

2010 self-defined census category “Sibiriak.” Hartley’s coverage of these interrelated themes begins by downplaying the impact of the “Siberian regionalist” movement of the nineteenth century, although she mentions leaders Grigori Potanin and Nikolai Iadrintsev. She discusses the politically messy and bloody consequences of the short-lived Far Eastern Republic during Russia’s civil war, and yet underestimates more recent attention by some Siberians to their separatist and regionalist local histories. She mentions a few personal encounters with self-designated “Siberians,” but rarely uses the term “Sibiriaki” (cf. 170). Her underestimation of the influence of Siberian natives (including “superstitious pagans”) on newcomer Slavic peoples over the centuries may provide a clue as to why she does not stress the mixed-background, intermarried “Sibiriaki” as a significant ethnic group in the process of fluid self-identification vis-à-vis others. Native influence is precisely what most official document writers and literate Russian memoirists were reluctant to admit. Hartley acknowledges contemporary “multiple identities” of many individuals in Siberia, a common pattern often matched in theories of interethnic relations to “situational identity,” but this very multiplicity may be undermining her recognition of the emergent “Sibiriak” self-identity. In any case, serious analytical conclusions concerning the tension between the conceptual separateness of Siberians and their inherent Russianness are avoided by ending the book with a quote from the passionate “village writer” Valentin Rasputin on the “fascination” of Siberia (251).

At least twice Hartley uses observations made from a plane to emphasize the vastness of Siberia (defined as spanning the Urals to the Bering Sea), or the strategic coherence of a given region’s river system (e.g. the Amur area bordering China). This “bird’s eye view” could be a metaphor for her sweeping book: in trying to see so much “from above,” she sometimes loses sight of the eclectic scholarly digging and conversation that need to be done for comprehensive “from below” portraits of Siberia’s many people and peoples. In sum, this reviewer would have preferred a more sophisticated analysis of debates surrounding many thematic aspects of Siberia’s complex history, rather than a grand, authoritative-in-tone narrative.

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<http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/00905992.2015.1014193>

Blood libel in late imperial Russia. The ritual murder trial of Mendel Beilis. Robert Weinberg, Bloomington, IN, Indiana University Press, 2014, xii + 188 pp., US\$70.00 (hardback), ISBN 978-0253010995; US\$24.00 (paperback), ISBN 978-0253011077.

Robert Weinberg’s book explores the Beilis Affair and trial, which took place in Kiev in 1911–1913. Mendel Beilis was accused of ritual murder because he was a Jew who worked near the site where the body of a 13-year-old Christian boy Andrei Iushchinskii was found. The Beilis Affair divided all of Russia between supporters of the case against Beilis, and those who believed in his innocence and thought that the accusation that Jews committed ritual murders was nonsense and a great embarrassment for the country.

The Beilis Affair and trial were widely debated in the press in the Russian Empire and abroad. Several novels and scholarly books have been published about the Beilis Affair;

Bernard Malamud's novel "The Fixer" (1966) is perhaps the best known among them. Beilis also published his own memoir *The Story of My Sufferings* (New York City: Mendel Beilis Pub. Co., 1926).

In spite of the rich literature on the topic, Weinberg's monograph brings to light many unknown aspects of the affair. The author uses previously unpublished archival documents, transcripts, and evidence from Beilis' trial; publications in the Russian and foreign press; and the personal correspondence of Beilis' contemporaries. The book combines a thorough scholarly analysis of documentary sources with a popular writing style. As historian Jarrod Tanny mentions in his endorsement, the work is written as "a gripping detective novel." This makes the book more comprehensible and interesting. To help the reader remember who was who in the Beilis Affair, Weinberg provides a list of the 40 main people who were involved in the case, calling them, as in a play, the "Dramatis Personae."

The work begins with an explanation of how a common criminal case, the murder of the 13-year-old Christian boy Andrei Iushchinskii, was transformed into "a ritual murder." On 20 March 1911, a group of playing children accidentally found the corpse of a boy with many stab wounds in a cave in a remote Kiev district. The police suspected that a gang of thieves led by Vera Cheberiak killed Andrei because he threatened to report them to the police.

However, Kiev right-wing political organizations insisted from the beginning that this was a ritual murder committed by Jews. They complained to the higher authorities in St. Petersburg about the investigation of the case. The Minister of Justice Ivan Shcheglovitov supported the ritual murder version. So the original detectives were replaced by ones more obedient to the authorities, and the case was investigated as a ritual murder. In July 1911, the Jewish manager of a brick factory near the murder site, Mendel Beilis, was arrested and accused of the ritual murder. Beilis was imprisoned for over two years until his acquittal in October 1913. Weinberg wrote that the Beilis Affair became "the best known and most publicized case of 'blood libel' in the twentieth century" (2).

The author looks for precedents of the Beilis case and traces the roots of the accusation of Jews of ritual murder to the Middle Ages. Several blood libel trials took place in Russia in the nineteenth century. The higher Russian authorities considered seriously the possibility that Jews were committing ritual murders and created special commissions for the exploration of the veracity of such accusations.

Thus, the Beilis Affair was not unique, but it appeared later than the other blood libel cases, and the affair was also pursued for political goals. The Beilis case was manufactured by the tsarist government to depict Jews as religious fanatics. The State Duma discussed in those years the possibility of abolishing the Pale of Settlements. The government resisted the abolition and, to bolster their case, attempted to represent Jews as dangerous religious fanatics who should be isolated in the Pale.

Weinberg compares the Dreyfus and Beilis Affairs and shows that both cases revealed "unresolved tension between liberal and conservative ... values" (15). In France and Russia, most conservatives shared anti-Semitic sentiments and supported the accusations against Dreyfus and Beilis, while most liberals were opposed to such accusations.

The author explains that the hostility of Kiev authorities toward Jews and the prejudices of the gentile population created an appropriate atmosphere for the blood libel accusation. According to one daily Kiev newspaper, the city had "a Black Hundred council with a hooligan mayor" (19), who demonstrated their open hostility toward Jews.

The Beilis trial lasted from 25 September to 29 October 1913. By the suggestion of the authorities, half of the 12 jury members were chosen from peasants. The prosecution hoped that their opinion could be manipulated more easily than that of educated Kievans. The accusation of Beilis was supposed to become an accusation against all Russian Jewry, so the authorities gave special attention to the preparation of the trial. They not only carefully selected the members of the jury, but also sent to the trial a prosecutor, Oskar Vipper, from St. Petersburg.

However, in spite of all the efforts of the Black Hundred organizations and the authorities to prepare well the ritual process, “the evidence against Beilis was critically weak” (43). The prosecution, which did not have enough evidence against Beilis and tried to avoid losing altogether, split the indictment into two questions: whether the murder of Andriusha Iushchinskii was ritual and whether Beilis is guilty of committing it. The jury answered positively to the first question: seven-to-five jury members judged the murder as ritual. On the second question, about Beilis’ involvement in the murder, the vote of the jury was “reportedly split evenly, six-to-six” (65). According to Russian law, “a tied vote went in favor of the defendant” (65), so Beilis was acquitted and released. So both sides, liberals and conservatives, proclaimed their victory. The liberals celebrated the acquittal of Beilis, while conservatives were happy that the case was considered as a ritual murder. The Black Hundred newspaper *Dvuglavyi orel* stated on 30 October 1913, “One Jew is Acquitted, All Kikes Are Found Guilty” (67).

Beilis’ ordeal did not end with his acquittal. He received threatening letters and decided to emigrate from Kiev by the end of 1913. Beilis immigrated with his family first to Palestine and then to the USA, where he lived until his death in 1934.

Weinberg shows that the Beilis trial “tarnished the tsarist regime’s reputation in the court of world opinion” (62). The accusation of Jews of ritual murder in the beginning of the twentieth century was considered anachronistic throughout the civilized world. The trial demonstrated the backwardness of the tsarist regime, the anti-Semitism of the Russian authorities, and their ruthless persecution of Jews.

The documents and illustrations published in the book are a valuable addition to the monograph. They give the reader a better notion of the time, place, and political atmosphere, in which the Beilis Affair took place. Weinberg’s work is an important contribution to the Russian Jewish history field, which will be interesting for both scholars and a popular audience.

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<http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/00905992.2015.1019776>

Swans of the Kremlin: ballet and power in Soviet Russia, Christina Ezrahi, Pittsburg, University of Pittsburg Press, 2012, xi + 322 pp., \$27.95 (paperback), ISBN 978-0-8229-6214-4

In 1962, President John F. Kennedy depicted the attendance of a Soviet ballet performance as a diplomatic gesture in a letter to Chairman Nikita Khrushchev:

In closing, let me say that I noticed with appreciation your friendly gesture in attending the concert offered by Benny Goodman in Moscow last week. I myself look forward to attending a performance of the Bolshoi Ballet when it comes to us in the fall. (Beschloss 1991, 395)