Museum Without a Collection: Jewish Culture in the New Italian Multiculturalism

Jeffrey David Feldman
Charlottesville, VA

B.A., Carleton College, 1989
M.Phil., University of Oxford, 1993

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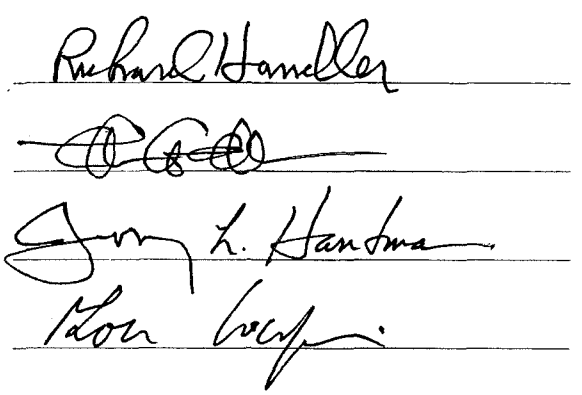

ABSTRACT

This dissertation is an ethnography of the *Museo Ebraico* in Bologna, Italy, based on fourteen months of fieldwork covering the museum's key phases of planning and its inauguration (May 1999). Drawing together the perspectives of constituencies in the museum and in Bologna's city center, I explore the collection, exhibition and education practices of this peculiar museum that failed to acquire the collection it was proposed to house. I investigate this "museum without a collection" by contrasting the state's valorization of Jewish artistic traditions with views on that project from the group being celebrated, considering the relationship between an "empty" Jewish museum and local Jews. The dissertation approaches the Jewish Museum of Bologna as a point of entry into the negotiation of collective ideals of what the nation and society should be—ideals that are hammered out in the social process of planning.

My argument unfolds in three sections. First, I define Italian multiculturalism (Chapter 1) and account for the central place of Jewish heritage projects in Italian "anti-racism" (Chapter 2). Second, I focus on the planning and construction of the museum itself, examining the collection practices of the "virtual" Jewish Museum of Bologna (Chapter 2) and the impact on the local Jewish community of the museum's so-called "empty" galleries (Chapter 4). Third, I describe the museum's role in urban renovation and Holocaust commemoration, including the establishment of a shopkeeper's association in Bologna's Jewish ghetto (Chapter 5), and the local significance of Benigni's *Life is Beautiful* (Chapter 6). I conclude that despite the intentions of the project planners, the Jewish Museum of Bologna at the time it was inaugurated had reinforced the very forms of intolerance it was designed to overcome.

For Leone

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NOTE ON NAMES

Names have been changed except for my name, and in cases where the individuals discussed hold public offices, including state bureaucratic positions. Any similarity between pseudonyms used in this text and the names of actual people is purely coincidental.

PREFACE

This dissertation is an ethnography of the *Museo Ebraico* in Bologna, Italy, based on fourteen months of fieldwork covering the museum's crucial phases of planning and its inauguration. Drawing together the perspectives of constituencies in the museum, the historic city center and local Jews, I explore the collection, exhibition and education practices of a museum that failed to acquire the permanent collection of objects it was proposed to house, contrasting the state's valorization of minority artistic traditions with views on that project from the group being celebrated. Exemplifying my interest in the display of outsiders and oddities as points of entry into the negotiation of collective ideals of what the nation and society should be, this dissertation offers an account of cultural ideals that are hammered out in the social process of planning.

Specifically, this dissertation describes how efforts in Bologna to reconcile a history of fascism with a future in the new Europe culminated in 1999 when the city inaugurated a museum of Jewish culture which—despite its status as the capstone public "initiative" celebrating Jewish "presence" in the nation—never obtained a collection of Jewish art, displaying instead a "virtual" exhibition of computer programs, text panels, and photographs. I argue that the "empty" Jewish museum epitomizes the social terrain navigated by ethnic minorities in contemporary Europe: recognized for their artistic heritage, but catalogued as property of the state; stigmatized as victims of the nation's past, yet coveted as symbolic capital in a projected future of global cultural humanism.

Accordingly, this dissertation contributes to anthropology in three ways. First, it enriches the ethnography of Italy, detailing museum practices and Jewish community life as contexts where urban Italians grapple with polysemic concepts of culture. Second, it advances an approach to the study of nationalism as a social process, combining critical responses to the politics of culture with the analysis of cultural institutions. Third, it broadens theoretical understandings of how post-modern critiques of culture take shape in the troubled negotiations between conflicting humanistic ideals and the contradictory reifications of civil society. Furthermore, this dissertation reveals an important dynamic germane to anthropological theories of culture--that a museum which valorizes Jewish culture without objects paradoxically reinforces a possessive individualist conception of ethnic minorities as separate wholes within the nation.

On May 9, 1999 at 10 o'clock on a rainy morning, the Chief Rabbi of Bologna hammered a venetian silver filigree mezuzah onto the door post of the *Museo Ebraico di Bologna*, officially opening the museum to the public and bringing to a close nearly ten years of proposals, planning and delays. Hundreds of people stood in the narrow corridor leading to the entrance of the museum, umbrellas overhead, to watch this ethnic version of a ribbon cutting ceremony, among them: the current mayor as well as both candidates in the upcoming mayoral election, speaker of the Italian senate, the president of the provincial government, the president of the Union of Jewish Communities of Italy, presidents of the Jewish communities of Bologna, Modena, Florence, Ferrara, Venice, Trieste and Rome, dozens of professors from the University of Bologna, reporters from local and national television stations, the president of the local ghetto merchants

association, the president of the Friends of Israel Society, dozens of Jews from the local and nearby communities--not to mention myself and two other anthropologists. The ceremony had begun an hour earlier when the president of the Jewish Community of Bologna and the Rabbi had joined with the mayor at city hall to welcome the distinguished guests as they arrived from Rome. Both preceded by and followed by small clusters of cigarette smoking reporters, the mayor led the process on foot for the five minute walk from city hall to a small Holocaust memorial on *Via Dell'Inferno* (Hell Street) in the former Jewish ghetto. Once there, the speaker of the senate, Luciano Violante, a white *kippah* now on his head, stepped towards the memorial by himself, taking hold of a large wreath being held by a *carabinieri* in white gloves and formal dress, and laid the wreath at the foot of the monument--a small plaque on the wall of the building that once held a Sixteenth-Century synagogue, but now housed some apartments and a vintage clothing store. Standing for a moment, the speaker looked up, reading the plaque as a crowd of roughly two hundred onlookers fidgeted impatiently and whispered among each other. As the speaker turned away from the memorial, the mayor gestured further down the street, whereupon the procession continued another two hundred yards around the corner until it reached the entrance Jewish Museum.

While the inauguration of the Jewish Museum in Bologna's former Jewish ghetto marked the beginning of the public life of that institution, it marked the end of my ethnographic fieldwork. I first came to Bologna in June of 1995 to study Italian and to investigate several potential field sites in Piemonte for my dissertation research. In 1995 I had written letters to all the heads of the Jewish communities in Italy, asking if they had

or had plans to develop a Jewish Museum. While I received several interesting responses about museums in Livorno and Parma, news of Jewish museums in the small towns of Asti and Casale Monferato near Turin caught my attention, as these towns had not yet been studies by ethnographers interested in either Jews, Italy or museums. To my disappointment, my visits to both Asti and Casale Monferato proved fruitless as the communities were both too small and too elderly to be the focus of attention for a year of field work. I returned to Bologna to finished my language course, in search of a new direction for my research.

A few days later, on the recommendation of one of my teachers in the language program, I decided to pass my last Friday in Bologna at the evening meal that followed the Sabbath service in the local Jewish Community center. As my Italian was still in its formative stages, I spent most of the night speaking with the Rabbi, a Milanese Jew of Tunisian origin who spoke three languages, including English, poorly, but with great persistence. Explaining my interests in museums and the politics of culture, he replied, "Bologna is not very good for Jews. Not like in New York. Here, the community is dying." I later found out that the Rabbi passed only one week out of four in Bologna, dividing his time between Jerusalem where his family lived and a lucrative business of verifying kosher butcher licenses in Italy and France.

Since I had not paid for my Friday night meal in advance, and since it was deemed impolite to pass money on the Sabbath when the Rabbi was present in the community, I returned to the Jewish community the following Sunday morning to give 30,000 Lire to the community secretary. As I was leaving the office I was introduced to a

well-dressed young man in his late twenties who struck up a conversation with me in perfect English. He was interested in my work and told me that he always found anthropology to be a compelling discipline. In addition, as our conversation neared its end he said quietly, "We have a Jewish Museum here, I think. I mean we will have one. It's being planned." I thanked him, left from the airport and immediately set my mind to study the planning of the Jewish Museum of Bologna.

The following summer (1996) I returned to Bologna for a summer of language study and pre-field work. Upon arrival, I discovered that the Rabbi had developed an illness that made it nearly impossible for him to speak. By July 1996 he had been replaced by a younger and more energetic Rabbi from Rome. At the same time, just before my arrival in June, the *Museo Ebraico di Bologna*--which did not exist--had hosted an international conference on the future of Jewish museums in Europe. Now with a greater proficiency in Italian and a better sense of Bologna, I made appointments with a host of people involved in the museum project, including architects working on the building renovations for the museum, historians involved in producing the exhibition, and Dr. Franco Bonilauri, the future director of the museum. During a long conversation in his office at the Culture Heritage Institute of Emilia-Romagna, the director handed me what looked like a galley proof of a book called *Treasures from the Jewish Museums of Italy* and explained to me that the following summer (1997) the Jewish museum would open with a significant collection of Jewish ritual objects--silver and text used in Italian synagogues. More importantly, the director shared with me a key piece of information about the museum. Roughly forty-five minutes into our conversation, he leaned forward

in his chair and asked, "Are you, yourself, of the Jewish persuasion?" I told him that I was, but that I was also secular humanist. He replied:

> Well, the important thing about our museum which makes it different from all other museums of its kind in Italy is that it is a public museum. The Jewish museums in Venice, Rome, Florence--they are all community museums planned by the local communities for the benefit of the local communities. They are for Jewish audiences. Our museum will be for non-Jews: a Jewish Museum for people who know little or nothing about Jewish culture, but come to this museum to learn about it.

Much of my initial fascination in the ethnography of the Jewish Museum of Bologna emerged from moments such as these when officials from the Jewish Museum would tell me that what distinguished their museum was its imperviousness to the particular interests of Jews. In a world concerned with building political bridges between museums and ethnic communities, I had found in Bologna a Jewish museum that wanted little to do with Jews. As I suspected, and which my ethnography would confirm, the desire to keep Jews at a distance did not exclude the desire to appropriate (unsuccessfully) Jewish material culture. Nor did it exclude the desire to extend the power of the new Jewish museum into all places where Jewish culture was defined and maintained.

If I grew interested in the Jewish Museum of Bologna because of its rejection of Jews, that interest was piqued when I learned how local Jews were rejecting the museum.

At the end of the summer when I first spoke with the director, I shared what I had learned about the project with my new friend in the community. Upon hearing me recount the director's comments, he replied, "Well, I think they would like to have things to put in the museum, but as far as I know they don't have anything, and it's unlikely that they will open next summer." When I returned for a second field summer (1997), it seemed that my friend had been correct. The same museum director who had shown me the mock-up for the collection to be housed in the museum, was now giving presentations about the Jewish Museum of Bologna as a "virtual" museum that would house computers instead of art. The museum had failed to acquire a collection and as such, had been forced to reinvent itself as museum filled with pedagogical computer technology rather than museum cases.

Historically, Jewish museums in Europe have followed a straight-forward artistic treasure chest approach with the apologist goal of demonstrating the Jewish contribution to western high culture. These museums displayed Jewish ritual objects as art and first appeared the later half of the nineteenth century. Given Jewish Experience in the first half of the Twentieth Century, however, the treasure chest approach was generally rejected in the 1980s—albeit with few exceptions. Rejected, that is, either up front in the planning stage, or rejected through as a result of the politics of planning, as in the case of the bologna project.

Generally speaking, the problem of representing Jews in contemporary European museums has yielded three distinct approaches.

The first approach has emerged at the intersection of architecture and critical theory and is exemplified by the recently opened Jewish Museum of Berlin (.

In Berlin, the central problem facing the planners was how to build an institution to celebrate Jewish presence in the city, when the most prominent issue was that Jews were absent. The solution offered by the museum's architect, Daniel Libeskind, was to make absence itself the central feature that was, figuratively speaking, "displayed" in the museum—to make a museum that contained emptiness. This does not mean that the Jewish Museum of Berlin lacks a collection. Rather, in the Jewish Museum of Berlin the logic of presence and absence unfolds through an architectural hostility to the display of objects (Young 2000:165).

The second approach has unfolded at the nexus of reflexive museum practice and virtual exhibition strategies and is exemplified by the new Jewish Museum of Vienna.

Similar to Berlin, the problematic of displaying Jewish culture is a central part of the exhibition strategy in Vienna. Rather than just viewing crafted exhibitions, visitors are able to view the storage rooms—a non-exhibition exhibition, so to speak, where the relics from a once-flourishing local Jewish community are viewed in the idiom of a backstage experience. In addition to the storage rooms, the Vienna museum includes an historic exhibition about Jews in Vienna revealed through twenty-one holographic images, allowing visitors to visualize Jewish history while avoiding the objectification of Jewish experience.

The third approach is the subject of this dissertation and is exemplified by the Jewish Museum of Bologna.

The case of the Bologna Jewish museum differs radically from the Veinna and Berlin examples. In the first two examples, the model of a museum as a container of objects is displaced by critical architectural and ocular display strategies. The Berlin and Vienna Jewish museums both contain Jewish culture and display the problematic of doing so. In Bologna, by contrast, emphasis has never been on the logic of presence and absence or the holography of historic representation, but on the virtual display of the Jewish subject. The central problem in Bologna was not the impossibility of representing Jewish culture through collections, but the anxiety of doing so in the absence of a collection.

The social strategies of a museum that wanted but could not get a collection, is just one of the many anxieties addressed in this dissertation. Other issues include: heritage bureaucrats who valorize Jewish culture, but are suspicious of its influence in the public sphere; local Jews who are suspicious of the project for its representation of Jewish culture as "dead", but relieved at the idea that the museum offers a pedagogical resource to teach non-Jews about Judaism; local residents who consume Jewish culture because Jews suffered racist oppression in the Holocaust, but who also participate in the racial exclusion of new immigrants in the city; neo-fascist politicians who espouse anti-Semitism and racial intolerance, and at the same time mourn the loss of Europe's Jews—and many more.

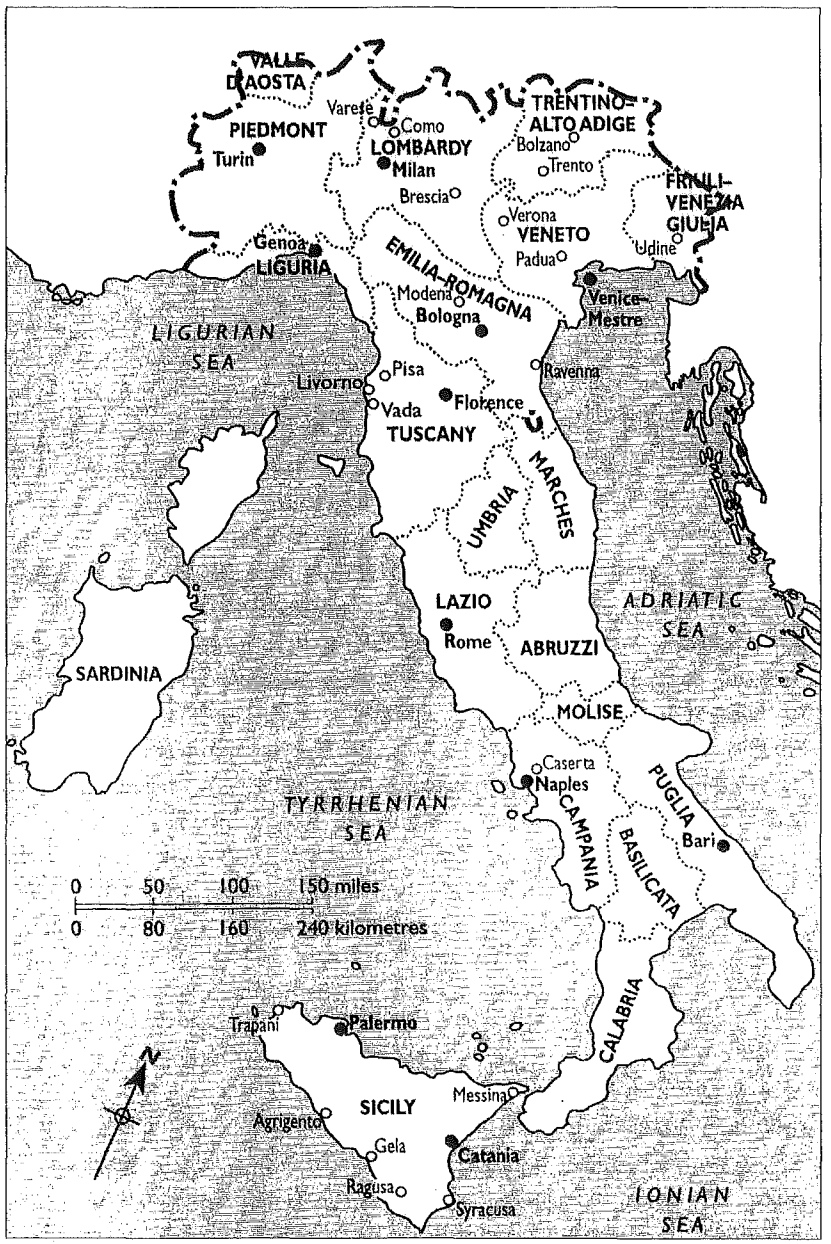
At the heart of these anxieties is the image of a European nation that, having participated in the genocide of an ethnic minority, now turns itself to the business of rediscovering lost history and culture, as if the absence of that ethnic group were

somehow a natural phenomenon. While in this dissertation my concern is to describe the practices of a museum project, and not to judge it, my critical position is always present, if only just below the surface. In particular, if the basis of the *Jewish Museum of Bologna* was that it would be a museum designed to teach ignorant non-Jews about Jewish culture, as a social theorist I find it remarkable that this same project never once engaged the key issues of (1) what it means to be ignorant, and (b) why it is that Italians, who have lived among Jews for two thousand years, feel themselves to know so little about that group?

Non-Jewish Italians are not ignorant of Jewish culture, but have a very particular knowledge of Judaism that both engenders and is informed by social experience. Since the Sixteenth Century when the Church passed a decree forcing Jews throughout the Italian peninsula to live in an enclosed sections of each city known as a "ghetto"—since Gramsci declared that Italians could not be anti-Semites because Jewish cosmopolitanism and Italian provincialism had died with the *risorgimento* of Italian nationalism—since Mussolini's race laws distinguished between Jews as "foreigners" and Jews as "racial" outsiders and banished them from public life—since Italian socialists and communist criticized Italian Jews for the political crimes of the state of Israeli in the 1980s—Italians have been anything but ignorant about Jewish culture. It is what Italians know about Jews and how they act on that knowledge, and not their lack of knowledge that is the focus of this dissertation.

If, as anthropology teaches, culture is a set of rules that everyone follows, but nobody talks about, then this dissertation is an attempt to uncover the "rules" about

Jewish culture in Italy, and then to use that knowledge to speak to the more general issue of how Europeans experience and understand cultural difference. In this respect, "a museum without a collection" is intended not merely as a metaphor for the dilemma of Jewish culture in Italy, but for the more general and persistent dilemma faced by ethnic groups in the modern nation state writ large.



Map of Italy (Cole 1997:iv)

CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

The idea framing this dissertation is that the planning and opening of Jewish Museums in Italy became a widespread phenomenon fifty years after the War or at that cultural moment when, upon reflecting on a past marred by genocide against Jews, Europeans had become concerned that a return of fascist racism posed a real threat the future of Europe. This dissertation is an account of a public project set motion to redress this perceived threat of "new" racism: a museum that was supposed to teach Italians to value difference via an exhibition of Jewish ritual objects displayed as art. The crucial finding presented in this account is that the museum failed to get a collection, and subsequently reinvented itself as a "virtual" museum committed to teaching Italians to value difference by exposing them to multimedia technology. Focusing on this turn of events—a shift during roughly ten years from a design for a museum "full" of authentic objects, to an actual museum "empty" of all but multimedia technology—this dissertation retraces the connections between two social arenas. The first social arena is the Jewish Museum of Bologna itself: its location, display practices and activities as they appeared at the inauguration on May 9, 1999. The second social arena is the much larger field of activity described by the movement and interactions between the museum planners and the local Jewish community in Bologna, activities that took shape while the museum was being planned. It is only through the description of this cultural project as it took shape in this broader social context—on the local, national and global level—that

the planning phase of the museum can be adequately appreciated as a period where old relations of power were maintained, and new ones took shape.

Of particular interest to me was the nexus between absence and presence—the intersection of discourses commemorating the destruction of Jewish culture in the Holocaust with discourses valorizing the presence of Jewish culture in the nation. Why did valorizing heritage discourses become focused on a particular culture, how do the terms of that celebratory discourse take shape, what is the connection between the final form of a museum and the planning phase of the project, what is the impact of that project on the daily lives of the group being celebrated, how is the representation of ethnicity in Europe framed by the multiple meanings of the keyword "emptiness," how does a discourse that valorizes one culture intersect with other discourses on race and immigration, what significance does film hold for the social landscape of heritage and commemoration? I investigate these issues by a number of means: (1) I observed the daily life of the Jewish Museum of Bologna in the three years prior to its inauguration, interviewing the key figures involved in the project; (2) I participated in the daily life of the Jewish Community of Bologna and in the nearby community of Modena, attending ritual services, eating meals in the community, assisting the Community President, Secretary and Rabbi with different types of work, and visiting the homes of dozens of local Jews; (3) I gathered, read and analyzed literature generated by the Jewish Museum of Bologna, publications on Jewish heritage initiatives in Italy, and Italian scholarship on Jewish history and culture; (4) I engaged various theoretical writings as I analyzed my findings, including works by Paul Gilroy on anti-racism (1987), Pierre Taguieff on

differentialist theories of culture (1990), C. B. McPherson's on possessive individualism (1962, 1980), Tony Bennett on museums (1995), Antonio Gramsci on hegemony (1975), Raymond Williams' on the field of meanings (1958, 1976), Pierre Bourdieu on habitus (1984), Deborah Poole's idea of a visual economy (1997), Ruth Wodak and Martin Reisigl on discourse, commemoration and anti-Semitism (1989, 1999, 2001), Daniel Libeskind on the architecture of emptiness (1997), James Young on representation and *unheimlichkeit* ("the uncanny") (1994, 2000), and Erving Goffman on manners and stigma (1959, 1963).

In Italy as elsewhere, efforts by state-run museums to collect and display property under the guise of celebrating ethnic cultural heritage have been complicated by the history of more troubling state projects (e.g., slavery, colonialism, fascism) resulting in the misappropriated property and decimated lives of those same ethnic minorities. In Germany, France, Spain, Poland and elsewhere in Europe, Jewish culture once expelled, imprisoned, and incinerated by the state is now celebrated in countless heritage initiatives valorizing the legacy of Jewish material remains as an important facet of national culture. For most Jews in Bologna, it was difficult to accept the new Jewish Museum into their frame of reference without it being associated with these other, more troubling actions by the state. Although the celebration of disused cultural property of Jews through museum practices is not by itself new—as early as 1878, while Jews were stigmatized and discriminated against as outsiders by various western states, Jewish cultural property was being displayed and admired as art—these previous efforts have typically been spearhead by Jews themselves. Today, many European efforts to build museums

celebrating Jewish culture are sponsored by city governments, regional heritage bureaus, and national public institutes. Hence, in explaining this dissertation to other anthropologists, I have often described my focus on a Jewish Museum planned and opened by Catholic and Italian Communists.

The idea to build a Jewish Museum of this type in Bologna took shape in the context of the fiftieth year (*il cinquantennio*) after World War II, in ceremonies commemorating the passage or race laws barring Jews from Italian civil society (1938) and other atrocities committed against Jews by the Nazis and Fascists. The key elements commemorated in 1988 involved the loss of life and property: On January 4, 1944 Benito Mussolini issued a decree mandating that all property belonging to Jews be confiscated by the Italian state; this order followed the earlier issuing of a "Manifesto of Scientists" (July 13, 1938) and the subsequent "Provisions for the Defense of the Italian Race" (November 19, 1938), both of which formed the basis of the Italian anti-Semitic "race laws" (*Le leggi razziali*); and on January 1, 1948, following the end of the War, the newly reformed Italian government ratified a new constitution, effectively abrogating the legal status of Jews as racially defined second-class citizens, and re-establishing the Italian state on principles of equality (Sarfati 1988, Caffaz 2000). This discourse of Jewish suffering during the War, and in particular the problem of returning Jewish property stolen during the Fascist era, was a constant presence during my fieldwork. The January 1999 edition of the Italian Jewish monthly *Shalom* (33:1) ran two separate articles on the subject of Jewish property stolen during the war: one article about the Swiss Bank scandal (Amos Vitale, "Not Just Money," p. 15) and one about the

establishment of a special "Commission investigating property taken from Jews during the period of the war following the racial persecutions" (p. 9).

The events described in this dissertation were framed by this extraordinary contradiction between the actions of a national government in Italy that was actively seeking to return property stolen from Jews during the War, and the actions of a regional government in Bologna that was aggressively seeking to collect Jewish property to display in a museum. The key result from this overlap of these discourses on Jewish property was that for many Jews in Bologna—Jews who were the owners of the ritual objects the museum planners hoped to display in their galleries—the mere idea of a "public" collection of Jewish art elicited fears that the state had designs once again on the unethical appropriation of Jewish property. On May 9 1999, despite continuous efforts, the Jewish Museum of Bologna opened to the public without a collection, displaying a few objects of Jewish ephemera temporarily donated by local libraries, artisans and antique merchants.

Racism, Anti-Racism, Multiculturalism

Beyond this nexus of appropriation and restitution within the category of Jewish cultural property, there was transpiring in Italy a broader set of contradictions between contemporary understandings of fascism, racism and multiculturalism. On February 19, 1999, Gianfranco Fini, the head of Italy's fascist party the "National Alliance," paid a commemorative visit to the museum memorial site of the former Nazi concentration camp at Auschwitz. Fini is one of five party leaders to emerge after the breakup of the

Italian Social Movement (MSI) in the 1980s. The Italian Social Movement was the heir to the Italian Fascist Party and counted among its members many figures active in Mussolini's Fascist party. Fini set up the National Alliance in 1994 in an effort to claim the mantle of Italian Fascism, a competition he has lost to the current head of state in Italy, Silvio Berlusconi, also a former member of the MSI. Fini, an admirer of Mussolini, and a well-known fascist agitator, went to Auschwitz to commemorate the anti-Semitic genocide waged by European fascism against the Jews. Among other things, Fini is famous for saying that Mussolini was the greatest statesman of the Twentieth Century. In 1992, Fini directed the MSI 70th anniversary celebration of the March on Rome. This 1992 demonstration was the largest fascist demonstration in post-War Italy, featuring skinheads and blackshirts giving the Roman salute and singing fascist hymns. In other words, one of the most powerful living symbol of fascist racism in Italy performed the quintessential act of contemporary Italian multiculturalism— the valorization of Jewish suffering. While there was round criticism of Fini's actions from Jews and non-Jews, the critics said little past their cries "not enough." Yet, Fini's visit articulated a very serious problem in European civil society being expressed for the first time in Italy.

While party sponsored racism was still a problem in a host of European Union member states, the real alarm has been over the sudden transformation of racists into "anti-racists" (Gilroy 1987:114), presenting a new problem for both politicians and social theorists attempting to respond to this phenomenon. As French theorist Pierre Andre Tagiueff argues:

> The most ideologically effective ploy, which has eluded Left criticism, is the differentialist argument. The praise of difference, after being emphasized by the ethnic doctrine of GRECE (*Groupement de Recherches et d'Etudes pour la Civilisation Européenne*), was rapidly accepted within the neo-chauvinist camp and became fundamental to the nascent heterophobic ideology. This praise of difference was reduced to the claim that true racism is the attempt to impose a unique and general model as the best, which implies the elimination of differences. Consequently, true anti-racism is founded on the absolute respect of differences between ethnically and culturally heterogeneous collectives. The New Right's "anti-racism" thus uses the ideas of collective identities hypostatized as inalienable categories (Tagiueff 1990:111)

Fini's visit to Auschwitz is an excellent example of racists masquerading as multiculturalists or "anti-racists"—an unwieldy term which, nonetheless, hints at the difficulty of tracking repressive ideologies as they adapt the language and actions of post-modern theories of difference to their own war of position with Western liberal humanism.

In anthropological theory since the 1980s, various forms of race, class and gender chauvinism have been scrutinized not simply through the lens of static forms of ideology, but through the guise of practice or habitus: multifaceted social, cultural and political processes deployed through language and culture (Bourdieu 1977, Urciuoli 1996,

Handler and Gable 1997, Kroskrity 2000). This approach to racism through practice theory helps to untangle many of the interpretive problems that have plagued officials attempting to define racism in too simplistic terms as political acts committed in the idiom of racist chauvinism, such as the 1978 UNESCO definition of racism deployed by the European Union:

> Any theory which involves the claim that racial or ethnic groups are inherently superior or inferior, thus implying that some would be entitled to dominate or eliminate others, presumed to be inferior, or which bases value judgments on racial differentiation, has no scientific foundation and is contrary to the moral and ethical principles of humanity.
>
> (Evrigenis 1985:22)

In European approaches to racism was a dangerous social problem only to the extent that it mobilized a discriminatory party politics. Starting in the 1980s, there were several official European attempts to use the UNESCO definition of racism to uncover and define current threats to civil society. The policy reports published subsequently by the European Commission routinely divided the problem of racism into two distinct issues: ignorance of history, and response to immigration (Evrigenis 1985; Ford 1992). The less quantifiable phenomenon of a racist politics of culture was not tagged as dangerous. Moreover, a racism that claimed all races as equal was not a problem. Race, per se, was not the issue. The threat to Europe was the mobilization of race as a basis for proposing

governmental policy with regard to the maintenance of borders and the distribution of public resources.

This approach to defining and then addressing racism was inadequate to solve the intriguing problem in question—the fascist who commemorates the crimes of fascism in the name of multiculturalism—or what Tagiueff calls "differentialist" racism: the absolute respect for the sanctity of cultural difference. Again, the problems of a differentialist perspective fall within the scope of anthropological critiques of structural functionalism, post-colonial theory, and critical approaches to modern western individualism. What remains unexplored is how these new expressions of differentialism have converged with the modern western idea that cultures can be represented through collections of material objects. This dissertation is intended as a step in that direction and starts with the premise that just as museum practices can constitute and reinforce class positions (Bourdieu and Darbel 1969) and concepts of citizenship (Duncan 1995), they can also be created and reinforce the valorizing dynamics of anti-racist racism. In fact, I suggest that the problem that is becoming increasingly more vexing from the perspective of social theory is not racism, per se—clear acts of prejudice, stated plainly by identifiable advocates of exclusionary or chauvinist politics—but the various forms of celebration that now dominate European discourse on culture. Multiculturalism, once held as the opposite of racism, needs to be considered not only as complicit with earlier political formations of racist ideologies, but as a particularly effective "new" exclusionary discourse.

A brief ethnographic example will illustrate this point. In April 1999, just prior to the opening of the Jewish Museum in Bologna, I went on a weekend trip with a small group of friends, including people from Italy, Poland, Spain, and Switzerland. Midway through the weekend, we stopped in a hillside town for lunch, having found a shop which served small salads, as well as plates of salami, *prosciutto* and bread. As we ate our lunch, the young woman from Spain commented that she preferred Spanish *jamón*—a thickly-sliced, more robust aged ham than the delicate Italian version. I responded that I had trouble eating *jamón* because the taste of pork fat (*strutto*) was much stronger than that found in the type of aged hams I was used to eating in Bologna. I then explained my personal history as a consumer of pork, which became the focus of the conversation. I explained that up to a few years ago, I had not eaten pork at all as a result of a decision I made at the beginning of my graduate studies—the decision to observe some of the basic laws of *kashrut*. Prior to that, I had not tasted pork for seven years. As a child, I continued, we did not eat pork in my parents' home, but we did eat pork out of the house, a fairly standard practice for conservative Jews in the United States. They then asked me why I chose to eat pork here in Italy. I explained that when I began my fieldwork, I thought that the Jews in Bologna would not eat pork, but I soon discovered that they did eat pork, even though they often implied that they felt it was wrong. I laughed and said this was one of the inconsistencies that I found intriguing about studying Jewish culture in Italy.

While I had presented this particular biographical information several times in casual conversation, I had never elicited the response that followed from my friends that

day. "It's not just a contradiction," one friend replied, not amused. "It's racism." This was followed by an awkward silence. "What's racism?" I asked. "To not eat pork is racism," he replied. Astonished, I replied, "What? How is not eating pork racism? Racism against what? Against pigs?" To which he responded, "To not eat pork is a type of prejudice, and so keeping kosher is racism." "But what about preferring *jamón* to *prosciutto*? Is that also racism?" I asked. "No, that's just a preference. Anna is not saying that she will not eat *prosciutto*, she's just saying that she likes *jamón*."

I responded, "I do not understand because I have always thought that racism was a form of discrimination against people where the cultural characteristics of a person or group were set in causal relationship to that group's physical characteristics. Kashrut is a set of dietary *rules* and whether or not they were as pronounced as those found in Judaism, all cultures have dietary rules. To follow rules was not racism. Italians have endless rules about what can and cannot be eaten. My favorite example is *spaghetti bolognese*. Would you eat *spaghetti bolognese*?" "There's no such thing." "Exactly! There's no such thing because in Italy there is a national rule about how to prepare that particular plate—it's done with *pappardelle*, not *spaghetti* (La Cecla 1998). But to the English or the Americans, there's no problem. Is it racism to eat *papardelle bolognese* and to never eat *spaghetti bolognese*?" "It's not racism. *Spaghetti bolognese* is just not good, but you can have it if you want. Not eating pork is a prejudice. It's racism."

To discover that I was a pork racist was frustrating at the time, but was perhaps the best introduction to the problem of tracking the current state of European discourses on race and multiculturalism, and how they differ from American conceptions. In the

European context, racism has a wide array of meanings ranging from the specific, historical discrimination of Jews under the Nazi and Fascist regimes, to the general idea of intolerance to any form of difference (European Commission 1998). In other words, the overly broad, popular conception of racism being expressed by the conversation about pork was an example of an understanding of racism that was emptied of any of the specifics of the historical experience of racism. Negative attitudes towards people who are "different" can be equally described by the term "racism."

The popular conception also looks for examples where Jews—the victims of racism, historically—are themselves racist. This narrative is often linked with Israeli politics. European nationalist discourses that once stigmatized Jews as racial outsiders, not identifies Jews with Israeli politics. The Jewish racist victim in this discourse becomes the racist, thereby offering redemption for Europe. This logic of pork racism seems to suggest that if the victim of racism is now a racist, then the social problem of confronting Italian racism is less urgent.

Yet, the other problem in my conversation on pork racism was the manner in which an ethnocentric opinion marking Jewish dietary laws as an expression of "prejudice" were presented to me as a form of anti-racism. Intolerance for Jewish culture had been reclassified as intolerance for intolerance.

The expression of anti-racism links up with one of the most common and widely-diffuse of forms of anti-Semitism in Italy: that Jewish culture is a problem because it rejects "normal" dietary habits or non-Jewish spouses—or any other expressions of Jewish particularism. While I am uncertain that "pork racism" is an heuristically useful

term for the study of Jewish Museums in Italy, it is indicative of how anti-racist statements and sentiment can easily—and proudly—propagate classical expressions of European xenophobic suspicion of difference. The boundary between differentialist racism and multiculturalism often hard to establish.

Any attempt to define multiculturalism should aspire to not only clearly establish who is speaking when "racism" and "multicultural" are used, but also to distinguish between popular-uncritical conceptions and critical, anthropologically useful understandings of those terms, keeping in mind that in practice the "critical" and the "popular" may converge or overlap. In this dissertation, one of my objectives is to specify what these terms mean when they unfold in the context of a cultural heritage project celebrating Italian Jewish culture.

Multiculturalism in an American popular culture perspective, for example, is often characterized as a social movement predicated on the idea of pluralism as the default human condition whose understanding has been suppressed by the exigencies of power. In this broad American view, multiculturalism signifies both "multiple cultures" and a discourse on the role of power in society, particularly as power is located in the history and maintenance of conceptions of culture.

In this same American context, multiculturalism is also understood as an historical phenomenon emergent from the intellectual critique of the culture concept both in the social sciences and the humanities. Hence, multiculturalism is an extension of the discourse on the post-enlightenment quality of a cultivated individual, and the nineteenth-century ethnographic concept of culture (Williams 1983:88, Segal 2001). Even more

specifically, in the United States, many scholars argue that multiculturalism has emerged from a particular critique of culture and power associated with the civil rights movement, critical theory since the 1970s, and the broad study of racism, class and gender under the rubric of "neo-Marxism."

In another example of the term can be defined, the *International Encyclopedia of Social and Behavioral Sciences* defines 'multiculturalism' as a general category framing issues of social justice and domination in terms of identity, and as a discourse that foregrounds "the political" in issues of representation, the public sphere and labor practices. Most importantly, 'multiculturalism' constitutes a critique of 'monoculturalism' which is intended to signify a Eurocentric understanding of all aspects of culture and society. 'Multiculturalism' as a social movement offers a critique of the basic inventory of distinctions that give social action value in western society, and finds remedy for the social injustices maintained by those distinctions in the deconstruction of the idea of a European culture. Finally, as a term 'multiculturalism' also represents a flow of ideas between the social sciences and the public sphere:

> More specifically, multiculturalism represents a major instance of the public circulation of the key term of American anthropology, culture—though contained within a compound term that was not itself prominent in any social or behavioral science discipline prior to the compound's wider circulation (italics mine). Multiculturalism is, in short, a hybrid concept, born out of the too little examined interaction between social scientific knowledge and its social reception and circulation. (Segal:2001)

Here, the crucial point is the idea that multiculturalism is a "hybrid concept" or "compound term" wherein the concept of culture from American anthropology, by which is meant a relativist or Boasian tradition, emerges in a particular public usage. To define 'multiculturalism' is not only to engage the late history of the culture concept, but to locate that discussion in a particular nexus of European humanism and American racism. Of late, this history has become increasingly difficult to navigate due to the fact that multicultural values are often espoused, as Geertz has suggested, by both relativists and anti-relativists alike (2000:42-46).

Italian ideas about multiculturalism signify a particular understanding and social practice concerning culture, but the history and politics of the term in the Italian context are radically different than what is found in other contexts, particularly the United States. Unlike its counterpart in the United States, which emerged from protest discourse associated with grass-roots anti-racism politics in the 1960s, multiculturalism in Italy emerged from a commemorative discourses associated with official anti-fascist politics. Multiculturalism has its roots in the the 1980s, not the 1960s. Specifically, American multiculturalism is dominated by the idea of promoting the politics of difference in the present, while Italian multiculturalism is dominated by the idea of rediscovering the presence of difference that has been removed from the history of culture. In a sense, the central problem of American multiculturalism is the great burden of difference—its inevitability and omnipresence, both in the practice of the hegemonic power structure and in the reforming discourse. So, while protest politics in the civil rights movement

focused on the problem of a social system which could not help but see black men as marked because of their blackness, affirmative action also insists on retaining that visibility as part of the means of redress. In Italy, by contrast, transparency is the problem posited by multiculturalism. The presence of Jewish architectural history is everywhere in the urban landscape, but without multicultural reform, one cannot "see" this presence. If in Ralph Ellison's conception, then, the founding problem in American history is the extent to which race renders certain citizens politically powerless by virtue of being marked as racially visible—the problem facing Italy has been posited as the dangers to society of not valorizing that which is present because it cannot be seen. The same concern with multicultural visibility and invisibility in Italy has not been confined to Jews. Commercial forms of multiculturalism, such as "The Colors of Benetton" campaign was predicated entirely on the concept of showing cultural difference. Despite this commercial movement, Italian multiculturalism has not been as interested in valorizing other ethnic groups. During my fieldwork I observed no interest or movements to valorize Gypsy, Albanian or Tunisian culture--three groups widely represented in the social and commercial life of the city. In fact, the same multicultural programs that valorized Jews could be shown to reinforce the process of racially stigmatizing Africans as non-Italian, non-European outsiders.

Another key difference between American and Italian discourses is the relationship between multiculturalism and concepts of labor and property. Affirmative action in the United States is a central issue in multiculturalism and is characterized by the widespread circulation of the idea of structural discrimination in labor practices—the

idea that in a meritocracy, cultural factors can result in an uneven distribution of opportunity. Hence, American multiculturalism points to the majority of culturally marked others in the subaltern class as both a sign of structural discrimination and the basis for the idea that the same factors previously used to exclude individuals (race and gender predominantly), should become factors in hiring practices until the playing field becomes level.

In Italy, the link between multiculturalism and labor reform is not only absent, but the broader postulate about the relationship between structural discrimination and poverty is inverted. In Italy, the basic presupposition of multiculturalism is that cultures which are marked as different have not been forced into poverty, but have accumulated great caches of cultural treasure which need only be valorized to be included in the collective repository of cultural wealth in the nation. It is the nation which is impoverished by not recognizing the value of cultural difference, not the excluded cultural group. While this logic is also present in contemporary debates on multiculturalism in the United States—the expression of Fish's "boutique" multiculturalist—its significance in the U.S. is dwarfed by labor concerns (Fish 1999:56).

This difference is embodied most clearly in the contrasting initiatives on cultural property emergent from the American and Italian contexts. While it is true that in the United States, multiculturalism has given rise to a tendency to celebrate various cultures through an appreciation of art, food, music and clothes, these consumer phenomena existed long before the rise of multiculturalism in the 1960s. The new phenomenon associated with the rise of multicultural attempts to redress the problems of social

inequality caused by structural discrimination has been the dismantling of museum collections and the creation of both legal and commercial means to insure that cultural property deemed to belong to a discriminated group remain outside of the public sphere. This reform has centered on both human remains and cultural artifacts belonging originally to Native American groups in the United States, but which were misappropriated in the 19th and 20th centuries to form the basis of ethnographic, historic and art museums. The complex of issues signified by the Native American Graves Protection and Repatriation Act of 1990 (PL 101-601; 25 USC 3001-13; 104 Stat. 3042) indicates the extent to which this position on property, like affirmative action on labor, marks the rise of multiculturalism in the United States from theory to practice. This has resulted, finally, in a restructuring of museum practices along the lines of dialogic cooperation and a meticulous adherence to a politics of self representation as a solution to the problems of discrimination through representation by the state (Palumbo 2001:19).

In Italy, the problem of property is divided into two discrete areas which do not interact. Similar to the juridical reforms which resulted in the return of property to Native Americans, the Italian state has instituted and carried out acts of restitution to citizens whose property was misappropriated during the war. In this case, the remedy of stolen property has been found in the return of property value rather than actual things. In exchange for proof of discrimination under the fascist race laws, any Italian citizen--although typically only Jews--can receive monetary compensation for the experience, but not the actual property lost. However, the restitution of stolen property in financial terms began prior to and beyond the bounds of multiculturalism. The phenomenon that

has emerged out of multiculturalism has been the valorization of cultural property through heritage practices, including research, cataloguing , collecting, exhibitions and museums. Complicating this process is the continuing presence of cultural laws to the effect that property deemed of value to the Italian nation becomes the de facto property of the Italian nation. Ironically, the multicultural valorization of the cultural property of marked outsiders sets in motion the legal process of transforming private property into public cultural capital. Even more ironic, these heritage laws in question were written during the fascist period (Carugno 1994:173, Alibrandi 1997, Volpe 1996).

In this dissertation my claim is that both political and intellectual approaches to racism are incomplete at best, and complicit at worst, if they do not also consider as part of the problem the proliferation of multicultural and anti-racist discourses and practices. To combat the elaboration of politics that stigmatize and exclude minority groups, scholarship must approach celebratory and disparaging discourses not as opposing forces, but as two expression of a cultural logic routinely deployed through the ordinary acts of everyday social life. In this logic, such simple acts as a museum director paying a social call to a synagogue are important moments in Europe's struggle to comprehend cultural difference. It is in these moments that commonsense acts are brought into context with the new forms of authority and control.

A further goal of this dissertation is to provide both descriptive and analytical connections between multiculturalism and situated concepts of emptiness--in this case the emptiness of a museum. The Jewish Museum of Bologna failed to acquire a collection through the actions of situated social actors, both Jews and state officials. "Virtual"

technology does not exist in a static vacuum, but offers a starting point for understanding how museums depend on and engender social links emergent from and constitutive of deeply held ideas about culture and capital. Finally, it is not a coincidence that Jewish museums engaged in the project of representing Jewish experience in the European social arena should begin to give shape to "empty" museums.

In this context, the idea of collecting itself becomes a keyword through which the complex interactions of history and contemporary politics are brought into dialogue. As Daniel Liebiskind writes in his theoretical observations about the problem of building a Jewish museum in Germany, "The visitor [must be] placed in precarious equilibrium between the collected and the un-collectable, the recollected and the un-recordable" (1997:56). Indeed, Jewish culture in Italy as in all of Europe is both collectable and un-collectable. Any project that does not engage this duality is complicit with those political agendas seeking to construct a Europe empty of Jews, if not all cultural difference. Hence, this dissertation speaks back to museum theory by interrogating the link between museums and collecting. If, as critical theorist and theologian Edmond Jabès has suggested, to study Judaism in post-Holocaust Europe is to "probe emptiness," then it can also be argued that to study museums in contemporary Europe is to probe the significance of that emptiness for theories of collecting. Hence, this dissertation describes an instance beyond the conventional definition of what a museum should--the gray-zone between having culture and having nothing--as a viable aspect of museum representation, thereby connecting the ethnography of a small Jewish museum in Bologna to contemporary debates at the heart of culture theory.

Ethnographic Setting

Typically, the Italian peninsula is celebrated as one of the "oldest" sites in Western history, while Italy is derided as one of the newest and most unstable modern western nation states. Established in 1865 after a series of events known as the *Risorgimento* unified the disparate city states from Sicily in the South to Friuli and Piemonte in the North, Italy has experienced more than 50 different ruling government coalitions since World War II, few lasting more than a year. Italy, today, is a parliamentary democracy whose current constitution was ratified on January 1, 1948, one of the founding member states of the European Union, and contains 20 semi-autonomous regions, each with regional and provincial parliaments. Economic life in Italy is marked by a radical split between a wealthy northern zone centered on the shipping, automotive and textile production in the industrial triangle of Genoa, Turin and Milan, and a poor, rural south whose major industry is the production of flour and olives for export (Villari 1903, Barzini 1964, Cooper 1923, Burke 1987. Bryant 1976, Isnenghi 1996).

From 1922 to 1943 Italy was controlled by a single-party fascist dictatorship under Mussolini, who ruled Italy until the nation was occupied by the Nazi government in the last years of World War II. Following the War, Italy was invaded by Allied forces who, with the assistance of dozens of independent Italian resistance movements, defeated the German occupying forces. Among other famous Americans involved in this "liberation" was Bob Dole who was shot and wounded in the town of Castel D'Aiano in

the Apennine Mountains about thirty miles from Bologna (De Felice 1970, Payne 1995:80-129).

Bologna is a medium-sized city by Italian standards with roughly 422,000 residents. It is the capital of the region of Emilia-Romagna which stretches from the Adriatic coast on the East to the outskirts of Milan in the west. The city center is a slightly squashed pie-shaped circle, formerly walled, with three main streets running to the center of the city on each end. Two major piazzas mark the center of the town, one by the Church of Saint Francesco and the other by city hall, but the symbol of the city is the Two Towers which lean precariously on one end of the busy Via Indipendenza. The city center can be crossed on foot in half an hour (James 1909, Ferrari-Bravo 1991).

While the *Museo Ebraico* has become important in the cultural landscape of the city, Bologna is much better known as *la dotta*, *la rossa* and *la grassa*: the learned, the red and the fat. The city is "learned" because it hosts the oldest university in Europe. The University of Bologna is famous amongst other things for the Palazzo Poggi, the medieval observatory where Copernicus supposedly studied the Dog Star and dreamed up the theory of the planets that would plague him until his death. The city is "red" for two reasons. First, the buildings are literally washed in red plaster. On a summer evening when the sun lights up the porticoes that cover most of the city streets, the town glows. Second, Bologna was the center of European communism outside of the soviet block—until the Italian communist party dissolved into the Left Democrat party. The name for the local communist party is "The Two Towers," and like the two towers, the communist party was for years the symbol of the city. Finally, Bologna is "fat" because

its cuisine, characterized by heavy cream, pork and beef, the classic Bolognese dish is *pappardelle al ragù*, flat egg noodles with a heavy tomato meat sauce. While the signature sausage known as *mortadella* is Bologna's most famous export to the west (we call it "bologna"), the most characteristic local ingredient is the thick-as-paste pork fat (*strutto*) used in everything from sauce to the ornate dinner rolls shaped like starfish and birds that fill the windows (Wiel 1923, Jäggi 1977).

Linguistically, Bologna is a diverse city, but the dominant language spoken is standard Italian. Bolognese is spoken by older residents, and understood by few young people. Romagnola serves as a lingua franca used in the provinces to the East of Bologna, with local languages providing the standard vernacular of everyday life. Due to the large population of students from Calabria, Puglia and Naples, linguistically, Bologna can be very complex with a variety of "dialects" interacting in one social context. Furthermore, the city hosts a large population of immigrants from Eastern Europe, North Africa, West Africa, the Middle East, Japan and China. Linguistically, Bologna can often present a puzzle. During my fieldwork, however, I never encountered a situation where I could not communicate in standard Italian, both with Italians from beyond Bologna, and with non-Italians.

My fieldwork in Bologna was conducted primarily in four locations: The Jewish Museum of Bologna, the Jewish Community of Bologna, small shops in the former Jewish ghetto in the city center, and the homes of local residents in the city. The Jewish Museum is located in Bologna's renovated "ex-ghetto ebraico," a small wedge-shaped neighborhood just off the central piazza. The ghetto area contains fashionable

shops, apartments, bars and restaurants and the museum. It is a pedestrian zone. The Jewish Community or *Comunità Ebraica di Bologna* is located five blocks from the ghetto on the opposite side of the city's central piazza at Via Gombruti 9. The *comunità* contains a synagogue, kosher dining hall, ritual bath, classrooms, offices, an apartment for the Rabbi and his family, and an apartment for the cook and custodian of the community.

There are roughly 35,000 Jews in Italy today, which has a population of approximately 60 million. The largest populations of Jews are in Rome (15,000), Milan (9,500) and Turin (1,285), with much smaller populations in Florence, Trieste and Venice (Della Pergolla 1976). Statistics are problematic in accounting for the size of Italian Jewry due to the high number of foreign Jews who live in Italy, including large Israeli populations who came to study dentistry and medicine in the 1960s, and American Lubavitch Jews who started arriving with the intention of recruiting Jews into their movement in the 1980s. Moreover, despite the variation within Italian Jewry, it is possible to generalize about several key aspects of Jewish life in Italy that are distinct from Jewish cultural patterns in other national contexts. In particular, Italian Jews typically follow some combination of Ashkenazi or Sephardi ritual together with "il Rito Romano" or "il Rito Italiano" (The Roman Rite or The Italian Rite), distinguishable by key aspects of the Sabbath and holiday liturgies (EJ 1969:11-398, Prato 1995). The other distinction is the deeply held belief by most Italian Jews that they have been in Italy "for over 2000 years," alluding to the idea that Jewish presence in Italy predates the

expulsion from Jerusalem that marks the classic beginning of the Jewish Diaspora in the third century BC.

The Holocaust in Italy is marked by a racist repressive activity of Mussolini's fascist dictatorship that was more severe than the repression in other European nations, but less so than nations under the direct sphere of influence of the Nazis. From Mussolini's assent to power in 1922 until 1937, Jews were not particularly singled out as political outsiders or biological contaminants to the Italian nation. Moreover, fascist colonial activity in North Africa often took on as its strategy—as was the case for France in Algeria and Morocco—the liberation and inclusion of the Jewish population in the concept of the Italian nation as a strategy for controlling the colony. While the historical narrative may exaggerate the extent of the sudden change of policy, it is generally true that in 1938, following a declaration on race by a group of Italian scientists, and the subsequent adoption of the "Race Laws" by the Fascists, Jews were systematically excluded from Italian public life along the lines of biological racism not radically different from those found in Germany. During the war, about 8,500 Jews were deported from Italy to Nazi concentration camps where they were killed (De Felice 1961, Carracciolo 1986).

There are roughly 212 registered members of the Jewish Community of Bologna. Record of Jewish life in the city of Bologna extends at least as far back as 1171, when the historical record shows the first evidence of a decree expelling Jews from the city. By the Fifteenth Century there were eleven synagogues throughout the province of Bologna, and the city hosted one of the centers of Jewish book printing (Ottolenghi 1979). In

1556, following the Papal Bull *Cum Nimis Absurdum*, which confined all Jews in Church territories to walled sections of the city, Jews in Bologna were confined to a small wedge of territory at the center of the city. A word of supposed Venetian origin, the ghetto is said to have originated with the Republic of Venice forcing Jews to live in one urban quarter (1516). Italian ghettos were only fully abolished when the end of the nineteenth-century brought Italian national unity (Abrahams1896; Roth 1946; Roth and Michman 1971; Stow 1977, Toaff 1971, 1996, Simonsohn 1990, Feldman 1997, Kertzer 2001).

Although as of June 1999 there was one Jewish shop owner who worked in the ghetto, and one Jewish family that had recently purchased an apartment, Jews have not lived in the ghetto since the end of the sixteenth century, and by 1569 the approximately 800 Jews living in Bologna were expelled. As one local historian commented, "In Bologna you really have to use your imagination to see Jewish culture in the ghetto, because there's really nothing there." Bologna is strikingly different than other historic Jewish quarters in Italy and Europe. The large Jewish heritage quarters in Rome and Venice contain not only tours and memorials, but also kosher foods stores, active synagogues, libraries, and Judaica shops. As one tourist in Bologna commented, "After being in Paris and Prague, I mean, it's nice here, but it's not as though there's anything particularly Jewish about it." In mentioning these reactions, my point is not to arbitrate on the authenticity of Bologna's ghetto as a Jewish site. Still, the reactions of both historians and tourists suggest that identifying the ghetto area as Jewish is an aesthetic and heuristic choice based on political interest rather than solely on documents or architectural evidence. Furthermore, much of the "evidence" used by historians to

document the ghetto in Bologna does not actually show any sign of Jewish life, but merely uses images of the city from the supposed "Age of the Ghettos" (Foschi 1998:68).

Probably the most famous event in Bolognese Jewish history is known as the "Mortara Affair" and took place in 1858, just prior to the unification of Italy. In June of that year, a six-year-old Jewish child was taken away at night by Papal guards claiming that he had been baptized by the maid. Despite international appeals, Edgardo Mortara never returned to this family and lived out the rest of his life as a devout Catholic missionary. The events were overshadowed, ultimately, by the revolution that led to the unification of Italy (Kertzer 1997).

During the War, the Fascist persecutions resulted in the slow elimination of Bologna's population of roughly 1,200 Jews from public life. Most Jews fled the city, either to the United States, South America or the nearby mountains (Sacerdoti 1983). Of the people who stayed, 85 were deported to Auschwitz and killed. Following the War, the community was re-established with the center of social life being the community building. There is no one area of Jewish residence in Bologna, as the roughly 200 Jewish families live throughout the city. There is a visible but small population of Israeli Jews in Bologna, some of whom frequent the community. These Israelis came to Italy in the late 1960s and early 1970s to study dentistry and ophthalmology. With the exception of Israeli Jews who occasionally speak Hebrew amongst themselves, Bolognese Jews cannot be distinguished by speech patterns.

My fieldwork followed the daily rhythm of life in the community, and included regular attendance at Friday evening and Saturday morning synagogue services, holiday

services, lunch with community members, and volunteer work in the community offices. Other less regular events included funerals, weddings, lectures, book signings, and a host of informal social events involving small groups. Many people in the community had social ties to both the Jewish Museum project and the merchants in the ghetto, which opened up possibilities for informal meetings, then more regular conversations and interviews. Beyond Bologna, I visited Jewish communities, museums, libraries and heritage sites in Asti, Carpi, Casale Monferato, Faenza, Ferrara, Fidenza, Florence, Forlì, Bagnacavalo, Imola, Lugo, Merano, Milan, Modena, Padova, Parma, Piacenza, Perugia, Ravenna, Reggio Emilia, Rimini, Rome, Soragna, Trieste, Venice, and a host of other locations.

The dissertation unfolds in five chapters which outline the planning of the museum without a collection, situating the project in the context of the Jewish culture in Bologna, heritage practice in Italy and a broad global discourse on the politics of culture. In chapter one, I examine the particular European discourse on multiculturalism articulated in the Jewish museum project and outline a full description of my research area and the key contextual elements in my ethnography. In chapter two, I discuss the "origins" of the museum project by considering how a materialist conception of Jewish culture emerged in Italy starting in the late 1970s and early 1980s. The focus of this chapter is the literature on Jewish "itineraries" and Jewish artistic "treasures" published since the 1980s, and other local and national discourses which refocused attention on Jewish culture as Italian cultural capital.

In chapters three and four I examine the display practices of the Jewish Museum in Bologna, focusing on the "empty" museum as a social arena. Chapter three describes "links" and "tours" as key elements of the permanent exhibition and how they relate to the planner's frustrated desire to have a significant collection. Chapter four then describes the "activities" in the gallery, tracing the connections between the social programs held in the museum and the social interaction between the museum representatives and the local Jewish community outside the museum. In chapter five I analyze the overlay of Jewish heritage, race and crime discourse in the renovated Jewish ghetto where the Jewish museum is located. Finally, in chapter six I consider the relationship between the museum, film and Italian efforts to commemorate the Holocaust.

Finally, it would be an oversight to introduce a thesis about Jewish heritage in Italy without offering some observations about the relationship between my own identity and the subject matter. As a Jew raised in the United States and with a considerable consciousness and knowledge of Jewish identity, I experienced both discomfort and anger in my fieldwork in Bologna. To be a Jew in Italy is to be a marked cultural outsider. Not once in conversation with non-Jews in Italy was the mention of my Jewishness left without some sort of comment (i.e., "I have always admired the Jews as a fascinating race"). It was also my general perception almost from my first discovery of the Jewish Museum of Bologna that the key figures orchestrating this project operated with a deeply held suspicion of my Jewishness.

But the problem of my Jewishness was not limited to interaction with non-Jews. Many times during my fieldwork I found myself in a position as interpreter for Jewish

tourists visiting Bologna en route to Florence or Venice or other destinations on what was rapidly becoming the Jewish version of the European grand tour. These tourists, mostly American and Israeli, but occasionally European, Australian or South African, came to the Bologna Jewish community to eat a meal, attend a ritual service or just to speak with local Jews. Their reactions were almost always disappointment. The Jews in Bologna, it seemed, were never the Jews that these Jewish tourists had expected to find. My experience in Bologna was deeply informed by this awareness that my Jewishness was part of a field meanings rather than just a single conception or experience. Moreover, while I often felt implicated, both directly and indirectly, by problematic attitudes or statements about Judaism, my ambition as an ethnographer was to understand this dynamic from a situated perspective, rather than through some a priori knowledge based generated by my assumed identity. The key to my ethnography was not simply reacting to Italy as a Jew, but in cultivating a social place in Bologna from which I could learn from locals—both Jews and non-Jews—how to react to Italy as a Jew.

My experience as a Jew in Bologna was informed by my daily evaluation of and commitment to critical relativism, and not by any singular allegiance to a normative conception of Judaism. While I may have felt the frustration of the tourist, as an ethnographer I chose to inhabit rather than reject this dissonance between my expectations about Jewish practice and the expectations of the Jewish community. Commenting on the problematic of his fieldwork in New York, Jonathan Boyarin suggested that anthropology can be a useful "tool for mediating between the self and the community" (Boyarin 1996:32). While Boyarin brought to light the role of anthropology

as a mediating tool, my fieldwork taught me that the choice to make use of that tool is a daily choice unfolding in a constantly shifting ethnographic context. It was by choosing to learn about the terms of inclusion in Jewish community of Bologna—rather than choosing to struggle against those terms—that allowed me to earn a social place in the community and epitomized the difference between my place as a participant observer. While I never became an insider, per se, by virtue of my constant questioning of what it meant to have a social role in local community life, I shared in the experience of being marked as a Jew Bolognese civil society. In cultivating this critical relativist perspective, I developed a great respect and admiration for the members of the Jewish community of Bologna, while at the same time sharing in their intense appreciation and anxiety over the rights and responsibilities of community membership.

Despite my intentions, there were times during my fieldwork when I chose to abandon the role of participant observer that I have described. Several instances are worth noting. One instance involved the Catholic Church. Despite objections by community members, I chose on several occasions to attend Catholic Mass in local churches. My interest in Catholic ritual came from a genuine interest (I had never attended Mass prior to my fieldwork), and from a commitment to establishing a broad the cultural context for the Jewish culture industry in Italy. Another instance where I chose not to be a participant observer involved ultra-orthodox Judaism. There is a small, but historically significant population of Lubavitcher Jews in Bologna who came to the city from the United States and Israel in the 1970s. The Lubavitch or "Chabad" as they are also called, are a sect of Chasidic Judaism based in the United Sates. On several

occasions during my fieldwork I was invited to attend functions or events hosted by the Lubavitch in Bologna, but I chose to decline these invitations and the Lubavitcher remain largely absent from my ethnography. While present in the city, Lubavitcher Jews were completely absent from the development of the Jewish Museum, did not attend any functions in the Jewish community building, nor did I ever encounter them in my daily routines. With few exceptions, their activities were restricted to a small building on the outskirts of the city. This decision was on both endorsed and called into questioned by members of the Jewish community of Bologna who are not in consensus about how to respond to the presence of this movement in their city.

There were many more instances than those discussed here. Yet, the crucial point is that whenever I chose to momentarily distance myself from the Jewish community, I did so with the intention of developing a broader perspective on the social issues that concerned me in Bologna. Ultimately, those understandings enabled me to gain an even deeper and more complex appreciation for the place of Jews in contemporary Bologna. Long after my fieldwork was completed, this appreciation remains paramount to my sense of what it means to be an anthropologists and forms the theoretical core of this dissertation.

CHAPTER 2: SHIFTING MODELS OF JEWISH CULTURE IN ITALY

Having set out the basic premises of European anti-racism and Italian multiculturalism, in this chapter and the next my goal is to examine these concepts as they took shape in the planning and opening of a museum. That the Jewish Museum of Bologna was intended as a multicultural project was clearly evident in the laudatory remarks offered by various keynote speakers at the inauguration of the museum in 1999:

> This museum is a step forward towards coexistence and brings to mind the circumstances whereby in our country, in our continent, there was a fracture between diverse cultures, one culture overpowered another. We must, therefore, reaffirm civic responsibility so that there will be no more instances of overpowering, so that everyone will partake in a culture of being together (Luciano Violante, 9 May 1999).

> We have just placed a wreath of flowers before the commemorative plaque that records the existence of the ghetto and the deportation of Bolognese Jews to German concentration camps after the fascist race laws of 1938. The century that is ending ("that is dying" *che sta morendo*), is stained from the horror of the Holocaust and, perhaps, closes with new persecutions just a few hundred kilometers from here. All the more, we reassert the obligation to affirm the values of multi-ethnic and multi-

> religious coexistence, that due to new threats is under discussion (Walter Vitali, 9 May 1999).

> In conclusion, I believe firmly in the establishment of a modern Jewish museum, not only to secure history absolutely, but also to wage a strong resistance against that kind of ignorance, that continues to root itself in many of us more than we can imagine, even in the context of a multiethnic, multicultural, and postmodern society (Franco Bonilauri, 1 June 1999).

In this chapter, I examine the time period before the museum was opened, including the evolving definitions of a Jewish museum, the origin of the basic materialist assumptions about Jewish culture that inform the Jewish museum, and the reactions of the local Jewish community to these developments. The idea that Italy in general, but Emilia-Romagna in particular, is rich with Jewish material "treasures" took shape through a series of publications and cultural projects that began in the late 1980s. I will examine these projects, the observations of some key participants in them, and show how they gave rise to a particular conception of the museum. I will then consider the reactions of local Jews in Bologna to this new emphasis on Jewish material culture, sketching how this development was often contrasted with the neglect for Jewish social life, particular amongst younger Jews in the city.

I argue that although the Jewish museum did not have a collection when it opened, it was conceived and planned with the idea that it should have one because Jewish culture, in the years prior to the museum project, had been re-imagined in Italy as material property rather than social life. Moreover, this idea was particularly strong in Emilia-Romagna, the region for which Bologna is the capital city. Ironically, while the state was "discovering" the richness of Jewish "presence" within its borders, and intellectuals and leaders were being involved by the state in locating and valorizing this material wealth, local Jews were growing increasingly anxious about the drop in Jewish population and the subsequent decline in Jewish social activities.

A spatial metaphor is helpful to draw out the significance of my argument. While local Jews understood Italy as a nation to be increasingly "empty" of Jewish social life, the discourse on Jewish heritage was propagating the logic that Italy was "full" of undiscovered Jewish material culture. Moreover, this was not one ideological viewpoint stamped onto another. The discovery of material presence in the heritage discourse is predicated on the realization that Italian Jewish social life was close to extinction—an exaggeration which also caused anxiety amongst local Jews. In linguistic terms, one might observe that in the context of the Jewish Museum of Bologna—and the Italian Jewish heritage industry in general—material wealth became a signifier for social bankruptcy.

The situated critique by local Jews follows logically from this model. As the discourse on Jewish cultural material wealth proliferated in the public sphere, it grew more and more difficult to see the poverty through the wealth. Hence, Jews who

believed that the community was in a state of "decline" [*decadenza*], a "dying community," found themselves in a context where local heritage projects were projecting an image of a vibrant, colorful world, brimming with cultural wealth. It is this contradiction that ultimately gives meaning to the Jewish response to the museum, both its contents and its techniques of display.

Early Catalogues and Tourist Literature

Since the publication of Karp and Lavine's *Exhibiting Cultures* (1991) it has become commonplace in anthropological literature to suggest that museums are social arenas rather than static containers of objects. Ethnographic studies have described museum practices as a politics of existing cultural institutions (Handler and Gable 1998). Yet, approaching a museum after it is already a functioning institution can leave unexamined the key processes that take place before the museum opens—when the museum is still a project in the making. This is the phase that does not open like the first page of a book with the museum proposal, but begins through the convergence of often random events that are then recast as coherent historical narratives in museum catalogues, conference proceedings, and newsletters produced by the museum project as it accelerates towards the status of an official institution. Likewise, this phase of institutional life does not end neatly with the inauguration of the museum, but merges with a new phase when official museum discourses begin to silence counter discourses. It is important to note that although these counter discourses do not go away—indeed

they can produce important interventions in the life of the institution—they may become difficult to recognize as the museum moves past this early phase of institutional life.

Raymond Williams' suggestive approach to the history of what he calls keywords is germane to the analysis of museum definitions. For Williams, definitions should be treated not as isolated, reified concepts, but as a "field of meanings" centered on terms whose multiple signifiers may overlap and contradict each other (Williams 1983:25). When I considered this concept ethnographically in the context of my fieldwork on the planning and development of a Jewish Museum in Bologna, Italy, I noted that a field of meanings was also a social field rife with tensions and contradictions. In situ, there are so many definitions of Jewish museums that emerge, it is no longer heuristically tenable to conceive of definitions as isolated models. Rather, each definition is a response to another, a dialogue, a contradiction that seeks to associate itself with another definition or to supplant one discourse with another. Moreover, due to the continued delays and postponed opening dates in the Bologna project I was studying, I found myself listening to and participating in a five-year conversation about the definition of a Jewish museum.

The *Museo Ebraico di Bologna* was inaugurated and officially opened to the public on May 9, 1999 after more than ten years of planning and delays. Although its exact origins are not ultimately recoverable, events starting in the late 1970s appear to have converged on the proposal for a museum whose main purpose was the collection and exhibition of Jewish material culture in Bologna. In 1987 the Italian government finally revised the legal status of non-Catholic religions in the republic, such that Judaism was no longer viewed as a juridical second-class citizen (Dazzetti 1998). Article Sixteen

of this "accord" (*intesa*) mandated a commission whose task was to plan for collecting, re-ordering, and enjoying "Jewish cultural heritage" (*beni culturali ebraici*) in Italy (Fubini 1986:52). Overlapping with this legal initiative, in 1988 the Cultural Heritage Institute of Emilia-Romagna (Bologna is the capital city of the region Emilia-Romagna) published a catalogue of all bibliographic, architectural and artistic materials relating to Jewish culture in the region, resulting in the massive volume *Jewish Culture in Emilia-Romagna* (Bondoni and Busi 1987).

Two regional exhibitions in towns near Bologna followed on the heels of this publication. The first was largely bibliographic, focusing on the writings and material culture surrounding the life of Rabbi Ovadyah Yare of Bertinoro, held in Bertinoro, (Busi 1988, Faranda 1988) and the second was an exhibition that included many silver ritual objects and dioramas of Jewish family life called "Marvels of the Ghetto" held in Ferrara (Sacerdoti 1988). At the same time, events all over Italy were commemorating the fiftieth anniversary of the fascist race laws in Italy. It was during these wreath laying ceremonies and exhibitions to remember racial discrimination against Jews in Bologna that public officials declared their intentions to build a museum in Bologna dedicated to the collection and preservation of Jewish culture.

The first definitions of what later become known as the Jewish Museum of Bologna took the forms of public declarations by municipal politicians on the importance of a "a large permanent museum of Jewish culture" (Garbesi 1988). The idea of proposing a "large permanent museum" in Bologna was an attempt by local politicians to do one better than their counterparts had done in Ferrara and Bertinoro, the idea of a

museum as "permanent" being posited against the "temporary" nature of those first two exhibitions. Yet, the idea of permanence was also linked to the commemorative contexts in which these declarations were made, where politicians were less concerned with museums, per se, than with finding a good multicultural sound bite.

Still, the museum emerged in this early context as a type of permanent exhibition. This early definition of a permanent museum of Jewish culture was also linked to the redefinition of the former Jewish ghetto in Bologna as a Jewish place in the city. Finally, these proposals took place in the context of a nationally prominent redefinition of Jews in the form of Pope John Paul II's visit to the synagogue in Rome. That visit is noted as the Pope's first public use of phrase "older brothers" (*fratelli maggiore*) as opposed to "treacherous Jews" (*ebrei perfidi*) to define the Jews. This event in Rome was followed by a similar visit from the Bishop of Bologna to the local synagogue that echoed the Pope's new fraternal declarations (Capitani 1988).

Early definitions of the museum that came from Jewish leadership often posited Italian Jewry as a subcategory of an abstract and broadly conceived idea of Italy. Tulia Zevi, then president of the Union of Jewish Communities in Italy, described the idea for a museum of Jewish "civilization and culture," suggesting that the Bologna project was one candidate for a "national museum of Jewish culture" with competing proposals situated in Venice and Ferrara (Zevi 1988:a). The implication was that Jewish culture and a museum of Jewish culture was not by and for Italian Jews, but by and for Italians.

A materialist conception of Jewish culture had also emerged within local tourist literature. The idea that Jewish heritage travel constitutes an important component of

Italian heritage travel first took shape in the late 1980s as a result of collaborative work between the Italian media and Roman Jews who suddenly became interested in cultural heritage. Early in the 1980s, Annie Sacerdoti—a Roman Jew and trained historian—began writing monthly reviews of places in Italy that had architectural sites or features relevant to Jewish history in those particular locales (i.e., synagogues, former houses of Jewish families, Jewish community centers, cemeteries, etc.). These short essays were published in the Roman magazine *Shalom*, which had a modest circulation and was read almost entirely by Italian Jews.

Later enlisting the help of Luca Fiorentino—another Roman Jew and trained historian—Sacerdoti published the first major guidebook to Jewish culture in Italy, *Guida all'Italia ebraica* (1986). This book followed a region-by-region approach to sites of Jewish interest in Italy, and was subsequently republished in a series of books called *Jewish Itineraries*, in which each volume was dedicated entirely to one region. The volume *Jewish Itineraries in Emilia-Romagna* was published in 1992 with an expanded version of the text found in the 1992 guidebook. Volumes for Lombardia, Piemonte, Lazio, Veneto-Friuli, and Tuscany followed.

The guidebooks are important not only because they represent the first major circulation of Jewish heritage discourse in the print media in the 1980s, but because they provide the basic assumptions about Jewish culture that ultimately guided the Jewish Museum project in Bologna. Moreover, Sacerdoti was a member of the staff that put together the permanent exhibition in the museum, the Jewish Museum of Bologna's "Scientific Committee," and more to the point: many pages from these guidebooks were

literally included in the permanent exhibition of the Jewish Museum of Bologna—including exact texts and photographs. As a friend said during the opening of the museum, "Doesn't that look like a page from that guidebook? No wait! That *is* a page from the guidebook!" Similar observations were brought to my attention by many people in the weeks that followed the opening of the museum. Examining how a materialist conception of Jewish culture in the guidebooks took shape in the 1980s is crucial to reconstructing the interpretive context of the Jewish Museum of Bologna.

According to Sacerdoti, she first got involved in Jewish heritage research at the request of the Italian state media:

> Three years ago RAI 3 [Italian PBS] asked me to curate a documentary on the history of Jews in Lombardia. It was on that occasion that I discovered the synagogue of Rivarolo Mantovano, with its portrait of Garibaldi in front of the *aron*, that of Viadena, transformed into a woodshed, that grandiose and fascinating one in Sabbioneta, deserted like the city.
>
> I realized then that the history of Italian Judaism was not written only in the large ghettos, like in Rome or Venice, but also, just as richly, in many, many hidden places, little centers and villages almost unknown to Jews themselves. I searched for more of them, also in different regions, and I understand that wherever a community of Jews had been in two thousand years, little or large, that had known splendors and persecutions, had

> prayed, suffered or rejoiced—there remained a trace of the daily life, the tradition, the culture (Sacerdoti 1986:8).

The concept of Jewish itineraries in Italy expressed the idea that the material traces of Jewish life were located outside of urban centers and within objects or sites that had been covered over by non-Jewish cultural activity. Despite Jewish absence, there was a Jewish material presence, not lost, but in need of cultural resource management.

The next step in this argument was to move beyond the idea of material presence to the more abstract idea that awareness of the Jewish material record was not merely evidence of Jewish presence in the landscape, but also in the collective psyche of the nation:

> The Jewish presence in the region, however, is not merely something testified to by buildings and objects; it is part of our collective imagination and over the centuries has played a role in the production of various literary works that now form an integral part of Italian cultural history (Cavallina and Raimondi, *in* Sacerdoti1992:2).

It is not difficult to assess who the "collective" is supposed to signify in this example—residents of the region of Emilia-Romagna or the entire Italian nation. Yet, in general, the "presence" of Jews in Emilia-Romagna did not cross over to the collective imagination except in these types of rhetorical claims. One of the most common laments of Jews in Bologna was the general statement, "Italians know nothing about Judaism." While on the other side, when asked about Jewish culture, non-Jewish Bolognese

residents would most often respond, "Are there Jews in Bologna?" This in itself does not mean that local non-Jews did not have clear ideas about Jews. The idea that prejudice results from the absence of knowledge, experience or contact with a particular ethnic group is a specious popular theory in Bologna as elsewhere. Conflict with or imagined conceptions of the other do not emerge solely at ethnic boundaries (Barth 1969), but also exist as integral parts of nationalist and cultural discourses. Racism is part of the content of culture, not merely a byproduct generated by social transaction.

Looking beyond the texts of the guidebooks, several contextual factors informed the emergence of a materialist Jewish heritage discourse. Luca Fiorentino was hired by Sacerdoti to assist her with the research and publication of the first guidebook mentioned above. Fiorentino, who is currently the director of the library at the American Academy in Rome, was not involved in Jewish heritage before working with Sacerdoti, but did have an interest in Jewish identity issues:

> I wasn't involved in Jewish history, no. I knew someone who knew someone at the editorial office of *Shalom*, who suggested I might be a good person to work with...I was a child of the generation of '68, involved with many people my age, Jews and non-Jews, who were protesting many things. We were particularly opposed to the occupation, the Israeli government of the time, like the left in general in Italy...So, in response to our criticisms of Israel, I don't remember exactly how it happened, we became very interested in our own Italian heritage. You have to understand that at the time, there was a new interest in Jewish

> identity because the government was involved in the negotiations surrounding the *intesa*, which as you probably know was the document which redefined the status of the Jewish religion in Italy…So, the intesa was going on and we just started looking into Jewish culture. I remember we once had a day where we sat around and recorded a bunch of us talking about Jewish identity with the idea of making a book or a television show. Nothing ever came of it…
>
> Work on the guidebook came at a time when public discussion of Jews had shifted Jews as victims of the Nazis to talking about Israelis as not so good. It was a frustrating time for those of us on the left, and I think there was a real desire to separate ourselves from Israel by creating something new…And the work by Annie [Sacerdoti] really grew out of this interest by someone at the *RAI* to figure out why this synagogue in Montova had a picture of Garibaldi on the Torah ark. So, it was a lot of things.

The idea of going into an Italian landscape that was already well-known for one set of historical features and "discovering" the "presence" of Jewish culture as a second set of features existed prior to the period that Fiorentino talks about, albeit not in the same terms. The most famous example of this trope of discovery would be the opening passage of Giorgio Bassani's novel *The Garden of the Finzi Contini's* (1956) which recounts the story of a group of friends whose trip to an Etruscan archaeological site in

the Roman countryside leads them to discuss Jews, and ultimately to the unfolding of the narrator's tale about growing up in the same social circle as a family of wealthy Jews in Ferrara who perished in the Holocaust. Bassani's narrative, it should be noted, while well known, narratives an instance where romantic reflection on prehistoric ruins leads to thoughts of a Jewish cemetery--a Proustian metonymy which redirects the narrative to events and characters in the protagonist's past as if they were the present. That scientific recovery of architectural features of the type Fiorentino discusses was very different. The 1980s discovery of the Jewish past was less nostalgic than political, less romantic than scientific.

Several key issues emerge in Fiorentino's commentary. First, beyond the romantic interest in memory and traces expressed by Sacerdoti, Italian Jews where also interested in Italian Jewish history as a political statement against Israeli politics of the 1980s. This spark of interest had initially been focused on recovering the social texts of older members of the community, but this interest has since been lost. Second, the interest in material culture and memory was not new, but grew out of literature on the same theme written in the 1950s—in particular, literature such as the stories of Giorgio Bassani. Third, this link to Bassani was also a link to the Holocaust. Hence, interest in Jewish material culture in the 1980s was a resurgence of interest in the same topic thirty years earlier. Multiculturalism is conspicuously absent from Fiorentino's concerns.

The *intesa* mentioned by Fiorentino was also a factor in focusing attention on the material aspect of Jewish culture in the region. The *intesa* is a contract between the state and the Union of Jewish communities in Italy, and consists of various articles and

obligations by both parties. A key signatory of the *intesa* was the President of the Union of Jewish Communities of Italy, Tulia Zevi, who wrote a preface for Sacerdoti's guidebook as she did for so many other catalogues and guidebooks. While Zevi's comments echo Sacerdoti's romanticism, they focus on the connection between Italian Jewry as a dying social presence due to the Holocaust and the collective effort of the Italian nation to "save that which can be saved" of the material presence that Sacerdoti discusses.

Zevi's words show how interest in Jewish material culture by Jews—a communal or parochial interest in materialist micro-history—is linked to broad European themes about minority cultures, tolerance and the future of Italian civil society:

> Considered by most to be the oldest minority in the western world, and certainly the oldest collectivity in the Jewish Diaspora, ... [Italian Jewry] can boast a bimillenial and uninterrupted presence in the Italian peninsula and on its islands, the last stop today of a tradition that, according to the historian Arnaldo Momigliano, represents "a component of Italian culture" from the origins of Christianity and before (Zevi *in* Sacerdoti 1986:9)

In Zevi's assessment, Jewish culture is not only the oldest "minority" in the western world, but it has been a cultural minority since before the origins of Christianity. In this logic, the valorization of Jewish culture in Italy is not merely a multicultural act, but constitutes the valorization of multiculturalism itself. This integration of Jewish culture

in Italian culture has resulted in a "reciprocal enrichment" between minority and majority (p. 10).

In the rhetoric that follows, Zevi contrasts the presence of "traces" of Jewish culture "sprinkled" throughout Italy, with the "extermination" of Jews in Europe. Using the phrase "Holocaust Syndrome," Zevi describes the situation of survivors of the Holocaust as shifting towards a concern for survival after the War:

> Italy is scattered with tenuous and hidden traces, and impressions of the Jewish presence which are still significant and vital. It is said that there is not a corner of this nation that does not contain some trace [of Jewish presence]...The extermination of six million Jews and millions of other innocent victims cannot be forgotten or erased. Since the war, the first and second generation Jews have slowly learned to coexist with what can only be termed the "Holocaust Syndrome." Overcoming the confusion and desolation of the Post-War era, Italian Jewry has examined and rediscovered itself. There is a pressing desire to accept the struggle of its survival and to be reunited with its heritage. The reawakening of collective memory allows us to relive the past in the present with eyes turned towards the future, to turn ourselves with renewed understanding with respect to the rest of society (p. 10)

In other words, Jewish itineraries are not just about weekend recreation, but represent a form of communion with memory. Here, memory is expressed in cultural terms as a

material "presence" contained by a spatially defined nation, and in social terms as part of a "struggle" with the potential to bring about the transformation of society.

At the level of institutional reform, one article of the *intesa* mandated that a cultural census of Jewish heritage in Italy should be taken to determine the extent and state of Jewish culture within national boundaries (Tedeschi 1994:25). Even though the *intesa* did not become law until 1987, the public process of writing the *intesa* intersected with another public process stemming from constitutional reform in Italy: the creation and devolution of state power to Italy's regions. This process entailed, among other things, the creation of a Cultural Heritage Institute in Emilia-Romagna, a renewed interest in census taking, and a newfound tutelary concern for Jewish culture (Bonilauri and Maugeri 1994). It was this institute that managed the Jewish museum of Bologna.

Instigated by the Cultural Heritage Institute, by 1984 there was a powerful interest in Jewish material culture specifically in Emilia-Romagna, and in particular in the so-called "culture of the ghetto." Around this time, officials at the Institute for Cultural Heritage began taking a keen interest in the cultural developments in Prague, where efforts were being made to recover transform a part of the city into a destination for tourists interested in Jewish culture. This initiative as followed by a successful exhibition of Jewish material culture. In 1984, the Institute of Cultural Heritage in Bologna began a regional census to determine the extent of Jewish architectural and art historical presence in the region (Bonilauri 1998:50).

The main result of the 1984 census was a catalogue titled *Jewish Culture in Emilia Romagna* (Bondoni 1987), but these same census results were also used for a

series of exhibitions in and out of Italy between 1984 and 1989 entitled *Wonders of the Ghetto* (Sacerdoti 1988), *Gardens and Ghettos* (Mann 1989), and *Ghetto and Synagogue* (1993). By 1996 this new Jewish art literature represented a thriving market niche in Bologna, seen not only in the emergence of new Jewish Culture sections in bookstores, but also in the popularity of Jewish film festivals and concerts in the ex-Jewish ghetto located in the city center. Over the course of the next ten years, ghettos became the focal point of discussions, historical studies, and cultural initiatives in Emilia-Romagna (Vincenzi 1993; Pratelli 1994).

While the guidebooks presented Jewish culture within the classificatory framework of region, city and village—suggesting that Jewish culture could be "discovered" or "experienced" through the practice of the itinerary--the 1984 tome of Jewish material culture in Emilia-Romagna imposed a systematization familiar to museums and exhibitions. The volume begins with an itinerary section which it labels "urban settlement," but then unfolds a classification system with twelve main categories:

1. Urban Settlement
2. Silver: Torah Ornaments and Temple Decorations
3. Ritual Objects
4. Textiles and Ritual Clothing
5. Objects of Family and Domestic Use
6. Marriage Contracts
7. Manuscripts
8. Books

9. Protests, Announcements, Advisory Notes, Notifications
10. Legal and Police Rulings
11. Community and Scholarly Activity
12. Professional and Artesian Activity

Just as it is important to situate a Jewish Museum which opened in 1999 in the context of guidebooks written in the early 1980s, it is impossible to overestimate the importance of *Jewish Culture in Emilia-Romagna* in terms of the proliferation of a museum model of Jewish culture. Prior to this book there was no other publication that made the direct link between a collection of material culture and the term *Cultural Ebraica.*

Moreover, many of the reactions of the Jewish community to this book are virtually identical to the reactions of the Jewish community to the museum exhibition, which will be discussed in later chapters. During an interview with a member of the community, I placed a series of books on a table and asked for reactions. The books I chose were a series of items that I had collected over a period of two summers in Bologna. Not only was *Cultura Ebraica in Emilia-Romagna* the largest book, physically speaking, on the table, it garnered the biggest reaction:

> Yes, of course, I know this. This book is the product of a huge effort to catalogue all Jewish culture in the region. I think it was either the result of or was turned into an exhibition. I don't know, you'll have to ask [...] about that. I can tell you this, though, plenty of people complain about this book and for good reason. I don't think it's a bad book, but as you

> see it is a particular approach. If I'm not mistaken there is only one picture of a person in the book. And so you get the idea that Jewish culture is pretty things. They are nice things, but it is a problem for many people.

In its contents and presentation, the catalogue is not extraordinary, containing numbered descriptions of objects, photographs, references, an index. In the local context of Bologna, it has the reputation of being the first major evidence that local heritage programs were displacing the idea that Jewish culture was alive, with beautiful books carrying the suggestion that Jewish culture was dead.

The pages of the catalogue celebrate the volume as "pioneering" in its work. The best example of this rhetoric is the preface by Prof. Bezalel Narkis, the director of the Center for Jewish Art at the Hebrew University of Jerusalem. Narkis lauds Bondoni and Busi, the editors of the work, not only for the finished product, but for the work of creating a new technique for representing Italian Jewish culture:

> The study of the Jewish communities in Emilia-Romagna has been in the main devoted to the historical, social and political contexts in which these important communities existed, yet has left the aspects of visual arts and material culture in these communities virtually untouched. We did not appreciate the extent of the surviving objects until the advent of Dr. Simonetta Bondoni, who with pioneering spirit and a tireless team of scholars has finally given us insight into the daily life in Emilia-Romagna region during the last 500 years...The task undertaken...is so monumental

> mainly because they had so few methodological examples they could follow. They had to develop methods of cataloguing , invent technical terms and adapt systems of description from the different objects. This in itself is a pioneering work, one which will have the utmost relevance for all historians and art historians, and for those from theologians to sociologists, who are interested in the overall picture of Italian society and culture in Emilia-Romagna from the late middle Ages to modern times. Let us hope that these pioneers will be followed, that their example will encourage many others. Blessed be the doers. (Narkis 1987:13).

Beyond Narkis' discussion of Jewish communities in Italy as if they no longer exist, his interest in the project makes little mention of the contents, celebrating only the act of creating the collection. Moreover, he implies that Jewish material culture is so unique that it requires the invention of entirely new techniques—that it somehow was not possible to use standard collection practices.

"There were hardly *any* Jews involved. I was one of the few and they barely asked me," commented another friend from the local Jewish community who actually worked on the project:

> These people knew nothing about Jewish culture at all. They just had connections that got them the job. Busi, he could barely read Hebrew...and the catalogue gives the impression that there aren't any living Jews anywhere. These people had never been to a synagogue service in his life. I remember Busi went to the community one day for a

service, he didn't know what he was doing. He was so nervous, he barely spoke to anyone!

Like this critique, local Jews generally doubted the Jewishness of the culture represented in *Jewish Culture in Emilia-Romagna*. Beyond that, they used the catalogue as a reference point to express concern that the emphasis on objects gave the impression that Jewish culture was dead. The example mostly cited as reinforcing this impression were the photographs with "nobody in them." These empty photos were a problem in the catalogue as well as the guidebooks.

The preface to the book *Jewish itineraries in Emilia-Romagna*, for example, discusses how interest in diverse cultures was manifest in the region in the form of a Jewish Museum in Soragna—a small town about one-hour's drive from Bologna—and in proposals for "similar museums" in Bologna and Ferrara (Sacerdoti 1992:9). Yet, several Jews in the local Bologna community pointed out to me that the Jewish Museum of Soragna opened in Soragna synagogue in 1986 when, also according to guides in the museum, "the last Jew in Soragna had died" and the synagogue was no longer in use. The museum in Soragna, in other words, represented to many Jews in Bologna a memorial to a lost community. In fact, the Soragna museum is managed by an amateur archaeology society.

In pragmatic terms, the Bologna synagogue is still in use, today, by roughly two hundred registered members of the Jewish community, and approximately two hundred non-registered participants in community life. There are no plans to turn it into a museum. In nearby Ferrara the Jewish community decided to turn one of its disused

synagogues into a museum (inaugurated in 1997). Similar plans were being considered in nearby Modena. When I visited the Modena community, the president commented on the prospect of having a museum built into one of the unused back hallways of the grand, Liberty style synagogue:

> We had never thought about having a museum, but we are a small community. We used to be bigger, but now we are small. And it would be a shame to just let all of our objects go to waste. Have you seen them all? They're just sitting there in the back hall.

In Modena there was a sense of obligation to use the objects sitting in a hallway to build an exhibition—that the death of the community was somehow lessened if there was a museum left in its place.

The anxiety over empty photos combined with another concern in the Bologna Jewish community: theft. Many members of the Jewish community had lent their possessions to the Ferrara exhibition in 1988, and since that time rumors circulated to the effect that Jewish cultural objects were routinely stolen from private homes and resold in local second-hand markets. One person commented to me that she felt that the Bologna museum project represented an ongoing process of Catholics attempting to appropriate Jewish property.

Overall, people associated with the Jewish community in Bologna expressed concern that if a Soragna-style museum should open while the community was still "alive," it would slowly appropriate the community's cultural capital until the community

disappeared. Bologna would then be left with a Jewish museum full of Jewish property, but no Jews, a concern which I examine at greater length below.

We Are Not Archaeology

During my first fieldwork season in the summer of 1996, I would seek refuge from the July *afa* ("hot and suffocating air") in the retail fur shop of Stefano, a regular in the Saturday morning minion in Bologna's Jewish community. One weekday afternoon, as we chatted in his showroom waiting for coffee to be delivered from the bar around the corner, he turned his head towards me as he smoothed the collar on a gray fox coat displayed on a window mannequin and said, "Here's something to put in your novel: We don't want to be an archaeology museum." I laughed and thanked him, telling him that was perfect. "I thought you would like that," he said as he smiled. At that moment, a young man knocked on the glass door with a tray in his hand. On the tray, two cups of espresso sat with small paper napkins wrapped over them to guard against dust and flies during the one-hundred-yard walk from the bar to Stefano's shop. Stefano stood up, unlocked the door, and brought the coffees into the shop. Handing me one of the cups, he continued his explanation:

> What I mean is we're not dead. Al this talk about building a museum, but all these museums, they display things as if Jewish culture were dead. Like these museums about your Indians. This gives people the wrong idea. Look, people already think that we're dead. They go the museum and its even worse.

Stefano's concern over the historicization of Jewish culture in Italy was joined by a growing concern for issues of ownership and control of Jewish material culture. Many times, Stefano told me that he collected Jewish objects from local markets:

> I go to local markets and I look around, just to see if there's anything of Jewish interest. What happens is, there are exhibitions, and then a few weeks later someone is robbed. Their property lost. But the things are not lost, understand? I go to the market—either this one in the ghetto, or the one in the Piazza by the train station or in Piazza Santo Stefano. I often see a silver candle holder or a *kiddush* cup and I know what it is. So, I hold it up and I pretend I don't know what it is, asking the seller, 'This is interesting. What is it?' And these guys are very wily. They just shrug as if they know nothing, understand? Do you understand what I'm trying to tell you? So I buy it and keep it. Jewish things belong with Jewish people.

Following this discussion about his rescue of stolen Jewish material culture from local markets, Stefano invited me back to his house to look at an item which he thought would be worth a lot of money. The item turned out to be a pewter commemorative plaque from Israel. I was able to see that Stefano's house contained many items of Jewish ritual art, mostly candelabra used for the holiday of Hanukkah, as well as a few random items such as the Zionist plaque. Most of them had been collected from local markets.

Theft had emerged as a broad concern in the Jewish community of Bologna in the decade prior to the opening of the museum. Another person who talked at great length about theft was the office secretary of the community a woman in her early fifties whom I would help with office tasks several mornings each week. Her perspective is vital because she emphasizes the extent to which the concern for theft was not only a statement about non-Jews exploiting Jews, but about Jews behaving in ways that were problematic vis-à-vis Italian civil society. In summarizing several incidents of theft in the community, she established a link between theft and local Jewish heritage initiatives:

> Jeffrey, let me tell you something about how things work in this country, because I don't know how they work in America, but I do have some experience here. After the exhibition in Ferrara, which I think you know about, there were problems. What happened was, people loaned their objects to the exhibition. They were happy to do it, it was a nice exhibition. And when it was over the objects were returned to the people's houses. Different people from Bologna, Ferrara, Modena. OK. Then, in the weeks after the exhibition, people are robbed. What gets stolen? The same items that were in the exhibition. So, I'm not saying that these people from the exhibition stole the property. I wouldn't say that. What I'm saying is that there was a nice catalogue with pictures and people knew suddenly that these items were valuable.

When I asked her how thieves knew where to go to steal the items if there were no names listed in the catalogue, only the phrase "On Loan, Jewish Community of Bologna," she replied, "They know."

As a result of this fear of theft, the community had asked her to be responsible for putting the torah vestments in storage during the July and August holidays when the synagogue was closed. The problem was that the rabbi forbid women from entering the torah ark to retrieve the objects. So, each year a man would be enlisted to help with this task, which fell to me in the two summers I spent in Bologna. What was remarkable about this informal act of securing the community ritual art treasures was that it was a very museum-like practice, but was performed with a complete absence of any professional cataloguing process or discussion of the museum project. The concern for theft was tied to a general process whereby the community's ritual objects were being treated, albeit only at specific times of the year, as a collection.

In my discussions with the secretary "theft" was also a topic expressing a general anxiety that the Jewish Community of Bologna was dying, and as a result, outside forces—Jewish and otherwise—were stepping in to appropriate its material goods. Interestingly, the secretary's concern for material culture articulated with the more stereotypical representation of the Jew consumed by anxieties over money. She was famous for encouraging community members and guests to the community (i.e., visiting students, tourists) to pay for their meals in a timely fashion. Following virtually every meal in the community the secretary explain to me that "certain types of people" felt that they did not have to pay for meals, but that meals were owed to them. Not paying for a

Sabbath dinner, or a Passover meal was "theft" from the community. During my fieldwork, the secretary criticized well over half the members of the community for this type of theft during my fieldwork. In addition, she often expressed concern for theft from the collection of *kippot* (men's head coverings) that the synagogue provided for male members of the community to use during ritual services. What she perceived as a rampant form "*Kippah* kleptomania," had a very simple explanation. While most Jews in the community were unable to read Hebrew or perform domestic rituals with confidence, they understood that wearing a *kippah* was a symbolic act signifying a ritual moment. Despite its importance most Jews in the community had no idea were to buy a *kippah*. Indeed, there was no place in Bologna to purchase them. New *kippot* were donated to the community by members sponsoring celebrations who would place them in the *kippah* basket at the entrance of the community. An important aspect of the rituals I observed in Bologna, including weddings, circumcisions and *b'nai mitzvot*, was the act of filling the community's *kippah* basket with donated *kippot* for the community. The quality and number of *kippot* in the basket corresponded to the social class of the member who donated them, ranging from simple vinyl to leather. While the secretary saw the taking of *kippot* as theft, it is arguable that the circulation of *kippot* was an important part of how Jewish identity and ritual practice unfolded in the Bologna community.

Beyond *kippot*, the most recurrent story about theft was the scandal in the community in the early 1980s when an American rabbi from the Lubavitch movement "stole from" the community. According to many different sources, in the early 1980s, the community was without a Rabbi. At that time, a Rabbi from the Lubavitch

movement in New York—a branch of particularly charismatic Hassidism—arrived in Bologna and offered his services. A very enterprising fundraiser, the Lubavitcher Rabbi was able to secure both funding and the confidence of the more conservative men in the community, resulting in the construction of a kosher lunch kitchen and a ritual bath in what was then a fairly downtrodden community building.

At this point the story gets murky and descends into accusations of theft. As the secretary would often say,

> I don't have a problem with religious Jews. I am not religious myself, but we have always respected Jewish tradition in our own way. What I have a problem with is—when these orthodox Jews believe that they cannot be immoral because they are religious—when they steal, for example, because they believe that since they are religious, it is not bad to steal.

According to several people, the Lubavitcher Rabbi told potential donors that money would be used for the community, and raised money in the name of the community without the community's permission, but then used those funds for other purposes. At this point, the lay leadership in the community began to pressure the Rabbi to move on, but he refused not give up his position in the community, and with the help of several loyal followers, waged a battle against those forces that accused him of theft. Borenstein's tactic was to accuse his accusers of not being authentic Jews, criticizing certain active members of the community for having married non-Jews, and accusing their children of not being Jews. At one point, Borenstein refused to let the children of a

very prominent member of the community read from the Torah. In the end, the crisis was resolved only through legal interventions and appeals, resulting in the forced eviction of the Lubavitcher Rabbi from the community premises.

The purpose of recounting this event is not to advocate for one side of a legal battle or another, but to make very clear that in the ethnography of the Jewish community of Bologna there were two distinct types of concerns over "theft" in the decade before the opening of the Jewish museum: theft of money versus theft of heritage understood as objects. While these types of theft unfolded in different contexts and expressed a range of concerns with regard to relationships between Jews and non-Jews as well as the Jewish Community and the state, the Borenstein case suggests one way that the concern for theft of money and theft of objects converged. Specifically, Borenstein represented for many people in the Jewish Community a return to ritual-centered tradition at a time when the community was abandoning synagogue-centered practice in favor of heritage projects focused on Jewish culture as art. Opinions within the community regarding Borenstein's guilt or innocence with regard to stealing money, often took into consideration his role as a symbol of the importance of ritual. Just as Stefano had argued that there it was morally problematic for non-Jews to purchase Jewish objects in flea markets--even if the act of purchasing was technically legal--many Jews in the community suggested that Borenstein's act of stealing money was morally acceptable even if technically, it was illegal.

Judgements about museum initiatives were often framed in ambiguous, essentialist moral formulas where the claimed Jewishness of one person was used to

determine if acts that involved the movement of resources in the community--money or objects--were good or bad. In one conversation in the community during the summer of 1997 I was sitting with the Rabbi Sa'adoun and several regulars in the synagogue, when one man said:

> Doctor-Rabbi, I'm not saying that it's bad. I'm just saying that the problem in this community is that the current president is a woman and a communist and she doesn't care about Jewish tradition. I mean, what does she know about torah? Does she even come to services? That's my point.

Later that day, Sa'adoun commented to me that these types of complaints were common amongst the more religious men in the community:

> It's hard, here. This is not like your Jewish communities in New York or Detroit. How many Jews did you say were there? 100,000. My goodness. Here we are lucky if we get ten people for a minyan. You know this. We are lucky to have you here to help us. So, these people who are more religious, they see the president who wants to have a museum, and they are not happy about it.

Many male members of the community who attended the weekly prayer *minyan* regularly implied in various ways that the president of the community was somehow engaged in problematic exchanges with the state--acts that were not quite stealing, but did involve giving the state access to a vague conception of community assets in exchange for status. Ironically, the same people who complained about the president of the community selling

out the community members for the museum were eager to be more involved in the museum once it opened.

The president of the community, Bianca Colbi-Finzi, often represented herself as a crucial player in acts of resistance against a city government that was forever searching for ways not exploit the Jewish community financially for projects that the community did not want--in the fight to make sure that the city did not "steal" money from the community. A woman in her eighties who had fought in the resistance and was an outspoken communist and feminist, in her own words the President was not in favor of the museum. When I would ask her about the museum project, she would most often just shrug her shoulders or say, "I never wanted this museum in the first place." On several occasions, however, she took me aside to tell me stories about how the mayor had called her into his office to ask for the Jewish community to pay for some aspect of a local Jewish heritage project, to which she always replied, "We don't have the money to pay for that. You pay for it!"

Nonetheless, for a woman who rejected the museum project, she was often the most visible participant in ceremonies and events sponsored by the museum--a role she could have delegated to the vice-president of the community, but chose instead to assume herself. Moreover, while the president may have refused to commit funds on behalf of the community, wealthy Jews in the community did become sponsors of crucial aspects of the museum and other related projects. I suspect, although this suspicion was never confirmed, that the president was able to mediate between the city government and

wealthy Jews in the community while at the same time refusing to allow the community to pay for anything.

Amongst the younger members of the Jewish community, of which there are roughly twenty ranging in age from 15 to 35, the late 1980s represented a time when they began to believe that they were the final generation of a dying community. The material wealth of the community, in this respect, was of less concern to this generation than the ability of the community to foster a clear sense of Jewish identity and provide for the social interactions that would lead to marriage. Several friends in their mid 20s when I began my fieldwork commented on this problem. Benjamin, an engineering student and the son of Ethiopian parents who owned a yarn shop on the periphery of the city, observed:

> When I was growing up the hardest thing was realizing that this was a community in decline. I had a lot of questions about what it meant to be Jewish and nobody to talk to. We have had four different Rabbis since my Bar Mitzvah. Four! We hire a Rabbi and then they leave, either because they want to raise kids in a place where there are Jewish schools and more children—like Milan—or because they get in a fight with someone in the community and just decide, 'That's it. It's not worth it!' I'm not saying that Borenstein is a good man. He's not. He's a thief. But at least he answers questions [about Torah]. I don't give a damn about a museum where people can go and look at pretty pictures! What about us? What

> about building the community? I mean, you've seen the classes that the Rabbi holds. They're boring. We learn nothing. It's more fun talking with you about Judaism. But then when you're gone...Remember Michèle, that student from France who was here your first summer? We're still in touch. He's in Marseille, now, and all he talks about is how many Jewish girlfriends he has. If I want to meet a Jewish girl I have to go to the winter program in the mountains

Benjamin's concerns were common amongst younger men in the community. Borenstein, in this example, became a symbol of the privileging of ritual knowledge and talk about torah over the secular concerns of the community.

Expressing similar concerns, Danielle, the daughter of the man who succeeded Colbi-Finzi as president of the community in 1999, often referred to herself as the "only eligible woman" in the community. As an architecture student she had worked on the 1988 exhibition commemorating the race laws, and so this was often the topic of conversation:

> At first I thought it would be very interesting and it was, working on the drawings of the ghetto, researching the old quarter and so on. But my father is so obsessed with it! I mean, after a while I just couldn't take it anymore. Enough! I wanted to do something else...the problem with a community this small is that it's suffocating. Particularly at that time during the exhibition [1988]. It just seemed that everyone knew your

> business all the time. It's impossible to meet new people. I'm not a member of the Jewish community because I love Judaism, but because I was born that way. As soon as I finish my degree I'm going to Israel for a while to see what it's like.

Other young women in the community shared similar attitudes. For youth in general, the 1980s was a time when the community was taken up by the new heritage initiatives, even when the decreasing size of the community as a social group was becoming an increasing anxiety to young people.

In my own experience as an unmarried Jewish man during my fieldwork in the Jewish community of Bologna, my interest in the museum project decreased my value in the eyes of many younger members of the community. Many people were very interested in me when I first arrived, extending various social invitations. As it became clearer that my research was focused on the development of the Jewish museum, my ties with Jews in my own age-set mostly vanished. The same was not true for older members of the community. In fact, I was regularly invited to households that had children in my age-set for Friday night meals. I would be invited by the parents whom I would see regularly in the community. When I would arrive for dinner, they would apologize profusely, lamenting the fact that unlike me, their children did not care enough about Jewish tradition to stay home Friday night for dinner.

Judaism as Treasure

Beyond the social production of guidebooks and art historical surveys on Jewish culture, several catalytic events took place in the early 1980s, providing a framework for events which might otherwise have remained disparate. In 1982 a bomb was hurled at the main entrance to the synagogue in Rome, killing a small child. As a result of this incident, Jewish communities throughout Italy installed armed security guards and surveillance cameras at the entrances to community centers and synagogues. In Bologna two armed guards sat in a car opposite the door whenever there were community events.

This incident also triggered the decision of Pope John Paul II to plan a visit to the synagogue in Rome, which finally took place on April 13, 1986. This was the first recorded papal visit of its kind. More importantly, during this visit, the Pope used the phrase "elder brothers" to describe the relationship of Judaism to Christianity, displacing the previous classification of Jews as "infidels" or outsiders with a new conception of religious kinship:

> The Jewish faith is intrinsic to us, not extrinsic. We have, in consequence, a relationship with Judaism unlike that with any other religion. You are our elder brothers (JPII 1986).

There are many possible interpretations of this visit, including the desire of the Pope to lead a ministry of reconciliation, and to be the first Pope to visit the houses of worship of all the world religions. From the perspective of this discussion, it is important to note that the action of the pope had a far reaching impact on the perception of Jews in Italy. The visit of the Pope in Rome was

followed shortly thereafter by a visit of the Archbishop of Bologna, the outspoken religious nationalist Giacomo Biffi, to the synagogue of Bologna in 1988 (*Gesto storico per la chiesa bolognese. Biffi in Sinagoga. Il Cardinale parteciperà alle celebrazioni ebraiche*, Il Resto del Carlino. Carlino Bologna, 103 (288), 4 Nov88:1)

The real changes in how Jewish culture was understood took place far away from the explosion in Rome or the barrage of media coverage that hailed the Papal synagogue visit as an heroic elevation of the place of Italian Jews in Italian culture. In this chapter I have argued that, with or without the Papal visit to the Roman synagogue, the social production of guidebooks and art historical surveys on Jewish culture in Italy contributed to a general transformation in the discourse on Jewish culture that began in the early 1980s. This transition that I have outlined was not one of suspicion to respect, but from a discourse on Jewish culture concerned with memory, textual history, and experience during the Holocaust, to a celebratory, valorizing discourse on Jewish material culture, exhibitions and museums. Rather than label one "origin" for this transformation, I have suggested that the re-imagining of Jewish culture in Italy took shape within a series of political, legal and religious changes, all of which had an impact on conceptions of Jewish culture in the 1980s. The most important transformations were a sudden interest in Jewish material culture brought on by the *intesa* between the Italian state and the Union of Jewish Communities in Italy, and the constitutional devolution of the nation into twenty regions.

As the Jewish Museum of Bologna took shape in the early 1990s, Jewish cultural itineraries and ritual objects both figured prominently in the museum's design. As the project neared completion, it encountered an obstacle that would have a major impact on its final form. The museum that had been projected to house the great wealth of Jewish material culture that had been "discovered" in the 1980s—this museum was unable to land a collection of objects to display. The peculiarity of the Jewish Museum of Bologna is not just that it has no objects. There are many museums that do not involve the display of objects. Rather, the extraordinary aspect of the Bologna case is that it represents a solution to the problem of defining culture without objects in a context where culture has been conceived and valorized in materialist terms.

The solution that emerges is the idea of a "virtual" museum—a museum that contains nothing. In the next chapter, I explore the full significance of the display practices of an empty museum, considering in particular those elements employed by the Jewish Museum of Bologna to insure that their empty museum would be, nonetheless, quite full.

CHAPTER 3: EMPTY MUSEUM (PART I): LINKS AND TOURS

In this chapter and the next, I will discuss the concept "empty" as it is made meaningful in the museum practices of the Jewish Museum of Bologna. I argue that the "emptiness" of the museum was of paramount interest both for the Jewish Museum staff and Jews from the local community participating in the project. Both constituents perceived emptiness as a problem and were focused on solving it so that the museum would not be empty. Jews and museum workers had very different understandings as to what were the problematic aspects of emptiness embodied by the museum, a difference I will characterize by a distinction between the absence of objects and the absence of agency. In this chapter, I will focus on the museum planner's concern for the absence of objects and how this concern was manifest in the display practices of the exhibition. In the next chapter, I will focus on the Jewish community's concern that the museum was absent of Jewish agency, with particular emphasis on how this criticism resulted in the inclusion of an "empty" gallery for "activities" and how the politics of emptiness in the museum extended outward into the daily life of the Jewish community.

While the Jewish Museum staff was concerned to resolve the problem of a museum that was empty in the sense that it did not possess "Jewish places and things" (Maugeri 1998:56), Jews in the local community were more concerned to resolve the problem of a museum that represented Jewish culture as rich in its material qualities, but empty of Jews actively involved in the planning and enactment of social life and culture. Accordingly, a concern for material emptiness was expressed through a range of

solutions regarding portable good as opposed to historic sites, while the concern for social emptiness was expressed through a series of interventions which sought to guarantee Jewish presence both within the representations of Jewish culture on display and in the planning of those displays.

The discussion in this chapter unfolds in three parts. I begin with a general discussion of museum typology in Italy, focusing on the types of Jewish museums in Italy. Second, I describe the CD-ROM touch-screen stations in the permanent exhibition, with particular emphasis on the idea of "links" and how this relates to the concern that the museum would be empty. Third, I describe the maps and "tours" integrated into the permanent exhibition, focusing on the idea of "itineraries" as a solution to the museum not "owning" an historic Jewish site.

Jewish Culture Program

From the perspective of the context outlined in the previous chapter, one might have predicted the Jewish Museum of Bologna to have taken the form of one of many existing museums—following earlier examples of Jewish museums established in Venice, Rome, Florence, Casale Monferato or Soragna. Such was the case, in fact, with other museums that had been planned and opened in the region during the same period. In the summer of 1998 a new Jewish museum was inaugurated in the nearby town of Ferrara, less than an hour's drive from Bologna. This museum was built in the Jewish community center in Ferrara, and consisted of two parts: a gallery with cases that displayed ritual objects, and a synagogue—one of three in this particular community

structure—which was on display. A visit to the museum consisted of a viewing of the synagogue from the women's balcony, followed by a tour of the museum gallery where the display included general descriptions of Jewish lifecycle events (e.g., birth, bar-mitzvah, marriage, religious festivals, death, etc.).

The Ferrara museum embodies a certain norm or standard for Jewish museums in Italy that makes sense within the larger national taxonomy of museums. As one heritage bureaucrat explained to me, the roughly 3,000 museums in Italy can be legally classified according to three main "types": public (state managed), private and ecclesiastical or "church" museums (Bonilauri 1997). Moreover, in the literature that caters to tourists, this general typology is often subdivided into eight subgroups, including: Archeological, Artistic/Archeological, Demo/Ethno/Anthropological, Naturalistic, Specialized, Historical, and Technical/Scientific (Lembo 1996). Jewish Museums in the simple taxonomy are typically private museums, paid for by individual donors or managed by private heritage management companies. In the broader system of tourist classification, Jewish Museums are "Specialized." Other specialized museums include, just to cite a few, the Antonio's House and Museum in Florence, the Coin and Stamp Museum in Rome, and the Museum of Boat Models and Ancient Maps in Bologna. The "specialized" category for a museum, in other words, does not signify ethnicity, race or any stigma per se.

Interestingly, there has been considerable consternation as to how churches—distinct from church museums—should be classified in this system. Most of the more visited churches in Italy contain small museums in side rooms off the main

apse, displaying medieval relics and models of the church itself. Beyond the Vatican museum, these smaller museums make up the majority of the church museum category. Moreover, these sites typically double as a site of culture and commerce, functioning as bookstores for the most part. Until recently, it has been only these small side-rooms and not the church which have been classified as museums, even if it is almost always the church itself, and not the backroom museum, which was the focus of the visit for most tourists. Recognizing this, several diocese have begun to classify their cathedrals as museums entirely, allowing them to charge an entrance fee. This has caused considerable outcry amongst people who believe churches should not be used to raise money in this way. How the situation is resolved remains to be seen, and in the short run the status of churches as museums remains ambiguous in Italy, even though it is quite common for tourists to say, "Italy is great! Every church is a museum!"

The same is not true for Jewish museums, where the synagogue-as-museum is one of two unofficial types of Jewish museum most common in Italy. The Ferrara museum is a synthesis of the two types of Jewish museums prevalent in Italy, where the synagogue and a side room have been transformed into two components of the museum. Unlike church museums the typical Jewish museum collection does not merely display objects, but uses the objects to introduce the visitor to the details of the Jewish life cycle. Not once in Italy did I enter a church to find a museum or a museum-type display that offered an introduction to Catholicism for non-initiates.

Prior to the Jewish museum of Bologna all Jewish Museums in Italy were private. Unlike other European nations, Israel or the United States, the State does not possess a

collection of Jewish material culture. Hence, there is no parallel in Italy for such museums as the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum; the Prague Museum of Judaica; the Auschwitz Museum and Memorial; and the Yad Vashem Museum. The Vatican owns materials of interest to Jewish history, but these holdings are largely texts.

Globally, the Jewish museum as a recognized category of museum has its origins in the same set of nineteenth-century practices that gave rise to other types of museums. The first public display of Jewish objects as art took place in the context of the 1878 Universal Exhibition in Paris. A variety of Jewish museums opened in the United States and Europe prior to World War II. Following World War II, the category of Jewish museum broadened to include photograph- and text-based museums focused on Jewish experience under the Nazis.

The Jewish Museum of Bologna—while planned as an object-centered museum in the tradition of European Jewish museums that display Jewish ritual objects for their artistic quality—opened to the public as a text-centered history museum focused on telling the story of Jewish history and culture from its inception to the present, with particular focus on the Jews of Italy and Emilia-Romagna. Unlike other Jewish Museums in Italy, the Jewish Museum of Bologna was planned as a public or state museum, under the direction of the regional heritage board, the Institute of Cultural Heritage in Emilia-Romagna. This was a fact presented with pride by state officials involved in the project—the public Jewish Museum planned by non-Jews.

During my fieldwork, the Jewish Museum was both public and private. Within the institute, the museum represented a new type of initiative known as a "foundation"

(*fondazione*). A foundation is a "private cultural enterprise within a public bureaucracy," a definition which emerged in answer to the question "What is a *fondazione*?" put to the director of the Jewish Museum. A new initiative invented by the Italian federal government in the mid-1990s, foundations were intended to breathe new life into cultural institutions that the government could no longer afford to support. Accordingly, a foundation carried with it both the obligation and burden of raising outside funds, together with a modicum of administrative autonomy. The closest parallel to a foundation would be a quasi-autonomous non-governmental organizations (QUANGO). Other foundations in Italy included the opera house of Milan, *La Scala*, and the opera house of Bologna, both of which survived the cut in government funding by securing outside sources of income, predominately from Japanese corporate investors. Consequently, institutions that were foundations were both public and private, unlike the American concept of a foundation which is entirely private.

The Jewish Museum of Bologna different from other Jewish Museums in Italy for two reasons. First, it was unique because of the public nature of the project. It was a state museum, not a private community museum. Second, it was unique because it was the only Jewish Museum in Italy that was also a *fondazione*. The line between public and private was not always clear, as the Jewish Museum of Bologna seemed at different times to be either public, private or both. This tension between the public and private status of a cultural institution is embodied in the example of the "Jewish Culture Program."

When I first arrived in Bologna, my interest in the Jewish Museum of Bologna led to conversations with two individuals. The first was Dr. Franco Bonilauri—a cultural

bureaucrat from the Institute of Cultural Heritage whom I will discuss at greater length in Chapter 4. Dr. Bonilauri had two titles in 1996: "Future Director of the Jewish Museum of Bologna" and "Vice-President of the Jewish Culture Program." When I went do speak with Bonilauri, he explained:

> The President of the Jewish Culture Program is Eraldo , a man of extremely high culture in the Jewish Community of Bologna...In reality, the Jewish Museum of Bologna does not exist, today. There exists instead the "Jewish Culture Program." The purpose of the Jewish Culture program is to do everything necessary leading up to the opening of the Jewish Museum of Bologna...on the day of the inauguration of the museum two things will happen: the Jewish Museum will start its life as a legal entity, and the Jewish Culture Program will end its life...at that point, I will no longer be the Vice-President of the Jewish Culture Program, but will be instead the Director of the Jewish Museum of Bologna. I will move my office to the museum and that will be my full-time job.

While this description suggests that the director of the museum was the master of his domain, the inauguration in point of fact gave rise also to a foundation board of directors, which consisted of the major donors and scholars charged with the responsibility of the project. The Jewish Museum Foundation board consisted of three members of the Jewish

community of Bologna, the head of the Institute of Cultural Heritage, and the head of the Union of Jewish Communities in Italy.

The staff of the Jewish Museum consisted of the Director, an Assistant Director and a small handful of hourly workers responsible for ticket sales and guard duties. Beyond the everyday work of the museum, the Jewish Culture Program had assembled a "Scientific Committee" of scholars and researchers who were responsible for providing the Director and Assistant Director with the content of the exhibition. This work consisted in the generation of texts featured in the museum panels, computer displays and multi-media presentations. Responsibility for the production of the museum exhibition was given to an independent contracting agency in Rome called Altair4.

The Jewish Museum of Bologna is located in the heart of Bologna's city center, in an historic quarter known as the "former Jewish ghetto." The museum is housed in the *palazzo Malvasia,* a building donated by the city which had previously functioned as a storage facility for street sweeping vehicles, sewer drainage equipment and garbage collection pushcarts. At a conference on "The Future of Jewish Museums in Europe," hosted by the Jewish Culture Program in Bologna (May 1996), city architect Paolo Nannelli presented a paper on the renovation of palazzo Malvasia without once mentioning anything Jewish or connecting any aspect of the building's history, form or function to anything culturally or socially Jewish.

Shortly after the conference, Nannelli gave me a tour of the building site then in progress. During this tour I anticipated being shown various "Jewish" aspects of the building that had been uncovered by workmen. In fact, the opposite was true. The most

significant aspect of the building in Nannelli's view was a series of frescoes that had been uncovered embedded in one of the gallery walls. Work had to be stopped to save the frescoes. What was Jewish about the museum from an architectural perspective was not the building itself, but the site:

> There is nothing particularly Jewish about this building. There are some people who argue that the original owner was Jewish, but that's never been proven. Moreover, it is technically outside of the boundary of what was the Jewish ghetto. Still, it can be accessed by the ghetto, today. And of course, the Jewish museum belongs in the ghetto.

The importance of the ghetto location for the Jewish museum project is a common theme that runs through the museum project, which is merely introduced in the clearest language in this example. The importance of the ghetto will be explored at greater length in Chapter 5.

It is important to note that in the broader discourse on whether or not the Jewish Museum conformed to an existing conception of a Jewish museum—a definition emergent from both the familiar categories of museums and local conceptions on what Jewish culture and a museum should be—in this broader discourse, responsibility was put in the hands of the urban history to authenticate the Jewishness of the museum site. In both interviews and in her publications, Paolo Foschi has made great efforts to connect the building to the history of Jewish residency in the ghetto. Foschi works in the Office of Monument History Research and Reports, an office connected to the city architects

department of Bologna's city government. When I went to talk to Foschi about the museum, she produced a series of reproductions of sixteenth-century maps of the city that she had taken from the Vatican, proudly showing them as proof that museum site could be linked to the "Age of the Ghettos." In a subsequent article on the topic, Foschi reinforced the same point:

> [T]his research has certainly furnished new elements for understanding such topics as the arrangement of space, the mode of construction, the successive transformations of space and walls—thereby serving as a guide for whomever bears the responsibility of managing a project of restoration...But before considering questions of construction and patrimony, one must try to frame the construction within the city, and even more precisely: in that particular urban location that, starting in 1555, was the Jewish ghetto (Foschi 1998:65).

Ironically, it is the metaphor of "construction" that is often used in the critical study of the politics of culture to describe the type of historical "framing" that Foschi explicitly embraces. The museum is represented as a structure whose specific meaning is defined by the narrative in which the building is associated with a particular cultural context and historical moment.

The idea that the Jewishness of the museum corresponded to its location in the city was contested by members of the Jewish community in Bologna, along the lines of concerns mentioned in the previous chapter: that the tendency to locate Jewish culture in

remote history was fostering a conception that contemporary Italy was empty of Jewish social life. Many protested that, since there were no Jews who had lived in the ghetto after the end of the nineteenth century, the museum would give the wrong idea about Judaism.

Many felt that the only Jewish location in the city was the current synagogue located on the other side of the city. People also argued that the location of the museum in the ghetto would be harmful to the educational efforts of the community to teach local students the basic concepts of Judaism through regular tours in the functioning synagogue. Still other members of the community felt that the ghetto was the proper place for the museum because it emphasized the long historical presence of Jews in the city and brought to the fore the importance of remembering Jewish oppression. Although there was never a Nazi ghetto in Bologna, the term invoked for these people the Jewish experience during World War II, a memory which they believed to be an important part of the museum project.

Moreover, by 1997 many Jews rejected the project as meeting a set of minimum requirements necessary to earn the label "museum." Members of the Jewish Communities of Lugo and Ferrara thought that the project in Bologna was not a museum because it had not managed to pull together a permanent collection of objects. More than once I heard the museum defined as "the Jewish museum-that-isn't" (*il museo che non c'é*). Similarly, friends in Bologna who were Catholic by default but not practicing, commented that the museum would not be Jewish enough because it would be managed

by people who were completely ignorant of Jewish culture and who were themselves "uncultured."

These Bologna residents—who were not connected with the museum project in any way—perceived as dangerous the possibility that under the title "Jewish Museum," it would only reproduce all the dangerous stereotypes of Jews that had been promulgated by two recent events. The first event was the 1988 exhibition in Ferrara, which many Jews in the community described as "filled with stereotypes"—including the ideas of the avaricious Jew, the secretive Jew, and the Jew as outsider. The exhibition in Ferrara was sponsored by the city and a local bank and had consisted of objects on loan from various private collectors in Bologna. The second event was the exhibition and publication "The Lie of Race" (1994), an attempt at a critical history of fascist representations of race. This second exhibition was sponsored by a local, liberal Catholic organization and included scholarship by various writers from across Italy. It stands, today, as the most definitive critical collection of fascist representations of race and, in some estimations, symbolized a new chapter in the historiography of Italian racism (Burgio 1996:19). The exhibition was read by the local Jewish community as problematic, containing racist images of Jews without sufficient historical context.

The local arguments that the Jewish museum would not be a museum if it did not have a collection, or that it would not be Jewish if it were not run by Jews, was not based on an abstract idea of a museum. Rather, they were the continuation of the discussion out of which the idea for a Jewish museum in the region first emerged in the context discussed in the previous chapter, most notably the literature generated by Bologna's

cultural heritage board and the impact these sources had on the everyday lives of people in the region. By 1997 it was clear that the Jewish Culture Program had failed to locate a collection of objects for the museum. Most often, observations about the museum reproduced a standard formula:

> The Jewish Museum of Bologna? Isn't it true that they don't have anything to put in the museum? So, you're studying the museum that isn't!

> Frankly, I don't understand how you can have a museum without having anything to put in it, but this is not for me to decide.

> They have nothing. What exactly makes this a museum, I'm not sure.

> I gave them one of my objects because quite frankly, you can't have a museum without something to put in it.

> As far as I can tell, he's looking anywhere for anything to put in the museum. Can you blame him? Imagine how embarrassing it will be when he opens the museum and there's nothing in it!

> They don't have shit to put in that place.

The general formula, then, is to define a museum in terms of objects, and then to question the museum based on the fact that it doesn't "have shit."

"Emptiness," therefore, emerges as a central concern on multiple levels in these situated attempts to define and critique the museum. The museum project managers inherit from the social field of heritage production an historically particular conception of what a Jewish Museum should be. This definition is further subdivided by an historical conception of Jewish culture as rooted in the urban landscape in the period known as the "Age of the Ghettos," a period starting in 1555 when the Vatican issued a Papal *bola* conscripting Jews to live in walled enclosures. Here, then, the two paramount concerns of the heritage bureaucrats are the absence of ritual objects to display as art, and the absence of particular Jewish historical or cultural characteristics of the museum site itself.

The latter concern was made even more explicit in the inauguration of the museum on May 9, 1999, when the ceremony revolved around the mounting of a *mezuzah* on the door of the museum—an act signifying that the residents or owner of the house is Jewish or more generally that the house "is" Jewish. I was not surprised by this event until I was told by the community president that it was the city and not the community that had wanted a *mezuzah* attached to the museum door—a symbol of the Jewishness of a building that was otherwise not defined as such. The dynamics of the inauguration will be discussed at greater length in Chapter 6.

This object emptiness of the Jewish Museum was often contrasted with the material "fullness" of the museum building and the local context. The discovery of the frescoes beneath the plaster of the museum walls confirms a commonly held idea that

Italian cities are so full of historically significant culture that most construction projects are interrupted when culture "spills out" as the result of regular work. Many buildings in Italy, in fact, have their original plans reshaped to incorporate the historic elements uncovered by accident during excavation. This type of accidental archaeological discovery was starkly contrasted with what was often discussed as the complete absence of Jewish material culture on or in the site. The display techniques that went into the main exhibition were designed largely to address these concerns—representing "fullness" in a context perceived to be empty.

Beyond material concerns, both in terms of portable "treasures" and features in the urban landscape, a concern for the lack of Jewish participation and social presence was the broad critique expressed by local Jews and, to a lesser extent, non-Jewish critics of the project. Here, the concerns again break down into two issues: the absence of Jews from the project, and the absence of Jews from the representations in the museum. The first issue was discussed at length in the previous chapter, and can be summed up by the idea of "empty" photographs. During several visits to the museum with members of the local Jewish community, people would look at the photographs of historical Jewish sites in Emilia-Romagna and offer reactions such as, "Where are the people?", "There's nobody *in* that photograph!" and, "I almost didn't recognize that synagogue when it's shown empty like that."

The second concern over agency was for the absence of Jews from the project staff, emerging most often in discussions about the legitimacy of the Jewishness and " museum-ness" of the project. I knew several people in the local Jewish Community who

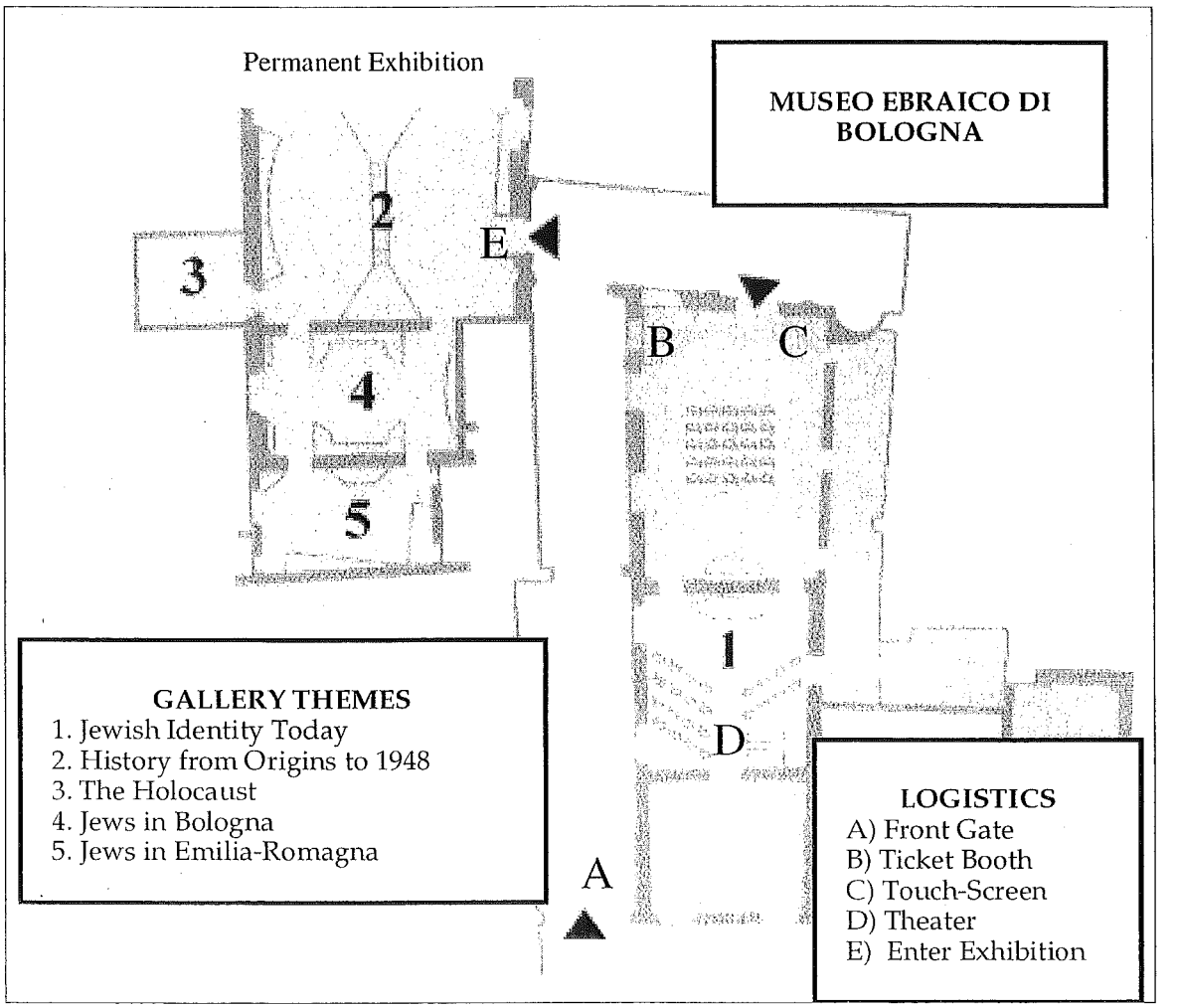
worked regularly for the museum's scientific committee. Most often when I engaged these people in a discussion about one aspect of the project, the conversation would end up on the same general topic, which can be summarized by the refrain, "But there are no *Jews* who work in this museum!" This concern was compounded by the fact that much of the work given to Jews on the project related to the Holocaust—almost as if the few Jews who were involved in producing the exhibition were given the task of confirming the absence of Jews from the region.

What emerged around the idea of emptiness was a tension between the commonsense understanding of the museum, and the critique of the project by the ethnic group (Jews) represented by the project. Moreover, the attempt to create solutions to these problems had a direct impact on the nature of museum representation set in motion by the museum. In a 1997 interview with the future museum director, I was told that the museum would not be a conventional museum, but a "virtual museum" that differed from museums Italians were used to seeing in two distinct ways. First, it would contain text, video screens and computer databanks instead of objects. This would be different from most museums in Italy which "housed significant collections, but were never visited." Second, the virtual museum would direct the visitor's attention not to the contents of the galleries, but to a much larger "collection" which the Jewish Museum galleries did contain: the cultural landscape outside the museum. The idea was to create a museum that was a starting point for guided cultural tours of Jewish heritage in the region, using the exhibition as a medium for explaining to visitors where the sites of Jewish cultural interest were in Bologna and the region, after which these visitors would be able to go out

on their own to visit them. The Jewish museum, I was told by the future director, would change the very definition of a museum in Italy. I now turn to a more detailed discussion of these "links" and "tours" as aspects of the museum's display techniques, focusing in particular on the manner in which the virtual museum techniques served as a substitute for collection-centered museum practices.

An Information Node

The entrance to the Jewish Museum of Bologna is a few hundred yards from the busy center of the city, and is reached by traversing several of the cobblestone pedestrian streets in the renovated ghetto area. Rather than a door, visitors enter the museum through a large gate that swings open after visitors ring a doorbell (A), allowing the gallery guards to see who is arriving through a series of security cameras. Walking past the gate into the central museum corridor, one of the museum guards appears at the end of the hallway to greet visitors and steer them to the ticket booth (B). After purchasing tickets, the visitors are directed to the interactive computer touch screen facing the ticket counter (C). The computer station, which is run by a centralized CD-ROM bank, begins an automated hypertext media presentation with voice over and sound when the screen is touched. A sound track of lute and a tambourine style drum fills the entrance with a "medieval" feeling and continues playing even after visitors walk to the next section of the museum. The various pages of the touch screen show pictures of Jewish art from all over Italy and the world as well as maps describing where sites of Jewish interest can be found in the city. All displays in the museum are in Italian and English. The main



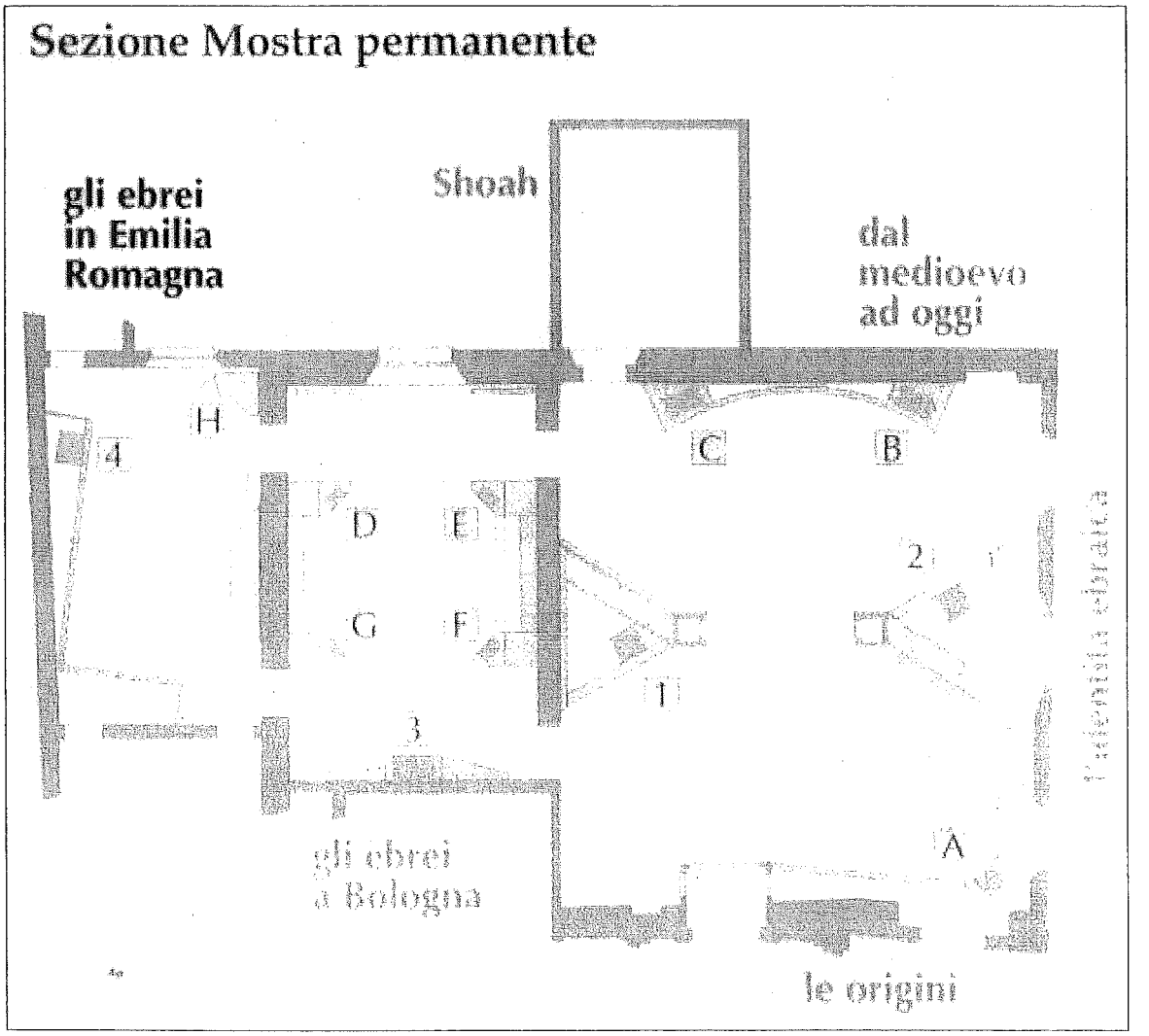
sections of a display are in Italian and subsections or summaries of the key information in a display, panel or hypertext translated into English.

The visitor would start the museum tour with the initial overview touch screen mentioned above, followed by a five-minute video on Jewish Identity. The video gallery (D) is set up theater-like with approximately thirty portable chairs facing a white screen mounted on the wall and windows shaded by opaque curtains. The video runs in a continuous loop such that visitors enter mid-presentation. The structure of the film is

that of a short voice-over documentary, presenting a series of still photography and video clips edited together with a voice over. The images do not illustrate the narrative, so much as accompany it. The majority of images in this video depict Ultra Orthodox Jews studying Torah, Israeli citizens and soldiers, and famous Israeli politicians. Following the presentation, visitors exit the video gallery, walk back past the ticket booth, tracing their steps approximately fifty feet back towards the museum entrance, a door marked "Permanent Exhibition" leads them to the "Origins of the Jewish People" section of the museum (E).

The museum displays eight touch screen stations, with at least one located in each of the five sections of the Permanent Exhibition. The sections are arranged into historical and geographic sections starting with the broadest background information on all Jewish history and culture, then moving to details about the "presence" of Jews in Emilia-Romagna. The sections are titled: "Jewish Identity in the Contemporary World," "The Origins of the Jewish People," "The Jews in Europe from the Middle Ages to the Contemporary Era," "The Jews in Bologna," and "The History of the Jews in Emilia-Romagna." The Permanent Exhibition extends over three galleries: one larger gallery divided into two sections; a medium sized gallery divided into three sections; and a small gallery (see map).

Overall, the Permanent Exhibition follows a unilinear, text-based narrative history



format with large illustrated text panels that unfold in a progression from early Jewish history to contemporary views of Jewish heritage. Several electronic display features have been designed into the narrative in order to interrupt the tour with both passive and active multimedia experience, including four additional videos and the touch screens.

Unlike the touch screens which are crucial towards understanding the theory of culture articulated by the museum planners concept of the "virtual," the videos were treated very much as straight narrative features—albeit elaborately produced narrative features. Nonetheless, the manner in which the videos were included in the exhibition is an intriguing solution to the problem of the empty museum.

Specifically, while all four videos in the Permanent Exhibition are shown on 13" color video monitors [1, 2, 3, 4] and integrated into the walls of the exhibition, two of them ("The Origins of the Jewish People" [1] and "The Jews in Europe from the Middle Ages to the Contemporary Period" [2]) are set into large (240 x 160 cm) expressionist oil paintings representing various stages of Jewish history. The paintings are by Torinese Aldo Mondino (b.1938, Turin), whose other works have included a large painting of a soccer ball titled "Food Ball" and a bronze sculpture of a fish standing on long, human legs. In terms of composition, the video screens are not integrated into Mondino's works, but are simply set into large square holes that have been cut from the top of the canvases.

Although it was difficult to confirm the origins of this particular display practice, several members of the museum's Scientific Committee told me that the paintings were commissioned to "fill empty spaces" in the permanent exhibition and that the idea to put the videos directly into the paintings came from the museum director. According to the director, the paintings were important from the start because they represent an expressive theme relevant to the video being shown. The first painting depicts an orthodox man covered in his prayer shawl and is titled "The encounter with Abraham." The second canvas depicts four men—two orthodox Ashkenazi Jews, one secularly-dressed

westerner, and one north African looking figure—and is titled "Destruction of the Temple and the Diaspora." Most visitors who viewed these installations failed to interpret them as the director intended. Reactions ranged from long pauses of silence to exclamations of disgust. During one visit, a friend turned to me and said, "Jeffrey what is this? Why is it all green?!" One Jewish visitor commented, "What does a European Jew with a *talit* over his head have to do with Abraham? Wasn't Abraham a Bedouin?"

Much more than the videos, the touch screen displays are the technological "trophy" items in the permanent exhibition and the key discursive focal component of the virtual museum concept expounded by the museum planners. Also designed by the multimedia corporation Altair4 that produced the videos, each touch screen station contains a series of nested texts and related images that can be navigated by touching the screen in a point-and-click fashion. With the exception of the stand-alone touch screen unit providing an introduction to the structure and administration of the museum in the ticket counter gallery, the eight stations are integrated into the displays in the permanent exhibition. In the first gallery, a touch screen titled "The Bible and the History of the Jewish People" [A] with texts about ancient synagogues and images of archaeological artifacts is embedded in a corner unit between large texts on Jewish ritual and synagogues.

In the second gallery, two touch screens are embedded in a map of Europe and present information on "The Jews in Europe from the Ancient Period to the Ghettos" [B] and "The Jews in Europe from the Age of the Ghettos to the 1900s" [C]. In the center of that next gallery are four touch screens: "Jewish Families in Emilia-Romagna" [E],

"Holidays and Traditions" [F], "Dietary Laws and Jewish Cooking" [G], and "The Jews of Bologna" [D]. Finally, in the last gallery a touch screen on "Jewish Presence in Emilia-Romagna"[H] sits in a corner unit. Several examples taken from the touch screens will provide a necessary sample of their contents, organization, and functioning.

In the program on "The Jews of Bologna" [D], the title appears on a blue screen with the logo of the museum. A touch of the screen with a finger begins the opening credits, listing in this case the curators Franco Bonliauri and Vincenza Maugeri, museum director and assistant director, and researchers, Maria Giusseppina Muzzzarelli, Angelo Varni, Anna Grattarola, Mauro Perani, Stefano Arieti and Paola Foschi—historians at the local university, some local independent researchers, and a public architectural historian (see discussion of Paola Foschi above). What follows is a table of possible topics that the user can touch to lead to further information. If, for example, one touches "The Anti-Jewish Papal Bulls," the screen refreshes to a new screen, a section of which reads:

> A brief from June 30, 1536 recognizes the right of the bankers to write accounting books in Hebrew, to charge a portion of interest according to the entire month, to sell un-reclaimed pawned items and keep the profits extracted therefrom—exactly the points that would be held against the Jews in 1555 with the papal *bolla* [titled] *Cum Nimis Absurdum.*

When touched, the underlined phrase "Cum Nimis Absurdum," the "link" (collegamento), opens a new page with the word at the top and a new text, this time a

portion of the actual text of the Papal Bull. Thus, each CD-ROM presents a series of nested narratives linked by key terms, cumulatively describing a general context of historical and cultural issues. There are approximately 15-30 terms covered in each CD-ROM for a total of roughly 20-40 screen pages of text each.

Not all links lead to other texts. Some links lead to images, and several touch screens have more images than text. The touch screen station with the most images is located in the historical section, "The Bible and the History of the Jewish People." This unit contains a series of texts, but is focused on a catalogue of artifacts from archaeological sites in the Middle East of interest to Jewish history. Visitors are able to scroll through a series of items as if they were walking through an actual museum exhibition of objects. It was intended that these images have museum labels next to them on the screen, although at the time of the museum opening they were unlabelled.

The reason for this oversight given by the museum staff was that time ran out before the labels could be added. When told about the missing labels, however, a member of the scientific committee suggested:

> Ran out of time? They didn't run out of time. Those images are an afterthought—a concern [...] that the museum would open with nothing to show for itself...like everything else in the exhibition, those images are a last-minute solution in a disorganized project.

These types of criticisms are difficult to confirm, but in several other contexts I encountered evidence that the museum planners were concerned about "filling" the museum with images and links to avoid the appearance that the museum was "empty."

During a conversation with the President of the Jewish Community of Modena—about thirty minutes from Bologna—I was told that the director of the Jewish museum was looking for objects to display and urging them to loan their objects:

> Just the other day Dr. Bonilauri came here to talk to me about our objects...he wants us to loan them to the museum. I think he's concerned that there will be nothing to put in his museum when it opens. In the meantime—and I imagine he has explained this to you—he has this idea, something about a "virtual museum"—with computers and the like. ..But I tried to explain to him that what we have is less a museum collection than a bunch of boxes filled with old things. We would like to organize it someday, but this seems a little fast.

Connecting the museum to other collections and museum sites in the region unfolds as a strategy for coping with the problem of not owning a collection. In a second example, during a tour of the Jewish Museum in Soragna, a small museum in the province of Parma, roughly one hour by train from Bologna, the museum guide told me that the Director of the Jewish Museum of Bologna was "strongly urging" them to integrate computers into their exhibition:

> Yes, this Dr. Bonilauri—he keeps asking us if we have thought about remaking our exhibition to include computers and other information technology—that he foresees our museum as one of many in a regional Jewish Museum information network. I think he wants to be in charge of all the museums! But I don't see what our little museum is going to do with computers.

Here, the director's concern to integrate the Soragna museum contents into the network of linked Jewish culture suggests the urgency of the anxiety that the Jewish Museum of Bologna had no collection of its own. Moreover, since the museum did claim to own links to objects, rather than objects themselves, promotional discourse about the presence of Jewish historic sites in the region is a key aspect of the museum's generated self image:

> The Jewish Museum of Bologna intends to become a place in which the visitor can begin to get to know the value of Jewish identity and culture also through many examples of objects that appear through links with that rich and extraordinary architectural, object, documentary and library patrimony still present in Emilia-Romagna in the archives, in the library, and in particular in the Jewish museums of Soragna, Ferrara and in the synagogue in Modena.

"Links" in this logic offer a display device that allows the museum visitor to access "images" and "illustrations" of museum objects that might otherwise be in a Jewish Museum. According to Vincenza Maugeri, the Assistant Director of the museum:

> In the [Jewish Museum of Bologna], together with the installation of multimedia systems and instruments, all the information and illustrations of Jewish patrimony in Emilia-Romagna will be accessible and approachable on multiple reading levels. Nonetheless, the presence of original material will be limited, even if objects for family and domestic use, silver, and synagogue ornaments--their significance and symbolism--will be illustrated and explained in the context of Jewish rituals and important annual festivals.
>
> The [Jewish Museum of Bologna], in fact, aspires to coordinate a *system of regional Jewish museums* and would like to be principally an information "node" through which one can collect globally complete and detailed documentation on the diffuse and capillary presence of Jewish patrimony inside the territory of the region [of Emilia-Romagna]—much more capable of suggesting and stimulating the direct visit and viewing of all witnesses and objects [of Jewish patrimony] in its original place (Maugeri 1998:60).

The idea of a regional museum "system" was not, at least in the abstract, new to the context of the Emilia-Romagna cultural heritage industry. The legislative reforms that created the regional cultural heritage institute contained language to this same effect, suggesting that it was the task of the regional institute to coordinate and create systems of information. Moreover, in the year following the opening of the museum, Bologna was designated one of the European Union's "cities of culture" with the specific theme of transportation and information technology. Hence, the idea of systems of information was very much "in the air" when Maugeri incorporated this concept into her description of the goals of the museum.

The Jewish Museum of Bologna followed a specific logical progression from collection to connection. If the museum could not have a significant collection of "original" Jewish patrimony, then they would display technology that allowed visitors to see images of all Jewish patrimony, all instead of nothing.

From the perspective of the planners, the virtual exhibition was talked about in advance of the opening as being "connected" (*collegato*). Hence, as the idea of a virtual exhibition took shape, the CD-ROM data banks became the points of conceptual reference that offered "direct links" (*collegamenti diretti*) to Jewish culture, but also direct links to other museums. By virtue of these links, the virtual museum as it stood in one small building in Bologna became a massive, "real museum" (*museo reale*) whose connections to culture were constituted by and constitutive of a structure of data links and institutional connections:

> Through consultation with the data banks one will be able to immerse oneself in the traditions, in the cuisine, and the history of particular families and at the same time listen to Jewish music. The information technology allows for the direct connection with other institutions for opportunities to explore the themes on display further (Bonilauri 1998:55).

The virtual museum, in this sense, is a strategy for making a small museum into a large museum, and a museum of local importance into a museum of regional importance. The virtual museum overcomes the physical limitations of space, both in the sense of dimension and contents.

In a discussion I had with the director of the museum, he noted that his conception of the virtual museum came from two different institutions, the Museum of The Tower of David in Jerusalem, and the Museum of Tolerance in Los Angeles:

> In Jerusalem they began with David's citadel, but they wanted to build a museum about the city. They did not have a collection of objects. Their challenge was to create a virtual museum that recreated the particular facts of the history of Jerusalem (shows me pictures)...in Los Angeles, they wanted to guide the visitor through an exhibition and give a particular message about the Shoah. So, they designed individual exhibits on themes that the visitor would follow, another example of a virtual museum (Bonilauri, notes 1996).

Despite the director's reference to these institutions as examples of "virtual museum" design, The Citadel Museum of the History of Jerusalem or the "Tower of David" (as it is more commonly referred to) and the Museum of Tolerance at the Simon Wiesenthal Center in Los Angeles employ different exhibition strategies. Although it is beyond the scope of this study to go very much into the particulars of those places, a brief discussion will be helpful towards the present discussion of "links" as key elements in the "virtual" museum in Bologna.

The difference is between an historic site brought to life (Jerusalem) and a completely designed theatrical display (Los Angeles). At the Tower of David, the museum is set in a structure which forms part of the ancient perimeter wall of the old city of Jerusalem. The museum structure is both icon and setting, but it does not "contain" any collection per se. The exhibition is designed to "bring to life," with the help of all the senses of the visitor, the various time periods of the city. Through videos, holograms, object displays and carefully timed light and sound shows, the visitor walks around the rooms, hallways and courtyards of the building. The Museum of Tolerance has no historic dramatic setting, but was designed by Disney Corporation "imagineers" to teach visitors about the horrors of religious and cultural intolerance. Rather than being historical, it follows the same principles as Disney's "Haunted House" or "The Pirate Ride." Visitors enter a series of galleries containing automated performances, the most famous being a simulated gas chamber whose large door slams shut, locking visitors in the dark. The intention is for visitors to learn the importance of tolerance by feeling some of the horror of the Holocaust.

Although these museums are very different, the director admired both of these institutions for the way they employed technology. In discussing the Museum of Tolerance in particular, he described how the museum was organized not around a series of objects, but through a network of interconnected CD-ROMS, a central computer bank tucked away behind a display wall, capable of generating the illusion of history, place and action.

By the time the museum was inaugurated, the fascination with illusion as the key to the virtual had given way to the idea of networks and connection as modern techniques for teaching. Bologna as a virtual museum was less like the Tower of David or the Wiesenthal Center than a learning center in the tradition of advanced "Anglo-Saxon" nations:

> It is difficult, today...paradoxically, to imagine the museum as a place of study and of culture (*acculturazione*) for the public at large. Italian museums even today are in grand measure museums for a few area specialists. While we continue to build museums that bear the imprint of the Nineteenth Century, the nations of Anglo-Saxon culture, like Germany, England, the United States, Canada, Holland, the Scandinavian and East-European countries have already for some time brought to the museum those necessary changes in line with scholarship and pedagogy present in the schools. Substantively, in these countries the primary function served by the museum is educative, and its construction is always

more focused on the larger need to know the "real" and the "material" (Bonliauri, Notizie, p. 2).

What interests me in this message is the extent to which it seems to refute the claim that the virtual museum strategy is new. It appears, in point of fact, that the virtual concept is a strategy for representing images and links to images as "real" and "material." While the virtual museum is a museum centered on the idea of connections, not collections, it does not sever ties to a representational logic where culture is conceived in terms of property contained by and displayed in the gallery. Furthermore, the virtual exhibit takes the initial concept one step further. While a museum case can hold a limited number of objects, in theory a computer can link to an infinite number of images of objects. The idea of the Jewish Museum of Bologna as a learning center linked to all other Jewish Museums in Italy and the world, suggests that in response to not gathering a "real" collection, the virtual museum substantiated itself as a "link" to all collections—and to all historic sites.

A Starting Point

Similar to the concept "links," the concept of "tours" employed throughout the permanent exhibition also addresses the problem that, unlike other museums, the Jewish Museum of Bologna is not located in an historic site. It is difficult to overestimate the value of Jewish "sites" (*luoghi*) in the conception of Jewish culture deployed by the Jewish Museum planners in Bologna. As mentioned in the previous chapter, the idea of

Jewish itineraries was an important development in the 1980s, one of the key factors in the emergence of a material conception of Jewish culture, and one which witnessed both Jewish and non-Jewish participation. Remarkably, anyone with a familiarity with Annie Sacerdoti's series of books on *Jewish Itineraries*, particularly the volume about Emilia-Romagna, almost immediately recognized the similarity between the text and images in the last gallery of the permanent exhibition and the pages of that book.

The general idea expounded by the museum was that rather than being a destination in itself, the museum would be a "starting point" for tours. Having seen the reproductions in their visit to the Jewish Museum of Bologna, the visitor was then supposed to go out and see the original sites. Thus, the museum was imagined not only as a "link," but as a "node" for regional cultural discovery. Locating, quantifying and promoting the "sites" of Jewish culture in the region is a crucial process in the propagation of the virtual museum concept.

While the idea of an Italy "rich" in Jewish cultural sites can be attributed to a range of scholars and leaders, both Jewish and non-Jewish, the assistant director of the Bologna museum, Vincenza Maugeri, was responsible for maintaining the image of Emilia-Romagna as a site "rich" in Jewish sites. In her writing and presentations, Maugeri often reduced cultural patrimony in the region to specific numbers, reciting a list of names, places with a formulaic regularity:

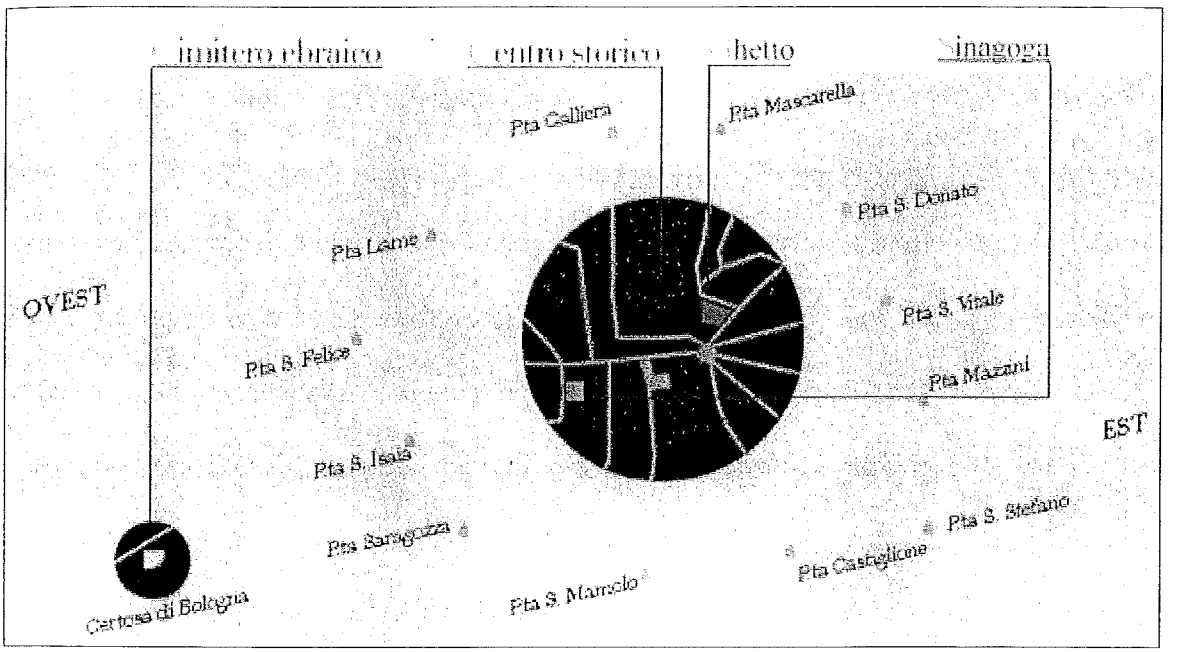
> Forty three are the places where Jewish presence is documented starting from the Fourteenth Century: in 27 locations there are Jewish cemeteries, several still in use; in the urban context, there are 32 locations in which

> there are traces of a quarter inhabited in antiquity by Jews, whether in reference to a Jewish quarter (*giudecca*) or a place of forced residence (*luogo coatto*), or more simply a "house of the Jew."

This language, reminiscent of Benedict Anderson's concept of census taking in colonial contexts, not only reduces Jewish culture to a quantity of sites, but also to a very limited range of types, in particular the cemetery, "Jewish house," synagogue and—most importantly—the ghetto:

> The ghettos true and proper in our region were ten (Correggio, Guastalla, Reggio Emilia, Carpi, Modena, Bologna, Cento, Ferrara, Lugo, Rimini): all these, with the exception of Modena, can still be visited today, and the buildings that contained the temples and oratories, the institutions of education and public aid, the stores and, finally, the points were the giant [ghetto] gates were attached. Traces of synagogues can be found in thirty locations: of these antique religious places only four are today still in use (Parma, Soragna, Modena and Ferrara), while in Bologna the synagogue was reconstructed in the modern form in the 1950s (Maugeri 1998:58).

Statistics in this sense can be seen as a convention that satisfied the expectations set up by the early itineraries from the 1980s and 1990s, which served their role in redefining Jewish culture according to a specific taxonomy of places and place names. In the display practices of the Permanent Exhibition, the idea of sites appears in several devices, most notably the recurrent use of stylized maps of Jewish sites in the city and the region.



The most prominent map is a highly stylized floor design depicting the locations of the ghetto, synagogue, Jewish cemeteries and several buildings of Jewish interest in Bologna. The map is less on the floor than it serves as the floor of Gallery 4 (see Map 1). Visitors walk back and forth over the map as they move between the four touch-screens in this gallery. The same map appears in two other locations in the gallery. First, a version of it appears in the touch screen program opposite the ticket counter. This program turns the various points of historical interest on the map into active links. When the user touches the symbol indicating the synagogue, a brief paragraph explaining the history of the synagogue appears on the screen. The other place in the exhibition where one encounters a version of the map is in the same gallery as the floor map, but off to one

side. There, a panel uses the map to describe an historical walking tour that the visitor may take to see all the sites of Jewish cultural interest in Bologna.

The museum heavily promotes itself as a point of departure and source of expert guides for tours of Jewish sites in the city. The nature of the ghetto as a social field where multiple cultural discourses interact will be explored at greater length in chapter 5. For the purposes of the present discussion, it is important to note how these guided tours figure in the maintenance of the idea of the virtual museum. To this end, several factors threaten the museum's image: competition from other guide firms in the city, and the threat of the museum being co-opted by other vendors of Judaica in the Ghetto. Several key examples illustrate these threats and the solutions offered by the museum.

First, the museum is only one of many firms that lead "ghetto tours" in Bologna. During my fieldwork I attended five different ghetto tours by three different companies. At one point, I was offered a position as a tour guide. These tours would attract local non-Jewish residents interested in "discovering" Jewish culture in the city. The ghetto tours were just one offering by companies which also offered tours of "mysterious places" and "romantic spots" in the city center. The first tour I took focused on the mystical aspects of Jewish life in the ghetto, and included New-Age type descriptions of the presence of Kabalistic magicians in Bologna's Medieval ghetto—a presence I was never able to verify. This tour ended in front of a bar named "Golem"—the name of a Frankenstein-type creature prominent in Jewish mythology as a symbol of the power of the Prague school of Kabalah. I later discovered that a restored version of the 1920s German expressionist film of the same name (*Der Golem*) was a popular ticket in

Bologna. Not all ghetto tours were this commercial and imaginative, but they often toured the ghetto at night when it was "most suggestive." There are several reasons for this timing. Firstly, the ghetto tours were offered as part of a general evening tourist culture in Bologna, whereby various private cultural programming firms organized a variety of Bologna-by-night activities. Other tours included tarot card workshops, night views of historic churches and tours of Bologna's ancient sewer system. In this context, nightfall was crucial in the staging of an authentic, medieval Bologna. Nightfall was a crucial element in revealing the hidden backstage of the city, where Jewish culture, among other things, was located (MacCannell 1973. 1976). The staging of Jewish culture at night revealed the extent to which the social construction of Jewish heritage involved the historical distancing (Fabian 1983) of Jewish culture and the cyclical distancing of Jewish culture--presented as an aspect of the "medieval" darkness of the Italian past.

Ghetto tours led by the museum were completely different than these other, private companies. The museum tours left from the museum and were guided by a small number of women with degrees in various aspects of Jewish history. The tours walked slowly through the streets of the ghetto in the morning, and touched on key aspects of Jewish history in Italy, including specific references to dates and Papal documents. Rather than focus on the mystery of Jewish culture, these tours often focused on arguments within the professional study of Jewish history itself. During one tour, the guide discussed whether or not it was possible to say that the ghetto was an institution

which punished or protected Jews—an argument that was hotly debated by local historians, but of scant interest to the tourists.

Another form of competition came from merchants in the ghetto itself. Leah, a Jewish woman from the local community, in her early seventies, owns a small antique shop around the corner from the Jewish Museum. When I interviewed her about her reactions to the museum, she was very positive in her response:

> Oh I think it's a marvelous place. The director, Bonilauri, passed by my store one day and asked me if I would be interested in donating one of my pieces to be displayed in the museum. I told him that I would gladly do so, but only asked that my business card be displayed next to the item, which of course was no problem...so many young people pass by the shop on their way to the museum, and I want them to know that they can stop in and talk to me, ask me questions about Judaism

During our interview, Leah would periodically interrupt my questions to try to sell me Jewish "antiques" that she had on display in her window. At one point she told me that a person from the community was complaining and making a fuss because he claims she sold him a "fake." I never did buy anything from Leah, but I admired her ability to turn the tables on the Jewish Museum. Preying on the director's hunger for authentic Jewish objects, Leah was able to use the Permanent Exhibition as a promotional display case for her small shop.

Interestingly, while Leah was using the Permanent Collection as a promotional case for her antique shop, the museum director was busy co-opting the products of another business in the ghetto. Lucia, a printmaker in her late forties, owns a print shop in the ghetto and sells intaglio prints on Jewish themes. Her specialty is reproductions of Hebrew letters found in the museums in Bologna. When the museum opened, I noticed that one of Lucia's prints of a local building had been included in the Permanent Exhibition. Passing by her shop I congratulated her, but to my surprise she responded that she did not know the print was in there and if it was it had been stolen. Lucia then recounted how the museum director would regularly stop by her shop and tell her that he looked forward to "collaborating" with her on projects that would be of mutual interest—although she suspected how mutually beneficial these collaboration would be, if they happened at all.

Multimediality

On the level of culture as property, the virtual exhibition strategy not only re-creates the possessive individualist logic of cultural property, but shifts museum discourse from the representations of culture to the means that produce those representations. One is reminded of Gramsci's observation that if one wanted to gauge the technological advancement of a country, one should not count the number of machines, but the number of machines that produce machines (Gramsci 19?:). The Jewish Museum of Bologna, while disavowing the importance of collecting actual objects, places great emphasis on the ability to reproduce images of objects.

A crucial distinction that underlies my analysis is the difference between innovative techniques and innovation at the level of cultural assumptions. Many critics both inside and outside of Italy have praised the Jewish Museum of Bologna as radically innovative because "this is probably the only museum in Italy which is not based around a collection of objects" (Gruber 2001) or "the use of multimedia technology makes this one of the most innovative museums in Italy." I have suggested that the ethnography of the project shows that what the critics see as innovation—at the level of technology or display practices—were in fact attempts by the museum project managers to live up to a broad cultural expectation that the museum would be exactly as the public would expect a museum to be—full of objects. Moreover, this set of expectations corresponds in the logic of the museum planners with a set of global assumptions about Western museums in general. The key to this interpretation is not merely to look at the finished product, but to consider the words and actions of the project as it unfolded together with those final products assembled in the galleries and display cases.

The problem of "links" and "tours" suggests another key distinction, and one which I often felt was being articulated just below the surface of the contemporary heritage discourse. Specifically, while talking about the museum project, I often sensed an anxiety in local Jews that might be summarized as a "just like the Nazis" or "just like the Church" argument. My conversations with Leah Oppenheim in her antique store were peppered with a comparative discussion of cultural dispossession. While answering my questions about the museum, Leah made passing remarks about her own monetary claims against the Italian government for property taken from her during the war, the

Swiss Bank scandal for Jewish accounts left unclaimed by Jews, and the idea that her trade in antiques was construed by other members of the community as just another plot to swindle Jews out of their property and their money. These concerns, I suggest, line up with the talk of theft amongst local Jews to articulate a broader comparative argument about the nature of cultural dispossession in the context of a heritage program.

One of the key social, political and symbolic issues described in the previous chapter is a contrast between Jewish culture as a social process—an active, living system in the present—and Jewish culture as a museum—a static collection of objects, dead, on display and in the past. The structure, strategy and form of the "links" and "tours" embody this tension in ways that are technologically innovative, albeit consistent with a broader logic of culture as possessions. Still, there are various examples of Jewish museums in Emilia-Romagna which deploy a possessivist conception of culture, both in terms of objects and sites--museums which have not been forced to contend with strong reactions from local or translocal constituencies—including museums long-since open (Soragna), just opened (Ferrara), and those barely in the planning phase (Modena).

The problem in Bologna is not solely the idea of Jewish culture as property, but Jewish culture as valorized property that is then claimed by national state authority under the jurisdiction of heritage laws—not culture as possessions, but culture as "dispossession," so to speak. Defining Jewish culture as property does not seem to be a problem in Bologna or elsewhere in the regional or national context, since Jews and non-Jews engage in that set of practices with a broad enough spectrum of responses on all sides of the ethnic equation. Rather, complications emerge precisely at that point when

the act of defining Jewish culture as property results in the extension of the authority of state agencies over that valorized property. The battle, then, between museums and communities is not merely a struggle to maintain ownership of cultural property, but to maintain authority over the cultural capital that accrues as a result of the reclassification of otherwise "ordinary" culture to the category of significant art.

Cultural heritage laws in Italy give the state authority over objects once they are deemed to be of national cultural significance. That these laws were written during the fascist period of Italian history—a period when Jewish culture was appropriated by the state—is not insignificant. More importantly, the extension of state power made possible by the heritage laws suggests an important distinction within the process of cultural appropriation: possession versus classification. The authority to control cultural property can take one road or both depending on circumstances. Yet, in a global context where the purchasing of cultural property is viewed increasingly with suspicion, and where multimedia technology grows more ubiquitous each year, the actual transfer of cultural property seems to decrease in importance relative to the maintenance of links and the control over images.

There are no laws about the cultural value or ownership of social or representational practices in Italy. Once a Jewish religion is defined as of national importance and significance, there are no laws that claim Jewish rituals as the property of the state. Nonetheless, the expansion of authority over culture does not respect the boundaries defined by law nor the seemingly rigid boundary between objects and practices. One reason for this fluidity in the concept of cultural possessions, as

demonstrated in the previous chapter, can be found in the idea that while museums and other heritage discourses define objects as static, bounded entities, objects and the contexts of their display are dynamic social fields with networks of social interaction that extend through both time and space.

In the absence of actual cultural property, obligation to or, in a more general sense, adherence to a commonsense taxonomy which defines culture as property can spark the creativity of state agents to expand the category of property such that it includes concepts and processes. "Links" and "tours," thus, become the property of the museum through a rhetoric that valorizes the instruments of representation, in this case computer screens. In one review of the museum the planners were praised for dedicating "ample space to multimediality (*multimedialità*)" as if the technology itself were the element of display and not the images or information being represented.

"Emptiness" in this sense is a social process where the display of the technology of display blurs the distinction between the ownership of things and the authority to produce and reproduce images of things. The very real consequences of this blurring should not be underestimated. In particular, as discussed in the previous chapter, even while the museum planners failed to become the collectors of authentic objects they thought they should be, Jewish fears that their property was being stolen grew more intense. The power to represent culture mobilized collective emotion and anxiety.

My discussion of the "empty" museum opens onto a much broader distinction within the idea of cultural dispossession that suggests several theoretical implications for broad understandings of the politics of collecting. While collecting is typically

understood as the act of making cultural property the possession of a museum, the Bologna case suggests that collecting carries with it a complementary set of practices whereby the prior possessions of the museum are legitimized as culture. Museum managers seek to collect cultural property while at the same time making sure that whatever they do possess is classified as culture and that the definition of a collection is sufficiently broad to include this new understanding. In other words, even empty museums have collections. More importantly, civilizing discourses about culture now give rise to tropes of connectedness and multimediality in addition to familiar metaphors of possession. As what it means to "have" culture increases in scope, the idea or image of an object has itself become a commodity in an increasingly embattled arena of cultural property.

I now turn to those sections of the museum where ideas of emptiness were expressed through statements about agency. This is the section where cultural programs (*attività*) took place on a weekly and sometimes daily basis, and which became a distinct type of social nexus marked by a vocal contesting of how Jewish culture was being representation in the museum. In these sections of the museum the absence of objects transformed gallery space into a social setting that became valuable as the locus for the reactions of the local Jewish community. Accordingly, I now turn to a discussion of those gallery spaces as a final consideration of how the concept of "emptiness" was embodied in the museum.

CHAPTER 4: EMPTY MUSEUM (PART II): ACTIVITIES

In this chapter, I once again pick up my discussion of the term "empty" as it is made meaningful in the Jewish Museum of Bologna by considering the social arena of the so-called "area for temporary activities" or the "empty" gallery of the museum. Accordingly, I focus on the empty gallery not only as a contact zone, but also as a point of connection to other social settings beyond the museum, settings where power relations are constituted through interaction amongst key figures involved in the project. My argument is that just as the computer "links" are best understood in the context of ongoing encounters between museum planners and local Jews, the dialogic encounters in the empty gallery space must also be considered in light of this broader social field. Beyond reading these encounters as protests that in turn led to attempts by local Jews to produce their own representations of Jewish culture (Rapaport 1997:35-36), I am interested in the activity in the galleries as manifestations of Jewish agency already in motion, and to some extent, already co-opted by the state.

While the gallery encounters appeared structured by openness and community outreach, other contact zones—particularly the local Jewish community—were dominated by rules of public etiquette (buona creanza). These rules of public etiquette reinforced rather than undermined the museum as an institution which controls rather than includes cultural difference. Moreover, the social encounters between museum planners and Jews in the local community reinforced extant power relations in the community whereby economic capital comes to dominate over cultural and religious capital.

The empty gallery addresses two aspects about the museum as a cultured space. First, it opens onto a discussion of how a museum with no significant markers of cultural difference becomes understood by local Jews not only as a Jewish space, but as a place Jews feel obligated to attend. Second, the empty gallery describes the advance of Jewish agency into a social arena that initially excluded them. This latter issue can also be conceived in the terms of bureaucratic evolution initially proposed by the museum. The museum director had originally foreseen the museum project in two stages starting with the temporary, fleeting events of the "Jewish Culture Program" and ending with the permanent, object-centered world of the Jewish Museum. "Culture" is the opposite of museum in this logic. However, after the museum opened, the project came full circle and the activity of Jewish culture once again became important.

In Italy suspicion of Jewish ritual is most often associated with Church attitudes and policies and most often believed to be a problem of Catholic attitudes towards Jews in the Middle Ages. Historical accounts of early Twentieth Century accusations of "blood libel" in Italy have undermined this accusation. Blood libel is a term for the accusation against Jews that they have tortured or killed Christians to extract blood for particular Jewish rituals. The rituals that were believed by Italian Christians to require "ritual murder" of Christians by Jews were the manufacture of unleavened bread for Passover. There was also broad belief articulated by the Church in the Catholic press as late as 1914 that the murder of Christian children was itself a Jewish ritual, and that the consumption of Christian blood was part of Jewish ritual (Kertzer 2000). In general, while my fieldwork never revealed attitudes of this nature, I can generalize that Jewish

ritual was a topic of great discomfort--a feeling that was often explained in terms of a lack of knowledge or experience with Jewish culture. Jewish rituals were often described as shrouded by a secrecy enforced by Jews themselves. It is difficult to locate the exact cause of this discomfort, but it does seem that Church attitudes are connected with widespread popular suspicion of Jewish ritual.

This chapter unfolds in three sections. First, I consider the inauguration of the Jewish Museum of Bologna on May 9, 1999 as a moment when the focus of the project seemed to embrace Jewish ritual and Jewish involvement whereas before it had been very suspicious of it. I briefly situate this change within anthropological discussions of museums as sites of multicultural interaction. Second, I describe the nature of the "activities" in the empty gallery of the museum, with particular emphasis on the dialogic encounters between Jews and museum planners. Lastly, I will situate these activities in the broader context of encounters between museum planners and Jews beyond the empty gallery, with particular focus on the local Jewish community center.

Setting Aside Space

Sometime between the summer in 1996 when I began my fieldwork and the time of the inauguration in May 1999, the Jewish Museum of Bologna became Jewish. That morning, as hundreds of people huddled beneath black umbrellas in the courtyard of the museum, the Rabbi from the Jewish community hammered a *mezuzah* into the door post above the entrance to the permanent exhibition. Jewish law in Italy and elsewhere stipulates that Jews must hang *mezuzot* on their door posts—typically a small piece of

metal about the size and shape of a cigarette lighter and containing a small piece of text on which it is written that Jews should perform this act. In general, the *mezuzah* is a global symbol signifying that the house or space is Jewish and non-Jews or non-Jewish spaces are exempt from this ruling. Jews are not forbidden to enter houses without *mezuzot* nor are they even obligated to hang a *mezuzah* on a rented space. If the house is Jewish property, it must have a *mezuzah* on the door, although there is no law barring non-Jews from performing the act.

As I watched the Rabbi hammer in the *mezuzah* and sing the appropriate blessing, my mind drifted back to conversations I had had with the museum director in which I was told that this museum would be different than other Jewish museums because it would be planned, run and intended primarily for audiences that were non-Jewish: a Catholic and Communist Jewish Museum. Something had changed, however. During the inauguration, the Catholic and communist mayor of Bologna wore *kippah*—the traditional Jewish head covering typically worn by Jewish men in Bologna during synagogue services, when reciting blessings over food, and at funerals, but not when attending museums.

When asked why the mayor wore a *kippah* for the ceremony, the Rabbi responded, "I don't know who told him to wear it. " Another person in the community, overhearing my question, offered, "Because he [the mayor] doesn't know shit about Jewish culture," while a third person suggested:

> I don't know why the mayor did that. Maybe one of his advisors told him it would be respectful. Who knows. But did you see Zion Banin and

> Antonio De Paz? They also wore *kippot*, but for different reasons. They wanted everyone to see that they were Jews.

The television spots on the inauguration of the Jewish museum that night showed multiple shots of famous scholars and statesmen in the crowd speaking with Antonio and Zion in their *kippot*—conversations between men of culture and Jews.

When asked why the city wanted a *mezuzah* on the door of the museum, the Assistant director of the museum merely commented that it was a nice idea and that everyone was very glad to have such a beautiful example of silver artisanship on display. When I put the same question to the President of the Jewish community of Bologna, she responded:

> Well, [the city] had the idea that we would all walk around the corner from Via dell'Inferno to Via Valdonica, we'd say a few words, cut a ribbon and the museum would be open. But I told them, 'This is a Jewish museum so we should not cut a ribbon. We should hang a *mezuzah*. This is how Jews inaugurate a building and this will be a Jewish building!' So the Rabbi hammered in the *mezuzah*, said a prayer and that was it.

Despite the assertiveness explicit in her statement, it seemed implausible to me that the President of the Jewish community had suddenly begun to dictate the agenda of the Jewish museum. Rather, more likely was the idea that Jewish ritual had become less suspect in the minds of the museum planners. If the initial stages of the project were marked by a suspicion of Jewish practice—the belief, perhaps communist in origin, that Jewish cultural processes threatened the public interest—by the inauguration, it seemed

that Jewish rituals were perceived as adding value to the museum. The shift from living culture to historicized objects had shifted back to living culture, albeit appropriate only in limited circumscribed contexts.

One of the key issues emergent from the last chapter's discussion of the "virtual" exhibition is the tension between a persistent museum ideology of culture as property and the rejection of that ideology by the museum's public. Nonetheless, during and after the inauguration of the museum, while Jews continued to reject the idea of the museum as a place for Jewish property, they seemed to endorse—and the museum planners seemed to embrace with greater enthusiasm—a model of the museum as a place for Jewish "activities" (attività).

When the museum opened, one of the key features in the exhibition, beyond the personal computers and video monitors, was a single, empty gallery intended to be use for "activities." During the inauguration and in the few weeks that followed, the Code of Avicena, an illustrated Renaissance medical book written in Hebrew on loan from the University of Bologna library, was displayed in a temporary case in the gallery occupied by the ticket counter. Several weeks after the opening, the space was emptied of everything but the corner unit which served as a ticket booth, and the initial touch-screen console. This "empty" space was designated for temporary exhibitions and, more importantly, for lectures, lessons and other forms of encounters on the subject of Jewish culture.

It is difficult to overestimate how important these events were to people in the Jewish community in Bologna. Even as the museum was treated with lukewarm

enthusiasm by many, there was an overwhelming sense in the Jewish community that even a museum that had failed to get a collection had somehow succeeded in its transformation of an empty gallery into a site of social encounter. As one outside observer commented:

> That an Italian museum would even consider setting aside space for temporary exhibitions is remarkable. When it comes to museum practices, Italians are way behind in the game. I mean, most museums are just thrown together around collections—most of which nobody cares about or bothers to go visit. So, I can't say that I'm particularly enthusiastic one way or the other about the exhibition in Bologna, but at least in terms of museum theory, the concept is revolutionary for Italy.

Hence, beyond the idea that the museum was innovative technologically, local observers were impressed by the Jewish Museum's emphasis on the museum as a social setting. Furthermore, social settings held different meanings for different constituencies in the museum project. For the museum officials, the museum offered a social setting similar to other museums or courtyards sought after by city officials for their annual cultural programs. For local Jews, the meaning was quite different. As one friend from the Jewish community remarked at the museum inauguration, "This is the most important day in my life. Now, when someone asks me about Judaism, I don't need to explain. I can just say, 'Go to the Jewish Museum!'"

It is important to note that for local Jewish residents in Bologna who had mostly visited the permanent exhibition at least once by the third week of May (1999), the phrase, "Go to the Jewish Museum" meant the act of attending the programs held in the empty gallery space. Moreover, while much of the discourse leading up to the opening was overcast by talk of failure—failure to get a collection or failure to include Jews in the project—talk about the empty gallery activities was decidedly positive. Local Jews not only enjoyed going to the galleries to listen to presentations and to participate in discussions on Jewish culture, but also seemed to enjoy talking about these discussions after the fact. On first impression, the activities in the empty gallery lent credence to many of the multicultural claims that framed the museum project—the rhetorical idealism promoting cross-cultural education and understanding, thereby bringing about the moral improvement of the public.

Interestingly, much of the critical museum literature in the past decade follows a logic similar to that which has unfolded through the development of the Bologna exhibition. This logic posits multicultural dialogue as a solution to the problems of culturally biased museum representation. Karp and Lavine, to cite a widely referenced example, begin *Exhibiting Cultures* with the claim that "every museum exhibition draws on the cultural assumption and resources of the people who make it" (Karp and Lavine 1991:1). They then respond to this dilemma by invoking the solution of multicultural dialogue:

> Museum officials attempting to act responsibly in complex, multicultural environments are bound to find themselves enmeshed in controversy.

> Only when as a society we have achieved sufficient opportunity for the art and artifacts of "other" cultures to be seen can we expect this kind of controversy to become less heated. Now an exhibition often bears the burden of being representative of an entire group or region. With multiplied opportunities, each exhibition will be just one assertion in an ongoing discussion (Karp and Lavine 1991:5).

"Controversy" in this argument is contrasted to "act responsibly," "multiplied opportunities," "complex" and—most importantly—"ongoing discussion." In other words, through this essay which is arguably a manifesto for critical museum studies, Karp and Lavine attempt to resolve the problem of state museum practices through an imagined future wherein multiculturalism necessitates dialogue between "museums and communities"--a concept so central in their model that it was chosen as the title of their second edited volume.

Dialogue, in this sense, has been posited as the opposite of domination associated broadly with the museum as an instrument of the colonizing modern nation state. In this framework, the museum exhibition results from a set of practices whereby agents of the state or dominant position in the cultural hierarchy appropriate minority culture through the practices of collection, museum storage and display. Thus, ending the cycle whereby the museum simply reproduces state power requires inventories of museums by museums, the dismantling of collections, the return of museum collections, collaborative exhibitions and so forth—all actions based on giving up the museum's monolithic control

of its own practices in favor of an open-door policy toward the ethnic groups or communities being represented.

As James Clifford (1997) has shown the idea that museum curators can solve the "controversies" brought on by multiculturalism through dialogue is itself an assumption rooted in the mystification of power relations. For Clifford, the problem is not that museum collections have been kept separate from their rightful owners—that people have been alienated from their cultural property. Rather, the problem is that museums engender specific relationships with ethnic communities mediated by objects, and that an anthropological definition of the museum requires not merely an overture to equal access, but a serious consideration of how subjects constitute each other through museum practices, how exploitations are suppressed, and how the appearance of reciprocity masked the politics of domination.

The empty gallery of the Jewish Museum of Bologna is one of two gallery spaces whose function is dedicated to temporary exhibitions and activities. Visitors enter the largest of the two galleries when they arrive to purchase a ticket. The ticket booth occupies one corner of the room. Two employees occupy the ticket booth: one who sells tickets and one who acts as a gallery guard who greets visitors at the door, then switches on lights indicating where the permanent exhibition begins. Beyond the ticket booth and the touch screen console discussed in the last chapter, this gallery space is empty. The second empty space is reached by passing through the adjacent "theater" space where the introductory video is viewed. This empty space is considerably smaller than the first large space. Although there was talk that this third space would be used as a bookstore,

during my fieldwork I only saw it used once: to sell books and posters on the day of the opening. At all other times it was not in use.

The "empty" gallery refers to the first large space where the Codex of Avicena was displayed at the opening, and which was subsequently used for activities scheduled by the museum directors. When there were activities in this space, the chairs in the video theater would be moved to the larger space and set up such that the audience sat with their back to the entrance of the museum. In this arrangement, the space could hold approximately 150 people, with about ten rows of fifteen chairs each.

Activities held in this space vary in scope and purpose. In a recent press release, the museum program of "initiatives" were presented under the titles "Afternoons at the Jewish Museum," defined as "appointments," "seminars," "lessons" and "encounters":

> Monday January 24 2000, at 12pm, at the Jewish Museum of Bologna (Via Valdonica 1/5), there is scheduled a press conference presenting the Museum initiatives for the period January-May 2000. In attendance...Eraldo, president of the Jewish Museum Foundation and Franco Bonilauri, Director of the Museum. "Afternoons at the Jewish Museum" are planned as a rich calendar of appointments intending to bring to the attention of a larger public aspects of Jewish history, culture and tradition. Programs planned for Mondays starting February 14, 2000 [include] a series of educational seminars on aspects of Jewish history, presented by experts to a limited number of participants (entrance fee required); on Tuesdays, lessons on Jewish culture and tradition intended to

> tackle and learn about aspects more directly connected with religion and sacred texts, organized by ...[the chief Rabbi of Bologna and the President of the Union of Jewish Communities of Italy] (entrance fee required); starting January 26 an appointment that could become a regular event for the public is the "Wednesdays at the Jewish Museum" with conferences, colloquia, and book signings with no entrance fee; Thursdays by contrast will be reserved for Hebrew language courses, with teachers who are native speakers. Finally, on Sundays, meetings at the museum for children and families: a "fun" guided tour with game boards that constitute a type of "treasure hunt."

Unofficial observations about museum activities stressed the use of the empty space more than the diversity of activities. I was told many times by museum planners that the "encounters" (*incontri*) at the museum would be a great aspect of the new project, and a great way to bring people into the museum. The planners were optimistic that the empty gallery would allow them to move beyond the limitations of other museums that did not reserve space for social activities. The empty gallery was often discussed as if it were a "courtyard" (*cortille*) similar to other open air venues in the city that hosted cultural events during the year, but particularly during the summer.

The first program of activities was scheduled to take place just over a month after the museum was inaugurated. Starting on July 1, 1999 and running to the end of the month, the local public could attend sixteen different "Evenings at the Jewish Museum of

Bologna" (*Serate al Museo Ebraico di Bologna*). Most of the events were free of charge, while others cost the public either the price of admission to the museum (L5,000) or just over. Leading up to the first evening on July 1, there had been considerable speculation about the program. Several people in the community told me that there would be cooking lessons, Hebrew language classes, and lectures by famous Jewish scholars from outside of Italy.

While programs would become more varied after the time of my fieldwork, in this first series, they consisted mostly of events that already took place in Bologna on a fairly regular basis--including book signings, lectures, musical recitals, and guided tours. Many of these events had been sponsored by the Jewish Culture Program in the years prior to the opening of the museum and the dissolution of that planning body into the museum *fondazione*. The major difference was that these new events now took place in the museum, not just under the sponsorship or in the name of the museum. A description of the first event will be helpful for my discussions that follow about the relationship between museum activities and the idea of emptiness.

At 9pm on July 1, 1999 the Director of the museum led a group of local tourists, merchants, people associated with the planning of the museum and a few members of the Jewish community on a tour of the ghetto. The museum's ghetto tours began and ended at the museum, in front of the open gate. With the group behind him, Dr. Bonilauri walked a few hundred yards, then stopped to explain an aspect of Bolognese Jewish "presence" in the city before moving on to the next stop. The tour this first evening cost L8,000 or L4,000 for students for "Friends of the Museum" who had made a donation.

The tour lasted approximately one hour. Dr. Bonilauri often said that certain aspects of the ghetto were "suggestive," but unlike other private tours, his focus was on history, not mystery.

The following Monday, local historian Mauro Perani gave a free lecture on "Jewish Fragments in Bologna." Dr. Perani had just completed a book about books in Emilia-Romagna's libraries that had reused Torah parchments to print other books. I had seen him speak several times on this topic--once at the "Salon Antonio" in a fashionable section of the city, where the local rabbi had argued with him, forcing his presentation to end early. While I could not attend the lecture in the museum, several people commented to me the next day that it was "boring" or "not very well attended." They were looking forward to the next lecture on July 7--Piero Stefani would speak about his *The Jews* (Einaudi), a popular version of his earlier work on Judaism (1988) that had recently experienced great success as part of a series of books on various social topics called "Think about this."

When I went to here Stefani the turnout was small. Dr. Bonilauri stood in the back of the gallery anxiously as the room which had been arranged to hold more than one hundred people barely took in twenty. Dr. Stefani spoke for over an hour in a monotone voice that lulled the crowd to sleep. At one point in the evening I looked back and Dr. Bonilauri was gone. After the event was over, I asked the assistant Director where he had gone? "He had to catch his train back to Reggio-Emilia where he lives. The last train is at 10.30."

The next night, everything changed when the Chief Rabbi of Bologna spoke to a packed audience on "Judaism and Nutrition: The Rules of *Kashrut*." I had heard the rabbi speak many times in public settings. In the weeks before this evening he had spoken in nearby Faenza on Judeo-Catholic relations. A few weeks earlier, he had been a guest at a local bookstore to speak about Judaism in the modern era. Moreover, by presiding over the mezuzah ritual, he had played a central role at the inauguration.

Dr. Bonilauri introduced the rabbi "with kid gloves"--using an extraordinarily polite tone and calling him a "man of culture." Since he was known in the local Jewish community for his often fiery temper, many people who knew him in that capacity shifted in their seats at this comment. Moreover, most Jews from the community--of which there were about 15 in attendance that night--knew as well that the rabbi did not hold the director in very high esteem. After the inauguration, it came to light there were mistakes in some of the Hebrew used in the museum text panels, the blame for which fell on the rabbi who had been asked to check the spelling. "I checked the spelling!" he told me earlier that week. "It's that director. He knows nothing about Judaism! Nothing!"

The rabbi's presentation was long and lackluster. He had a habit of quoting at length from the Torah, but questions soon opened up and the evening came alive. One person asked if it was difficult to keep kosher. Another person asked if it hurt the animal to be slaughtered in the Jewish manner. Another asked if Jews and Muslims had the same rules. Overall, the questions were friendly. Then, Shimon stood up to one side of the gallery and began to address the room

> I think it is important that we have a chance to listen to the rabbi speak about kashrut. Although for those of us who grew up knowing these rules, it may not be so fascinating to listen to it again. I find it interesting, however, that this museum, which is so filled with stereotypes and misconceptions about Jewish culture, should suddenly take an interest in presenting the opinions of Jews--

Shimon stopped and looked around the room as several people started to shift and make noise. Unlike most people in the room who had dressed to "go out" despite the July heat, Shimon--a dentist--had rushed from his home still wearing Birkenstock sandals, a men's undershirt and protective eyeglasses. Laura, another friend from the community was sitting behind me, leaned over and whispered "Shimon's crazy." She was laughing.

Antonio De Paz, a member of the local Jewish Community who owned two retail stores in town that sold expensive English fashions, stood up next and said in a voice that was less reserved than Shimon's had been:

> No, no! Shimon is right. Why suddenly do they want the rabbi in the museum? Why can't he answer that question? Shimon is correct to point out the problems in the museum. There are problems, it's wrong. It's not right.

Ruth, Antonio's wife, leaned to one side and said, to nobody in particular, "He won't stop going on about this museum. Antonio, enough!" Now Shimon stood back up to talk, but paused just long enough so that the cries of "No! Basta!" stopped him and he sat down. The rabbi leaned to one side and smiled, nodding his head in a gesture of

agreement. The museum director stood at the front of the room, pale. In a somewhat shaky voice, but with a polite smile he responded,

> Perhaps the good sirs (*i signori*) do not agree with everything that is written in the museum, and we certainly welcome the discussion that will lead to the correction of any errors that may be in the permanent exhibition. But I wish to remind the gentle public that this is a museum not designed with specific interests in mind, but with the interest of a general public who know very little about Jewish culture. And we are very lucky to have with us tonight a very knowledgeable expert on a topic of great interest to those of us who have come here to learn

Shimon stood up again, but the director's comments calmed down the crowd. The rabbi looked over and said in an assuring voice, "Dai, Shimon." Antonio complained to Ruth in a voice loud enough to hear, "It's not right! He didn't answer!" The talk broke up shortly after that. The next Monday, a similar outburst took place at a talk on Hebrew literature hosted in the empty gallery.

My initial reading of this situation was that Shimon and Antonio had plotted to use the quiet evening of highbrow culture as a pretense for a vocal protest against the exhibition. In the days that followed, I was told by both Ruth and Shimon's wife Maria that they had urged them not to make a scene that first evening, but the two had insisted. They gave voice to a growing sense in the community that the museum exhibition represented Jews as greedy usurers who had not made an important contribution to world

culture. They also felt that the museum had edited out sections of history that criticized the church. These criticisms and the reactions of the museum will be discussed at greater length in the concluding chapter of this dissertation.

What I did not realize at first was the broader significance of the museum director's manner in handling Shimon and Antonio. The director had not engaged Shimon or Antonio by fighting with them, but had defined the museum as a public entity with particular rules governing its use, and then indicated that they had violated those rules. The rest of the room seemed to concur. The maintenance of proper public behavior, in other words, was as much the content of the evening in the empty gallery as the rabbi's presentation on *kashrut*. Moreover, the sudden statement of the rules at a point otherwise marketed as an "quiet encounter" or a pleasant "evening" was a remarkable statement about the museum planners' commitment to the museum as a civilizing mechanism (Hooper-Greenhill 1992, 1994, 1995, 2000) and to culture as social means of enforcing power--all under the guise of multicultural understanding. This dynamic was not limited to the technology or the space of the museum, but was embodied in the behavior and presence of the museum planners and introduced into contexts where they were present--particularly in the Jewish community.

In the next section, I broaden my scope to include the activities of the museum staff beyond the museum, those moments when they interact with the subject they are seeking to represent in the museum. In these contexts we see the museum representatives operate as state agents, in which the goal of the encounter is extending the legitimacy of the museum rather than dialogic cooperation. I suggest that these

encounters not only work against publicly expressed ideals about the harmony of cultures, but they tap into the anxieties the Jewish community has about presenting a public face that is Italian rather than Israeli and male rather than female. Hence, the "multicultural" museum seeking to valorized Jewish difference amplifies community efforts to control its own public manifestation of difference.

Play By Their Rules

In September, 1998 the director of the Jewish Museum of Bologna attended Rosh Hashanah services in Bologna's synagogue, walking into the service in the middle of a prayer. In Bologna, the synagogue seating is divided by gender, with men on the ground floor and women in the balcony. In a regular Sabbath service, I would sit in one of the unoccupied chairs, but this day the synagogue was too full for me to sit and I stood in the back next to Eraldo, the elderly President of the museum planning committee. When the director walked into the service, he appeared awkward, standing by the door until there was a break in the Rabbi's chanting. A *kippah* sat on his head awkwardly as he looked directly into the room, rather than at the Rabbi. While service went on, I watched him watch the room. As the prayer ended, the Rabbi indicated that all could now be seated. Eraldo looked at me and shrugged his shoulders as if to say, "but we remain standing!" Amidst the clatter of seats the director made his way to the far corner of the room.

As he walked directly past us, Eraldo turned to me and whispered, "That is the director of the Jewish Museum. Dr. Franco Bonilauri." Then, with subtle, but noticeably

barbed tone, he added, "As you can see, he is not a Jew. He is a civil servant." At the end of the service, Dr. Bonliauri approached Eraldo to greet him. He extended his hand to Eraldo, bowed almost imperceptibly at the waist, and remarked that the service was beautiful. As we moved to leave the synagogue, Eraldo turned to me and said, "Well, you can see that he is not impolite (*maleducato*), just not Jewish."

Overall, it is not possible to "spot" a person's Jewish or bureaucratic identity in Bologna. The few exceptions are those instances when Jewish men were *kippot* outside the confines of the community or when the occasional small group of ultra-orthodox Jews walked on the outskirts of the city, where the Lubavitcher Rabbi supposedly lived and still held regular Sabbath services for students from the university. Jews in Bologna do not speak a distinct language, do not have a particular way of walking, and do not greet each other or gather in ways that set them apart. The same non-distinctness can be extended to bureaucrats. Stereotyped groups in Bologna are male "*mafiosi,*" ostensibly recognizable by their dark sunglasses, mustaches, and out of date suits; "*extracomunitari*" or "African immigrants," recognizable by skin color and occupation (see chapter 5); and Americans, recognizable, so I was told, because they wear summer shoes in the spring and because they order *cappuccino* after dinner.

What set off the Director of the Jewish Museum Eraldo's mind was a series of subtle cues that enabled him to suggest that I could "see" that he was a non-Jewish functionary. First, there was the awkwardness with which the Director work the *kippah*--a sign that he was not used to wearing one. Next, there was the manner in which he entered and faced the center of the room rather than the Rabbi and the Torah at the east

end of the room. Third, he put on a *talis*, a prayer shawl worn by men during a service where the torah is read, this gave him a general uneasiness which I could "see," but I also "saw" these attributes on other Jews in the room whom I knew attended synagogue services infrequently. Samuel Hakim, an Egyptian Jew who had lived in Bologna since the war, but had just begun to attend services during my fieldwork, used to wear his *kippah* so far forward that another friend in the community would jab me in the elbow during services, point at him and laugh. A crooked *kippah* could mean many things.

Rather, the clue that seemed to say the most about the Director's identity was Eraldo's formulaic use of the phrase, "he is not impolite" (*non è maleducato*), a formal phrasing often used by older people in Bologna to describe public behavior. To be "maleducato" suggests that one does not know how to behave well in public, formal settings. More informal terms include "un bravo ragazzo" (a good kid), "molto gentile" (very nice), and "simpatico" (friendly).

In theorizing the concept of politeness, anthropological linguists and ethnomethodologists have largely focused on the ideas of a norms of interaction (Hymes 1972) and saving face (Goffman 1955). Accordingly, what might be loosely grouped as ethnographic theories of politeness argue for context specific conceptions of politeness rather than a cognitive model favored by psycholinguists, and which claims to identify universal modes whereby humans tame emotions (Slama-Cazacu and Mininni 1989). From an ethnographic perspective, norms governing face to face interaction suggest a set of possible dispositions whereby each speaker demonstrates a commitment to a stable social relation, demonstrations which occur both on the level of syntax and lexicon as

well as embodied forms of communication (e.g., dress, comportment, facial expression, etc.). Nowhere is the importance of self-presentation more apparent than in speech communities marked by the presence of one or more stigmatized or "spoiled" identities. In these contexts, face management includes both repressive strategies and strategies of concealment (Goffman 1963). The management of interpersonal relations is a key aspect of the management of what forms of difference are and are not acceptable in a given cultural context. Hence, politeness as a social process frames a tension between being "nice"--nice in the sense of building a social relationship--and being repressive. Politeness in this broader conception enforces social boundaries at the level of micro-social interaction. In Bologna, polite interactions between Jews and museum representatives suggested a troubling contradiction within the multicultural policies of the heritage institute. That contradiction is between a state discourse that welcomes difference as a key aspect of civil society, and stage agents who micromanage difference in their daily activities.

The director's presence in the synagogue elicited the same discourse of interpersonal manners, framing the event in terms of museum, cultural difference and place, that had been voiced by the director in his confrontation with Shimon and Antonio. While I was never told explicitly that the presence of a museum representative or a scholar linked to the museum project transformed the encounter into a museum event, the formula of signifying both the politeness (e.g., use of a particularly formal term to describe the person's good manners) and the non-Jewishness of the individual (e.g., reference to their incompetence with Jewish ritual or discomfort with Jewish ritual

objects) framed these encounters. One of the more profound results of this dynamic was that multicultural encounters often gave voice to an anxiety about public etiquette on the part of Jews in the community. The problem was not that these conventions were not clearly understood, but that certain elements of the community would not adhere to them, and this transgression would have wider repercussions for the community. A key element of concern in these events, as will be discussed below, was the tension between Italian versus Israeli as well as male versus female inflections of Jewishness.

In addition there was a concern that the presence of the museum official turned a private or guarded community event into a public event and that there were a set of conventions that needed to be followed. The privacy of synagogue services in Bologna was exemplified by the need for newcomers or outsiders to present identification to the community secretary prior to being admitted. Unlike Catholic mass in Italy or synagogue services in other contexts (e.g., Israel, the U.S.), admission to synagogue services in Bologna was by prior arrangement only. Quite often, Jewish American tourists would just show up at services expecting to be admitted "because they were Jews," only to discover that services were not open to the public. Hence, while services were public in the Durkheimian sense that they were collective, they were meticulously guarded from outsiders--both guarded in the literal sense that there were police guards at the synagogue entrance during all services, and guarded in the embodied sense I am addressing here, whereby community members were very aware of outsiders.

The presence of museum officials in the community set into a motion a discourse of control "at home" for local Jews. This discourse dictated that while the community was a place in which differences could be expressed amongst Jews, in the presence of museum officials as non-Jews, these differences must be repressed in favor of presenting a unified front stage image of harmonious—and civic—community life. Most striking of all, breeches of this code were feared not merely as damaging to community relations with the museum or the heritage board, but often as damaging to the idea that Jews in Bologna were Italian. Anxieties over community manners in the presence of museum officials articulated a mapped, national and global range of acceptable ethnic behavior.

The anxiety about public displays of national difference amongst Jews in the context of museum encounters in the community was often expressed by local Jews in terms of a conflict between Israeli and Italian manners. One day after a Sabbath service I saw a retired friend, Paolo, a community member with whom I met regularly for coffee and discussions on a variety of topics from his experiences in the Holocaust to government corruption. While we walked under the porticos en route to a favorite café, Paolo reached into his coat pocket and pulled out a newspaper clipping. The article was by David Grossman, a leading Israeli political writer, and was about the tension between Palestinians and Israelis. The thesis of the article was that Israelis had become too rude to solve the tensions with their neighbors, and that the author—because of this rudeness that he observed amongst his co-nationalists—felt for the first time that he no longer belonged in Israel.

As he gave me the clipping, Paolo remarked, "It's true, I find, what this intellectual writes. I find Israelis—mind you just the Israelis that I have met—to be completely missing any sense of courtesy towards other people or each other. Americans, maybe, can be loud, true. But Israelis are rude (sgarbi)." Paolo's observation is another example of how manners were commonly used to distinguished nationality in Bologna, and offers a good introduction to the type of logic often used to express anxiety over bad manners in front of museum representatives.

Several times during my fieldwork, the "Friends of Israel Society" hosted evening discussions or book signings in the social hall of the Jewish community building. On one of these evenings, in February of 1999, a former Jewish resident of Bologna who was now a professor of politics in Israel was invited to give a presentation on the current state of the peace process. The social hall was a square, medium-size room directly under the main sanctuary, and was used often for weekly Sabbath services or receptions. For this evening, a folding table had been set up at the front of the room for the speaker and the board of the Society, with about fifty folding chairs divided by an aisle for the audience.

From my seat in the back of the room, I noticed Eraldo and his wife had arrived early and were seated close to the front. A few rows behind him sat the research chairman for the Jewish Museum's permanent exhibition, a professor of Jewish history at the University of Bologna. Different than the director of the museum, the research chairman had a long-standing reputation with the community as a "big scholar" (gran studioso) and a very polite man. The rest of the audience consisted of members of the community, and other society attendees, including many Israelis living and working in

Bologna who visited the community infrequently, but were drawn to the event by the topic.

Midway through the presentation, the speaker was suddenly interrupted by a member of the community, Shimon. Born in Israel, Shimon had come to Bologna to study dentistry in the 1960s, a popular option for Israeli students at the time. After marrying a local classmate, a catholic woman named Maria, he opened a practice in his home, and started a family. That evening, his two teenage boys and Maria were sitting next to him when he stood up and asked:

> Now, I listen to you and I wonder why it is that you think that the Palestinians want their own state? Why is it that the Israeli left always wants to force them out of Israeli society?

After this, Shimon sat back down in his chair. The speaker, noticeably perturbed by Shimon's confrontational tone, responded:

> Excuse me for being presumptuous, but I believe I detect an Israeli accent in your Italian. Is that true? Ah, yes, I thought so. Let me just say that this type of question is very common of the Israeli right—

At this point, Shimon stood up in his chair and, interrupting the speaker, restated his question in a louder voice:

> You are not answering my question! Why is it that you want a Palestinian state when this is not what they want?

As Shimon once again returned to his chair, he looked around the room with an uncomfortable glance. Following the sweep of his gaze with my own quick glance at the room, I noticed a wave of agitation moving through the audience. People were beginning to murmur amongst themselves. "What rudeness," I overheard in a whisper. "*Mah, che maleducazione.*" One person said sternly, "Let him answer the question!"

In responding this time to Shimon, the speaker stepped around the table and into the room, extending his hand in Shimon's direction with a "hold-on-a-minute" gesture that seemed to anticipate the argument he was about to inflame with his next comment:

(speaker) The good sir, while being of good intentions, perhaps, not being completely fluent in Italian, is having difficulty understanding the subtleties of the presentation—

(Shimon) (Stands up) No—The problem with the left in Israel is that they fall victim to the delusion—

(speaker) If you would let me finish my answer. May I finish my answer?

(Shimon) (looks around the room) The problem with the left—

(speaker) May I, sir, finish my answer? Because I can leave, now, but that would be a shame since so many people came out in the cold and rain to listen to me (audience laughs uncomfortably). Thank you. First of all, it is not my decision to have a Palestinian State. These ideas have not come from the Israeli left, but from Palestinian negotiators. In my mind, I am a

> realist, a pragmatist, the question is not whether there will be a Palestinian state. There will be. There will be whether we like it or not. So, to avoid further bloodshed, I say the sooner the better, how can we help to end this violence. I would rather have a war between two states than a prolonged civil uprising between a state and an occupied people—(Shimon) I'll tell you why. Because the Israeli left has always refused to acknowledge that the leadership of the Palestinians are terrorists. That they speak about peace when they are with Clinton or on television, but they feed their children hatred of the Jews with their mothers' milk—

At this point, the room erupted with cries of "Stop!" "Shimon, don't be ridiculous!" and "He's always like this in these events." The director of the society, with a deep frown on his face, turned to Shimon and said, "Enough." When Shimon continued to speak, the director slammed his hand onto the table and shouted, "I said, ENOUGH!!" Shimon, paused, and continued his diatribe. The speaker threw up his hands in disgust and walked to the other side of the table again. Meanwhile, Shimon launched into a long diatribe about the community being run by left-wing interests, which he concluded by saying:

> The real problem here is that this community is run by certain people who, aligned with the communists and the left, refuse to allow any other voice to speak.

Shimon's point was informed by his general belief that communism was less a political ideology than a genetically transmitted virus. However, his frustration also gave voice to a running theme in his public diatribes about how one side of the community was constantly trying to silence him. Suddenly, in response to the speaker having questioned Shimon's ability to speak Italian, Shimon's wife stood up, went to the front of the room and with a slap of her open hand on the table yelled at the speaker in Hebrew:

> Well you see, even though I'm not Jewish, I can certainly understand Italian, having been born in this city, and I can also speak your language!

During this Hebrew exchange, Eraldo, who was not responsible in any way for the evening, stood up from his chair and in his polite voice said:

> I apologize to both our speaker and our guests for the tone of this exchange, but I feel that this evening has come to an end. I wish you all good night!

He then turned to his wife, who stood up and followed Eraldo out of the room. Maria, having completed her verbal assault on the speaker, then walked out of the room, shouting in Italian, "I am never coming back to this community again!"

After Maria had left and the noise had quieted down, the chairman of the museum exhibition committee stood up and said:

> I have always been—and I think most people who know me here can vouch for this—I have always been a great friend of the people of Israel and a student of Jewish culture. I have had the good fortune to enjoy many good experiences with colleagues in Israel, who have always

> welcomed me in the most cordial manner. Still, I cannot help but wonder how it is, given the current situation, when I hear of Israeli policies towards the Palestinians, I cannot help but wonder why Israelis are not more concerned about how their actions appear to others. In particular, given the way Israel behaves, it is no wonder that Europe is astounded. How is it that the state of Israel is so unconcerned about the impression they make with Europe in this way?

Remarkably, this comment remained largely unanswered. Despite the air of confrontation that hung over the room, the speaker replied quietly that he felt Israel had always respected the opinion of its European neighbors, but it also felt that as to domestic policy, Europe had always trusted Israel to determine its own interests—a standard, diplomatic response. Shimon, who had been yelling at the speaker just minutes before, sat listening quietly.

Shimon and Maria's tactics were, all told, an effective means to bring to a close a discussion of the politics they rejected. What is even more interesting was the extent to which Shimon was rejected less for the content of his political views than for the style of his behavior. Later that evening, as I accompanied Shimon out to his scooter, I asked him if he thought he would have had a better response to his point of view if he had stated his question differently. He flatly disagreed, saying without hesitation as he put on his helmet:

> The real crisis, here, is that this community is run by a bunch of weaklings. Communists and wealthy people who know nothing about

> Judaism and nothing about Israel. All they know is you don't make waves. Well, I refuse to play by their rules.

For Shimon, a political outsider in the community, a left-wing power structure controlled the community through the ruthless enforcement of politeness. Strength, in his estimation, was the opposite of adherence to the rules of public decorum.

After Shimon left, I fell into conversation with Benjamin, a younger member of the community who had witnessed this and many of Shimon's outbursts. Benjamin was embarrassed and asked me not to write in my book that this is how Bolognese Jews are. I assured him that I did not think that was the case and so he had nothing to worry about, that I was always struck by how polite Bolognese Jews were. I then asked Benjamin what he believed the problem to have been in this evening's confrontation:

> I personally agree with Shimon. And it's true. Who pays for these evenings? Not the community. It's certain people with money who pay for these things and I do not need to tell you who they are. They weren't even here, tonight, which shows you how much they care about these issues. Still, Shimon's problem is how he says things. His manner. You can't just stand up and scream at people, particularly tonight when there were so many non-Jews, people from the [Friends of Israel] Society, people from the museum. On a certain level, it doesn't matter what you say if you say it like Shimon. Even people who make condescending

> remarks, if you say it nicely, at least you can have a conversation, not just yelling and screaming and walking out of the room.

Benjamin's account of the events that transpired that evening suggested the dominance of form over content in exchanges between Jews and non-Jews. It also articulated a larger principle described by the phrase "dirty hands should be washed at home" (*Mani sporchi si lava á casa*), often at work in the community. This phrase was used to distinguish how problems should be resolved "at home" in the community, versus "in the street" or in public.

While not everyone in the community valued manners over knowledge in assessing the events that took place during the meeting of the Friends of Israel Society, most invoked this distinction. The Rabbi of the community, who had witnessed the evening, was in full agreement with Shimon's political position. His view was that most of the men speaking on behalf of Israel know nothing about Torah, that is, have little traditional knowledge of Jewish law, and are therefore flawed in their reasoning:

> These men know nothing about Torah. This is the fundamental problem with Israel, today. Shimon? Well, Shimon gets excited, true. It's difficult for people to hear him when he speaks that way. And Maria (laughing), she's not even Jewish. You know she's not Jewish? But she learns from Shimon how to conduct oneself in public. She speaks beautiful Hebrew, too…[the curator] is a famous historian, he speaks very well, but he knows nothing about Torah.

The Rabbi expressed a particular view of politics informed by his conviction that Torah should be the intellectual and moral core of Judaism and Israeli diplomacy. Yet, he also marks Maria as different both as a non-Jew. The curator, by contrast, is marked only as a well mannered intellectual.

In the days to follow, during casual conversation in and around the community, Shimon was consistently tagged as a "good boy" (*bravo ragazzo*) with good intentions but bad manners. Maria was most often described as a hot head with no reason to have gotten so mad as Shimon ("I don't know why she was so angry, she has no reason to be"). In confidence, I was assured that Maria had threatened never to return to the community on many occasions, but that she always returned. Assessments of the curator were markedly different. "Il professore," as he was called, was always described as a very well-educated man for a non-Jew. While disagreement with his point of view were generally not voiced, reference was always made to his good behavior.

The presence of the museum official, and the impact of his actions on the social interaction of the Jewish community members, offers an important insight on the museum as a political-discursive space. In the current anthropological debate, the museum official is most often characterized as an agent of state hegemony who enforces a dominant cultural position on a willing public. Accordingly, the disciplinary engine room of the museum lies in the private sphere of the collection space and curator's offices—those spaces closed to the public, as opposed to those spaces the public can access either without charge or through the purchase of a ticket. Discipline as a social

process finds a technological mechanism, a setting and a cast of characters in the museum. Members of the public enter the structure whereupon the curators as agents of the state imprint a particular form of knowledge on them in the name of citizenship. The location of agency entirely with the curators, the public or somehow shared between them can be parsed, but the basic model of the museum as disciplinary stage, cast and performance all in one, remains.

In Bologna, long before and after the museum opened to the public, social encounters between Jews and prominent members of the museum staff embodied a disciplinary process taking place in the name of the museum, but not in the space of the museum. Moreover, the main difference between the form of discipline identified by museum scholars and the events in Bologna was the centrality of the curator as social--and sociable--person rather than as architect of a socializing mechanism. Here, hegemony was enforced through participation in conversation between Jew and curator, and in the assessments of these encounters afterwards.

The presence of the museum official is only part of this enforcement, as suggested in the brash remarks by Shimon after the event, as well as the cautionary statements by Benjamin. Long after the museum director left, the subject of how to behave in the community was still ongoing for days. The public official not only turned the community into a public space governed by public rules of decorum while he was there, but by virtue of his mere existence--and the existence of the project--the director and the idea of the director as a social actor represented the encroachment of public space into the otherwise private space of the community. The museum, in this sense,

represents not only a site where public manners are scripted through the practices of collection and display, but also a process wherein one's sense of private space is replaced by the obligations of public decorum. The two stages of this process, accordingly, were the re-classification of community and ritual contexts as cultural treasures, and then the social visit of the museum official.

Another consistent pattern that marked interaction between Jews in Bologna and cultural bureaucrats from the museum was the absence of any dialogue with non-Jews about what Jews openly discussed amongst themselves as the problem or ignorance of non-Jewishness. During the museum inauguration, a prominent member of the exhibition scientific committee approached a regular attendee at the synagogue—who was wearing a *kippah*, rendering him visibly observant in addition to being well-known by his interlocutor as an observant Jew—and said:

> I would be very curious to here your reactions to all of this, a man of your level of Jewish culture. What we have here is an exhibition designed for people who have nothing, zero. How does a man such as yourself, who knows Jewish culture so intimately, respond to such a phenomena?

The response was halting:

> I think if it helps people who know nothing about Jewish culture to understand better, then it is good. It is difficult for me to judge.

The response is less significant than the initial question, at least for the purposes of my argument in this chapter. That is, while it was quite common for museum representatives to seize upon the Jewishness of an interlocutor in intimate conversation, I

never observed the opposite scenario during my fieldwork. In intimate conversation between a museum official and a Jew, the Jew never presented the museum official with a question requiring that individual to comment on their own non-Jewishness.

Moreover, while Jewishness was regularly and audibly marked and non-Jewishness remained unmarked in encounters between local community members and the museum staff, this markedness was always enforced through politeness and cordiality. Hence, the unspoken logic of politeness produced a recurrent, unequal type of conversational "exchange"--exchange, in this case, clearly emerging as an ideological concept in a political process--which in turn described a set of expectations which might be generally classified under the rubric of multicultural manners. Accordingly, a non-Jew could express interest in Jewishness or Jewish culture directly to a Jewish interlocutor, safely within the range of socially acceptable conversational possibilities or politeness. The reciprocation by the Jewish interlocutor was bound by a different set of possibilities. A return expression of interest in non-Jewishness or non-Jewish culture directly to a museum staff member did not fall within the range of socially acceptable conversation possibilities—it was rude.

Multicultural manners, in this case, govern a pattern of social interaction through conversation. That is, an ostensibly equal exchange becomes a mechanism for enforcing cultural hierarchy, whereby culturally marked people are limited in conversational possibilities relative to those who are unmarked. Yet, what is of particular interest in the Bologna project is not merely the presence or enforcing of social inequality, but the relation between the museum as an institution overtly engaged in fostering social

interaction between Jews and non-Jews—on the premise of multicultural exchange—and the actual social interaction produced.

Several weeks after the museum opened I was invited together with a friend from the Jewish community to an evening at the house of a member of the museum staff. Other attendees at the dinner included three assistants to the museum curator. My friend was also an assistant to the curator, but often expressed anxieties that her participation in the museum was not equal to that of the other staff members:

> I never know if they are going to give me a job or not. The work they give me is temporary, I lead tours in the ghetto, I helped them with the display for the Shoah, I worked with [...] on the CD-ROM about Jewish families in Emilia-Romagna. Getting invited to these evenings is nice. [...] is always very nice, and she's a good cook. But she is completely ignorant of Jewish culture. Completely ignorant! The others know a bit, but they're not Jewish either.

Upon arrival at our host's apartment, my friend's concerns were immediately re-contextualized within the framework of the evening. Our host, who was responsible for a vast number of publications on Jewish culture in the region over the past ten years, and a central organizer of the permanent exhibition, had not merely invited us for dinner, but had invited us as Jews for an evening of Jewish specialties. Shortly after sitting at the table, the food was presented to us:

> Now, I hope you both appreciate that I have prepared some traditional Jewish recipes. This dish is [...] a traditional pasta from Reggio-Emilia. And this one over here [...] is a recipe from Ferrara. Jeffrey, I would not expect you to be familiar with these, but you should write them down in your notebook. [...] should know them very well.

Here the conversation at the table turned specifically to the appreciation by the museum worker of Jewish culture, which was presented to us in the framework of table manners and cordiality. We were offered the dishes first, asked if we enjoyed them, and otherwise coddled as special guests relative to the "Jewish" food on the table.

While we ate, the conversation turned to office politics, the sexual gossip of the Heritage board, and acquaintances held in common by the guests. Suddenly, the topic of Israeli politics was broached, and the conversation was once again directed towards my friend from the Jewish community and me:

> Well, I am sure the situation in Israel must certainly interest you two, given that it is Israel. There must a great deal of talk about this in the community

Here, again, the conversation was framed by the host through a polite solicitation of our Jewishness. In both instances—the question about the food and the question about Israeli politics—we were each given space to respond, but then there was no further discussion on the matter. After the meal, my friend remarked to me that she did not have a particular opinion about the situation in Israel, although she could certainly think

of people in the community who did. Nor was she familiar with the recipes on the table. She did not remark at the absences in the conversation which drew my attention. Namely, despite the fact that my friend considered her relationship to the other museum people a professional one, her participation was never elicited vis-a-vis the museum. Despite having worked on the exhibition, she was not asked about it, or her opinion of the director, or any other aspect of the museum—all topics of conversation that emerged during the evening.

This type of marked solicitation served to frame the event as both a social encounter between equals and to define a boundary between cultural markedness and unmarkedness. The event not only affected interactions between host and Jewish guests, but also between other guests. After the meal, while clearing the table of dishes, a guest engaged me in a personal conversation about my work. After hearing me describe my ethnography of the Jewish museum, he inquired if I was Jewish. Upon telling him that I was indeed Jewish, he asked me if I had been to Israel. I told him that I had and he responded:

> That is very interesting. I have always been very interested in Yiddish. I think it is such a beautiful, expressive language and I would love someday to learn it. Did you speak Yiddish when you were in Israel?

I responded politely that Yiddish was not the lingua franca in Israel, but that it was spoken by many people. Embarrassed, he quickly responded:

> Yiddish! I meant Hebrew. I am so sorry for getting that wrong. I meant Hebrew, of course. Did you speak Hebrew in Israel—is that also the language you speak at home?

This was not the first time I had been asked by an Italian non-Jew if as a Jew I spoke Hebrew at home. I replied that I spoke English at home because I was raised in the United States, but having had the opportunity to study Hebrew I was able to speak it. I then added that, just as Latin was spoken in a Catholic mass, it was not spoken in Italian households, an analogous situation to the use of Hebrew amongst non-Israeli Jews. Even more embarrassed by this response than by my first one, my questioner averted his gaze, thanked me and then returned to the kitchen carrying some dishes.

I suggest that the problem with this exchange was precisely that my responses turned it into an equal exchange, a conversation. The situation was framed by our host such that the expectations of the interaction between Jew and non-Jew were not supposed to be equal, but had transformed the Jews in the room into a cultural resource to be mined for information. The key elements of this type of interaction were the extreme politeness on the part of the non-Jews towards the Jews, and the assumed silence of the Jews towards the non-Jewish guests. Hence, similar to the manner in which racial markedness takes place through the dual process of rendering whiteness as transparent and marking non-whiteness as visible, Jewishness in this exchange was made audible, while non-Jewishness was protected by silence.

Colpo Di Stato!

Many of the examples mentioned thus far have pointed to the intersection of several factors. First, key individuals from the museum project, while interacting with Jews in the community, reinforce the social distance between Jews and non-Jews while enforcing a hegemony of politeness. Second, this enforcement not only dictates how to behave, but an unequal range of conversation possibilities, particularly with respect to the discussion of cultural difference. Finally, the museum dynamics reinforce a struggle by members the Jewish community to repress forms of difference that conflict with Italian styles of public behavior. The most notable of these threatening differences were Israeli modes of behavior. The broader dynamic in question is the problematic relationship between the discourse of difference articulated under the guise of multiculturalism and enacted through the public museum project, and the discourse of difference being worked out in the privacy of the Jewish community.

Conflicts over difference in the community not only articulated concerns over Israeli identity focused on Shimon. Also at issue were the non-Bolognese regional origin of community members. These conflicts most often focused on the Rabbi.

During the Jewish holiday of *Pesach*, the Rabbi presided over large festival meals or *seder* for members of the community. Leading up to the first night, the Rabbi was concerned that not enough people had made reservations, but was reassured by the synagogue secretary that people often fail to make reservations, but show up anyway and that she would do her best to get money from each person who was in attendance ("Non siamo tutti quanti onesti come Lei, Signore Rabbino!"). Sure enough, the evening of the

seder, more than half the people in attendance had not paid. As a result, the Rabbi was upset and kept insisting in a stern voice that everyone calm down and pay attention.

None of his urgings had any effect and so, when it came time to sing the first of the *Pesach* songs, he announced, "Tonight we will be trying some Roman tunes that I learned in my childhood." During the first song, there was a struggle of melodies between the Rabbi's family and the rest of the membership, which resulted in the membership not singing. The same process transpired for the next song, and the next. When the *seder* reached the song "Dayenu,"--an often energetic tune, typically known and enjoyed more than any other song in the *seder* service--Ayal, a professor in his thirties who was sitting immediately next to me, motioned for everyone in the near vicinity to lean into the table. He then whispered:

> OK. I don't know about all of you, but I am sick of all these boring, heavy Roman tunes. Who does this guy think he is? I come to synagogue once a year--OK, Jeffrey, don't write that in your book--maybe I come a few times (laughs). But when I come I want to have fun. I don't come to be yelled at by some Roman. This is the Jewish community of *Bologna*, not Rome. If he wants to do things his way, he can go back to Rome. Now, here's my plan. If he starts *Dayenu* with one of his Roman tunes, we all start in with the tune we know. It will be a *colpo di stato* (coup d'état)!

Sure enough, the tune began and it was unfamiliar. Ayal immediately began singing the familiar tune and for a minute the hall rang out with a ritual cacophony, representing the

attempt of a local faction to displace one regional cultural tradition with another. "Colpo di stato!" Ayal whispered loudly, urging us on. But the table gave out, and the Rabbi's tune prevailed.

Later that year, following the same Yom Kippur services where the Director had been in attendance, but after he had already left, an incident transpired where the subject of "revolution" was again regional culture. Following the day-long services of the Jewish festival of *Yom Kippur*, the community hosts a small meal in the social hall below the synagogue, allowing everyone who has been fasting for twenty-four hours, as dictated by Jewish law for this holiday, to eat something before returning home. As the service neared its conclusion, many people began walking down from the synagogue, resulting in a small group of older men, women and children in the lobby just outside the social hall. Inside the social hall, tables were covered with platters of sweet bread, cookies, pasta, fruit, wine and coffee. At one point, I noticed that, while the front doors remained closed, some people were walking around with smiles, wiping their mouths and chewing as if they had furtively eaten bites of food from the buffet.

When services ended, the Rabbi came down and entered the social hall. Seconds later, I heard an explosion of voices. The Rabbi had discovered that people had been eating and was yelling:

> At the very least for the respect of the Rabbi! At the very least they could have waited!!! I wake up early, conduct services all day and they have the audacity not only to eat before the end of the holiday, but to run around in

> front of the Rabbi and eat!! Respect for themselves, fine, they may not have, but respect for the Rabbi!!!

Quickly opening up the wine, the Rabbi recited the blessing, and left the room, continuing to shout as he went. At this point a woman in her late thirties approached him, apologizing on behalf of the offenders, explaining to him that they were mostly old women and young children and that they thought Jewish law allowed for this. The Rabbi would have none of it. Yelling even louder, he chastised the apologetic woman, saying that her parents would be ashamed of her, and he stormed out.

When I caught up with the woman who had apologized in the hallway, she was crying and being consoled by a small group of women. Turning to me, she said:

> I can't believe the way he just acted. I am never coming back to this synagogue again. Never! I can't believe, on Yom Kippur of all days, the one day people come to the synagogue, he has to treat us like this. Maybe that's how they behave in Rome, but in Bologna if you treat people like that, people won't come back. I'm going to Ferrara, forget this place.

Five minutes later, the woman's sister assured me that every year ("maybe three or four times a year"), she announces that she will never come back. Later that evening, I asked Alena, a woman in her mid forties what she thought about the events:

> First of all, both the Rabbi and [...] are crazy. Nice, but crazy. Second, the Rabbi is Roman. Jeffrey, you have to understand that it's a different world down there. There, they scream and yell at each other all the time

> and then go home and have a pizza together. Romans are crazy. They're great, but crazy.

The next day, the Rabbi returned to the community. Two weeks later, the person who had vowed never to come back was in the synagogue. The Rabbi's emotions and the thoughts on the Rabbi's Romanness by members of the community, seemed to be part of a broader discourse on authority that often erupted, but then would subside.

The purpose of these examples is not to side with one faction of the community or another, but to suggest how multiple discourses of difference--as well as the power to define and control difference--were ongoing in the community when the museum director arrived. I am not suggesting that the director's visit to the synagogue was the sole factor in bringing Jewish behavior in line with the museum planners' expectations for public behavior. Situating the social interactions that took place in the empty museum in the context of a broader social field outside the museum is crucial to understanding the multiple factors that informed these evenings of culture.

Collected Social Life

Less than two years following the inauguration of the museum, the short series of "evenings" had evolved into a multifaceted schedule of "appointments." The events are now divided into a thematic schedule with particular types of events recurring on the same day of the week throughout the schedule. On Sundays the museum offers tours of Jewish sites in Bologna and elsewhere in the afternoons, as well as concerts in the

evening; Mondays is reserved for art history seminars; Wednesdays are for book signings; Thursdays include lessons in culture and tradition (texts and Jewish law) and visits to the museum for children. In addition, the museum now sponsors Jewish Itineraries to Europe, with trips to Amsterdam led by the Assistant Director, and trips to Switzerland and Poland led by the museum Director (although to my knowledge, these trips have not yet taken place).

Two issues emerge in this chapter that are of particular interest to anthropological discussions of museums and nationalist discourse. First, even the abandonment of collection as a central tenant of museum practice, and the embracing of dialogic cooperation as a guiding principle, does not eliminate the power imbalance between museums and communities. This is not to suggest that the Jewish community is a helpless victim of museum practices. Second, nationalist concerns over identity and the politics of culture unfold simultaneously through disciplining institutions, and through disciplining social interactions. The study of the politics of culture must situate museum practices in the broader setting of local community interactions, and in multiple ethnographic contexts, ranging from informal social gatherings to ritual.

In the next chapter, I turn to a discussion of how public space, rather than the private space of the community, is structured and affected by the museum and its various cultural initiatives. Accordingly, my discussion will focus on the ghetto or the "former Jewish ghetto" and the manner in which the cultural programming taking place in the ghetto articulates certain ideas about Jews and race central to Italian nationalism. Looking at the ghetto is a crucial part of my ethnography because the definition of the

ghetto as a Jewish space, as discussed in the previous chapter, was a crucial part of establishing the museum's legitimacy. What remains to be seen is how this legitimacy engages other cultural discourses, particularly a racist discourse about Southern Italians and African immigrants.

CHAPTER 5: GHETTO ASSOCIATION

Midway through our tour of the neighborhood known as Bologna's "former Jewish ghetto" (*ex ghetto ebraico*), our guide stopped in front of a memorial commemorating the oppression of Jews under Fascist race laws (Caffaz 1988:20). Earlier that morning, a wreath was placed in front of the memorial by the president of Italy's House of Deputies, who was invited to Bologna for the inauguration of a new Jewish Museum just around the corner. There were four guides conducting the museum's new ghetto tours as part of the activities celebrating the inauguration. We turned the corner heading down the romantic alleyway of Via Valdonica en route for the museum entrance where our forty-five minute tour began and ended. As I looked down to watch my step carefully so as not to trip over the cobblestones, my eye caught several objects floating in the water drain: a handful of syringes and a broken balloon. As a large banner waved in front of the Museum, "Bologna City of Culture for the Year 2000," a group of three men not on our tour hurried around the corner in front of us. Earlier that week, during a conversation in Via dei Giudei, just a short walk away from the Jewish museum, I saw the same three men sitting on a bench in the Piazza di Porta Ravegnana--a popular local meeting place flanked on one side by a Benetton store for children, a Feltrinelli bookstore, and a Bancomat machine, and on the other sides by Bologna's oft-photographed "Two Towers" (*Le Due Torre*). "You see those guys over there on the bench?" my friend whispered, "Pushers. Heroin." Later, this same friend would tell me that she was the secretary of a new merchants association in the ghetto that was planning

cultural initiatives on Jewish themes as a strategy to force the heroin trade out of the ghetto.

In addition to its role as host for Holocaust commemoration ceremonies, a new Jewish Museum, and some of the city's most stylish bars and art galleries, Bologna's renovated historic "Jewish" quarter is home to one of the city's most active heroin markets. The *ex ghetto ebraico* had been a Jewish residential area for less than half a century--four hundred years ago--having been effectively abolished in 1593 when all the Jews of Bologna were expelled (Ottolenghi 1979; Kertzer 1997). There is not, in demographic terms, a "Jewish quarter" in Bologna and I only met one Jewish person who lived in the ghetto area, having purchased an apartment in 1996 when the ghetto was on its way to becoming one of the most expensive neighborhoods in the city center.

In her recent study of Jewishness in the United States, Karen Brodkin suggested that "the Jewish question" signifies the "interplay between ethnoracial assignment and ethnoracial identity" (Brodkin 1998:22). Although set in the specific context of the United States, Brodkin's observation suggests that the question of who Jews are in a given nationalist context draws on larger discourses on difference encoded in founding national mythology. In Italy, the distinction between black and white is not part of the founding myth. Rather, as recent cultural developments suggest, Italian concepts of Jewishness intersect with narratives about Italian and European Fascism during World War II more than with origin stories about the late Nineteenth Century.

Given the context of Jewish experience in post-Holocaust Italy, "the Jewish question" derives from an interplay between the politics of Jewish heritage, the politics of

racism and the politics of ant-racism in Italy. Moreover, this interplay takes place with increasing frequency within the social space of Bologna's ghetto. The politics of culture in Bologna's former Jewish ghetto begin with the official assertion that identifies Jews with the ghetto. The late twentieth-century usage of the term tends more and more to signify not the Venetian or papal ghetto, but the Nazi staging grounds for exportation to concentration camps, such as the Warsaw ghetto. The reinvention of Jewish ghettos in Italy holds a disturbing implication for the role of heritage programs in national discourse. The celebration of Jewish culture as national treasure is linked directly to the experience of Jews as victims of European racism. Yet, the result is the recreation of a special place for Jews within, but distinct from the rest of the city. The moral lesson of the urban heritage landscape is that Jews, whether persecuted or celebrated, exist in a bounded space that is an exception to the national narrative.

The question of Jewish culture and heroin in Bologna raises the problematic sociological conception of the "ghetto" as a bound entity as both the urban location and model of Jewish collective life (Wirth 1929). That this model of Jewish culture persists on both the level of public heritage discourse and cultural theory reinforces "how fundamentally pathological are the notions of minority, ghetto, stranger, marginal man, and rootless cosmopolitan" (Kirshenblatt-Gimblett 1994:340, Weinreich 1967).

In 1996, after a friend told me that the ghetto was "full of junkies" rather than Jews, I conducted an informal walking survey in the wedge-shaped neighborhood approximately five square blocks in size. I noted over one hundred syringes floating in a few dozen open rain sewers, tucked behind window screens, and strewn in dark corners.

I found no other concentration of syringes in any other neighborhood in Bologna. I conducted similar surveys in 1997, 1998 and 1999 with the same results. In those first days of my research it seemed that the consumption of heroin and the re-invention of Jewish culture taking place in the ghetto intersected only in that they shared a common space. I began to realize that in Bologna, as in other urban contexts in Italy, drug dealers were assumed to be African immigrants and that their representation in both the media and in everyday conversation most often took on racist themes wherein North Africans--once colonized--were now criminalized as deviant outsiders (Carter 1997; Colombo 1997).

My claim is not merely that Jews have been re-ghettoized and that immigrants have been re-criminalized in contemporary Italy, but that both have been set into conflict through a local, national and global politics of culture. *Why is Jewish culture viewed as a cure to drug crime in Bologna?* The answer to that question lies in the broader discourses about race, Jews, anti-racism and urban renewal to have emerged in Italy since the late 1980s. In this chapter, I discuss Jewish culture and heroin in Bologna's newly renovated ghetto to counter the problematic notions that Jews belong in the ghetto and that immigrants have brought drugs and crime to the Italian city. My concern is to show what happens when racism directed at African immigrants and Southern Italians moves into new Jewish heritage zones emergent from anti-racist discourses. This chapter offers a crucial ethnographic perspective on anti-racism.

The rest of this chapter unfolds in four sections. The first section, "Drugs and Racism," considers how the ideological association of North African immigrants with the

heroin trade is elaborated in Bologna, deconstructing this problematic linkage with anti-drug counter-discourses from immigrant associations in Bologna and an actual labor profile of immigrant workers in the city. The second section, "From Race to Treasure," examines the Jewish culture industry in Bologna, emphasizing the municipal Jewish museum project and local initiatives involving participation by the local Jewish community. The third section, "A Ghetto Association," presents the case of the Former Jewish Ghetto Business Association (*Associazione Operatori Economici Ex Ghetto Ebraico*) as an example of cultural economic activity that frames a confrontation between Jewish cultural heritage and the heroin trade within the reconstructed space of the ghetto. The conclusion, "The Consumer Ghetto," returns to a discussion of the problematic relationship between the ghetto, immigrants, Jews, and racism focusing on new consumer patterns emergent from this nexus.

Drugs and Racism

Discussions of racism in Bologna most often divided the topic between past and present. As discussed in the introduction of this dissertation, racism in the past meant fascism. The fascist state enforced a series of race laws against Jews and Africans in 1938, resulting in massive exclusion from Italian social, economic and political life as well as the deportation of Jews in Italy to both Italian and Nazi concentration camps (Caffaz 1975). Given this history, most Bolognese concede that racism is a blight on Italy's past. Italy's racism under Fascism, as the popular explanation holds, was not home grown, but imposed by Nazi Germany. By contrast, as a topic relevant to the

present, Bolognese understand racism in two senses. The first is a very general use signifying prejudice or preference, not inconsistent with my earlier example of "pork racism." Fans who jeer an opposing team, someone who feels that Milan is better than Rome, or even someone who reads one newspaper rather than another might be labeled "racist" (*razzista*). Second, Bolognese identify racism with the Northern League (*Lega Nord*)--a northern separatist party led by Umberto Bossi that participated in the 1994 national government, and which espouses a political platform that is highly anti-Southern and anti-immigrant. Even with this split between Mussolini's fascism and the Northern League, local discourse defines racism as something either in the past or on the political fringe, but never in everyday practices, seemingly overlooking the current racism of soccer fans and newspaper readers.

Scholarly approaches to Italian racism have taken issue with this distinction between "old" and "new" racism. Historians have refuted the idea that racism was a German import into Fascist Italy by tracking the development of indigenous, pre-war racism emergent in the contexts of Italian science, colonial expansion and literature (Burgio and Casali 1996; De Felice 1961; Centro Furio Jesi 1994; Israel and Nastasi 1998). Anthropologists and social theorists, on the other hand, have provided a much more complex view of Italian racism, by placing it in the broader context of Italian Orientalist attitudes towards Southerners and Africans (Schneider 1998), shifts in Italy's status from a point of departure for Italian workers to a point of arrival for foreign workers (Cole 1997) and the social relations resulting from flows of global capital and power (Carter 1997). More recently, the idea of a distinctive form of Church racism has

been effectively documented (Kertzer 2001:205-221). Hence, a discussion of "old" and "new" racism in Italy speaks to questions of labor, power and the nation (Balbo and Manconi 1992, 1993). Yet, the larger issue is that racism is a flexible term in Italy, allowing for a broad range of differentiating practices.

Since the late 1980s, under the aegis of Italian multiculturalism, yet another set of meanings became attached to the concept racism. A new concern for cultural diversity has taken as its point of departure an official contrition for racism committed against Jews during the Second World War, reproducing in Italy a mode of public discourse taken up in some form or another everywhere throughout Europe. The success of Benigni's *Life is Beautiful* can be attributed to a thematic interest in Jewish culture as a counter-discourse to an Italian history marred by racism. Even the Catholic Church, after years of ambiguity on the subject, has expressed public regret for racism against Jews. More significantly, these anti-racism discourses have been elaborated locally throughout Italy in the form of a new Jewish culture industry.

In Bologna multiculturalism since the late 1980s has focused largely on a public program to valorize Jewish culture as integral to regional and Italian culture. The practical result since 1995 has been a steady stream of Jewish cultural events that not only attract a public curious to learn about Jews, but actually transform the urban landscape. Specifically, the notion of a Jewish ghetto--which previously connoted specific Jewish neighborhoods in Rome and Venice--was rediscovered as a Jewish quarter ubiquitous throughout Northern Italy (Sacerdoti and Fiorentino 1986). While ten years ago most Bolognese did not even know that there was a former Jewish ghetto in the

city, by 1998 the ghetto area had become a major point of interest in local politics, leisure, and tourism, making Jewish heritage as a multicultural discourse a fixture in Bologna's urban landscape.

My analysis of racism proceeds from several opening propositions. First, a view of Italian racism requires a relativist perspective. That is, I take as given that while anthropologists should be suspicious of race as a natural category linking biology to culture, they should be aware of the social and cultural consequences of racism as a discourse affecting heritage politics (Handler and Gable 1997). A relativist perspective also calls for a conception of racism that may be linked to multiple registers of difference (Balibar 1991). Second, racism in Italy is both a key symbol in the politics of multiculturalism and a set of cultural practices that reinforce a model of Italian local and national identity, a model that discriminates on the basis of physical appearance, language, and class. Third, an effective analysis of racism requires a focus on anti-racist discourse (Gilroy 1987). In the Bologna case, a project commemorating Jewish absence as a result of racism is viewed by local actors as serving the goal of clearing the former Jewish ghetto of drug dealers--subsequently stigmatized as North African. Anti-racism is not just the movement against racism, but also the attempt by right-wing politicians to rephrase their chauvinism in non-offensive language—speaking about cultural preservation rather than biological purity (Taguieff 1990). Fourth, racism must be seen as part of a broader set of practices linked into commonsense ideas and patterns of consumption (Bourdieu 1984).

On May 5, 1999 Bologna's local television newscast ran a story on the opening of a Jewish Museum in the ghetto, followed by a report on the closing of a bar five minutes from the new museum due to drug trafficking. According to the report, seventy five doses of heroin were found in the bar's bathroom. Several weeks earlier, a heroin pusher was stabbed to death in a pizza shop just down the street from the back entrance of the new Jewish Museum. Although the ghetto itself is rarely the talk of drug-related stories in Bologna, it flanks two major market areas for the sale of heroin: the busy main street *Via Indipendenza*, which runs from the main piazza in Bologna to the train station, and *Piazza Verdi*, known as the drug piazza in Bologna. The latter, due to its proximity to both the university and the municipal opera theater, has been the focus of local efforts to reclaim the streets from drugs and violence (Venturi 1999). A special police task force has been launched to clean up *Piazza Verdi* , as well as a voluntary group called *Nonni Civici* (Civic Grandfathers) formed to provide escorts for young children who need to pass through the piazza on their way to school.

These stories of urban violence are never framed by news that deconstructs the monolithic category of "immigrant" or contextualizes immigrant social life in Bologna. On June 4, the Independent Forum of Immigrants in the Province of Bologna held a public protest against the drug trade, with the familiar slogan "Say no to drugs!" Unlike similar events in Milan (Carter 1997:142), this protest did not take place in an area where immigrants lived, but where they were perceived to be a problem, and was virtually overlooked by the media. Represented at this protest were numerous associations of immigrants from Morocco, Egypt, Kurdistan, Nigeria, Liberia, the Philippines, and

Algeria, as well as more general associations representing Islamic immigrants, Arab immigrants and immigrants from South America.

Immigrant workers fill a vast number of low-wage market niches in Northern Italy, including metalwork, light construction, domestic labor, and garment assembly. Jobs are not secure as the duration of an informal contract varies. As one Tunisian nineteen-year-old commented to me about his job in a metal turning shop:

> I got the job because I had the skills when I arrived and I could speak Italian. So, I can work as long as the boss lets me and assuming I don't get beaten up after a soccer game I should be here for a while.

In fact, on the day of the conversation, this worker decided to stay home since the local soccer team had won and there were rumors that the excitement might include violence against North Africans. Still, beyond its comment on the dangers of immigrant life, his remarks suggests that contrary to popular conception, both technical skills and language skills facilitate entry into Italian labor markets, an observation that confirms anthropological theories about migrant labor in other parts of Italy and Europe in general (Cole 1997:13).

The discourse on drugs in Bologna is a discourse on race and immigration that advances on two levels. The first is an Orientalist view of the Southern Italians as deviant (Gibson 1998:99). According to this logic, the drug market is said to be a product of the Southern Mafia which employs poor North African illegal immigrants as sellers on the streets in Northern cities. As recent anthropological studies of Italian Orientalism suggest, this image of the Mafia-guided, genetically criminal Southern Italian

has racial overtones of Southerners as dark, lazy and stupid, an image with deep roots in both Italian anthropology and Italian history (Schneider 1998), and also meshes with popular images of drug using Sicilian Mafia lords, such as depicted in Benigni's *Johnny Stecchino*. (1991).

The second level of the racialization of drug crime in Bologna falls under what has recently been described as the "new racism" in Italy and revolves around the term *extracomunitaria*. Although it literally means "not a citizen of the European Community," *extracomunitaria* commonly signifies "black," "African," and "North African" (Franchini and Guidi 1992). In the months prior to the murder in *Via Zamboni*, the Italian national media were filled with stories not only about waves of criminal *extracomunitari* attempting to immigrate illegally to Europe via the Puglia coast in South Eastern Italy, but also stories concerning *extracomunitari* in almost all of Italy's major cities who had committed violent, drug-related crimes. In the winter of 1998-99, one might suggest that Italy experienced not simply a nation-wide panic over the rise of crime, but a new fear of invasion by racialized, criminal immigrants. In Bologna, this panic began in the summer of 1997 when the city experienced a wave of rapes and violence against women, all of which were reported in the press to have been committed by *extracomunitari*. After this time, many people told me that they no longer went near Piazza Verdi for fear that an *extracomunitari* would stab them with a syringe.

The term *extracomunitaria* is not limited to discussions of crime and the drug trade. It is often invoked in Bolognese laments about the distribution of public resources. Immigrant families with children are often rumored to have received public

housing prior to native Italians who have no children. These arguments often follow a similar logic, condemning *extracomunitari* for the dual crime of stealing local work opportunities and garnering more public benefits for the unemployed. Hence, the labor market and public resources in Bologna are both racist and nationalist fields of discourse. Yet, I would argue that race rather than citizenship is the dominant referent in the term *extracomunitaria*. This became clear to me through my own use of the term and through repeated discussions with Bolognese about my own status as *extracomunitaria*.

During my fieldwork, I was often referred to as *extracomunitario* in jest. When I would ask why this was humorous, I was told on many occasions that although I was technically *extracomunitario*, I was not really *extracomunitaria*. I was being told that I did not appear African. Hence, as an American with white skin, I was inside the technical definition, but outside the practical meaning of *extracomunitario*. Likewise, on several occasions I tried to use *extracomunitaria* in my Italian discussions of Polish, Russian, and Slovakian immigrants in Bologna. Here, as in discussions of my own status, I was corrected, told that although Eastern Europeans were technically immigrants, in fact they were only nominally *extracomunitari*. I was subsequently encouraged to use the term *immigrati* (immigrants) This same distinction between *extracomunitari* and *immigrati* was often posited in discussions of the rise of prostitution in Bologna. Following the publication of a newspaper article on the demographics of prostitution in Milan, a local professional commented to me:

> Bologna's just like Milan in this respect. You could make a map of the city based on prostitutes. There are transvestites by the station, *extracomunitari* between

Porta Maggiore and *Porta San Vitale*, and both *immigrati* and *extracomunitari* by the convention center.

As it is presented in local usage, the term *extracomunitari* is a keyword that often distinguishes identity along racial lines. Yet, beyond a racial distinction between black and white, the term *extracomunitaria* also signifies a chronological distinctions between old and new racisms--a timeline central to contemporary discourse on race in Italy. That is, so-called "new" racism is perceived as a problem resulting from the transformation of Italy from an immigrant point of departure, into an emigrant destination. Underpinning this idea of a new racism is the parallel concept of an "old" racism, signifying fascist biological racism focused against Africans and Jews, beginning with laws banning sexual relations between races in Ethiopia (1936) and the passage of a series of race laws against Jews (1938). The term *extracomunitaria*, beyond implying a racial distinction between "us" and "them," also suggest an historical distinction between "how we are now" and "how we were then." Jews and Africans play complementary roles in both the new and old conceptions of race. Within the 1938 model of Fascist racism, both Jews and Africans were deemed biologically separate from the Italian race. Yet, Jews had a large residential presence in both Italy and the colonies, while Africans were mainly present in the Italian colonies. Despite this different distribution, both were excluded from economic, cultural and political life (Raspanti 1994; Fubini 1988; Sarfatti 1988).

On both the national and local level, the "new" race discourse has an anti-racist inflection. Accordingly, a respect for Jewish culture is positioned as the key to a society that tolerates immigrants. In 1996 I had the opportunity to discuss race with the director

of the Jewish Museum of Bologna. When the director told me that the museum would have a section which recounted the Holocaust, I asked him if he foresaw any problems considering Italian Jewry's experience with fascist race policies during World War II. He responded:

> In Italy there is no tradition of anti-Semitism as there was in France or Germany. Racism was a problem during the war, but it was a problem imposed upon Italy by the Nazis and it is no longer a problem. Today, the problem that the museum seeks to confront is the new rise of racism brought on by ignorance. That's why the museum is so important. We hope that by providing a forum to learn about Jewish culture, the museum will help to avert this new threat.

The director's distinction between an old and a new form of racism circulates widely in the Italian press. New forms of racism are characterized not as biological, but as cultural and not focused against Jews, but against *extracomunitari*. As a model of racism, this distinction locates the problem of Jews and race in the past. Yet, it also rehabilitates Jews as part of the solution to the rise of racism in the present. Furthermore, this transformation of Jews and Jewish culture from the object of racist politics to a mediator of anti-racist politics takes place in the context of cultural projects. Indeed, these projects are widely diffused in Italy and include museums, festivals, and associations. My argument is that through a process of both discursive and practical transformation, a cultural role has been constructed for Jews that locks them into the social and political struggle against a claimed new racism. The logic is that Jews who suffered at the hands

of the old racism should be central in the national struggle to insure the success of a multicultural society.

It is consequential that Bologna's Jewish cultural projects have strong political ties to Italy's left, particularly the Left Democrats (DS), formerly the Italian Communist Party (PCI). One of the broader cultural dynamics that characterized the PCI, and a legacy inherited by the DS, is the view that the party is engaged in constant struggle for membership against the Catholic Church. The key to this form of competition in the 1970s was the creation of communist rituals and symbols linking party membership to a deeper sense of national identity. In Bologna the myth of the resistance fighters movement, active in Italy at the end of World War II (*La Resistenza*), played a central role for the PCI. Accordingly, the resistance was celebrated as a communist party effort to fight the Nazis, while the Church is portrayed as facilitating Nazism. This symbol had particular resonance in Bologna where a shrine in the center of the city--complete with photos of fallen partisans--commemorates the resistance as communist heritage (Kertzer 1980:157-8).

The Jewish Museum project received considerable attention from DS party magnates, including a 1996 commendation by Walter Veltroni, then minister of Cultural Heritage, now head of the DS. Yet, as the museum director's comments suggest, it is unlikely that this support of the museum project is connected to any sense of responsibility for fascist anti-Semitism. It was Antonio Gramsci who first wrote, "in Italy there does not exist real anti-Semitism" (Gramsci 1975:1801). Gramsci's logic was inspired by a book review written by the Jewish historian Arnaldo Momigliano

(Momigliano 1933) and based on a theory of Italian national unity. According to Gramsci, Italian national identity was rooted in the transcendence of "municipal particularism" and "Catholic cosmopolitanism." As such, national unity rendered anti-Semitism obsolete because Jewishness was no longer congruent with urban or Catholic identity. Although the historian Amos Luzzatto has pointed out the limits of Gramsci's mechanistic idealism when it comes to the Jewish question (Luzzatto 1997:1839), the Jewish Museum director's words suggest that Gramsci's explanation still holds in DS cultural politics. Support for Jewish cultural projects, if not due to a belief that anti-Semitism is a problem, but in continuation of a discourse that demonizes Nazism and questions the Church for its association with Hitler.

Competing for party membership through the establishment of political rituals is a broad theme in Italian public discourse that extends beyond the struggle between communists and Catholics. The Northern League often cited as the most vocal separatist racist party in Italy, has also engaged in the generation of new symbols and rituals, culminating in the 1996 declaration of the free state of Padania. Up to 1996, the goal of the Northern League had been to gain popular support for its proposal to separate northern Italy from the south through the establishment of a new nation, comprising the territory of Emilia-Romagna, Lombardia, and Friuli-Veneto. Its strategy on the level of both discourse and practice was to generate a celebratory calendar drawing on mythology that mixed Christian themes with supposed pre-modern Lombardian symbols, and included the parading of paramilitary "green-shirts" reminiscent of the Fascist "black-shirts" (Kertzer 1996:19; Destro 1997:361).

The same logic could be applied as an explanation for why Italy's right-wing party also began to support the idea of Jewish cultural heritage in the late 1990s. As mentioned in the introduction to this dissertation, on February 19, 1999, Gianfranco Fini, the leader of Italy's *Alleanza Nazionale* (AN), a party often accused of having affiliations with neo-fascist extremists, visited the memorial site of Auschwitz-Birkenau in Poland. According to Franco Perlasca, a leading AN strategist and close advisor to Fini, the trip to Auschwitz-Birkenau was intended to lessen the fears of Italian Jews that the current party policies where in any way connected to anti-Semitism. The idea was that after Fini's visit to Auschwitz-Birkenau, the AN would no longer be associated with racism. Participating in an Auschwitz memorial was intended to show Fini in the role of ritual pilgrim to the site of the most extreme form of biological racism against Jews. Tulia Zevi, former President of the Union of Jewish Communities of Italy, quickly criticized Fini for hypocrisy, suggesting the visit to Auschwitz meant nothing since the AN continued to recognize racist fascist and skinhead activists as members of the party. She added that despite the visit to Auschwitz, Fini rarely if ever met with these young racist members of the AN to encourage them to embrace rather than combat multiculturalism, adding in conclusion, "To conduct these [young members of the AN] from dismissal to the acceptance of multiethnic and multicultural Europe, that is already a reality, is at least or possibly more important for everyone than a visit to Auschwitz" (Longo 1999:9).

Zevi argues that Jewish culture should not be used as a symbol, but that Jews alone who have experienced racism have the right to lead discussions of racism and to make symbolic, public gestures of anti-racism. Thus, she observes that even if the AN's

anti-racist discourse involves Jews, it still practices racist grassroots politics against *extracomunitari* and Jews (Zevi 1998:12). In other words, Fini's pilgrimage to Auschwitz was a classic embodiment of a new form of anti-racist racism, whereby racist political ideology was being repackaged as multicultural respect for Jewish memory.

Accordingly, Zevi's response speaks to the larger discourse of how and on what terms the commemoration of racism against Jews should be mobilized as a national political ritual. Because racism as a social concern in these discourses about political symbols touches on the political debates on emigration and crime, Jewish culture lies at a nexus of debates on urban improvement, including the war on drugs in Bologna. Through the social project of transforming the ghetto, Jewish culture takes up a multivalent role as anti-racist symbol and catalyst for both cultural diversity and commercial success. Moreover, Jewish culture has multiple sponsors, producers, and consumers, ranging from the *Comunità Ebraica* of Bologna to the city government and local merchants. Understanding how Jewish culture is constructed as a symbol requires an initial inquiry into the recent history of Jewish cultural programming in Bologna and in particular the re-invention of the ghetto as a site of Jewish heritage.

From Race to Treasure

The racialization of Jewish Culture in Bologna and the racialization of the drug trade take place through different channels and projects, even as they converge in the social space of the ghetto. For the drug trade, the broader discourse can be described in general terms as an Orientalizing process, whereby the heroin dealers, distinguished by

skin color and language, become marked as a North African presence in the city and imagined as a threat to a healthy Italian society. Jews are also marked as a distinct presence in the city, although the connection of Jews with race takes place in the dual context of municipal heritage programs and local efforts to maintain Jewish collective life. The central role that the ghetto plays in both of these efforts is an effect of discursive practices rather than a response to obvious facts.

In order to understand what kind of imagination and interests are at work in re-fashioning the ghetto as a Jewish space, it is useful to refer back to the Jewish Museum director's observation that his project is part of an effort to stem the potential rise of new racism caused by ignorance of Jewish culture. This comment raises several key issues about the connections between racism and the origins of Jewish cultural programming in Bologna. In particular, it is always important to keep at the forefront of any discussion of the politics of culture the speed and efficiency with which cultural institutions--and I am thinking specifically here of museums, annual festivals, and exhibitions--write their own histories. This is particularly true within the context of bureaucratically situated, state-funded cultural projects which depend on political alignments and "favorable" winds to reach completion. The Jewish Museum of Bologna is that type of project. Thus, the museum director's comments about the social project of the museum should not be confused analytically with the origin of the museum. Rather, it would be more accurate to recognize a constantly revised concept of the project's origins, starting first with the idea of art historical recovery in the early 1980s, which became a cultural project

with potential benefits to society, and which finally arrived at the model of a form of institutional cure for the social ailment of racism.

Recall that in 1984, the Institute of Cultural Heritage in Bologna began a regional census to determine the extent of Jewish architectural and art historical presence in the region (Bonilauri 1998:50). At the same time, a process of Jewish institutional reform was underway in Italy, known as the *intesa*, or accord between the Italian state and the Jewish communities of Italy. This was part of a larger constitutional process of achieving legal parity between the Catholic church and the Protestant, Muslim and Jewish minorities in Italy--a step in a larger series of constitutional reforms meant to redress the impact of Fascist legislation and race policies during World War II (Cantoni 1947; Fubini 1986; Dazzetti 1998). One article of the *intesa* mandates a cultural census of Jewish heritage in Italy (Tedeschi 1994:25). Even though the *intesa* did not become law until 1987, the public process of writing the *intesa* intersected with another public process stemming from constitutional reform in Italy: the creation and devolution of state power to Italy's regions, of which Bologna is the capital city of Emilia-Romagna. This process entailed, among other things, the creation of a cultural heritage institute in Emilia-Romagna, a renewed interest in census taking, and a newfound tutelary concern for Jewish culture (Bonilauri and Maugeri 1994). Despite these massive cataloguing efforts in the region of Emilia-Romagna, the politics of Jewish culture in Bologna itself have been complicated by a dearth of local historical data and material culture, in contrast to an abundance of local memory of fascist race policies towards Jews. Tour guides and local historians often explain how most documentation on the ghetto was

burned when Bologna's synagogue was accidentally bombed by the Allies during World War II. Finally, prompted by the debate over Swiss misuse of Jewish deposits in 1998, the Italian government with the help of the Union of Jewish communities in Italy launched a fact-finding mission to determine the extent of the problem of expropriated Jewish property that remained unresolved over fifty years after the end of the war (*Shalom* 1999:9).

My point, here, is neither to question or affirm the validity of these connotations of the term *ghetto*, nor to lament the state of local history in Bologna. Rather, I suggest that beyond its definition as a container of Jewish heritage representing Italian cultural wealth, the ghetto in Bologna is point of convergence for past and present racial discourses. Moreover, in the complementary processes of cataloguing and heritage promotion, Jewish culture is assigned a social role as mediator in broader efforts to confront the issue of racism in Italian society.

According to Bologna's local discourse on multiculturalism the ghetto is a means of guaranteeing that Jewish presence remain visible within local heritage--visibility being a vague concept linked to the idea that the valorization of diversity is an antidote to racism. Reflecting on this effort to make a Jewish presence visible through the ghetto, an historian and influential voice in the study of Jewish culture in Bologna recently commented:

> I realize that the ghetto is not a perfect representation of Jewish experience...however, because Jews did not have cities of their own, and because

> the ghetto is a visible sign of the richness of Jewish presence, if we are to appreciate this richness then the ghetto is the best means to do so.

The ghetto's value is that it provides a visual marker for Jewish richness within the context of urban heritage, and this marker is legitimized and naturalized through the work and theoretical assertions of historians involved in the museum project (Muzzarelli 1984, 1994, 1994a, 1996). Yet, this narrative--as in many others like it--also contains the idea of Jewish visibility as an attribute of a healthy Italian society. At its core, the ghetto as a model of Jewish culture is an outgrowth of a liberal democratic concept of education, in which society will be improved by teaching an ignorant public to appreciate Jewish culture rather than seeing Jews as threats. In this case, the improvement of society means the elimination of racism. Thus, the discourse on visual and historical richness involves Jewish culture not only as a symbol of multiculturalism, but ultimately as an intermediary between a past burdened by racism and a history of the misappropriation of Jewish property, and a future rectified by the valorization and protection of Jewish heritage.

This anti-racist, valorizing effort by the city has included considerable participation by the *comunità ebraica* of Bologna--consisting of a council of elected members, a Rabbi, and about two hundred individual members. Moreover, the emergence of a publicly sponsored Jewish heritage program has been balanced with cultural initiatives originating in the *comunità*. These initiatives have also been marked by a redefinition of the ghetto as Jewish cultural wealth as a means to engage the struggle against racism. Similar to the census-taking of the regional heritage board, the

comunità has developed a new concern for the definition, inventory and management of its cultural possessions --a development that has taken place in the context of a collective, *comunità* engagement with the experience and consequences of Jews under fascist racism.

In 1988, as a way of marking the fiftieth anniversary of the ratification of the fascist race laws, the Jewish community worked with the city of Bologna, the regional cultural heritage board, and the chamber of commerce on an exhibition tracing the history of the ghetto in the city. The exhibition consisted of large color photographs of the ghetto, alternating with panels of text which explained Jewish history in the city. This exhibition resulted in the creation of a logo designed by a member of the community, and the integration of this logo into community self-representation. The logo is a line drawing traced from a photograph of the former sixteenth-century synagogue in the ghetto. This tracing is flanked by stylized Hebrew letters and contained within a six-pointed star. After it closed, the display panels used in the exhibition were mounted on the walls of the synagogue and social hall of the Jewish community center, where they remain today. That same year, the *comunità* mounted the commemorative plaque in the ghetto.

In 1993 the community sponsored a second exhibition commemorating fifty years since 84 Jews were deported to Nazi concentration camps. Again, the logo from the 1988 exhibition was the motif for the exhibition. The Institute of Cultural Heritage did not co-sponsor this event, which consisted of various vigils commemorating the deported Jews, as well as an exhibition of photographs in city hall entitled "Ghetto and

Synagogue." Posters and pamphlets from this second exhibition are still on display in the community.

The first time I saw these images of the ghetto was during an ordinary religious service, during which I was struck by the contrast between the ghetto photographs and explanatory panels, and the space of the religious service. Shortly after this observation, I inquired about the importance of the transfer of the 1988 and 1993 exhibitions into the *comunità* social hall, whereupon a *comunità* representative responded with a matter-of-fact, almost dismissive tone, "Those aren't exhibitions. It's just the ghetto." In other words, the ghetto and images of the ghetto were the cultural property of the *comunità* and belong in the space of the *comunità*. Moreover, although this was not obvious to me, it was either entirely obvious to my interlocutor or he intended for me to understand it as such.

I am suggesting that this commonsense attitude describes the end product of years of a complex politics of culture in Bologna. The result has been the integration of an historical consciousness of Jewish persecution under fascist racism--and images of Bologna's ghetto--into the everyday conception of Jewish *comunità*. These ghetto images have become not just visual markers for the *comunità*, but also ways of injecting a critical relationship to the idea and history of racism into the contemporary consciousness of the ghetto and Jewish collective life. Moreover, participation in municipal cultural heritage programs by members of the *comunità* is conceived as a way of insuring that past racism does not re-enter contemporary public discourses on Jews in Bologna. This type of anti-racist work by the *comunità* occurs both formally and informally.

Whereas today, what I call "the ghetto logo" of the Jewish community can be seen all around the community center--stamped on yarmulkes, prayer books, and letterhead--before the 1988 exhibition commemorating the racist persecutions, the community logo was just a simple star in a circle. The central role the ghetto plays in the community's self-representation, both to its own members and to the outside world, is the result of public reflections on anti-Semitic racism sponsored by Bologna's Cultural Heritage Institute and Chamber of Commerce being put to different ends by Jewish leaders. The series of exhibitions from 1984 to 1993 marks a turning point in the community's understanding of and participation in Judaism. It is from this point onwards that the concept "comunità" began to include references to race commemorations—that is, events and products sponsored by state institutions connected with the broader politics of culture focused on resolving the problem of racism.

With regard to my earlier discussion of ethnic markedness in chapter 3, the community's initiatives on anti-racism manifest a more powerful form of agency than suggested by their involvement in the social activities in the museum and their reactions to the social outreach of the museum officials. In the generation of a logo, while the community is responding to the dictates of an increasingly corporate consumerism, they also control the means of producing the representation that re-frames the idea of community. The museum officials, by contrast, represent the efforts by the state to control means of representing Jewish culture in exchange for polite interaction with the Jewish community.

That the consumption of Jewish cultural heritage has become a commonsense solution to the production of racism has also produced some difficult problems concerning who has the power and authority to define, control, and accumulate Jewish cultural capital. At times, in fact, these problems threaten to undermine the very multicultural idealism at the heart of Jewish heritage programming in Bologna. Tensions often run high between city officials seeking to demonstrate their non-racist attitudes to Jews, and Jewish officials seeking to remind city officials about the history of Jewish suffering at the hands of Italian racism.

These conflicts raise the important question of power that has emerged at the intersection of race and Jewish culture in Bologna. From the city's perspective, Jews cannot be afforded too much power in the Jewish cultural project, because the larger issue is the education of a non-Jewish public. While at the same time, although these new forms of public Jewish culture appeared at first to fall beyond the *comunità* conception of what Jewish life was, Jewish leadership soon became concerned that if they do not seek a certain amount of control over the public representations, then eventually they would lose control of internal projects.

In other words, if the ghetto has made Jews visible as a domain of art history and eventually a cultural barrier against racism, then it has also made visible new consumer pathways which, ironically, are both useful to and threatening to the maintenance of a sense of Jewish collectivity, as well as efforts to propagate multicultural ideals. The notion of Jewish culture as something strictly produced and consumed by Jews has been overwhelmed by public initiatives to transform Jewish culture into a socially beneficial

boom market. As a result of the vast discourses on Jewish cultural riches in Bologna, a large part of Jewish culture is now produced by Catholics and consumed by Jews—and vice versa. The ghetto in this formula is critical to seeing how these problematics take shape because it reveals the politics of Jewish culture through the interwoven processes of sponsorship, consumption and the elaboration of race discourses.

In this new market, the ghetto has become the central, spatially deployed model for Jewish culture, to which Jews and city officials have attached their own at times contradictory claims of provenance and ownership. As has been suggested, the broader discourses are of race and cultural wealth linked to the idea of a healthy Italian society and a safer city. Thus, public and *comunità* heritage concerns in the ghetto overlap with responses to the drug trade, immigrants in the city center, and the various cultural initiatives which seek to displace urban decay.

What I am suggesting is that through a series of parallel concerns that converge on the urban space of the ghetto, ideas about Jewish culture emergent in an anti-racist discourse and about the sale of heroin in a racialized discourse find themselves in confrontation. Furthermore, it is through this encounter that the heroin market enters the discourse on Jewish heritage and Jewish heritage, likewise, enters the discourse on urban transformation brought on by shifting modes of commerce. In other words, Jewish culture enters the politics of shopping malls and supermarkets, while heroin pushers enter the ghetto tours. What is interesting about these confrontations is that Jewish culture becomes an anti-racist symbol deployed in a racist discourse. What makes this possible is the presence of many different claims on Jewish culture in the same urban space.

Thus, I now turn to one final example, the case of the establishment of the Merchants Association in Bologna--an association whose specific goal was to make the ghetto safe from drug crime by unifying the streets in "traditional" Jewish character.

Ghetto Association

In early March 1999, I received a letter of presentation for the *Associazione Operatori Economici Ex Ghetto Ebraico* (Former Jewish Ghetto Business Association). At the top of the page was a logo bearing a candelabra, a common symbol for Judaism in Italy and Bologna. Yet, the Ex Ghetto Association is not a Jewish organization as the logo might suggest, but an informal collective consisting of storeowners and residents living and working in the ghetto area. The text of the letter presents a single problem: although one of the most fascinating and characteristic areas in the historic city center, the ghetto has been ruined by urban and civil decay (*il degrado urbano e civile*). Towards a solution the Ex-Ghetto Association proposed to develop economic and cultural initiatives (*iniziative*), including exhibitions, longer store hours, and guided tours.

What immediately struck me about this letter was the degree to which drug related crime and Jewish culture were present not literally, but as visual and rhetorical euphemisms that drew on a familiarity with the commonsense logic configuring these issues. The two discourses framed by the association were those of crimes caused by the massive influx of *extracomunitari* , expressed in the fear of the drug trade, and the value of Jewish culture to the city, manifest in the Jewish Museum and Jewish Culture Program in the ghetto area. Yet, unlike the commonsense racist arguments in Bologna, the Ex-

Ghetto Association's logic does not define immigration in racial terms, nor does it identify immigration as the cause of urban degradation. Rather, it identifies large shopping malls as the problem, drug crime as a symptom and Jewish culture as the cure. On one level, the goal of the association's manifesto was to tap into the momentum of a Jewish Museum being opened in their area as a point of departure for drawing greater improvements into the area, thereby leading to more publicity, safer streets, and increased commercial activity. On a second level, they sought to halt a much larger problem identified as the shopping mall, a newly emergent economic force in Bologna. Moreover, large shopping malls entered the urban economy in the first place, according to the association, because of government corruption.

The use of Jewish culture by the Ex-Ghetto Association exemplifies the problematic engendered by European anti-racist discourses. Jewish culture in the imagination of the association merchants is a symbol of anti-racism, an idea lifted from observations of the Jewish Museum project. Jewish culture is then applied as a symbol to combat urban decay. While not citing race as the cause for urban decay, racist ideas about immigrants figure in the association's ideas about urban decay—in conversation rather than official statements. Hence, the association's plan to use Jewish culture to revitalize the ghetto can be restated as one racialized object (Jews) being used to displace another (North African immigrants). Both the Jewish Museum project and the anti-racist activities of the Jewish community were key elements in this development because they provided the means by which Jewish culture grew to be understood as an anti-racist symbol in Bologna.

Understanding this more complex logic requires further inquiry into both the history of the Ex-Ghetto Association--including its encounter with theories of urban renewal--and a brief description of the political environment in which the association took shape. In Bologna in general, the prevailing commonsense explanation of urban decay cites race as the degenerative factor . This theory often takes the form of racist laments, which I encountered all over Bologna. According to this explanation, the city "had changed" in the past ten years: one no longer felt safe walking on the streets in the city center due to the high number of extracomunitari; and for that reason the shopping mall had become a viable alternative.

This argument was particularly common during the recent mayoral elections in Bologna, after which fifty years of communist mayors came to end with the election of Giorgio Guazzaloca, a local butcher with center-right party ties, including the Alleanza Nazionale. During the election, Guazzaloca's supporters made immigration a central issue, including signs that read "Out With Immigrants! Bologna is not Chicago!" At this time, the racialized discourse on street crime moved to the center of public political discourse. The ghetto and the area near Piazza Verdi were focal points in these discussions and in the months leading up to the elections, police presence in the city center increased noticeably. The political debate unfolded such that the right accused the left of allowing too many immigrants into the city, thereby causing crime, while the left responded by attempting to model crime patrol reforms after the initiatives by New York mayor Rudolph Giuliani. These debates were not merely local, but could be heard as well in other major Italian urban contexts.

In mid-October of 1998, a group of merchants, artisans and residents who had been living and working in the ghetto area attended a workshop on urban renewal in Bologna sponsored by the European Federation of Town Centers. During the course of the seminars, several merchants in this small group learned that one of the causes of urban decay was a shift in local commerce from small, diverse market zones evenly distributed throughout a city to large shopping centers on the periphery of a city.

According to the presentations at the conference, when a superstore (*ipermercato*) or shopping mall (*centro commerciale*) opens, mobilizing multinational capital to keep prices low, small businesses die in the city center. Pedestrian traffic in the areas of the city center with fewer businesses then decreases, and these dying zones then open up to drug trafficking and urban violence. The solution is to attract consumers back to low traffic areas through a combination of the market diversity offered by the large shopping centers and the cultural richness and diversity offered by the historic city center (Pedrelli 1998; Pellegrini 1998).

The social phenomenon under siege by the shopping mall was not merely shopping, but also what many Bolognese refer to as *fare la vasca* ("to circle the tub"), whereby people shop and gather in and around the central piazza. According to the association secretary, this phenomenon had shifted in large part to the shopping malls and to large stores such as *IKEA* and *Euromercato* located in the industrial park about two miles west of the city:

> People used to like the idea of having all the shops you needed right in your own area. Now, people go to the *ipermercati* or the *centro commerciale.* I know

> people who go out there Friday night, they bring the entire family, have dinner, do their shopping for the week, then sit on the benches and talk to people. It's not their fault, really, they're there because the prices are lower and it's convenient. But now, instead of going out to the corner to buy shoes, you go the mall where you know you can get the best price. This has destroyed the city center.

Thus, urban degradation is due not only to shifting markets, but to the loss of a neighborhood unity built on a symbiosis between merchants and consumers. This type of logic is linked to the idea that immigrant peddling and drug dealing are social problems that appeared in Bologna only when neighborhoods began to stagnate.

Although interviews led me to discover that economic theories lent the Ex-Ghetto Association an explanatory framework, the struggle against "civil decay" remained the publicized departure point and central concern in the Association's platform. Although still relatively new and a long way from realizing its goals, the Ex-Ghetto Association promotes an agenda in which Jewish culture displaces heroin culture through the social and cultural unification of the neighborhood. Even before the local merchants conceived their project, municipal authorities had launched a program of neighborhood renewal focused on the better integration of motor and pedestrian traffic, including the resurfacing of streets and the cleaning of building facades (Fontana 1988). This strategy had been applied in other pedestrian zones of the city with limited success, including *Piazza Santo Stefano* and *Via del Pratello*, two areas which experienced sharp rises in real estate prices following architectural interventions by the city. Although this program has had little

success in the ghetto area, it was directed at the same goal as that of the Ex-Ghetto Association: the elimination of drug-related street crime.

The same can be said for the "Festival Zamboni" (1997) and "Buonasera Via Zamboni" (1999), two cultural initiatives by the city which sought to displace drug dealers by simply staging concerts, lectures, and performances in the places of high drug trafficking. Not surprisingly, these events were poorly attended. In contrast to all of these efforts, the Ex-Ghetto Association sees itself as a means for situating cultural initiatives such as the Jewish museum and the festivals within everyday social and economic life. The Ex-Ghetto Association does not dismiss the other initiatives , but critique the fact that they failed to create social ties to the merchants and residents in the ghetto. Furthermore, the city's inability to reduce street crime simply by improving the physical quality of the streets raises the important issue of how the Ex-Ghetto Association distinguishes itself and profits from the products and activities of these other projects--including the resurfacing of the streets and the Jewish Museum. Its relationship to these projects is in fact an important key to understanding how the association has enlisted Jewish culture in its program of urban renewal, and the complications that potentially emerge from this strategy.

Speaking for the Ex-Ghetto Association, the secretary critiques the museum and the ghetto renovations as projects disconnected from everyday life in the ghetto. Although they have the potential to render the ghetto physically more attractive, she adds, they actually exacerbated the problem of neighborhood decay because they do not contribute in any way to a feeling of neighborhood unity. Towards a solution, the Ex-

Ghetto Association has attempted to reclaim aspects of the ghetto renovation project that had been left out due to lack of will or funds on the part of city and regional administrators. They have proposed to redesign the shop signs in the ghetto along a medieval theme proposed by a local historian, including the suspension of large cloth standards above the stores in the narrow streets (Vincenzi 1993).

Indeed, the generation of visual motifs in the ghetto has become for the Ex-Ghetto Association a way of transforming Jewish culture and neighborhood history into unifying social reference points. In a subsequent interview, for example, the secretary of the Ex-Ghetto Association told me that when she moved into her store in the ghetto in 1994, the first street resurfacing work was well under way, emphasizing that when she first arrived she had no idea about the city's plans to restructure the streets or the museum project. Slowly, she began to develop the desire to do work consistent with the Jewish character of the area. In 1996, she attended a conference on Jewish Museums in Europe held in Bologna (Bonilauri Maugeri 1998). Shortly thereafter she executed her first piece on a Jewish theme: an etching of a candelabra. By the end of that year she was selling the candelabra etching along with etchings of Hebrew letters which she learned from books and museums in the city. Here it is important to note that by 1996, the museum project was well publicized, renovations in the ghetto had produced two colorful books, including a Jewish itinerary tour book describing Bologna's ghetto (Vincenzi 1993; Sacerdoti 1992). At first, the secretary's artwork drew on these prior cultural initiatives.

This interest in Jewish iconography had a direct impact on the development of a strategy for marketing the Jewish cultural nature of the Ex-Ghetto Association. Like

many associations in Bologna, the Ex-Ghetto Association has created a logo which it includes on all official communications, and which it plans to place on store windows of all association members. The current logo is a square design of a light shield on a dark background. The shield contains an image of a menorah--a seven branched candelabra and common symbol of Jewish culture--with the words "Ex Ghetto" above the candelabra branches. Running across the shield at the bottom of the logo is a banner which reads "Associazione Operatori Economici Ex-Ghetto Ebraico".

The logo has an interesting history which describes the evolving concerns of the association and how their interest in Jewish culture brought them into the context of public discourses on race . According to the association secretary:

> The original logo was made by the owner of the Chinese restaurant around the corner, on his Macintosh computer. It was very nice, and had a map of the entire ghetto. But I though it was too detailed, and suggested that we change it to something simpler. The problem is that a logo has to be reduced in size and reproduced and if you make it too complicated, well in the end it becomes a little black box. So I suggested we try the candelabra design with the writing.

What is interesting here is not simply the importance of aesthetic concerns in the creation of the logo (Handelman and Shamgar-Handelman 1993). Rather, I see a shift from representation of the association as a territorial collective to an image that transforms a central symbol of Judaism into the symbol for an association claiming authority in the ghetto.

The candelabra is an important symbol for Bolognese and Italian Jewry. Bologna's current synagogue contains both an actual candelabra on a table in front of the large cabinet where the Torah scrolls are kept, a stained glass window design of a candelabra, and two smaller candelabras on the table from which the Rabbi conducts ritual services (Cabassi and Del Vecchio 1994). For Italian Jewry in general, the candelabra recalls the image of Titus' soldiers stealing the coveted *menorah* from the temple of Jerusalem. Furthermore, the candelabra has become a logo in separate initiatives , including the new Jewish Museum of Bologna and a lecture series on Jewish themes in a local bookstore.

Claiming the candelabra as a symbol for the association drew the association into a public discourse on the impact of the race laws on Jewish patrimony. The *comunità* has argued that the candelabra as a Jewish symbol was being misappropriated by the association, perceived by the *comunità* as a non-Jewish organization. This led the association to confront the issue of claiming authority to appropriate Jewish imagery, as well as the much more vexing issue of being associated with the historic problem of racist anti-Semitism.

The larger context for concerns over the association logo and Jewish language was the ongoing inquiry into unresolved cases of Jewish property seizure after 1938--the same issue that complicated the cataloguing efforts of the Jewish Museum project. As was the case with the Jewish Museum's attempt to catalogue Jewish property, the Ex-Ghetto Association 's use of a Jewish symbol resonated amongst many local Jews with prior discussions of how fascist race laws led to the misappropriation of Jewish property.

The economic and cultural trajectory of the association's discourse as urban renewal found meaning within the local discourse on Jewish history. This dual referent of the association logo as both a proud symbol of Jewish culture and a catalyst for concerns over Jewish suffering points to the complexity of the terrain that the association had entered.

Moreover, I would suggest that the paradox of the association's goal of urban renewal is that the imagery it mobilized and the problems it saw itself as fighting to resolve were both previously racialized subjects in local discourse. The association's logo problem was in the short term resolved by the Association secretary's reputation as an artist who worked with Hebrew letters. In the association's decisions involving Jewish culture, the secretary assumed more and more authority due to the fact that her expertise in Jewish fonts had resulted in many social relations with members of the *comunità*, including the Rabbi and the President. In fact, by mid-1999 the secretary of the association was often referred to as "our friend" (*nostra amimca*) by members of the *comunità* and several of her etchings were on display in the *comunità* building. The rabbi and his family had even begun to make weekly visits to her store, and although in her own words she is not Jewish, the Association secretary is regularly invited to Jewish ritual meals hosted by members of the *comunità.*

According to the secretary, her authority results specifically from her association with Jewish language and culture:

> I think because I run a shop that sells etchings of Jewish letters, and because I know many people in the *comunità* as a result of my work, particularly the rabbi--

> I really made an effort to make sure that we didn't offend anyone. I mean, if you're dealing with something Jewish, it's only right that you should ask someone Jewish if it's right. These are very sensitive issues, as we have only one Jewish merchant in the association, and one resident, we're mostly not Jewish. But there's no-one really who knows the Hebrew letters in Bologna better than me. This is not to claim that I should have authority. I just find them beautiful!

Her facility with Hebrew letters--something she learned through her surveys of books, museum collections, and local architecture--has resulted in her status as an expert on Jewish culture, friend of the *comunità*, and by default, lent cultural legitimacy to the Association's claim on Jewish imagery.

This same nexus of language and legitimacy has emerged in the Association's reactions to the drug dealers in the ghetto. During a tour of the ghetto which I took in June, I noticed three men--one of whom had been pointed out to me as a heroin dealer by the Association secretary--pass by our group. They looked up at the Holocaust memorial plaque in Via dell'Inferno, the text of which contains both Hebrew and Italian inscriptions. These men stood for a minute and appeared to discuss the plaque, although I could not understand what they said, because they were speaking Arabic. I believe that I had witnessed the discovery by these three men—labeled in racial terms as heroin pushers by the association secretary—that they shared a social space with Jewish culture. The distinction between their cultural experience and the same experience by "tourists" was the product of the broad discourses on crime, Jewish culture and race circulating in the ghetto. Later that day, the secretary of the Ex-Ghetto Merchants

Association confirmed my suspicion. "Oh, yes! The other day one of them walked over to my store window, looked at the etchings and said, 'Ebreo!'" She imitated an Arabic accent, putting the stress of the word for "Jew" on the first rather than the second syllable.

In many nationalist discourses, observations of language difference often facilitate practices of exclusion (Urciuoli 1996). This is particularly true in Northern Italy. In fact, in the late 1980s and early 1990s, the disparaging phrase *vu compru*--stemming from an Italian perception of a French accented phrase meaning "to acquire a temporary resident visa"--was commonly used to signify African immigrants. Along similar lines, the secretary depicted the speaker not as dangerous, but as linguistically uneducated and foreign. Their ignorance of the Jewish character of the ghetto and their late discovery of the presence of Jewish linguistic elements on the walls and in store windows highlighted their status as marked subjects. Thus, the Arabic speaker's curiosity was framed as a confrontation between the naturalized presence of Jewish culture in the ghetto and the foreign presence of the Arabic speaker.

My claim is not that the Ex-Ghetto Association has mobilized a campaign against North African immigrants in the ghetto, but that language, culture and space coalesce to create a model of exclusion that resonates with previous discourses about so-called *extracomunitari.* The secretary's story was framed by a broader discomfort with the dangers of the drug trade and its proximity to her shop. She often witnessed drug exchanges just outside her door. Yet, by delimiting the ghetto through concepts of Jewish language, culture and history, the Ex-Ghetto Association has created for Jewish culture a

unifying role against fracturing economic problems, and this unifying theme invokes exclusionary models not dissimilar to nationalist models that exclude Arabic speakers.

It is crucial at this point to note that in the association's discourse on urban safety, the danger of the drug trade lies in the Arabic speaker who sells the heroin, not the Italian speaker who consumes it. In Bologna, the demand for heroin comes from middle-class professionals and students. I witnessed several drug exchanges unwittingly during conversations in and around the ghetto area. Although by no means an exhaustive survey, my glimpses of these exchanges between the dealers who spent the majority of their time on public benches and young, well-dressed professionals emerging from expensive cars suggested that heroin was in part a luxury consumer item in Bologna.

Whether or not the association's challenge involves competition for the attention of the same bourgeois consumers that fuel the local heroin market is a potential irony of which association members are well aware. More important is how the association's program contributes to the broader production of the ghetto as a zone of consumer activity. Accordingly, I consider the implications that the new ghetto has for the relationship between the ghetto and the city as sites where culture is consumed.

The Consumer Ghetto

The urban renewal model outlined by the Ex-Ghetto Association implies that the consumption of culture is opposed to the consumption of drugs. Yet, as the manifesto of the association suggests, this is part of a larger logic in which the goal is to draw consumers back to the streets in the ghetto. The challenge of the association is to

transform Jewish culture into a commercial draw strong enough to overcome the dual prejudice that the city center has been overwhelmed by immigrant criminals and that the new shopping malls are better places to shop.

The association's program describes a logic in Italian nationalist discourse into which both Jews and immigrants have been drawn. The association draws on a vision of Italian society in which the city is the heritage of the nation. In this model, the city is an integrated unit as the center of national life that sustains and contains citizens. At the same time, the city is envisioned as a repository of culture conceived as possessions. The health of the nation is, accordingly, judged by the condition of the city's architecture, the number of museums, and the level of tourism (Handler 1988).

In 1999, while the Ex-Ghetto Merchant's association announced its goal to revitalize the ghetto as a place of small commerce and Jewish culture, the municipal government of Bologna was busy preparing to become a European City of Culture for the year 2000. Each year since 1985, the European Commission has designated one city in Europe a "city of culture"--an honorary title together with monetary rewards to develop the city along a given theme. In the year 2000, nine cities shared the honor including, in addition to Bologna: Avignon ("Art and Creativity"), Bergen ("Art, Work and Leisure"), Brussels ("The City"), Helsinki ("Science, Technology and the Future"), Prague ("Cultural Inheritance"), Reykjavik ("Culture and Nature"), Santiago de Compostella ("Europe and the World"), and Krakow ("Thought and Spirituality"). Bologna's theme was "information and communication."

Yet, in addition to installing electronic bus stop indicators and making internet access available to local residents for free, one of the major transformations that took place under the guise of information and communication was a re-mapping of the city center as a "City of Museums." Signposts were erected in prominent tourist crossings listing all the museums in the city. Even before the Jewish Museum opened its doors to the public it was listed on these signposts. A similar publicity campaign employed the phrase "Bologna City of Theater," listing all of the city's theaters. In contrast to the city center as a site of museums and theaters, the city's periphery was figured as a place of commerce. Features of Bologna's periphery include a large conference facility as well as burgeoning shopping malls.

My point in mentioning these broader transformations is to suggest that local discourses on racism, Jewish culture and heroin are set within a broader series of changes as part of Bologna's reinvention as a European city. In this context, the troubling history of both Jews and immigrants as racialized subjects in Italian history is lost in a broader commercial politics of the city of culture.

As recent anthropological studies of shopping have argued, shopping malls are locations informed if not structured by racialized consumer attitudes towards space, language and labor (Miller, Jackson, Thrift, Holbrook and Rowlands 1998). This context of consumption lends new poignancy to Baudrillard's condemnation of postmodern shopping as an experience in which

> work, leisure, nature, and culture all previously dispersed, separate, and more or less irreducible entities that produced anxiety and complexity in our real life, and

> in our 'anarchic and archaic' cities, have finally become mixed, massaged, climate-controlled, and domesticated into the single activity of perpetual shopping (Baudrillard 1988:33-4).

It is unlikely that Bolognese Jews who experienced the imposition of fascist race laws would agree with Baudrillard's observation that "work, leisure, nature, and culture" were all "previously dispersed."

Furthermore, what is missing in Baudrillard's comments is an ethnographic concern for both the relationship between the shopping mall, the city and the politics of culture through which particular ethnic groups become locked into urban quarters configured as cultural shopping zones (Dávila 1997, 2001; Ninetto 1998). One could argue that the programmatic vision of the Ex-Ghetto Association is a practical response to the fear mixed with anger that the authentic city being lost, a discourse present in Baudrillard's philippic. Yet, the direction changes completely as the association hails the improvement of commerce resultant from the same intersections of culture, leisure and work that Baudrillard condemns. What is also interesting is the extent to which Baudrillard's judgement of postmodern commercial development overlooks how the history of racism feeds into the growth of the city.

As Jewish culture enters the consumer markets in the role of political-economic symbol or mediator, one byproduct is that Judaism now finds itself reacting to the pressures of competition and limited resources. This raises an interesting issue about the intersection of race and Jewish religious practice in Italy. In particular, it is commonly held that there has never been a Jewish religious reform in Italy. As friends have

commented to me, "It's not that we follow every rule, but we're all orthodox." The deep inroads that consumer and social concerns have made into the production and management of Jewish culture in Italy now suggest that the absence of reform has been complicated by the widespread presence of outsourcing. In other words, many different *comunità* cannot afford to sponsor the educational programs that they feel are so important for their survival in multicultural Italy. As a result, Jewish leaders have given large sections of both the profits and responsibility for these projects to private or public heritage management boards. Outsourcing may not be a classically recognized type of religious reform, but it is relevant to contemporary Judaism in Italy. The process takes place from the cultural heritage side, as more and more Rabbis become permanent consultants on the boards of municipal Jewish museums.

Indeed, this type of reform suggests that the nexus of culture, leisure, and shopping may not be destructive to social life, but--as the Ex-Ghetto Association holds--quite a productive intersection. It is difficult to tell if these intersections insure a safe Jewish future or not, but it seems clear that the immediate future in Italy suggests a continued relationship between Judaism and discourses on racism--as well as a newly revived, albeit historically familiar, relationship between Jews and commerce. This also suggests that the production of Jewish culture as commercial heritage experience in the ghetto will continue to be connected to the criminalization and exclusion of immigrants from Italian society.

The image of Jewish culture emerging as a symbol entrenched in cultural-economic reform is not entirely comforting. The recent theatrical performance of Moni

Ovadia provides an appropriate contrasting example to the image of the ghetto tour encountering a group of immigrants in the ghetto that opened this chapter. Ovadia--an Italian cabaret singer who sings in Yiddish, and who is discussed at greater length in chapter 6--was scheduled at the Municipal Theater as part of the city's effort to attract a cultured public back to the city center (May 30, 1999). As has become standard practice, police swept the piazza in front of the theater several hours before performances to disperse a regular group of immigrants and students presumed to be drug dealers. The performance consisted, among other things, of Ovadia's passionate recounting of his own Holocaust experiences under Nazi racism (Ovadia 1996).

What was troubling about this scene is the contrast between a round-up of immigrants taking place under the auspices of a cultural performance that recounts Jewish suffering under racism. Later that week, the protest against drugs organized by a host of immigrant associations in Bologna took place just down the street from the theater. In that protest, the police hovered around the outside of the area as if to contain the event and protect the bystanders. At the center of the protest a group of men in their early forties, all with different accents suggesting different cultural backgrounds, debated the best tactics to raise awareness in Bologna that drugs are a social problem, not an immigrant problem. "Drugs kill, not immigrants!" announced one protester. Nobody from the Ex-Ghetto Merchants Association attended the immigrant association protest, where virtually everyone in attendance was an immigrant.

What emerges in this contrast between theater and protest is a social configuration were bourgeois Italians consume only the well-dressed forms of racialized experience

that come at the price of a theater ticket. Moreover, the issue of who consumes racialized discourses parallels the question of who consumes heroin. In Bologna it is widely assumed that users and dealers of heroin are the same: immigrants. Yet, as the anti-drug protesters emphasized in Bologna as elsewhere in Europe, heroin is a fashionable opiate consumed by bourgeois university-age youth, as well as upper-middle-class professionals. The heroin market is not an immigrant problem, but a sector of the local economy.

Ironically, the efforts of the Ex-Ghetto Association may not be strong enough to displace the appetites of bourgeois consumer habits. Ultimately, examining how racial discourses involving Jews and the heroin pushers are framed in local urban renewal projects is just one way of examining these consumer transformations. A broader view would inevitably examine a much more elaborate collusion between new forms of prejudice and new avenues of profit.

Postscript

In June of 2001, Lucia wrote me an email asking how my thesis was going, and telling me that the association had disbanded. Her attention has shifted away from the politics of neighborhood renewal to focus on developing her reputation as an artisan. Recently, she was contacted by galleries in the United States who are interested in showing her etchings. Concerned about the cost of shipping artwork abroad, she asked me for advice. The global trade in Jewish Culture has taken precedence over her fear that the streets of the ghetto have been overrun by heroin dealers.

The stories of the immigrants who frequent and are imagined as a problem in the ghetto are less clear to me. Even during my fieldwork in the city, it was difficult to approach the men who were subjects of the association's efforts to displace drug traffic with heritage traffic. Unlike an ethnographer whose focus might be drug dealing and its impact on racial segregation in the urban centers of industrialized nations (Bourgois 1995), drug dealers were more symbols than informants or collaborators in my fieldwork. I would see the men that Lucia described ("Ebreo!") while riding the bus in Bologna, or while walking to do laundry and many times I would wonder if I should track them down to interview them. For better or worse in terms of my research methodology approaching the men who had just walked into an alley to shoot heroin with several teenagers fell beyond the frame of what I felt to be the minimum requirements for participant observation. Moreover, while I had conducted my survey of syringes in the ghetto sewers, a police car circled past several times, slowing down to watch me as I bent over a drain counting needles or looked in the cracks of a window frame for charred spoons. My work as a researcher was framed by the fact that, like other immigrants in the city, I was allowed to remain in the city by virtue of my *permesso di soggiorno* ("residence permit"), the police permit brought into use by the 1990 Martelli Law (Balbo and Manconi 1993:40-43).

A follow up to my portrait of economic and cultural developments in the ghetto would benefit from more data on the immigrants themselves—data beyond the problematic representations by other factions in the city. That work, while it interests me greatly, would require a research design and set of skills far different than those with

which I was equipped (I would need to learn several Sicilian and Neapolitan dialects as well as Tunisian Arabic). Until I am qualified to carry out that research, this chapter will remain incomplete—unable to cast sufficient light on the agency of those African immigrants stigmatized by discourses on Jewish culture, racism and anti-racism in contemporary Europe.

CHAPTER 6: MUSEUMS AND THE PROJECTION OF CULTURE

Throughout this dissertation I have argued that a materialist conception of Jewish culture framed a set of expectations that give meaning to the practice of a museum without objects. The belief that a culture should be represented by the collection and display of objects is the context for a museum which displays "virtual" objects sited in other museums, maps to objects that it does not own, or nothing at all. As each chapter has tried to show the connections between the display practices in the "empty" museum and the social field of planning the museum, I have also shown how the act of "not collecting" embodies many of the complications regarding cultural misappropriation, the extension of hegemony, and deployment of racism as other, more standard forms of museum practice oriented around actual objects. In this chapter, I turn to the final, most problematic aspect of the museum: the Holocaust memorial.

Unlike the computer driven parts of the exhibition (empty of objects, but full of links) or the activity room (empty of objects, but full of social encounters), the Holocaust memorial in the museum is empty of objects and of social interaction. It is a single room painted entirely black and containing only a list of names of Emilia-Romagna's Jewish victims of the Holocaust. Visitors are barred from entering the room by a hip-high transparent acrylic barrier. It is regarded by the museum planners as a work in progress, and several times the director of the museum referred to this space as "unfinished" or qualified it to visitors with the phrase, "In this section of the museum, there is still much to be done."

In this chapter, I relate these plans for the museum's Holocaust memorial to the desire of the museum to incorporate film into the museum. In particular, I am interested in the connections between the museum's display practices and the film representation of Jews as victims of the Holocaust. While permanent exhibition was planned around a collection of artistic treasure, and the subsequent absence of that collection, the Holocaust component of the museum plan (*progetto*) centered on the desire of the director to show (*proiettare*) Holocaust films in the gallery space.

Accordingly, perhaps more than any other aspect of my discussion thus far, it will be important to situate the Holocaust aspect of the museum in the context of several events that transpired on both the national and global level--events that unfolded far beyond the scope of the museum project, but which nonetheless became vitally important to it. These events include: the efforts of Spielberg's Holocaust Testimony project to collect video interviews with Holocaust survivors towards the creation of a documentary archive in Los Angeles; the global success of the film *Life is Beautiful*, which opened in the summer of 1998 and was awarded two Academy Awards; and the allied bombings in Kosovo, which began in February 1999, many of which were launched from the airbase in the nearby town of Piacenza.

This chapter will unfold in three sections. In the first section, I describe several examples where Jewish experience in the Holocaust is commemorated, including personal narrative, public performance, and pedagogical forum. These examples articulate both the complexity of local Jewish attitudes toward the Holocaust and a wider sense of public assumptions about the issue. Next, I consider the relationship of the

Jewish Museum of Bologna to the broader landscape of Holocaust commemoration in Italy, including a consideration of the role of film. I discuss the place of *Life is Beautiful*, focusing on the set of rules about Holocaust representation articulated in response to the success of *Life is Beautiful*, and the market in Holocaust film catalyzed by the collection of visual testimony. Lastly, I consider how the museum evolved a set of practices to include film, considering the theoretical implications of this distinction between the display and the projection of culture.

Holocaust Narratives

On a rainy afternoon in March, my cell phone rang from my coat pocket as I left the supermarket. I fumbled for the phone, spilling a bag of oranges. It was Paolo. He wanted to push our meeting time up by an hour and meet me in front of the bus stop rather than in the community. I agreed, rushed home with my bags, and caught the bus for the ten minute ride from my apartment to the city center. When I arrived, Paolo was standing under an umbrella. "So, Jeffrey! How goes it with your research?" He told me his knees were bothering him because of the rain, and that since his other obligation in town had been cancelled, he was glad I was able to meet him early. "Shall we head to "our" café, then?" He walked next to me, holding my arm as we head down Via d'Azeglio, a street of upscale boutiques. Suddenly, we ducked into a bar as Paolo said, "There's something I'd like to show you here." He ordered me a cappuccino. When it arrived, I noticed that the *barista* had used the end of a plastic straw to draw the outline of a naked woman in the steamed milk. I quickly stirred my coffee and drank it. Paolo

slaps me on the back, drops a 5,000 lire note on the bar and waved to the men who were grinning at me. "Now that you've seen that, we can go to our regular bar across the street. No naked girls in the coffee, but they have little sandwiches for free." We crossed Via D'Azeglio, settled into the corner and began to talk about Paolo's work experience abroad, corruption in Italian politics, and his escape to Zurich during the war.

The stories that Paolo told me and others about his escape from the Nazis during the war are a remarkable record of Jewish experience in Emilia-Romagna during the Holocaust. Having grown up in nearby Ferrara, Paolo was a teenager during the Nazi occupation. When it became clear that his family was in danger, Paolo's father chose the option of purchasing refuge to the north, a risky prospect that involved paying non-Jews for safe passage by train, and then travel by foot over the mountains to Switzerland, where they could pass the war in Zurich:

> We were told to get on the train in Bologna and another man who could guarantee our safety would meet us on the train north of Milan. You can only imagine how anxious this made us. The Germans had a system whereby every so often, every few stops or so on this particular line, a guard would get on the train at one end and slowly work his way down, checking identity cards. Of course they new that there were Jews on the train, and we knew that it was just a matter of time before we were checked. So the plan was for this gentleman, whose name we did not know, whose face we did not know, but whom we had paid for safe passage—papers and so forth—he was to get on at a station somewhere on

the line and give us the necessary materials to pass this inspection, we would then get off the train, walk over the mountains and we would be in Ticino— Switzerland. Well, we were sitting on the train and we had not heard from anyone, and my father sees this German guard, and we had to get off the train. That was the plan, we were to get off the train. You can only imagine how nervous we were. As far as we knew, if we got caught that was it. We had no idea who was supposed to meet us. We were now waiting at a train station, without friends, without contacts. By some miracle, after several hours we were approached by a man who handed us papers and told us to get back on the train, which took us to the North. Well, after this whole nightmare, our last obstacle was to walk over the mountains into Switzerland without being caught by German patrols. Now, as we were walking, suddenly we see a group of soldiers moving toward us. We had no idea who they were, we had no legal means of being where we were, if they were Germans they could have killed us right there. As luck with have it, it was a group of Swiss soldiers who probably understood who we were, but hated the Germans more than they hated the Jews and so they let us pass.

Paolo's story, although important, was not particularly heroic or non-heroic, although fraught with danger. Paolo saw Nazi soldiers, but was not in direct contact with them; his story involved train travel, but it was not travel in a Nazi deportation train to a concentration camp. Other Jews in the community had similar experiences. One

woman in the community, the daughter of a wealthy family, spent the war in New York, saying of her experience, "It was hard to have left, sure, but once I was in New York it wasn't as though I suffered. I had a good experience there and came back after the war." Still other families spent the war escaping to the hills around Bologna. The president of the Community procured false identification papers and lived with peasants in a nearby town. These experiences were different than those of the eighty-five Jews who were deported from Bologna to Auschwitz.

What followed in Paolo's story was his remarkable account of how the next phase of his experience was not only to flee the Nazis, but to flee the very category of Jewishness. Once in Zurich, Paolo began pursuing a normal life as a Swiss national. This part of his story did not unfold as a neat narrative, but as a series of observation about the people of Zurich as "closed"—an ambiguous term which he used to indicate his feelings of being an outsider amidst people who provided safety, but withheld friendship:

> There was never a sense, even after fifteen years, that we were from Zurich. They are a very closed people in Zurich, never telling you that you did not belong, but always letting you know. After a few years, I spoke flawless German, I dressed the part, and I was no longer Jewish. We decided like many people to be baptized, not Catholic, but baptized.

Paolo's flight from Jewish identity, while not putting him in physical danger, placed him in jeopardy of being an outsider in a world that was foreign to him. He would often talk

about cultural specifics of growing up Jewish in Ferrara, including wistful reflections on the particular types of food that his mother made.

Yet, the most difficult of the experiences for Paolo was not the experience in Zurich or even the escape from Nazis, but the return to Italy when he relocated to Bologna--a return both to his country of origin and to the category of Jewishness. After leaving Switzerland in his twenties, Paolo married and for the next thirty years worked as a sales representative for an international clothing firm. Several years before I arrived in Bologna for my fieldwork, Paolo decided to return to the Jewish community, once again attending services and becoming active in community life. This transition back to Jewish life was difficult for Paolo, as it was for many others in his position. After the war, Jews who had fled Italy and converted were looked upon with disdain by Jews who had chosen to stay, particularly those whose family had suffered deportations and extermination. For Paolo, the most difficult part of remembering the Holocaust was his present experience as someone who had living memories of that period, and the impact those decisions had on his status as a Jew in contemporary Italy.

Paolo's story can be distinguished from other cases of Holocaust commemoration, particularly instances where Bologna's ethnic entertainment industry drew upon the authority of local Jews. One such case was the example of the musical group "Dire Gelt." I first attended a "Dire Gelt" concert in the summer of 1996. As I emerged from a newspaper store in a busy pedestrian zone in the city center, I notice a black and white poster affixed to an alley wall. The poster depicted Jews being held at gunpoint by Nazi soldiers during World War II, a photograph taken by Nazi soldiers during the Warsaw

ghetto uprising. The image was of an old man with his hands in the air and a look of terror on his face. The text on the poster read, "Dire Gelt. Piazzetta of the Apse of San Domenico, Tuesday 9 July, 21.00."

I was not sure what this poster meant, until I found an advertisement for the same event in a listing of outdoor summer concerts. What appeared at first sight to be a disembodied fragment from a Holocaust visual history exhibition was an advertisement for a concert of *klezmer* music which claimed to present "music, voices and atmosphere of the oriental Jewish tradition under the patronage of the Jewish Community." Indeed, several days later I was invited to the concert by friends in the Jewish community who told me that Dire Gelt were one of many Klezmer bands who had become popular in the past several years. Other bands included "Klez-Roym," "The Original Klezmer Ensemble, " "Rony Micro Band," "Stefano Paci Dalò and his Klezmer Orchestra," and the solo artist "Massimo De Carlo."

The Klezmer trend was remarkable not only because it was based on the marketing of traditional Jewish wedding music—often called "Jewish Jazz"—but also because the majority of these "traditional" bands or "Voices of the Diaspora," as one advertisement described them, had no Jewish members whatsoever. It is also worth noting here that Klezmer music, is not "traditional" in Italy, but is a recent import from the United States and other parts of Europe. Beyond the invention and marketing of ethnic tradition, the Klezmer trend in Northern Italy was an example in which the aesthetics of Jewish suffering during the Holocaust had become highbrow entertainment.

The use of a photo depicting an elderly Jew seconds before execution as an advertisement for an evening of music was the most visually disturbing aspect of the commodification of the Holocaust. Yet, what was more problematic to me as an ethnographer was observing how local Jewish knowledge and participation were brought into these performances as living certificates of authenticity.

The Dire Gelt concert in question took place in a small courtyard behind the church of Saint Dominic during a heat wave in July, 1996. Part of a summer festival in the city called "Bologna Dreams" (*Bologna Sogna*), the concert was one of a series of concerts that took place in the same space, including an evening of sixteenth-century humorous choral pieces, a retrospective of Paolo Tosti's work, and a baroque festival. The "Bologna Sogna" festival ran from June to August during which the city was transformed each evening into a network of public cultural events—including film, theater, music and lectures—most free, but some charging a modest fee for admission. Dire Gelt tickets cost L. 12,000 and were sold out weeks in advance. Earlier that night, a friend in the community told me that I should come along early and she would give me one of the tickets given to the Jewish community to distribute amongst its members. My friend's father, Stephano, a prominent man in the local Jewish community, would be introducing the band that evening.

One of the first Jewish cultural events I attended during my fieldwork in Bologna, the event embodied for me a perfect description of the local audience for the Jewish culture market. While generally mixed in age and gender, the audience was marked by the presence of a visibly noticeable avant-garde arts crowd--what Americans often refer

to as a black turtleneck crowd. I had been to several concerts in the city and this was not always the case. Although early in my research, I still recognized many faces in the crowd from the audiences who attended performances in Bologna's most experimental theater, "Teatri di Vita," the directors of which occasionally sponsored performers from Israel and frequented Torah lessons in the Jewish community. While to American audiences, Klezmer is typically the music used as background in documentaries about Jewish immigrant life, in Bologna, Klezmer was high-art and attendance at such concerts signified cosmopolitan taste.

The concert was to consist of twenty-three short songs organized into eight groups: Introduction, Religiousness and Shabbat, Celebration, Love, Marriage, Family and Children, Life's Difficulties, Death and Hope. Before the concert began, my friend's father, who was then the Vice-President of the Jewish Community, was introduced by the director of the concert program. Stephano's task was not simply to introduce the music, but to "explain Jewish culture" so as to situate the performance in a broad context, thereby allowing for a greater appreciation of the performance. At the time, Stephano was working on the manuscript for his book *Limùd, Limuidì: Uno Studio, Il Mio Studio* (A Study, My Study), a series of informal lessons on Jewish culture that he had presented to the students at the Seminary of Saint Dominic, and which was later published in 1998. Stephano's involvement with the Seminary and his outgoing personality had given him a local reputation as an expert on Jewish culture. By contrast, professional historians at the University of Bologna had arrogantly warned me to "be careful of" who was trained as

an engineer and, in their words, "had no conception of what it meant to present a systematic study of Judaism."

That evening the task of describing all of Judaism as an introduction to a concert proved too large for Stephano, and after twenty five minutes of talking about Torah and barely getting through an explanation of the first song, he paused and leafed through his notes furiously. Stephano's daughter turned to me and whispered, "Oh no. He's taking way too long. He should just stop." Shortly after this comment, Stephano stopped his introduction, saying that he would continue after the intermission. After the concert Stephano expressed anxiety over not having been able to explain everything. "There was just too much to say," he sighed.

The problem faced by Stephano was not merely the anxiety of having too much to present, but an awareness that the concert would eclipse his own narrative. The public transcript of Klezmer performance frustrated his attempt to relay his lived-experiences. Stephano's presentation, although not bound by any spoken rules, was limited by expectations that had been developed by prior representations of Jewish culture. First, he was limited by the types of imagery that circulating in high art circles, typically images of Jews as victims of the Nazis. Second, he was limited by the amount of time typically afforded to evening performances, and even further by his role as the Jew who introduces Jewish culture. The format of the Klezmer concert worked against Stephano's desire to speak at length about Jewish experience. Moreover, events designed to satisfy consumer tastes for authenticity tended to silence the more open-ended discussions many Jews believed to be necessary in order to sufficiently contextualize Jewish cultural

performances. While many local Jews were never explicitly faced with this type of silencing, people in positions of leadership such as Stephano confronted it with increasing regularity as Jewish culture gained in popularity.

Following the concert, Stephano commented that one of the hardest ideas to get across was that Klezmer music was not sad music, as was suggested by the languid singing style of the band's lead vocalist. Rather, it was celebratory music. What was sad, in Stephano's estimation, was that it came from an Ashkenazi Jewish culture that had been largely destroyed during the war, not the music itself. The challenge of presenting the music as something beautiful, while simultaneously framing it in the context of genocide such that Judaism was not depicted as a "dead" culture, was a difficulty that left Stephano feeling frustrated.

Another context in which the Holocaust was commemorated with the participation of local Jews were programs organized to teach schoolchildren about the war. The program was organized by the Italian chapter of "Children of the Shoah," which identifies itself in its literature as having "corresponding organizations" in the United States, Austria, Belgium, France, Greece, England and Israel. The local head of the organization was a member of the Jewish community. In the weeks leading up to the Holocaust memorial events on May 19, 1999, the head of the organization relayed information to me that a day-long Holocaust seminar was going to take place by leaving the organization's announcement with the community secretary with whom I spent most afternoons.

The event, titled "Questo è Stato. Meditiamo" (This is what Happened. Let's Think About It), was an articulation of the multiple consumer and representational issues in Holocaust memory in Bologna. The cover of the program distributed by the event organizers listed the logos of the Jewish community of Bologna, the municipal Education Department, and the Children of the Shoah on the front, and a quote from Elie Wiesel's *Night* on the back. The event was sponsored by the Foundation of Bologna Savings Bank and took place in the largest hall of the University of Bologna: the Aula Magna in the former church of Saint Lucy. The program itself was divided into four sections: introductions by prominent Jews and educators, testimonies by holocaust survivors, public debate amongst the students, and a presentation about the dangers of racism and anti-Semitism put together by the students at several nearby high schools (Liceo Ginnasio Galvani, Istituto Tecnico Commerciale R. Luxemburg, and Liceo Ginnasio Minghetti). The event unfolded in public as a rather predictable public assembly where students are forced en masse to listen to presentations. Roughly 5,000 students were in attendance to hear speeches and lectures. Following presentations by the local Rabbi and the head of the local Jewish community, a German historian delivered an academic paper in a thick German accent about the rise of fascism in Europe, lasting for over an hour.

While most students talked or failed to pay attention during this presentation, they focused their attention when Moni Ovadia stood up to speak. Ovadia is a Milanese cabaret performer who has become famous through his stage creations of an Ashkenazi Jew with a heavy Yiddish accent, including *The Corrosive Jew* (1998), in which he comments on the "nature" of Jewish identity. This "nature" is a stereotype of an East-

European Jew: avaricious, neurotic, loud and suspicious of non-Jews. Ovadia's stage performances have gained him so much notoriety, that even though he was intended as only the introduction to the testimony of Liliana Segre--a Holocaust survivor who later spoke about her experiences at Auschwitz--his appearance became the central focus of the afternoon.

While his speech was long, what interests me is the opening of his presentation in which he set a tone that seemed to capture the attention of the students:

> Being a man of theater, I was asked my opinion on these recent films on the *Shoah*--that film of Benigni and that other one by Radu Mihaileanu, *Train de Vie*. I responded that the existing inadequate masterpiece (*il capolovoro iadequato visivo*) remains the film of Claude Lanzman, *Shoah*. Why? Because it has witnesses that speak to us, with their shame, their reluctance--if you like, also with their censorship. Yet, nothing represents man more than the story a man tells of himself. The great oral tradition whose force, unfortunately, is being lost...and with it the power of the individual to tell his own story. Now, if the film of Claude Lanzman has such force despite the mediation of the cold screen, like that of video and television, you can understand what value must have the testimony of a person who in flesh and blood tells us of themselves in that time so close and so shocking, and in this way, indelibly part of the history of man.

Ovadia's comments suggest the extent to which the Italian discourse on the Holocaust by 1999 had become a discussion of morality and film. Moreover, Ovadia exemplifies how commemoration, albeit framed as a moral act, unfolded as public entertainment. When I had the opportunity to ask one of the students who had participated in the program which aspect of the afternoon he had thought most compelling, he told me that the testimony of Liliana Segre was the most important. It was Ovadia's presentation that provided the crucial frame for the testimony, and ultimately received more attention than the "flesh and blood" of Liliana Segre.

When Segre spoke for forty five minutes about her experiences in Auschwitz, not only did the students return to their own social worlds in the auditorium, but the project planners even stopped paying attention. Several days after the conference, I received a phone call from event chairperson asking if I had made a video recording of Liliana's testimony. Apparently, while the events preceding her testimony had been recorded on tape, there was not a video to be found of her presentation. In the months that followed, I made several copies of my tape which I distributed to various participants in the program.

After the event concluded, the program planners and several speakers went to the Jewish community for lunch in the community dining hall. During lunch, the community secretary ran into the room to announce that news of the conference was about to be broadcast on the mid-day local news. As we sat around the table eating oranges and watching the news footage, one person in the group turned to another and said:

> We really should turn this into something. Not just something that happens, you know, because it's fifty years later, but something permanent.

Liliana agreed that it was not enough to talk about the Holocaust, but before conversation could get started, the secretary interrupted again to tell everyone that the director of the Museum had generously offered to give a private tour of the museum to the participants in the program, and everyone quickly shuffled out the door of the community towards the museum.

Reinventing Public Commemoration

While it is difficult to generalize about all cultural activity in the region, it was generally true that prior to its inauguration the only Holocaust commemoration activities connected to the Jewish Museum of Bologna were commemorative ceremonies. The inauguration ceremony mentioned in the last chapter is an excellent, although not extraordinary example of this type of event. Plaques commemorating various aspects of Jewish oppression during World War II were erected throughout Bologna and the region of Emilia-Romagna in the years leading up to and during my fieldwork. These ceremonies always followed a structure similar to that of other types of European public memorial discourses (Reisigl 2001): a speech by a representative from the community, followed by a speech from an elected official, followed by the unveiling of the plaque.

The museum planners' initial approach to the Holocaust, not unlike their interest in historic sites, took place within a broader national interest in Jewish itineraries (see chapter 3). A recently published Italian guide book offers tourists a concise compendium of all sites in Italy pertaining to the Nazi occupation of Italy, and includes a fold-out map titled "Geography of Violence." On this map, four Nazi swastikas indicate "Nazi Concentration Camps" functioning in the Italian peninsula from 1943 to 1945. The camp locations are in the north, and include Bolzano, Borgo San Dalmazzo, Trieste, and Fossoli (less than one hour from Bologna). The book goes on to specify that between 1940 and 1943 Mussolini's fascist government counted roughly fifty concentration camps in the jurisdiction of the Minister of the Interior, the largest of which was the concentration camp at Ferramonti.

Interestingly, the museum's practices seem to intersect with two distinct discourses in Italy: an anti-Fascist commemorative discourse linked to the memory of communist partisans, and a Holocaust commemoration discourse linked to the memory of Jews. What interests me in this literature is the extent to which memorial sites and practices which had signified a generic, Italian national experience during the war were revised in recent years to focus on the specific experience of Jews in the Nazi Holocaust. Part of this idea of Italian nationalism during the war is the myth that anti-Semitism was a German import. This myth was generated both during and after the war, by both a Fascist government in the 1930s seeking to legitimize its own politico-cultural project relative to fascism in Germany, and by the generation of anti-anti-fascist historians in the 1960s and 1970s, in particular De Felice and Michaelis (De Felice 1965, Michaelis 1978,

Di Cori 1996). The Jewish Museum of Bologna was part of that larger trend. A few examples will suffice to demonstrate this point.

Italy has a small number of Holocaust memorial-museums, the oldest of which is called the *Museum-Monument of the Deported* and is located less than forty miles from Bologna in the town of Carpi (Province of Modena). In 1955 the town of Carpi opened a "National Exhibition of the Nazi Camps" (Mostra Nazionale Dei Lager Nazisti), focusing on the experience of the Italian resistance fighters in the Nazi concentration camps, or more specifically, "to valorize the sacrifice and the resistance of the victims of the Nazis" (Gibertoni and Melodi 1993:33). This exhibition was one of many events which helped to elevate *la Resistenza* to the status of national myth following World War II (Kertzer 1980). The idea of valorizing the spirit of resistance rather than just the victims was not unique to Carpi. Early exhibitions on the Holocaust in Israel celebrated Jewish resistance fighters while questioning the national spirit of victims who did not engage in armed revolt (Segev 1993).

In 1973, the *Museum of the Deported* was opened in the same site as the initial exhibition, a small annex in the central Municipal building in the main piazza in Carpi. The project represented something new for Italian heritage politics because it commemorated the victims of racial and political discrimination, and involved the participation of the Jewish Community of Modena and Carpi. However, the museum barely mentioned Jewish experience during World War II. Designed by architect Lodovico B. Belgiojoso, the museum took its inspiration from other sites commemorating the genocide of Jews in eastern Europe, reinventing them in a "universal

humanistic idiom" focused on the dangers of evil and the "memory of mass suffering." According to Belgiojoso, the central challenge in designing the museum was to create an architectural experience that could serve as a "lasting performance" of the "most negative event in human history." The key element of the museum is an empty gallery with the names of 14,343 resistance fighters and deportees, although Jews are not listed in this memorial as a distinct group.

Further to the north, the most infamous Holocaust memorial site in Italy is the Museum Monument of the Rice Mill (*risiera*) of San Sabba on the outskirts of Trieste. The building, a former rice manufacturing establishment built in 1913, was used by the Germans as a concentration camp for political prisoners and Jews sentenced to deportation after September 8th, 1943, and later became a death camp provided with a crematorium. It was the only example of a Nazi death camp in Italy, with fully functioning crematoria. After the war, the *Risiera* was converted into a refugee camp, and in 1965 it was declared a national monument. This early exhibition was largely textual and documented the occupation of the region by the nazis. Years later in 1982, a new historic exhibition was opened, curated by Elio Apih, and mounted in one of the former Nazi barracks in the main camp. The exhibition (still in place, today) consists of 100 panels with photographs, texts and reproductions of letters. Thematically, in contrast to the earlier exhibition, this new display focuses on the experience of Jews in the camp. In 1983 the city of Trieste together with the museum published a catalogue in three languages (Italian, Slovenian and English) (Dugulin 1996).

While museums and monuments occupied a vague middle ground between remembering and ignoring Jewish experience in the war, literature and film focused specifically on Jews and opened up a new level of commemorative discourse. The most prominent example of this discourse is the work of the Jewish Italian novelist Giorgio Bassani. Writing about his experiences during the war in the town of Ferrara, Bassani's *Garden of the Finzi Continis* was a bestseller that was subsequently made into a film by Italian director Vittorio De Sica.

While a full discussion of Bassani's work lies beyond the bounds of this dissertation, it is important to note that his stories were the first to address the complex problem of Italian Jews during the war: that many Jews, particularly in Northern towns, embraced fascism prior to being singled out and persecuted by it. Bassani's narratives draw attention to the moral dilemma of drawing boundaries between good and evil in a political context where boundaries were shifting very quickly. While Bassani's work was popular in Italy, it was De Sica's film which popularized the story abroad, winning the Academy award for best foreign film in 1969. Hence, while Benigni's film was widely celebrated, it was not the first Italian national commemoration of the Holocaust to gain global attention. Moreover, it was the global interest in De Sica's film about the destruction of Italian Jewry that served as the backdrop for the public discussion of Jewish culture through the *intesa* , and the emergence of an interest in the material remains of Jewish culture.

Life Is Beautiful

In the summer of 1998, Benigni's romantic comedy about the Holocaust opened to rave reviews in Italy and around the world, becoming the focus of public discussion of Italian culture, Italian Jews, and the Holocaust in Italy. Immediately prior to the Benigni film, the Holocaust in Italian life was dominated by discussion of a book. A year earlier (November 1997) the historian and former diplomat Sergio Romano had published his controversial book *Letter to a Jewish Friend* which had also dominated public discussion of Italy, Jews and the Holocaust, but not nearly to the same extent as Benigni's film. Few if any people outside of Italy have heard of Romano's book—a patronizing essay on the dangers to "civilization" of too much attention being paid to Holocaust memory. But even in Italy, few people actually read Romano's book, and by the summer of 1998—as reactions to it still smoldered in the editorial columns of various newspapers—even fewer seemed to care. As an historian at the University of Bologna explained to me, "In Italy, millions of books are published each year, which nobody reads, at which point they are removed from bookstores in the same boxes they arrived in—and a few months after their release, burned like garbage." More than the cynicism about "print capitalism" (Anderson 1983:18) there was an overwhelming sense that Romano was not merely overly didactic, but just plain dull. Several young historians working on their doctorates at the University of Bologna explained that Romano was the last of a dying breed in his obsession with the purity of historical method, the critical distance of the researcher as a sign of the modern, and the dangers of commemorative particularism for the morality of history.

"Look closely at Romano: he's a dying breed of Crocean Intellectual," I was told in reference to the grand cultural figure of Benedetto Croce, a symbol of intellectual elitism--removed like Romano from the realities of "the people." Yet, even without reference to Croce, Romano's continued presence on television talk shows gave broad testimony to his symbolic role in the public discourse on Jewish memory. A thin, pale man in his sixties, Romano was often a guest on shows like Paolo Vespa's *Door to Door* (*Porta á Porta*) and Maurizio Costanza's *Maurizio Costanza Show*, Italian media hybrids that combined the current events focus of *Sixty Minutes* with the studio spectacle of *Live with Regis*.

Romano's public image offers an important, opening contrast to the popularity of Benigni. Benigni has always been popular in Italy. But *Life is Beautiful* signified more than his ability to sell cinema tickets. It represented his intrusion into a public discourse on Jewish history that had been dominated—with few exceptions—by writers. In fact, Benigni himself seemed to be aware of the newness of this terrain, timing the opening of the film with the release of the screenplay in print form, which included an uncharacteristically serious essay explaining his reasons for doing the film and providing an historical context for the story (Benigni and Cerami 1998:vii-viii).

While I never met anyone who had read Romano's book, and even fewer who had purchased Benigni's screenplay or read his historic contextualization, there was not a single person I met who had not seen *Life is Beautiful* at least once. Nonetheless, when Benigni's film exploded onto the global scene in 1998, Romano's thesis, that there was too much attention being paid to the Holocaust, either gave voice to or fomented a rising

public impatience with talk of Jewish suffering during the war. The Benigni phenomenon overwhelmed public discourse by shifting attention from text to film, from historiography to Hollywood, and from tragedy to comedy. If any two characters could represent diametrical personality opposites in Italian public life, it would be Romano and Benigni: diplomat and clown, catholic and communist, man of letters and man of the people. The most common image of Romano was a picture of him sitting at his desk, dark suit, pen in hand, wedding band on his finger, looking down with a dour expression while writing. Benigni, prior to *Life is Beautiful*, was best known for a photo of him holding the leader of the Italian Communist Party (Enrico Berlinguer) in his arms at a public rally, mouth open with his signature smile, hair tussled, while thousands of fans cheer in the background.

After the film's release in 1998, the leading communist paper in Italy published an editorial not only praising the film, but actually suggesting that anyone who did not like it "was a fascist." Meanwhile, Romano Prodi, the leading center-left politician at the time, wondered in public if such an Italian film would have any success abroad. Still, similar to Steven Spielberg's *Schindler's List*, Benigni's film was both celebrated as a masterpiece and condemned as an inadequate, even immoral representation of the Nazi genocide of the Jews. Benigni, like Spielberg, was one of the best known cinema figures in his respective national context, but had not demonstrated any prior interest in Holocaust commemoration. Also similar to Spielberg, after the success of his film Benigni was elevated by the media and the public to the status of "expert" on the Holocaust, and criticized by the academic world for exploiting and trivializing the

subject. Benigni received an honorary degree from an Israeli university at the same time countless essays criticizing his work appeared in academic journals. Moreover, the film had an instant global presence. When I returned from fieldwork I discovered that *Life is Beautiful* had been the longest running film ever at the local art-house movie theater in Charlottesville.

The two basic critiques of Benigni's film arising from a global debate on Holocaust representation are that Benigni trivialized the Holocaust and that he misappropriated Jewish victim status for profit. For example, Sander Gilman criticizes Benigni for violating what he posits as to certain rules of representing the Holocaust (Gilman 2000, including the exclusive authority of Holocaust survivors to use comedy in Holocaust representation. "To have been accepted into high culture as an adequate representation of the Shoah," Gilman argues, such texts have to be seen as stemming from the pen of "Jews" (p. 284). That Gilman leaves open the definition of Jews suggests that the category is not only malleable, but expansive--determining who is a Jew is itself part of the process of creating authentic Holocaust texts. Yet, in Gilman's assessment, Benigni's approach to this process is suspect. Although Benigni is not Jewish, nor had he ever played Jewish characters in the past, during the production of *Life is Beautiful*, "he began to refigure his own identity as the child of a survivor... to give him[self] the moral authority to make...[a] film about the Shoah" (p. 293). Gilman cites interviews in which Benigni talks about his father's experiences as a political prisoner in a Nazi work camp as connected to his desire to make the film. Benigni goes so far as to

suggest that his father's stories were in the same genre as Primo Levi's stories about Auschwitz, in an apparent attempt to claim moral authority as the child of a "survivor."

This posited connection between the inner quality of the survivor and comedy is crucial for Gilman and is the key to understanding the international criticism of Benigni. From a specific criticism of Benigni, Gilman builds a general theory of comedy and the Holocaust. Laughter can be therapeutic for survivors when it emerges from the individual, but it cannot be evoked or elicited from observers or audience members (p. 285). Moreover, because Gilman's criticism synthesizes a panoply of international criticism against Benigni, it articulates most clearly a set of rules governing Holocaust representation elicited by Benigni's film. In these rules, the assumption is that Jewish commemorative acts are unmediated presentations of self—an individualist, essentialist assumption that the self-presentation of victimhood is an expression of an inner quality contained by the person as a result of experience. An authentic Holocaust survivor, not unlike an authentic historic object, is one who is assumed to contain and express above all else the qualities of a particular moment in a continuous sweep of experience. Furthermore, the problem is that the appropriation of the voice of the victim commits the moral crime of repression under the guise of remembrance. The hidden agenda suggested by Gilman is that the exploiter continues to exploit. Acting reveals itself as a potentially dangerous form of deceit in the moral economy of genocide—dangerous because it denies the subjective voice of the victim by representing it.

Along similar lines, political economists have argued that the problem of morality in contemporary Holocaust commemoration has been compromised by the culture

industry (Cole 2000). Memory is a business, not just an act of redemption, or in Yaffa Eliach's oft-cited misreading of Ethel Merman, "There's no business like Shoah business"--where the word "*Shoah*" is not only intended as a reference to the title of Claude Lanzman's eight-hour documentary of the Holocaust, but the most widely used keyword used to signify Jewish genocide.

Life is Beautiful is an expression of a broader trend in the 1990s in which Holocaust narratives appropriated the conventions of film and television, starting with the made-for-television series *The Holocaust* which aired on ABC in 1977, the popularity of Elie Wiesel's novels, and the establishment of the United States Holocaust Memorial Council by the Carter Administration. The broad transformation in this market has been a shift from a focus on survivor experience in the 1960s and 70s—symbolized by the figures of Anne Frank and Wiesel—to producers of Holocaust representations, including Spielberg. The transformations suggest a shift from history to consumer mass-media as the central context in which Holocaust knowledge unfolds.

My point in addressing these critiques is to suggest that Benigni's film and the literature both praising and condemning it are part of a broad process wherein the social construction of visual memories unfolded as a colonizing "reconfiguration... obliging [memory] to conform to present configurations" of power (Halbwachs 1980). Barbie Zelizer has summarized this perspective in her study of Holocaust photography as the art of "remembering to forget" (1998). In this process, the objects of memory grow to stand for the memories themselves rather than referents to them, and the process of remembering becomes increasingly filtered through a set of visual fetishizing routines.

Hence, as Zelizer argues, images of piles of corpses, just to name one example, become "oddly satisfying" (p. 1) in an aesthetic of memorial symbols, when at closer proximity to the actual events, these same images were sickening, even overwhelming (Zelizer 2001). While routinization need not necessarily signify trivialization, it brings with it certain moral puzzles. Historian Saul Friedlander has argued that contemporary commemorative practices are marked by an interest in fascinating fascism, (Friedlander 1992) while James Young has argued that today's generation of artists who represent the Holocaust are more drawn to the memory of memorial markers, rather than to the events themselves (2000). This observation frames an important connection between the memorializing practices in which the Jewish Museum planners took part, and the broader social process in Italy whereby Jews qua Holocaust "culture" are celebrated and valorized.

Many of these issues of authority and memory in Holocaust representation were just beginning to unfold in the museum during my fieldwork, and were given voice in such events as the Children of the Shoah commemoration day. Beyond issues of representation and economy, the opportunity to watch the film in the context of fieldwork in Bologna revealed several additional important issues. Most notably, there were differences in opinion as to how the film was received by local Jews. Hence, reactions to Benigni's film give rise to several observations germane the broader discussion about the Jewish culture and the cultural heritage industry in Bologna.

I saw *Life is Beautiful* twice during my fieldwork. In both cases, the theater was overflowing with people. After the first viewing, I discussed the film initially with my

language tutor, who explained that for Italians, Benigni was a "national genius," a man of "enormous culture":

> Did you know Benigni can recite all of the Divine Comedy from memory. Apparently all Tuscan troubadours could do this at one point, but Benigni is really the last of his kind. A real genius who plays a fool...if you want to understand the film, you need to first understand Benigni's admiration for Charlie Chaplin. The eggs falling on the prefect's head, tipping his hat with his cane, falling over a chair with a tray of food—it's all Chaplin. Think about this, then go see the film again.

Hence, Benigni was described as *un grande*—a concept meaning, literally, "a great one"--recalling Sapir's discussion of national "spirit" or "genius"—the embodiment of Italian civilization, thus signifying what gives Italians their "distinctive place in the world" (Sapir 1949:311). If for Italians *Life is Beautiful* was a film about Benigni and the Italian spirit, for Americans it was about Italians and the Holocaust.

Benigni was not universally loved in Italy, however. Non-Jews with whom I spoke tended to express great admiration for Benigni, but Jewish audiences were split. National Jewish leadership criticized Benigni's portrayal in terms consistent with Gilman and Cole. In many television interviews, Tulia Zevi, the best known public voice of Italian Jewry and former president of the Italian Jewish community, criticized Benigni for "suggesting to future generations that life in the camps was easy." Zevi's concern was that film representation "sugarcoats" the Holocaust rather than forcing viewers, as Claude

Lanzman had done in his film, to confront the troubling contradictions and lack of narrative resolution in first-person Holocaust testimony.

When I discussed the film with local Jews, I discovered a lack of consensus. Jews in Bologna did not unanimously agree with Tulia Zevi's critique as a whole, but broke down along a generation divide. Older Jews in Bologna tended to express distaste for Benigni in general and were critical of the film, while younger Jews endorsed Benigni as "un grande" and expressed admiration for the film. More importantly, when the film was discussed in Bologna it was almost always contrasted with a second film, *Train of Life*, by Shlomo Abelanski, which was produced in France and released in Italy shortly after Benigni's film.

Abelanski's film is also a farce about the Holocaust, but the story is very different. Set in a traditional small Jewish town or *shtetl*, the film recounts the story of the town's attempt to escape Nazi persecution and death. Following the plan of the town fool, the entire village decides to purchase a train and impersonate Nazis deporting themselves, thereby escaping the grasp of the enemy. In the end, the viewer discovers that the entire story is a fantasy by the town fool in his final moments before extermination in Auschwitz. Older Jews in Bologna almost unanimously preferred *Train of Life* to *Life is Beautiful* based on the argument that Abelanski's film was more "real." Unlike Benigni, Abelanski enlisted the help of a Jewish consultant (Moni Ovadia) to choreograph the village scenes.

What was fascinating about this distinction was that both films used comedy to represent the Holocaust and both films were centered on characters that followed a

Chaplin archetype of the cinematic fool. Older Bolognese Jews brought to my attention the idea of an authentic image on which they based their judgements of the films. During a conversation with the Rabbi and several members of the Jewish community, I was told that *Train of Life* "looked more real," and looked "the way Jews were supposed to look," unlike Benigni who was not only Jewish, but did not look Jewish. When I asked if they did not think the look of the Jews in Abelanski's film was stereotypical (e.g., Jews dancing with chickens and violins in a village), the replies were mixed, but mostly quizzical.

Rather than authenticate the image of Jews in the films by linking them to their own experiences, older Jews in Bologna evaluated the films against a more general understanding of what it meant for an image of the Jew from the period of the Holocaust to "look right." Bolognese Jews, in fact, did not grow up or have experience with life in Eastern Europe as shown in Abelanski's film. While most grew up in nearby cities or Bologna itself, their experience was much closer to the image of Italian life depicted in Benigni's portrayal of 1930s Tuscany.

While the set of images and the rules governing those images were never articulated directly, I suggest that a general sense for what was right and wrong in terms of Holocaust representation in Italy can be found in the events which took place in the broader context of the city, such as the commemorative event attended by Bolognese school children discussed in the previous section of this chapter. In particular, the attraction of the older Jews to Abelanski's film seemed linked to a following amongst older Bolognese Jews of Abelanski's choreographer for the film, Moni Ovadia.

As recent ethnographic studies of public history projects have shown, the ideal line between professional history and history as spectacle is one that is easily crossed in practice. Factors as obvious as corporate sponsorship for research and as subtle as moral intellectual commitments based on economic class status suggest that for Holocaust history as in other historical projects, markets and historiography are both part of broad processes of how knowledge is constructed and consumed. In discussing Benigni's film I am sensitive to observations on the appropriateness of humor as a medium for describing genocide, but I am also interested to draw attention to the dynamic of professional history asserting its authority to define the rules of representation in the mass media.

Ultimately, Benigni's film had a lasting impact on how the Holocaust was represented in Italian Jewish museums. I now turn to a discussion of one such example beyond Bologna and then conclude with a discussion of film and emptiness in the Bologna Jewish museum.

Get These Films

A few months prior to the opening of the Jewish Museum of Bologna, I traveled to Trieste to visit the local Jewish Museum. Earlier that day, I spent several hours walking around the Holocaust memorial in San Sabba, a short bus ride from the center of town. The Jewish Museum in Trieste is a small building on the second floor of a non-distinct building in the center of the city. Upon arriving at the museum, I was welcomed by the director, a Lubavitch Hassid in his mid-40s. The Museum was divided into two

main rooms: one room with photographs and the other with ritual objects in display cases (Wiesenfeld 1995, Naldi 1998). Taking out my notebook, I immediately began to walk from case to case. Before I could get very far, the director pulled me to the front corner of the museum and sat me down in front of a television and VCR. "You have to see this before you start. It's the best," he said with a combination Italian, America and Israeli accents.

The video he played was a black and white film of four cities in Eastern Europe before the war, showing the large Jewish population in each city (Lodz, Warsaw, Krakow, and Wilna). As I watched, I noticed a logo for the Spielberg foundation in the corner of the screen. When the film was over I asked if Spielberg had donated the footage:

> It's a long story. At first, I asked them if they would send me the film for the museum and they said "No way!" I had to pay some huge amount of money to get these films. So I said, look, I don't have a lot of money. We're just a small Jewish museum in Trieste. When they found that out, they felt bad and just gave me the film on the condition that I would not reproduce it, which of course I would never do. But here's the best part: when I first got the film, Bonilauri from Bologna came down, just by chance, to look at the museum. He looked at the film and said, "How did you get that? Where did you get the money?" He had been asking them to send film and they had told him "No!" Poor guy. He keeps asking me to make him a copy or lend it to him, but you know I can't.

Two salient points emerge from this story. First, while the Spielberg footage was a valuable--collectible--item in the mind of the museum director from Bologna, at no time did I come across evidence that the director had contacted local Jews in Bologna about including their experiences in the museum display. Living testimonies were both kept from the museum by local Jews and, apparently, beyond the planners' interest. Secondly, Holocaust film does not flow freely as public media, but is controlled by large museums and corporations in the United States and Israel. During my fieldwork both the Spielberg Visual History Foundation in Los Angeles and the Yad Vashem Holocaust Memorial and Museum in Jerusalem solicited and recorded testimonies from Jews in the area. These transcripts and videos subsequently became the private property of foreign bodies that the museum coveted.

However powerful global heritage practices may have been in relationship to local politics in Bologna, the museum planners did manage to make Holocaust film a central part of their program. On January 27, 2000 the Jewish Museum of Bologna launched its own day of Holocaust commemoration ceremonies in its "empty" gallery. This program was sponsored by the Regional Heritage Institute, the city Education Department, and two private banks (Rolo Bank in addition to the Bologna Savings Bank) in addition to the Jewish community and the Children of the Shoah organization. This new program seemed to be the first step towards "something permanent." Moreover, rather than focus on testimony and history, the museum's program re-framed the idea of commemoration within the familiar structure of public speeches by local politicians, a

public ceremony in front of a commemorative plaque, guided visits to the museum and the historic ghetto neighborhood, and most importantly: a film festival.

While the previous commemorative day planned by the Children of the Shoah organization had been promoted by posters bearing a logo image of a young man holding his hands over his face—an image that was on both the posters advertising the events and the program distributed at the events—the museum marketed their Holocaust commemoration program using photographs of Auschwitz. The image of Auschwitz served as a backdrop for the programs circulated prior to and during the events, as well as on the museum's web site. In eight months, the Holocaust commemoration initiative of the Children of the Shoah organization had been woven into the museum planner's ambitions to make the Jewish museum a setting for the projection of Holocaust film. It is worth noting also that while teachers and community leaders spoke in the Aula Magna, there were no politicians who spoke in the museum. The events sponsored by the museum had been subdivided such that there was a morning of speeches given in city hall, with the keynote speaker being the mayor himself, followed by a series of "cultural" events in the museum. The standardization of commemoration, apparently, brings with it the segregation of politics and culture in their respective urban institutions.

The emptiness of the Holocaust memorial room in the museum masks the attempt by the museum curator to build a significant collection of Holocaust film. The "unfinished" aspect of the museum--the idea that there is much work to be done, as mentioned at the outset of the chapter--opens onto multiple levels of meaning and social action relative to the idea that the museum is "empty" of objects, but "full" of

representations of Jewishness. In the case of film, the model of an authentic victim of the Holocaust was reinforced by the explosion of representations in popular film, most notably the work of Benigni. The attempts by the museum director to collect film open onto a wider urban politics whereby the museum emerges as a venue for Holocaust commemoration. In this context, the work of the museum can be shown to displace and contradict the rhetoric that valorizes the "flesh and blood" testimony over the "cold" representation of Jewish suffering in film.

The image of the Jewish victim, standardized and circulated for decades in the global mediascape (Appadurai 1990), takes on a greater value than the subjective narratives based on experience in the Holocaust (Zelizer 1998, Cole 1999). Yet, it is important not to exaggerate the loss of Jewish agency that results from the museum's investment in the Holocaust commemoration market. It can be argued that individuals such as Paolo whose personal narratives may be overlooked in the public discourse, may also be held up as examples of local Jews protecting themselves from being appropriated by the museum. Both perspectives are important when observing that the presence of a Holocaust memorial in the museum represents as much the aspirations of the institution to become a recognized authority in the local commemorative landscape, as the desire to remember the victimization of local Jews.

If, as George Herbert Mead has suggested, the past is a picture that people imagine (1932), then the empty room of the Holocaust memorial in the Jewish Museum of Bologna represents another important aspect of how the Jewish past is imagined in Europe. Specifically, the Holocaust memorial posits how past destruction has resulted in

present emptiness. In Bologna, this image of emptiness masks a politics of controlling the right to own and project film. In this dissertation, I have argued that emptiness is a social process that unfolds in multiple contexts, most notably the politics of museums, multiculturalism and consumerism. I now turn to some concluding remarks that suggest how emptiness suggests several broad directions for theories of culture.

CONCLUSION:

I began this dissertation by focusing on an empty museum as a window into the new politics of anti-racism in Europe. Since the 1980s, European politicians expressed both fear and optimism. Their fear was that the organized mass racism that fueled the destruction of European civil society in the past, was once again on the rise. Their optimism was a belief in the power of cultural projects to educate citizens with the multicultural values deemed necessary for Europe's future. Museums were an integral part of this optimism. With their rhetoric of collection, preservation, valorization, and appreciation, they seemed to offer a perfect counter-discourse to the destructive politics of exclusion associated with neo-fascism. In particular, museums celebrating Jews--the quintessential victims of European modernism--became a boom industry across Europe. In the 1980s violent anti-Semitism resurfaced in the guise of graveyard desecration and synagogue bombing. This trend was matched in the late 1990s by a multitude of high profile projects in Britain, France, Germany, the Netherlands, and Italy. Jewish museums offered more than a chance for the public to look at beautiful ritual objects. More than treasure chests, Jewish museums were described in public discourse as moral outposts for a new type of society. In the new Europe multiculturalism was to be more than just a comment on demographics. It was to become a program that would protect public morals from decay.

Multiculturalism was supposed to guarantee that civil society would continue to be civilized. Yet, the new multiculturalism was met by even newer and more flexible

racism. While politicians in the new Europe had grown fluent in the language and logic of cultural relativism, jackboot nationalists had also found uses for the rhetoric of cultural preservation. Politicians who once wore brown shirts and raised Roman salutes could be seen in the late 1990s laying memorial wreathes to honor the victims of fascism. Cynical as these gestures may seem, they were effective strategies for encompassing anti-racism within the practices of racism. Distinguishing between the politics of exclusion and the politics of tolerance had become increasingly difficult by the late 1990s, requiring neologisms such as "differential racism" to keep the players straight.

I have observed that despite the intentions of politicians and community leaders, the blurring of racism and anti-racism in Bologna could be seen taking shape in the daily activities of local people involved in the social practice of planning a museum. In this dissertation my claim has been that ethnographic approaches to racism are incomplete if they do not consider as part of the problem the proliferation of multiculturalism and anti-racist discourses—that is, the very movements engaged in the battle against racism.

To combat the elaboration of politics that stigmatize and exclude minority groups, scholarship must approach celebratory and disparaging discourses not as opposing forces, but as two expression of a cultural logic routinely deployed through the ordinary acts of everyday social life. It is in these moments that local, national and global processes can take shape as new forms of social control.

While public officials may have been clear in their intentions to build a Jewish museum that would aid in the multicultural enlightenment of Bolognese citizens, the objectifying and commidifying practices of museums in general reinforced those very

forms of intolerance the project was designed to overcome. The Jewish Museum of Bologna not only proliferated the stereotype of Jews as civic outsiders, but heightened local Jewish fears of civic disenfranchisement. Moreover, in the two years since the Jewish Museum of Bologna opened, it has been plagued by protests from a contingency of Israeli born Jews living in Bologna. Under the leadership of Shimon and Maria, dozens of Israeli professional students at the University have waged public demonstrations and attempted to mobilize the international media to condemn the museum as an outgrowth of Italian anti-Semitism. Shimon's constituents call for less focus on history and banking in the museum's permanent exhibition and more on Jews in the areas of science and literature.

Privately, most members of the museum's planning committee agree with Shimon's message, even if they reject the means of his protest. Yet, the backlash has done little to change the content of the museum beyond the correction of typographical mistakes. Instead, the protest has changed the social dynamic of the community. Just following the opening of the museum, the community held board member elections. As a result, Stephano was elected President of the community. Despite a rigorous campaign, Shimon carried only the Israeli vote in the community and was not elected to any office. Rumors swept through the community that "mail in votes" had been fraudulently counted to insure that Shimon lost. For weeks Shimon refused to enter the community, although eventually he relented. He continues to plague Stephano with demands that the museum be indicted for anti-Semitism and that the community leadership be disbanded.

The persistence with which certain members of the Jewish community demanded that their voices be heard in the public space of the museum, emphasizes the extent to which a discourses of cultural protection masked the politics of state domination experienced in the daily lives of local Jews. When the state declared its intention to protect culture, it articulated national claims of responsibility for Jewish culture that superceded claims to that same responsibility by local Jews. This displacement transpired both on the level of cultural planning and daily interaction. When defined as regional treasure, the tutelage of Jewish culture fell within the jurisdiction of the Institute of Cultural Heritage, even though it never left the authority of the local Jewish community. In this overlap between state heritage board and local community power, the politics of face-to-face interaction resulted in the reinforcement of state hegemony despite some extremely vocal protests. Jews became good citizens who behaved as they should and the museum became a place which not only claimed ownership over Jewish culture, but also provided an arena for Jewish dissent.

Disenfranchisement in the daily experience of Jews involved in a cultural protection discourse raises questions about Jewish agency versus intent on the part of heritage workers. I have suggested that the missing collection was not merely an accident, but was evidence of Jewish rejection of the museum. Moreover, while many of the statements of the museum staff were problematic in their attitudes towards Jews, I have argued that it was their use of a system of embodied habits and public manners that was central in the process of domination resulting from the project. To suggest otherwise would be to argue that the problems in Bologna could be resolved by changing the

personalities involved. In fact, the problems embody a broader dynamic in the practice of cultural protection itself.

Cultural protection is a social process linking past and present visions of the nation, and is framed by concurrent discourses of collection and projection. Discourses of collection posit the acquisition and preservation of objects as central to the continuity of national patrimony. Discourses of projection, by contrast, posit the production and distribution of images as central to the improvement of national character. Although separated out in this discussion for heuristic purposes, collection and projection are inextricably intertwined in practice. The acquisition of objects does not operate independently from the production of images. The preservation of objects does not exist separate from the distribution of images. The maintenance of the national patrimony unfolds seamlessly with the improvement of the national character. Claims to control the former invoke claims to authority over the latter.

State claims and community claims to collect Jewish culture articulated different ideas about cultural protection. The state was interested in safeguarding against the rise of fascist activity that might threaten civic institutions. "Protect" here carries with it the idea of safeguarding and storage. There was also a strong sense that a particular past, not that of fascism, was being safeguarded. In this perspective, archived evidence can be offered as proof that the past embodied the image of a multicultural nation being posited by politicians in the present. The Jewish community's claims to collect focused on the rights to ownership and the importance of maintaining Jewish proprietary authority over Jewish patrimony. In this perspective, the material disenfranchisement of Jews in the

present could be held up by Jews as evidence that the present marked a return to the egregious acts of violence against them that had been committed in the fascist past. The museum has been mobilized as a form of epistemic violence, not a physical threat.

Claims to collect culture invoked broader theories linking anti-racism to the control of national property. These claims addressed expectations as to whether Jewish culture should ultimately be public or private property, and whether a multicultural nation could emerge without a transfer of Jewish property into the public sphere. The link between Jewish property and multiculturalism unwittingly invoked arguments by 1930s Fascism that the success of the nation depended on the appropriation of Jewish property by the state. In the present, unlike the in past, this dynamic was resolved in favor of the Jews. After all, the Bologna Jewish community refused to allow their private property to become public patrimony.

Yet, even in the absence of property appropriation, the virtual museum managed to re-establish—indeed to re-affirm—the link between racism as a cultural discourse and Jewish culture. The contemporary context of anti-racism and multiculturalism merely changed the terms of this link. Through the Jewish Museum project and its myriad social activities, the focus of the state narrative shifted from a discussion of Jewish cultural property qua objects, to Jewish property qua the control of categories and technology.

A key question emerges, therefore, from the ethnography of the Jewish Museum of Bologna. Can heritage projects provide a way out of the dialectic of racism and anti-racism? Do Jewish museums in Europe or elsewhere provide opportunities for reprieve

from the praxis that objectifies culture and joins it to the politics and social process of racism?

A simple answer to this question is elusive. I have argued for suspicion of classificatory practices that link multicultural celebration in the present to racism in national history. In this respect, my study of an empty museum in Bologna responds to ethnographies that focus on the process and problem of constructing culture through objects (Myers 1999:264). Objects are not necessary for these constructions, and as material culture becomes more and more politically volatile as a site of national patrimony, it will become the image and link to the thing, and not the thing itself, that occupies center stage in regimes of heritage value.

Despite the flexibility of these discourses, counter discourses did take shape in the unplanned developments or "leaks" in the museum's hegemonic control over the classification, production and circulation of virtual Jewish culture.

It was unforeseen, for example, that the decision to exclude Jews from the planning of the project would ultimately lead to the virtual museum concept. Yet, this decision was critical to the failure of the original museum plan. The virtual museum model was an improvised solution to an unforeseen problem in the museum plan. Ironically, it led to increased interaction between the museum planners and the local community. The initial plan was to have all interaction framed by the Jewish Culture Program, which was designed to limit Jewish participation and influence on the project. Without the collection, the Jewish Culture program slowly gave way to second plan in which Jews were scheduled into the museum space itself.

The social relationship between the Jewish Museum and local Jews remains problematic and unbalanced. There have not been, for example, encounters about the problem of Catholic anti-Semitism included in the program of social encounters in the museum. For the museum project, the lack of any critical discussion of Catholicism and its connection to racism in the permanent exhibition is a problem that needs to be redressed. Not surprisingly, this missing critical discussion of Catholicism's racism is mirrored in the public sphere at large. Only recently has a discussion of so-called Catholic racism taken shape in the national public sphere (Kertzer 2001). The museum still follows the logic of a container of one culture rather than a focus for broader dialogue on culture.

Still, Jewish agency qua the classification and control of Jewish culture has not dissipated entirely, nor have Jews been stripped of the ability to articulate in public the troubling connections between racism and anti-racism.

In fact, the museum and the forms of Jewish agency it has catalyzed, stands to become an social arena for working out anxieties over cultural difference in contemporary Italy. The central issue is the complexity Italy's race problem in the late 1980s—the problem of Italy having the appearance in global politics of being closely associated with a history of racism and intolerance. At the same time, Italian Jews have their own problem with appearances--the problem of being shackled with an image of a dying community with nothing but a legacy of racist oppression.

Both the Jewish community's desire to reinvent its public image and the state's interest in reinventing its past were deeply vested in the museum. Yet, as the museum

developed, the shared assumptions of the community and the state began to drift apart. It would seem that many cultural agendas fit comfortably into a museum proposal. A fully functioning but empty museum, by contrast, has only enough room for one.

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