

# Joint Berlin-Jerusalem Post-Doctoral Fellowship Program

Confidential information

**Justine Walden**

Application number: joint-postdocs-5348

## Core Data

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**Field of Research:** Humanities

**Title of Research Proposal:** Connected Histories: Jews, Muslims, and Race in The Letter of Rabbi Samuel.

**PhD University:** Yale University

**Year of PhD:** 2016

**Current Institution:** University of Toronto

**Year of Award:**

**Recommendation 1, First Name(s):** Carlos M. N.

**Recommendation 1, Last name:** Eire

**Recommendation 1, Institution:** Yale University

**Recommendation 2, First Name(s):** Francesca

**Recommendation 2, Last Name:** Trivellato

**Recommendation 2, Institution:** Yale University

**Endorsement FUB, first name(s):** Konrad

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**Endorsement HUJI, first name(s):** Elisheva

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Figure 1: Project Proposal and time plan, 1 (2018\_01\_31\_1517432283.pdf)

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## I. Project Summary

I would like to propose a joint fellowship at the Freie University of Berlin and the Hebrew University of Jerusalem so as to research and write my second monograph, tentatively entitled, *Connected Histories: Jews, Muslims, and Race in The Letter of Rabbi Samuel*.

The monograph will describe the travel, spread, and transformations of an antiJudaic treatise called the *Letter of Rabbi Samuel*, a tract which saw extreme popularity across all of Europe in the late medieval and early modern periods. Known variously as *Letter Against the Error of the Jews*, *Contra iudeorum proterviam*—‘Against The Proud Jews’, and many other names, the *Letter of Rabbi Samuel* took the form of an epistolary dialogue between two Jews. The fictional author, the titular Rabbi Samuel, hailed from either Fez or ‘Subulmeta’—a corruption of Sijilmassa in Morocco. About to convert to Christianity, he set about explaining the reasons for the abject conditions of Jews to his friend, Rabbi Isaac. Though the *Letter* claimed to be written at the beginning of the eleventh century, it was written in the fourteenth century by the Spanish Dominican Alfonse Bonominis, who claimed to have discovered and translated the *Letter* out of Arabic in the *Letter’s* preface.

The *Letter of Rabbi Samuel* saw unprecedented success in Christian Europe. It flourished in manuscript form from the fourteenth century onward, with a notable spike in production in Observant Mendicant circles in Germany and Italy, which are my areas of geographic focus. The *Letter* first appeared in Latin, but was quickly vernacularized into German, Italian, Spanish, French, English, and Polish. With the advent of print, the tract saw exponential multiplication. I began a database to compile manuscript and print versions of this work in 2012. To date, I have located 154 manuscripts and hundreds of print editions, and studied about fifty of them.

While the *Letter’s* overarching anti-Jewish theme remained constant over time and space, other emphases shifted, as when a chapter seeking to refute Judaism with arguments from the Quran was added in the fifteenth century, and when in seventeenth-century England, a printer injected the work with racial import when he recast the titular Moroccan Jew as a ‘Blackamoor’. The work thus seems critically important as a site of convergence for European Christian hostility towards Jews, Muslims, and ultimately, people of color. Through an analysis of the work’s contexts of production and strategies of presentation, I am to deconstruct the manner in which the work’s symbolic associations were harnessed over time to construct and maintain these persecutory discourses.

Figure 2: Project Proposal and time plan, 2 (2018\_01\_31\_1517432283.pdf)

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## II. Monograph Description

As I currently envision it, the monograph will examine a series of three major connected histories over time. Part I will examine the *Letter's* Mendicant origins, its work against Jews and its paratexts across the centuries. Part II will examine the significance of the Quranic chapter and the *Letter's* relationship to Muslims and Arabs. Part III will focus on the meaning of the *Letter's* reference to 'Blackamoors'. On the basis of my historiographic and manuscript research thus far, I have developed several preliminary hypotheses about the *Letter*.

### A. Friars, Jews, and European AntiJudaism

The *Letter* was above all an antiJudaic treatise. Its protagonist, the would-be convert the Rabbi Samuel, represented the most powerful model Christianity could muster for its truths: a preaching, teaching, converted Jew—though this in itself is a point requiring analysis and explanation. The *Letter's* many references to Dominican activities and proliferation in Mendicant circles suggest that its early circulation was allied to Mendicant evangelizing efforts, a point I need to further establish by consulting undigitized manuscripts in European libraries.<sup>1</sup>

The *Letter's* Mendicant links puts my study in direct dialogue with Jeremy Cohen's seminal *Friars and Jews* (1982). However, where Cohen focused on formal Mendicant disputation and thirteenth-century theological attacks on Judaism, I see the *Letter* as embodying a very different set of Mendicant antiJewish initiatives in the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries. Contrary to historiography which classed the *Letter* with other forms of thirteenth-century polemic,<sup>2</sup> I read the *Letter* as disbanding with the genre of disputation—for fundamentally, it only gestures to it—and betokening the reach of Mendicant ideas and influence into practical and political life.<sup>3</sup> Practically speaking, though Mendicants held no *de jure* political power, throughout the fifteenth century, Christian governments, particularly new ones, welcomed Mendicants as bringers of order via their virulent preaching, and there is much evidence to suggest that Mendicants penetrated deeply into the

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<sup>1</sup> Another portion of this phase of research will be to map sites of manuscript printing and production to see if they coincide with Mendicant presence or alternate forms of antiJudaic activity.

<sup>2</sup> Limor and Strousma, 1996.

<sup>3</sup> The *Letter* was a decidedly unscholarly document. Though it recapitulated the ancient and unoriginal charge of Christ-killing, it asked readers to collude in this notion not via appeal to the thirteenth-century strategies of *auctoritas* or reason. Instead, it asked its readers and copyists to deduce the guilt of the Jews on the basis of experience and observation. The present degraded, dispersed, and abject state of European Jewry was supposed to lead readers to deduce that to incur this fate, Jews must have committed the worst possible sin, decide.

Figure 3: Project Proposal and time plan, 3 (2018\_01\_31\_1517432283.pdf)

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fabric of daily life: preaching events, the Mendicant translation of secular works into the vernacular, the frequent exchange of texts between Mendicants and townspeople, and a popular fourteenth-century cycle of song-poems based directly upon the *Letter*, *Von den Juden* (*Concerning the Jews*).<sup>4</sup> Ultimately, Mendicant influence on political and local life along with factors economic, social, and religious and the explosive force of print combined to normalize and legitimate aggressive discourses against Jews and Judaism, and to place such discourses in the hands of those better positioned or disposed to deploy force against them.

The second portion of my discussion of the *Letter's* antiJudaism will track its circulation first in manuscript and then in print to see how its meanings and collaborators changed over time and space. After the *Letter's* first printing in 1475, it saw a massive number of further vernacularizations and reprintings throughout Europe. The Brothers of the Common Life (the *Devotio Moderna*) published it at Brussels, and it saw multiple reprintings in Augsburg, Sant'Orso, Mantua, Naples, Mainz, Florence, Rome, Bologna, Cologne, and Antwerp. In the seventeenth century, the *Letter* was reissued at York, Macerata, Padua, Poland, Lucerne, Venice, Nuremberg, Strasburg, Ancona, Paris, Colmar, Wittenberg, Zurich, Augsburg, Zwickau, Brescia, Madrid, and London. In the eighteenth century—the century during which religious concerns were once thought to have receded from the public sphere—the *Letter* was reprinted in twenty-one more cities. The last printing I have identified was in 1855 in London.

As it traveled through time and across space, the *Letter* took on new valences from the works with which it was copied and printed and from the prefatory material which framed it. It played different roles in different national contexts. In fourteenth and fifteenth-century Germany, the *Letter* held a notable place either preceding or the end of 'people's bibles'—colorful, illustrated bibles designed to teach the truths of scripture to the unlettered. It also saw a vast circulation in 'high' orbits such as scholastic treatises. At the beginning of Reformation conflicts, the *Letter* assumed apocalyptic overtones in German-speaking lands through an emphasis on prophecy, as in the Zurich printing of *Ein Benysung, das der war Messias kummen syg: des die Juden noch on Vrsach zükünfftig sein wartend* (Getruckt zü Zürich: Durch Johansen Hager, Im. 1524.)

The *Letter's* vernacularization in Italy first occurred in 1468 in Laurentian Florence, a period often characterized by free intellectual interchange between humanists and Jews. Its translator was

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<sup>4</sup> Recent scholarship contains further evidence of Mendicants wielding influence on secular leaders at all levels of the political hierarchy and across different national contexts. Echevaria 2015, Beebe 2014, Johnson 2012, McMichael 2012.

Figure 4: Project Proposal and time plan, 4 (2018\_01\_31\_1517432283.pdf)

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Sebastian Salvini, a humanist and member of Marsilio Ficino's circle, and the work, vernacularized and carefully copied in a humanist hand, was dedicated to a Hungarian bishop at a time of particular fear of incursions by the Ottoman Turks into Hungary. In Italy, printers frequently issued the *Letter* first in Latin and then in the vernacular, which may speak to a particular marketing strategy of printers or to Mendicant-printer collaboration.

Each generation reinflected and re-presented the *Letter* in different ways. At times the *Letter* wore its antiJudaism on its sleeve and it was copied with other overtly antiJudaic works such as the blood libel of Simon of Trent. At times the work appears to have been given to children in a didactic spirit as a form of writing practice. Sometimes the *Letter* traveled alongside distinguished works, adopting their style of presentation and thereby according the work an aura of scholarly legitimacy, as when it began to be printed with Paul of Burgos' *Scrutinium Scripturarum*. Later versions capitalized on forms of ancient prestige, as when the 1746 Jesuit edition presented to Hungarian theology doctorates heightened the *Letter's* authority by citing its printing at Macerata by the distinguished Bolognese printer Grifonius. Though versions of the *Letter* were rarely over 120 pages, it was carefully bound for preservation in libraries across Europe. It is certain that beyond copying and printing, the work saw vast consumption, for Christopher Columbus read the *Letter* and reproduced three of its passages in his book of prophecies from 1501-1502.

#### B. Jewish-Muslim Relations, Arab-Speaking Jews, and the Quran

The second section of my study will seek to understand the symbolic meanings of the *Letter* as it relates to European ideas about Jewish-Muslim relations and Arab-speaking Jews.

In its earliest incarnation, the *Letter of Rabbi Samuel* bore a prefatory letter that over time was addressed to various generals of the Dominican order. As noted, the *Letter* was authored by a Spanish Dominican. In the first century of their founding, the thirteenth, Mendicants had optimistically dispatched preachers to places like Tunis and Marrakesh to convert both Jews and Muslims. They met with decidedly little success, with such efforts inevitably ending with missionaries and preachers being killed (or martyred). By the fourteenth century, Mendicants disbanded with such efforts and retreated to Europe to preach to a more receptive audience—Catholics—about enemies within (Jews) and without (Ottoman Turks). When they resumed their conversionary efforts, Mendicants typically did so only at a vaster scale and supported by secular mandate or force. This background of Mendicant missionary failure in concert with Rabbi Samuel's status as a Moroccan Jew about to convert suggest that the *Letter* functioned as a symbolic, if

Figure 5: Project Proposal and time plan, 5 (2018\_01\_31\_1517432283.pdf)

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spurious, token of Mendicant missionary victory in North Africa. At the same time, the *Letter's* dismissal of reasoned argument in favor of gossipy intrigue and its appeal to experience, along with its suspicion of Jewish, and as we shall see, Jewish-Arab collusion, and its persistent hope of Jewish conversion signaled new shifts in Mendicant strategy.

As noted, in the fifteenth century, a twenty-seventh (and final) chapter was added which purported to demonstrate the fallacies of Judaism using arguments from the Quran. On the one hand, the appearance of this chapter hearkened back to earlier eras, for Mohammad had debated the Jews of Medina and Quranic polemic against Jews centered around scriptural falsification or distortion (*Tahriif*). Yet aside from Muslim extremist movements in the twelfth century, Quranic arguments rarely led to violent and religiously based antiJudaism of the sort found in Christianity. In short, only Christians used the Quran to refute Judaism. Yet the *Letter's* uses of the Quran to refute Judaism broke new ground by providing an inverted image of the Christian fear of Jewish-Muslim collusion, a fear with medieval roots and legitimate foundations insofar as Jews in lands under Muslim rule enjoyed a safer and more stable position than Jews living in Christian regimes. Such fears assumed new force with the growth of millennial eschatology and as Muslim empires gained ground in the Mediterranean in the fourteenth through the sixteenth centuries. While the *Letter* was ultimately more concerned with the 'internal enemy' of Jews than an Islamic military or theological threat, it suggested that Christians routinely thought of their enemies in concert.

A key feature of the *Letter's* persistence and centuries-long popularity consists of its fictitious siting at Sijilmassa/Fez in Morocco, both sites of great symbolic importance. Sijilmassa had been home to a major Jewish community which prospered under Arab rule as a node in Trans Saharan trade, and Fez had been home to an intellectually and commercially successful Jewish *mellah* from the ninth until the eleventh century. Yet both Fez and Sijilmassa were sites of forced Jewish conversions and massacre, and so were charged sites of interfaith instability. By the fifteenth century, Europeans were well aware that Morocco was the last Muslim country in the southern Mediterranean still independent of Ottoman rule, and so the notion of converting a Moroccan Jew possessed a connotation of overtaking of a mysterious and fundamentally unconquerable people.

A final source of the *Letter's* resonance lay in the linguistic associations it made between Judaism, Arabic, and occult information. The work's preface declared that it had been 'hidden' by the Jews for 230 years, and its purported origin in Arabic added to this mystique. Like Hebrew, Arabic represented a powerful language of wisdom and science inaccessible to most Christians, but one to which Jews in Arab lands, who were typically bilingual, had privileged access. Bonhominis'

Figure 6: Project Proposal and time plan, 6 (2018\_01\_31\_1517432283.pdf)

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purported discovery and deciphering of the spurious *Letter* thus represented a major tactical interception: a cracking of the code of secret knowledge, an exposure of the feared collaboration between Arabs and Jews, and an entry into a privileged circle from which Christians were typically excluded. These are some of the themes I will explore in the section on Muslims and Arabs.

### C. Race

The *Letter* assumed racist overtones when it was translated in 1648 England as *The Blessed Jew of Morocco: or, a Blackamoor Made White* (York: Thomas Calvert, minister of the Word). Part III of the book will track the *Letter's* entry into color-based racism by examining what it meant for a Moroccan Jew to be re-presented as a 'Blackamoor'. Moors, former Muslims from Spain and Portugal of mixed Arab, Spanish, and Amazigh (Berber) origins, had skin tone that ranged from light to dark. But considered against the background of Shakespeare's *Othello* (*The Tragedy of Othello, the Moor of Venice*, 1603) and England's entry into the Transatlantic slave trade, the idea of black moors was much on peoples' minds and the designation of Moors as 'Black' was more than metaphorical. Also to be discussed here is how the *Letter's* status as a persecutory document assumed new meanings and drew strength from ignorance, and how it signals the dawning of a racism predicated on skin color, a conception once considered possible only in a nineteenth-century scientific milieu.

### D. Conclusion

A monolithic approach to European Anti-Semitism as prelude to the atrocities of the twentieth century has given way to more context-driven studies of antiJudaism. Focused studies, however, are sometimes isolated—on a theoretical level, at least—from broader currents,<sup>5</sup> and focus can come at the expense of a sense of persistence or development over time. Moreover, it is sometimes difficult to substantiate theories of a relationship between antiJudaism and other forms of hatred such as anti-Islam and racism, an insight that is currently receiving intellectual traction<sup>6</sup>. My study of the *Letter's* connected histories of antiJudaism is therefore important in that it will help restore a sense of historical continuity that has receded, and that it provides irrefutable historical evidence for links between antiJudaism, antipathy toward Muslims and Islam, and racially-based hostility.

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<sup>5</sup> The nominalism espoused in Nirenberg, the importance of his work notwithstanding, is emblematic of this approach.

<sup>6</sup> Here, see, for example, the mission statement of the Pears Institute for the Study of Antisemitism at Birkbeck, University of London (<http://www.pearsinstitute.bbk.ac.uk/>).

Figure 7: Project Proposal and time plan, 7 (2018\_01\_31\_1517432283.pdf)

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To summarize: a careful study of the *Letter of Rabbi Samuel* is important in that the document uniquely embodies and expresses a series of connected histories. In the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries, it revealed how Mendicants began to combat their Jewish enemies in Europe in a range of new pragmatic and political ways. As a printed treatise in the fifteenth century, the *Letter* harnessed both popular fears of Muslims and Arabs and popular ignorance thereof. Beyond the fifteenth century, the *Letter* penetrated cultural ambits both high and low through a radical alteration of paratexts. In the seventeenth century, the *Letter's* Moroccan Jewish protagonist became a dark-skinned Moor and thus links antiJudaic sentiments to race-based hatred across time and space. While it is important to avoid positing a monolithic anti-Judaism or single uninflected persecutory discourse that spans the centuries, the work's transformations and the manner in which it exposes diverse modes of persecution in the West over time and across national boundaries seem to me deeply provocative and worthy of in-depth scholarship. My aim as a historian is to contribute scholarship that is internationally relevant, meaningful and interesting, and above all, humane. A careful study of the *Letter of Rabbi Samuel* would seem to me to meet these criteria.

## II. Extant Scholarship

Little scholarship on the *Letter of Rabbi Samuel* exists to date. Early scholarship debated the veracity of Alfonso Buenhombre's claims to discovery and translation, but by the twentieth century there was scholarly consensus on Bonhominis' authorship (Van den Oudenrijn, 2910; Meersseman, 1940). A later generation traced the philological variations of the *Letter's* German translation by the cleric Irmardt Oser (Marsmann, 1971). Limor and Strousma classed the *Letter* with thirteenth-century Christian AntiJewish polemics as defined by Funkenstein (1971), Limor determining that the *Letter* was fundamentally about exile and calling attention to its potential missionary links (Limor/Strousma, 1996). Szpiech studied a manuscript exemplar of Paul of Burgos' *Scrutinio Scripturarum*, though gave little consideration to the letter that traveled with it (Szpiech, 2005). The *Letter's* Muslim component has been discussed relatively recently, though only cursorily (Tolan, 2000; Harris, 2000) or in relation to another work by Bonhominis, the *Disputatio Abutalib*, a series of invented letters between a Muslim and a Jew (i Bas, 2015). I am not aware of any scholars who have studied the *Letter* across national boundaries, who have investigated the work's paratexts, who have considered the work's multiple valences in tandem, or who have addressed the implications of this otherwise unimportant treatise's turn to race in the seventeenth century.

Figure 8: Project Proposal and time plan, 8 (2018\_01\_31\_1517432283.pdf)

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### III. Timeline for Study in Jerusalem and Berlin; Scholarly Cross-Fertilization

Perspectives from Jewish and Islamic studies are critical to balancing my study of the reception of the *Letter of Rabbi Samuel*, as is my ability to consult more manuscript exemplars. Thus my first fellowship year at Hebrew University will be spend on understanding the *Letter* from a Jewish perspective. Here I will work with Elisheva Baumgarten, a specialist in Jewish communities in Germany and Northern France who has invited me to participate in her working group *Beyond the Elite*. Tzafir Barzilay's work on well-poisoning accusations will be particularly relevant here. I also wish to work with Yanai Israeli on Jewish conversion, Ram Ben-Shalom on Jews in fifteenth-century Spain and France, Avelet Ezra on medieval manuscripts, and Israel Yuval on Jewish History. It is of additional importance that I complete the Hebrew University component in 2018 since Dr. Yuval will retire next year. During my residence in Jerusalem, I will seek assistance in locating instances of Jewish response to the *Letter* as well as help in Hebrew translation. In Summer 2018, I will tour Europe to review undigitized manuscript exemplars.

During my second year in Berlin, I will focus on the *Letter's* Muslim and Jewish-Arabic dimensions under the guidance of Konrad Hirschler at the Institute of Islamic Studies. His work in Muslim history across the medieval and early modern divide is critical to my decoding these aspects of the *Letter*, and his work in book history aligns with my methodology. During my first few months in Berlin I will consult undigitized manuscript exemplars in German and Austrian libraries, and during the remainder of the year I will work on translating the German version of the *Letter*, consulting with native speakers so as to understand differences between the German and Italian versions, and soliciting feedback on chapter drafts in the Middle Ages-Renaissance-Early Modern Forum in the Department of History and Cultural Studies. I will continue to study the *Letter's* AntiJudaic dimensions in Berlin via consultation with Giulio Busi, who works on Jews in fifteenth-century Italy, and Klaus Herrmann, who works on Theology and Jewish Literature (both at the Institute for Jewish Studies at the Freie University). In the Summer of 2019 I will consult remaining manuscript exemplars as required.

There is some urgency in initiating this project. In addition to the impending retirement of Dr. Yuval, Cohen's thesis that Mendicants were central in producing antiJewish discourses has been dismissed and refuted,<sup>7</sup> and conciliatory historiography emphasizing the pacific nature of Mendicant

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<sup>7</sup> Stow (1998 and 2004), Ocker, Thompson, and several others have argued that the purported links between Mendicants and antiJudaism are unfounded since direct causal links cannot be always and everywhere demonstrated. In addition to

Figure 9: Project Proposal and time plan, 9 (2018\_01\_31\_1517432283.pdf)

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activities has grown.<sup>8</sup> This, against the contemporary background of broader global upswings in antiJudaism, racism and xenophobia, suggest the need for renewed effort to understand the roots of persecutory thought and activities.<sup>9</sup>

#### IV. Qualifications

My graduate training at Yale has given me a strong foundation in early modern Catholicism, religious orders, AntiJudaism, and book history.<sup>10</sup> My training in codicology and considerable time spent in rare book rooms and archives has made me particularly sensitive to the use of manuscripts and paratexts in reconstructing early modern mentalities.<sup>11</sup>

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adducing many instances of the so-called 'effectiveness' of Mendicant preaching (cf. Muzzarelli), I argue that the origin of the *Letter* in Mendicant circles is indisputable, as is the work of Mendicants to legitimate anti-Judaic discourses in ways that intersected with the lives of ordinary people as well as political leader capable of taking action.

<sup>8</sup> See, for example, Smoller and Polecristi's emphasis on Mendicants as peacemakers; the many recent publications of Bert Roest, or the call to a recent conference at the Academy of Athens which describes Mendicants as the 'compassionate face of Catholic Western Europe'.

<sup>9</sup> The study of paratexts--items such as titles, prefaces, and other framing elements that accompany written works--has attracted increasing attention as a privileged tool for understanding the reception of texts. Since 1987 when the concept was articulated by Genet, the method has been used productively in the study of early modern bibles, and is particularly well-suited for the study of texts produced in quantity. A study of the *Letter's* paratexts is eminently more possible today due to recent manuscript digitization initiatives.

<sup>10</sup> My BA is in Philosophy from UC Berkeley, where I was deeply influenced by Isaiah Berlin's ideas of value pluralism and political institutions as protectors of citizens from exercises of arbitrary power. My second degree was in American Civilization from the University of Pennsylvania, where I focused on the religious roots of American political life and culture. Working backward to understand religious thought, I arrived at the study of Europe in the early modern period.

<sup>11</sup> Also preparatory to this study is research I completed for my dissertation and my first monograph, which I am currently completing. In brief, these works examined how a monastic order in Italy known as the Vallombrosans fought the rise of Mendicant Observance in fifteenth-century Italy and lost. The Vallombrosans, a relatively anodyne form of Catholicism, were eclipsed by the more aggressive Mendicants due to the latter's ability to forge links with urban populations and secular leaders. The outcome of Mendicant victory was, I argue, the development of increasingly effective ways to persecute those beyond the pale of Catholicism. The point is important, for it reveals that different forms of Catholicism had different outcomes. More recently, at the University of Toronto, I have been working on mapping Jews for an online digital mapping project on fifteenth-and sixteenth- century Florence, and completing two articles on Christian-Jewish relations.

Figure 10: Project Proposal and time plan, 10 (2018\_01\_31\_1517432283.pdf)

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Figure 11: Curriculum Vitae including list of publications, 1 (2018\_01\_31\_1517432316.pdf)

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**ACADEMIC EMPLOYMENT**

- 2016-7 Postdoctoral Research Fellow, Department of History, University of Toronto.  
Monograph Project: *Religious Rivalry and Persecution in Renaissance Italy and Beyond*  
Work on DECIMA project: HGIS, digitally mapping early modern Jews.
- 2017 (sum) Visiting Scholar, Schoenberg Manuscript Institute, Philadelphia, PA  
Project: *Digitizing Florentine Manuscript Catalogues*
- 2016 (sum) Postdoctoral Project, Oxford University, Networking the Republic of Letters.  
Project: *ItaLet: A Database of Early Modern Italian Letters*

**EDUCATION**

- 2008-2016 PhD, Yale University, History and Renaissance Studies  
Dissertation: *Foaming Mouth and Eyes Aflame: Exorcism and Power in Renaissance Florence*  
Advisors Carlos Eire, Francesca Trivellato, Bruce Gordon.  
Foci: Religion, Late Medieval Europe; Renaissance Italy; Book History; Catholic Deviance (Heresy, Skepticism, Atheism, Inquisition); AntiJudaism
- 1999 MA, American Civilization, University of Pennsylvania(1999)  
Fellowships: *William Penn Fellowship*, *Penn Humanities Forum* (declined), *Smithsonian Museum of American Art*, *Terra American Art Museum*, *Winterthur Decorative Arts Museum*, *Samuel Fels/Philadelphia Academy of Art Summer Fellow Internship*.
- 1992 BA, Philosophy, University of California at Berkeley.  
Fellowships: Honors/Distinction in Scholarship; Phi Beta Kappa; Honors Thesis (Richard Rorty's Nietzschean Ethics in *Contingency, Irony, and Solidarity*).

*Doctoral Fellowships:*

- 2014 *Susan Rhoda Cutler Fellowship, Yale University* for dissertation research and writing
- 2013 *Beinecke Rare Book Library, Yale University* for rare manuscript study
- 2012 *MacMillan Center for International and Area Studies* for archival research in Florence  
*Salo Baron Program in Antisemitism* for research on Jews in Renaissance Florence  
*Renaissance Society of America* for research on Florentine manuscripts
- 2011 *Andrew Mellon Foundation* for Italian paleography course at Newberry Library, Chicago  
*Medici Archive Project/Kress Foundation* for archival research and paleography seminar  
*Dreyfus Foundation* (declined)
- 2010 *Beinecke Rare Book Library, Yale University* for paleography and codicology study
- 2009 *FLAS/European Studies*, for Italian language study

Figure 12: Curriculum Vitae including list of publications, 2 (2018\_01\_31\_1517432316.pdf)

**PUBLICATIONS**

“Jewish Residence in Florence before the Ghetto: Space, Sense, Work, and Cohabitation”. *Global Reformations* Anthology, Routledge, 2018 (accepted; revising).

“Exorcism and Religious Politics in Renaissance Florence”. *Renaissance Quarterly*, Summer 2018 (accepted, in final proof stage).

“Distant Reading: Early Modern European Understandings of Jews and Ottoman Turks through Florentine Manuscript Records”. *Manuscript Studies*. Accepted with revisions; currently completing.

Book Review, Sherry Roush’s *Speaking Spirits: Ventriloquizing the Dead in Renaissance Italy*, 2017. *Sixteenth Century Studies Journal*.

Encyclopedia Essays: “John the Baptist”, “Origen”, “Jakub Hutter”. *The Encyclopedia of World Religious Figures*, ABL-CIO, Santa Barbara, CA, 2017.

“Global Calvinism: The Maps in the English Geneva Bible”, in *Shaping the Bible in the Reformation: Books, Scholars and Their Readers in the Sixteenth Century*. Ed. Gordon, McLean. Brill, 2012.

**LECTURES AND PAPERS**

2017

Schoenberg Manuscript Institute, Philadelphia, PA.  
*Religious Pluralism Avant la Lettre in Florentine Manuscripts* (Invited)

University of Toronto, Global Reformations Course (Hist 302).  
*Jews, Muslims and Christians* and *Global Catholicism: Mission, Empire, Slavery*

Global Reformations Conference, Toronto, ON.  
*Jewish Immigration in Granducal Tuscany (1571)*.  
Chair, *Transforming the Sacred in Early Modern Iberia*

Medieval Studies Conference, Kalamazoo, MI.  
*Invisible Manuscripts or, Why Italian Manuscript Evidence Lies Buried in the Archives*

Renaissance Society of America Annual Conference, Chicago, IL  
*Prolegomena to a Ghetto: Jews in Medici Court Letters*.  
Chair, *Exploring Generic Hybrids II: Beyond Lyric*.

Jackman Humanities Institute, University of Toronto. *Spaces of Jewish Residence, Work, and Worship in Early Modern Florence*.

2016

Renaissance Studies Association Annual Conference, Boston.  
Panel organizer. *Hybrid Humanism in Fifteenth-Century Florence*  
Paper: *Hybrid Humanism: What Was Humanist History in Laurentian Florence?*

Sixteenth Century Society Annual Conference, Brugesw. *Commenda, Exorcism, and Sodomy: Revamping Monastic Reputation in Fifteenth-century Florence*.

Figure 13: Curriculum Vitae including list of publications, 3 (2018\_01\_31\_1517432316.pdf)

- 2015 Sixteenth Century Society Annual Conference, Vancouver.  
*Nuns, Virgins, and Demoniacs: Demonic Possession and the Paradoxes of Female Religious Agency in Fifteenth-Century Italy*
- Renaissance Studies Association Annual Conference, Berlin.  
*The Devil in the Renaissance, or, Diabolization in Early Modern Political Discourse*
- 2014 Sixteenth Century Society Annual Conference, New Orleans.  
Panel organizer: *Reputation in the Early Modern Mediterranean.*
- 2013 Sixteenth Century Society Annual Conference, Puerto Rico.  
*Tales from the Periphery: the Exorcisms at Vallombrosa.*
- Yale University, New Directions in Digital Scholarship Conference.  
*FLIP: the Florentine Library Intermapping Project.*
- 2012 Vernacular Bibles & Religious Reform Conference, Catholic U. of Leuven.  
*Vernacular Scripture, Reform, and the Lesser Laity in Quattrocento Florence.*
- Yale University. Baron Foundation for the Study of Anti-Semitism.  
*Modes of Anti-Semitism in Renaissance Florence.*
- Renaissance Studies Association Annual Conference, Washington DC  
*An Anatomy of Influence: Savonarola and Pico Della Mirandola.*
- 2011 University of London, Italian Academies Conference.  
*Banned Books in The Library of the Accademia Olimpica, Vicenza.*
- Renaissance Studies Association Annual Conference, Montreal.  
Chair: *The Renaissance Reception of Boethius' Consolation of Philosophy.*
- 2010 Yale University, Department of English, Theater History.  
*Commedia and the Counterreformation.*

**ADDITIONAL SKILLS: LANGUAGES, DIGITAL, CODICOLOGICAL**

**Languages:** English, Italian, and Latin; passive proficiency in French and German.

**Digital Study:** Medieval Rolls; TEI; Manuscript Collation, Topic Modelling, ArcGIS.

**Manuscript Study:** Codicology, bibliography, cataloguing, using archives. Cofounded Florentine Library Intermapping Project and Yale Working Group in the History of the Book.

**Work Experience** (Washington DC 2000-2007): Data Director, National Policy Research Council; Creative Director, Roger Lee Group; Art Director, Kamber Group.

Figure 14: Recommendation Letter 1, 1 (2018\_02\_01\_1517477521.pdf)

Yale University

Department of History  
Hall of Graduate Studies  
320 York Street  
New Haven, Connecticut  
06520-8324

**Recommendation for Justine Walden**

October 2017

Justine Walden, who is currently a postdoctoral researcher at the University of Toronto, is gifted with a quick mind, boundless curiosity, and an admirable and impressive drive. All of her work here at Yale was top notch, and this includes the dissertation she submitted in 2016 for a PhD in History and Renaissance Studies. Justine has also served as a teaching fellow in two of my courses, and performed superbly.

I should also note at the outset that the doctoral program in History and Renaissance Studies is one of our most demanding, for it requires students to take more courses, learn more languages, undergo more comprehensive exams, and cross more boundaries than most other programs here and elsewhere. She has not only met all these expectations, but surpassed them. She is extremely creative and eager to find new ways of analyzing and understanding the past, always with an eye on stretching our horizons in the present.

Justine's dissertation is a detailed and enlightening analysis of the Vallombrosian order's social, economic, and political role in and around fifteenth-century Florence, and of the part played by their exorcisms in the religious life of that region of Renaissance Italy,

The number and range of archival sources plumbed for this dissertation is extremely impressive. Relying principally on manuscript accounts of exorcisms performed by the Vallombrosian order –documents laden with strange tales of the otherworldly, none of which seem on the surface to lend themselves too readily to a worldly interpretation – this dissertation reconstructs the very worldly matrix in which these rituals were performed. Its main argument is that the exorcisms can be best understood in the context of Florentine politics and economics, both civil and ecclesiastical, urban and rural. Its chief conclusion is that the monks of the largely rural Vallombrosian order chose to specialize in exorcisms as a means of claiming a higher status for themselves in Florentine society, as they jockeyed for position against wealthier, more powerful urban religious orders, and as they sought the patronage of Florence's elites, especially the all-powerful Medici clan.

This is highly original research and a great contribution to early modern historiography. The largely-ignored sources examined here give us a new perspective on Renaissance Florence, a place more often associated with the birth of modernity than with phenomena as ostensibly "medieval" as demonic possessions and exorcisms. Yet, while focusing on seemingly un-modern events, this dissertation seeks to analyze them in the context of modernity, not as a manifestation of older archaic patterns of thought, belief, and behavior, but rather as expressions

Figure 15: Recommendation Letter 1, 2 (2018\_02\_01\_1517477521.pdf)

of the sharp-edged political astuteness and the intense self-fashioning normally associated with the Italian Renaissance.

Justine has presented papers at the Sixteenth Century Studies Conference, one of the largest and most important in the field of Early Modern studies, which attracts the very best scholars. One of these papers, which focused on the social role of the Vallombrosian order in Florence, was very well received, and was a crucial step for her in two ways: first, as her debut in the academy; second, as her first opportunity to receive feedback from scholars beyond Yale. She presented other papers as well, but, unfortunately, I have not been able to attend any conferences for the past two years due to a severe injury. .

As far as her range of interests is concerned, Justine is well prepared to cover a wide variety of subjects in late medieval and early modern history. This is due in part to the way we train our students in Renaissance Studies, and in part to the teaching assignments she has taken on. Her work as my assistant in two very different courses was superb. I just re-read the teaching evaluations recently and saw once again, first-hand, how much praise the students had for her teaching style. In addition, due to her involvement in projects related to the history of the book, Justine is also well-prepared to cover not just that subject, but also that of digitization and electronic information processing.

In sum, Justine Walden is well on her way to becoming a rising star in early modern studies, and is precisely the kind of young scholar who could make the most of any opportunity. She would also have much to contribute to the intellectual and social life of any enterprise, for she is extremely affable and dependable: the sort of person who makes for a great colleague.. Any institution or program that is able to recruit her – be it for a postdoctoral or teaching post – will be lucky indeed.

She has my highest and most enthusiastic support.



Carlos M. N. Eire  
T. L. Riggs Professor of History and Religious Studies  
Chair, Renaissance Studies Program

Figure 16: Recommendation Letter 2, 1 (2018\_02\_01\_1517477529.pdf)

# Yale University

Department of History  
P.O. Box 208324  
New Haven, Connecticut 06520-8324

Campus address:  
240 Hall of Graduate Studies  
320 York Street  
Telephone: 203 432-1366  
Fax: 203 432-7587

New Haven, 3 November 2017

To Whom It May Concern:

I write in support of Dr. **Justine Walden's** application for a tenure-track position in your department.

I have known Justine since she entered the doctoral program in History and Renaissance Studies and have served as a member of her dissertation committee. I am therefore well qualified to comment on her academic profile. She is a dynamic teacher and a fine scholar, who acquired a wide-ranging expertise in the course of her doctoral studies at Yale, including specialized training in the digital humanities.

Justine completed her dissertation, *Foaming Mouth and Eyes Aflame: Exorcism and Power in Renaissance Florence*, in May 2016. This study examines a remarkable and nearly forgotten source: a small number of Latin and vernacular manuscripts written by the members of a male religious order, the Vallombrosans, whose monastery was located in the mountains some 20 miles to the south-east of Florence. Dating to the latter part of the fifteenth century, these manuscripts are addressed to Lorenzo de' Medici, the de facto ruler of the Florentine Republic (which by then extended its territorial control to this and other parts of Tuscany as well). The documents include the accounts of 72 exorcisms performed by the Vallombrosian monks in the region, primarily on local peasants, both men and women. In parsing these narratives, Justine recovers the nature of popular piety and beliefs in the half century before the Reformation. She also seeks to recast the history of the regional state, the Church, and humanism under the rule of Lorenzo de' Medici in light of the concerns expressed by a religious order that operated in the periphery and yet still yielded political and cultural influence (as demonstrated by Lorenzo's interest in their lands and by Savonarola's and Machiavelli's acquaintance with their writing).

This original and consequential study interrogates the relationship between popular and learned religiosity, between city and countryside, and between civic and ecclesiastical institutions in the last phase of the Florentine Republic. It also has wider implications for early modern Europeanists. Given the centrality of demonology in scholarly debates about the Reformation and the Counter-Reformation, Justine's careful examination of the practice of exorcism in fifteenth-century Tuscany sheds new light on a neglected episode of Catholic theology and popular religion in the period leading up to the Reformation.

Figure 17: Recommendation Letter 2, 2 (2018\_02\_01\_1517477529.pdf)

During her research in the rare-book libraries and archives of Florence, Justine identified an additional, rich body of texts that has been overlooked by generations of scholars of humanism and that illuminates popular views of both normative Christianity and religious minorities. She plans to make them the centerpiece of a new research project on vernacular culture that has the potential of yielding a fresh new understanding of two crucial (and rarely intersecting) lines of research: the rise of Savonarola and the representations of Jews and "Turks." On the latter point, I wish to stress that classic and recent contributions (most recently by James Hankins, Nancy Bisaha, Margaret Meserve, and Daniel Stein Kokin) have focused on the upper echelons of the humanist elites, while popular religion in Catholic Italy has largely remained the purview of scholars of the Inquisition. Justine's project moves beyond this impasse in a productive and highly original way.

In the past few years, Justine has acquired considerable skills in the digital humanities and has developed a pilot project to digitize the Florentine library catalogues, which are in dire need of more suitable indexing and search engines than those provided by Italian institutions. The tool she has devised so far allows users to obtain manuscript counts and then to examine specific manuscripts. She is utilizing it for her own projects on Christian apologetics and European views of religious 'others,' but would be of great value to the wider scholarly community as well. I can again speak from direct experience because Justine kindly provided me with the search results of a query on "Livorno" (the Tuscan port-city that is at the heart of my research), which yielded several manuscripts in the Florentine collections that would have otherwise taken me a very long time to identify.

At present, Justine is employed as a post-doctoral fellow at the DECIMA project in Toronto under the leadership of Nick Terpstra, where she is honing her teching and DH skills as well as making progress in the revisions of her book manuscript.

Justine's teaching portfolio is wide and she is able to capture the undergraduates' attention whether in broad surveys on the history of the West and the Renaissance or in more specialized lectures and seminars on a range of intriguing topics, from the history of exorcism and witchcraft to Florence in the age of the Medicis or theories and practices of toleration before and after the Reformation.

While I am sure you will be evaluating numerous impressive dossiers, I urge you to give Justine Walden's application the attention it deserves. Do not hesitate to reach out to me via email if you have any further questions.

Sincerely,



Francesca Trivellato  
Barton M. Biggs Prof of History

Francesca.Trivellato@yale.edu

Figure 18: Endorsement Letter FUB, 1 (2018\_02\_06\_1517912611.pdf)



**Prof. Dr. Konrad Hirschler**

Department of History and Cultural  
Studies  
Institute of Islamic Studies  
Fabeckstr. 23-25, D-14195 Berlin,  
Germany

**Telefon** +49 30 838-61553  
**Fax** +49 30 838-4-52487  
**E-Mail** Konrad.Hirschler@fu-berlin.de

Berlin, 29.1.2018

**Re: Joint Berlin-Jerusalem Post-Doctoral Fellowship Program**

I am writing this letter to endorse the application of Justine Walden for the Post-Doctoral Fellowship Program. I do not know Dr Walden personally, but we have repeatedly corresponded in preparation for this application.

Dr Walden's proposed post-doc project on the letter of *Letter of Rabbi Samuel* and its circulation in European societies is evidently not in the centre of my own regional expertise. However, while discussing the project with her it has become clear that there are two main areas where our interests do intersect and where a collaboration could be mutually beneficial. Firstly, the purported Muslim bent that emerges at some point in the circulation is highly intriguing. This is for me of particular interest as I have started to work on European acquisitions of Arabic manuscripts from the early modern period onwards. These acquisitions were driven by concerns not entirely alien to those emerging in the *Letter of Rabbi Samuel* story. Secondly, Dr Walden is very interested in

Figure 19: Endorsement Letter FUB, 2 (2018\_02\_06\_1517912611.pdf)



reception philology, an approach that has gained in massive popularity in Middle Eastern history. Co-operating on this question with our respectively very different source corpora and very difference contexts in terms of print/manuscripts promises to be intriguing.

I have not yet collaborated with Prof. Elisheva Baumgarten, but this is very much an outcome of the wide thematic area that Dr Walden needs to cover for his project. Prof. Baumgarten is known to me from her publications and with her focus on medieval (social) history it is not too difficult to see various overlapping areas of interests. I could imagine that this might be a chance for possible future collaborative work.

We can offer Dr Walden work space in the institute and she will join an informal group of colleagues who have been working on the question of reception philology, such as two of my PhD students, our postdoc Olly Ackermann, and the International Education Scholar Rescue Fund Fellow Said Aljoumani.

I thus fully support Dr Walden's application: I am convinced that the institute will greatly benefit from her and the opportunity to intensify the collaboration with Hebrew University.



FREIE UNIVERSITÄT BERLIN  
Fachbereich Geschichts- und Kulturwissenschaften  
Institut für Islamwissenschaften  
Fabeckstr. 23-25  
14195 Berlin  
Tel.: 030 / 8385 2487

Figure 20: Endorsement Letter HUJI, 1 (2018\_02\_08\_1518079494.pdf)



## Beyond the Elite

Jewish Daily Life in Medieval Europe

Prof. Elisheva Baumgarten | Prof. Yitzchak Becker Chair of Jewish Studies

Elisheva.baumgarten@mail.huji.ac.il



January 27<sup>th</sup>, 2018

FU-HU Fellowship Committee  
Hebrew University  
Frei Universität

Dear Colleagues,

It is my pleasure to recommend Dr. Justine Walden for the FU-HU fellowship. Dr. Walden is currently a post doc at the University of Toronto after successfully finishing a Ph.D at Yale (2016) that has recently been revised into a book *Religious Battles and Persecution in Renaissance Italy*. In addition to this forthcoming monograph, Dr. Walden is the author of a number of additional forthcoming articles, some of which will appear in prestigious journals such as *The Renaissance Quarterly* and the *Journal of Sixteenth Century Studies*. These accomplishments to date are all evidence of the high quality of her scholarship and of her devotion to her chosen field of study.

Dr. Walden and I have corresponded over the past months regarding her next project, that which she proposes for the HU-FU fellowship. She would like to write a study about the “Letter of R. Samuel”, a known treatise against Judaism written in the fourteenth century although attributed to an earlier period. This letter contains fascinating information related to the way both Judaism and Islam were understood by late medieval Christians and especially by the Dominicans. Dr. Walden has told me about her database of manuscripts of this treatise and I was astounded to hear that there are so many manuscripts of this treatise and also to learn of how popular it was, as it was often printed within popular Bibles. The text relates to a number of key areas in popular culture and learned theology and as such is both an important text and one that can teach scholars much about a large number of topics. I believe it is a most worthwhile project that will be an important contribution to current scholarship.

Based on her accomplishments to date and my conversations with her, I believe that Dr. Walden has the training to undertake this challenging endeavour. As I have already indicated, the project will require knowledge in a wide range of fields. Dr. Walden’s training to date has laid the foundations for anything that has to do with the Latin of the text and Christian culture. In light of this, her desire to spend time at FU and at HUJI seem to me to be both timely and wise. At HUJI, she is most welcome to learn from members of my ERC research group “Beyond the Elite: Jewish Daily Life in Medieval Europe” and from myself and I believe she will find that many members of the group are good partners for conversation. HUJI faculty that

Figure 21: Endorsement Letter HUJI, 2 (2018\_02\_08\_1518079494.pdf)

includes Ayelet Even-Ezra, Israel Yuval, Yanai Israeli and others who will also be of great assistance to her project. Above all, the chance to be in Israel, improve her Hebrew and Hebrew palaeographic skills is crucial for the project's success. The time she spends at FU (if granted this fellowship) will further the Islamic aspect of this project and the proficiency she needs in Arabic and Koranic texts. Altogether, I think her plan for the postdoc not only makes sense but is an excellent one.

Please see this letter as my warm endorsement to Dr. Walden and her project and my willingness to be her sponsor for the Jerusalem leg of this project.

Sincerely,



Elisheva Baumgarten

Prof. Yitzchak Becker Chair for Jewish  
Studies

[Elisheva.baumgarten@mail.huji.ac.il](mailto:Elisheva.baumgarten@mail.huji.ac.il)