15. A "translation" into English before publication in Italian? (On the possible relationship between Ancona, Urbino, and Florence)

Two are the possibilities regarding the (in)authenticity of the tale in Selbourne 1997a in its various imprints:

**Possibility 1.** The alleged "original manuscript" exists, Selbourne translated it, and everything else he told us was true, so that not the slightest whiff of intellectual dishonesty (on anyone's part) is in the air. Because of myriad anomalies in "Jacob"'s preposterous tale and Selbourne's equally preposterous story, the Scourges of Jacob find that possibility as hard to accept as espousing the Ptolemaic system and rejecting the Copernican one.

**Possibility 2.** Selbourne's story is not true. If so, one of these subpossibilities is right;

**Subpossibility 2.A.** Someone other than Selbourne faked a "thirteenth-century original manuscript" and Selbourne translated it (if so, it is not clear whether Selbourne was aware of the fakery). That subpossibility is hard to believe (though easier to believe than Possibility 1) because we do not see why anyone would want to trick him, what anyone except Selbourne would achieve by faking such a text, or why anyone except Selbourne would want to rebroadcast Selbourne's ethical, philosophical, political, and social ideas by putting them into the alleged "Jacob"'s mouth. All of which is to say that it appears that only Selbourne had an interest in "Jacob"'s tale. Furthermore, as noted in the present essay, "Jacob" and Selbourne often made the same mistakes. Thus, from whatever seat in the house you watch this tragicomedy, you see that sooner or later the spotlight always falls on Selbourne and Selbourne alone.

**Subpossibility 2.B.** Selbourne faked a "thirteenth-century original manuscript." That subpossibility too is hard to believe because it would involve a Rube-Goldberg scenario: fake an "original manuscript"; translate it; and then assert that the "original" cannot be seen. It would be far easier to write an original text, claim that it is a "translation" of an "original manuscript" from the pen of someone else, and claim that the "original manuscript" is for one reason or another not available for inspection (= Subpossibility 2.C), as is presumably the case here.

**Subpossibility 2.C.** No "original manuscript" exists; *The City of Light* was Selbourne's original piece of historical fiction, written originally in English; *Jacob of Ancona* was Selbourne's pen name; the fictional character so called was Selbourne's pseudo-Jewish stick figure dutifully serving as his voluble mouthpiece, saying whatever Selbourne wanted him to; the "present owner" and his "heirs" (see note 144) were likewise Selbourne's creation, allegedly saying and behaving exactly as Selbourne wanted them to; and Selbourne's story was an attempt to make the alleged tale a sensational find, which would draw attention, in a dramatic way, to Selbourne's ideas and thus rebroadcast them. Given the available evidence, that is the only likely scenario of the four possible ones.

If Subpossibility 2.C is right, all the myriad anomalies in Selbourne's enterprize become easily explainable. If that subpossibility is wrong, Selbourne did not prove that Possibility 1 or Subpossibility 2.A is right. We know his "explanation" of why he cannot provide such evidence (the alleged refusal of the alleged "present owner" to come forward) but we do not believe it: we do not believe that there
ever was a "present owner" or an "original manuscript" other than Selbourne's first draft of his "translation." Simply put, we believe that he cannot provide evidence not because the alleged "present owner" is standing in his way but because there is no evidence, the only real character in this tragicomedy being Selbourne and the only real inanimate object being Selbourne's book. Selbourne cannot eat his cake and have it too: if he wants to be believed, he has to produce evidence; if he does not produce evidence, he will go on not being believed.

The following discussion rests on the assumption that Subpossibility 2.C is right. Naturally, the assumption could be ill-founded, in which case the discussion would be too.

* 

Say you were a publisher in London to whom someone (who had moved from Italy to England a few years earlier) had come to announce that near his new place of residence he had found a 280-leaf English text written by a thirteenth-century Englishman which was far more sophisticated in language and content than anything Chaucer had written. It would be an amazing find and you would be all ears. And then that person said to you, "I want you to publish only a translation of the text. Here is the translation, in French, which I have made, and my critical apparatus."

Naturally, you would wonder why you, as an English publisher in England, should first publish just a translation -- and, to boot, not a translation into today's English but into another language -- of an English text written by an Englishman and discovered in England. Rather, the logical procedure would be to publish -- between two covers -- a facsimile of the original, a transcription of the original if the facsimile was not always legible, a translation into today's English, and a critical apparatus in today's English.

Obviously, then, something was fishy about Selbourne's asking Mondadori, an Italian publisher with headquarters in Italy, to bring out a "translation" into English rather than into today's Standard Italian and a "critical apparatus" in English rather than in today's Standard Italian (to say nothing of the countless other anomalies, some of them enumerated in the critical reviews and letters to the editor).84

In fact, since Selbourne not only could not boast of any creditable track record in the pertinent disciplines but also lacked any relevant track record at all, you wonder why he got involved to the extent that he did, for it would have occurred to nobody in the world of learning (at least not outside the People's Republic of China) that Selbourne was qualified for the many, varied, and hard tasks that such a project would have involved -- that is, had there been an "original manuscript" and had it been authentic. What then was his motive?

Naturally, Selbourne had an "explanation": "Selbourne says he has known the man who owned the manuscript for many years" (Phillips 1998); the man was, to use Selbourne's words, "aware of my interest in Judaica, including the history of medieval Jewry in Italy."

"Interest in Judaica"? Interest and deep knowledge, or interest and relevant qualifications, are not synonyms. It would be one thing if Selbourne had been the author, say, of an authoritative two-volume work on the phonetics and phonemics of Jewish Italian from the diachronic, diatopic, and diastratic viewpoints; or of several weighty publications on thirteenth-century Italian Jewry; or of important works in other Jewish fields relevant to the alleged "original manuscript"; or of important works on thirteenth-century China, medieval trade, medieval navigation, East-West relations, or any of a number of other relevant fields.
However, so far as I can tell, his sole contribution to Jewish studies was the slim volume of slight Jewish interest called *Not an Englishman: Conversations with Lord Goodman* (*Who's Who: 2006: An Annual Biographical Dictionary* list nothing else of even remote Jewish interest in its entry for David Maurice Selbourne). Far be it from me to demean any contribution to any discipline, so that the words *slim* and *slight* here should not be taken as pejoratives, the point being that they are far from showing that Selbourne commanded profound Jewish knowledge or even a moderate amount or even a small amount -- for that book, he merely interviewed a British Jew. It is therefore impossible to find any evidence supporting Selbourne's contention of having an "interest in Judaica" and thus of having any qualifications for the job of translating and editing a lengthy text by a thirteenth-century Italian Jew composed in Higher Macaronic.\(^85\)

As for Selbourne's alleged interest in "the history of medieval Jewry in Italy" in particular, that's even more startling news. What did he publish in that field before the alleged "present owner" turned to him? What has he published in the field since then? Does his alleged "interest in the history of medieval Jewry in Italy" not date to the time he conceived his enterprize and did he not allege it merely to justify the alleged "present owner"'s allegedly turning to him for a translation (into... English)?

Selbourne thus seemed once again to tailor his story to meet his needs, here by alleging an "interest" that made himself, or so he presumably hoped, look like the right person in the right place at the right time (see paragraph E below). Let us recall here the Yiddish saying *der vos er halt di pen in der hant shraybt zikh on a gut yor* 'he who holds the pen in his hand puts himself down for a good year'.\(^86\) See the last paragraph of note \(^58\) for more references to Selbourne's alleged "interest in Judaica, including the history of medieval Jewry in Italy."

As you ponder the alleged course of events, much more turns out to be fishy. For example, Selbourne was unable to produce the alleged "original manuscript," not even a photocopy of it, not even a photocopy of just one leaf, not even a photocopy of a mere few lines, not even a transcription of a mere few lines. And again you conclude that he could not do so because no "original manuscript" exists. No wonder that Mondadori smelled a rat and showed Selbourne the door.\(^87\)

What might not come so swiftly to mind is why Selbourne did not claim that the language of the alleged "original manuscript" was Hebrew-Aramaic or Jewish Italian or Yevanic (= the two or possibly three languages of Anconitan Jewry of the 1270s and thereabouts, hence the two or possibly three languages in which someone like "Jacob," had he existed, would plausibly have written) and instead claimed that the alleged document was written in "the vernacular Italian of the thirteenth and perhaps fourteenth centuries; it is basically educated Tuscan [...] but with some Venetian words and spellings, and occasional phrases which can be identified as the mediaeval Jewish dialect of Ancona" (Selbourne 2000:8), with an admixture of Arabic, Chinese, Greek, Hebrew, Latin, and Persian.

As if that farrago were not ridiculous enough, in the French version of Selbourne's book, we read that "Il est aussi des tournures, des verbes et d'autres formes qui sont presque français, voire franco-italiens" (p. 543), that is, 'constructions, verbs and other forms which are almost French, nay, Franco-Italian' (so far as I can remember, earlier versions of Selbourne's book did not contain that remark). With his characteristic vagueness, he failed to give any examples of such constructions, verbs, and other forms. Let us have a complete list.

My guess is that after 1997 Selbourne learned about Franco-Italian literature and was now trying, in an effort to make his story more believable, to link "Jacob" to that stage of Italian literature, which lasted from the twelfth to the fourteenth centuries, thus, the period during which the alleged
"Jacob" lived most or all of his life. If that was indeed his intention, Selbourne, with his characteristic superficiality, did not learn enough, for Franco-Italian literature was not Italian literature in Italian with French influences but Italian literature in French and Occitan (with, possibly, Italian linguistic influences, their degree depending on the writer and the work):

**Franco-Italian literature.** French prose and verse romances were popular in Italy from the 12th to the 14th century. Stories from the Carolingian and Arthurian cycles, together with free adaptations from the classics, were read by the literate, while French minstrels recited verse in public places throughout northern Italy. By the 13th century, a 'Franco-Italian' literature had developed [...]. In this literature, though the language used was French, the writers often unconsciously introduced elements from their own dialects, according to their varying knowledge of French" ("Italian Literature," *The New Encyclopædia Britannica*, 15 ed., 1991, vol. 22, p. 152; instead of "the language was French" read "the languages were French and Occitan").

It is also possible (whether or not my guess having to do with Franco-Italian literature is right) that Selbourne wanted the alleged "Jacob"'s alleged language to approximate the Italian-influenced French of Rustichello's version of Marco Polo's account of his travels: "Polo's book was produced while he was imprisoned in Genoa (1298-1299) [...]. In prison he met the author of several Arthurian romances, Rustichello (or Rusticiano) of Pisa, to whom he related his experiences in Asia and who composed them in the distinctive Italianized French dialect of Rustichello's own surviving romances. It was probably Rustichello who gave Polo's book its flourishes of chivalric rhetoric and much of its legendary content" (Jones 1992:557). See section 18.

If you think about Higher Macaronic, you see that its makeup is preposterous and hence could not occur in reality; that it must, therefore, be a calculated mixture; and, consequently, that the deviser of that non-existent lect must have had motives (we have just offered one with regard to the alleged 'constructions, verbs and other forms which are almost French, nay, Franco-Italian').

And when you think about language, you start to think about geography too because Selbourne's description of Higher Macaronic refers to three places (Tuscany, Venice, and Ancona), which, though relatively close to each other, are nonetheless non-overlapping parts of Italy.

Thinking further, you ask yourself why the imaginary "Jacob" was alleged to be Anconitan, for if he was a resident of Ancona (which is noticeably distant from the area where Tuscan is spoken), he should have written in Anconitan rather than Tuscan. And you wonder too why he mentioned Venice.

And if you keep on thinking about geography, you remember that "the great rabbi Israel" was alleged to be Florentine yet we have no record of any Jews in Florence at the time he would have presumably lived, to say nothing of any "noble rabbinical lineage" -- or any "rabbinical lineage" -- there, so that why the real "Jacob" made that presumably mythical rabbi to be a Florentine is also a question you would like to see answered.

Since Florence is the capital of Tuscany, you then wonder whether the grandfather's alleged provenience and the alleged "basic" language of the alleged "original manuscript" are related.

And since you're already thinking about geography, you wonder whether Urbino, where Selbourne took up permanent resident in 1985, might be relevant too, especially since Ancona, Florence, and Urbino are relatively close to one another.

That was my train of thought when, as a student of language, I could not fathom why anyone would claim Higher Macaronic as the language of an alleged but unseen text when it would have been
not suspicious at all to claim that the language of the alleged "original manuscript" was (1) Hebrew-Aramaic or (2) either Anconitan Jewish Italian or Anconitan Yevanic if the alleged writer was a thirteenth-century Anconitan rabbi.

In sum, why all that linguistic and geographical disparateness? And is it really disparateness, or, rather, can we link everything -- the languages and the places -- in a logical way so that all the pieces of the puzzle fall into place?

Thus, just as Mondadori smelled a rat for its reasons, I, as a student of language and of Judaica, smelled one for mine. As I pondered the puzzle, I realized that it was specifically a jigsaw puzzle. On an early-morning walk one day, almost everything, as we will now see, fell into place, the only still puzzling element of that mishmash being "some Venetian words and spellings."

In considering the following suggested reconstruction of the events (which the fourth, third, and second paragraphs from the end of Part A of Section 8 hint at), remember that we are assuming that Subpossibility 2.C is right.

A. Since too much geographical distance between all the factors involved would be implausible (say, a document written by a Jew in Sicily referring to a trip made by him from Genoa to China in the thirteenth century and in the twentieth century brought to the attention of someone living in Venice by someone living in Naples), the places involved had to be fairly close.

B. In the mid 1980s Selbourne moved to Urbino permanently.

C. Thus, since the only character in this tragicomedy known to be a real person -- Selbourne -- was living in Urbino, that city was an invariable factor. Here, therefore, no choices were available. As a consequence, all the other places had to be at least fairly close to Urbino. For an analogous situation, see paragraph L below on how Selbourne's knowledge of latter-day Standard Italian was the invariable factor determining all the relevant variable ones.

D. Probably because he had visited India and China and published on those countries, Selbourne decided to have "Jacob" spend most of his on-shore time there rather than in any other countries.

E. A journey from Italy eastwards would in the thirteenth century most likely have as its point of departure some place on the eastern coast of Italy, that is, along the Adriatic Sea or the Ionian Sea. See paragraph G for further discussion.

F. Selbourne alleged that the "present owner" was living "near Urbino," again, not a surprising choice in light of the invariable factor, Selbourne's residence in Urbino. The word "near" made that alleged person's location meet the requirement set out in C but it was still vague enough to make any doubters' detective work hard: does "near" mean 'within a radius of three kilometers'? 'within a radius of thirteen'? 'within a radius of thirty-three'? or what? Just how far from Urbino would investigators suspicious of Selbourne's story have to search for the alleged "present owner"? Since no one could say, investigators would never know when they had combed the whole area they were supposed to.

Furthermore, choosing "near Urbino" forestalled anyone's questioning the likelihood of Selbourne's alleged multiple trips to the alleged "present owner"'s house between September 1991 and June 1996 to "translate" the alleged "original manuscript": since relatively short trips like those need not leave a paper trail, no doubter could prove that they had not taken place (in contrast to multiple trips from Urbino to, say, London, which in our times would have been almost impossible to take without leaving a record of some time, like airline tickets or entries in a hotel register). We wonder, by
the way, what Selbourne's wife and children could tell us about those many trips and about the "present owner." Since he was Selbourne's friend of "many years" and he visited Selbourne's house at least once, "early in 1990" (Selbourne 2000:1), Selbourne's wife and children may have seen him, in which case they could describe him.

In contrast, had Selbourne claimed that the alleged "present owner" was living "in Urbino," the requirement set out in C would have been satisfied just as well and Selbourne could have made his brief trips without leaving a paper trail, but in 1988 the estimated population of the municipality of Urbino was a mere 15,582 souls, from which figure we must subtract (in the order given):

i. the number of women (since the "present owner" had to be male or female, Selbourne had to choose one gender; he chose a male).

ii. of those remaining, the number of young people (since the "present owner" had known Selbourne for "many years," he had to be at least middle-aged).

iii. of those remaining, the number of bedbound and senile people.

iv. of those remaining, the number of people having no intellectual interests.

v. of those remaining, the number of people who could not read English (remember that Selbourne, curiously, "translated" the alleged "original document" not into the Standard Italian of his day but into Wardour Street English and he wrote his critical apparatus in English).

vi. of those remaining, those who were not paranoid.

vii. of those remaining, any who were Jews.

At that point, either the number of candidates for "present owner" would have been reduced to such a small number that any doubters could easily locate such people and find that for one reason or another none of them could have been the "present owner" or the number of candidates would have been zero. Which is to say that Selbourne had to make the haystack in which he embedded his imagined needle neither too large nor too small.

G. Since we already have Urbino as an invariable, a port on the central or northern Adriatic Sea would be appropriate as "Jacob"'s point of departure rather than one on the southern Adriatic Sea or on the Ionian Sea. The choice of Ancona is thus not surprising. And it could not hurt to make "Jacob" an Anconitan, especially since Ancona had a Jewish population in the 1270s.

H. So far, then, we have, an alleged manuscript allegedly written by an alleged thirteenth-century Anconitan Jew allegedly brought to the attention of someone living in Urbino in the twentieth by an ambulatory and otherwise healthy adult Italian male with intellectual interests allegedly living "near Urbino." Since "near Urbino" includes the area between Urbino and Ancona, the alleged "present owner" was thus conveniently living not far from the alleged place of writing of the alleged "original manuscript" (that proximity would not make anyone wonder how the alleged document had traveled from its place of composition to its present location) and not far from Selbourne's residence.

I. After those parts of the puzzle fell into place in my mind, I turned to thinking about Tuscany, specifically Florence, so that now the unusual phrases "basically educated Tuscan" and "the great rabbi Israel of Florence" came to the fore (unusual, because, as we have seen, we do not expect thirteenth-century Anconitan Jews to have been able to write in non-Jewish Italian, all the less so in Tuscan, even less so in "educated" Tuscan, and because we do not expect to find any Jews in pre-fourteenth-century Florence, all the less so a rabbinical family). And when I thought about the first of those phrases, I started to think about language again, this time also about Selbourne's linguistic
repertory, for, after all, he's not the first person or even the five-hundred-thousandth you would think of turning to if you wanted to get a translation of a thirteenth-century text written by an Italian Jew. Which is to say that Selbourne -- so I assume he thought -- felt he had to demonstrate to skeptics that he was the right person for the job (recall the two other clues that he foresaw the critics' onslaught and therefore tried to justify his involvement even before they descended on him: his proclaiming an "interest in Judaica, including the history of medieval Jewry of Italy" and his advertizing that he was the grandson of a rabbi -- flimsy hence not credible pretexts).

J. The next task was determining Selbourne's linguistic repertory, determining what the alleged "Jacob of Ancona"'s repertory should have been, and comparing the two. Selbourne's appears to have consisted of just the following:

i. Today's Standard English, which he wrote well when the mode was expository prose. When, however, he chose Wardour Street English, namely in the "translation" (see the first paragraph of section 5), he was a sleeping pill.\textsuperscript{89}

ii. Since Selbourne's father lived in Paris from birth in 1906 to just after the beginning of World War One, since the published version of the latter's diary (Selbourne 1989) contains an entry reading "Received Revue d'Histoire de la Médecine Hébraique from Paris" (18 July 1962, p. 165), since the diary contains at least one gallicism, namely \textit{anniversary} in the sense of 'birthday' (in the entry dated 15 February 1963 we read "Judy's 18th anniversary" [p. 229], which refers to Judy Selbourne, who was born on 15 February 1945), since Selbourne's mother, born in 1915, lived in Antwerp from 1920 to around 1935 or early 1936 (although the vernacular of most non-Jews in the city is Dutch, its Jewish residents are almost always stronger in French than in Dutch), since she was a student at the École Supérieure de Commerce, in Brussels, at a time when the language of instruction at the school was French, which was also the chief language of the city then, and since the most widely studied non-English language in the United Kingdom is French, Selbourne must have acquired at least some knowledge of today's Standard French.\textsuperscript{90} Indeed, we need not suppose, for he stated in Selbourne 2000 that he took part in the preparation of the French version of \textit{The City of Light} (see note 160).

iii. At least a fair active and a fair passive knowledge of today's Standard Italian (which has its roots in twelfth-century Tuscan, more specifically, twelfth-century Florentine). Living permanently in a small Italian city since the mid 1980s, he in fact needed such knowledge (in Rome or in Venice an anglophone might get by without Italian but not in smaller places in Italy).

K. From what we know of the linguistic history of the Jews of Italy the repertory of a rabbi in Ancona of the 1270s should have been as follows:

i. His strongest language would have been either Jewish Italian or, possibly, Yevanic.\textsuperscript{91}

ii. A rabbi, all the more so a rabbi coming of a rabbinical family, all the more so if being of "noble rabbinical lineage," and even more so if being the grandson of "the great rabbi Israel of Florence," would have a good passive knowledge of Hebrew-Aramaic and be able to write it too.

iii. Since Jews needed to interact with non-Jews (almost always, just orally), he would in all likelihood have been able to understand spoken non-Jewish Italian and be able to speak it for everyday purposes. An ability to read non-Jewish Italian would be unexpected; an ability to write it, even more so; an ability to read Latin, even more so. Any other vernaculars known would depend on the person (say, a stay in Ashkenaz might result in acquisition of a certain amount of Yiddish).

L. Next, we compare the two repertories to see where they do not overlap.
i. The only element which the alleged "Jacob"'s repertory and Selbourne's shared was non-Jewish Italian (J.iii and K.iii) -- but in a rough way, for thirteenth-century Italian Jews understood spoken local non-Jewish Italian (in the alleged "Jacob"'s case, Anconitan) and they could speak it (with varying degrees of interference from Jewish Italian) to the extent that they needed to communicate with local non-Jews, but they were not able to write any variety of non-Jewish Italian. Selbourne, however, knew no Jewish Italian (see note 10 on Selbourne's not-to-be-believed claim that he was able to detect "occasional phrases which can be identified as the mediaeval Jewish dialect of Ancona" -- of which he gave, expectedly, not a single example). A gap therefore remained, for Selbourne could not have translated from Jewish Italian and the alleged "Jacob" could not have written in any variety of Tuscan, including Florentine. The gap was closed, as we will see presently, in an implausible way.

ii. A thirteenth-century Italian Jewish male would have wanted to write in Hebrew-Aramaic because it is the language of prestige among all traditional Jews whether they know it or not (see note 60) and because, being the only language known in all traditional Jewish communities (though not by everyone in each of them), it is the language most suitable for reaching the largest number of traditional Jews and the language of choice if one wants one's writings to survive in the Jewish world. Which is to say that Hebrew-Aramaic plays the same role in traditional Jewish communities as Latin once did in much of Christendom.

Furthermore, someone as Jewishly learned as the alleged "Jacob" would have easily been able to write Hebrew-Aramaic, especially since he was a rabbi, especially since he belonged to a rabbinical family, all the more so since he was the grandson of "the famous rabbi Israel of Florence." Someone of that stature in a traditional Jewish community would have written Hebrew-Aramaic better than any other language and would have considered any other Jewish language, even if it was his native, primary, and habitual language, unsuitable (because lacking in prestige) for serious writing.

In contrast, Selbourne, though also the grandson of a rabbi, presumably knew no Hebrew-Aramaic (see note 157 for his confession, "I'm not a Hebraist"). Here, therefore, the gap remained wide open and could not be closed.

iii. Jewish Italian would have been the next logical choice for someone like "Jacob," that is, if for some reason he did not want to write in Hebrew-Aramaic. However, Selbourne did not know that language either. Likewise with respect to Yevanic, if perchance any Anconitan Jews of the time spoke it.

M. Consequently, we are now back to the apparently intractable problem mentioned in subparagraph i of paragraph L. Selbourne presumably thought long and hard about it. One solution he apparently thought of was to say that the text which he alleged he saw in the alleged "present owner"'s house could have been a translation into "basically educated Tuscan" of an "original" in Hebrew-Aramaic (see section 12). In that way, the alleged "Jacob" would have written in the language we expect him to have (had he existed) and Selbourne would have translated from the variety of thirteenth-century Italian which he knew least badly: "basically educated Tuscan."

But once again, a solution to one problem engendered two more (if you try to make the Ptolemaic system work, eliminating one defect creates more): as we know from note 116, Selbourne claimed -- on the basis of no evidence (and, in fact, against the evidence, of which he was unaware) -- that the alleged "Jewish family" kept the alleged "original manuscript" hidden for many centuries because it feared the Inquisition, and, as we know from section 12, he also supposed -- on the basis of no evidence (and, in fact, against what intuition tells us) -- a "secret demand" for the alleged document.
If so, the demanders must have all been Jews, for, if the family feared the Inquisition, it would have revealed the existence of the Precious Gift only to people whom it could trust not to reveal its existence to anyone who might inform on the family to the non-Jewish authorities. The people it could trust most were fellow Jews and the ones it could trust the least were non-Jews. And since the only people having a "secret demand" to see the Precious Gift would have been those who knew about it, the demanders must have been Jews.

If the "secret" demanders could read Hebrew-Aramaic, they would have needed no translation. If they could not read that language, they would have needed a translation into Jewish Italian (or Yevanic?). Consequently, if Selbourne supposed an original "original manuscript" in Hebrew-Aramaic (a supposition which he made presumably to ward off criticism that the alleged "Jacob" should have written not in "basically educated Tuscan" but in Hebrew-Aramaic), he is now obliged to recognize that the "secret demanders" knowing Hebrew-Aramaic would have needed no translation (for they could read the original "original manuscript") and that the "secret demanders" who could not read Hebrew-Aramaic would have needed a translation into Jewish Italian (or Yevanic?).

Which is to say that a translation of the original "original manuscript" into "basically educated Tuscan" would have benefited no Jews until maybe the sixteenth or seventeenth or eighteenth century, when an appreciable number of Jews in Italy began learning to write Standard Italian (see, for example, Barnett 1966).

The only readership who in the thirteenth century and for many centuries afterwards could have benefitted from a translation into "basically educated Tuscan" would have been educated non-Jews, but, as we have seen, the family fearing the Inquisition would not have revealed the existence of the Precious Gift to such people.

Selbourne thus (unwittingly?) painted himself into a corner, but we can get him out of it (though in so doing, we will have to put him into another one): the only person whom an original "original manuscript" in thirteenth-century "basically educated Tuscan" or a "translation" into thirteenth-century "basically educated Tuscan" -- take your pick -- would have benefitted would have been Selbourne, for that was the only variety of thirteenth-century non-Jewish Italian from which he could have plausibly claimed to be able to translate.

Yet, if so, the alleged "Jacob" would not have been able to write in that variety of Italian (if what Selbourne alleged he saw was the original "original manuscript") and a translation into that variety (if what Selbourne alleged he saw was a translation of the original "original manuscript") would have been useful only to non-Jews, who would have been the people most likely to denounce the alleged "Jewish family" allegedly owning the alleged Precious Gift to the non-Jewish authorities.

Consequently, the alleged "Jacob" would not have written in non-Jewish Italian of any kind; if he wrote in Hebrew-Aramaic (which would have been likely) and what Selbourne alleged he saw was a translation of the Hebrew-Aramaic original into "basically educated Tuscan" or Higher Macaronic, such a translation would have been a closed book to most Italian Jews until centuries later (so that for the benefit of Jewish readers nobody would have undertaken a translation into either of those lects); and the only languages in which Italian Jews, until relatively recent times, would have written when addressing other Italian Jews would have been Jewish languages (of which Selbourne knew not one). The gap, therefore, was unbridgeable.

As often in Selbourne's enterprize, one problem is "solved" only to create another, and when the second one is "solved," either the first one pops up again or a third is created.
That was just one whirling maze in which Selbourne trapped himself. A related one has to do with the connection (actually, the absence of a reasonable connection) between the alleged "Jacob" and "basically educated Tuscan." No thirteenth-century Italian Jew could probably even have read that variety of Italian, much less write it, much less write 280 leaves in it, much less write 280 leaves if he was not living in Tuscany. "Jacob," as Selbourne told us, was a merchant of Ancona. And Ancona is not in Tuscany. Here too, then, Selbourne had to bridge a gap and he again did so in an implausible way.

Is it not the truth that the reason for the creation of "the great rabbi Israel of Florence" was to link "Jacob" to the Florentine-based Standard Italian that was coming into shape in the twelfth, thirteenth, and fourteenth centuries, that is, to "basically educated Tuscan"? Which is to say that by giving the alleged "Jacob" a Florentine grandfather, the real "Jacob" could justify, or so he hoped, the fictitious "Jacob"'s writing in "basically educated Tuscan" rather than in any of the languages we expect such a person to have used (Hebrew-Aramaic, Jewish Italian, or possibly Yevanic).

Indeed, in what is presumably a Freudian slip, Selbourne himself linked the alleged language of the alleged "original manuscript and the alleged residence of the alleged grandfather: "it is basically educated Tuscan -- Jacob tells us that his grandfather was a Florentine rabbi" (Selbourne 2000:8; see note 10 in the present essay for a fuller quotation and the penultimate paragraph of note 75 for other possible Freudian slips). Presumably, we are to infer from that sentence that "Jacob" learned to write "basically educated Tuscan" from that grandfather (which is for more than one reason not believable).

But then Selbourne got himself trapped yet again: as we have seen in Part A of section 8, probably no Jews were living in Florence before the fourteenth century; even if we supposed, for the sake of argument, that a few were living there below the radar, they would probably not have constituted an organized community; and no rabbi is likely to live outside an organized Jewish community. In sum, "the great rabbi Israel of Florence" (of whom we hear in no text known to us) was a fiction created for a purpose, but as it "solved" one problem (how to link "Jacob" and Tuscan?), it created another.

Creating "the great rabbi Israel of Florence" spawned yet another problem: being two generations older, he was even less likely than his alleged grandson to be able to write any non-Jewish variety of Italian (as we go back in time, the number of Jews able to write any variety of non-Jewish Italian decreases).

In sum, making "the great rabbi Israel" a Florentine accomplished nothing for Selbourne but it did put more ammunition into his critics' hands.

As Miss O'Connor, one of my high-school teachers of English, liked to say when we read Dickens, a novel of his, like Great Expectations, may start with several subplots, all apparently unrelated to one another, but by the end of the story he pulls everything together like the strings of a purse tightly drawn. That seems to be the case in "Jacob"'s tale and Selbourne's story too: at first you are puzzled by the disparateness of many elements, but on reflection, you come to see the purpose of each one (though I still cannot account for Selbourne's claim of Venetian items in Higher Macaronic) and how many of them are interrelated.

The foregoing reconstruction rests on the assumption that the only "original manuscript" was the first draft of an original piece of writing by Selbourne in English (the alleged "translation"), but the assumption (= Subpossibility 2.C) may be wrong. If it is, let us see how Selbourne sorts out all the
contradictions and other anomalies and paints for us a realistic picture that accounts for everything in
his enterprise convincingly.

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Selbourne's alleged "translation" of the alleged "original manuscript" into English rather than
into today's Standard Italian is unusual for a second reason. How curious that a present-day Italian-
speaking Italian living in Italy (the alleged "present owner") would have had any desire or need or use
for a translation into English (or, in fact, for a translation of any kind) of a text in "basically educated
Tuscan." We now elaborate.

Because of the largely successful efforts of Italian prescriptivists to model Standard Italian on
fourteenth-century Tuscan in general and fourteenth-century Florentine in particular and, over the
centuries, to keep it as close as possible to the Tuscan and Florentine of those centuries (see note 124),
the distance between today's Standard Italian and "basically educated Tuscan" of the 1270s is probably
more or less the same as that between Standard Written English of our times and Standard Written
English of Shakespeare's day (thus, Standard Italian appears to have changed much more slowly than
Standard English has during the same period).

Moreover, since our Nobel-Prize-deserving-but-for-some-inexplicable-reason-not-yet-winning
Cervantes redivivus (see note 35) was presumably not one to associate with ignorant lowlifes, his friend
of "many years" must have been extremely intelligent and extremely well-educated. Such a person
would have been excellently educated, presumably in Italian schools, which naturally devote a not
inconsiderable amount of time to Italian literature, including the early landmarks, like the major works
of Dante (1265-1321), Petrarch (1304-1374), and Boccaccio (1313-1375), all of whom wrote and
championed Tuscan, specifically Florentine, as the basis for the standard language (see note 124). The
"present owner" would thus have been familiar with that standard language as it was written in the
fourteenth century, which was not much different from the "basically educated Tuscan" of the 1270s.93

Such a person would therefore not need a full translation into today's Standard Italian, for, at
most, just a glossary or marginal notes would have been enough for him to understand the archaic
lexemes, meanings, and constructions (look at any anthology of Italian literature written for today's
Italian-speakers and you will see that the selections in older Standard Italian are accompanied by just a
few notes elucidating now archaic or obsolete usages, especially if, as Selbourne revealed, the text is
written"on clean, fine paper in a small but careful and usually clear running hand" (Selbourne 2000:6),
thus, with no major problems of handwriting either.

How curious, therefore, that Phillips 1998 quotes Selbourne as having said that the "original
manuscript" "was written in a medieval Italian he [the 'present owner' (D.L.G.)] could barely translate." How
inconvenient for the "present owner" but how convenient for Selbourne.

How curious that an Italian who was presumably a native, primary, and habitual speaker of
Italian would turn to a non-Italian who was not a native or primary speaker of the language (possibly
not a habitual speaker either) who had no track record in translating from Higher Macaronic (or any
other variety of Italian), no track record in Jewish studies, no track record... well, you know the list by
now.

How curious that for the "present owner"s benefit Selbourne would "translate" the entire
"original manuscript" rather than prepare just a set of marginal notes and a glossary elucidating the
usages that today's speakers of Standard Italian would not understand. When students in today's
English-medium schools read, say, Shakespeare, they need only marginal notes or a glossary, not an
entire translation into today's Standard English. In like manner, today's speakers of Standard Italian do not need full translations of the earlier monuments of literature written in Standard Italian.

How curious, as we have remarked earlier, that for a native speaker of today's Standard Italian, Selbourne would not only translate the entire text but translate it into English.

How curious that he would not translate it into straightforward English but into offputting Wardour Street English (see the first paragraph of section 5).

We are forced to conclude from all those oddities that Selbourne did not have in mind the needs of his friend of "many years." Rather, some other consideration must have motivated his choices.

But let's put aside the false naivete and speak realistically: my impressions are that Selbourne's book contains not a "translation" of any "original manuscript" in "basically educated Tuscan" intended for a native, primary, and habitual speaker of Italian but his own original piece of writing in Wardour Street English; that there never was an "original manuscript" in "basically educated Tuscan," any "present owner," any "Jacob of Ancona," et caetera, et caetera, et caetera; that the purpose of Selbourne's book (truly Selbourne's book and only Selbourne's book) was to rebroadcast his ethical, philosophical, political, and social ideas (at a time that they were being forgotten?); that he desired to enshrine those ideas in a sensational book, which would thus remain in print for generations (like Marco Polo's account); and that he hoped to go down in history, among other things, as having brought to the world's attention a European who beat Marco Polo to China and left us a far more detailed, far more sophisticated, far more interesting account of his travels than Polo did (see section 18).

To accomplish those goals as fully as possible, no better medium could be found in the 1990s, as today, than the languages most widely used for worldwide communication, English, which happened to be, fortunately for Selbourne, his strongest language. In contrast, a glossary or marginal notes in today's Standard Italian would have been useless and a full-fledged "translation" into today's Standard Italian (which Selbourne was probably incapable of making even had he wanted to) would have helped him but slightly (relatively few people outside Italy can read Italian, which cannot hold a candle to English as a language of wider communication).

With presumably all those grandiose aims in his mind, no wonder that Selbourne forgot the pressing need of his friend of "many years" for just a glossary or marginal notes in today's Standard Italian. Actually, his friend did not need Selbourne or anyone else at all, since he could have acquired, as thousands of readers of older Italian literature have done, a dictionary covering older Literary Italian ("basically educated Tuscan"), though we do recognize that fathoming the more recondite elements of Higher Macaronic would have been a problem for anyone (except one person).

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How curious that the alleged "original manuscript" did not surface at any time during its some seven hundred years of alleged existence save, mirabile dictu, between September 1991 and June 1996.

How curious that the alleged "original manuscript" lay hidden until just six years after Selbourne settled in Italy permanently.

How curious that the garrulous "Jacob" spewed forth ethical, philosophical, political, and social ideas identical or nearly so with Selbourne's.

How curious that, of all people, Selbourne, who appeared to lack the proper qualifications, was
chosen to translate the entire alleged document.

How curious that, of all people, Selbourne was chosen even though he himself later confessed that "[...] I'm not a Hebraist, [...] I'm not an Italianist, [...] I'm not a Sinologist [...]" (see note 157), 'I'm not an Orientalist and not an medievalist' (see the fourth paragraph of subsection G of section 22).

Would it not have been easier to publish the alleged thirteenth-century "original manuscript" by reproducing it photographically, either with a full translation into today's Standard Italian or with marginal notes and a glossary of usages that today's users of Standard Italian would not understand? That would have been most useful to researchers. It would have spared Selbourne all the grief of coming under suspicion. The "present owner" would have still been fully protected because publication in that manner would not have had to entail revelation of his name, his whereabouts, or any other personal information.

But we are still being falsely naive. All those and all the other curiosities about Selbourne's enterprise vanish the second that you assume that Jacob of Ancona was Selbourne's pen name, that the only "original manuscript" was the first draft of an original piece of writing in English penned by him, that no "present owner" has ever existed, and so on and so forth. Thus, to answer the first question in the previous paragraph: no, it would not have been easier to publish the thirteenth-century "original manuscript"; on the contrary, it would have been much harder because no such document has ever existed: "The story of a rare manuscript discovered in unusual circumstances and translated under terms of strict secrecy is a particularly clever angle, for it avoids the hard work of ginning up an actual forgery of the original document that can stand up to direct scrutiny" (see note 125).

Curious too is this passage in Phillips 1998: "Over the next few years, Selbourne says he laboriously translated the manuscript in the man's home. He was not allowed to remove it from the house. Selbourne, who now says he was naive, thought that if he could present the man with a nicely bound translation, he could persuade him to allow experts to look at the original. With this in mind, in 1996 he talked to Italy's leading publisher, Mondadori, which was interested in publishing but said it would need to send experts to look at the document. Selbourne telephoned his source and told him. The man accused Selbourne of breaking his word. ¶ In vain, Selbourne tried to convince him that he had done nothing to reveal his identity. From that day, Selbourne's source has refused to talk to him or acknowledge his letters."

Since the friend allegedly turned to Selbourne for help in understanding the alleged "original manuscript" and Selbourne allegedly agreed to help him, his goal at the time must have been to make a translation just ad usum amici. Selbourne's intention to "present the man with a nicely bound translation" supports that assumption. Thus, it was to be a completely private matter: Selbourne would magnanimously spend almost five years "translating" (during which time, lo and behold, he would "discover" to his astonishment that the alleged "Jacob"'s ethical, philosophical, political, and social ideas were either identical or nearly so with his own), he would magnanimously present his friend with the "translation" ("nicely bound"), the friend could then satisfy his curiosity about the contents of the alleged "original manuscript" (he could presumably read Wardour Street English more easily than a thirteenth-century ancestor of his own language -- and without falling asleep), and that would be the end of the matter -- no publication and no scandal.

How curious that Selbourne went from thinking "he could persuade him to allow experts to look at the original" to taking the unilateral decision of going to Mondadori. Did it not occur to Selbourne, before deciding to turn to any publisher, to discuss with his friend "near Urbino" what to
do with the "translation," come to an agreement with him, and abide by it? Thinking logically, we expect Selbourne to have instead written something like this:

"I thought that if I could present the man with a nicely bound translation, I might be able to persuade him to approach a publisher with the goal of bringing out the original, my translation, and my critical apparatus. After five years of hard work, I indeed presented him with the translation, talked to him about publishing it, but got nowhere. And so the sole copy of the original manuscript and the sole copy of my translation and critical apparatus are to this day in the man's possession, both unpublished, probably to remain so as long as he is alive. Although I have naturally come under pressure to reveal more, I do not intend to do so. It is both a matter of honour and of gratitude for an act of faith [see note 125 (D.L.G.)]. My understanding is that the present owner's heirs could well do the same [see note 144 (D.L.G.)]."

And there the matter would have ended: no Selbourne 1997a and related publications, no outraged critics, no onslaught, no embarrassment for Selbourne, no need for him to stonewall, and the "original manuscript," the "translation," and the "critical apparatus" could have lain hidden forever, as they all deserve to. "The kindest thing to do with Jacob would be to send him back to wherever he has spent the last seven centuries for another long rest" (Jenner 1997).

How curious too that Selbourne would devote no less than five years of his life to a project on the off chance that it would culminate in the publication of an entire book under his "editorship." If an friend of "many years" comes to your door and asks you to translate 280 leaves of a thirteenth-century text just for his benefit, do you agree, plug away for almost five years, and hope that your toil will culminate in a book without first coming to an agreement about what will happen afterwards? And notice all the trouble to which Selbourne went: he not only make his "translation" but also put together a "critical apparatus," he wrote to many people seeking advice (see the paragraph to which note 135 is attached about the eleven people "as well as [...] many others too numerous to mention for their responses to my queries upon a hundred and one different matters"), he tried to identify every person and every place mentioned in the "original manuscript" (see, for example, section 19 for his remark that "[...] searching for corroboration of Jacob's references [was] a lengthy and arduous process [...]" and note 137 on how he turned to Shu-ching Naughton, of the Bodleian Library, for help with a certain name), and so on and so forth.

If so, Selbourne was the most generous of friends and the alleged "present owner" the most ungrateful of people. Yet Selbourne bears no ill will and has sealed his lips. "It is both a matter of honour and of gratitude for an act of faith." Violins, please!

Furthermore, was his friend of "many years" a Sinologist who needed a full and precise translation of every passage of Chinese interest (with marginal notes if appropriate), a student of the Jewish world who needed a full and precise translation of every passage of Jewish interest (with marginal notes if appropriate), a student of the Muslim world who needed a full and precise translation of every passage of Muslim interest (with marginal notes if appropriate), a student of the Italian world who needed a full and precise translation of every passage of Italian interest (with marginal notes if appropriate), and so on? If Selbourne could not make out the name of, say, this or that person or place, a notation like "name illegible in original" would have been enough. Which is to say that we cannot believe that Selbourne would go to all that trouble of putting together just one copy of Selbourne 1997a for the sole and private use of just one person who, moreover, would presumably not show it to anyone else.
But we are still being falsely naive, for we do not believe any part of Selbourne's story: no friend of "many years"; no "original manuscript"; no "Jacob of Ancona"; and so on. We do believe, however, Selbourne when he said he was naive, though not in the way he thought he was and not only in connection with his alleged friend's alleged inacitance. Rather, he was naive if he thought we would fall for his story. On the contrary, his story is such a glaring example of stonewalling that we see on first reading that it is preposterous.

The foregoing analysis, it bears repeating, is my reconstruction of the prehistory of *The City of Light* in the assumption that Subpossibility 2.C is right. The analysis is either wholly right, wholly wrong, or partly right and partly wrong. Even if it is wrong in certain details or incomplete (I am at a loss to account for the presence of Venetian in Higher Macaronic), it seems to be cogent overall.

If anyone wants to offer an alternate scenario to mine, that is, one based on Possibility 1, Subpossibility 2.A, or Subpossibility 2.B, let us have it. Presumably, only one person might take up my invitation. But he must offer us a detailed, logical, step-by-step analysis, like the one just presented, if he wants to prove that Subpossibility 2.C is right (so far, despite several tiny-scale attempts, as in brief letters to the editor, he has failed to do so).

In section 18 we will again draw the strings of the purse.

16. The uncanny resemblance between (1) the alleged "Jacob of Ancona"'s political, social, ethical, and philosophical preoccupations, and (2) David of Urbino's

We have already remarked on a few of the similarities between David of Urbino and the alleged "Jacob of Ancona."

After reading Selbourne's alleged "translation," I thought to myself that for several reasons the alleged "original manuscript" as seen through Selbourne's alleged "translation" baffles recognition as a thirteenth-century but not as a late-twentieth-century document:

A. "Jacob" was a thin disguise for a twentieth-century person speaking about his own place and his own time, namely, the non-Jewish Western world of the late twentieth century, not any society, whether Jewish or non-Jewish, whether Eastern or Western, of the thirteenth.

B. The language and the thoughts of the tale were too sophisticated for the mid thirteenth century but they were appropriate for someone of some education living in the late twentieth in the non-Jewish Western world.

C. The issues that "Jacob" raised were not issues of the thirteenth century but they were issues in the Western world of the late twentieth.

D. Accepting "Jacob"'s tale as having been written in the thirteenth century would be as impossible as accepting claims that people in that century wrote music like Shostakovich's, painted paintings like Picasso's, sculpted sculptures like Brancusi's, and designed buildings like Wright's. Furthermore, most if not all of "Jacob"'s issues seemed to be issues amply discussed in Selbourne's other books and most if not all of "Jacob"'s views on those issues appeared to be Selbourne's too (we are reminded of Dickens, who wove events of his own life and people he knew into his fiction), so that
whereas the alleged "Jacob" failed to come off as a believable character, he did sound plausible as Selbourne's late-twentieth-century mouthpiece masquerading as a thirteenth-century "astonishing intellectual titan" (see note 35).

All the negative reviewers, even three of the uncritical reviewers (see x-xii below) and even one of the few positive reviewers (see xiii) had the same reactions as I to the modernity of the alleged "Jacob"'s thoughts (to say nothing of the many anticipatory anachronisms [see passim in the present essay] and the modernity of his Chinese [see section 18 for Barrett's remark that "even the low-life characters speak a surprisingly modern form of Northern Mandarin, rather than the local dialect"]). For example:

i. "The Chinese in 'City of Light' sound suspiciously like 20th-century Americans, says Hymes. They've got surprisingly modern ideas--that criminals aren't to blame for their actions, for example, or that homosexuality is normal. Disapprovingly, Jacob describes the graphic violence in a performance--but his description fits current movies better than Chinese entertainment of the day, says Hymes. And some philosophical passages in the book sound like Western interpretations of Confucian thought from the 1950s. These anachronisms have led Hymes to wonder if 'someone was using the 13th century as an allegory for the 20th century'" (Chang 1997).

ii. Hillenbrand remarks that "Those familiar with Selbourne's books will find a remarkable similarity between the political and religious views of Jacob, a well-read 12th [sic (D.L.G.)] century merchant, and his 20th century translator. Lectures on the importance of civic responsibility, which Jacob gave to an assembly of Chinese town elders, echo the same political philosophy which Selbourne sets out in his 1994 book, The Principle of Duty. There is more; Jacob and Selbourne agree on capitalism, education and, not surprisingly, the mistreatment of Jews [...]" (Hillenbrand 1997). Apparently, Selbourne was naive enough to believe that we would be naive enough to believe that a mere trader would have such thoughts, that someone who had come to trade would be keen on taking time out from his business to want to transmit those thoughts to the locals, that the locals were interested in hearing his thoughts, that they were interested to such an extent that an assembly was organized to listen to the foreigner's thoughts, that such an honor was accorded a non-Chinese trader (thus, to someone low on the local social scale because of his occupation and maybe for being non-Chinese too), and that he would keep a detailed record of his thoughts. Is it not obvious that this was David of Urbino talking to an imaginary assembly under the name "Jacob of Ancona" in order to rebroadcast his ideas?

iii. After noting that the text of The City of Light was "unusually long for period and genre," Kaveney remarks that "By coincidence, much of what Jacob d'Ancona dislikes in 13th-century China is what David Selbourne dislikes in late-20th century Britain. Further, the dialectical principles with which d'Ancona controverts his ideological opponents closely parallel Selbourne's rhetorical techniques" (Kaveney 1997).

iv. "[...] d'Ancona makes something of a practice of anticipating the debates of the contemporary world in terms that are startlingly relevant and sometimes humorous. [...] On education, the exchanges between the wise and foolish inhabitants of Zaitun could have come straight from a TV debate" (Walden 1997). The contemporary Western world, that is.

Tongue in cheek, Walden says further, "No doubt I have completely misread this diverting and sometimes wise book, whose authenticity is vouched for in a blurb by the Sunday Telegraph columnist, Matthew...d'Ancona." See the paragraph to which note 140 is attached on Matthew d'Ancona's lack of
relevant credentials. We are eager to learn the details of his authentication; among other things, we would like to know precisely what he "authenticated." Since the only authenticatable object is the alleged "original manuscript," we are curious to know how he authenticated it without examining it. But again we are being naive, for, as is clear from the negative reviews and letters to the editor, including the present essay, anyone certifying the authenticity of the alleged "original manuscript" on the basis of Selbourne's book is a dunce.

v. "[Spence] suggested that the book's philosophical digressions reflected Mr. Selbourne's own intellectual preoccupations" (unsigned 1999a). Reference is to Spence 1997.

vi. "Spence [...] noted some incongruities with established historical fact in Jacopo's description of China. He also queried the gratuitous insertion of depictions of sexual incidents and Jacopo's supposed participation in public debates in China. Jacopo's preoccupation with sex and gender issues has a strangely contemporary odour; we are entertained to descriptions of striptease, genital organs, male and female homosexuality, and, oddest of all, a thirteenth-century Chinese feminist whose doctrines are a hotchpotch of Julie Burchill and Madame Mao" (Wasserstein and Wasserstein 1997:16). "These passages read more like discarded bits and pieces left over from earlier work. Trickle-down economics, libertarian concepts and quasi-communitarian ideas jostle here fashionably and anachronistically. In literary terms the book is a big bore, rendered supremely irritating by the enveloping balloon of apparatus criticus. Considered as a satire on contemporary mores, Jacopo's memoir falls flat on its face" (ibidem).16

vii. "The most celebrated chronicler of medieval Jewish Mediterranean merchants, S.D. Goitein, observed in 1973, that 'the religious and learned middle-class traders, who left us their writings in the Geniza, were as tight-lipped about sex as we are bubbling over with it.' Jacob clearly did not share their inhibitions. In the best narrative tradition of depicting the shadowy sides of life, he uses the moral search for his lost servant as an excuse to record a wide spectrum of sexual practice: female prostitutes displaying all their most intimate charms, male transvestites, lesbian couples, boys from 10 to 12 servicing the local Chinese men, publicly copulating couples using special devices and unguents to increase their pleasure, in full view of passers-by" (Spence 1997:21). Read "narrative tradition among Christians" instead of "narrative tradition." Jews have no such tradition.

Hence a passage like the following (in which the alleged "Jacob" supposedly described his visit to a Chinese brothel), one of the many implausible ones in the alleged tale, is as likely to come from the pen of a traditional Jew (all the less so if he was a rabbi of "noble rabbinical lineage" and the grandson of "the great rabbi Israel of Florence") as the popes of our day, even under pen names, are to review blue movies for L'Osservatore Romano or publish Fescennine verse in Latinitas:

"Having made herself naked, God forbid, she began carnal sin with the thigh first and afterward with the belly, a strange fragrance coming from her scented body, so that a man might die of his desires... Nor did she have much shame in showing it, albeit with little hair, nor forbid certain men the touching of it, who, with swollen members, lay on a mat with the girl in great delight. Whereupon I saw many obscene things, praying to God that I might learn therefrom yet avoid beastly acts on my own part... Thus, one placed a silver clasp about the root of his member... Whereupon he parted the thighs of the said woman, may God forgive me for what is written, helping her to raise her buttocks high and with sputum making the interior part moist...."

viii. "We can almost read the account Pitaco gives of the troubles of contemporary society as an invective against twentieth-century habits [...]" (Abulafia 1997c:65). "[...] the greatest warning Jacob
makes seems to be directed not at his own time, nor at our recent history, but at the social conditions of the west at the end of the second millennium" (idem, p. 66).

ix. "The possibility that one is reading, not the account of a medieval traveler, but a late-20th-century dystopian novel a la Gulliver's Travels, can hardly fail to occur" (Halkin 2001a).

Even three of the uncritical commentators noted the unusually modern ring of the tale:

x. "[...] the curiously modern voice of its 13th-century author" (Davidson 1997). That "modern voice" does not sound curious if the thesis is accepted that the main purpose of Selbourne's book was to rebroadcast his ethical, philosophical, political, and social ideas.

xi. Quanzhou of the 1270s, "in its wealth, sophistication and decadence, appears joltingly contemporary" (unsigned 1997b).

xii. "Jacob, the moment he lands in China, begins to plod. Is the whole thing an allegory, I began to wonder, a precursor of those political allegories cast in the form of journeys to unknown lands which, in the 18th century, allowed witty satires of current government to amuse the smart set?" (Glazebrook 1997).

xiii. Even Phillips, by far the most enthusiastic of Selbourne's handful of cheerleaders, touched on the parallels (but, as her wont was, left Selbourne with the last word instead of trying to dig below the surface): "The second element that ignited the academics' suspicion was Selbourne himself. The City of Light's analysis of moral decay and its prescriptions for restoring a sense of civil responsibility bore a remarkable similarity to Selbourne's own views, expressed in his influential book, The Principal of Duty. Selbourne says his views were influenced by the Jacob manuscript, on which he worked for some time before writing The Principle of Duty" (Phillips 1998).

Unlike the shallow Phillips, Hillenbrand pursued the matter. Asked to explain why certain of the alleged "Jacob"'s beliefs and views were identical with or similar to his, Selbourne said that "Two or three passages [in the alleged "original manuscript" (D.L.G.)] triggered a very fertile process of philosophic creativity in me" (Hillenbrand 1997). Whereas Phillips failed to pursue the matter, Hillenbrand does not: "Yet," he goes on to say, "Selbourne omits any reference to Jacob in the original 1994 edition of The Principle of Duty even though the book is laced with references to works from which Selbourne claimed he 'derived intellectual stimulus or moral instruction.'"

Let Selbourne not claim that if he had mentioned "Jacob" and the "original manuscript" in The Principle of Duty, he might have compromised the "anonymity" of the "present owner," for his acknowledgment of the alleged "Jacob" in The Principle of Duty could have been as nonspecific as "Some ideas expressed in this book were taken from a thirteenth-century Italian manuscript in private hands." Many of the most valuable works of art in private hands are often exhibited publicly with the notation PRIVATE COLLECTION and no harm has ever come to the works or their owners.

xiv. At least once, a critical reviewer calls attention to the modernity of the tale but is not explicit: "The two great granite pagodas that distinguish the city [of Quanzhou] even today were finished in 1250, and we read of one Buddhist monk spending the subsequent decade building and repairing more than 200 bridges -- a picture of practical religious devotion that makes Jacob's account of temples deserted by all but a handful of elderly clerics utterly unlikely" (Barrett 1997:180). If, as several reviewers remark, you take the scene which "Jacob" allegedly painted of Quanzhou of the 1270s (see note 6 on the city really described in Selbourne's book) as Selbourne's of Europe of the 1980s and 1990s, you see here his criticism of the decline of religious fervor (especially noticeable in
Protestant Europe of the late twentieth century, less so in a good part of Roman Catholic Europe, even less so in Eastern Orthodox Europe).

Barrett is thus right that the picture is "utterly unlikely" if you consider it to be a picture of China in the 1270s, but if you take it as depicting certain segments of Western society in the late twentieth century, it is realistic.

In summary, "Jacob of Ancona" would have been a little less unbelievable had he been presented as a fictional character of the late twentieth rather than of the thirteenth century.

Hillenbrand writes too that "Selbourne complains that the controversy over the authenticity of the manuscript and the debates over the accuracy of the details of Chinese history contained in The City of Light have deflected discussion of the book's broader political and philosophical ideas" (Hillenbrand 1997). If works of fiction laden with ideology can just as easily be discussed from the ideological viewpoint as works of nonfiction carrying an ideological message (indeed, all high-level works of fiction carry a message), the controversial position of Selbourne's book on the fictional-factual continuum should have been no obstacle to such discussion, so that if no discussion ensued, it was presumably not because attention had been deflected to the question of the tale's authenticity (Selbourne seemed here to be rationalizing or trying to smooth his rumpled feathers) but because "the book's broader political and philosophical ideas" were straightaway perceived to be Selbourne's ideas, which, being available in other publications of his (where they were in fact much more easily accessible because they were worded in lean expository prose and thus need not be teased out, as in The City of Light, from the treacly prose of a fatuous historical novel featuring a nonstop chatterbox) and having earlier been discussed in various periodicals, were now perceived by the critics to be in no need of rebroadcasting or of further examination. Can Selbourne point to ideas of "Jacob"'s that he (Selbourne) has never espoused in print? If not, he cannot deny the identity or near identity between his and that imaginary being's ideology, that identity or near identity being circumstantial evidence that Selbourne was the real "Jacob."

As for "the details of Chinese history," either Selbourne was unaware of the full spectrum of "details" which the Scourges of Jacob marshalled to underpin their contention that Selbourne's entire enterprise was an attempt to pull the wool over our eyes or he was disingenuously trying to play down the force of the onslaught.

Not surprisingly, three years later Selbourne was still struggling to direct the spotlight away from the questions of the existence, authenticity, and factualness of the alleged "original manuscript" and toward ideas allegedly "Jacob"'s: "the absence of an 'original manuscript' may frustrate our curiosity but, for the most part, does not trouble our judgement as to the virtue or truth of that which we read and ponder" (Selbourne 2000:442). We agree, provided that by "truth" is meant philosophical truth and provided that the suggestion is accepted that The City of Light is a work of fiction written by Selbourne under the pen name "Jacob of Ancona." In connection with those other books of Selbourne's, is it just another of the many "coincidences" leaping to the eye that the alleged "Jacob" stayed longest in India and in China, that Selbourne also spent time in those two countries, and that both "Jacob" and Selbourne published about both of them? This much is certain: the alleged "Jacob of Ancona"'s style is far too sophisticated for anyone in medieval Europe, though it would not be for, say, a late-twentieth-century speaker of English trying to write in a way typical of a bygone era. However, to Selbourne's credit as a "translator," we must admit that his rendering of the alleged "original manuscript" is so seamless, so
flawless, so smooth, so devoid of even an iota of translationese that one would think one was reading something originally written in Wardour Street English.

See note 147 for more on Selbourne's complaint.

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Except in the People's Republic of China, Selbourne did not get a pulpit of any size. Even there, the few people whose enthusiasm he could excite were interested only in what they thought his book could tell them about Quanzhou of the early 1270s. Was Selbourne so naive that he hoped that citizens of the People's Republic of China occupying official positions would warm to the ideology of the author of Against Socialist Illusion: A Radical Argument and other anti-leftist publications? Once again, we get the impression that Selbourne had an exaggerated sense of who he was and of what he could accomplish.100

The City of Light was not a best-seller because it was too long, too slow-moving (hence boring), and too padded with Selbourne's rehashed ideas. Also, it was widely excoriated in both academic and popular periodicals for being poorly written fiction laden with mistakes that was being misadvertized as factual nonfiction (which is to say that it was advertised as something it was not), but the critics' onslaught was presumably just a minor reason for poor sales, for, as commercial publishers know, even bad reviews are preferable to no reviews).

So far as I can tell, except in the People's Republic of China, the book changed nothing in the world of learning:

1. no conferences were held to hail the book and assess its contributions to various disciplines.

2. just a few people with academic interests defended Selbourne; none invited him to collaborate on further projects.

3. no tertiary schools or research institutes extended invitations to him to deliver guest lectures, much less to join the faculty, even temporarily.

4. no learned societies elected him to membership as a result of the book (though he was awarded the Order of Merit of the Italian Republic and La Rubiconia Accademia dei Filopatri di did not expel him).

5. no honorary doctorates or other prizes were awarded him.

6. the syllabus of no course in any school was changed.

7. no schools made the book required or even recommended reading as a factual source.

8. the book inspired no master's essays, doctoral dissertations, or other academic investigations.

9. no reputable research publication considers Selbourne's book to be a source of fact (Bernstein 2008, Chanda 2007, Margariti 2007, and Thubron 2006, for example, do not mention it).

10. no history book were rewritten.

11. no documentaries about "Jacob" were made.

12. though it is periodically updated, Opera del Vocabolario Italiano has not drawn on the "earnest" in Selbourne 1997a or 2000 (see the first paragraph of section 3).

13. no entry for "Jacob of Ancona" was added to any encyclopedia or other work of reference except Wikipedia, the free encyclopedia, which speaks of "the supposed author of a book of travels, purportedly made by a scholarly Jewish merchant [...] The manuscript [...] has never come to light,
even in photocopies; its possessor still anonymous. [...] No scholar has come forward to support the text's authenticity in public," thus wordings which do not flatter Selbourne (the encyclopedia should question the very existence of the alleged "original manuscript." It will be interesting to see whether future editions of Farquhar 2005, Farrer 1907, Rey 1925, and Stein 1993 take notice.

14. no businesses were named for "Jacob of Ancona" (many are named for Marco Polo: to take just a handful of examples, Marco Polo Ristorante, Marco Polo Tile and Marble [both in Kings County, New York], Marco Polo Building Corporation, Marco Polo International [both in Nassau County, New York], Marco Polo Buttons, Marco Polo Caterers, Marco Polo Cruises, Marco Polo Motel, Marco Polo Network, Marco Polo Noodle Shops, Marco Polo Pizza Cafe [all in New York County, New York], Marco Polo Cruises, Marco Polo Shoes, Marco Polo Trading [all in Queens County, New York], Marco Polo Pizzerias, Marco Polo Unisex Hairstylist [both in Suffolk County, New York], and Marco Polo Travel [Westchester County, New York]).

15. if the media reported anything, it was only the Iacobomastiges' dismissal of the enterprize as fantasy.

16. Higher Macaronic was not added to the repertory of the world's lects.

As a member of the editorial staff of *Plagiary: Cross-Disciplinary Studies in Plagiarism, Fabrication and Falsification* commented on the present essay, "No serious student of the Middle Ages would pay any attention to Selbourne's invention." Neither would any serious student of Jewish studies or of the languages composing "Jacob"'s Higher Macaronic -- except to slate it.

Selbourne got his fifteen minutes of fame among the laity and he continues to be revered by a handful of undiscerning people in the People's Republic of China (but just for what they thought his book told them about Quanzhou of the early 1270s) and a few credulous people elsewhere, at least two of whom had a parti pris:

A. Henri Gambourg, who was yearning for confirmation of his ideas (see section 142), but did not realize that Selbourne's book was fiction.

B. Luc Kwanten, who stood to gain monetarily from the success of Selbourne's enterprize (see section 2).

17. A. A newborn Jewish male's circumcision before the eighth day after birth? B. The Sanctification recited at a wedding? C. The Sanctification recited at the end of the Sabbath? D. The Torah commands Jews to invite everybody to a wedding? E. The alleged "Jacob"'s unusual way of marking the thirty-third day of the Counting of the Sheaf. F. A suspicious excess of Jewish-related details

A. A newborn Jewish male's circumcision
before the eighth day after birth?

Selbourne's "translation" ends with this paragraph: "With such great store and with God's blessing I was restored to my loved one, having been absent from her for three years and twenty-four days from the day of my departure to the day of my return. My Sara, O my light, had passed grievous
years without me, having been greatly troubled by many things. So that she wept bitterly to speak of my father, yet being greatly comforted by other things also, as the birth of our son Mose, upon whom the sign was made before the eighth day, for which God be praised" (Selbourne 1997a:350 and 2000:427).

If you succeeded in plowing through that sleep-inducing Wardour Street English (as a conscientious reviewer, I was obliged to endure all 417 pages of it but admit having skimmed more than a few times, probably at the expense of not catching some of the real "Jacob"'s howlers), you may have wondered what the alleged "Jacob" meant by "make the sign upon [someone]," which sounds almost like the Christian term make the sign of the cross and is an odd, un-Jewish way of referring to circumcision, not found in any known Jewish text, the closest we can come being Genesis 17:10-12, which in translation reads "This is My covenant, which ye shall keep, between Me and you and thy seed after thee: every male among you shall be circumcized. And ye shall be circumcized in the flesh of your foreskin; and it shall be a token of a covenant betwixt Me and you. And he that is eight days old shall be circumcized among you, every male throughout your generations, he that is born in the house, or bought with money of any foreigner, that is not of thy seed'. Thus, a token or a sign, but nothing about making it. Let us, however, dismiss that animadversion as a quibble (see note 157), for Selbourne's enterprize has so many smoking guns that we can afford to be generous -- and, anyway, he could claim, as he in fact did (see note 44), that "I may have mistranslated" (if so, we would be curious to know what the "original manuscript" has and how it should be properly translated).

In the last sentence of the above-quoted passage, consider, rather, the smoking gun, first pointed out in de Rachewiltz and Leslie 1998. As anyone with even just an elementary knowledge of Judaism knows, a newborn Jewish male is normally circumcized on the eighth day after birth, sometimes later but never earlier than that day:

A. Since Genesis 17:10-12 says that God commands that newborn Jewish males be circumcized on the eighth day after birth, we are not surprized to read in Genesis 21:4, 'And Abraham circumcized his son Isaac when he was eight days old, as God had commanded him,' or in Leviticus 12:1-3, 'And the Lord spoke unto Moses, saying: Speak unto the children of Israel, saying: If a woman be delivered, and bear a man-child, then she shall be unclean seven days; as in the days of the impurity of her sickness shall she be unclean. And in the eighth day the flesh of his foreskin shall be circumcized.'

B. A newborn Jewish male is thus normally circumcized on the eighth day after birth, even if that day is the Sabbath or the Day of Atonement (because, as the Talmud says, circumcision outweighs all the other 612 commandments in the Pentateuch).

C. Nor are we surprized to read in Luke 1:59 (in reference to Jesus), 'And it came to pass, that on the eighth day they came to circumcize the child [...]', or in Luke 2:21, 'And when eight days were accomplished for the circumcizing of the child, his name was called yeshua [...]'.

D. In fact, the Mishna forbids circumcision before the eighth day: 'A child can be circumcized on the eighth, ninth, tenth, eleventh or twelfth day, but never earlier and never later. How is this? The rule is that it shall be done on the eighth day; but if the child was born at twilight, the child is circumcized on the ninth day and if at twilight on the eve of Sabbath, the child is circumcized on the tenth day; if a Festival-day falls after the Sabbath, the child is circumcized on the eleventh day; and if the two Festival-days of the New Year fall after the Sabbath, the child is circumcized on the twelfth day. If a child is sick, it is not circumcized until it becomes well' (Shabat 19:5).
E. Jewish law further elaborates on certain aspects of the commandment, for example, if the newborn boy is sick (in Shabat 134a the Talmud goes into some detail on the definition of a sick child), the day of his recovery is considered the day of his birth, seven days are then allowed to pass, and he is circumcized on the eighth, though if the eighth day is a Sabbath or the Day of Atonement, the ceremony is postponed to the ninth. Or, if the boy is born prematurely, circumcision is put off until he is sufficiently developed, the same prohibition about the Sabbath and the Day of Atonement applying here too. Or, circumcision does not take place at all if at least two older brothers of the newborn have died as a result of it, say, because they had hemophilia and the removal of the prepuce caused fatal bleeding. In no case, however, is the ceremony permitted before the eighth day after birth. Even non-Orthodox Jews who have their newborn sons circumcized do not do so before the eighth day (which is probably a good idea medically too).

We are presumably to understand from the last paragraph of Selbourne's "translation" that the alleged "Sara" was pregnant when the alleged "Jacob" left for China and thus that she gave birth during his absence. If so, we could not claim that a rabbi's allowing his son to be circumcized before his eighth day is another smoking gun. Rather, our contention is that:

A. The alleged "Sara" being the wife of a rabbi, she would know not to have the boy circumcized before the eighth day. Indeed, any Jew traveling with even light Jewish baggage, rabbi's wife or not, would know.

B. Because the alleged "Sara" lived in a Jewish community, she was in touch with numerous other Jews who would have known, so that if perchance she suffered a temporary loss of memory (anything is allegeable in this tragicomedy of unlimited possibilities), other Jews would have reminded her of the law.

C. Had "Jacob" existed and been Jewishly knowledgeable, he would have reacted differently: instead of nonchalantly remarking that the boy was circumcized before his eighth day, he would have expressed astonishment, embarrassment, and regret that Jewish law had been violated and he would have felt impelled to explain the violation.

As you wade through the twaddle of The City of Light, if at all you can stomach "Jacob"s logorrhea (in Metamorphoses 5:678 Ovid speaks of studium immane loquendi 'a limitless desire to talk') and Selbourne's treacly prose, again and again you are astonished by that alleged "rabbi"s lack, as here, of even basic Jewish knowledge. The only logical conclusion to draw is that it was the real "Jacob"s Jewish ignorance put into the fictitious "Jacob"s mouth that was on display here. Indeed, lo and behold, when you turn to Selbourne's comment on that passage (part of his "critical apparatus," presumably designed to give his enterprise a veneer of scholarliness), you find him writing that "That is, the 'sign' of circumcision, which is required to be carried out within eight days of birth" (1997:388, note 50, and 2000:525, note 50).101

Had Selbourne stopped after the second comma (had he written only "That is, the 'sign' of circumcision"), we could have argued that having a newborn Jewish male circumcized before the eighth day of birth was a smoking gun; Selbourne could have countered that he mistranslated (see note 44) and that instead of "before" he should have written "on"; and thus our argument would not have been airtight. But Selbourne did not stop at the comma and, by going on to say "which is required to be carried out within eight days of birth," he made stronger in our mind the impression that he was the real "Jacob."

Our argument can be made even more airtight:
A. If for some reason Selbourne claims that he "mistranslated," let us cut him off even before he even reaches the pass: in "basically educated Tuscan," 'on' with dates is not expressed at the surface level (as in "partirò venerdì" 'I will leave on Friday,' literally 'I-will-leave Friday') whereas 'before' with dates is expressed at the surface level (as in "partirò prima di venerdì" 'I will leave before Friday,' literally 'I-will-leave before of Friday'). Thus, if the alleged "Jacob" had intended to say (as he should have) 'on', he would have written nothing to express that meaning ("l'ottavo giorno" 'on the eighth day', literally 'the-eighth day'). Which is to say that had an "original manuscript" existed, had it been authentic, and had it come from the pen of a Jewishly knowledgeable person, nothing in it would have prompted any translator to write "before."

Consequently, something other than the alleged "original manuscript," namely what we assume to be Selbourne's ignorance of the proper timing of the circumcision of a newborn Jewish male, prompted him to use that word. The fictitious thirteenth-century "Jacob" should have been more careful before espousing anything the twentieth-century real "Jacob" told him to say.

B. Furthermore, inasmuch as a second passage in the alleged "Jacob"'s tale also mentions the circumcision of a newborn Jewish male before the eighth day of birth (Selbourne 1997a:109), it occurs not once but twice in the tale. In Selbourne's "critical apparatus," it occurs at least once (I forgot to check whether his annotation to page 109 says anything). Selbourne would therefore have to argue that he "mistranslated" not once but twice and that at least once (or twice?) he failed "through inadvertence" to remark on the unusual timing, but if he tried to take that tack, we would repeat to him arguments presented above: "l'ottavo giorno" (thus, without any preposition preceding) could not possibly be mistranslated as 'before the eighth day'; a well-known commandment would not have been violated; the imaginary "Jacob" not once but twice failed to express astonishment, embarrassment, and regret; and the wife of a rabbi would not have had or allowed her son to be circumcized before his eighth day.

What would "the great rabbi of Israel of Florence" have said if he had known that Jewish law would be violated when his great-grandson was circumcized? What would Selbourne’s grandfather (once the Chief Rabbi of Antwerp and later the Ashkenazic Chief Rabbi of Tel-Aviv) have said if he had known that he would one day claim that Jewish law requires circumcision before the eighth day after birth? Two Jewishly learned ancestors. Two Jewishly ignorant descendents. As Vergil says in The Aeneid, "deterior paulatim ac decolor aetas successit" (8.326).

We thus conclude that Selbourne was unaware of the proper timing of the circumcision of a newborn Jewish male (an irrefutable argument in light of what he wrote in note 50 of Selbourne 1997a:388 and 2000:525), that the real "Jacob," not the imaginary one, blundered, and that once again we conclude that Selbourne was the real "Jacob."103

B. The Sanctification recited at a wedding?

Also revealing ignorance of even the basics of Jewish ritual is the alleged "Jacob"'s statement that at the alleged wedding of his alleged son and his alleged daughter (Selbourne 2000:66ff.), "the kiddush and amotzi were said by Rabbi Salomone ben Giuda of Basra, at which a great Amen was called" (idem, p. 69).

Kidush (literally 'sanctification') is the Hebrew name of the ceremony and prayer by which the
holiness of the Sabbath, each of the Three Pilgrimage Festivals (the Feast of Booths, Passover, and the Feast of Weeks), and the Jewish New Year is proclaimed (the name is a shortening of Hebrew kidush hayom 'sanctification of the day'). No such ceremony takes place and no such prayer is recited at weddings.

Might the real "Jacob" have confused, on one hand, Hebrew kidushim 'marriage' and Jewish Aramaic kidushin 'marriage' and, on the other, Hebrew kidush? If so, he could not claim that he was just following the fictitious "Jacob," for, although those two words meaning 'marriage' and the one meaning 'sanctification' are derived from the same root, even a Jew possessing but a smattering of Jewish knowledge would not confuse them, any more than someone commanding only a smidgen of English would confuse sanction and sanctification. To say nothing of a rabbi like the fictitious "Jacob," who would be no more likely to confuse kidushim ~ kidushin and kidush than an imam would confuse Arabic 'isl_m 'Islam' and Arabic muslim 'Muslim' (which likewise derive from the same root). Consequently, if anyone confused the words, it was not the fictitious "Jacob."

Continuing to display his ignorance in Jewish subjects, Selbourne managed to pack several blunders into this definition: "kiddush (Hebrew) lit. 'sanctification', the blessing of the Sabbath wine" (idem, p. 476). Had Selbourne bothered to read the prayer, which is available in English, French, and Italian translations for anyone taking an "interest in Judaica" (see note 58), he would have learned not just that it is recited only at the times mentioned in the previous paragraph but also that it does not "bless[...] the Sabbath wine." Furthermore, had Selbourne has any serious "interest in Judaica," he would have possessed the elementary knowledge that Jews, unlike Christians, do not bless anything tangible. Thus, whereas, for example, wine and bread are consecrated during the Christian mass, in the Jewish religion a blessing of God is recited, for example, over wine or over bread, but the wine or the bread is itself not consecrated (see, for example, Yiddish makhn a brokhe iber vayn 'recite a blessing over wine', makhn a brokhe ibern vayn 'recite a blessing over the wine', makhn a brokhe iber broyt 'recite a blessing over bread', makhn a brokhe ibern broyt 'recite a blessing over the bread', and so on).

It would be good to know the spelling in the alleged "original manuscript" of the words which Selbourne translated as "the kiddush and amotzi" and why Selbourne chose the spelling "amotzi." While eagerly awaiting that information, we note that since the Jewish blessing over bread (called hamoytsi in Ashkenazic Hebrew, hamotsi in Israeli Hebrew, amosti in Judezmo, and hamoyste ~ moyste in Yiddish) is not necessarily part of the Sanctification (that blessing is recited before bread is eaten, whether the Sanctification is recited or not), the Sanctification always includes that blessing, so that to speak of "the kiddush and amotzi" betrays as sodden ignorance of Jewish basics as speaking of "the Mishnah and the Talmud" does (see the second part of section 9 on the latter blunder). As expected, Selbourne does not point out the alleged "Jacob"'s blunder.

C. The Sanctification recited at the end of the Sabbath?

From Selbourne's "translation" we also learn that the alleged "Jacob" "pronounced the sanctification for the end of the Sabbath" (Selbourne 2000:79). No such ceremony or prayer has never existed nor could it ever exist because it would be a contradiction in terms since the end of the Sabbath is the end of that holy day.
We thus have quite a crew here: now, not just the alleged "Jacob," allegedly a rabbi, but also the alleged "Salomone ben Giuda," allegedly a rabbi, who both blunder in ways in which even a youngster growing up in the traditional Jewish world would not, and the others present, just as Jewishly ignorant as they and thus ignorant of the fact that the Sanctification is not recited at a wedding, chime in with "a great Amen." Would could have introduced all those crass blunders into the "original manuscript"?

D. The Torah commands Jews to invite everybody to a wedding?

"Certain Saracens were also present [at the wedding of my son and daughter (D.L.G.)], it being a commandment of the Torah to invite all, including such neighbours as are Saracens and even if they be foes" (Selbourne 2000:67). It would be good to know where in the Torah, other than the fictitious "Jacob"'s, we can find that commandment.

E. The alleged "Jacob"'s unusual way of marking the thirty-third day of the Counting of the Sheaf

"The next day, being the eighteenth day of Iyar and the day of Lag Ba-Omer,47 I remained in the synagogue together with Rabbi Isaac ben Isaac, and would give myself to no buying and selling. But Menahem Vivo, as well as Lazzaro and Eliezer, did otherwise, while the captain of our fleet, learning of my piety and that I would neither buy nor sell among the Jews until the morrow, and the day after, grew impatient that we prayed so long to the Creator. I would not be moved from my will, but passed many hours in the study of the Mishnah both on the day of Lag Ba-Omer and on the morrow also, until I was content that my duty had been done" (Selbourne 2000:47).

Since at least in post-Talmudic times only a brief passage, taking up not even two full pages even in a small prayerbook, is added to the statutory prayers (and then only to the Evening Prayer) on each of the forty-nine days, including the thirty-third ("the day of Lag Ba-Omer"), on which Jews count the sheaf cut in the barley harvest, only someone ignorant of how that half holiday is celebrated might write "we prayed so long to the Creator" and "[w]e passed many hours in the study of the Mishnah both on the day of Lag Ba-Omer and on the morrow" and we wonder what "duty" he had in mind. Whereas that Jewishly ignorant person could not have been the fictitious "Jacob," it might well have been the real "Jacob."

Also weird is the alleged "Jacob"' statement that "I would neither buy nor sell among the Jews until the morrow." Business on that day is prohibited to Jews whether the buyers or the sellers are Jews or non-Jews.

Note 47 in Selbourne's "critical apparatus" says in part, "18 May 1270. The day of 'Lag Ba-Omer' (Hebrew in original) [...]" It would be good to know what Hebrew spelling he found in the alleged "original manuscript."

F. A suspicious excess of Jewish-related details
Selbourne's "translation" often contains an excess of Jewish-related details, three examples being:

A. "At first light, the winds being more gentle and my body restored, I prayed to God, blessèd be He, placing my phylacteries upon my forehead and arm, at which many of the sailors seemed astonished" (Selbourne 2000:41). Normally, a Jew would write nothing more than the equivalent of 'I recited the Morning Prayer', it being self-understood that he would at that time either don or not don phylacteries according to what Jewish law prescribes for the day (they are donned every day before the start of the Morning Prayer except on the Sabbath, the three Pilgrimage Festivals, the New Year, the Day of Atonement, on all of which occasions no phylacteries are donned; they are donned on the Ninth of Av, on which occasion they are donned not before the Morning Service but before the Afternoon one; on the Intermediate Days of the Feast of Booths and of Passover, they are donned before the Morning Service in certain Jewish communities and not in others; and a mourner on the first day of mourning does not don them). Mention of phylacteries thus being unusual here, all the more so mention of where they are placed, one gets the impression that Selbourne was trying to impress us with "Jacob"'s profound Jewishness. However, because the alleged "Jacob" remarks on the sailors' astonishment, let us give Selbourne the benefit of the doubt by assuming that "Jacob" added those details in order to explain the sailors' reaction.

In another passage, however, we read, "I placed my phylacteries upon my arm and forehead, giving thanks to God for teaching me His wisdom in the night, and for conducting me towards the light" (idem, p. 58), where, since the reaction of nobody, whether non-Jew or Jew, is mentioned and it is hard to find any justification for the detail, we cannot give Selbourne the benefit of the doubt, the only possible conclusion now being that the real "Jacob" added the detail just to try to impress us.

B. When the alleged "Jacob" allegedly visits a Jewish cemetery in southern India, he notes that the tombstones "of the Cahanim, may their holiness endure for ever, have upon them hands of blessing which are engraved with great art" (idem, p. 102). Note 34 reads "Men of priestly descent" (idem, p. 500).

The wording 'may their holiness endure for ever' is unusual in the Jewish world when reference is to people, even to members of the Priestly Caste (it would not be if reference were to God).

Since it is a universal Jewish custom to carve a pair of hands on the tombstones of members of the Priestly Caste, the alleged "Jacob"'s observation that the stones have such a carving is unusual. Rather, we expect him to take the appearance of such hands there for granted and remark only on the "great art": the hands on the tombstones of the members of the Priestly Caste are engraved with great art'. Thus, the observation is as unusual as if a Roman Catholic priest in, say, 1400 visited a Roman Catholic Church in a distant country and wrote 'the Mass was said there in Latin with great beauty' instead of just 'the Mass was said there with great beauty'. However, let's call that criticism a quibble (see note 157).

"Hands of blessing" is likewise unusual, but let's call that criticism too a quibble.

Selbourne misdefined the italicized word: although the men are indeed of Priestly descent, their distinctive feature is their membership in the Priestly Caste (it is as if he defined the word Jew as 'descendent of Jews').

C. "Thus we departed, for upon the Sabbath the pious man must desist from all matters save
those which are in praise of God, may He be exalted, or which seek His mercy, or which shall serve to spare the Sons of Israel from harm or danger. Therefore, a man shall not bite the nails of his fingers with his teeth, nor pluck a single hair from his head, neither must he listen upon the Sabbath day to the troubles of a city to which he comes as a stranger. ¶ For this is not to remember the Sabbath day nor to keep it holy, from which default may God forever keep me, Amen.”

We should be suspicious of the alleged "Jacob”'s providing population figures for the various Jewish communities he allegedly visited, examples being "more than three thousand Jews" (Basra; Selbourne 2000:59), "one hundred and sixty Jews" (Sri Lanka; idem, p. 106), and "more than three thousand Jews" (Aden; idem, p. 417). Mind you, it's not the figures themselves which arouse suspicion but the indication of such figures itself, which has a modern ring to it (if anything, we expect vague indications like "many Jews" or "a few Jews"). When is the first time we find even approximate figures in Jewish travel literature? I'll grant, however, that I may be quibbling.

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We thus get the impression that the real "Jacob," having decided to make the fictitious "Jacob" a towering Jewish intellectual, interlarded the text with Jewish details to prove he was. If so, the real "Jacob" did not realize that an excess of such information in a travel account would be a dead giveaway of inauthenticity and that, his Jewish baggage being featherweight, he was likely to blunder, as he indeed did time and again.

18. The imaginary "Jacob," the real "Jacob," Marco Polo, Benjamin of Tudela, the Jews of Cochin (again), and allegedly "lost" books -- is there not a connection?

One of the ways in which researchers in all fields increase the fund of knowledge is linking data which were hitherto not seen to be related. Section 15 gives an example and the present section will offer another. Since in both cases we run the risk of connecting dots which in reality are unrelated, what follows is only a suggestion.

In reading Selbourne's book, I was often put in mind of the words eclipse, emulate, go one better, outdo, outpoint, outshine, and surpass. Specifically, I got the impression that in an effort to increase sales of The City of Light (and thus to acquire a more powerful transmitter from which to broadcast or rebroadcast his political, social, ethical, and philosophical ideas) he was striving to suggest comparisons with Marco Polo in which the alleged "Jacob" always emerged either as Polo's equal or as his better. Other reviews too got that impression. For instance, Davidson 1997 writes, "He puts Marco's prose in the shade." The first paragraph of section 1, the last paragraph in subsection D of section 4, the fifth paragraph after the one to which note 86 is attached, and note 93 give examples of implied comparisons, and here are more:

The Western laity in our day believes Marco Polo to be either the first European to have visited China or the first European visitor to have left a detailed account of it.104 Polo wrote that he began his trip from Italy to China and back in 1271. The imaginary "Jacob" said that he began his trip from Italy to China and back in 1270. Since Polo did not know the imaginary thirteenth-century "Jacob" or even know of him, he was not trying to compete with him. We do surmise that the reverse was true, namely that the real "Jacob," who knew of Marco Polo, wanted the imaginary "Jacob" to get
Having first read Polo's account of his trip and then the alleged "Jacob"'s, I got the impression that the real "Jacob" read Polo's account too and then tried to flesh it out. Other negative reviewers too have that impression. For instance:

"Parts of the text could have been written to fill the well-known holes in Polo: his omission of bound feet, tea, Chinese script and woodblock printing all appear in The City of Light. Where most Marco Polo manuscripts are a bit disappointing on women, Jacob, extravagantly and improbably, took two washerwomen with him to China whose wild Decameron-like antics led him to Quanzhou's red light district to gape at transvestites and see-through silks" (Wood 1997).

"Particularly suspicious is Marco Polo's failure to comment on such exotic features of Chinese life as the drinking of tea or the binding of women's feet. Selbourne's traveler, one Jacob d'Ancona, scrupulously calls attention to such details" (Budiansky 1997).

"[...] the relationship with Marco Polo's text seems uncomfortably close" (Barrett 1998:1020). Barrett finds that the real "Jacob" copied from Yule and Cordier 1903, which is a translation of Polo's account: "The only possible conclusion is that we need to stretch the composition of Jacob's text not simply past the date of Marco's book, but past the date of this particular annotated English translation, which, as I have already pointed out, appeared in 1903" (idem, p. 1021).

That the real "Jacob" read Marco Polo's account is clear from the fictitious "Jacob"'s mention of "lions": "Jacob decides against a trip from Zaitun to the capital for fear of 'lions' on the way; we recall that Marco Polo makes the same mistake in referring to tigers. But Marco made that mistake because he used Persian as his main language in China - it had official status under the Mongols - and in the Persian of that time there was no distinction between the two. Jacob is not presented as knowing Persian at all; his interpreter translates everything said in Chinese directly into Italian. And, to judge by the names and terms that are quoted, even the low-life characters speak a surprisingly modern form of Northern Mandarin, rather than the local dialect" (Barrett 1997).

Which is to say that the real "Jacob" presumably took the alleged "Jacob"'s story about "lions" in China from Polo, did not know Persian, did not know, therefore, that Polo's "lions" were actually tigers, and thus made the alleged "Jacob" talk about lions in that country when in fact it had none at the time.

The subtitle of Selbourne 2000 supports the assumption that one of the purposes of creating the thirteenth-century "Jacob" and his tale was to supplant Marco Polo.

The full title of Selbourne 1997a was The City of Light: An Authentic Traveler's Tale. The adjective in the subtitle is both defensive (methinks he doth protest too much) and, maybe intentionally so, ambiguous: is it the traveler who is "authentic"? the "tale"? or both? And is the word "tale" not a Freudian slip? In any case, the full title of Selbourne 2000 was The City of Light: The Hidden Journal of the Man Who Entered China Four Years Before Marco Polo. The new subtitle thus replaced the brief, obviously defensive one of 1997 with something wordier and more explicitly geared to conquering "the Christmas market" (see note 106). The sensational revelation about the fictitious "Jacob"'s allegedly getting to China before Polo was, now, made right on the jacket and right on the title page.105

The real "Jacob" presumably thought that if "Jacob of Ancona" could grab attention away from Marco Polo, "Jacob"'s name would be on everyone's lips, sales of his "authentic traveler's tale"
would skyrocket, people around the world would be analyzing "his" political, social, ethical, and philosophical beliefs, Selbourne's star, after plummeting with his black-balling at Ruskin College (see subsection F of section 22, including note 147), his abandoning academia, and his leaving the British Isles permanently (all in the mid 1980s), would rise again, brighter than ever. Was that not the intended scenario?

Indeed, the wildly exaggerated language with which its commercial publisher trumpeted Selbourne 1997a suggests that it thought it was bringing out a blockbuster best-seller. In point of fact, however, although the publisher was "not disappointed" at least as far as "the Christmas market" of 1997 was concerned, the book was a dud both as the nonfiction it was intended to be and as the fiction that it gave every indication of being, the new, flashier subtitle having no appreciable effect in circles that count, namely the highest academic circles, where Selbourne, so far as I can tell, has not even one supporter. None of the versions of The City of Light, including those in other languages, got on even one list of best-sellers for even a week or won Selbourne any support from relevant researchers. Today, how many people around the world have heard of Marco Polo and how many of "Jacob of Ancona"?

* 

Not only in connection with Marco Polo did the real "Jacob" seem keen on impressing us by having the alleged "Jacob" outdo others.

"They say that in the land of Sinim there are many tens of thousands of Jews of Sinim, as in Sinchalan, Penliian, Chinscie and Suciu, and many other places besides. Thus in the house of study of Chaifen are the lost books of the Maccabees and the son of Sirach, which Nathan ben Dattalo declared to have seen with his own eyes and which I think to be true" (Selbourne 2000:132). We are presumably expected to be astounded that certain books have been "lost" -- and where are they "found"? Of all places, in faraway China, as if lost Finnish books had turned up in Paraguay, lost Japanese books had turned up in Norway, or lost Irish books had turned up in Mongolia. But once again, the real "Jacob," as we will now see, ends up being the loser.

We are dealing here, first, with a work originally written in Hebrew that is known in Jewish Aramaic as alfa-beta deven sira and, for short, ben-sira, in Hebrew as alfa-beta deven sira, chochmat yeshua ben-sira, mishle ven-sira, and, for short, ben-sira, in Greek as Sophia L sou byion Sirach, in Yiddish as mishle ben-sire and, for short, ben-sire, and in English as Ecclesiasticus, Wisdom of Jesus the Son of Sirach (though in Hebrew sources his given name has come down to us not as yeshua 'Joshua' [= 'Jesus'] but as shimon 'Simon'), Wisdom of Jesus the Son of Sirach, Wisdom of Ben-Sira, Wisdom of Ben-Sirach, and, for short, Ben-Sira and Sirach. Since the author tells us that sira was the name of one of his grandfather's and that el'azar 'Eleazar' was his father's name, the titles containing words meaning 'son of Sira' are wrong (doubly so, the short English name Sirach). And, as latter-day research has shown, of the fifty-one chapters of this long book, someone other than "the author" wrote the last one (see subsection E of section 6 on Deutero-Isaiah for an analogous situation).

The Hebrew original, written around 180 BCE, was still known in the first half of the tenth century, for Saadyah ben-Yosef, also known as Saadyah Gaon, who was born in 882 and died in 942, refers to it in such a way that we know it was extant and known in his day. Later writings that have come down to us, however, do not mention the Hebrew original.

A (Jewish?) Greek translation of Ecclesiasticus by the anonymous grandson of the author of the first fifty chapters and a Syriac translation have never been lost. Consequently, it was not the work that was lost but the original, but since the following argument would be a quibble (see note 157), we
will not take it to be a valid argument against Selbourne's enterprise: the wording "[the] lost [book] of the [...] son of Sirach" is another sign of the inauthenticity of *The City of Light* because two translations have never been lost.

Rather, the valid argument here is that the words "lost books" ring modern rather than thirteenth-centuryish. They reflect latter-day Jewish bibliographical research (from the nineteenth century onward), which concluded that the original had been lost presumably after Saadyah ben-Yosef's day, and they do not sound like anything we expect to hear from anyone writing in "Jacob"'s day.

Consequently, we assume that the real "Jacob," reading modern Jewish historiographical or bibliographical literature, learned that the books had been "lost" books and decided to wow us by showing that way back in the thirteenth century that "astonishing intellectual titan" had found them. Since the alleged "Jacob" took along with him two clerks, how curious that he did not have them copy them, how curious that we have no record (other than Selbourne's book...) that he made such an extraordinary find (in, of all places, China...).

What the real "Jacob" apparently did not know was that versions of parts of the original text began resurfacing in 1896 and researchers have dated them to the twelfth century, so that now we know that at least parts of the original survived well after Saadyah ben-Yosef's death. Since the fictitious "Jacob" was born, as Selbourne told us, in 1221 and was living in the early 1270s, it is only a hop, skip, and a jump between the date or dates of composition of the twelfth-century fragments and "Jacob"'s time. Which is to say that at least part of the Hebrew original could have been extant in the early 1270s, in which case he could have known that it was, especially since he was "an astonishing intellectual titan" (see note 35), who seemed to know much than no one else of his time did. Consequently, whereas someone, say, in 1895, coming across a manuscript penned in the 1270s or later that called the books "lost" would probably not question that word, anyone in our day who has kept up with the latest in Jewish bibliographical research knows that such a description in such a manuscript raises, if not a red flag, a pink one. An "astonishing intellectual titan of the 1270s," in order not to arouse suspicion, should have written that they had been "recently lost." But since we have found many truly smoking guns and truly smoking cannons, we can, instead of making much of the matter, afford to assume that Selbourne forgot to translate the adverb.

* Since the fictitious "Jacob" would have written the name *sira* either in the Jewish or in the Roman alphabet (respectively אינ or Σίρα), we do not expect to find in Selbourne's "translation" the spelling *Sirach*, the last two letters of which represent the Greek letter chi, which is the last letter of Σείραχ, which is how the Hebrew-Aramaic male given name *sira* is represented in Greek. Selbourne, therefore, would not have come up with the spelling *Sirach* had he translated what he claimed to have translated. Rather, the spelling *Sirach* must have come to him from some other source, like some latter-day English-language source mentioning that the original text of the book in question was lost for several hundred years. But let us not make much of that criticism and dismiss it, rather, as a quibble (see note 157).

* The *First Book of Maccabees* was written originally in Hebrew and survives only in a (Jewish?) Greek translation. The *Second Book of Maccabees* is a (Jewish?) Greek condensation of five books written in (Jewish?) Greek and survives only in the condensed form. The *Third Book of Maccabees* and The *Fourth
Thus, by "lost," the fictitious "Jacob" could at most have been referring to the original of *The First Book of Maccabees*, but that they were "lost" is a remark which, again, we are far likelier to hear from a latter-day student of Jewish literature or Jewish bibliography than from anyone in the thirteenth century. Furthermore, all four books, though written by Jews for Jews and thus at first part of Jewish literature, soon became apocryphal in the Jewish world (they were not included in the canon of the Jewish Scriptures). "Though [apocryphal Jewish literature, written between the second century BCE and the second century CE] enjoyed considerable popularity for some three centuries, it was subsequently thrust aside by the rapidly growing body of talmudic literature and was all but lost to the Jewish tradition. The preservation of these writings is due in great measure to the Christian Church [...]" (Werblowsky and Wigoder 1966:36).

Presumably, by the 1270s all the four books of Maccabees had long been forgotten in the Jewish world.

All things considered, then, the chance that the Hebrew originals of *Wisdom of Ben-Sira* and *The First Book of Maccabees* would surface in China and that any Jew of the 1270s would recognize them as otherwise "lost" was probably slight. Which is to say that the real "Jacob" appears to have projected nineteenth- or twentieth-century knowledge normally known only to students of Jewish literary history and Jewish bibliography back into the 1270s. If so, we have here two more dramatic anticipatory anachronisms. In any event, no post-1997 research publications note the alleged "Jacob"'s alleged discovery.

"Dattalo," presumably a male given name (in Jewish Italian?), is suspect. Since traditional Jews are extremely conservative in the coinage of male given names (unlike, say, the many American Blacks today who try to bestow unique given names on their children, especially daughters), we expect the given names of all the Jews mentioned in the alleged "original manuscript" to be well-attested, yet the closest I can come to "Dattalo" is *Dattilo*, the name of one of the Jews who moved in the circle of Giovanni Pico della Mirandola (1463-1494). Might the real "Jacob" have come across *Dattalo* when reading about Pico della Mirandola and inadvertently bestowed the form "Dattalo" on the person whom Selbourne's book called "Nathan ben Dattalo de Sinigaglia" (p. 39 of the French version). We will return to the quotation from Selbourne 2000:132 in the Comment on Quotation H in section 20.

E. Section 9 dissected "Jacob"'s unbelievable assertion that the Cochinese Jews had a Talmud "all in Hebrew" and promised that a reason for that assertion would later be suggested. Now is the time to suggest it.

Benjamin of Tudela, the late-twelfth-century Jewish traveler from the Basque Country (floruit circa 1170), made an observation in his journal about the Cochinese Jews which Fischel 1972:622 describes as "obscure and controversial." The observation seems to mean that those Jews 'knew a little of the Oral Law' (which would mean "knew a little of the Talmud"). Whether that was Benjamin of Tudela's intention is, however, not clear, but that question does not concern us. Rather, we focus on the fact that latter-day researchers deem Benjamin's observation to be "obscure and controversial."

Imagine now that in our day someone discovered an authentic text written by a Jew who visited Cochin in the thirteenth century and it told us that the Jews of that city not only possessed the
entire Talmud but also that it was written entirely in the original language. Going on the assumption that at least some Cochinese Jews could read and understand the text without needing a translation, we would have to conclude that (1) the discovery of that authentic text dissipated the obscurity and settled the controversy, (2) the interpretation that those Jews 'knew a little of the Oral Law' was an understatement, and (3) the new interpretation would have to be that they possessed the entire text of the Talmud in the original. If so, we would then have to presume that if they had the entire text in the original, they needed no translation into their vernacular language in order to understand it; and, if so, they knew not 'a little of the Oral Law' but, mirabile dictu, were thoroughly familiar with the Oral Law.

My guess, therefore, is that the real "Jacob" knew that current research considers Benjamin's statement to be "obscure and controversial" and wanted to wow us by showing that, whereas an earlier Jewish visitor in Cochin did not express himself clearly regarding the level of Talmudic knowledge among the Jews of that city, a later visitor, our "astonishing intellectual titan" "Jacob," did: we would now know that their version of the Talmud was all in the original; (by implication) they needed no crutches like a translation; (by further implication) they studied it in the original; (by still further implication) their level of Talmudic knowledge was high; (by yet further implication) the controversy had now been settled; and (by even further implication) what a wonderful source of "new knowledge" The City of Light is.
83. One is reminded here of a remark by Dickens, "as if one should put up an enormous scaffolding for the building of a pigsty" (quoted in Forster 1966, vol. two, p. 306).

84. "But the continued absence of the manuscript itself has fuelled academic scorn. Among Selbourne's chief critics are Bernard and David Wasserstein [...]. They assert that the rules of scholarship require 'that a manuscript be produced before it deserves to be taken seriously'. But where does such a rule leave Marco Polo's voyage to China? (Where, for that matter, does it leave the Bible?)" (Phillips 1998).

Every case is to be judged on its own. In particular, this one is different from the two that Phillips mentioned: for the Bible and Marco Polo, we do not have original texts but at least we have copies, copies of copies, and so on, whereas only Selbourne alleged the existence of an "original manuscript" of the alleged "Jacob"'s alleged text, for myriad reasons Selbourne came across as an unreliable witness, not even a tiny one, except maybe his visit to Mondadori, is believable, and we have a pile of evidence pointing to just one conclusion: presumably, no manuscript of any kind has ever existed except drafts of what Selbourne alleged to a "translation" but which we believe to be an original piece of writing of his. However, if Phillips does want to get educated about Marco Polo and the Bible, she should do that independently of the subject at hand. She can start with the bibliography in Maraini 1991:574, "Biblical Literature and Its Critical Interpretation" in volume 14 of The New Encyclopædia Britannica, the bibliographical references in that article, Urry 1991, and the references in Urry's article.

Yes, yes, we know Selbourne's alibi all too well: it is not he who does not want to let the "original manuscript" be seen (why of course he would be glad to prove its existence if only the "present owner" allowed him to); it is not he who is opposed to showing the public a photocopy (why of course he would be happy to do so if the "present owner" cooperated); it is not he who is against showing the public a transcription of it (why of course he would be glad to oblige if only the "present owner" did not stand in his way) -- it is the stubborn "present owner," we are asked to believe, who is against everything that Selbourne would be only too willing to do to remove any suspicion that he behaved improperly. All too well do we know the alibi -- but we do not believe it, especially since the alleged "present owner," if he existed, could comply with our wishes and still preserve his precious anonymity by merely releasing a photocopy of the alleged "original manuscript" (we have not been treated to even so little as a photocopy of one side of one leaf). Given the circumstances, the only logical conclusion to draw is that everything in Selbourne's enterprize was a figment of his imagination except Selbourne himself and maybe the visit to Mondadori.

85. We will return to Not an Englishman: Conversations with Lord Goodman toward the end of section 17.

86. The Yiddish saying alludes to the High Holiday prayers, in which Jews ask God to inscribe them in the Book of Life for the coming year.

In connection with Selbourne's alleged "interests," I am reminded of the response I got from the head of some sort of awards committee of the American Library Association when I protested its endorsement of Leo Rosten's garbage called The Joys of Yiddish (see note 134). To convince me of the well-foundedness of its decision, she wrote me that "one of the members of our committee is Jewish." Presumably, I was to understand that because that member was of Jewish extraction, he or she was qualified to evaluate Rosten's cover-to-cover drivel. If so, the next time I have a question about Italian diachronic phonology, I'll mosey over to the nearest pizzeria, and the next time I want to get an authoritative opinion about the affiliation of Korean, I'll drop in to a Korean restaurant.

Selbourne's claim of an "interest in Judaica, including the history of medieval Jewry in Italy" is at one with Little, Brown and Company's statement that he was "the grandson of one of the greatest of modern rabbinical philosophers, Moshe Avigdor Amiel (1882-1945)," the goal of both those statements being to offer relevant credentials for someone who lacked them. Presumably, therefore, Selbourne and his publishers realized that he had no pertinent credentials (does anyone's "interest" qualify as expertise? is anyone's being anyone's grandchild pertinent to the exercise of any occupation or profession?), they rightly foresaw that the critics would focus, inter alia, on that lack, and they desperately tried to forestall or defuse the criticism by scrounging around for "relevant" credentials, those being the best they could dredge up. But best does not mean 'good' (see subsection G of section 22 for Max Weinreich's remark), and if that is all they could come up with, they implicitly recognized that Selbourne lacked pertinent credentials.
87. How curious that although the alleged "present owner" did not allow any substantial portion of the alleged "original manuscript" to be released to the public (that is, nothing beyond the alleged "earnest"), Davidson wrote that "A citizen of Urbino gave Selbourne a manuscript to translate, wrapped in a piece of 17th-century silk" (Davidson 1997). Overlook Davidson's imprecisions (accuracy and depth of reporting were not her forte), namely "a citizen of Urbino" (read "someone living near Urbino") and "gave" (read "showed"), and concentrate instead on Selbourne's claim that the alleged "original manuscript" was wrapped in "a piece of 17th-century silk." Did the "present owner" allow Selbourne to remove the silk (or part of it) from his house to have it tested? If so, what kinds of tests were made to prove that it was from the seventeenth and not, say, the sixteenth or the eighteenth centuries? Where is the silk now? May we see it? If not, why not? How would showing it endanger anybody or anything?

If the silk was taken out of the house for testing, why can even so little as a photograph of one side of one leaf of the alleged "original manuscript" not be made and shown? If the silk was not removed from the "owner"'s house, how did Selbourne determine its age? But let's stop playing Selbourne's game according to his rules and get back to reality: the alleged piece of silk is presumably as imaginary as everything else in Selbourne's enterprise.

How curious too (we're playing the game again) that, whereas the "present owner" was adamant about not allowing even a photocopy of even one side of one leaf of the Precious Gift (the alleged "original manuscript") to be released to the public, he did nothing to thwart Selbourne when he went ahead and published not just Selbourne 1997a but also at least fifteen versions of his book (see that entry in References). Why did he not go to court to halt Selbourne's publication of any or all of them? Apparently, the friend of "many years" is adamant or pliant according to Selbourne's needs of the moment. How convenient for Selbourne -- though, actually, how revealing to us.

88. Abulafia 1997a and, in more detail, Abulafia 1997c argue persuasively that Venice had suppressed voyages from Ancona in the 1270s (so that having "Jacob" leave from the latter port was implausible). Selbourne 1997c retorted that Abulafia was wrong. Abulafia being not only professor of Mediterranean history in the University of Cambridge but also a prolific, solid, and respected researcher who has published on relevant subjects, he has the last word, not Selbourne, who in any case merely issued one of his many ipsi dixits: "Ancona was an active and flourishing port in 1270" (Selbourne 1997c).

Selbourne presumably did not know that Jewish life in Italy during the thirteenth century was concentrated in the south (see notes 58 and 59). Thus, the alleged "Jacob," being an "astonishing intellectual titan" (see note 35) should have been living in the south, in which case he would probably have left from some port in Apulia, but Apulia would have been too far from Urbino (the invariable factor) and Florence (which, as we will soon see, was an essential piece of the jigsaw puzzle too).

89. "[...] as one labours through Selbourne's mock-archaic English prose, one longs for more and better fantasy" (Jenner 1997:52). "I have not read the whole book (I find insoluble problems every time I try)" (Barrett 1997). Does Barrett mean that The City of Light is soporific, it is intellectually repulsive, or what?

90. Selbourne's father also possessed at least some German (and Yiddish?).

91. Despite beliefs popular among those who do not know Jewish Italian and do not bother to learn it (by Jewish Italian is meant here not the vestiges of Jewish Italian embedded in the otherwise non-Jewish Italian of every Italian Jew today but Jewish Italian as a full system, which is now dormant and would in all likelihood have been "Jacob"'s vernacular), simplistic definitions of Jewish Italian like "a language that is not quite Italian and spelled out phonetically in Hebrew letters" (Jochnowitz 1997), "Italian written in the Jewish alphabet," "Italian with a sprinkling of Hebrew," or "Italian played in a Jewish key" are not acceptable. See note 37 for more on Jochnowitz.

92. The device goes back at least to Shakespeare: "In some ways [Shakespeare's middle comedies] are intellectual plays. Each comedy has a multiple plot and moves from one set of characters to another, between whom Shakespeare invites his audience to seek connections and explanations. Despite very different classes of people (or immortals) in different strands of the narrative, the plays are unified by Shakespeare's idealistic vision and by an implicit judgment of human relationships, and all their characters are brought together--with certain significant exceptions--at, or near, the end" (Brown et al. 1991:260).

93. By the way, the alleged "Jacob" was one of the earliest writers of Standard Italian, possibly the first in Ancona, and by far -- several centuries -- the first Jew ever to write it. The number of alleged firsts in Selbourne's enterprise is amazing (so too is the fact that none of them is recorded anywhere else), the only believable "first" being that the "original manuscript" is
Selbourne's first draft of a piece of fiction he wrote in English called *The City of Light* under the pen name of *Jacob of Ancona*.  

94. The taller the pedestal on which Selbourne put the fictitious "Jacob of Ancona" -- not just a trader but also a rabbi (and not just a rabbi but a rabbi of "noble rabbinical lineage"), a physician, a moralist, a philosopher, a European who beat Marco Polo to China (see section 18), the first to do this, and the first to do that (including the first to use this word, the first to use that one) -- the harder it became for us to believe that no mention of that thirteenth-century "astonishing intellectual titan" (see note 35) or his "noble rabbinical lineage" is made in any source known to us.

If the thesis is accepted that "Jacob of Ancona" was Selbourne's pen name (a thought which comes to the discerning reader a few minutes after "Jacob"'s logorrhea starts), several puzzles are solved:

**A.** As we ask in section 10, if the alleged "Jacob" mentioned Aquinas, why did he say nothing about the controversy, then raging in the Jewish world, between Maimonides's supporters and critics? Why, when traveling through countries with small Christian populations at most, did "Jacob" unleash anti-Christian diatribes? Why would a Jewish trader in China, a rabbi no less, take time out to polemicize with a Roman Catholic priest? The only reasonable supposition which comes to mind is that Selbourne, who published on hatred of Jews (the words "anti-Semite," "anti-Semitic," and "anti-Semitism" should be abandoned), wanted to sound off on those subjects again. As for the controversy between supporters and opponents of Maimonides, we would assume that either Selbourne was unaware of it or, if he did know about it, it was not pertinent to his own ideas.

**B.** Why did "Jacob" go to China at all if most of what we get in the chapters about that country is his rehashing of ideas preternaturally close to if not identical with Selbourne's? The only reasonable supposition which comes to mind is that because Selbourne had in earlier publications presented his ideas in straightforward expository prose, he knew that a commercial publisher would not warm to any rebroadcasting in straightforward expository prose, so that now a new angle was needed and the one chosen was an alleged "translation" of an alleged thirteenth-century travelog which had allegedly just "surfaced." A "found" book, as Halkin 2000a calls it. Mind you, not a found or a discovered book (like the diary of Anne Frank) but a "found" or "discovered" book (like those of the Rnying-ma-pa school of Vajrayāna Buddhism in Tibet).

We thus assume further that Selbourne hoped that commercial publishers would overlook, as some indeed did, the minuses of his enterprise (which are at least his failure to meet the standards of research by producing the original, allowing it to be authenticated, and allowing its degree of factualness to be determined; "Jacob"'s boring regurgitation of Selbourne's ideas; the wearisome Wardour Street English [see the first paragraph of section 5]; and the scores of smoking cannons, smoking guns, and other anomalies and oddities) and, instead, would concentrate on the pluses (allegedly, a hitherto unknown thirteenth-century manuscript, the amazing feats of an Italian Jew who reached China before Marco Polo allegedly did, his sensational revelations, and so on). Which is to say that the stratagem seems to have been, in general, to let Selbourne's own ideas "unobtrusively" ride ashore atop the tsunami of the new Marco Polo.

We assume also that by claiming that *The City of Light* was a precontemporary piece of nonfiction written by someone else, Selbourne made it easy for himself to parry any commercial publisher's or reviewer's possible criticism that the book was boring, had no plot, was riddled with contradictions, or was rife with mistakes: he could say something like "Well, that's what the thirteenth-century traveler wrote and I'm not responsible." Presenting fiction as nonfiction has advantages which neither fiction presented as fiction nor nonfiction presented as nonfiction does, though, as Selbourne painfully saw, in this instance it got him into boiling water.

It therefore seems that Selbourne knew that not only was he going out on a limb (a thinly veiled historical roman à thèse presented as factual travel literature) but a limb of a limb (an alleged "translation" of an alleged but now allegedly inaccessible "original manuscript" which he claimed to be factual travel literature). The limb of the limb was a big risk because if he had gone out just on the limb (writing a novel and presenting it as such) and numerous anachronisms and other historical mistakes were found, nobody would level any serious accusations against him because, fiction being fiction, fictioneers need not be historically accurate (when a clock strikes in performances of Shakespeare's *Julius Caesar*, horologically knowledgeable people in the audience chuckle but nobody has ever accused the playwright of being intellectually dishonest for introducing that anachronism into the play), whereas presenting the alleged "Jacob"'s tale as factual was unbelievably bold on Selbourne's part. This presumably being a one-man enterprise, he had nobody to stay his hand and say, "Stop! This is foolish."

Not for nothing, therefore, did Hillenbrand remark -- not more than a few weeks after the appearance of
Selbourne 1997a -- that Selbourne "is in danger of falling into disfavor and possibly disrepute" (Hillenbrand 1997). Further possibilities are at least disapproval, disdain, disgrace, dishonor, dislike, dispraise, disregard, and disrespect.

95. Kaveney's remark about the unusual length of the text reminds us of Halkin's that "One can have one's doubts about such prose. It is unlike that of any other Jewish writer of the Middle Ages, a period that did not encourage stylistic originality, and seems verbose and discursive in comparison with medieval Jewish travel documents like Benjamin of Tudela's or Petahiah of Regensburg's (both from the late 12th century)" (Halkin 2001a). In connection with Halkin's second sentence, see the first five paragraphs of section 5. The length of "Jacob"'s tale would be another of his many supposed "firsts," the likes of which we would not see until several centuries later.

96. Selbourne tried to parry part of the charge that "Jacob"'s story contained gratuitous insertions, namely the part dealing with explicit descriptions of sexual intercourse (on the other gratuitous insertions he was silent):

"Bien qu'empoimées de pruderie, les objections adressées au tableau haut en couleur que brossne Jacob des moeurs sexuelles à Zaitun ne manquent pas d'intérêt: le comportement qu'il décrit aurait été inconnu des Chinois sous les Song (ou des Chinois tout court), le récit de Jacob serait 'trop explicite' pour l'époque, ou le Juif pieux qu'était Jacob «n'aurait jamais écrit» de la sorte.

"Pour ce qui est de la première objection, on renverra à Jacques Gernet: «À un monde rude, guerrier, quelque peu guindé et hiératique, s'est substituée une Chine animée, commerçante, avide de plaisirs et corrompue1» À Hangzhou -- et dans une grande ville portuaire comme Zaitun2 -- «il n’y a guère en effet de lieu public, cabaret, restaurant, hôtel, marché, ’quartier d’amusement’, place ou abords de pont ou l’on ne rencontre par dizaines des femmes galantes». À Kaifeng, au XIIe siècle, il y avait également des hommes qui se prostituatnt: «Ils menaudent, se fendent, se parent, chantent et dansent comme leurs homologues féminins» Ce dont Jacob lui-même témoigne sur un ton désapprobateur. En outre, la pharmacopée taoïste compte nombre de potions et techniques pour renforcer la virilité et l'érection.

"Quant au fait que Jacob s'exprime dans cette veine, il suffit de connaître un peu la littérature juive du XIIIe siècle, en particulier la poésie -- y compris la poésie des auteurs juifs italiens contemporains de Jacob --, pour savoir que la hardiesse de son texte, que certains critiques décrètent ‘impossible’, est au contraire largement partagée à son époque.3 De surcroît, les Juifs, y compris et même surtout les Juifs pieux, ont rarement partagé la pruderie des Chrétiens à l’égard du corps: la sexualité, à leurs yeux, était ‘un don de Dieu’, plutôt qu’une perversité à ‘livrer aux fouets’.

"Ainsi chante Moïse ibn Ezra de Grenade (vers 1055-après 1135), à qui l’on doit des poésies érotiques aussi bien que des méditations pour la synagogue: «Tels sont les délices de ce monde. [...] Sans cesse bois à petits coups ces lèvres humides jusqu’à ce que tu tienne enfin ta part légitime – la gorge et la cuisse4» Contemporain de Jacob d’Ancône, Todros Aboulafia de Tolède (1247-après 1295) s’exclame, dans son poème Behara Chalta («Oh! être une femme!»): «Mais que délicieux étaient tes pieds lorsqu’ils enlaçaient mon cou et montaient contre ma nuque5» Jacob n’est pas moins explicite dans ses descriptions sexuelles. Pour finir, on citera également ce poète juif anonyme du Moyen Âge qui décrit «La femme idéale» en termes anatomiques explicites, de la bouche aux pieds, tout en précisant «au cours des rapports [...] sur sa couche». T. Carmi note que le poème est «lacunaire en ce point», alors que le récit de Jacob, en la matière, est merveilleusement complet.


Let us dissect Selbourne’s remarks:

A. As for his first two paragraphs, whereas Selbourne used Gernet’s book to defend himself (in a nutshell, Selbourne’s argument here was that Gernet’s descriptions prove the authenticity of certain passages in the alleged "original
manuscript), we suspect that Selbourne's based those passages in his alleged "translation" on Gernet's book (see Barrett 1998:1022 for details). In section 19 we will turn the tables on Selbourne in the same way: he cited James Finn's book of 1843 in an attempt to defend himself against the charge that a certain spelling which he alleged he found in the alleged "original manuscript" arose only in the eighteenth century, whereas we will argue that Finn's book was Selbourne's source for that spelling.

Anyone trying to guess more of Selbourne's sources for The City of Light should consider this passage in the published version of his father's diary: "Received two books from Harry W. Jr. in Covington, Virginia: one on Chinese eroticism and the other on Eroticism in Hindu Sculptures" (entry dated 11 October 1962 in Selbourne 1989:190; Harry W. Jr was a dairy farmer and a bibliophile). Selbourne presumably inherited his father's library.

B. China overall was not so unrestrainedly licentious in the 1270s as Gernet depicted it and Selbourne thought it was, for during the Sung and Ming periods (thus, during "Jacob"'s alleged stay in China), what one might today call "erotic" or "risqué" or "offcolor" literature was, under the influence of Confucianist poetry, seized and destroyed (Porkert 1972:142). But that is just a correction to Gernet and not an argument against Selbourne.

C. Rather, the argument is this: we would not be surprized to find in a work by someone who was not only a rabbi but also of "noble rabbinical lineage" and was, moreover, the grandson of "the great rabbi Israel of Florence" a condemnation of licentiousness (however defined) but we do not expect such a concentration (= the length of the descriptions and the graphicness of the details), which rings inauthentic to people acquainted with rabbinical literature. The descriptions are typical, rather, of twentieth-century soft sexography.

D. As for Selbourne's third and fourth paragraphs, although his words "la littérature juive du XIIIe siècle, en particulier la poésie" imply that he knew of examples from prose too, both his examples are from poetry, and although he spoke of "la poésie des auteurs juifs contemporains de Jacob," both those examples are from Granada and Toledo. Since when have those cities been in Italy? Thus, Selbourne's alleged examples (you would have a tidy little sum if you got a dollar for every time the word alleged must be used in connection with Selbourn's enterprise) are from the works of poets of Sefarad 1 (the Iberian Peninsula before the expulsions of the Jews at the end of the fifteenth century), thus doubly inapposite. See paragraph E below on "la poésie des auteurs juifs contemporains de Jacob."

Selbourne's two examples are thus for a different genre and for a different place -- which is not surprising, for his responses were never to the point. Furthermore, as students of Jewish literature have known for over a hundred years, the Hebrew poets of Sefarad 1 were influenced by Muslim poets of the Iberian Peninsula and, specifically, the handful of Jewish poets of Sefarad 1 who wrote a few erotic poems were influenced by Arabic-writing erotic poets. It consequently comes as no surprize to us that Selbourne could not round up any examples of Jewish erotic poetry from Italy of the thirteenth century Italy -- a time and a place uninfluenced by Arabic-writing erotic poets.

E. Selbourne mentioned "la poésie des auteurs juifs contemporains de Jacob," but, as expected, without examples (we get not even so little as one name). Can he quote erotic poems by thirteenth-century Italian Jewish poets? Any erotic poems by any Italian Jewish poets? Any poems at all by thirteenth-century Italian Jewish poets? Even just the names of any thirteenth-century Italian Jewish poets?

F. In trying to answer the questions asked in paragraph E, Selbourne should look not to Carmi's book (well-made and valuable as it is) but to Davidzon 1970 (a bibliography of about 36,287 published and unpublished Hebrew poems composed by about 2,843 people after the canonization of the Hebrew Bible until the end of the eighteenth century, and, in the case of sacred poetry, as far into the present as Davidzon could go) and then let us know how many erotic poems he finds from Italy of any period -- and he should look at far more than poems, which is not what the alleged "Jacob" wrote. When he does, he will realize that our argument against him on the subject of eroticism in premodern Jewish literature is even stronger: if Selbourne could find only a handful of -- irrelevant -- examples in a small anthology, Davidzon's bibliography will not lead him to even one erotic poem written outside Muslim countries. However, because Davidzon's last supplement appeared in 1938 (the prefatory material is dated 9 March 1937) and new poems have been discovered in the more than seventy years that have passed since then (see, for example, vol. I, pp. XXVIII-XXIX), Selbourne still has a chance of finding relevant analogs. We eagerly await news of his discoveries (naturally, with full details).

G. Since Carmi does not romanize the Hebrew titles of the poems, lecturer in Hebrew and Jewish studies Parfitt or one of the unnamed "Hebraists" cheerleading Selbourne on must have given him the misromanization "Behava Chalta."
Several romanizations are acceptable, one of them being B̂aĥb̂hH altî, which is a narrow transliteration of the fully pointed form, but "Behava Chalta," which Selbourne will now probably claim to be a "misprint," betrays poor knowledge of Hebrew.

Selbourne's wording "Behava Chalta («Oh! être une femme!»)" suggests that he thought the Hebrew title means 'Oh, to be a woman!'. It means 'I writhe in pain with love'.

H. As for the anonymous poet's poem, since it is untitled in the text which has come down to us, both the Hebrew and the English titles in Carmi's book are his. For a Hebrew title, Carmi took the first three words of the poem as it has come down to us (text is missing before those three words, which translate as 'a mouth as round as a ring'). For its English title, his choice was not based on any part of the extant poem. Thus, that the poet intended to describe the ideal woman is only Carmi's inference.

I. Giving the impression of trying to chalk up more "firsts" for "Jacob," Selbourne gleefully crowed that "T. Carmi note que le poème est «lacunaire en ce point», alors que le récit de Jacob, en la matière, est merveilleusement complet" (the word merveilleusement 'marvelously' suggests glee). Selbourne was thus hinting that whereas the poet was hesitant to describe the sex act fully, "Jacob" was not. Sorry, but when Carmi wrote that "The text is defective at this point" (p. 360), he had in mind not the poem but the manuscript in which it has come down to us, as we see from the bracketed suspension points that he added to indicate illegible or missing portions of the manuscript. And if the imaginary "Jacob"'s description is 'marvellously complete,' that's because the real "Jacob," we submit, was free to write what he wanted to make it look as if the imaginary "Jacob" had outdone anyone whom the real "Jacob" wanted him to surpass (see the second paragraph of section 18 and the Yiddish saying in the paragraph to which note 86 is attached).

J. Since even the complete text of the poem would be just a tad longer than the incomplete one that has come down to us, Selbourne should have argued differently, namely that the anonymous poet's brief, undetailed poem cannot hold a candle to "Jacob"'s more detailed description. However, even that better argument would have exploded in Selbourne's face: aside from the Song of Songs (which is but mildly erotic), a few erotic poems written in Sefarad 1, one written in Damietta, and maybe (?) a little bit more, we have nothing similar in the Jewish world to "Jacob"'s alleged erotic descriptions. Once again, therefore, we see how Selbourne's attempt to put out one fire started another: yes, he found two analogs in Sefarad 1 and one in Egypt (all poems, all idealizations rather than depictions of actual scenes, all the result of Muslim influence, nothing in Italy or by an Italian Jew). The upshot of our examination of his argument is that we rule against him.

K. Selbourne turned a blind eye to what Carmi says about the author of the poem "A Mouth as Round": "A unique and unusually detailed description of woman's attributes by a poet who resided in Damietta, in northern Egypt. It serves as the 'introduction' to a song of friendship to his benefactor" (p. 111). Let Selbourne ponder the words "unique" and "unusually": if Jewish erotic poetry of that kind was unique and unusual even in Muslim-controlled areas, it is even less expected (and is in fact non-existent) elsewhere among Jews. Or are we to infer that "Jacob" knew Arabic and was acquainted with Arabic erotic poetry?

Selbourne also conveniently forgot to mention Carmi's hints that Todros Abulafia too was atypical: "Todros arranged his copious works in [an anthology], which presents an unusually candid picture of his love affairs [...]" (p. 117), "Abulafia's thematic innovations included love poems about Arab and Christian women. In the general mood of repentance that swept the community after the release of the Jewish prisoners, a ban [...] was proclaimed in the synagogue against those who maintained liaisons with non-Jewish women. Abulafia, however, did not mend his ways." (ibidem).

Selbourne also turned a blind eye to what Carmi says about Moshe ibn Ezra's erotic poems: "The poet must have had such passionate works in mind when, in old age, he renounced his love poems as the mistakes of unbridled youth" (p. 105).

Thus, it now becomes even clearer that Hebrew erotic poetry in earlier times was exceptional. Jewish erotic prose seems to be absent before the twentieth century (The Song of Songs is a poem), but Selbourne and the unnamed "Hebraists" supporting him know better.

Furthermore, although, beginning in the twelfth century, certain Jewish poets living in Muslim-controlled areas of the Iberian Peninsula did influence certain Jewish poets of Italy (see the mention of "Andalusian influence: 12-14 [Secular poetry and Piyut]" and "Italian-Spanish School: 14-19" on page 16 of Carmi's book, where the numbers refer to centuries),
the result was not erotic poetry of the intensity found in Muslim-controlled parts of the Iberian Peninsula. See Pagis 1976 and Schirmann 1966 for details.

L. We conclude this dissection of Selbourne's remarks on the Hebrew erotic poems by going back to the first sentence of his third paragraph: "[...] il suffit de connaître un peu la littérature juive du XIIIe siècle pour savoir que la hardiesse de son texte [...] est [...] largement partagée à son époque." A little knowledge ("un peu") is little knowledge.

M. As for the Jerusalem incident of January 1998 reported in Daily Telegraph, since Selbourne must have known that every society, including Jewish society, has members whose behavior differs from the norm and that the behavior described in that newspaper was indeed abnormal (being nonjudgmental here, I am using the word abnormal in its statistical sense), whereas a thirteenth-century rabbi's descriptions in extenso of erotic scenes would not be, his dragging in that incident reveals not only the depth of his desperation but also his willingness to engage in casuistry.

Are we to conclude that cross-dressing and murder are nothing unusual among Orthodox Jews today if around 2005 a cross-dressing Orthodox Jew in Brooklyn, New York, was arrested and charged with the murder of his Orthodox Jewish apartment mate. Are we to conclude from a certain insert in the "Adult Advertising Section" of New York Press of 22-28 November 2006 -- "PRETTY JEWISH GIRL. / Sexy Sara offering a private rubdown. Caring, satisfying and elegant. 212 [...]" (p. 72) -- that at that time Jewish women in Manhattan (area code 212 is limited to that part of New York City) were in significant numbers offering such services? Are we to include from any number of other statistically abnormal incidents that they are the norm? And since when has The Daily Telegraph been a source of reliable information about thirteenth-century Jewish society? See note 142 for more on that sheet.

Selbourne's desperate latching on to the anecdotal reminds us of the Yiddish saying, az me dertrinkt zikh, khapt men zikh onet in a khalef 'a drowning man will clutch at a straw' -- here, moreover, anecdotal evidence of other kinds from other places and from other times, and thus irrelevant. Desperate people often take desperate -- an ineffectual -- remedies.

See section 7 and note 137 for more on anachronism and ectopism combined. For more examples of Selbourne's casuistry, see that section on his possibly accurate but in any case irrelevant statement that "There are no salt marshes in Fez," note 44 on his "assumption" that "the peasants were carried to the market in sedan chairs and their pigs and rice harvest were carried in sedan chairs too," and the paragraph to which note 97 is attached on how he tried to draw attention away from the matter at hand (namely, does the alleged "original manuscript" exist? if it does, is it authentic? if it is, is it factual?). See also the mention of casuistry in the Comment on Quotation H in section 20.

97. Reading the book, you get the impression that the alleged "Jacob" journeyed to China not to trade (though that was his ostensible goal) but to debate -- and not just to debate but to debate on subjects of interest to Selbourne -- and not just to debate those subjects but to take Selbourne's side -- and not just to debate those subjects and take Selbourne's side but to debate, debate, debate, and debate, and debate, and debate, and sermonize, sermonize, sermonize, and sermonize (the gaseous "Jacob" was a windbag whose tongue ran on pattens) until the reader finds it hard to resist the temptation to skip pages (see the second paragraph of subsection A of section 17 on how my goal was a perfection but it was not fully achieved).

In a different connection, Kathleen Tillotson remarked that "The debate is usually only a deeper disguise for the author's actual prejudgement of the 'problem' he presents [...]" (Tillotson 1965:121).

If the debates and the other passages expressing "Jacob"'s ideas are excised from the tale, little remains -- further evidence that they were the rationale for Selbourne's book.

98. I have the feeling that Selbourne's wording "the book's broader political and philosophical ideas" contains two Freudian slips. We expect the wording to be "Jacob's political and philosophical ideas." Consider:

A. Since even the most hardened fakers may feel pangs of conscience, if only subconsciously, Selbourne's failure here to attribute the ideas to "Jacob" and his attribution of them instead to "the book" may be a sign that he recognized that they were his own rather than "Jacob"'s. Which is to say that the words "the book's" may be a way of avoiding an unpleasant choice: presumably, Selbourne could not say "Jacob's" (because of pangs of conscience, however subconscious, he did not want to say something untrue) and he could not say "my" either (which, though presumably the truth, would be a dead giveaway that he wrote the tale). Presumably, therefore, the words "the book's" seemed to be a good compromise: being truthful, they set Selbourne's conscience at rest; being noncommittal, they neither asserted nor denied "Jacob"'s or Selbourne's authorship.
B. The word "broader" here implies that the story was written to have a larger goal, beyond the mere recording of what happened during the alleged trip to China and back. Presumably, even Selbourne would admit that the alleged "Jacob" had no such goal in mind (had he, he would have published the account or directed in his will that such be done). Consequently, Selbourne's use of that adjective could not have stemmed from any belief on his part that "Jacob" wrote the account with that aim in mind.

If, therefore, "Jacob" had no "broader" goal, by process of elimination, suspicion once again falls on Selbourne, this time as the only person who would realistically have set himself such a goal; and, since we believe this to have been a one-man enterprise, suspicion falls only on him. Which is to say that nobody other than Selbourne could have benefited from the alleged "Jacob"'s espousing Selbourne's political, social, ethical, and philosophical preoccupations. It must have therefore been Selbourne, and it could have been only Selbourne, who had an interest in calling attention to the "broader" ideas and in bewailing the public's failure to discuss them. Again, therefore, as always, when something is amiss in Selbourne's enterprise, he is the only suspect coming to mind.

Further Freudian slips are absence, an, and the quotation marks in the phrase "the absence of an 'original manuscript." He should have written "the current inaccessibility of the original manuscript."

See the penultimate paragraph of note 75 for other possible Freudian slips.

99. "If we were given what purported to be a transcript of a medieval manuscript, and should find in it words like enlightenment or scepticism, we should not hesitate to pronounce it a glaring and absurd forgery; and we should reject with equal promptness a pretended Elizabethan play in which we came upon such phrases as an exciting event, an interesting personality, or found the characters speaking of their feelings. Or when we read in the famous cryptogram, supposed to have been inserted by Bacon in Shakespeare's and his own writings, of secret interviews, tragedies of great interest, and disagreeable innuendos, we begin to doubt Bacon's authorship of these phrases; a doubt which is considerably strengthened when we find him speaking of his affaires de cœur and the lonesome garden of his heart. These are extreme instances; but there are thousands of other words and phrases which we feel belong to definite periods, and would never have been used at an earlier date. The reason for our feelings is only to a slight extent philological; as far as their form is concerned, the greater part of these words would have been perfectly possible—it is in their meanings, the thoughts they express, that they are such obvious anachronisms.

"This curious sense of the dates of words or rather of the ideas that they express comes to us from our knowledge, grown half-instinctive, of the ways of thought dominant in different epochs, the 'mental atmosphere' as we call it, which made certain thoughts current and possible, and others impossible at this time or that" (Smith 1912:214-216).

100. The following paragraph refers to countries other than the People's Republic of China.

101. See note 29.

102. What would you say of an unseen but alleged "authentic" Christian manuscript that claimed that Lent follows Easter or an alleged but unseen "authentic" Muslim manuscript that claimed that the two holiest cities in Islam are Beirut and Algiers? And what would you say of the self-styled "translator" of the manuscript and "editor" of the compilation in which the "translation" appeared if he not only did not point out the blunder in the alleged "original" but was guilty of it himself?

103. When reading Selbourne 1989, which he must have done at least three times (initial reading, editing, and proofreading), Selbourne failed to compare the entry dated 17 November 1960 and the one dated precisely a week later, 24 November 1960, and draw the proper conclusion. Respectively, they read as follows:

"Wake up a grandfather, a beloved grandmother at my side. Ruth has a son. [...] First sight of my grandchild. Whisky at Toon's place, and curried chicken dinner offered by Indian residents. Excellent stuff, coffee and cigar" (p. 64).

"Afterwards to circumcision of my grandson at St Mary's Hospital" (p. 65).

104. "In reality, there were Western visitors to the Far East before Marco Polo who left detailed memoirs of their travels, the friars William of Rubruck and Giovanni di Pian del Carpine" (Abulafia 1997c:61, with references to Komroff 1928 and Olschki 1943). Milton Meltzer was not informed when he wrote that "Until the Italian Marco Polo's great travel book appeared in the early fourteenth century, there was no European account of India or China worth much" (Meltzer 1990:13).

105. "Alison Menzies, a Little, Brown publicist for 'The City of Light' in Britain, said the book was selling well there, though she did not give specific figures. ¶ 'This is a book that we published with the Christmas market in mind,' Ms. Menzies said,
'and we haven't been disappointed’” (Carvajal 1997). What revealing words, “the Christmas market.” For the sake of history, it would be good to know the number of copies printed and the number of copies sold of each version -- and not just for "the Christmas market."

For other possible Freudian slips, see the penultimate paragraph of note 75.