trust when she agrees to drink the potion offered to her—and she awakens suddenly to find herself in an unknown room with grated windows, shorn of her hair (her glory and charm as a woman), and subject to rule by harsh, unyielding guardians. Sybil recalls her feelings at this moment:

More and more alarmed, I flew to the door and found it locked. No bell was visible, no sound audible, no human presence near, and an ominous foreboding thrilled cold through nerves and blood, as, for the first time, I felt the paralyzing touch of fear.[\[47\]](#)

In this last section of "A Whisper in the Dark" all the forewarnings, premonitions and literary pre-statements come back with a vengeance as tangible and realistic attacks on her integrity as a person, indicating something terribly wrong with the order of the world and the fairness of human institutions. Sybil's soul is broken and her mind disordered. She is on the verge of becoming what the conspirators have set her up to be: the hysterical woman deprived of legal rights. However, unlike the protagonist in "A Red Flower" who escapes

into the morbid delusion that freeing the world from injustice is possible through possession of the poppy stolen from the asylum garden, or as Schreber seems to do through construction of a cosmic emblem of himself as the agent through divine "miracles" can save the world from collapsing into sterility and chaos, Sybil avoids the final plunge into pure madness through a *deus ex machina* in the form of a chemical explosion that kills one of her chief jailers, provides an occasion for escaping the mad house, and brings aid in the fortuitous return of a chastened cousin Guy. But Alcott's tale lapses into sentimentality, when the crazy woman pacing the floor in the cell above hers proves to be her mother, long thought to be dead, who whispers partly heard key words to her and sends her an ambiguously written message hidden in the collar of her dog. These whispers, hums, and taps seem to communicate emotional signals, a version of Schreber's nerve language.[\[48\]](#) The way has been cleared for Sybil to regain her mental equilibrium, inherit her wealth, and marry Guy without mercenary bonds.

This language of the nerves, as Schreber explains (in his supposedly mad discourse but surrealistic literary conceits) does not consist of verbal or symbolic codes, except insofar as feelings of empathy and mutual support are communicated indirectly. Lothane explains that "Schreber's playful illusions were pathologized as morbid delusions" and the attempts at self-treatment by projection of such rhetorical exaggerations misread as "macabre madness."[\[49\]](#)

On the one hand, Rose once expressed herself in the formal formulae of a doctoral dissertation and later her "voice" manifests in the response of a wounded soldier to her letters sent to a hospital near the front; on the other, while he left no written record of his feelings for Rose, Salomon's words

about her come through the misunderstandings of Liane de Pougy, as well as in his participation in the salons where Liane and her old friends gather to gossip about their experiences as prostitutes, mistresses, and lesbian lovers.

Salomon Reinach 's propensity to compile thousands of book reviews and death notices, like his compilations of lists of acquisitions and contents of museum collections, much of this scholarly work is still used to identify, authenticate and keep records of provenance for various pieces of archaeological, cultural, and historical artifacts put him into an ambiguous position. Sometimes, along with Bernard Berenson's connoisseurship and at other times with Aby Warburg's iconography and cultural history, with many commentators seeing this work as superficial and unworthy of serious attention, and some even treating Reinach as a sort of buffoon who could not see the difference between great art and trivial imitations.

In a similar vein, there are cultural historians who see Salomon's achievement as superficial synthesising, popular vulgarization, and generally limited by its dependence on nineteenth-century versions of anthropology, particularly the Cambridge school of myth and ritual studies. His attitudes toward religion were seen, not least his disparagement of Judaism, as being stuck in otiose customs and superstitious beliefs. Such opponents also viewed his attempts to reform received ideas—whether in debunking the "Mirage of the East" or the political adventurism of Zionist settlements in the early years of the twentieth century—as ill-considered, bumptious, and on the wrong side of history.

As with his fascination with the salons and soirées run by

former courtesans and lesbian radical intellectuals, these evaluations of Reinach's character and personality seem wrong, especially when his motives are seen to rise from mere prurience or from suppressed homosexuality or confused bisexuality. Compared to Daniel Paul Schreber's *Memoirs of my Nervous Illness*, Reinach's collective *oeuvre* in its fragmentary and compiler style does not display any of the deviant or psychotic signs Freud, Lacan, and other psychoanalysts set out to analyse. Salomon's wide-ranging interests and peculiarities of behaviour do gain resonance from modern existential readings of Schreber's published book, even as, in its unexpected parallels to the intensified and inward turnings of Alfred Dreyfus after his trumped-up arrest, manipulated trial, and unjust exile to Devil's Island.

Similarly, after saturating the experiences of Schreber, Dreyfus, and Reinach, much of what they say about themselves and analysts of their writings—particularly when the role of their wives and other family members are taken into account—also reiterate or echo a range of decadent, symbolist, and impressionist novels, short stories, and plays appearing within the same time span, and even of photographs, paintings, and cinematic spectacles at the *fin-de-siècle*.[\[50\]](#)

Rather than an arbitrary choice imposed between male and female identities generated by phantasms in the tension-ridden crossing of stages in psychological development and social acceptance in a strictly patriarchal world-order,[\[51\]](#) the Reinachs—like the Dreyfuses before them and the Schrebers in the disturbed visions of an imaginary existential theology[\[52\]](#)—Bracha Ettinger sets up a more dynamic, flexible matrilineal paradigm. In this concept, a transitional space is opened up for creative combinations and transfigurations. In other words, an easier, softer slide from one stage and state

of being to another occurs, rather than a traumatic split, and so the consequences are therefore less stressful or painful.

For Salomon Reinach, the intellectual and aesthetic achievements first recognized in the late 1800s through the discovery of caves containing sophisticated statuary, wall-paintings, and symbolic markings made him ready to accept the legitimacy of the objects found at Glozel. Their existence was further proof that civilization did not appear from the Near and Middle East and impose a cultural mentality on the lands to the West but rather allowed for a blending and enhancement of developments originating in many places and over long periods of accommodation.[\[53\]](#)

NOTES

[1] Wendy L. Smith, *Reviving Fortuny's Phantasmagorias* (School of Arts, Languages and Cultures: PhD Thesis, University of Manchester, 2015) p. 190.

[\[2\]](#) No more so than by any homosexual drives or anxieties that would have occurred if the analogies to Dr. Dan Paul Schreber were more than indicative of symptoms common to the *fin-de-siècle*: symptoms of bisexuality, hermaphroditism, transvestism, etc. On the literary and artistic context for these cultural poses, see François Cachin, "Monsieur Venus et l'ange de Sodome: l'androgynisme au temps de Gustave Moreau" *Bisexualité et différence des sexes*, ed. J.B. Pontalis (Paris: Gallimard, 1973) pp. 83-92.

[\[3\]](#) See Freud's comments on Schreber's childless marriage, *Psycho-Analytic Notes on an Autobiographical Account* pp. 2389, 2428, etc. Freud also seems to see the connection between the

language of the nerves and the basic language as “a translation of the paranoid mode of expression into the normal one” (p. 2410).

[4] Brent Dean Robbins, “Schreber’s Soul-Voluptuousness: Mysticism, Madness and the Feminine in Schreber’s Memoirs” *Journal of Phenomenological Psychology* 31:2 (2000) 117-154.

[5] Schreber describes an early formulation of his ideas about a transcendent mode of non-verbal communications replacing “basic language” in these terms: “Thus it also liked to speak of a ‘principle of light-telegraphy,’ to indicate the mutual attraction of rays and nerves” (*Memoirs*, p. 116, n. 58). Seeing this “basic language” as “a vigorous though somewhat antiquated German, which is especially characterized by its great wealth of euphemisms,” Freud misses the point of how a language in a broader sense than a verbal code can draw its energies from deeply repressed unconscious ideas not only about sexuality but also about the trauma of birth—and before that the trauma of conception. See Freud, *Psycho-Analytic Notes on an Autobiographical Account*, p. 2439.

[6] Amy Wells-Lynn, “The Intertextual, Sexually-Coded Rue Jacob: A Geocritical Approach to Djuna Barnes, Natalie Barney, and Raddclyffe Hall” *South Central Review* 22:3 (2005) 82; online at <https://muse.jhu.edu/article/190494/summary>.

[7] Cf., Jean Gillibert, “L’acteur, médian sexuel” in Pontalis, *Bisexualité et différence des sexes*, pp. 93-104.

[8] Melanie Hawthorne, “Rachilde’s Deliquescent Walls: Speaking Silences” *Dix-Neuf* 21:2-3 (2017) 116-117; online at <https://doi.org/10.1080/4787318.2017.1386882>.

[9] Léon Kreisler, “Bisexualité et différence des sexes” in Pontalis, *Bisexualité et différence des sexes* pp. 173-200.

[10] Hawthorne, “Rachilde’s Deliquescent Walls” 125.

[11] Gal Ventura, "The Dead Mother, the Uncanny, and the Holy Ghost" *Studies in the Maternal* 7:1 (2015) 9; online at www.mamsic.bbk.ac.uk.

[12] I would like to thank Norbert Col and his wife Armelle not only for transcribing the document with its faded script and awkward syntax, but also for suggestions on translation into English, as well as hints at the particular moment of the war out of which it comes.

[13] «Quemeven 14018 : Des hommes et des femmes dans la grande guerre » here extracting the relevant passages from Yveline le Grand, « La seconde bataille de Champagne–sept-oct 1915 » in *La prise de Tahure* (18 December 2013) online at <http://www.quemeven1418.org/seconde-bataille-de-champagne>. Also see "L'Offensive de Champagne en septembre 1915 : En Champagne 1915. Le Front à Reims, L'Episode du bois Sabot, Les opérations de printemps, Quennevières, La Bataille de Champagne (sept. 1915), Prélude, L'Offensive, Main de Massages, Beauséjour, Le trou bricot, Bilan de la première journée d'offensive" online at http://chtimiste.com/batailles1418/1915_champagne2.

[14] Sarah Bernhardt entertained the men at the front with her songs and dramatic monologues. By that time she had lost one leg due to a lingering infection and the sight of an elderly actress in this condition carried on a stretcher to the ambulances or field hospitals just behind the front inspired the troops to confront the adversity before them.

[15] From 2 March to 30 April, 2015, there was an exhibition on "Madame Salomon Reinach née Margoulieff : Correspondances de soldats 1915-1918 " at the Maison de l'Orient et de la Méditerranée Jean Pouilloux, Hall de la bibliothèque, 5 rue Raulin, Lyon. See also the *Lyon Communiqués* online at <http://www.lyon-communiques.com/communiques/madame-salomon-reinach-correspondances-de-soldats-1915-1918-c120126>.

[16] Léon Côte, *Glozel ou la Guerre des Briques* (Toulouse: Patrice Thierry/L'Ether Vague, 1987).

[17] It is illuminating to compare and contrast the way the Bergson family dealt with the rise of anti-Semitism and the ominous warnings of the Holocaust. Henri Bergson in 1937 indicated that while he was doctrinally drawn towards Catholicism he would not convert while persecution of the Jews was occurring, and that he would rather renounce all his titles and positions in society than be baptized. Although at his death on 4 January 1941 he asked for a Roman Catholic priest to officiate, he refused to change his legal identity. Each time he and his wife and daughter, always maintaining a tight relationship, attempted to cross over to Switzerland to escape from the Nazis they were refused exit visas; they were considered Jews no matter what they believed or how they affiliated themselves—they were considered Jews and subject to the new racial laws. Thierry Noël, "Louise Neuberger, veuve de Bergson, n'a pas été exemptée de l'étoile jaune" in *La face cachée de l'étoile jaune* (31 December 2011) online at <http://etoile-jaune-anniversaire.blogspot.com/2011/12/louise-neuberger-veuve-de-bergson>. See also <https://www.geanenet.org/garric?lang=f&n=Bergson&oc=0&p=Jeanne>.

[18] Hervé Duchêne, "Salomon Reinach" *Archives de France: Actions culturelle et pédagogique/ Commémoration nationales/recueil 2008/Littérature et sciences humains/Salomon Reinach* online at <http://www.archivesdefrance.cultur.gouv.fr/action-culturelle/celebrations-nationales/2008/litterature-et-science-humanises/salomon-reinach>.

[19] "Jewish/Israel Organizations: Alliance Israelite Universelle" *Jewish Virtual Library* based on a number of entries in the *Jewish Encyclopedia* online at <http://www.jewishvirtualibrary.org/alliance-israelite-universelle>.

[20] Cited by Richard Gottheil and E. Schwarzfeld in "The

Jewish Colonization Association" *The Jewish Encyclopedia* online at <http://www.jewishencyclopedia.com/articles/8633-jewish-colonization-association>.

[21] Leonid Nikolaevich Andreev, "Silence" in *Selected Russian Short Stories*, ed. and trans. A.E. Chamot (London: Oxford University Press, 1925) pp. 335-336

[22] Patricia Verdeau, "Lettres inédites d'Henri Bergson à Salomon Reinach" *Revue philosophiques de la France et de l'étranger* 137:2 (2012) 230.

[23] Verdeau, "Lettres inédites d'Henri Bergson à Salomon Reinach" 238.

[24] Verdeau, "Lettres inédites d'Henri Bergson à Salomon Reinach" 236.

[25] Verdeau, "Lettres inédites d'Henri Bergson à Salomon Reinach" 236.

[26] Friend and disciple of Bergson, he was a well-known Christian philosopher in his time.

[27] Claude Collin, "Henri Bergson (1859-1941): Biographie" online at <http://www.cvm.gc.ca/enceph/CONTENU/PHILOS0/Bergson>.

[28] "Emile Bourdelle, 1861-1929" *Chemins de Mémoire* online at <http://www.cheminsdememoire.gouv.fr/en/emile-bourdelle>

[29] This way of creating two-dimensional works with a sense of depth and movement is what Bernard Berenson theorized as "tactile value."

[30] Cited by Edouard-Josef in the *Dictionnaire biographique des artistes contemporains*, tome 1, A-E, Art & Edition, 1930, p. 115; available in "Jeanne Bergson" *Wikipedia* at https://fr.wikipedia.org/wiki/Jeanne_Bergson.

[31] Louise Bergson, the daughter of Gustave Neuberger and Laure Lazarus, was born in 1871 and lived until after the Second World War, passing away on 2 September 1946. She and Jeanne had attempted to receive an exception from wearing the yellow star required by the Vichy Regime but their petition was turned down, though Marshal Pétain had recommended accepting their appeal.

[32] Aside from the personal letters and other materials from his work-room which Jeanne preserved on behalf of her father, two other components of his documents were assigned to the Bibliothèque nationale de France (manuscripts and worksheets of printed books) and the Bibliothèque littéraire Jaques Doucet (other miscellaneous manuscripts). See "Henri Bergson" in *Biblioteca de los filósofos* (Scuola Normale Superiore di Pisa) online at <http://picus.unic.it/index.php?page=Filosofo&id=254&lang=es>

[33] Drawing reproduced on the website of the Galerie Saphir for an exposition of the women of Montmartre; available at <http://galeriesaphir.com/Jeanne-bergson>

[34] Collin, "Henri Bergson (1859-1941): Biographie" cited from Jean Guittou dans *La collection des prix Nobel de Littérature*, éd. Rombaldi.p.35.

[35] Robbins, "Schreber's Soul-Voluptuousness" 117-154.

[36] Lothane, "The Legacies of Schreber and Freud."

[37] Zvi Lothane, "The Legacies of Schreber and Freud" *JEP: European Journal of Psychoanalysis, Humanities, Philosophy, Psychotherapies* 30: 1 (2010) no pagination given.

[38] Lothane, "The Legacies of Schreber and Freud"

[39] Peter Goodrich, "The Judge's Two Bodies: The Case of Daniel Paul Schreber" *Springer Law Critique* (8 May 2015) no pagination. Online at DOI 10.1007/s10978-015-9154-z.

[40] p.2. Lothane's citation is from E.J. Engstrom, "Zeitgeschichte as Disciplinary History—on Professional Identity, Self-Reflective Narratives, and Discipline-Building in Contemporary German History" *Tel-Aviver Jahrbuch für deutsche-Geschichte* 29 (2000) 399-425.

[41] For a brief account of Schreber's personal, professional and medical history, see Andries Gouws, "Review of *Memoirs of My Nervous Illness*" in *Metapsychology online* reviews at http://metapsychology.meentalhelp.net/poc/view_doc.php?type=book&id=298&cn=295.

[42] Vsevolod Garshin, *A Red Flower: A Story*, trans. not given (Philadelphia, PA: Brown Brothers, 1911; original Russian 1883) p. 24.

[43] Louisa May Alcott, *A Modern Mephistopheles and A Whisper in the Dark* (Boston: Roberts Brothers, 1889 and Cambridge: University Press, John Wilson and Son, 1877, 1889) pp. 293-349.

[44] Ariel Leve, "How to Survive Gaslighting: When Manipulation Erases your Reality" *The Guardian* (16 March 2017) online at <https://www.theguardian.com/science/2017/mar/16/gaslighting-manipulation-reality-coping-mechanisms-trump>

[45] Cp. Goodrich, "The Judge's Two Bodies": "The whole metaphysical struggle of [Schreber's] *Memoirs* is to restore the 'Order of the World', the proper law of the human relation to the divinity ... The purpose of the whole exercise, restoration of the harmony of the Order of the World, is early on defined juridically as the project of an unconventional but 'equalizing justice'..."

[46] Alcott, "A Whisper in the Dark," pp. 317-318.

[47] Alcott. "A Whisper in the Dark," p. 330.

[48] Alcott, "A Whisper in the Dark," pp. 343-345. Cp. Goodrich, "The Judge's Two Bodies": "Schreber notes also that God fails to comprehend human language, mistaking nerve language for actual human expression, and so confuses dreaming with thought, unconsciousness with consciousness". In her youthful enthusiasms, Sybil believes that her uncle ("God") can tell the difference between her playful, teasing and tantrum rants and who and what she really is. She is shocked into submission and inarticulateness when he—and the doctor—take her words and gestures at face value and use them to deprive her of her liberty and her inheritance. The authoritative males in the story confuse their own ambitions and greed for justice and reason.

[49] Lothane , "The Legacies of Schreber and Freud."

[50] For example, in the case of an extraordinary parallel of events in the case against Alfred Dreyfus and the events experienced by Daniel Paul Schreber, take this passage of the *Denkwürdigkeiten eines Nervenkranken*: "In this way a plot was laid against me [perhaps March or April 1894—ed's inserted note; we add: this was the year of Dreyfus's arrest and trial], the purpose of which was to hand me over to another human being after my nervous illness had been recognized as, or assumed to be, incurable, in such a way that my soul was handed to him, but my body—transformed into a female body..." (p. 63).

[51] Sheila L. Cavanagh, "Transsexuality as Sinthome: Bracha L. Etinger and the Other (Feminine) Sexual Difference" *Studies in Gender and Sexuality* 17:1 (2016) 27-44.

[52] Freud points out how Schreber drew on stories of ancient myths found in Reinach's major studies of archaic cults, ancient rituals and Classical and Renaissance art: see the "Postscript" (1912) to Freud, *Psycho-Analytic Notes on an Autobiographical Account*, pp. 2445-2446.

[53] Salomon Reinach, *Éphémérides de Glozel* (Paris: Kra, 1928), pp. 1-5.

Norman Simms taught in New Zealand for more than forty years at the University of Waikato, with stints at the Nouvelle Sorbonne in Paris and Ben-Gurion University in Israel. He founded the interdisciplinary journal *Mentalities/Mentalités* in the early 1970s and saw it through nearly thirty years. Since retirement, he has published three books on Alfred and Lucie Dreyfus and a two-volume study of Jewish intellectuals and artists in late nineteenth and early twentieth century Western Europe, [*Jews in an Illusion of Paradise; Dust and Ashes, Comedians and Catastrophes, Volume I*](#), and his newest book, [*Jews in an Illusion of Paradise: Dust and Ashes, Falling Out of Place and Into History, Volume II*](#). Several further manuscripts in the same vein are currently being completed. Along with Nancy Hartvelt Kobrin, he is preparing a psychohistorical examination of why children terrorists kill other children.

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