

## THE DEMISE (AND SUBSEQUENT RESURRECTION) OF JEWISH HISTORIOGRAPHY IN THE SECOND TEMPLE PERIOD<sup>1</sup>

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ABSTRACT: Jewish historiography ceased to exist as a distinct genre during the Second Temple period, a time otherwise marked by rather prolific Jewish cultural production. The process whereby this has come about has been described by Yerushalmi as that of the displacement of history by memory. The present article seeks to identify the social context within which this displacement took place, namely, that of the gradual socio-political marginalization of the Jews in the course of the Hellenistic and Roman periods.

The topic figuring in the title of this article may be considered one of the most neglected great mysteries of antiquity. By an ironic quirk of history Jewish historiography started dwindling away at about the same time that Greek historiography was beginning to take shape in the 5<sup>th</sup>–4<sup>th</sup> centuries BC. By Roman times it was practically defunct, not to be revived again before the 19<sup>th</sup> century. Although the Jews had once been among the pioneers of historical writing, the contemporaries of Josephus and Philo – even some of the most learned amongst them, as rabbinic literature makes quite plain – were historically illiterate, profoundly unacquainted and uninterested in their own history, or in any other history for that matter<sup>2</sup>. How did this come about? What makes a people lose interest in its own past – and that at a time marked by an extremely prolific cultural production?

Jewish literature, moreover, written in Hebrew in spite of the surfacing of Aramaic as the language of daily exchange, legal documents and administration, has been shown to have served as a prime vehicle of ethnogenesis in the Second

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<sup>1</sup> This is a revised and expanded version of a paper initially presented at the 5<sup>th</sup> international conference on European history of the Athens Institute for Education and Research, Athens, under the title “The Demise of Jewish Historiography in the Second Temple Period”, and subsequently published in the proceedings of the conference under the same title.

<sup>2</sup> Tropper 2004: 186–190.

Temple period<sup>3</sup>. The absence of historiography – elsewhere a significant means of identity formation – from the rich literature of the time is indeed conspicuous.

To begin with, however, two points need to be addressed in order to establish the very terms in which the problem has been stated, universal agreement on neither of which may be taken for granted. First, what is it that I have just been referring to as ‘Jewish historiography’? Second Temple Judaism – to whose historiographical production this term would certainly aptly apply, being distinctly monotheistic and exclusivist in outlook<sup>4</sup> – was the product of a long process of development spanning two centuries at least, counting from the Deuteronomistic revolution. The historiography embedded in the Bible is, of course, much older than that<sup>5</sup>. Consequently, not all contributors to the Bible were ‘Jewish’ in this strict sense of the word; some, being henotheists, if not outright polytheists, would be better described as Yahwist<sup>6</sup>, or Hebrew, or Israelite<sup>7</sup>.

However, if we concentrate on the genre instead of the people, we may notice an interesting fact: what we casually refer to as ‘Jewish historiography’ had originated in a pagan society and was eventually taken over by a Christian one. The genre whose course of development we are tracing was born pagan, reached maturity and then died Jewish, only to be subsequently resurrected as Christian<sup>8</sup>. One could call it Israelite after its origins, thus evading the issue of religious creed; if I adhere to ‘Jewish historiography’ here it is because it was during its Jewish phase that it came to a halt, the occurrence which constitutes the problem to be addressed in what follows.

Second, do we really know that it died out in the period under consideration? Is this not an *argumentum ex silentio*? No, because some remains of the writings of Jewish historians of the Hellenistic and Roman periods are extant and available to us for perusal<sup>9</sup>, and paradoxically enough, they lend further evidence to the non-existence of Jewish historiography at the time. All extant Jewish sources from the Hellenistic period onwards, however related to the recording of the past, belong to either one of two categories: they were either produced within

<sup>3</sup> Goodblatt 2006: 65–67.

<sup>4</sup> But cf. Niehr 1999: 237–241.

<sup>5</sup> Assuming that the Bible in its entirety is not the product of ideologically motivated post-exilic mythopoeia as postulated by some scholars of the ultra-critical complexion discussed by Japhet 1999.

<sup>6</sup> Smith 1989: 188–190; E. Stern 2006: 201, who interprets the remains of material culture as pointing unequivocally to “the practice of a local ‘national Judean paganism’”.

<sup>7</sup> See Berquist 2006 on the elusiveness of religious, linguistic, geographical, and indeed several other reductionist indicators of identity pertinent to the issue at hand.

<sup>8</sup> Hengel 1979: 40–58; Marguerat 2002. I return to the issue of early Christian historiography and its relation to Jewish historiography in the concluding paragraphs of this article.

<sup>9</sup> Conveniently assembled in Holladay 1983.

the framework of Greek historiography – and so cannot be considered ‘Jewish historiography’ any more than Einstein’s theory of relativity can be considered ‘Jewish physics’ – or they demonstrate meagre acquaintance with the relevant data, or an antiquarian, i.e., an ahistorical orientation.

Of the first category the most obvious, and by far the most completely extant, is Josephus, whose prose falls indubitably well within the fold of Hellenistic historiography<sup>10</sup>. Josephus wrote his account of the “Jewish War” in Greek for the benefit of “the subjects of the Roman Empire”, a record of the war designed to meet the highest standard of “historical accuracy” by avoiding the common pitfalls of invective and encomium<sup>11</sup>. He understood the Jewish canon, on which he relied for his *Antiquities*, as *sui generis*, superior and different fundamentally from the works of pagan historians because of its divine authorization, but nevertheless made the conscious choice of addressing a gentile readership in its own idiom<sup>12</sup>. His was neither the first nor the only account of the war, and of the others engaged in similar projects and mentioned by him with condescension in his opening remarks, the only history produced by a Jew and whose fragments remain for us to judge by, namely that of Justus of Tiberias, was equally meant to comply by the conventions of the Greek genre.

In all, the fragments of at most ten Jewish authors engaged in one way or another with matters related to the nation’s past are extant; of these four only qualify as historians, Eupolemus, Ps.-Eupolemus, Ps.-Hecataeus and Justus of Tiberias, to whom should be added the elusive figure of Jason of Cyrene, whose lost five-volume history of the Maccabean period was the source of *II Maccabees*. They all wrote in Greek in conformity with Greek conventions of the genre, and so may have rightfully been described by Holladay as “representative of the tradition later to be embodied by Josephus”<sup>13</sup>, as long as what we understand by this description is a tradition of Jewish apologetics within Greek historiography rather than Jewish historiography *tout court*<sup>14</sup>.

Of the six others four, namely, Demetrius, Artapanus, Cleodemus Malchus and Aristeas, are exegetes or antiquarians whose concerns lie in reconciling internal inconsistencies and contradictions in the Bible, in ordering the chronological or genealogical sequences thereof or in correlating the account of the Bible with the traditions of the surrounding gentiles. What they hold in common with the contemporary Jewish historians is the apologetic or propagandistic

<sup>10</sup> Schwartz 1990: 23–57; Avidov 2008.

<sup>11</sup> Joseph. *BJ* I 2 f., and cf. *AJ* XX 262: “no one else, either Jew or gentile, would have been equal to the task [...] of issuing so accurate a treatise as this for the Greek world”.

<sup>12</sup> Hengel 1979: 31 on *C. Ap.* I 37.

<sup>13</sup> Holladay 1983: 97.

<sup>14</sup> Sterling 1992: 16 has aptly described “apologetic history” as “a host genre for natives who wrote the story of their own people in the form of Hellenistic historiography”.

objective and tone and the Greek garb. Two others, finally, included by Holladay in his collection, are doubtfully Jewish and most certainly not historians, namely, Theophilus<sup>15</sup> and Thallus.

Turning from apparent contenders to the title of historians to rabbinic literature, the only exception to the general indifference of the rabbis to history, the quasi-historical literary genre of the rabbinic chain of transmission<sup>16</sup>, has recently been shown to have been modelled upon a Hellenistic prototype of the Second Sophistic<sup>17</sup>. There is thus every reason to conclude that we do have the pertinent evidence to positively assert that genuine historiography was not part of Jewish literary production of the time.

Neglected indeed as the causes for the demise of Jewish historiography generally are in modern research, they have, however been addressed with monograph-scale studies by two great scholars of the previous generation, Arnaldo Momigliano<sup>18</sup> and Yoseph Haim Yerushalmi<sup>19</sup>. Both accord primacy of cause to the canonization of the Holy Scriptures, a process starting in the 5<sup>th</sup> century BC and culminating in the late 1<sup>st</sup> century AD. History, which for the Jews had always been the unfolding drama of Jehovah's troubled relationship with his chosen people<sup>20</sup>, had, it was felt, arrived at its final act. The present was perceived as but an interim period between the biblical past – “known, hallowed and sealed” – and the messianic future – “assured, but contingent on diligent cultivation of Jewish mores”<sup>21</sup>. It was not in itself the stuff of history. In the vigorous language of Momigliano: “...super-valuation of a certain type of history implied under-valuation of all other events. [...] The significance which the Jews came to attach to the Torah killed their interest in general historiography”<sup>22</sup>.

Yerushalmi's special added contribution to this reconstruction is in his distinction between history and memory, the latter being “encapsulated” in ritual and liturgy rather than embedded in scholarly enquiry. Generations upon generations of Jews could thus satisfy their universally human need for historic identity by means of a canonized script without seeking recourse in rational enquiry of the past.

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<sup>15</sup> Stern 1974–1984, No. XXII.

<sup>16</sup> The prime example is *Avot* 1, 1, which presents the (largely fictive) chain of transmission of the Torah from Sinai to the rabbis of the Tannaitic period.

<sup>17</sup> Tropper 2004: 191–197, who, in spite of its obvious shortcomings, considers it “historiography of a lesser sort”.

<sup>18</sup> Momigliano 1990: 5–28.

<sup>19</sup> Yerushalmi 1982.

<sup>20</sup> Bohrmann 1989.

<sup>21</sup> Yerushalmi 1982: 24.

<sup>22</sup> Momigliano 1990: 23.

Following Yerushalmi, in commenting on the un-historicity of the vast corpus of Talmudic literature produced in the aftermath of the cataclysmic events which had derailed Jewish history for millennia to come, M. Hadas-Label writes:

L'apport du Talmud et du Midrash relève en effet de la mémoire et non de l'histoire. Les faits historiques connus seulement par tradition orale, transmis dans la conscience collective du peuple à quelques générations de distance y sont soumis aux traitements les plus divers. La plupart se perdent, un petit nombre surnage erratiquement et se charge d'enjolivements et de significations nouvelles. Telle est bien l'œuvre lacunaire et sélective de la mémoire sur laquelle vient se greffer la réflexion du moraliste et de l'exégète<sup>23</sup>.

All this begs the question, whence these marks of orality in one of the most literate societies ever? As we have just seen, both Momigliano and Yerushalmi respond by explaining the displacement of historiography by memory in Israel in terms of the internal dialectics of Jewish culture and literature.

A different explanation, couched in the socio-political realities of the time, has recently been proffered by the Biblical scholar Alexander Rofé, who identifies the decisive cause in the loss of sovereignty<sup>24</sup>. Historiography, according to Rofé, thrived in the vicinity of the ruler's court, which provided both qualified writers and an involved readership. When sovereignty came to an end with the fall of the kingdom of Judah, historiography went down with it. This is a very persuasive argument, to which the momentary revival of Jewish historiography during the Hasmonean monarchy lends added weight<sup>25</sup>.

It is not my purpose to add an entirely new explanation to the existing ones, but rather to offer a new theoretical context within which to incorporate them. The context, I submit, is one of a protracted process of the marginalization of the Jews, beginning in the neo-Babylonian and Persian periods and reaching its culmination in Roman times. Perceiving themselves as deprived of the power to shape their own destinies, marginals habitually take little interest in the concerns of surrounding society, on which they have given up<sup>26</sup>. Characteristically, rosy and often vindictive visions of a future disjointed from linear time come to replace

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<sup>23</sup> Hadas-Label 1990: 127.

<sup>24</sup> Rofé 2006: 186 f.

<sup>25</sup> Note that this is a different argument from the one advanced by some 19<sup>th</sup> century historians referred to by Tropper 2004: 187 f., who dated the end of Jewish historiography to the period following the failed revolt against Rome and the destruction of the second temple in 70 AD and as a result thereof.

<sup>26</sup> See Mancini Bilson 2005: 34 f., n. 4 for a discussion of different degrees and manifestations of marginality-related personal maladjustment.

rational planning for the future<sup>27</sup>; occasional fits of exasperated action substitute for constructive interaction with impinging agents<sup>28</sup>; and, most significantly for the issue at hand, a self-absorbed, hazy, plaintive memory of a heroized past comes to replace a sustained effort to maintain an impassionate record of past events<sup>29</sup>. It should, therefore, come as no surprise that this, more or less, is what had indeed occurred in Israel as memory, embedded in, and transmitted by ritual and liturgy had come to replace history for the nation turned in upon itself.

Marginality, then, goes to explain the waning of Jewish historiography as one among several aspects of a phenomenon well-known from a rich and rapidly growing post-colonial literature<sup>30</sup>. Social marginality, strictly speaking, applies to segments of society which for whatever reason are unable or unwilling to fully play out their expected social roles within it. Marginality theory locates such populations both within and yet not fully integrated into a given society<sup>31</sup>. Although one may possibly conceive of marginal elements within a political system such as the Persian empire had been, this terminology gains full force only within an identifiable society into which one may, or may not, be socially integrated. Marginality is basically social integration gone amiss, and therefore applies to societies in which some measure of ongoing integration may be identified<sup>32</sup>. Consequently, the following argument makes no claim to identify marginality of the Jews prior to their incorporation in Roman imperial society, which was highly integrative<sup>33</sup>, but rather to trace the course of accumulation of marginalizing factors leading to that outcome in the preceding phases of the process.

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<sup>27</sup> See Hadas-Lebel 1990: 112 on *II Baruch* and *IV Esdras* as examples of the consolatory effect of the apocalyptic literature of the turn of the first century AD.

<sup>28</sup> See Hadas-Lebel 1990: 164 on Messianic feelings and aspirations leading to the revolt of Bar-Kochba in spite of the grave consequences of the revolts of 66–73 and 115–117.

<sup>29</sup> See Ben Zvi 2003 on the “discursive emphasis on a constructed ‘classical’ monarchic and pre-monarchic past and on an ideal future, which resulted in a discursive marginalization of the present”.

<sup>30</sup> Loomba 2005; Barklay 2005; Smith 1989: 8–63.

<sup>31</sup> Marginality has been defined by Germani 1980: 49 as “lack of participation of individuals and groups in those spheres in which, according to determined criteria, they might be expected to participate”. Three implicit points merit emphasis: (1) “lack of participation” implies that the individuals and groups referred to are taken to be included in a given society; they are not total outsiders; (2) marginality is closely bound up with expectations concerning the nature, scope or terms of participation in social life, viz., the viability of social roles; and (3) by “determined criteria” some socially sanctioned model of society is implied against which the reality of failed expectations may be measured.

<sup>32</sup> I have provided a detailed outline of the process leading to the marginalization of the Jews in my 1995 Cambridge Ph.D. thesis *Processes of Marginalization in the Roman Empire*. For a brief summary see Avidov 2008.

<sup>33</sup> Consider the role of manumission, e.g., coupled with patronage, as a mechanism of integration, on which see Millar 1995.

An ahistorical, viz., non-referential attitude to the past – it should be noted in passing – is not in itself necessarily a sign of marginality; archaic Greece and Rome provide us with well known examples of societies whose recollection of the past had once been mythical rather than historical. However, loss of historical consciousness where it previously had existed is indeed a rare and remarkable occurrence calling for special attention. The extraordinary aspect of such an event may be easier to grasp by a not altogether unrelated analogy to loss of literacy and reversion to orality, as had once occurred in Greece with the transition from the Bronze Age to the Dark Age. It is a cultural upheaval of such an order of magnitude as to be accounted for only by some cataclysmic factor, in this case the total dislocation of the Mycenaean civilization as a result of foreign invasion and destruction on a massive scale.

Although the marginalization of the Jews too was related to a trauma of similar magnitude – the destruction of the First Temple, loss of independence, exile – it was not in itself a singular event which can be located at a precise moment in history, but rather a protracted process both preceding the aforementioned trauma, and then progressing through centuries of accumulation of marginalizing factors on top of each other. Full blown social marginality can be identified only in Roman times; the process leading to it may be broken down to the following phases:

1) The Deuteronomistic revolution in the last quarter of the 7<sup>th</sup> century BC introduced an exclusivist tendency of unprecedented force into the cultural life of the Judean polity, in the form of strict monotheism<sup>34</sup>.

2) Loss of sovereignty and exile in the early 6<sup>th</sup> century transformed this tendency into the overriding unifying principle for the Babylonian community to construct its identity upon<sup>35</sup>.

3) Following Cyrus' celebrated declaration of 538 BC, under the auspices of the new Persian sovereign, the returnees took upon themselves to reconstruct communal life in Israel. They found themselves confronted with a whole host of contenders for inclusion and position within the emergent polity<sup>36</sup>. The ensuing conflicts pushed them further on to ever increased exclusivism<sup>37</sup>. Our chief literary sources for the 5<sup>th</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup> centuries are preoccupied with the issues of exogamy and ethnic purity<sup>38</sup>.

4) A brief period of sovereignty in the Hellenistic period – the Hasmonean state of 142–3 BC – generated the only substantial piece of historiography since

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<sup>34</sup> Becking 1999: 5–7.

<sup>35</sup> Smith 1989: 58–63, 190–197.

<sup>36</sup> Knoppers 2006; Kessler 2006.

<sup>37</sup> Bedford 2002; Kessler 2006, esp. pp. 107–112.

<sup>38</sup> Fried 2002; Smith 1989: 144–151.



Chronicles (5<sup>th</sup> century). It was the exception that proves the rule. Significantly, this was also a time marked by the secularization, by way of Hellenization, of the state. This was the time that the Jews came within the orbit of Hellenistic culture. Contact generated acculturation – but also polarization<sup>39</sup>. The history of the period was composed in Hebrew and in accordance with the canons of Biblical historiography. This is surely to be accounted for by conscious archaism, rather than any supposed tenacity of local tradition surviving a three century gap. *I Maccabees*, most probably written in the late 2<sup>nd</sup> century BC, may be regarded as the last flicker of a long defunct art. *I Macc.* 9, 22, which closes the account of Judas Maccabaeus' leadership of the revolt, in fact reads like an ironic comment by way of archaizing paraphrase on the spirit of the age: "Now the rest of the acts of Judas, and his wars and the brave deeds that he did, and his greatness, *have not* been recorded, but they are very many".

5) Roman occupation drew a final curtain on sovereignty. Henceforth, all local authority was to be vicarious and conditional on Roman concession. As a result, all local government – from Herod to the High-priestly class and the ruling elite, invested with authority by the occupying power but lacking a genuine legitimacy anchoring in society – was culturally, socially, and eventually politically as well, marginal to the society dominated by it. Judea, as noted by Martin Goodman twenty years ago, was a society ruled from its margins<sup>40</sup>. This fact alone need not have caused society itself to be marginalized in relation to the greater society of the empire. However, two further factors conspired to bring that eventuality about: the twin engines of integration, which elsewhere had generated social cohesion between the disparate peoples of the empire, did not operate in Judea: the imperial cult and the patronage network, from both of which the Jews were cut off. The marginality of the Jews of the Roman Empire was thus an accomplished fact even before the launching of the Vespasianic policy of conscious marginalization following the failed attempt at revolt in the 60s of the first century of our era. One cultural consequence was the demise of Jewish historiography.

Some Jews, however, still engaged themselves in writing history in Roman times, both in Judea and the Diaspora, but by now the fact that they had come within the orbit of Hellenistic culture was decisive: whatever historiography was produced towed the line of Greek historiography: Josephus and Justus of Tiberias naturally spring to mind. Genuine Jewish historiography, written in the vernacular, with an interested local readership in mind, was long defunct by that time. Whoever chose to invest their energies in pursuance of the now alien genre were impelled by forces external to Jewish society and did so outside its cultural confines.

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<sup>39</sup> Hengel 1974: vol. I, 308–313.

<sup>40</sup> Goodman 1987: 29–49.



To recapitulate then, there is no single overriding cause for the demise of Jewish historiography. Rather, it was a concatenation of causes and circumstances best understood within the overarching theory of marginalization, a protracted process which gradually brought about a transformation of the cultural conditions pertinent to the production of history. Yerushalmi, as I see it, was right in describing the process as one of the gradual displacement of history by memory. Postulating the underlying dynamics of marginality not only provides the context within which to identify this process, but also enables us to see that this displacement was not just one among several results of the closure of Jewish society, but also a causal factor in its own right in further propelling it along its course of marginalization.

There remains an unsettling afterthought. If the demise of Jewish historiography is indeed to be explained at least partly as the consequence of social marginality, how then are we to account for its resurgence at the hands of the earliest Christians, seemingly members of an equally, if not exceedingly marginal group? Martin Hengel, in a solitary, unelaborated comment, even goes further to hint at a possible causal connection between the two occurrences<sup>41</sup>:

After the destruction of the sanctuary [...] the events of the present were no longer worth writing down. [...] In effect the consciousness of a history of salvation which had produced the Old Testament and Jewish historiography, passed over to earliest Christianity. We might ask whether this development under the rabbis was not, among other things, a reaction to the rise of the gospels.

Engaging as this proposition may seem at first sight, it should be rejected on two counts. First, because, as we have seen, Jewish historiography had run its term centuries before Christian historiography arrived on the scene for the rabbis to react to; and second, because there is no reason to expect – conceding, for the sake of argument, that they were otherwise historically oriented – that the rabbis should react to the appearance of a Christian historiography by courteously making way for it to the point of abandoning the field entirely. A causal link may, however, still be lurking here, though, I venture to say, the argument has to be turned on its head for us to see it: historiography was one among several manifestations of the breaking away of the budding movement from its Jewish roots. On this view, early Christian historiography may be seen, partly at least, as the expression of a reaction to the increasingly inward looking stance of the rabbis. The key text is Luke–Acts whose author has recently been hailed as “the first Christian historian”<sup>42</sup>.

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<sup>41</sup> Hengel 1979: 33 f.

<sup>42</sup> Marguerat 2002. Following Paul Ricoeur, Marguerat distinguishes (pp. 8 f.) between three types of historiography, documentary, explicative and poetic. Of the third he writes that “its truth lies in the interpretation it gives to the past and the possibility it offers to a community to understand itself in the present. In other words, what historiography in the strong sense recognizes as trustworthy

Luke–Acts presents us with an intriguing duality in its relation to Christianity’s Jewish origins: on the one hand it harks back to a biblical theology and worldview; on the other hand it endorses a markedly open stance towards the surrounding gentile society which is strikingly alien to contemporary Judaism. A close reading of the text of Luke–Acts has led Marguerat to define the author’s underlying program as one of “theological integration”, since it insinuates, throughout the diptych – semantically, thematically and by its descriptive art – an integration of the universality of the Roman empire with the particularity of Jewish salvation<sup>43</sup>:

...the author seeks to define Christian identity by a double demonstration, which creates strong tensions in his narrative: on the one hand, he seeks the roots of the Church in Jerusalem, that is, in the continuation of a history of salvation that began with Israel; and on the other hand, God opens up to universality, where the Roman Empire represents the framework for geographical and political expansion. The two sides of the amphibology go back to the two points of reference for the identity of nascent Christianity. Luke’s theological ambition even permeates his choices of writing, which hold open the continuity with Israel as well as the expansion to the nations. The phenomenon of double signification serves this theological programme, since it presents Christianity as both the fulfillment of the promises of the Scriptures and as the answer to the religious quest of the Graeco-Roman world.

Earlier he has explained the seemingly triumphalist emphasis laid by Luke on the expansion of the Christian mission by ascribing it to his “theology of providence”<sup>44</sup>. Not triumphalism but providence. In terms of marginality theory, what is significant here is that the view advanced by the author is not overwhelmed by the structural aspects of the condition of marginality because it superimposes on them his theory of providence. The Christian church is not only, as the true Israel, in possession of the ultimate truth and the pledge of a distant future salvation: the future is here, and the world is opening up to the unfolding fulfillment of the divine promise. The addressee has evolved, however, in the meantime, and Israel is now poised to embrace any and every true believer. A huge leap is involved in terms of the issue at hand, from extreme exclusivism to the other extreme of an integrationist religion.

But we are interested in the social circumstances of the individual whose historiography has given enduring expression to this theological vision – which brings us back to the issue of marginality. Social marginality is a hybrid concept in that it purports to signify a phenomenon identified and explained through its two rather loosely interrelated dimensions, the structural and the cultural. Although this is by

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is the self-consciousness that it offers to the group of readers”. *Acts* belongs, of course, with this last category of historiography.

<sup>43</sup> Marguerat 2002: 75 f.

<sup>44</sup> Marguerat 2002: 38–40.

no means the current consensus<sup>45</sup>, the cultural dimension should, I submit, take precedence over the structural. Structurally, marginality refers to the location of actors in relation to each other, in terms of their social, economic and ecological relations, within a conceptually engendered graphic representation of an analytically delimited section of a given population. Culturally, it refers to the inter-subjectively perceived definientia, whose presence qualifies actors as pertaining to those structurally defined sections of society. It is these definientia to which I was referring earlier when defining marginality as the condition of those actors within society who are prevented, for whatever reason, from performing their social roles.

Social roles are essentially sets of expectations, that is, inter-subjective notions of social location and function: given one's social location, how is one to comport oneself in each of one's socially sanctioned roles? These notions are inter-subjective because they are perceived as simultaneously both collective (and thus part of culture) and intensely personal. When these two aspects coalesce (when no difference is perceived to exist between an actor's understanding of his/her role-set and the way it is perceived by society at large), we may infer that the social actor in question is well-integrated.

Social roles are vital for the preservation of society and for the well-being of its constituent members, as their free implementation is essential for the integration of society. To be integrated into society means to be able to freely play out one's social roles. For marginality to arise actors need to be prevented from playing out their roles; but this is only a necessary condition, not a sufficient one. Frustrated role expectations may just as likely lead to the attempt to negotiate the roles in question, and, in the process, to defiance, resistance, conflict or rebellion, according to whatever specific circumstances pertaining to any particular case<sup>46</sup>. It is only when the frustration of one's roles is subjectively accepted as a permanent state to be reconciled with that one's social condition may be described as that of marginality. None of the structural characteristics of marginality or any combination thereof, regardless of their centrality in its aetiology<sup>47</sup>, is in itself sufficient for

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<sup>45</sup> Cf. Mancini Billson 2005.

<sup>46</sup> A good example is the apostle Paul of *Acts*; discussed by Marguerat 2002: 66 f. Paul could be the quintessential "marginal man" since he is located exactly "at the crossroads of two worlds". He defies, however, that role in that he is most energetically engaged in a project of self re-definition.

<sup>47</sup> Dunne 2005: 14 f. for the aetiology of marginality understood through Shils' theory of centre/periphery relations, refined in several ways as follows: first and foremost, social distance is understood in terms of the quality and volume of flow of resources, and marginality is understood as the condition of those social actors to, and from whom resource flow is restricted; second, multiple local centres are allowed for in place of the one centre postulated by Shils; and third, allowance is made for voluntary restriction of resources flow, i.e., voluntary marginality; finally, since multiple centres are postulated, marginality is understood as a multi-dimensional phenomenon "in that a given person may be simultaneously integrated with one or more centers while being marginal from one or other centers". This is a very bold attempt to describe marginality in strictly structural terms. Although it captures the most salient structural elements of marginality it fails to distinguish aetiology from consequences and falls

its identification<sup>48</sup>. The linchpin of marginality is this particular mental condition of resignation. In the crudest of terms it is quite simply the acceptance – whether conscious and articulated or not – of one’s defeat in a power struggle; and this is what makes marginality primarily a political phenomenon<sup>49</sup>.

The earliest Christians may have borne many of the structural marks of marginality, but unlike the Jewish society from which they had sprung, far from being reconciled to their predicament of exclusion, they conceived themselves as engaged in a struggle over the terms of inclusion into the society of the Roman empire. In this endeavour, quite predictably, historiography served them well as a prime vehicle of expression and identity-formation.

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short of giving due weight to cultural factors such as group identity and political consciousness, for which reason I am not surprised by Dunne’s conclusion (32) that “pure forms of marginality are hard to find”, by which he presumably means forms conforming to his pure structural categories.

<sup>48</sup> See Germani 1980: 7 for marginality distinguished from poverty. Germani understands marginality as conceptually located on a different level than social stratification, related as it is to political consciousness as well as to pertinent aspects of lifestyle.

<sup>49</sup> Germani 1980: 13.

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