But even were we to grant, for the sake of argument, that the alleged "Jacob encountered [problems] in the preparation of the manuscript, which he resolved with knowledge provided by friends who returned from Zaitun to Italy," Selbourne would still not be off the hook. For example, "Toutson" would still be a smoking gun, (i) because its spelling looks English and French, not "basically educated Tuscan," (ii) because temple names (not just that one) should not appear in an account written in real time if the bearers were then alive, and, (iii) because, if temple names were later added or substituted, they should appear in the proper way ("[now called (...)]").

Thus, whereas Wang wanted to explain how the alleged "Jacob" came by information that was available only after he left China, the Scourges of Jacob are focusing on something much more basic (as expected of the uncritical and undiscerning Wang, he took the use of temple names to be legitimate instead of questioning their very presence in the alleged "original manuscript"): referring by their temple names to people alive at the time of the alleged "Jacob"'s alleged visit is a smoking gun; use of present-tense verbs with those names is another smoking gun; and two smoking guns in the same connection are equivalent to a smoking cannon. To put the matter in terms that even people unacquainted with the Eastern Asian custom of temple names will understand:

1. Retrospective writing like "In China a few years ago I met the now late John Doe" is not suspicious -- but "Jacob" did not write retrospectively.

2. Real-time writing like "Tomorrow I am to meet the late John Doe" is a smoking cannon -- and the real "Jacob" did write in real time.

Since Wang did not even mention the anomaly of the co-occurrence of temple names and present-tense verbs (much less explain it), we assume that he merely heard about the criticism concerning the temple name "Toutson" and was thus unaware of the full extent of the real "Jacob"'s blunder, which is even greater if we bear in mind that the alleged "translation" calls other living people too by their temple names and uses present-tense verbs in conjunction therewith.

As for how that information got into Selbourne's "translation" (addressing further the question of how it got into an imaginary text would be a waste of time), since latter-day Western sources, as noted in section 14, usually refer to the emperors by their temple names, Tu-tsung, the short form of the temple name of Chao Ch'i, is the one which the real "Jacob," in our day, presumably came across in a Western secondary source; he presumably did not know it was a temple name (he presumably did not know even that Chinese kings and emperors have at least two names); and, unaware of that fact, he used the temple name in "Jacob"'s tale, even with present-day verbs. Likewise with respect to the other temple names.

There is no getting around the fact that temple names in the tale with present-tense verbs (or other wordings implying that the bearers were alive during the alleged "Jacob"'s alleged visit) are smoking guns. Ditch Ptolemy, accept Copernicus, and the "problems" disappear instantly.118

As for the claim that "At that time, the number of Europeans, including Jews, who came to Quanzhou was much greater than it had been in the past," it would be good to know on what reliable evidence it is based. Consider this statement in Kedar 1972:469, which refers to the fourteenth century:
"Reports that there were other Jewish communities in Chüanchow (Zayton), Fukien Province, and Ningpo, Chekiang Province, may be true, but cannot be corroborated." If serious students of Chinese Jewry are not sure even about the fourteenth century, we wonder what evidence, even weak evidence, Wang had for the 1270s. As usual in the tragicomedy called Selbourne's Enterprize, a claim was made confidently but no evidence was supplied. Nay, in this case, three claims were stuffed into one twenty-three-word sentence:

**A.** There were Jews in the city in the 1270s.

**B.** There were Jews there before the 1270s

**C.** There were more Jews there in the 1270s than before.

Let's have the evidence.

**Quotation H:** "If [...] the transliterations of the [Chinese] place names presented in the manuscript resemble *putonghua* and differ from Chinese dialect, then the forgery could be hard to conceal. If, on the other hand, the transliterations resemble Quanzhou dialect, and differ from *putonghua*, then the authenticity of the manuscript could not be denied. Could there possibly be someone so competent in medieval Italian, Hebrew and Latin, and also so familiar with the history, customs and dialect of Song era Quanzhou who would be able to forge such a book?" (p. 470).

**Comment:** First, two preliminary remarks:

**A.** Transliterations from Chinese are impossible because Chinese spelling is not alphabetic (nor is it, despite popular belief, pictographic or ideographic either). Since Chinese spelling is logographic, the right word is *transcription* or, if the transcription is into the Roman alphabet, *romanization* is a proper term too (see point C in section 19 for the identical mistake on Selbourne's part).

**B.** The vernacular of Beijing, which is a variety of Northern Mandarin, is the basis for Modern Standard Chinese (called *guoyu* 'National Language' and *putonghua* 'Common Language' in Modern Standard Chinese).

Since Modern Standard Chinese did not exist in the 1270s and the vernacular of Quanzhou is not a variety of Northern Mandarin, Wang was right that romanizations in the alleged "original manuscript" resembling Putonghua would be a dead giveaway that it was a forgery, but we go further by saying that so too would such romanizations in the alleged "translation."

Here are the possibilities (x signals intellectual dishonesty of some kind; ? means that we do not know whether anyone has been intellectually dishonest; and the absence of any symbol means that we have no evidence of intellectual dishonesty):

**x Possibility I.** The romanizations reflect Modern Standard Chinese. If so, the alleged "original manuscript" either does not exist (in which case, Selbourne was the real "Jacob") or it does
exist (and is a fabrication). Barrett says that "[...] 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). We thus have prima-facie evidence for intellectual dishonesty of some kind. Or
does Wang want to dispute Barrett's description of the pronunciation suggested by the romanizations
in "Jacob"'s tale?

Wang was aware of spatial differences in Chinese (he rightly implied that "Jacob"'s
romanizations should reflect Quanzhou pronunciation) but he gave no sign of knowing about
chronological differences: the romanizations should reflect Quanzhou pronunciation of the 1270s,
which cannot be Quanzhou pronunciation of our day since the phonology of all languages except
dormant ones changes. Consequently:

x Possibility II. The romanizations reflect latter-day Quanzhou pronunciation. If so,
we have prima-facie evidence for intellectual dishonesty of some kind.

If the romanizations reflect Quanzhou pronunciation of the 1270s, we have these possibilities:

? Possibility III. If Quanzhou pronunciation of the 1270s has not yet been
reconstructed (has it?) or if it cannot be reconstructed (sometimes reconstructions can be taken back in
time only so far -- say, to take a hypothetical example, only to the sixteenth century), we cannot now
tell and we may never be able to tell whether the romanizations reflect local pronunciation of that time.
See Egerod 1992:730 on some of the difficulties in the reconstruction of older Chinese in general.

x Possibility IV. Historical Chinese linguists reconstructed Quanzhou pronunciation
of the 1270s and published their findings before 1997. If the romanizations in Selbourne's book do not
reflect it, this is a case of intellectual dishonesty of some sort.

? Possibility V. Historical Chinese linguists reconstructed Quanzhou pronunciation
of the 1270s and published their findings before 1997. If the romanizations in Selbourne's book reflect it,
we have two subpossibilities:

x Subpossibility V.a. Relying on the reconstruction, a hoaxer chose
appropriate romanizations in order to give the "original manuscript" (whatever that might be) a veneer
of authenticity.

Subpossibility V.b. Since Selbourne's story is truthful and an authentic
"original manuscript" exists, we are not surprised that the "original manuscript" reflects what in our
day has been reconstructed as Quanzhou pronunciations of the 1270s.

Thus, of the seven possibilities and subpossibilities, four would be damning, two would result
in a hung jury, and only one would allow Selbourne and his supporters to heave a sigh of relief. But
they could breath easy only with respect to those romanizations, for all the other anomalies in the
alleged "Jacob"'s alleged tale and in Selbourne's story would remain. Because his critics have found far
too much wrong for this to be a case of an authentic manuscript with a few mistakes, one of the
damning possibilities or subpossibilities is presumably right.
Furthermore, since the alleged "Jacob," had he existed and had he been able to write "basically educated Tuscan," would have taken Tuscan spelling of his day as the basis for choosing the graphemes to represent the phonemes of Quanzhou Chinese as he heard him (see the Comment to Quotation I for an example), either Wang and his colleagues would have to be familiar with "basically educated Tuscan" phonemics and graphemics or, if not, they would have to work with Italian diachronic phonologists when trying to analyze the alleged "Jacob"'s transcriptions. Did they do that? And what did they do when coming upon non-Italian spellings like "Toutson"? Did the non-Italianness of the spelling not raise a red flag? But let's not ask pseudo-naive questions -- they had no inkling of how deeply flawed Selbourne's enterprise was because they did not know how to carry out research at a high level.

C. Curiously, although Quotation H presents two possibilities ("If [...] the transliterations [...]" and "If, on the other hand, the transliterations [...]"), Wang never went on to tell us which the right one is. Let us hear from Chinese diachronic phonologists on that matter.

In the meantime, we will address Wang's question, "Could there possibly be someone so competent in medieval Italian, Hebrew and Latin, and also so familiar with the history, customs and dialect of Song era Quanzhou who would be able to forge such a book?" The question is based on an erroneous assumption, namely that the author of the alleged "original manuscript" was competent in all those fields. But we know that he was not. We know that "Jacob"'s tale is riddled with smoking cannons, smoking guns, and sundry mistakes and anomalies of lesser importance, all of which tell us that the "original manuscript" (whether that is Selbourne's "translation" or some "original manuscript" underlying that "translation") came from the hand of one or more unknowledgeable people -- we suspect just one person -- who produced in this work nothing more than a lifeless, unexciting, boring historical novel of no literary or scholarly value.

We have just seen how Wang too, not just Selbourne, played the role of Mr. Unstated Unproven Assumption in this tragicomedy. Here are more examples of how someone in Selbourne's cast took for granted something which had not been proven (and was in fact wrong):

i. Selbourne when he said that "I would then have written one of the great works of European fiction. It would be called 'Picaresque Philosophical Novel Without Any Equal.' Jacob d'Ancona would be my Don Quixote, I would be his Cervantes, and it'd certainly be worth the Nobel Prize for fiction" (see note 35). The City of Light indeed gives every appearance of being fiction but it is not a "great work." Selbourne was no Cervantes. His book did not win even a minor literary prize (were the "original manuscript" to exist and be authentic, it would be the earliest example, by far, of a psychological novel, though a poor one, since "Jacob" would still be a stick figure).

ii. Phillips when she tried to make an error-laden, patently inauthentic scribble into an incredible masterpiece: the author (the imaginary "Jacob"? the real "Jacob"?) was, she claimed, "an astonishing intellectual titan" (see note 35).

iii. Selbourne when he claimed that had he been the author of "Jacob"'s tale, it "aurait tout de même exigé une quantité de recherches prodigieuses, un temps infini, une incroyable habileté, une imagination héroïque, la connaissance d'un dialecte médiéval du Fujian méridional [...]" (see the
fourth paragraph of subsection G in section 22). That would be true only if we found nothing obviously wrong in the alleged "Jacob"'s tale.

iv. Selbourne when he assumed that the romanizations reflect Quanzhou pronunciation of the 1270s and when he assumed that they represent them faithfully (see note 119). How could the Chinese-less Selbourne have known that?

How interesting that three of the most important passengers on "Jacob"'s sunken tub -- Selbourne (several times), Wang, and Phillips -- committed the fallacy of petitio principii. For more examples of Selbourne's casuistry see notes 44 and 96.

**Quotation I:** "Jacob calls Zaitun the 'City of Light', which the local people call Giecchon. Without doubt, this is the dialect pronunciation of Quanzhou. Though it is not a perfect transliteration, it is clearly not the putonghua pronunciation of Quanzhou. Moreover, on sixteenth- and seventeenth-century European maps, Quanzhou is written Quanzu, Ciuenchou, Chuamchiu, etc., but never Giecchon, which eliminates the possibility that the term was copied" (p. 470).

**Comment:** Wang was unclear here. By "Without doubt, this is the dialect pronunciation of Quanzhou," he meant one of the following:

i. In the thirteenth century, the local name of Quanzhou was [...] and Giecchon is a good approximation of it. If that is what Wang meant, why did he not state what the local name was in the thirteenth century? Giecchon, by the way, suggests */_ikon/. Was that the local pronunciation at the time?

ii. The spelling Giecchon does not represent the current Putonghua pronunciation. Therefore, by process of elimination, it must represent the thirteenth-century local pronunciation. If that is what Wang meant, his inference is not necessarily right and may in fact be wrong.

Only when we find out what Wang meant, could we comment further. In the meantime, what's the Chinese for 'coupled non sequiturs'? Wang's argument that the spelling "Giecchon" is authentic because it was not copied and we know that it was not copied because it is not found elsewhere is tantamount to one non sequitur followed by another. Any faker can make up any number of elsewhere non-occurring but still plausible forms. William Shakespeare's family name has come down to us as Shakespear, Shakespeare, Shake-speare, and Shaksper, if someone now faked a letter of his and signed it with a similar spelling (say, Shakespere), would Wang say that the letter is authentic because the faker's spelling is different from the previously known ones? Since when is every hapax legomenon to be deemed a sign of authenticity merely by virtue of its being a hapax legomenon? See the Comment on Quotation E for another of Wang's non sequiturs.

While awaiting word from Wang on whether he meant i or ii, I offer a different explanation of the spelling Giecchon. A hoaxer can take elements (names, dates, events, and the like) from authentic sources (see note 35 on information of type A) in order to give a piece of fiction the veneer of authenticity -- "Be careful to mix some truth with your lies" (Rey 1925:27) -- and alter them in ways he thinks will cover his tracks. That is how, I suggest, the real "Jacob" devised the spelling Giecchon.
A. We know from the quotation in note 6 that in 1890 G. Phillips published a description of Quanzhou which was actually that of Zhangzhou and that in "Jacob"'s tale the same mistake is made. Since Phillips presumably never visited either city, it is easy to see how he could confuse the two (the similarity in the names of the cities misled him).

In contrast, Selbourne told us that the alleged "Jacob" visited Quanzhou -- but Selbourne never said that "Jacob" visited Zhangzhou as well. Consequently, the alleged "Jacob" knew at least one of the cities. If so, unlike G. Phillips, he could not have confused them.

It must therefore be the real "Jacob," presumably in the twentieth century, who confused them. Presumably, therefore, the real "Jacob" copied from G. Phillips or from someone who had copied from him (see section 19 for the same kind of mistake).

B. If, therefore, the real "Jacob" copied from Phillips (whether directly or indirectly), we may go on to note that the former must have seen the latter's mention of "the port of Gay-cong."

C. Possibly, in older European maps (available in latter-day reprints?) the real "Jacob" saw the spelling Ciuenchou and maybe others too.120

D. Possibly, the real "Jacob," taking elements from the spellings Gay-cong, Ciuenchou, and maybe others, created a new one, Giecchon. For example, he could have taken the G of Gay-cong, the i and the e of Ciuenchou, the e of Gay-cong, the ch of Ciuenchou, and the on of Gay-cong, put those letters together in that order, and gotten Giecchon (notice too the symmetry: he would have always gone forward when plucking letters out of Gay-cong and Ciuenchou and plucked alternately, first from one name and then from the other). Furthermore, he would have ended up with a name that in pronunciation and in spelling could pass for Italian in the varieties of nonstandard Italian in which word-final unstressed */e/ is not pronounced (see the mention of provolone in section 17), though that was a mistake from the standpoint of "basically educated Tuscan," in which that loss has not occurred (* Giecchone would have thus been better as a spelling in "basically educated Tuscan").

And since the city has been known by several names in the West, the hoaxer would reason that one more would not be conspicuous and in fact thus stand a good chance of being accepted as just one more variant, especially since it is similar to those found in reliable sources.

A hoaxer thus has to walk an often fine line between authenticity and inauthenticity: if certain elements are too similar to elements in other texts, it will be readily perceived that the hoaxer copied (for an example, see section 19, where it is noted that choosing B in the romanization of Huang Chao's name was a dead giveaway that the real "Jacob" had copied, whether directly or indirectly, an eighteenth-century misreading of an Arabic manuscript); on the other hand, if certain elements are too dissimilar to certain others, it will be readily perceived that something is amiss (for an example, see section 14, where it is noted that the spelling "Toutson" was a bad choice as a thirteenth-century "basically educated Tuscan" spelling).

So far, then, the only reasonable conclusions to draw from the spelling "Giecchon" are that it could easily have been contrived in our day and that it looks more Italian than does "Toutson," which we also assume to be a latter-day contrivance (which is to say that the presumed contriver had varying
degrees of success in *trying* to pull the wool over our eyes). Because "Toutson" too occurs, so far as we know, in no known manuscript dealing with China, will Wang say that we must accept it as authentic because it occurs nowhere else? Accept Wang's choplogic and you open the gates to endless foolishness of all kinds.\textsuperscript{121}

Selbourne boasted that "Chinese scholars continue to work on details of the names, places and events recorded by Jacob. They have identified some, and remain puzzled by others" (2000:xii). You can analyze any fictional work as if it were nonfiction, but no matter how much you analyze fantasy, you cannot turn it into reality. The amateurish wording of Quotations \textbf{H} and \textbf{I} tells us that Wang, who presumably had no training in linguistics in general and onomastics in particular, had not even the faintest idea how to evaluate the romanizations in Selbourne's book. Presumably, his colleagues did not either. If they can show that my analysis of "Toutson" (section \textbf{14}), "Baiciu" (section \textbf{19}), and "Giecchon" is wrong, let us see their step-by-step refutation (but if it is on the same low level as Wang's article, do not waste our time). At least for the time being, then, we conclude that Wang and his colleagues' "work on details of the names [and] places" (to say nothing of the alleged events) is, like Selbourne's book, of no scholarly value.\textsuperscript{122}

Speaking of place names, the "Chinese scholars" will also want to consider this smoking gun: "Jacob (p. 109) writes of Jews in Penlian (without Selbourne pointing out that this is an old name for K'ai-feng); then in the next line he talks of Chaifen. Did Jacob/Selbourne not realize that Pien-liang and K'ai-feng were names for the same place?" (de Rachewiltz and Leslie 1998:184). Here, in full, are the two sentences in Selbourne's alleged "translation":

"They say that in the land of Sinim there are many tens of thousands of Jews of Sinim, as in Sinchalan, Penlian, 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, where "Penlian" = \textit{Pien-liang} and "Chaifen" = \textit{K'ai-feng}).

Which is to say that the real "Jacob" presumably lifted one name of the city from one latter-day Western secondary source and the other name from a different latter-day Western secondary source, did not know that they had the same referent, thus did not know that he had to remove the telltale signs, and therefore had the alleged "Jacob" speak of them as if they were different places. If in an allegedly factual travel account you came across the sentence "On our trip to Russia last year, we visited three fascinating cities: we spent the end of June in Saint Petersburg, then we went to Petrograd, where we spent all of July, and from there we went to Leningrad, where we spent the beginning of August," would you not dismiss the alleged account as a hoax? And what if you found not just one smoking gun like that but many? And what would you think of "eminent scholars in Russia" who found nothing wrong with that and many other passages of Russian interest in the alleged account?
How much more evidence do we need to dismiss the alleged "original manuscript" as either a fake or, more likely, non-existent and to dismiss the "Chinese scholars" hailing Selbourne and his "find" as gullible people who lacked even basic training in the methods of research?

**Quotation J:** "It is certainly interesting that from Jacob's time to the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, almost every Western transliteration of the name of Quanzhou was so inexact and inferior. It is for this reason that it is hard to make conclusions about other place names in the text, especially certain street names. But there are some street names, such as Street of Red Flowers \([Honghua jie]\) or Street of Longlife, from which it is obvious what Jacob is trying to translate. These are not necessarily the original names, so we must compare them to the eighty Song street names recorded in the Quanzhou gazetteer. The manuscript mentions a street of Longlife \([Changshou jie]\) in the western part of the city; there was in fact a street called Street of Honoring Longevity \([Rongshou jie]\) in the west of the city in the Southern Song. This seems highly persuasive, even if we cannot come to a definite conclusion" (pp. 470-471).

**Comment:** The fact that the alleged "translation" contains a street name known to have been used in Quanzhou in the 1270s or thereabouts is no sign that the "original manuscript" exists and is authentic. If a piece of realistic fiction about New York City set in the 1880s mentions Broadway and Fifth Avenue, does that mean that the fiction is nonfiction?

If the alleged "translation" contains street names not known to have been used in Quanzhou in the 1270s or thereabouts but they sound plausible, they could have been lifted from descriptions of other Chinese cities (and in light of note 6 we wonder whether the real "Jacob" gave names he had found in Zhangzhou). If I find on a map of Philadelphia Front Street and Main Street, and I use them in a fictional story about Manhattan, New York (which has no Front Street or Main Street), can we use my story as evidence that Manhattan has or had streets so named? Wang's naivete and lack of preparation grow in our eyes by the minute.

**Quotation K:** "Jacob's descriptions of the social life, beliefs and moral behaviour of the people of Zaitun, as well as certain aspects of culture and leisure, are the most interesting parts of the whole book. It may be that only people from Quanzhou can fully appreciate the details, the familiar flavour of his descriptions of the local traditions; the densely crowded structures; the hustle and bustle of the market; the streets lined on both sides with food stalls from which hang string after string of pork sausage; the lack of hygiene in public places, with people standing at their doorways pouring out their chamber pots and spitting into the street; the taboo on stepping, standing or sitting on the threshold; the storytellers and theatricals, and the appreciation of the audience for scenes where the evil are punished; the devotion with which the gods are worshipped, the Buddha revered, and evil spirits expelled" (p. 456).

**Comment:** Wang should find out what literary realism is (who is the Chinese William Dean Howells?) and read note 35.

*Quoting more from Wang's defense would be only belaboring the by now obvious:
A. Although he was at times careful (see, for example, quotations I and J), instead of starting at stage 1 (production of the alleged "original manuscript") and, if that stage was reached, proceeding to stage 2 (determination of its degree of authenticity), he began at stage 3 (see note 5 for a possible reason) and assumed that, barring "some [possible (D.L.G.)] omissions and errors," the text was authentic. In any science, we start at stage 1 and go through all the stages in order, omitting none. Whereas Wang and other believers in Selbourne's enterprise believed everything he said just because he said it, scientists take nothing on faith.

B. All of us agree that science demands convincing evidence, but what Wang considered convincing we do not. In fact, Selbourne never gave us any evidence at all to support the authenticity of his enterprise and he actually gave us much evidence to show that it was worthless for scholarship. Not one element of Selbourne's story is verifiable; not one piece of allegedly "new knowledge" in "Jacob"'s tale is verifiable; and much is certified garbage.

C. Just as "Dr Tudor Parfitt, lecturer in Hebrew and Jewish studies at the School of Oriental and African Studies" and the other, unnamed (because non-existent?) "Hebraists" to whom Selbourne alluded strike us as being unfit to pass judgement on his enterprise in general and its Jewish, including Hebrew, aspects in particular, Wang strikes us as being unfit to pass judgment on the enterprise in general and its Chinese aspects in particular. Which is to say that if alleged "specialists" or "scholars" could not discern even gross blunders even in their own fields of alleged specialization, they are unreliable witnesses in general.123

D. The original version of Wang's "Remarks on The City of Light" appeared in Hai Jiao Shi Yan Jiu, the journal of the China Maritime History Studies Association and the Quanzhou Maritime Museum. The director of the latter institution is Wang himself. Western researchers occupying higher ranks in an organization, like directors, often avoid publishing in journals sponsored by their organizations to avoid the possible charge that lower-ranking personnel, like editors, will accept their submissions not on their merits but because of their authors' higher rank. Wang's choice of Hai Jiao Shi Yan Jiu thus does not sit well with first-rate Western researchers. Furthermore, to avoid bias in the evaluation of submissions, the editors of many journals in the West do not allow their referees to see the submitters' names. We do not know whether the editor of Hai Jiao Shi Yan Jiu observed that safeguard. We do not know whether Wang's submission was even refereed and we suppose that it was not. In any case, whether refereed or not, the article reflects negatively on its author because of its low level. It reflects negatively on Selbourne too, for, even though it is the longest and most detailed defense of his book that we have seen, it fails to defend him. Which is to say that no one has as yet come forward with a convincing defense (see the last paragraph of subsection E of section 22) -- a not surprising state of affairs in view of the fact that Selbourne's enterprise is indefensible.

It would also be good if Wang reacted to this statement: "The Chinese text of an interview with Wang makes it clear that he would like to believe the account genuine, but he too finds errors in it and avoids a definitive verdict" (Barrett 1997). Are we to conclude that what he first thought were mistakes turned out not to be? We would appreciate a list of those mistakes and an explanation of why he changed his mind regarding each one. Also, to repeat an elementary question worth repeating because Wang seems never to have asked it (and has definitely never answered it), what proof does he have that "the account" even exists and, if it does, that it is authentic?
Since Wang's statement was the only response of any length that we had from Selbourne's tiny camp, it is curious that, although the response appeared in June 1999, the French version of Selbourne's book was finished in April 2000 (the colophon reads "Achevé d'imprimer en avril 2000"), and Selbourne thus presumably had enough time to include it in that version, he did not. Might Wang, therefore, have changed his opinion from positive to negative and therefore prohibited Selbourne from reprinting his (Wang's) remarks as a defense of the book?

21. Eleven reasons why the present essay did not appear earlier

Although parts of this essay were ready at the end of 1997, for eleven reasons I waited more than ten years to publish it:

**Reason I.** I wanted to take Horace's advice, "si quid tamen olim scripseris, nonum prematur in annum" (Ars Poetica 388) 'if, nonetheless, you ever write something, keep it under wraps for nine years' and "saepe stilum vertas, iterum quae digna legi sint scripturus" (Sermones I, 10, 72) 'if your works are to repay a second reading, use your eraser often'.

**Reason II.** I wanted to see whether certain events would come to pass at the same time that I wanted to remind people that Selbourne had made certain promises and certain predictions:

A. Was Selbourne speaking honestly when he offered us "an earnest, in the interim, of the authenticity of the text" (see the first paragraph of section 3) or, rather, was the "earnest" merely a list of words and phrases that he had put together with the help of dictionaries of older Italian and called an "earnest" just to string the Scourges of Jacob along? More than ten years having passed since the "earnest" was offered and nobody has still been able to see any "original manuscript," my guess is that the "earnest" was just a stratagem to keep the critics at bay (see note 124 on the sop to Cerberus) and that the "interim" will turn out to be the longest one ever.

B. Selbourne claimed that the alleged "original manuscript" "might be considered to be what the Italians call bene culturale, a possession of the state" (Honigsbaum 1997) and, therefore, that the Italian government might try to confiscate it, the possibility of confiscation being the alleged "present owner"'s motive for utmost secrecy: "Selbourne claims that the manuscript in question was secretly handed to him [...] and he was allowed to read it only on condition that he not show the original to others or to reveal its owner's identity. The reason was that the provenance of the manuscript is unclear, and the present-day owner, who lives near Urbino, fears that his ownership might be questioned in court, and so is reluctant to be identified. According to Selbourne, the anonymous owner 'had no trust in disclosing it to an Italian,' a sentiment which Selbourne finds quite reasonable" (Dien 1997).

Defensively, Selbourne elaborated on that "sentiment": "Why me? Because my interest in
Judaica, including the history of medieval Jewry in Italy, was known to him, and because I was not Italian, yet within reach. Only those familiar with Italian mores could understand the mistrust, often justified, in which Italians hold one another, while Italian scholarship is a byword for bad faith, corruption, and indolence. By contrast, the Englishman will generally be considered, rightly or wrongly, as trustworthy in keeping a pledge, as nonmaterialistic and as hardworking" (Selbourne 1997d).

Comment:

1. During all the years that have passed since the appearance of Selbourne 1997a, neither the Italian legal authorities nor the Italian archeological authorities, despite widespread coverage by the Italian and non-Italian press of Selbourne's enterprise, have made, so far as I know, any attempt to interrogate Selbourne, to find the "present owner," to locate the alleged "original manuscript," or to seize it. As a matter of fact, in 2001, thus, after the publication of Selbourne's book, the Italian government conferred on him the Order of Merit of the Italian Republic. Inasmuch as up to that time, his sole contribution to Italian studies was (as it presumably continues to be) The City of Light, we may assume that the government believed every word of the tale and every word of the story and that it had no other motive in bestowing the prize than rewarding him for the book. Consequently, Selbourne and, by implication, the alleged "present owner" had nothing to fear. On the contrary -- had that alleged person come forward, he too might well now sport the same medal his friend of "many years" does. Thus, the alleged "original owner"'s fear that, if he came out of the shadows, he might lose his precious "original manuscript" has turned out to be unfounded (and even if such document has ever existed, nobody would want it because it would be a nineteenth-century or, more likely, a twentieth-century fake).

Is it not the truth, rather, that no "present owner" and no "original manuscript" have ever existed and that Selbourne made up that part of the story in order further to create the illusion (see notes 116 and 144) that that alleged document was cocooned beyond retrieval? Consider these proportions:

A. the alleged "Jewish family" who had earlier allegedly owned the alleged "original manuscript."

A'. its alleged fear of the Inquisition.

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B. the alleged "present owner."

B'. his alleged fear of confiscation of the alleged "original manuscript" because it is of "unclear" provenance, because it may be Italian cultural property, or for both reasons.
C. the alleged "heirs." \(^{124}\)

C'. the alleged possibility that they may follow in the footsteps of the alleged "present owner" by never exhibiting the Precious Gift.

D. the alleged "family taboo" (see note \(^{116}\)).

D'. its alleged prevention of exhibition of the Precious Gift (except, conveniently for one person, the only one in this tragicomedy known for certain to be real, between September 1991 and June 1996).

And this one:

E. in September 1991 or shortly before, the alleged "present owner" turns to Selbourne for help.

E'. as a result, Selbourne is allowed to see the Precious Gift.

F. in June 1996 Selbourne finishes his work, he turns to Mondadori, and as a result of his turning to the publisher, the alleged "present owner" breaks with him.

F'. as a result, Selbourne is no longer allowed to see the Precious Gift.

Thus, A-D concern cocooning of the alleged "original manuscript" (explaining why it was preserved down through the years but its existence went unrecorded); E-F concern its temporary uncocooning and recocooning (thus explaining how Selbourne and only Selbourne came to see it and he and everyone else were later prohibited from seeing it); and G concerns its permanent recocooning.

Cocooning is a well-known, unconvincing ploy when something is claimed to exist but in fact does not. We regret only that event E occurred.
Selbourne was fortunate that the Italian authorities did not try to determine whether the "original manuscript" existed, for if they had and he refused to cooperate, he would presumably have been charged with being an accessory after the fact, with contempt of court, and with what is called obstruction of justice in American English and perverting the course of justice in British English.

In any case, the always deathly silent "present owner"'s alleged dread of confiscation or other legal action against him turned out to be baseless. How curious, therefore, that even after more than ten years (a generous amount of time to allow even the most timid of people to emerge from the shadows), even after he has seen that no attempt has been made to harm him or to confiscate the "original manuscript," and even after the Italian government bestowed an award on Selbourne for his book, the alleged "present owner" has failed:

a. to come out of the shadows, of his own accord, to forgive Selbourne for his indiscretion in turning to Mondadori without his permission;

b. to state to the public (even if just in an affidavit with his signature blotted out and released by his attorney, who would surely guard his anonymity) that 'Everything that Selbourne has said is true; you have unjustifiably suspected a truthful person';

c. to release a photocopy of even just one side of one leaf of the "original manuscript" (cares he nought about Parfitt's exhortation, directed to Selbourne but equally directable to the "present owner," that "What we're all waiting for is him to come out of his corner with his manuscript"?);

d. to bask in the glory which his friend of "many years" has enjoyed for almost a decade (see section 2 for a roster, probably incomplete, of Selbourne's champions and the entry for Selbourne 1997a in References for a list, possibly partial, of his best-sellers), his few opponents being nothing more than an ignorant bunch of full-time nobodies and professional pipsqueaks.125

Is it not the truth that the only reason the alleged "present owner" has forever been silent is that he has never existed? Is it not the truth that the only real "present owner" is Selbourne. Is it not the truth that the only real "original manuscript" is Selbourne's first draft of his sleep-inducing novel called The City of Light and that he wrote it under the pen name of Jacob of Ancona? Is it not the truth that the only possibly true detail in his story is his visit to Mondadori (and even that detail remains to be verified) and that everything else in his enterprise is fantasy?2126

Or will that liberal dispenser of fog now allege that the "present owner" has died and the whereabouts of the "original manuscript" are unknown? If so, surely Selbourne is now able to reveal his name, late address, late telephone number, and other details, so that:

a. through death records kept by the Italian government, fleshed out possibly by church records, an obituary, and the oral testimony of friends, neighbors, and relatives (see note 144 for proof, provided by Selbourne himself, that the alleged "present owner" has heirs, that they are aware of the alleged "original document," and that Selbourne in one way or another learned what they "might" do with the alleged "original manuscript"), the whereabouts of the Precious Gift can be
ascertained, it can be recovered, it can be preserved (is Selbourne not worried that through neglect it will in all likelihood deteriorate?), it can be authenticated, and it can be exhibited to the awe and delight of all humankind for ever and ever,

b. and Selbourne himself, who even before 10 November 1997 (thus, barely a mere three months after publication of the First Version of Holy Writ) was "in danger of falling into disfavor and possibly disrepute" (see the last paragraph of note 94), can in the highest relevant research circles finally clear his name (cares he nought about his reputation?) and gloat over his stunning defeat of the "peashooters" (see note 157).

2. In contrast to the alleged "present owner," who seemed to be scared even of his own shadow, Selbourne was all cockiness.

Surely Selbourne, a clever man who had not only been trained in the law and called to the bar (at Inner Temple in 1960) but also was a long-time shouter from the rooftops for morality (among his publications were Moral Evasion and The Principle of Duty: An Essay on the Foundations of the Civic Order), knew that it was his alleged friend's legal and moral duty to report the existence of the "original manuscript" to the Italian legal authorities, so that the question of ownership could be cleared up once and for all and the prized object, if not rightly the "present owner"'s, could be turned over to whomever the authorities designated.

Surely Selbourne's alleged friend of "many years" was so intelligent and so educated (we know he was, because, were he not, an astounding intellectual titan like Selbourne would not have wasted his time with him for "many years" and would not have devoted almost five years of his life to making his "translation" and "critical apparatus") that he realized he was not in compliance with the law or with ethics if he failed to report the existence of an "original manuscript" of "unclear" provenance to the Italian legal authorities, all the less in compliance since it may have been Italian cultural property, which, if so, belongs to the state.

Surely Selbourne's alleged friend of "many years" was so ethical (we know he was, because, were he not, an ethicist like Selbourne would not have hobnobbed with him) that not only did he realize the extent of his moral and legal obligations but he also wanted to meet them by reporting the Precious Gift to the authorities and handing it over to the rightful owner if so directed.

Surely Selbourne's alleged friend of "many years" was so intelligent and so educated that he knew he had an albatross around his neck and wanted to be rid of it.

Surely Selbourne counseled his alleged friend of "many years" to report to the legal authorities.

Surely Selbourne felt uncomfortable when that person failed to report to the legal authorities.

Surely Selbourne felt more than uncomfortable that he, a person of towering intellectual and ethical stature who for years had been shouting from the rooftops for morality, was hobnobbing with someone who was not carrying out his legal and ethical obligation.

Surely Selbourne knew that ethics and the law required that he himself, once he learned of the
"unclear" provenance of the "original manuscript" and the possibility of its being Italian cultural property, report his friend of "many years" to the authorities.

Surely Selbourne knew that by keeping silent he could be charged with being an accessory after the fact.

Surely Selbourne felt that ethics and the law required him to break off all contact with his friend of "many years."

And there the matter should have ended, after which the Italian legal authorities would have carried out the law, Selbourne would have been in the clear, his friend of "many years" would have been in the clear, nothing would have prevented Selbourne's undertaking and publishing the "translation" and "critical apparatus," and, last but not least, there would have been no Selbourne Scandal:

1. If the Italian authorities had decided that the "original manuscript" belonged to the "present owner," the latter could still have turned to Selbourne for a "translation."

2. If the authorities had decided that the "original manuscript" belonged to another entity (whether a person or an institution), it would presumably have been accessible to the public and Selbourne could view it at will.

Indeed, given Selbourne's indisputable "interest in Judaica, including the history of medieval Jewry in Italy," given Little, Brown and Company's indisputable statement that Selbourne was "the grandson of one of the greatest of modern rabbinical philosophers, Moshe Avigdor Amiel (1882-1945)," given the indisputable statement in the biographical blurb on the jacket of Selbourne 1997a that "[David Selbourne is] one of the few scholars who could have done justice to the translation and annotation of Jacob d'Ancona's many-faceted manuscript," given the indisputable existence of "the mistrust, often justified, in which Italians hold one another, while Italian scholarship is a byword for bad faith, corruption, and indolence," given the indisputable fact that "the Englishman will generally be considered, rightly or wrongly, as trustworthy in keeping a pledge, as nonmaterialistic and as hardworking," and given the indisputable fact that "Jacob"s ethical, philosophical, political, and social ideas were identical or nearly so to Selbourne's, and given the indisputable fact that Selbourne's residence in Urbino put them close to the "original manuscript," only peashooters (see note 157) would have been stupid enough not to see that Selbourne was the best person for the job -- the right person at the right moment in the right place.

Furthermore:

Selbourne must have realized that by not concerting with his friend of "many years" about the disposition of the "translation" and the "critical apparatus" (see note 124), he might jeopardize their relationship.

Selbourne must have realized that his turning to Mondadori without the "present owner"s permission might be illegal (does Italian law allow someone to publish a translation of a text in the possession of someone who has not only not given his permission for publication but has also
expressed his opposition to publication?).

Selbourne must have realized that by turning to any third party, like a publisher, he would be bringing the existence of the Precious Gift to the knowledge of the entire world, as a result of which both his friend of "many years" and he might be charged with various infractions of the law.

Selbourne must have realized that if the authorities took him to court and he refused to reveal the name and address of his friend of "many years" he would be charged with contempt of court and obstruction of justice.

Yet Selbourne did not report anything to the authorities (had he done so, we would know about it). Quite the contrary:

Selbourne was not afraid to turn to Mondadori.
Selbourne was not afraid to turn to other publishers when Mondadori showed him the door.
Selbourne was not afraid to endanger his relationship with that friend of "many years."
Selbourne was not afraid to turn to other publishers after the relationship was ruptured.
Selbourne was not afraid to proceed as he did, despite the danger of legal complications.

On one hand, therefore, we have a coward, the "present owner," alleged by Selbourne to be so afraid even of his shadow that he did not allow even so little as a photocopy of one side of one leaf to be released.

On the other hand, we have a hotspur, Selbourne, willing to risk getting himself and his friend of "many years" into legal and other trouble.

What an odd couple.

The alleged "present owner"'s queer behavior and Selbourne's queer behavior, however, puzzle you only if you believe "their" stories (actually, his story -- and you can guess whom I mean by his). If in contrast you are a disbeliever, all the puzzling goings-on, all the puzzling contradictions, and all the other puzzling anomalies are explained easily:

a. Selbourne, you conclude, created the alleged "present owner," made him say and do what he, Selbourne, wanted him to.

b. Selbourne, you conclude, could afford to be insouciant about those possible risks and dangers because, knowing that there was no "original manuscript" and no "present owner," he knew that the authorities could not level any charge of wrongful possession or concealment of a document of "unclear" provenance, any charge of wrongful possession or concealment of Italian cultural property, any charge of being an accessory after the fact, any charge of breach of trust, or any charge of violation of copyright (you cannot be charged with possessing, concealing, or failing to report what does not exist, you cannot be charged with breaching the trust of someone who does not exist, and you cannot be charged with violating the copyright of a text that does not exist).
c. Selbourne, you conclude, had to fear only the charge of being a hoaxer (if his "translation" is the real "original manuscript") or of being involved in some lesser way in a hoax (if somebody gave him a fabricated text to translate).

d. If conclusions a, b, and c are right, the next logical conclusion is that Selbourne weighed the pros and cons of proceeding with the prank:

i. If Selbourne succeeded in knocking Marco Polo off his pedestal; the fictitious "Jacob" would be hoisted up in his place; Selbourne would be hailed as the discoverer or the codiscoverer of the new Marco Polo (see section 18); the fictitious "Jacob"s ethical, philosophical, political, and social ideas (which is to say, Selbourne's ethical, philosophical, political, and social ideas) would be widely discussed; Selbourne would be assured a prominent place in history for having brought the new Marco Polo to the attention of the world; his detractors at Ruskin College and any others elsewhere (see subsection F in section 22, including note 147) would be green with envy or jealously; and, since there was no "present owner," Selbourne would not have to share with anyone else the limelight or any honors (like the Order of Merit of the Italian Republic and the conference organized in the People's Republic of China to discuss his book).

ii. If Selbourne failed, his enterprize would be dismissed as a prank or a hoax and, presumably, the matter would not reach the courts (at most, possibly, he would have to return any money gotten from the publishers).

e. If the conclusion enunciated in d is right, the next logical conclusion is that Selbourne decided that the pros outweighed the cons, namely that the risk of being exposed as a hoaxer or a prankster was worth taking. After all, literary hoaxes occur all the time and the punishment is usually nothing more than embarrassment, often temporary, possibly with return of any money gained from the hoax or the prank. Indeed, all that Selbourne seems to have suffered, at least till now, was bad reviews from "peashooters."

Those are my conclusions based on my logical reading of the available evidence and on the absence of evidence. If you disagree in any way, say why and suggest what you think is a more realistic scenario. If your scenario includes a real "original manuscript" of "unclear" provenance, in which case it perforce includes a real "present owner," ethics and the law require that you report such an object and such a person, as well as Selbourne, to the Italian legal authorities because, believing that a certain document is of "unclear" provenance and believing that it may be Italian cultural property, you have the moral and legal obligation to report its existence to those authorities.

To get back to reality: ironically, Selbourne was in the end the object of the very opposite of legal action: he was rewarded with the Order of Merit of the Italian Republic. It would be good to know who decided to reward him and on what grounds.

3. See the last paragraph of note 58 on Selbourne's alleged "interest in Judaica, including the history of medieval Jewry in Italy," an interest of which, curiously, serious students of Judaica have not been aware.

4. As for the claim that "Only those familiar with Italian mores could understand the
mistrust, often justified, in which Italians hold one another, while Italian scholarship is a byword for bad faith, corruption, and indolence," granted that Italy, like every other country, has its share of incompetents (among them, we Scourges of Jacob have reason to believe, are those who awarded Selbourne the Order of Merit of the Italian Republic, Ephraim Nissan [see note 163], and the author of unsigned 2001 [see note 168]), but claiming that Italian research as a whole is as dismal as Selbourne made it out to be is just another example of his readiness to be self-serving. Given the worthlessness of his enterprise for research, his claim is also hypocritical.

I know or knew personally several Italian Jews, in Italy and in Israel, who are or were not only honest but also first-rate historians of Italian Jewry; and I have read many more who strike me no less favorably. Can the "present owner" or Selbourne (are they not the same person?) prove his point in detailed, convincing reviews published in the best academic journals?127

We get the impression that had Selbourne left the United Kingdom for Greece, we would have heard from him the same blather about the poor quality of Greek research; had he left for Spain, that we would have heard the same twaddle about the poor quality of Spanish research; and so forth.

5. As for the claim that "By contrast, the Englishman will generally be considered, rightly or wrongly, as trustworthy in keeping a pledge, as nonmaterialistic and as hardworking," how fortunate that Selbourne was English.128 We get the impression that had Selbourne been a Greek, we would have heard the same blather about the Greeks; had he been a Spaniard,...

George Orwell understood the English better than did the non-existent "present owner" (who was never in England and never met even one English person): he noted "the widespread English belief that intelligence and unscrupulousness are much the same thing" (Orwell 1946:233, first published in 1945).

6. Even though Providence had deigned to bestow on Selbourne the "gift," as he called it (more accurately: the Precious Gift), "I wrestled with my own doubts about translating a manuscript to which others would not have access. I decided, as I became aware of the gift that I had in my hand, that I had a responsibility to make its contents known" (quoted in Kristof 1997:A18). Truly noble. As noble as "Jacob"s noble rabbinical lineage." To bring Selbourne back to Earth: when he was allegedly wrestling with himself, it is then that he should have admitted to himself, "Since I'm not a Hebraist, not an Italianist, not a Sinologist, not an Orientalist, not a medievalist, and so on, I'm not qualified for the job, ethics therefore compelling me to turn down the offer" (see paragraph D in note 157). Selbourne thus did say the right thing, but at the wrong time, and when he should have said it, he did not.

Reason III. I wanted to see whether harm of any other kind would come to the alleged "present owner." Would his possession of anti-Christian material result in excommunication? Would he be the object of verbal or physical assault by Christian fanatics? So far as I can tell, harm came only to Selbourne: even as early as 10 November 1997 (just a few weeks after Selbourne 1997a appeared), Hillenbrand remarked that Selbourne "is in danger of falling into disfavor and possibly discredit" (Hillenbrand 1997). See the last paragraph of note 94.
Reason IV. I wanted to see whether the alleged "original owner" or that person's rightful heir or heirs would come forward to claim the alleged "original manuscript." Nobody did, because, as I believe, no piece of writing has ever existed for anyone to claim and, consequently, no "original owner" or heirs have ever existed either.

Reason V. I wanted to see whether anyone would come forward with evidence for the alleged "Jacob of Ancona," the alleged "noble rabbinical lineage," the alleged "original manuscript," the alleged "present owner," or any of the other alleged entities. Nobody did, because, I believe, none of those entities has ever existed, though we did hear a vague "speculation" from Matthew d'Ancona that he may be related to "Jacob of Ancona" (see section 22 for a dissection of his fatuousness). Why has he not come forward to claim the alleged "original manuscript"?

Reason VI. I wanted to review not just Selbourne's enterprize but also the reactions of the laity and reputable researchers, whether positive or negative, to the enterprize. We have seen:

A. How he failed to react to most of the criticism (his silence was eloquent).

B. How he ran frantically from one of the many leaks in his sunken tub to another; how he tried in vain to stuff them up; how his struggle to salvage his rickety vessel added up to failure.

C. How he was vague.

D. How he handed down brief, unsupported, and unsupported ipse dixits.

E. How he at times contradicted himself by alleging one thing on one occasion (because it suited him at that moment) and something else on another (to suit a different circumstance).

F. How, drawing liberally on an apparently unfailing fund of far-fetched "explanations," he would dish up one of them in the hope of explaining away an anomaly, only to engender yet another anomaly or to put more ammunition into our hands, only to make himself look sillier in the eyes of the discerning.

G. How his tiny band of cheerleaders, in their struggle to help him, often accomplished nothing more than put more ammunition into our hands. One is reminded of that line in Cicero's *pro Milone*, "iacent suis testibus" (18.47) 'they are overthrown by means of their own witnesses'.

Thus, the more Selbourne and company spoke out (or did not speak out), the stronger we were able to make our case against him. Selbourne ran but he could not hide.

Reason VII. I wanted to watch how the pro- and anti-Selbourne camps took shape (see, in section 22, the part beginning "The reaction to Selbourne 1997a [...]"). Expectedly, high-level research publications contained no defenses of Selbourne's enterprize, most such publications ignored it because it was too ridiculous to merit even just a brief dismissal, what little notice it did gain in such publications was negative (Abulafia 1997c, Abulafia 2000, Barrett 1998a, de Rachewiltz and Leslie 1998, Jenner 1997, unsigned 1999a, and unsigned 1999b), and Selbourne succeeded in publishing his Mickey Mouse apologiae pro libello suo (all devoid of convincing arguments) only in imprints of his
own book or as responses to negative reviews in periodicals (at least The Guardian, The Times [twice], TLS: Times Literary Supplement, The London Review of Books, and Commentary), the editors of which were obliged to accept them because it is a custom, and rightly so, to allow the author of a negatively reviewed book (or a person otherwise criticized) to respond. We wonder how much he could have published about his book in high-level academic journals if the editors evaluated his submissions just on their merits.

Reason VIII. I wanted to see whether the two camps would change over the years. Would anyone change camps? Would their size change appreciably? Would one disappear? Where do his supporters stand today? Have any succumbed to reality? If not, will any have the forthrightness to come forward, after reading all the negative reviews and letters to the editor, including the present essay, and tell us why they still believe Selbourne?

Reason IX. I wanted to see whether Selbourne's book would have any effect in the long run. What kind of success or failure would the book be? See the fifth, fourth, and third paragraphs from the end of note 35 and the part beginning "So far as I can tell, except in the People's Republic of China" in section 16.

Reason X. Being wont to writing long reviews, seeing that the negative reviews and letters to the editor revealed only a few of the myriad fissures and faults in Selbourne 1997a and Selbourne's related publications, dismayed that, even after most of the negative reviews and letters to the editor appeared, versions of The City of Light were still coming out (in both English and some other languages), and learning from Selbourne 2000 that the book had gained some acceptance in the People's Republic of China to the point that a conference of local "scholars" had been held to assess its "contributions," I realized that a Thorough was needed to expose it more fully to the public gaze: with careful dissection, detailed analysis, and relentlessly trenchant criticism (including drawing the logical consequences of many of Selbourne's statements to highlight their absurdity, contrasting his mutually contradictory statements to underscore their worthlessness, showing how he was willing to change his story to adapt it to the urgencies of the moment, and putting to him one blunt question after another to force him either out of his several corners or into corners from which exit was impossible), I set out to debunk The City of Light on a larger scale than had earlier reviewers, who, though they visited Selbourne with speedy prosecution, left much unsaid (as I have too). Describing in the round Selbourne's enterprize took time.

Reason XI. I wanted not only to review Selbourne 1997a and related publications but also formulate some guidelines for detecting insincerity in research. That required creating both the chicken and the egg: (i) evaluating those publications and then looking at the evaluation to tease out the guidelines I had followed intuitively or by trial-and-error; (ii) thinking up possible guidelines and then trying to determine their usefulness. That task involved reading, in the beginning, Farrer 1907, Rey 1925, and Stein 1993, and, recently, Farquhar 2005. All that took time.

Thus, to answer Cicero’s question, "in eo quo delictum maius est, eo poena est tardior?" (pro Cæcina 3, 7) 'is the punishment slower in coming if the fault is greater?', the answer is, sometimes it is, but the day of reckoning is now dawning.
22. Final remarks (for the time being): A. What Selbourne should have done. B. A dissection of Selbourne's "acknowledgments." C. Did Selbourne's helpers and supporters have any relevant credentials? D. Will Selbourne open his files and can he leave us an ethical will? E. The reaction to Selbourne's book in the highest relevant scholarly circles (the only reaction that counts). F. The more likely possibility: no "original manuscript" has ever existed. G. Selbourne later admitted that he could have written "Jacob"'s tale. H. Selbourne's deficient knowledge of Latin. I. Does Selbourne now regret undertaking his enterprise? J. Outdoing Al Capone. K. Let us bring the matter before a court of law. L. In sum

A. What Selbourne should have done

It is suspicious when someone's first foray into a field (all the more so, several fields; even more so, several diverse fields) is a large work, for normally researchers begin modestly, say, when, as graduate students, they publish short reviews, short articles, or notes (based, possibly, on research for their master's essays or doctoral dissertations), later going on to bigger projects, making mid-course corrections throughout their careers by eagerly seeking reaction, whether in the form of reviews, private letters, or oral comments, from colleagues and other knowledgeable people, so that little by little, through painstaking labor, researchers make a name for themselves in their fields, and when the time comes for a magnum opus it rests on a solid foundation of earlier work.

In contrast, the amateurs are loners. They often work for years on what they think is a magnum opus and then, suddenly, they burst onto the scene. But because they lack training, because they are unaware of their lack of training (they think that enthusiasm is enough to carry them along), because they have not benefited from mid-course corrections (being loners, they allow no one to guide them back to reality when, inevitably, they go astray), and because, not knowing the ars, they do not know how to work per artem, by the time the alleged magnum opus appears (characteristically, it is either printed privately or brought out by a vanity publisher or by a commercial publisher, who, presumably having only $$$ and, possibly, fame in mind, will undertake to put almost any "product" on the market, no matter how shoddy), neither reviews, however long, however detailed, or however penetrating, nor editing, however massive, could bring a revised version of "the product" up to snuff and thereby make it acceptable to the only people qualified to judge: the best researchers in the relevant fields.\(^{134}\)

In the instant case, the loner's task was all the harder because he made these procedural blunders:
A. The tale was extraordinarily long (a blunder stemming from the real "Jacob"'s virtually uncontrollable urge to use the imaginary "Jacob" as his mouthpiece). The more you write, the likelier you are to make mistakes.

B. The tale was extraordinarily detailed. The more details you give, the more knowledge you must possess to avoid mistakes.

C. The alleged "original manuscript" was written in Higher Macaronic. The more languages you involve, the more languages you must know (and know them well) to avoid blundering (to say nothing of the extreme unlikelihood of such a linguistic farrago as Higher Macaronic, of which the only example would be the alleged text in the alleged "original manuscript").

D. Since the tale dealt with issues widely discussed (in the West) in the late twentieth but not in the thirteenth century, it was extraordinarily sophisticated for the thirteenth but not for the late twentieth century, it stood out doubly as wildly uncharacteristic of writing of the 1270s and doubly as perfectly characteristic of writing of the 1980s and 1990s. Furthermore, not only did it deal with issues that Selbourne had discussed in publications under his name but "Jacob"'s stand on those issues was usually if not always identical with Selbourne's. All in all, then, it was impossible not to conclude that this was his book, written under a pen name, dealing with issues of interest to himself.

Grasp all, lose all. Pride goeth before a fall. If you think you're clever, if you're cocky, if you're a loner, if you think you can pull the wool over the eyes of experts, as sure as the Sun will rise tomorrow you will stumble and fumble. Selbourne would have done better to publish his collected works, corrected and expanded where necessary.

B. A dissection of Selbourne's "Acknowledgments"

A dissection of Selbourne's "Acknowledgments" is revealing. He thanked for their help "the late Eliczer Amiel, Dr Domenico Cossi, Matthew d’Ancona, Joseph Hassan, Boris Kaz, Maria Luisa Moscati Benigni, Dr Luigi Paci, Dr Gustavo Pesarin, Meir Posen, Carol Thomas and Professor Donald Thomas" (Selbourne 1997a).135 The list in Selbourne 2000 and the one in the French version were identical to the one just cited except that Boris Kaz's name did not appear in either of those two imprints (pp. xv and [15] respectively), from which we assume that when Kaz became aware of the entire enterprize, that is, when he saw Selbourne 1997a for the first time (thus, after its publication), he realized that he had become associated with what he now held to be a disreputable undertaking and therefore directed that his name be removed from any later versions. If so, we also infer that Selbourne did not inform Kaz of the extent of his enterprize when putting his questions to him (he must have asked each of the above-named people many questions, for, after mentioning the eleven, Selbourne said "as well as [...] many others too numerous to mention for their responses to my queries upon a hundred and one different matters," the unnamed "many" presumably being those who gave him help of smaller compass).136
118. Going on the assumption that many elements in Selbourne's enterprise had a hidden meaning, I pondered what the phrase "advanced in years" might mean below the surface. Reading in Liu and McKnight 1991:103 that "Both Li-tsung (reigned 1224/25-1264/65) and his successor Tu-tsung (reigned 1264/65-1274) indulged excessively in pleasure, though much of it was carefully concealed from the public," it occurred to me that the real "Jacob" presumably read about Tu-tsung's excessive indulgence, wanted to add verisimilitude to the imaginary "Jacob"'s tale by intimating that the latter knew about the emperor's love of pleasure, and expressed that intimation in the form of a remark about his being "advanced in years," that is, excessive indulgence had -- we are presumably asked to believe -- taken a toll on the emperor's physical health and "Jacob" had seen it with his own eyes, the intimation itself being an intimation that "Jacob" was privileged to see the emperor, something which all but highly privileged Chinese never were (see earlier in the text on the cocooning of Chinese kings and emperors). Does any reliable source mention premature physical deterioration of Tu-tsung?

We should not forget that in the days before mass media, in the days before photographs, in the days before newspapers published even sketches of people, in the days before newspapers, say, in the 1270s, few people knew what anyone they had not seen looked like. Even examples closer to our day are striking:

A. During the Time of Troubles in Muscovy (1598-1613), "Rumours spread that Dmitry [the first False Dmitry (D.I.G.)] had survived the coup d'état and in August 1607 another pretender appeared at Starodub claiming to be the recently deposed tsar. Although the Second False Dmitry bore no physical resemblance to the first, he gathered a large following among Cossacks, Poles, Lithuanians, and rebels who had already risen against Shuysky. Gaining control of southern Russia, he marched toward Moscow and established his headquarters, including a full court and government administration, at the village of Tushino (spring 1608). [..] ¶ On March 28, 1611, a third False Dmitry, who has been identified as a deacon called Sidorka, appeared at Ivanogorod. Gaining the allegiance of the Cossacks (March 1612), who were ravaging the environs of Moscow and of the inhabitants of Pskov, he [..]" (The New Encyclopædia Britannica, 10 ed., vol. 4, p. 140).

B. Louis XVI of France, Marie-Antoinette, and their son were caught fleeing France on 20 June 1791 not because someone had recognized any of them but because the ornateness of the coach in which they were trying to reach the eastern frontier aroused suspicion. Mind you, they were not in disguise.

C. In 1860 the Prince of Wales, later King Edward VII, visited the United States under the name of Baron Renfrew (Baron of Renfrew being one of the titles of every Prince of Wales at least since his day). Nobody recognized him even though he was not in disguise. In contrast, were the current Prince of Wales, his great-great-grandson, who also holds the title of Baron of Renfrew, to visit the United States under that name (or any other), millions of people would recognize him by his face.

* Presumably taking a cue from Wang's supposition of "friends," Selbourne invoked "des contacts marchands ultérieurs" (page 24 of the French version of his book) to explain away an anticipatory anachronism noted by critics reviewing Selbourne 1997a: "Un deuxième indice, plus détourné, de la date de rédaction du manuscrit nous est donné par le mot arguni qu'emploie Jacob pour désigner la progéniture métissée des Chinois et des Européens à Zaitun. Il s’agit de la version italienisée d’un mot d’origine tartare, et il est peu probable qu’il ait été d’usage courant à l’époque où Jacob séjourna à Zaitun: c’est en 1277, après son départ, que la ville tomba aux mains des Tartares. J’imagine qu’il dut connaître ce mot à travers des contacts marchands ultérieurs avec la Chine mongole, ce qui inviterait à dater la rédaction du début des années 1280" (pp. 23-24). But what will Selbourne say about dramatic anticipatory anachronisms like rabbinico (noted in section 3)? That "Jacob" lived into the eighteenth century? The undeniable fact is that no matter what date you assign to the alleged "original manuscript," it will contain anachronisms of one kind or another: the earlier Selbourne dates the alleged "original manuscript," the more prochronisms we will find; the later he dates it, the more metachronisms we will find; whenever he dates it, we will find anachronisms (see section 14). That is proof enough that, if it exists, the document is a fake. The
Ptolemaic system is unsalvageable.

By the way, how interesting that whereas the not exactly unknown Dante Alighieri (1265-1321) complained that when writing *The Divine Comedy* (which he probably began in the first decade of the fourteenth century and finished late in life) he could not express himself as he wished and as his subject required because literary Italian was, he said, "una lingua chi chiama mamma a babbo" "a language that calls daddy "mommy"" (that is, a language still in its infancy) the to-everybody-but-Selbourne-unknown "Jacob of Ancona" had -- some thirty to fifty years earlier! -- succeeded in expressing himself with such sophistication that he sounded not only like the most refined Italian writer of his day but also like a late-twentieth-century author who, we gather from one person's intimation, would be worthy of the Nobel Prize for Literature, this "astonishing intellectual titan"s feat being all the more amazing in light of the fact that whereas Dante had the advantage of writing *The Divine Comedy* in the language in which he could express himself best (Italian) "Jacob" had to struggle with what must have been his third language (after his native Jewish Italian or native Jewish Greek and after his early-acquired Hebrew-Aramaic), namely Higher Macaronic. Let us not, however, be falsely naive, for we all know how "Jacob" succeeded where Dante failed: the farsighted "Jacob," unlike the unimaginative Dante, got the brilliant idea of using words coined after his death.

119. Selbourne seemed to be better informed than Wang on the question of which chronolect of Quanzhou Chinese was relevant: responding to the critics who asserted that he had perpetrated a hoax, he asked, if so, "How the devil did I get to know the medieval dialect of Zaitun? Alternatively, and more to the point, how did Jacob hear it and transliterate it without having been there?" (Selbourne 2000). Expectedly, Selbourne's rhetorical questions jumped to conclusions: the question "How the devil did I get to know [...]?" presupposes that the alleged "original manuscript" reflects medieval Quanzhou pronunciations (that is, it presupposes Possibility V), but we do not yet know which of the five possibilities and two subpossibilities is right. Conveniently, Selbourne forgot to address Barrett's remark quoted in the text concerning Possibility I. As for "how did Jacob hear it [...]?" that alleged person presumably never existed.

Selbourne was not only Mr. Changing Story, Mr. Contradiction, Mr. Double-Talk, Mr. Half-Truth, Mr. Ipse Dixit, and Mr. Serendipity but also, as we have now seen, Mr. Unstated, Unproven Assumption. To take another example, consider the following: "On my visit [to Quanzhou in February 1999] I was taken aside at a Buddhist temple in the town, and the carvings on the stone pillars of its portico were pointed out to me by a local historian. In his manuscript Jacob describes going to 'the Temple of the Stone Phoenix' (held by early critics of *The City of Light* to have been an invention of mine). At head-height, on each of the stone columns, was carved a phoenix. It was stranger than fiction" (Selbourne 2001).

The foregoing passage rests on two unstated, unfounded assumptions:

**Unfounded assumption A:** The existence of the temple was unknown in modern times before the publication of *The City of Light*.

If that assumption were justified, Selbourne would not have failed to tell us that it was, that is, he would have proudly and loudly proclaimed something like the following: "Jacob mentioned a temple in Quanzhou having such-and-such carvings; when I visited the city, I saw the temple, which fit his description perfectly; my guide told me that the existence of the temple was unknown until after the publication of my book, when it was excavated." Thus, we would have here information of subtype B.2 (see note 35) that was proved to be accurate on the basis of reliable evidence.

But since Selbourne did not say anything about any post-1997 discovery, we may assume that the existence of the temple was known before he published his book -- which it indeed was. If so, the temple must be described in pre-1997 sources easily available to the real "Jacob," say, English (and French?) guidebooks to China or Quanzhou, books on Chinese architecture, and/or books on Chinese religion. If so, the real "Jacob" could have easily copied a description of parts of the temple from such sources (presumably, reference is to one of the twin granite pagodas in Quanzhou built in the thirteenth century, before the alleged "Jacob" allegedly arrived there) and used a certain detail (the one about the carved birds) as his basis for naming it "the Temple of the Stone Phoenix."
Unfounded assumption B: The carving which the alleged "Jacob" allegedly described was of a phoenix.

So far as is known, the Chinese have never believed in the mythical bird which in the West is called a 'phoenix', knowledge of which has never reached their country (except in recent times and then only in research circles like folkloristics). However, Chinese mythology does include the bird called fenghuang in Mandarin. The 1991 imprint of the fifteenth edition of The New Encyclopædia Britannica describes it as follows: "feng-huáng, Pinyin FENGHUANG (Chinese: 'phoenix'), in Chinese mythology, a creature whose rare appearance is said to indicate some great event or bear testimony to the greatness of a ruler. Tradition recounts an appearance of the feng-huáng before the death of the legendary Yellow Emperor (Huang Ti), who ruled China in the 27th century BC. Its latest appearance is said to have taken place in Anhwei province at the grave of the father of Hung-wu, founder of the Ming dynasty in 1368. It is said that the song of the phoenix is exceptionally beautiful and meaningful and that the animal has a special appreciation of human music. ¶ The Shuo-wen dictionary (1st or 2nd century AD) describes the bird as having the breast of a goose, the hindquarters of a stag, the neck of a snake, the tail of a fish, the forehead of a fowl, the down of a duck, the marks of a dragon, the back of a tortoise, the face of a swallow, and the beak of a cock. It was reportedly about 9 feet (2.7 metres) tall. In systematized mythology, the phoenix is the female counterpart of the male dragon" (vol. 4, p. 725). The encyclopedia says further that "the phoenix-like creature (feng-huáng) symbolizes the empress" (vol. 17, p. 126).

The 1957 imprint of Webster's New International Dictionary of the English Language: Second Edition: Unabridged defines the fenghuang as 'A bird of rich plumage and graceful form and movement, fabled to appear in time of peace and prosperity, and often represented in art, sometimes in pheasant-like form. Cf. PHOENIX' (p. 932). At phoenix, we read that "The fêng-huáng is commonly called the Chinese phoenix" (p. 1843).

Thus, the encyclopedia's and the dictionary's descriptions of the Chinese mythical bird do not mention either of the distinctive features of the mythical bird known in the West as a 'phoenix' (namely, its self-immolation and its resurrection); they do mention features which the phoenix does not have; and the only feature which the two birds share is their mythicalness (which is the bare minimum and thus nothing substantial).

In sum, the Chinese might have named a temple 'the Temple of the Stone Fenghuang' (did they?) but not "the Temple of the Stone Phoenix'.

Selbourne could counter-argue that just as the authors of the passages quoted from the encyclopedia and dictionary included the wordings "phoenix," "phoenix-like creature," and "the Chinese phoenix" in their treatment or mention of the Chinese mythical bird because in an extremely rough way the two birds share a feature, "Jacob" too, wanting to explain the unknown in terms of the known to his Western readers, either replaced the name "the Temple of the Stone Fenghuang' (which the Chinese had given) by 'the Temple of the Stone Phoenix' (a name of his invention) or he made up the name 'the Temple of the Stone Phoenix' himself. If Selbourne takes the first option ("replaced"), let us see evidence from a reliable source for the name "the Temple of the Stone Fenghuang'. If he takes the second option, why would the alleged "Jacob" make up a name?

Furthermore, if Selbourne takes the first option, we will have another dramatic anticipatory anachronism, so that he would in effect be handing us, as he often did, more ammunition.

In any case, we still have our other argument, which appears to be irrefutable: since latter-day Western sources describe and illustrate the temple with the columns in question, it is a reasonable assumption that, in so doing, at least some of them mention the word phoenix (but then only as a metaphor, to help Western readers unfamiliar with Chinese culture understand what the fenghuang is, as when, say, explained to Yiddishless anglophones that "Sholem-Aleykhem is the Ashkenazic Mark Twain" or to Englishless yiddishophones that "mark tveyn iz der amerikaner sholem-aleykhem" 'Mark Twain is the American Sholem-Aleykhem'); if so, the real "Jacob" could have easily learned of the columns with the carved "phoenixes," which, he presumably did not know (see note 157 for Selbourne's confession "I'm not a Sinologist"), are
actually representations of the fenghuang.

Selbourne was laboring under a misapprehension when writing that "In his manuscript Jacob describes going to 'the Temple of the Stone Phoenix' (held by early critics of The City of Light to have been an invention of mine)." Critics do not deny the existence of the temple or of the carved birds. They deny that they are phoenixes and they deny that anyone in the thirteenth century would have called the temple *the Temple of the Stone Phoenix*, which sounds as if it had been taken from a twentieth-century guidebook to China.

120. I thank Wang for pointing out those spellings on the older European maps, of which I had been unaware.

121. Selbourne's intellectually preposterous book and the equally absurd "defenses" of it do not bear acquaintanceship unless you want to glimpse illogic or need a soporific.

122. My modus operandi here is based on a formula I devised for describing one of the ways in which the hordes of dabblers in Jewish family names (that is, probably at least ninety-seven percent of those who have ever published on the subject) proceed when trying to etymologize a name: grab one lexeme with your left hand, another with your right, slap the two together, and -- presto! -- an etymology." Here is a description of one example:

"Alexander Beider, a Russian computer technologist who has put into mass circulation thousands of misetymologies of Ashkenazic family names and has become an 'expert' on Ashkenazic family names in the eyes of those who know even less than he does, says that the Eastern Ashkenazic family name Korbel' comes from a diminutive of Yiddish korb 'basket'. However, anyone possessing even a baby flea's thimbleful of Yiddish, which he and his admirers do not, has internalized the rule that Yiddish protovowel 41 (represented by o in romanization) in stressed position in the base form of a noun becomes protovowel 21 (represented by e in romanization) in diminutives that end in -l and -ele, so that from korb we have the first-degree diminutive kerbl and the second-degree diminutive kerbele (the plurals, respectively kerblekh and kerbelekh, likewise have protovowel 21).

"Which is to say that Beider manufactured the non-existent and ungrammatical Yiddish form *'korbl' by grabbing Yiddish korb with his left hand, grabbing the Yiddish diminutive suffix -l with his right hand, and, ignorant even of basic Yiddish morphophonology (namely the rule about the change from protovowel 41 to protovowel 21), slapped the two together to produce a word existing only in his -- boundless -- fantasy." Obviously, Korbel ~ Korbel' cannot come from kerbl* (slightly revised from Gold 2005b:30, where footnote 26 reads "The Yiddishless Beider's 'Yiddish' coinages deserve an article unto themselves").

123. The French version of Selbourne's book quotes, in French translation, a sentence from an article which Wang Lianmao published in the issue dated 21 August 1998 of Wan Wei Bao, a Shanghai newspaper, 'Un homme qui ne serait pas venu ici n'aurait pu présenter les choses ainsi' (that is, 'someone who would not have come here could not have described things in that way'), but with no elaboration. Let us therefore supply what is missing.

Pace Wang, it takes but little effort to copy from reliable sources information of type A about place X (say, Quanzhou) and eke it out with one or both of the following kinds of information: information of type A about place Y which sounds plausible for place X; information of type B.2 which sounds plausible for place X. To take a hypothetical example: if seven hundred years from now we had only an incomplete list of the street names of Manhattan, New York, a hoaxer could:

1. Copy some names from the partial list that had survived, say, Broadway and Fifth Avenue (= information of type A).

2. Copy some names from a list of street names existing elsewhere in the United States in 2007, say, Chestnut Street and Walnut Street, which are Philadelphia hodonyms. Manhattan, New York, of 2007 had no such street names, yet those two
sound plausible for that locality; and if the partial list surviving seven hundred years from now does not give them, they would constitute information of type B and researchers could not determine whether they were of subtype B.1. or subtype B.2.

3. Make up some street names that sounded plausible, say Abercrombie Avenue and Sunderland Boulevard (which so far as I know occur nowhere).

Wang was gullible.

124. When we left Selbourne at the end of the ninth paragraph from the end of note 116, he was presumably trying to figure out how to bridge the gap between the time the Inquisition became weak in Italy (the end of the eighteenth century? the mid-nineteenth century?) and September 1991.

To claim that the alleged "Jewish family" kept the alleged "original document" concealed even after, say, the mid-nineteenth century would have been, Selbourne presumably thought, unrealistic.

To claim that he knew the "Jewish family," he presumably thought too, would have been dangerous because in the 1980s and 1990s so few Jews were living in the Marches (which includes Ancona, Urbino, and "near Urbino") that they could all easily be tracked down in any effort to verify his story. Claiming not to know the family would have the added advantage of being able to allege knowing nothing or almost nothing about it, so that when pressed for information, he could convincingly say that all he knew was the precious little which the "present owner" had revealed to him. Indeed, we are told neither the family's name nor precisely where it lived -- though when it suited him, Selbourne did come forth with a detail, as when he claimed that the family held back the "original manuscript" because it was afraid of the Inquisition (we were never told how he came by that information, but it is easy to guess what Selbourne's answer would be if asked: the family so informed the "present owner").

Consequently, for at least two reasons, it was essential, Selbourne presumably thought, to have at least one buffer between the alleged "Jewish family" and himself. If so, that was one of the roles played by the "present owner," who, for reasons to be suggested here, had to be not a Jew but a Christian. Presumably, it was also expedient to claim that the provenance of the alleged "original manuscript" was "unclear" because that claim could pave the way for leaving open the possibility that any number of additional buffers could have existed, namely between the alleged "Jewish family" and the alleged "present owner."

The more buffers were created or the more the number of buffers was unspecified, the more convincingly Selbourne could claim to have no knowledge about provenance, though, as we often see in Selbourne's enterprise, solving one problem resulted in another: if provenance is "unclear," legal problems ensue for Selbourne and the alleged "present owner." However, the more cards your house consists of, the likelier it is to collapse, so that in the end, whatever the number of buffers, you run are bound to run into trouble. Creating fiction does give the writer a free hand, but when if fiction is presented as nonfiction, the writer is constrained in numerous ways and usually cannot foresee, hence eliminate beforehand, all the impossibilities, the improbabilities, the contradictions, and the other absurdities that sharp-minded critics are bound to see (as the Yiddish saying puts it, der emes shvimt aroys vi boyml afn vaser 'the truth swims out like oil on water').

Selbourne presumably reasoned along these lines:

By the early 1990s, as a result of murder by the Fascists and the Nazis, as a result of emigration, and as a result of disappearance into the non-Jewish woodwork, the Jewish population of Italy was a shadow of its former self. In Ancona and in Urbino, indeed, in the entire Marches, hardly any Jews remained. Consequently, a claim that the "Jewish family" (or any Jew in Italy for that matter) continued to own the alleged "original manuscript" down to September 1991 and that a member thereof showed the alleged document to Selbourne at that time would make it easy for doubters of his story to locate and question all possible owners (= non-existent needles in a small Jewish haystack), upon which they would find that none of
them possessed such a document.

Consequently, the "Jewish family" allegedly owning the alleged "original manuscript" down through the centuries had to exit the offstage (on which it always was) by moving onto the offoffstage. In its place offstage came another "owner," the alleged "present owner."

Presumably, another decision was to make the "present owner" a person rather than an institution (a synagog, a church, a library, an archives, or some other public, private, or government entity) because it would be relatively easy for doubters to determine that no such manuscript existed at any such institution (= a non-existent needle in a not too large haystack): the doubters could check the holdings of such institutions, in which case they would find no "original manuscript," and they could determine from the people in charge of them that no one matching Selbourne's description had made numerous visits to examine any manuscript (inter alia, Selbourne's presumable English accent made him stand out in Italy).

Presumably, a second decision was to make the "present owner" a Christian rather than a Jew because, as noted above, the number of Jews in Italy by the early 1990s was small and the number in the Marches tiny.

Presumably, therefore, the goal was to create a "present owner" who would be a non-existent needle in as large a haystack as possible: a Christian, that is, a member of the by far largest religious community in Italy in our time. (For some reason, Steve Moore is under the misimpression that the "present owner" is a "Jewish Italian" [Moore undated], but Selbourne said clearly that he was a Christian.)

The haystack could be enlarged even more by making the "present owner" an Italian rather than a non-Italian living in Italy because non-Italians were far fewer and stood out more than Italians in that country.

And the Italian Christian could not be a woman because a friendship between a heterosexual man and a woman stands out more than one between two heterosexual men -- and a friendship between a married heterosexual man (like Selbourne) and a woman who is not his wife stands out even more. The more any relationship between two people stands out, the more people are to notice it, so that if doubters of the story became inquisitive, asked neighbors and other locals for information ("Did you ever see Selbourne make frequent visits to any woman's house?"), and were told no (which would have indeed been the only possible answer inasmuch as, so the Scourges of Jacob believe, Selbourne never visited anyone to translate any "original manuscript"), that answer would be unusual (for we expect neighbors and the like to notice frequent visits of a married man to the house of a woman not his wife) whereas an answer of no would not be unusual if the visits were allegedly of one man to another man's house.

Selbourne presumably thought about explaining how he and the alleged "present owner" came to know each other:

A. "The existence and possession, in private hands, of the manuscript I have translated were first made known to me early in 1990 by a visitor to my home in Urbino. He was aware of my interest in Judaica and declared that he had 'no trust' in disclosing to an Italian what he was prepared to disclose to me" (Selbourne 2000:1).

B. "Selbourne says he has known the man who owned the manuscript for many years. In the early 1980s, this man produced from his inside pocket a piece of paper on which he had written the first few lines of Jacob's manuscript. He told Selbourne these lines came from a document he owned which was written in a medieval Italian he could barely translate. [...] Over the next few years, Selbourne says he laboriously translated the manuscript in the man's home" (Phillips 1998).

According to Selbourne 2000:1 it was "early in 1990" that he became aware of the Precious Gift but according to Phillips 1998 it was "in the early 1980s." Let us ascribe that discrepancy to a misprint in the latter source.

*
Selbourne had to explain why the alleged "present owner," a Christian Italian living in Italy, could not understand a text in his own language (albeit an earlier variety of it) and chose him, a non-Italianist Englishman, to help him. Before examining what Selbourne said, let us describe the situation in all its Selbournesque absurdity:

A. If Selbourne was capable of being "disillusioned with intellectual life in Britain" (Phillips 1998), he, like the alleged "Jacob" before him, must have been "an astonishing intellectual titan" (you don't hear such sweeping dismissals of British intellectual life every day, even from people who could make a far better claim than Selbourne to be disillusioned with it). Selbourne was thus a dazzling intellectual bulb. Someone like that would not have hobnobbed with dim ones.

B. We know from Phillips that Selbourne had known the "present owner" for "many years" (Phillips 1998). Since a dazzling intellectual bulb like Selbourne presumably avoided boorish company, he would presumably not have wanted to keep in touch with someone who was not extremely intelligent, not extremely well-educated, not extremely stimulating intellectually, or not a scintillating conversationalist (according to Who's Who: 2006: An Annual Biographical Dictionary, one of Selbourne's four recreations was talking). Since he did keep in touch with him, we may assume only that the "present owner" was an outstanding intellectual.

C. The Italian educational system naturally accords a prominent place to the high-water marks of Italian literature, which had its beginnings in the twelfth century. Thus, if Selbourne's friend of "many years" was, as we have assumed, well-educated, he must have finished at least secondary school and in all likelihood had at least one university degree. If so, he would have been familiar with the chief works and authors of early Italian literature (Franco-Italian literature, the Sicilian school, the early Tuscan poets, the sweet new style, early comic verse, early religious poetry, and so on). Anthologies, school editions, and dictionaries by the score are available to any reader of latter-day Standard Italian interested in works of the twelfth and thirteenth centuries (remember that the alleged "Jacob" was allegedly born in 1221), all of which, except Franco-Italian literature and the poetry of the Sicilian school, are written in "basically educated Tuscan."

D. A well-educated twentieth-century Italian would therefore be well-versed in spoken and written Standard Italian (in all likelihood, such a person would be a native speaker that variety), which is based largely on fourteenth-century Tuscan (which is almost identical to thirteenth-century "basically educated Tuscan"):

i. "[The Crusca Academy was] founded in Florence in 1582 for the purpose of purifying Tuscan, the literary language of the Italian Renaissance. Partially through the efforts of its members, the Tuscan dialect, particularly as it had been employed by Petrarch and Boccaccio, became the model for Italian literature in the 16th and 17th centuries" (The New Encyclopædia Britannica, 15 ed., 1991, vol. 3, p. 764). That was in fact the world's first language academy, founded fifty-two years before the second, the French Academy. Petrarch's and Boccaccio's dates are respectively 1304-1374 and 1313-1375.

ii. "Pietro Bembo of Venice published his Prose della volgar lingua (Writings in the Vulgar Tongue) in 1525. In this work, which was one of the first Italian grammars, Bembo demanded an Italian literary language based on 14th-century Tuscan models, particularly Petrarch and Boccaccio" (idem, vol. 22, p. 155).

iii. Though he had opponents, "Bembo's theories did finally triumph in the second part of the century. This was due to a large extent to the activities of the Florentine Accademia della Crusca [...]") (idem, vol. 22, p. 155).

iv. In "Prose della volgar lingua (1525; 'Discussion of the Vernacular Language'), [...] Bembo codified Italian orthography and grammar, essential for the establishment of a standard language, and recommended 14th-century Tuscan as the model for Italian literary language. His view, opposed by those who wanted Latin and by others who wanted a more modern Italian as the model, had triumphed by the end of the 16th century" (idem, vol. 2, p. 87).

v. Appreciably diminished, the dispute continued into the early nineteenth century: "Antonio Cesari [...] wrote Sopra lo stato presente della lingua italiana (1810; 'On the Present State of the Italian Language') and endeavoured to
establish the supremacy of Tuscan and of Dante, Petrarch, and Boccaccio as models. But a Lombard school opposed this Tuscan supremacy [...]," (idem, vol. 22, p. 158). Dante's dates are 1265-1321.

vi. "Prompted by the patriotic urge to forge a language that would be accessible to a wide readership rather than a narrow elite, Manzoni decided to write his novel in an idiom as close as possible to contemporary educated Florentine speech. The final edition of I promessi sposi (1840-42), rendered in clear, expressive prose purged of all antiquated rhetorical forms, reached exactly the sort of broad audience he had aimed at, and its prose became the model for many subsequent Italian writers" (unsigned 1991d:804; Manzoni was born in 1785 and died in 1873). Thus, although opposition to the choice of the topolect (Tuscan or Florentine) as the basis for the standard eventually disappeared, later opposition to the choice of the chronolect (fourteenth-century Tuscan or Florentine) was to a large extent successful.

vii. In sum, thanks to the successful effort made for several hundred years to keep Standard Italian close to fourteenth-century Tuscan (the only major failure came in the nineteenth century, when those opposed to the retention of archaisms lost [see vi]), the differences between today's Standard Italian and fourteenth-century Tuscan are far fewer than, say, between the English of today and that of the fourteenth century, so that latter-day Italian-speakers familiar with the current standard have far less to learn to be able to understand a thirteenth-century text in "basically educated Tuscan" than, say, an English-speaker of today who wants to learn to read thirteenth-century English. Although comparisons are usually not perfect, I will hazard this one: today's educated Italian-speaker should have about as much trouble with "basically educated Tuscan" of the 1270s as today's educated English-speaker should have with seventeenth-century literary English.

Thus, Selbourne's friend of "many years" should in fact have for two reasons found the alleged "original manuscript" much easier to understand than Selbourne:

1. The friend was presumably a well-educated native, primary, and habitual speaker of today's Standard Italian (the contemporary variety of Italian closest to "basically educated Tuscan" of the thirteenth century), whereas Italian was for Selbourne a second or third language.

2. The friend had presumably been exposed to the early classics of Italian literature at school, whereas before undertaking the "translation" of the alleged "original manuscript" Selbourne was "unfamiliar with mediaeval Italian vernacular, apart from having read Dante with the aid of a crib years before" (Selbourne 2000:1-2).

Furthermore:

3. Since dictionaries and grammars were available to help the friend with archaic and obsolete usages.

4. The alleged "original manuscript" was written, as we have seen in section 12, "on clean, fine paper in a small but careful and usually clear running hand." In fact, Selbourne told Phillips that the alleged "present owner" "produced from his inside pocket a piece of paper on which he had written the first few lines of Jacob's manuscript" (Phillips 1998). If he could copy those lines, he could at least make out the letters.

5. In view of the foregoing, Selbourne was not believable when he alleged that his friend of "many years" "could barely translate" (Phillips 1998) an alleged thirteenth-century manuscript in "basically educated Tuscan" (that was, to boot, written in a "careful and usually clear running hand").

6. Selbourne's friend of "many years" could thus have easily proceeded on his own. In so doing, he would have felt more comfortable because he would not have had to let anyone, including Selbourne, see the Precious Gift (what's the Higher Macaronic or "basically educated Tuscan" equivalent of the Yiddish dictum far twreyn iz shoyn meyn nisht ka sod 'what two people know is no longer a secret?'). Not the least advantage of working alone would have been that he would have been spared all the grief which Selbourne caused him when he turned to Mondadori without his permission.

7. Just as Selbourne put a host of questions to numerous people when writing Selbourne 1997a (see subsection B
of section 22) without presumably letting anyone see "Jacob"'s tale, his friend, even if proceeding alone, could have put questions to Selbourne (who better to answer them than someone with an "interest in Judaica, including the history of medieval Jewry in Italy"), and if, peradventure, Selbourne was unable to answer, the pair could have enlisted the help of that stellar cast of experts from whom Selbourne himself, as it turned out, was to seek advice (see subsection A of section 22).

Which is to say that Selbourne did not need to go to all the trouble which culminated in the publication of Selbourne 1997a and related books and letters to the editor of his, he could have easily avoided the resultant scandal, Hillenbrand would not have written -- just a few weeks after that book came out -- that Selbourne was "in danger of falling into disfavor and possibly disrepute" (Hillenbrand 1997), and, most important for all concerned (especially the Scourges of Jacob), the existence of the Precious Gift would have remained unknown for ever and ever (as "Jacob" would have said, amen, amen and amen).

8. How curious, by the way, that the "careful and usually clear" handwriting must have made Selbourne's work easier but not the alleged "present owner"'s when he tried to read the text before turning to Selbourne for help. Apparently, what was sauce for the English goose was not for the Italian gander.

Is it therefore not the truth that Selbourne shaped his story to make everything turn out in his favor and his alone?

Is it not the truth that Selbourne created the "present owner" in order to create at least two removes between himself and the alleged "Jewish family" allegedly owning the alleged "original manuscript" down through the years and that he created those removes so that to the disbelievers' inevitable questions about provenance he could respond, "I've told you everything the present owner has told me, he is no longer speaking to me, and I cannot therefore ask him for more details" (a response which, as we know, satisfied the naifs)? If so, Selbourne's aim was presumably to avoid being accused of illegal acquisition and possession (though he could still face a charge of possibly being an accessory after the fact for not reporting the existence and whereabouts of possibly illegal possession of the "original manuscript" and for not reporting the "present owner"'s possession of what may be Italian cultural property).

Is it not the truth, therefore, that once the alleged "present owner" allegedly let Selbourne "translate" the alleged "original manuscript," Selbourne willed him offfstage so that he would have a ready explanation, when, as he knew, the inevitable avalanche of questions about provenance, current ownership, and current whereabouts of the Precious Gift would descend on him? We are reminded here of the French saying "une fois la fête passée, adieu les saints!" once the holiday is over, it's "goodbye, saints!" and of that line in Schiller's Die Verschwörung des Fiesko zu Genua, "Der Mohr hat seine Schuldigkeit getan; der Mohr kann gehen" (act III, scene 4) 'the Black has done his work; the Black can go' (Schiller described the play as dealing with 'ambition in action, and ultimately defeated').

In any case, once Selbourne created (so we assume) the "present owner" (who spoke only when it was convenient for Selbourne, was silent only when it was convenient for Selbourne, was on stage only when it was convenient for Selbourne, was offstage only when it was convenient for Selbourne, was offfstage only when it was convenient for Selbourne, so that he behaved only to Selbourne's advantage but never to anyone else's and he behaved never to Selbourne's disadvantage but always to the disadvantage of those really trying to get at the truth (that last adverb is essential because we do not have in mind the mindless cheerleaders who made only a pretence of trying to learn the truth), a new dilemma popped up (we have seen that phenomenon time and time again in Selbourne's enterprize: his attempt to solve one problem resulted in another -- Selbourne kept tying himself into knots and, as soon as he thought he had squirmed out of one, he was caught in at least one more), namely, explaining how the alleged "present owner had acquired the Precious Gift.

At all costs, the explanation could not give critics any reason to believe that a paper trail should exist, so that, for example, alleging that the "present owner" bought the "original manuscript" at auction or from a dealer was out of the question.

Alleging that the "present owner" was, say, the landlord or the son of the landlord of "the Jewish family," the
family was deported during the Holocaust, it never returned, no one ever claimed the contents of its dwelling, and the landlord took possession of the contents because the family owed it a few years' back rent would not have been appropriate either, because acquiring something as a result of the family's misfortune and keeping it afterwards would have been dishonorable and Selbourne, being honest, would not have gotten involved with such a person.

It seems that in the end Selbourne could think of no link between the alleged "present owner" and the "Jewish family" that would meet the necessary requirements (leave no paper trail and be unverifiable yet plausible), so that the pisseur was claiming that the provenance of the Precious Gift was "unclear" and leaving the matter at that.

But, once again, the presumed solution of one problem led to another, so that Selbourne was once again ensnared in a web of his own making, as we will now see.

Italian law requires that a person having knowledge of something which is possibly cultural property, which is of "unclear" provenance, and which, therefore, is possibly illegally possessed report what he knows to the authorities. Selbourne must have known all the relevant facts: (1) since the alleged "present owner" and he were friends of "many years," Selbourne must have known his name; (2) since Selbourne made many visits to his house between September 1991 and June 1996, he must have known his address; and (3) Selbourne knew about the unclear provenance, about the possibility that the Precious Gift "might be considered to be what the Italians call bene culturale, a possession of the state" (Honigsbaum 1997), and about the owner's realization that he might not have legal right to it.

Selbourne having been trained in the law and admitted to the bar, he must have known what the law required of him; and even someone having no legal training but possessing a modicum of intelligence knows that keeping stolen property is illegal and that knowledge of such should be reported.

Yet Selbourne never told us that he alerted the authorities. Does his inaction not lay him open to the charge of being an accessory after the fact? Of failing to do his civic duty? And would Selbourne not in fact want to force the issue by revealing the location of the Precious Gift to the authorities so that it could be seized and given to competent people to examine for authenticity and factualness? Surely, if had proceeded in that forthright manner when alerting the authorities, the Precious Gift would have been proven to exist, to be authentic, and to be factual; Selbourne would have been cleared once and for all of suspicion that he proceeded improperly; he would have been hailed as the discoverer or the codiscoverer of the new Marco Polo; history books around the world would have had to be rewritten; and so on (see section 16 for more rewards).

Selbourne will now presumably tell us that since a trust is a trust, he would never betray his friend of "many years" by revealing details he had promised years ago to keep secret. Keep them secret even at the price Selbourne has been paying ever since a prepublication version of Selbourne 1997a was sent to competent people for evaluation? Keep them secret even when his friend of "many years" refused to come to his rescue by issuing a statement that everything Selbourne had said about the Precious Gift was truthful? Keep them secret even when his friend of "many years" was already angry with him, so that Selbourne, if he went to the authorities, would have nothing to lose in the way of the "present owner"'s friendship? Indeed, since the "present owner" could easily get into Guinness World Records for being the greatest paranoid of all time (he feared that a photocopy of even one side with writing of one of the 280-leaves of the Precious Gift would compromise his anonymity), would Selbourne not want to ditch that weirdo anyway, especially since he (not, as Selbourne may have thought, the Scourges of Jacob) was the source of Selbourne's entire misery?

Or could it be that Selbourne did not inform the Italian authorities because he knew that no "original manuscript" existed, that no "present owner" existed, and, consequently, that there was nothing and there was nobody to report?

To get back to provenance, being vague about provenance had, however, a disadvantage for Selbourne, so that yet again his "solution" to a problem engendered another: since no paper trail was created for the transfer of the alleged "original manuscript" from the alleged "Jewish family" to the alleged "present owner," suspicion mounted even more, for now still
another element of Selbourne's story turned out to be not only fishy but also unverifiable (indeed, not a single element of the story was believable or verifiable, though the minor detail about his alleged visit to Mondadori would be believable if the publisher confirmed it).

Details about provenance having been left "unclear," many questions came into every logical, perceptive person's mind:

1. Why was provenance "unclear"?
2. How exactly did the alleged document come into the hands of the alleged "present owner"?
3. Who were the previous "owners"?
4. How many degrees of separation stood between the alleged "present owner" and the alleged "Jewish family"?
5. What was the name of that alleged family and when and where did it live?
6. If provenance is "unclear," why did the alleged "present owner" not seek legal advice about whether he had a right to acquire the alleged document and, if he had no such right, why did he not relinquish that alleged document to the rightful owner?
7. Why did Selbourne -- trained in the law, admitted to the bar, and for years a shouter from the rooftops for morality -- get involved with an alleged document of "unclear" provenance?
8. Did Selbourne not realize that in so doing he could be charged with being an accessory after the fact?
9. Why did at least fifteen commercial publishers agree to publish an alleged "translation" of an alleged but never seen document of "unclear" provenance? Is it not the truth that the reasons were greed for $$$ and yearning for "fame"?
10. What steps did the commercial publishers take to verify the existence, authenticity, and factualness of the alleged "original manuscript" and the accuracy of Selbourne's "translation" thereof?
11. Are the commercial publishers too accessories after the fact?
12. And, to get back to reality: was it not obvious to everyone involved that all the alleged people and alleged objects involved in this tragicomedy have never existed?

Cheerleader Phillips, in her "brilliant" "investigation," did not even ask those questions (among many others she should have), much less try to get answers. Nor did any of the many people above her at The Sunday Times think of asking her why she did not.

In sum, provenance is another legal issue which the at least fifteen commercial publishers of the at least sixteen imprints of Selbourne's book ignored. Did the expectation of raking in mucha moola make the commercial publishers forget their duty to verify, verify, and verify? Did the expectation of glory after revealing to the world the "new" Marco Polo make the commercial publishers forget their duty to verify, verify, and verify?

In any case, the alibi about "unclear" provenance permitted this chain of alleged events (a-g) or real event (h) to occur:

   a. The "unclear" provenance made the "present owner" paranoid. How curious that such a level-headed person as Selbourne would pal around with such an unbalanced person.
b. His paranoia allegedly made him refuse to identify himself or allow even a photocopy of even one side of one leaf of the "original manuscript" to be released. Is that believable?

c. Because of the alleged "present owner"'s alleged insistence on anonymity, Selbourne was able to allege that he was not at liberty to reveal the exact whereabouts of the alleged "original manuscript" or the alleged "present owner"'s name.

d. By turning to Mondadori without getting the "present owner"'s permission (an astounding, incredible act of rudeness, disloyalty, and stupidity on his part), Selbourne made his friend of "many years" angry (not make, we believe, in the way that one real person makes another real person angry but make in the way that a ventriloquist makes his dummy angry). Afterwards, Selbourne needed to keep that imaginary being angry forever, so that he could fend off any pressure from critics to coax the "present owner" into coming forward by claiming that the "present owner" had cut off all contact with him (from the day the "alleged owner" learned of Selbourne's visit to Mondadori, he "has refused to talk to him or acknowledge his letters" [Phillips 1998]), but, yet again, that claim resulted just in another absurdity (see note 160 on Selbourne's presumed ability to compare [i] the French translation of his alleged "translation" with [ii] the "original manuscript" after the rupture).

Even if you gave Selbourne the benefit of the doubt by assuming that events a-d occurred, you would then realize that it would be hard to believe that in the circumstances -- namely, Selbourne and the "present owner" had been friends for "many years"; the "present owner" took Selbourne and only Selbourne into his confidence; and Selbourne, working assiduously on the "translation" for almost five years (from September 1991 to June 1996), must have visited his friend's house countless times -- Selbourne would, without consulting or even informing his friend, decide to publish the "translation"; he would, without consulting or even informing him, choose which publisher to approach; he would, without consulting or even informing him, journey to Milan; and then, out of the blue, Selbourne would call him long-distance to tell him that Mondadori was interested but wanted to send knowledgeable people to authenticate the "original manuscript."

Instead of springing all those unbelievable -- and rude -- surprizes on his friend of "many years" (uncharacteristic of someone like Selbourne, who gave the impression of being an intelligent, honest, sedate, courteous, refined, and respected Englishman, who thought things through logically before he acted), he should, you expect, have behaved in concert with his buddy: they should have discussed what to do with the "translation" (should it be ad usum amici only or should it be published?); if deciding to publish it, they should have decided whether to turn to an agent or go directly to a publisher; they should have gone to the agent or the publisher together (or, since the "present owner" seemed to fear even his own shadow, Selbourne and the "present owner"'s proxy, say his attorney, should have gone or his pal should have furnished him with a written power of attorney); and they should have taken all other decisions together, neither one committing himself or the other without the other's agreement.

Had they thus behaved as educated and refined friends of "many years" do, neither would have been angry with the other, everything would have run smoothly, and today we would all probably be able to gaze upon the Precious Gift.

It therefore boggles the mind -- all the more so because, as Cicero reminds us in de Amicitia 32, "Quia mutari natura non potest, idcirco verae amicitiae sempera sunt" 'nature being immutable, true friendships are forever', and because Selbourne gave not even a hint of any friction between his buddy and himself before their lamentable tiff -- to think that each of two friends of "many years" -- two courteous, refined, honorable, educated, and respected people, at least one of them the author of several works on ethics -- could have treated the other as caddishly as they did: Selbourne, by turning to Mondadori without his friend's permission or even knowledge, and the friend, by not coming to Selbourne's rescue by emerging from the shadows, when the critics' onslaught began, to proclaim urbi et orbi, "You have maligned an innocent man! Everything my friend of many years has written is true!"

Unable, therefore, to believe that event d happened, we wonder whether Selbourne had a temporary lapse of
memory and that event in fact never occurred. Until hearing from him about that possible lapse, let us continue detailing the chain of alleged events.

e. Because of Selbourne's uncharacteristic faux pas, the "present owner" became angry with him and broke off all contact. If, however, event d did not occur, his friend of "many years" (today, if still alive, of "very many years") is, we assume, not cross at all and will finally agree to emerge from the shadows and put all his cards on the table, especially since, as he must now have realized, no attempt has been made to find and seize the Precious Gift and the Italian government in fact rewarded Selbourne with the Order of Merit of the Italian Republic.

f. With all contact severed, the "present owner" receded even farther back into the shadows (for the staging of this tragicomedy, not only a stage but also an offstage and an offoffstage are needed, but not to worry -- they take up no space at all).

g. Selbourne now had an alibi if asked why the "original manuscript" was unavailable for inspection.

i. In public, he rued the "present owner"'s inaccessibility, he lamented the unavailability of the "original manuscript" (though being an understanding person, he found the "present owner"'s sentiment "quite reasonable"), and he threw a sop to Cerberus by offering us an "earnest, in the interim, of the authenticity of the text" (see the first paragraph of section 3). In light of what Selbourne later told us about the alleged "present owner"'s alleged "heirs" (see note 144), this will turn out to be the longest "interim" in history, worthy of mention in Guinness World Records.

We therefore get the impression that Selbourne needed to "make" the alleged "present owner" angry. By creating that impression, he could claim that the two had parted ways. The "present owner" would thus recede from offstage to offoffstage, inaccessible even to Selbourne, and Selbourne would now have an alibi when pressed to show the alleged manuscript or to reveal its whereabouts.

* * *

Consequently, alleging fear of the Inquisition (fear which we know in reality to be baseless since the Inquisition did not persecute public Jews) would keep the "Jewish family" from revealing the existence of the "original manuscript," just as alleging the "present owner"'s fear of its confiscation by the Italian authorities (fear which we likewise know in reality to be baseless since even after the publication of Selbourne 1997a nobody has tried to recover that alleged document) would keep the "present owner" from letting it be seen or even photographed (although asked by several reviewers, Selbourne never told us why even a photocopy of even just one leaf would have compromised the "present owner"'s allegedly ferocious urge for anonymity -- but we need no answer, for we already no it: no such person and no such document have ever existed).

The Inquisition and the present-day Italian authorities were therefore made to play the same role in Selbourne's story: they were bugaboos created to explain the alleged "Jewish family"'s and the alleged "present owner"'s alleged fear of stepping out of the shadows, their alleged fear resulting in the alleged cocooning of the alleged "original manuscript" until Selbourne (who was born in 1937), toward the end of the twentieth century, chanced on the scene (what serendipity!), when the alleged "present owner" graciously showed it to him and to him only (though only for a little under five years), after which time it again disappeared into the fog, never to be available for inspection by anyone disbelieving (or even by anyone believing) Selbourne's story. The miraculous event may rightly be called The Almost-Five-Year Apparition of the Precious Gift to David Maurice Selbourne, Supreme Leader of the Cult of Saint Jacob of Ancona.

How convenient for Selbourne that he happened to take up residence near the "present owner."

How convenient for Selbourne that he happened to make the "present owner"'s acquaintance.

How convenient for Selbourne that they eventually became friends of "many years." By the way, although Selbourne, so far as I can tell, never called his friend his "friend" (Selbourne 2000:1, with characteristic haziness, spoke of "a
visitor to my home in Urbino"), it may be presumed that by the time Selbourne went to Mondadori with his "translation" they had become fast friends: Selbourne told Phillips in 1998 that "he has known the man who owned the manuscript for many years" (Phillips 1998) and Selbourne himself told us that he made his "translation" in the man's house between September 1991 and June 1996, during which time he must have on numerous occasions spent many hours with him.

How convenient for Selbourne that the alleged "original manuscript" lay hidden from the public gaze for nothing less than a little over seven hundred years until, suddenly, six years after he settled in Urbino, a miraculous apparition occurred.

How convenient for Selbourne that, although he was "unfamiliar with mediaeval Italian vernacular, apart from having read Dante with the aid of a crib years before" (Selbourne 2000:1-2), his friend thought of turning to him (Mr. Urim and Thummim) for help rather than to any of the thousands of others in Italy who could easily have read and understood most of the text.

How curious that whereas the friend could "barely translate" a text not much different from his presumable native language, Selbourne the Englishman could.

How curious that Selbourne and his buddy did not realize that with the help of dictionaries and grammars of older "basically educated Tuscan," anyone having a good command of today's Standard Italian could understand "basically educated Tuscan" of the thirteenth century (if you don't know Italian, think of today's Standard English and of Shakespeare's English and you'll have a good idea of how little separates those two varieties of Italian).

How magnanimous of Selbourne to expend what must have been an enormous amount of intellectual energy and to spend what must have amounted to hundreds of hours, maybe a few thousand, during almost five years "translating" no fewer than 240 leaves of a difficult manuscript (Selbourne said that "I also had the task of mastering the handwriting of the scribe" [Selbourne 2000:1-2] and Phillips said that he worked "laboriously" [Phillips 1998]), making not just a "translation" but also putting together a "critical apparatus."

Selbourne, we see, was extraordinarily devoted to his friend and the friend must have been utterly grateful that Selbourne devoted a good part of almost five years of his life to translating and annotating that unique text.

How interesting, by the way, that whereas Selbourne told us in every version of Selbourne 1997a that he worked on his "translation" between September 1991 and June 1996 (during which time he presumably visited the "present owner"'s house "near Urbino" many times) he said in Selbourne 1993 that for "a span of five months" between June and November 1992 "Lord Goodman and I met -- at his house in Oxford or his flat in London -- on twenty-three occasions, and conducted the conversations of which this book is the result" (p. ix). Since twenty-three trips between Urbino and London or Oxford and back in about 150 days would have exhausted him (he would have had to go by land between Urbino and Perugia and, with a stop in Milan, fly between Perugia and London), he was presumably not in Italy for at least five months between "September 1991 and June 1996." If so, the five months are to be subtracted from that period. Can anyone show that more time is to be taken away?

How convenient for Selbourne that "Jacob"'s ethical, philosophical, political, and social ideas took up a large part of the text, maybe the bulk, and those ideas were similar, if not identical, to Selbourne's. Not everyone gets to rebroadcast his ideas in sixteen imprints in nine languages.

In Selbourne's portrayal of the events, therefore, much worked out to his advantage and to his alone. But in reality, nothing did: how inconvenient for Mr. Serendipity that the Scourges of Jacob see through the fog.

* 

All in all, we get the impression that Selbourne tried to cook up a story that would be as cogent as possible and as
unverifiable as possible (only his offering the "translation" to Mondadori could turn out to be true). The story, however, was a two-edged sword:

On one hand, it gave Selbourne a free hand to make himself the right man in the right place at the right time. Presumably, he needed the story because he knew that people in the academic world would wonder how someone with no training in the relevant fields, someone with no relevant track record, would come to produce such a book.

On the other hand, by its very nature, the enterprize was absurd because of all the mistakes in the tale, all the anomalies in the tale, all the unlikely events in both the tale and the story, the story's lack of even the slightest paper trail to corroborate it, the absence of even one person known to exist who could corroborate even part of the story (truly, a one-man tragicomedy), and so on and so forth.

Apparently, Selbourne did not realize that the larger the number of unverifiable or preposterous details discovered in his enterprize, the more ridiculous and unbelievable it would look ("When every qualitative error in a book is an error in the direction of the book's thesis, you have prima facie evidence of fraud" [Luker 2005]). The deeper the secrecy Selbourne created, the more he must have thought he was protecting himself, but in fact he only aroused more suspicion. He was naive enough to suppose that we were naive.

I could be wrong about anything and everything, but those are my impressions, based on my best interpretation of the available information (and absence of information). If Selbourne can set the record straight in any connection in which I have gone astray, he will have struck a blow for the truth.

See later in this section, including note 129, for further discussion of legal matters.

125. "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" (Selbourne 2000:2). Since the alleged "present owner" did not step out of the shadows when Selbourne needed him to back up his story, Selbourne had no obligation to protect the "present owner" further. But let's not be falsely naive: the "present owner" has always been silent presumably because he has never existed and probably the only thing that Selbourne could reveal about the "present owner" is that he was a figment of his imagination.

The well-known ploy of claiming the existence of an "original manuscript" which is now "now lost" or was "once but is no longer available to the translator" gives the alleged "translator" an alibi when coming under pressure to reveal details about the provenance of the alleged original, its present whereabouts, and so on, and to prove its authenticity, but it is so transparently false that it is a dead giveaway of a hoax:

"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. (This is where many a would-be hoaxter has come to grief. One can but feel pity for the manufacturer of a rune-covered stone found in Minnesota in 1898. The stone bore a message describing a visit by Vikings to the region in 1362; unfortunately it was written in a Swedish dialect that was not merely modern but unique to immigrants in the American Midwest.)" (Budiansky 1997).

Thus, the Minnesotan's Modern Midwestern American Swedish = Macpherson's barbarous Irish (see note 151) = Selbourne's Higher Macaronic, that is, regarding modernity, compare the many anticipatory anachronisms in Selbourne 1997a; regarding barbarousness, compare the many other implausible features of the form (to say nothing of the content) of the alleged "Jacob"s tale (like the un-Jewish turns of expression); and regarding uniqueness, compare the uniqueness of Higher Macaronic. All three lects being contrived, they were dead giveaways of presumable monkey business.

The ploy is not clever but trite, examples abounding. To mention just eight:

A. Geoffrey of Monmouth (d. 1155) was the author of Historia regum Britanniae 'History of the Kings of Britain',
which he claimed was his translation of 'a very old book in the British tongue' brought from Brittany by a friend of his, Walter, archdeacon of Oxford. The 1991 imprint of the fifteenth edition of *The New Encyclopædia Britannica* says that the alleged provenance "seems pure fabrication" and that the "historical value [of the book] is almost nil" (vol. 5, p. 189). "Although some, even contemporary, readers were not deceived by the work, and William of Newburgh, one of the best English historians of the 12th century, denounced it as a tissue of fabrications, many seriously accepted it as history" (op. cit., vol. 20, p. 563). The encyclopedia says further that Flavio Biondo entered only a single note is his copy of the work: 'I have never come across anything so stuffed with lies and frivolities' (vol. 20, p. 566; translated there from Latin). Not surprisingly, the alleged original seems never to have been produced, whether in Geoffrey's times or later.

**B.** In 1722 Montesquieu published *Lettres persanes* 'Persian Letters', which the 1991 imprint of the fifteenth edition of *The New Encyclopædia Britannica* calls "a brilliant satirical portrait of French and particularly Parisian civilization, supposedly seen through the eyes of two Persian travellers."

**C.** In 1762 Oliver Goldsmith published *The Citizen of the World; or, Letters from a Chinese Philosopher Residing in London, to His Friends in the East.*

**D.** Around 1763, Thomas Chatterton began publishing what literary historians call the *Rowley poems*, which he claimed were from the pen of "Thomas Rowley," whom, he alleged further, was a monk in fifteenth-century Bristol. In fact, Chatterton wrote the poems and took the name *Thomas Rowley* from a civilian's monument brass in St. John's Church in Bristol. Among those believing the poems authentic was Horace Walpole, who was later told by friends that the poetry was modern and accordingly took his distance from Chatterton.

**E.** In 1765 Horace Walpole published *The Castle of Otranto*, which he claimed was his translation of an Italian manuscript written in 1529 and discovered in the home of a Roman Catholic family in northern England. He never revealed the name of the family (compare Selbourne); he never said precisely where it lived (Walpole's "in the north of England" was thus the equivalent of Selbourne's "near Urbino," which is vague enough to make it hard for disbelievers to comb the area in search of the alleged "present owner" but plausible enough to make it seem possible that Selbourne could have made many trips to that person's house for almost five years); he never produced the original manuscript or facilitated access to it (compare Selbourne); and the book gave every evidence of being his original piece of writing in English (compare Selbourne's). After learning of Walpole's hoax, Thomas Chatterton penned a note to him but never sent it: "Thou mayest call me Cheat -- / Say, didst thou ne'er indulge in such Deceit? / Who wrote Jacob's tale?"

**F.** In 1793 José Cadalso y Vázquez published *Cartas marruecas* 'Moroccan Letters', which he claimed was his translation of letters "in which a Moorish traveller in Spain makes penetrating criticism of Spanish life" (*The New Encyclopædia Britannica*, 15 ed., vol. 2, p. 711).

**G.** In 1807 Robert Southey published *Letters from England by Don Manuel Alvarez Espriella*, which he claimed was his translation of letters written by a Spaniard visiting England. The existence of "Manuel Álvarez Espriella" has never been proven (he was thus the equivalent of Selbourne's "Jacob of Ancona" and other mythical characters).

**H.** As Budiansky mentions, Pierre Louis, who wrote under the pen name of Pierre Louys, claimed to have translated *Chansons de Bilitis* (1894) from a Greek original. At first he deceived even knowledgeable people, but eventually he was exposed. He could not produce the alleged "original" (just as Selbourne could not) and he did not know enough Greek to translate from that language. Indeed, a thread running through all or almost all the above-quoted examples is that the alleged "translators" either did not know the alleged original languages (Montesquieu did not know Persian; Goldsmith did not know Chinese; Walpole did not know Italian; Cadalso y Vázquez did not know Arabic; and Southey did not know Spanish) or they did not know enough (Louis). Selbourne fell mostly into both categories: he may have known enough thirteenth-century "basically educated Tuscan," but of the other languages making up Higher Macaronic (see note 10), as we see from a dissection of Selbourne 1997a and from his ipsissima verba (see note 157 on his avowal, incomplete as it is, "I'm not a Hebraist, [...] I'm not an Italianist, [...] I'm not a Sinologist") he presumably knew nothing or hardly anything (Anconitan
Jewish Italian, Arabic, Chinese, Greek, Hebrew, Latin, and Persian).

So far as I know, since 1894 nobody else has tried to pull the dog-ate-the-original-manuscript stunt because by the end of the nineteenth century the scholarly world and much of the formally educated world were too sophisticated to be fooled. No wonder, then, that few people at the end of the twentieth and the beginning of the twenty-first centuries believed Selbourne, most of them being commercial publishers (who by the nature of their business -- commercial publishing is truly a business -- would not be unlikely to ignore the standards of scholarship) and citizens of the People's Republic of China (where those standards are considerably lower than the highest ones in the West [see also note 5]).

Claiming that the alleged "present owner" had cut off all contact with him (an allegation made as soon as the very first publisher he allegedly approached, Mondadori, allegedly said it would not go any further until the alleged "original manuscript" was produced and authenticated) was tantamount to putting up a smokescreen, which allowed Selbourne to say anything he pleased without anyone's being able to verify his story (like "I may have mistranslated," mentioned in note 44), and, oozing with self-righteousness and self-congratulation, he could claim "honour" and "gratitude" for an alleged "act of faith" (= the alleged "present owner"'s allegedly having faith in Selbourne by allegedly confiding in him the alleged task of translating the alleged "original manuscript") as the incentive [his critics say: lame excuse] for refusing to reveal anything more. But it was to no avail, for Selbourne's story, not being not deep-laid, was denounced so swiftly that Hillenbrand was able to say in print just a few weeks after the appearance of the first imprint of Selbourne's book that he was "in danger of falling into disfavor and possibly disrepute" (Hillenbrand 1997). In similar cases, some time usually passes before the outcry reaches stentorian proportions, but in this one Selbourne was derided even before his book appeared. Another "first" for "Jacob"?

See note 156 on a similar ploy and, for more on the alleged "act of faith," subsection I of section 22.

126. One is reminded of religions in which an allegedly "holy person" stands between the allegedly "supernatural" and the laity; only the "holy person" has access to the "supernatural"; allegedly "holy writ" has allegedly been handed down from on high only to the "holy person"; and the laity must take on faith everything the "holy person" says. Things do not work that way in today's highest research circles, where only evidence open to everyone for inspection counts.

If Selbourne wanted to found the Church of the Most Holy Saint Jacob of Ancona, he would have most or all of its essential or useful components already in place:

A. a Holy Trinity: "Jacob," "the present owner," and himself.

B. a Supreme Leader, who could also be dubbed Mr. Changing Story, Mr. Contradiction, Mr. Half Truth, Mr. Ipse Dixit, Mr. Serendipity, Mr. Stonewall, Mr. Unstated, Unproven Assumption, and Mr. Urim and Thummim, who speaks in two tongues simultaneously, as we hear, for instance, in paragraph E of note 157.

C. an Incarnation: the Holy Trinity is incarnate in the Supreme Leader -- and only in Him.

D. an Epiphany: one member of the Trinity, the "present owner," revealed the existence of the second member, Saint Jacob of Ancona, to the third member, the Supreme Leader.

E. Holy Writ: the Precious Gift, impiously called "Jacob"'s tale by infidels, which only the "present owner" (and, mentioned in note 144, his "heirs") may see at will and only the Supreme Leader may see when the "present owner" so decides (when so ordered by the Supreme Leader).

F. a Commentary on Holy Scripture (infidels impiously call it Selbourne's story).
G. a Holy Tongue: Higher Macaronic, used only in the Precious Gift and which only the Supreme Leader can see, read, write, and understand.

H. a creed: the Tale and the Story are completely true.

I. sacred sites: in the Commentary on Holy Scripture, which is available in at least sixteen versions and nine languages (though, curiously, and probably never, in the original Higher Macaronic), see the map of Saint Jacob of Ancona's voyage (of all the sacred sites, the holiest one is "Sinim," which only Saint Jacob and the Supreme Leader have so dubbed).

J. miracles, which include apparitions (the Precious Gift remained hidden from everyone's view for about seven hundred years, it appeared to the Supreme Leader between September 1991 and June 1996 and then it again disappeared, this time forever), revelations (which have been made only to the Supreme Leader), and mysteries galore (like a rabbi's making elementary mistakes in Jewish matters and using words that were first known to be used hundreds of years later).

K. a handful of uninformed, zealous, nutty devotees (as Chaim Bermant once said, "Believing requires no seeing").

L. a large and growing number of infidels.

The staffer at The Times who had to give a heading to Selbourne 1997e appositely called it "Why I believe in Jacob." As the fictitious "Jacob" would not have said had he existed, "Amen, Amen and Amen."

See note 50.

127. Here's another suggestion: Selbourne being a member in good standing (since 1993) of La Rubiconia Accademia dei Filopatridi ('the Rubicon Academy of Lovers of the Fatherland'), a cultural organization in Savignano sul Rubicone, he could deliver a lecture there on how "Italian scholarship is a byword for bad faith, corruption, and indolence" (it would then automatically be published in the academy's Quaderni).

By the way, if guides show you the Rubicon and tell you that Julius Caesar crossed it on the night of 9-10 January in 49 BCE, tell them that:

A. we are not sure which stream he crossed because the ancients did not state its precise location; Latin Rubico ~ Rubicon 'the Rubicon' did not survive into Italian; and, even if it had, the Italian reflex might designate a different red-colored stream (compare Latin ruber 'red [including reddish shades of orange]).

B. at least three candidates for the Rubicon have been put forward in more recent times: from north to south, they are the Pisciatello, the Fiumicino, and the Uso.

C. the Fiumicino was officially renamed the Rubicon in the eighteenth century (= the "Rubicon" you are being shown), although the available evidence does not support the candidacy of one of those red-colored streams more than it does any other.

For discussion see H. Philipp in August von Pauly, George Wissowa, and W. Kroll's Real-Encyclopädie der klassischen Altertumswissenschaft (1893 ff.), sub verbo.

After the "official" renaming of the Fiumicino, Savignano renamed itself Savignano sul Rubicone 'Savignano on the Rubicon'. In 1801, l'Accademia degli Incolti, the local cultural academy, which had been in existence at least since 1651, changed its name to La Rubiconia Simpemenia dei Filopatridi, it assuming its present name in 1876.

Thus, "reality" was created by fiat. That too could be a subject for a Selbournian lecture. Apparently, evidence in Italy abounds.
Although in Selbourne's story everything always turned out in his favor, in the real world nothing did.

Come to think of it, we have here a legal tangle. Selbourne stated for the record, with respect to the alleged "original manuscript," that "both its provenance and rights of ownership over it are unclear" (Selbourne 2000:1). That, you will remember was part of his "explanation" of why the alleged "present owner" refused to show the Precious Gift to anyone but him. However, like several of Selbourne's statements, that one now comes back to haunt him, for, if Selbourne knew (as he avowed he did) that the "rights of ownership [...] are unclear," he also knew (being trained in the law, admitted to the bar, and a published moralist) that you cannot legally convey to another person something to which you yourself do not have clear title. Permission and vestment (see note 160) are thus invalid. May we see the alleged permission and vestment from the alleged "present owner"?

Was the "original owner" the imaginary "Jacob"? One of his relatives? The alleged "Jewish family" that allegedly kept the Precious Gift hidden for centuries? Someone else?

Which "owners" acquired the Precious Gift legally and which illegally? Who now has legal ownership? Were the commercial publishers Selbourne signed contracts with not interested in finding out. Was Selbourne himself not interested in finding out? Was the alleged "present owner" not interested in finding out? Was he not willing, if it turned out that he had no right to the Precious Gift, to hand it over to the legal owner? Does the Unione della Comunità Ebraiche (formerly Unione della Comunità Israelitiche), as the national representative of the Jews of Italy, not have a right to claim ownership? Since it has not proffered any claim, is it not the truth that its silence means that it does not believe any such document to have ever existed?

Is it not curious that no one has come forth to say even just, "Yes, a Jacob of Ancona did exist in the 1270s"? Or just, "Yes, a rabbi Israel of Florence did exist two generations earlier"? Or just, "Yes, such a rabbinical line did once exist"? Or just, "Yes, we have evidence for such a manuscript"?

Since Selbourne claimed to have gotten permission and vestment from the "present owner," but the "present owner" seems never to have existed and, if he did exist, he may not have had clear title to the Precious Gift, were the various commercial publishers legally and morally entitled to publish the sundry versions of Selbourne's book and to keep the money they earned? Was Selbourne entitled to do so?

If the commercial publishers paid any money to the "translator" and "editor," did he have a right to keep it?

Should those monies not be used to track down the alleged "original manuscript," have it authenticated, and have its degree of factualness determined in order that everyone involved be cleared of any suspicion of possibly having violated the law and ethics?

By the way, a trickster could remove from Selbourne's alleged "translation" all the smoking cannons, all the smoking guns, all the other blunders and anomalies and foolishness (as Selbourne himself did at least once -- see the last two paragraphs of section 19 on his silent replacement of "Baiciu" by "Ianciu"), and all the Wardour Street English (see the first paragraph of section 5), add more "sensational," yet reasonable, details (including more "firsts" for "Jacob"), call it a "translation" of a better version of "Jacob"'s story (after all, Selbourne himself, as we have seen in section 12, did allow for the possibility that he saw not "Jacob"'s "original manuscript" but a copy, possibly in someone else's hand, so that not just the copy he allegedly saw may be extant), publish it, and claim, in Selbourneque the-dog-ate-my-homework fashion, that for this or that reason the "original manuscript" is no longer available for inspection, the "present owner" insists on remaining anonymous, and the "present owner"'s "heirs" (and their "heirs" and their "heirs" and...) might well follow in his footsteps (see note 144 on how that in fact "happened").

Or a trickster could do all of the above and, additionally, go through all of Selbourne's writings, tease out all the ethical, philosophical, political, and social ideas he found there, and weave them into a "translation" from an even "better"
version of the "original manuscript."

Or a trickster could claim to have located the "original manuscript," tested the paper and ink, and found it to have been produced in Urbino in the 1990s (alleging that out of embarrassment the "present owner" refused to reveal its whereabouts or let it be photocopied).

Being trained in the law and admitted to the bar, Selbourne presumably knows that, if any of that happened, he would in all likelihood not stand a chance of proving in a court of law that the "copyright" he claimed in Selbourne 2000 to his text had been infringed upon or that he or any of his publishers had in some other way been wronged. What's sauce for the goose is sauce for the gander.

All in all, we get the impression of quite a bit of swift backstage rearranging of the scenery in Selbourne's Potemkin village and of his frantically ruddering from one position to another to suit the occasion. "[...] a tremendous clatter, assailing, defending and explaining, but altogether without logic, consistency or even coherence. The whole business is a gigantic bluff, a hollow sham. That the stuff we are getting can be solemnly peddled to the people through the press is both a tribute to the gullibility of the voters and to the lack of political discrimination and clarity in the newspapers" (T. R. B. 1930:206). Change a few words in the last sentence and the whole applies to Selbourne's enterprize.

130. From the apparently ready-to-say-anything Parfitt we got only a couple of brief, vague sentences with many mistakes and without any supporting evidence. From the undemanding, credulous Wang we got only a few pages of no substance. Davidson and Phillips were just cheerleaders. Vergil describes the spear thrown by the aged Priam against Pyrrhus as "tellum imbelle sine ictu" (Aeneid 2.544) 'a weapon feebly thrown without effect'.

131. Of the thirty-five negative reviews and letters to the editor that have come to my attention (see the third paragraph of section 2), twenty-four appeared in 1997, five in 1998, and two each in 1999, 2000, and 2001.

132. On the other hand, because it was easy to spot many holes in "Jacob"s tale and Selbourne's story, the essay was not hard to write.

133. These general guidelines, in all likelihood not original with me (though the third one may be), are worth specifying:

   A. Look at proven cases of intellectual dishonesty to get an idea of hoaxers' typical modi operandi, like the double fiction, when trying to judge the position that a work of doubtful authenticity occupies along the continuum of fiction-nonfiction (see the first paragraph of the Comment on Quotation C in section 20 and notes 125, 151, and 156). The more similarities you find between the proven cases and the cases under scrutiny, the greater the likelihood that the latter are instances of the former.

   B. The larger the number of made-up elements in a story, the larger the number of improbable elements, the larger the number of impossible elements, the larger the number of contradictions, and the smaller the number of ascertainable elements, the likelier the entire story is to be a fiction -- which is to say, the more cards in a house of cards, the wobblier it is, and the higher you climb, the harder you fall.

   C. Look not only for what's wrong with the picture but also what's right with it, because what's right may be too good to be authentic and thus actually wrong (see note 154).

   See too the epigraphs of the present essay.

134. Two of the countless loners who, with no relevant track records, suddenly burst onto the scene with supposed magna opera were Leo Rosten, with his blunder-ridden and tasteless The Joys of Yiddish (see the reviews listed in Bratkowsky 1988:21 and 172-173), and Isaac E. Mozeson, with his cover-to-cover drivel called The Word: The Dictionary That Reveals the Hebrew Source of English, just the title of which is enough to reveal its worthlessness (see Gold 1990a and 1995). Rosten is most
admired and believed by those who know no Yiddish. Mozeson is most admired and believed by those who know no linguistics. See note 84.

135. Presumably, only the first-mentioned was dead by the time of publication. If so, read "Eliezer Amiel (deceased)" instead of "the late Eliezer Amiel." The French version of the book is free of that ambiguity.

136. Just as Kaz bowed out of Selbourne 2000 and the French version, Selbourne's wife (Hazel, née Savage) bowed into the French version: "Grande est également ma dette envers mon épouse, qui m'a aidé, intellectuellement et pratiquement, à mener ce travail à son terme" (p. [15]). Will she reveal all she knows about her husband's enterprise? If the two behaved properly, she has nothing to hide and will therefore not hesitate to come forward now.