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IN THIS ISSUE

From the *Editors*

Dear Reader,

As with all of our issues, this Fall 2023 issue of *The Judaic Studies Review* highlights the exciting and intelligent work and experiences of the professors, students (both undergraduate and graduate), and those guests whom we gladly invite in and, of course, hold in the utmost regard. Unlike previous issues, however, this edition focuses solely on compelling arguments and brilliant research conducted by our undergraduates! First, Rachel Zaszlavsky delves into the lives of two women who changed the course of Renaissance Tuscany in "Eleanora de Toledo and the Jews of Tuscany." Next, we showcase two of Benjamin Frogel's articles. In "Gersonides or Albo," Frogel reckons with two distinct views on how the Jewish people are able to engage in life virtuously - and how both thinkers draw from the Aristotelian tradition and yet, Gersonides pushed for an individualist direction while Albo finds it impossible to be "good" without societal engagement. Next, Frogel enlightens readers on how to better unwrap Maimonedes' Eight Chapters in "Rabbi Shimon and Aristotle in Maimonides: Who Speaks to Whom?" unpacking the roles of prophets, legislators, and statesmen. Finally, Rachel Hogue merges oral histories, physical relics, and poetry in "'I had my own war…' Holocaust Memory in the Dress of Celina and Alicia Rottenberg" a comprehensive retelling of a fragmented history.

As always, we are incredibly excited for you to read and enjoy the issue!

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Eleonora *de toledo* & the Jews *of tuscany*

RACHEL ZASZLAVSKY

By investigating personal relationships between historical individuals, especially those between women, history which had once been obscured becomes revealed. In this short essay, I will explore a relationship between two women which changed the demographics and economics of sixteenth-century Tuscany.

Jews had been fleeing persecutions in Spain and seeking asylum in Italy since the fourteenth century. With the forced conversions of Portuguese Jews in 1487 and the expulsion of Jews from Spain in 1492, even more Jews flocked to Italy.[1] One family which fled from Iberia was the powerful Abravanels. The Abravanel family settled in Naples, Italy, and there, quickly entered high society.[2] The Abravanels became influential in Naples. Some Abravanel men headed the Neapolitan Jewish community. Other family members were associated with the Neapolitan royal court.[3]

It was in sixteenth-century century Naples that Catholic "princess" Eleonora de Toledo and prominent Jewess Benvenida Abravanel met. The head of royal court, reigning since 1532, was Don Pedro de Toledo, the Viceroy of Spain in Naples. Acquainted with Benvenida and impressed with her nobility and character, Don Pedro appointed Benvenida as the tutor for his daughter, Eleonora.[4] Eleonora and Benvenida grew close, developing a special relationship. Benvenida was a sort of surrogate mother to Eleonora, and Eleonora even called her "mother" later in life.[5] Benvenida and Eleonora's lifelong friendship allowed the Abravanel family to prosper amidst persecution.[6]

Both in the Naples of her childhood and in the Florence of her marital years, Eleonora spoke on behalf of Jewish welfare when appealed to by Benvenida.[7] In 1533, Holy Roman Emperor Charles V ordered the expulsion of Jews from Naples. Due to Benvenida's intervention and the objections of several members of Neapolitan nobility, this expulsion was postponed. It is suspected that Eleonora had a role in this appeal, despite being only eleven.[8]

With her marriage to Cosimo I, Grand Duke of Tuscany, in 1539, Eleonora resettled in Florence. Two years later in 1541, the Abravanels were expelled from Naples and left for Ferrara.[9] Benvenida frequently visited Eleonora in Florence. Through her connections with Eleonora, Benvenida obtained permission from Cosimo to open banking

establishments in Tuscany with her sons.[10] Similar banking privileges were granted by Cosimo to other Jews. During his rule, Cosimo allowed these Jewish banking families to settle in Tuscan cities. It is likely these favorable policies towards the Jews were influenced by both Eleonora's and Benvenida's ability to advocate on the community's behalf.[11]

Before Eleonora's death in 1562, Cosimo had been actively courting exiled and persecuted Jews from the Iberian Peninsula and the Papal States to come and settle in Florence and Tuscany. Because of Eleonora and Benvenida, he granted these Jews many privileges in the 1540s and 1550s. Cosimo did not strictly enforce anti-Jewish laws and ignored many cruel papal decrees against the Jews. He considered the wealth, business acumen, and mercantile connections of these Jews to be of economic value to Tuscany.[12]

Upon Eleonora's passing, Cosimo had a shift in attitude towards the Jews. One can speculate this was because of the loss of Eleonora's influence.[13] Political relations with Spain and the Papacy also forced Cosimo to make a decision regarding the Jews.[14] Rather than exile the important community, in 1570, Cosimo chose the pragmatic move to ghettoize the Jews in Florence and Siena.[15]

Still, under Cosimo's rule after the death of Eleonora, Florentine Jewish life blossomed. Florence became home to two Jewish communities: those following the Spanish and Portuguese tradition and those following the Italian tradition.[16] The Spanish Jews brought with them Kabbalah, Jewish mysticism.[17] Two synagogues were built, one for each group.[18] Some wealthy Jews were able to live outside the ghetto, and those who remained within were not treaty harshly. In comparison to other ghettos, conditions in the Florentine ghetto were good.[19] In the ghetto, Jews enjoyed a reasonable amount of autonomy, electing their own council, and rabbinical courts had authority; the only outside court with jurisdiction was the Supreme Court.[20] Jewish religious, social, and cultural life flourished in the ghetto.[21] There were the two synagogues, Jewish schools, a butcher, a baker, a ritual bath called a *mikveh*, and other social and philanthropic organizations.[22]

Eleonora's impact was further realized through her and Cosimo's son Ferdinando I. As duke, he enacted positive policies for the Jews. Ferdinando invited Jewish merchants

to settle in the port-city of Livorno, where they enjoyed unlimited access to trade and extensive self-governance.[23] This city became essential to the Tuscan economy.[24] In Florence, Ferdinando defied the Papacy in defense of his Jewish subjects. He feigned ignorance regarding the activities of his Jewish subjects, lied about their whereabouts, obscured their religious histories and countries of origin, wrote letters on their behalf to Rome, and even directly lied to the Pope.[25]

From her status as the wife of Cosimo I, Eleonora was able to use her regal, Spanish upbringing in Naples to further develop Italian Jewish life. The importance of the Jewish community in her early years drove Eleonora to be a sort of ambassador for Jewish welfare and to advocate on the community's behalf. She encouraged Cosimo's promotion of the growth of the Florentine Jewish community. Eleonora's support for the Jewish people, which gave the Abravanel family the position to access Italian leaders and gain backing for their community, set in motion the development of a thriving Jewish community in Florence and Tuscany under Cosimo and Ferdinando. A macro-historical approach misses this bond between two women, across religious divides, which shaped the history of Italian Jewry.

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[6] Taitz, Henry, and Tallan, *JPS Guide to Jewish Women*, 107.
[7] Sloan, *The Sephardic Jews of Spain and Portugal*, 41.
[8] Adelman, "Benvenida Abravanel".
[9] Taitz, Henry, and Tallan, *JPS Guide to Jewish Women*, 107.; Adelman, "Benvenida Abravanel".
[10] Adelman, "Benvenida Abravanel".; Siegmund, *The Medici State and the Ghetto of Florence*, 51, 99.; Taitz, Henry, and Tallan, *JPS Guide to Jewish Women*, 108.
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[13] Siegmund, *The Medici State and the Ghetto of Florence*, 70.

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[15] "Modern Jewish History: The Jews and the Medici", Jewish Virtual Library.; "Modern Jewish History: The Prehistory of the Florentine Ghetto ", Jewish Virtual Library.; "The Jewish Community of Florence", ANU Museum of the Jewish People.

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GERSONIDES *or* ALBO?

BENJAMIN FROGEL

Levi ben Gershon (Gersonides, 1288-1344) and Joseph Albo (1380-1444) embody two rival modes of Jewish engagement with the virtues. Each drawing from Maimonides, Gersonides and Albo take contrasting stands on the role of revelation cultivating virtue, as well as on what constitutes justice. Gersonides takes from Maimonides an apophatic and naturalistic conception of God and God's actions in history and grounds his ethics in an adaptation of Aristotelian teleology. Albo inherits from Maimonides an Aristotelian concept of the law and political justice as necessary for human flourishing. I will also argue that Albo inherits a craft-tradition model of philosophy from Maimonides, while Gersonides is willing to attribute more significance to untutored human reason. In this essay, I will attempt to demonstrate the roots and implications of Gersonides' and Albo's approaches to ethics, argue that they are incompatible approaches, and make an argument as to who we ought to see as the more rightful heir to the Maimonidean tradition.

One must begin with Gersonides' metaphysical foundations to understand his thoughts about justice. For Gersonides, God orders the world through the Agent Intellect, as a sculptor uses a tool to shape rock. God knows "in a universal, not a particular way" (*Wars of the Lord* 189). God has perfect knowledge of truth and goodness but not of each individual's good actions or factual statements. Gersonides uses this concept to explain how, if God's will is necessarily unchanging, why the Bible describes God as changing God's mind. If God can reconsider punishing the Israelites, they must have repented or changed their ways—they changed, as God cannot.

Divine providence, then, operates in a naturalistic way for Gersonides. God has ordained that He will reward the good and punish the bad. But, since God can only know universals and does not concern Himself with particulars, the traditional logic of reward and punishment is inverted. Good actions are those that bring reward, and wrong actions are those that bring misfortune. To be virtuous, then, is to receive Providence (*Wars of the Lord* 90). One can freely receive Providence if one understands the workings of the natural world. For example, the wise sailor receives providence when he understands tide patterns because he can use his knowledge to his practical benefit. Indeed, the sailor demonstrates how humanity is unique from the rest of creation in ow it receives divine providence. The difference between divine providence for animals and humans is that God, through the Active Intellect, has endowed humans with a practical intellect and, thus, with the gift of deliberation, foresight, and intelligence. In contrast, animals must follow their most base instincts.

Gersonides grounds his theology in an Averroist theory of nature and his ethics in Aristotelian teleology. As an astronomer who spent much of his life contemplating metaphysical reality, Gersonides sees the ultimate goal of life as contemplation. Gersonides' version of Aristotelian teleology parallels the marginalization of justice in his writings. Gersonides has no robust notion of distributive or corrective justice found in Aristotle and sees the benefit of the political community as entirely practical. The individual cultivates justice through studying and contemplating nature and instruction in the Biblical

narrative. Gersonides might argue against Aristotle: the thinker achieves contemplation when he exists independent of the political community, so the focus of ethics should be on practically setting the thinker up to be independent of the community rather than intertwined with its customs and mores. In other words, Gersonides' writings implicitly argue that political life plays a far lesser role in preparing one for contemplation than Aristotle or Maimonides would have it. We would do well in our reading of Gersonides to separate, as Gersonides did, the notion of the political community from that of friends. Gersonides emphasizes friendship and loving-kindness in his reading of the Abraham narrative (*Ralbag's Useful Ethical Lessons Concerning Abraham* 408). However, where Aristotle argues that a community is made good by its lawgiver and Maimonides argues that the prophet *qua* divine lawgiver can imitate divine justice in the political community, Gersonides sees no such role for the law (Green, *The Virtue Ethics of Levi Gersonides* 93-94).

The depoliticized ethics of Gersonides led him to a novel conception of how to read Tanakh from an ethical standpoint. Gersonides grounds his reading of Tanakh on narrative rather than law. Biblical figures become moral exemplars, and we are to learn from how they conduct themselves. For example, Abraham is praiseworthy for thinking strategically in his rescue of Lot and for making the tough decision to lie about Sarai being his wife (*Lessons* 411). Each decision involves the virtue of haritzut (roughly, decisiveness). Abraham is aware of his telos, the service of God, and the contemplation of eternal truths (*Lessons 413)*. His virtues lie in how he navigates a tumultuous world to secure that telos. This

argument is not foreign to the tradition; Talmudic writings are either aggadah (narrative) or halakha (legal commentary). However, Gersonides is unique among Jewish Aristotelians for placing far more ethical importance on aggadah than the law.

It is possible to understand Gersonides as a break from a craft-tradition model of moral philosophy towards a more liberal model. Such an understanding of Gersonides would place him within his philosophical climate, which was shifting towards empiricism (Green 70). For Aristotle, education in a tradition of rational inquiry requires membership in a particular type of moral community and a willingness to participate with that community in the collaborative enterprise of investigation, using shared starting points and end goals. Gersonides, in deemphasizing the metaphysical justice of the law, places the onus on the individual to understand divine justice by studying nature and her place in nature by studying Tanakh. The implication is that this enterprise of virtue cultivation is possible for the individual, independent of her political community.

Compared to Gersonides, Joseph Albo is a cataphatic thinker. Far from seeing God as distant, Albo argues on Aristotelian grounds that humanity, and Israel, can engage in a loving relationship with the Creator. For Aristotle, the friendship of the good can include friendships of utility or pleasure, and one might even suggest that the latter two friendships are necessary for the former. Albo adapts this idea to man's love for God. God is the cause of all good, pleasant, and valuable things and is thus worthy of one's undivided love. Albo uses Aristotle's argument that perfect love can only be directed at one person to

community, the divine law encapsulates the natural law and is superior at creating social norms to the conventional law.

On the concept of the law, Albo can make critiques of Aristotle that Maimonides made possible. Maimonides brought the Jewish law into conversation with Aristotelian political theory explicitly in the *Guide* and implicitly throughout the *Eight Chapters*. From this standpoint, Albo can criticize conventional law from three Aristotelian standpoints: reliability, specificity, and the imparting of theoretical knowledge.

The second critique is from reliability. Unassisted human reason cannot always distinguish between the becoming and the unbecoming. In other words, a law created by human convention, even when designed with an eye toward the good of the community, cannot separate taboo from what is necessary for human flourishing. Albo uses the example of Plato and Aristotle's disagreement over monogamy to demonstrate the flawed nature of human reason (*Ikkarim* 82). While Albo thinks that Aristotle is correct and Plato is incorrect, the critique from reliability is also a critique from certainty. Because human reason cannot issue perfect laws, the citizen will never know whether the law she follows is genuinely good or, in fact, a meaningless ritual or counterproductive interdiction. Divine law, by contrast, is indisputable and sound, as it comes from the source of all truth and goodness.

The critique from specificity is a critique of the structure of the *Nicomachean Ethics*. The *Nicomachean Ethics* can only speak about specific virtues, not specific laws (*Ikkarim* 83-84). While it is grounded in the law of the

suggest that one must direct one's undivided love toward God. While God is infinitely powerful and thus cannot need anything from humans, God can love humans as a king loves his subjects. Moreover, this love is reasonless, just as a husband loves his wife despite knowing he could have married someone more beautiful. God's love is not irrational, but it is based on commitment.

Albo's more robust conception of God allows him to have a richer picture of God's actions in the world, specifically God's justice. Human justice can replicate divine justice, while Gersonides' God can only set a blueprint for the rhythms of nature. Albo's God can establish human norms of justice, love, and divine law through acting in history (*Ikkarim* 80).

The method that Albo uses to make his case is also essential. As Maimonides argued for the place of Aristotelian ideas within the tradition, Albo argues that Jewish ends are the perfection of Aristotelian concepts, most notably on law and virtue.

Albo discusses three types of law: conventional, conventional, and divine. The natural law, a concept for which Albo was the first Jewish thinker to mention expressly, is the same among all people at all times and places. It is the law that any society must follow if it does not wish to descend into anarchy. The conventional law, epitomized by Aristotle's *Nicomachean Ethics*, is ordered by wise men to suit a particular place and time. More ambitious than the austere natural law, the conventional law aims to order human conduct and is directed at improving society. God orders the divine law through a prophet to guide men toward happiness and immortality (*Ikkarim* 79). In establishing the political

polis, that law is unreliable and subject to changes. The question of what law one must follow, then, is open. By contrast, the law is true and certain in God's commonwealth. The critique from specificity is a critique of a primarily narrative form of virtue cultivation against a primarily legal form of developing character traits. Albo's critique of Aristotle might also apply to Gersonides; an overly vague form of virtue cultivation gives too much leeway to unassisted reason, as opposed to using human reason to contribute to a tradition of law that originates with God. Interpretations of stories can yield valuable lessons, but the law is an enterprise that issues clear, action-oriented direction.

The critique of Aristotle from theoretical knowledge is one that Maimonides makes available to Albo through his concept of the afterlife and the Jewish law as imparting theoretical wisdom. Albo and Maimonides hold to an Averroist conception of the afterlife in which the intellect, and its accumulated knowledge, are the lone part of a person to survive past the destruction of the body. Albo points out that the law of the *polis,* and any conventional law, cannot further man's theoretical knowledge. However, the divine law, obtained through prophecy and containing mandates to praise God and contemplate God's works, might be a successful transmitter of theoretical wisdom so that even those non-metaphysicians might warrant eternal felicity—Maimonides gestures at this critique with his metaphor of the Sultan's palace. For Maimonides, studying metaphysics, mathematics, and the natural sciences brings one closest to God. The devoted student of metaphysics enters the proverbial Sultan's chambers. Those engaged in false religion have their backs turned to the Sultan.

In contrast, the non-contemplative people involved in true religion can approach the palace walls—their laws and teaching impart theoretical knowledge about eternal truths. Albo makes this critique explicit, arguing that divine law is preferable because it can impart theoretical knowledge. Albo might say that if Aristotle truly wants members of his polity to achieve contemplative virtue, he would be best off embracing a form of law that cultivates contemplation about eternal truths.

Albo's three critiques of conventional law from divine law demonstrate that he shares the same standpoint regarding philosophy and theology with Gersonides and Maimonides; taking revelation as a data point, he is a theologian speaking to philosophy. However, his theology synthesizes philosophical and unphilosophical ideas and presents them as native to the Jewish tradition. Albo is a much more orthodox inheritor of the craft-tradition model of philosophy, which emphasizes law and cultivation as a prerequisite to intellectual and practical virtue. Gersonides, in his emphasis on narrative and deemphasis on politics, embodies a form of inquiry that gives more credit to the untutored intellect than his progenitors in the Jewish and Aristotelian traditions might have.

While both thinkers work with a generally Aristotelian teleology, they offer different routes to arrive at contemplative virtue. These routes lead them on rival paths regarding the role of law and justice in the virtuous life. Albo's virtues are those of the political society where justice is partially constitutive of a good life, while Gersonides' virtues take a more individualistic tact. While Gersonides'

virtues are not individualistic—he advocates loving-kindness and friendship—he is highly skeptical about the Law's ability to secure justice—considering that justice, for Gersonides, can be found by observing the natural order. Albo is much more explicit about critiquing Aristotelianism on Aristotelian grounds. It appears that Albo can present a more intact version of Maimonides' view as outlined in the *Eight Chapters*. While Gersonides offers a novel theory of Jewish scripture and virtue in a philosophical climate that was moving in an empiricist direction, Albo attempts to further argue for an implicit Aristotelianism within Jewish thought, which better achieves Aristotelian ends than the *Nicomachean Ethics* can. In this reading, Albo extends the Maimonidean argument, whereas Gersonides argues from a different context.

Rabbi Shimon and Aristotle in Maimonides

Who Speaks to Whom?

Benjamin Frogel

The Eight Chapters is considered to be the most ethics-centered of Maimonides' work. With regard to his focus, he differs notably from Aristotle in that he is reluctant to invoke politics or a conception of man as a political animal, as he did in the *Guide for the Perplexed*. Rather, in the introduction to the Eight Chapters, Maimonides writes as a physician, diagnosing souls against the model that he inherited through Al Farabi. In fact, the Eight Chapters can be read as anti-political, given that he sees the prophet as a superior political leader to the statesman (who possesses imaginative virtue but not practical wisdom) and the legislator (who is in the opposite state) and his theological commitment to the lack of Jewish prophecy in exile.

Weiss explains this phenomenon as a limitation of Maimonides. As "Rabbi Moses" inherits a tradition with a conception of its own law as perfect, divine law, he has no room to write about which traits befit political leadership or about what a good society looks like. Furthermore, Weiss adds this idea would be pragmatically advantageous for a prominent rabbi like Maimonides to advance. Deemphasizing the political dimension would have allowed the community to avoid despair at its continuing exile. (Weiss 18)

It is not true that the rabbinic system Maimonides inherits precludes political functions. As an author of a highly innovative law code that aimed at canonical status, Maimonides must have been aware of this. Furthermore, his theology of the Oral Torah was such that the rabbinic tradition contained principles necessary for interpreting the Law, not a set body of information that was merely passed down as a baton in a relay race. Given that this law dictated

Maimonides, in his pursuit of a synthesis of Aristotelian and rabbinic moral inquiry, takes the validity of Jewish law and Aristotle's metaphysical biology as starting points. Much of his writing for a Jewish audience is to demonstrate that there is no inherent tension between his two starting points. In some cases, the synthesis is incomplete; Maimonides has persuasively adopted Jewish sources to his cause but has failed to provide Aristotelian reasons for the inclusion of Jewish practices and ideas in his overall system. In some areas, Maimonides' writings provide the resources for a critique of Aristotle that is genuinely Aristotelian and genuinely Jewish. I will explore herein the extent to which Maimonides successfully synthesizes the Aristotelian and rabbinic traditions. To do so, I will measure Maimonides' writings against what I take to be Maimonides' central goal in those writings: to convince a Jewish audience that the Jewish tradition is somewhat Aristotelian in nature, and contains within it Aristotelian human teleology and theory of law. However, from an Aristotelian standpoint, and Maimonides can be described here as an Aristotelian, this argument requires a reason why Maimonides' argument should not be that his Jewish audience ought to abandon the Jewish tradition altogether and pursue better means of pursuing an Aristotelian *telos* (practical matters notwithstanding). Focusing on the Introduction to the Eight Chapters and selections from the Mishneh Torah, I will focus primarily on the latter part of this dynamic, and explore ways in which Maimonides' work either achieves this, fails to do so, or provides resources for future writers to complete his synthesis.

life for the community, it seems as though its interpreters and explicators must have some concept of the political virtues and the good society. As to Weiss' pragmatic argument, Maimonides' audience would have lived in Jewish communities that had a corporate, semi-autonomous status that required some form of political rule under the Law. While the Jews may not have required generals and statesmen, they needed judges and diplomats. Thus, the question of why Maimonides focused more on the individual student of Torah and less on the budding communal leader still stands.

A more likely explanation for this seeming discontinuity with Aristotle is that similar to the *Nicomachean Ethics,* politics is presumed in the Intro to the Eight Chapters rather than stated outright. Having taken the Law as a starting point, the Eight Chapters takes on the mission of explaining what character traits are required of the Jew who is bound by God's sovereignty. Rather than establishing the law as perfect, Maimonides merely chooses not to address himself to the lawgivers of the community. One likely explanation is that he wrote for those that could realize his Aristotelian teleology, where contemplative virtue is the highest good. Furthermore, following the Stagirite, contemplative virtue for Maimonides is self-sufficient. While the Law is necessary to develop a person into a theoretical reasoner, the community is good but not ultimately necessary for the contemplative philosopher. This metaphysical end instrumentalizes the law, or as Kaplan puts it, subordinates obedience to virtue. By this Kaplan means that Maimonides sees no intrinsic value in performing commandments *qua* commandments, in the sense of a Halevian perspective which would see a

person's spiritual wellbeing bolstered by an action like wrapping tefillin, outside of the action's impact on a person's habits and how those habits form the person. For Maimonides, each commandment is worth doing because a person who does the law will be more inclined towards the mean, and to becoming an excellent practical and theoretical reasoner. Following Aristotle, practical pursuits are devalued relative to contemplation.

On the subject of contemplative virtue, Maimonides' system provides room for a critique of Aristotle along Aristotelian lines. Maimonides' theocentric conception of the virtues means that contemplative virtue is baked into his legal framework. While Aristotle focused on the laws of the polis, Maimonides interprets Jewish law as directed at the end, which both men agree is most desirable; that of contemplating eternal truths. Maimonides' critique of Aristotle might juxtapose the practical nature of the laws of the polis compared to the laws of the kehillah, which habituate their practitioners to think about eternal truths from awakening, to meals, to each significant moment in one's life. While contemplative virtue is still reserved for the elite few, Maimonides could say that the halachic system is better at creating contemplative minds, as even one's quotidian life is permeated with references to eternal truths. If such logic holds, then Maimonides' metaphysical conception of God creates room in his system to make an Aristotelian case that an Aristotelian might benefit from incorporating elements of Jewish law into her conceptual scheme. While it is not clear that Maimonides actually makes this argument, it is a straightforward conclusion that one could draw from the texts discussed herein.

commandments because he values virtue over obedience and might see the chukkim as education in moderation.

Maimonides' discussion of the chukkim has similar mechanics to his disagreements with Aristotle about honor and anger. Aristotle believes that one should be angry in measured amounts when it is appropriate (NE 2.5). For Aristotle, measured anger can be an appropriate response to something like an insult to oneself or to one's friend. Maimonides holds that anger is never a good emotion for a person to possess, although it may be necessary for a leader sometimes to put on an angry face while remaining serene. If one's friend is insulted, it may be necessary to lash out at the offending party. However, one must not allow himself to feel anger. Maimonides' stated reason for this is that anger is a form of idolatry. His reason for anger-as-idolatry is that anger causes one to forget everything he knows. This includes forgetting who God is. Since, for Maimonides, man's telos is the contemplation of eternal truths, all non-contemplative matters are merely instrumental toward the ends of one's bodily and spiritual health. Thus, one must not forget God in the process of mundane life, even for a temporary moment of anger. Furthermore, as Frank argues, *imitatio Dei* for Maimonides requires a person not to feel anger--just as God feels no anger.

Similarly, Aristotle sees magnanimity as a virtue. If one does something impressive, it is vicious for one to be small-souled and refuse to take credit for it, and it is just to gracefully and moderately receive the honor.

Maimonides attempts to further map the terrain between the Aristotelian and rabbinic traditions in his summary of chapter six. Maimonides' intro to the sixth chapter is laid out as a dialectic in which Maimonides seeks to resolve a contradiction. The philosophers hold that it is best to be virtuous; a person, in the course of practical reasoning, should act from his disposition to do the good. Because he is predisposed to goodness, he will desire it. The Talmudic sages hold continence as the ideal; the ideal person acknowledges that she desires to have illicit sexual relations or to eat pork but that she resists the temptation because of God's commandments. Maimonides avoids resolving the distinction, instead drawing a distinction between mishpatim and chukkim where mishpatim are to be done from virtue, and chukkim to be done out of continence. He avoids resolving the tension between a confessional mode of inquiry--that of Rabbi Shimon ben Gamliel and the reading of him that would hold that one does the law strictly out of a duty to obey God--and a dialectical one, that of Aristotle, which sees every action as aimed at some good. Instead, he reduces it to a semantic distinction, dividing the pie and giving Rabbi Shimon the chukkim and Aristotle the mishpatim.[1]

Maimonides does not give specific reasons for the commandments that he designates as chukkim. However, he argues that there are reasons for having the

[1] It is important to note here that Maimonides' reading of Rabbi Shimon is coherent with his reading of the Noahide laws (that the righteous gentile must perform them primarily because God commanded them and not strictly from his own reason) because he does not think that there is a natural-law argument to be made to prohibit explicit sexual relations.

Magnanimity is seemingly off the mark for Maimonides, as he urges his reader to imitate Moses in being not just humble but "very humble." Once again, Maimonides' theocentrism appears to be the driving force behind his divergence from the Stagirite. The reason to avoid arrogance is to avoid forgetting who God is--the God who freed one from slavery and the God who made any impressive deed possible. To be arrogant is to admire one's gifts without a thought to the divine Giver. For Maimonides, a person must never feel anger and must remain humble even when she is the recipient of deserved praise. However, in public, justice seems to demand that evildoers face social consequences. When one is praised publicly, it seems unjust to scorn well-intentioned, moderate praise. Therefore, a person must act as though she is angry or honored while avoiding the internal feelings of anger or arrogance to penetrate her inner psyche. Just as settling for continence with regard to the chukkim appears incoherent with an Aristotelian approach to habit, namely, that one's habits change one's dispositions. One could make an internal critique of Maimonides along these lines, arguing that his own prescription for avoiding anger and honor will lead one to cultivate these dispositions in the long run.

Maimonides's avoidance of giving specific reasons for the chukkim render his account of law less coherent from an Aristotelian perspective, as Halacha is at once perfectly virtue-forming and requires even its most virtuous adherents to sometimes act from continence rather than from virtue. Similarly, Maimonides seems to require leaders to practice acting angrily while remaining perfectly serene within. Kaplan's reading of Maimonides attempts to resolve the tension.

Kaplan's Maimonidean Jew says: "In terms of the virtue of moderation, there would be nothing wrong with my eating an appropriate amount of meat and milk as determined by practical judgment. Therefore, I will let my soul be attracted to this action. But I will not eat this food because my Father in heaven has forbidden me—forbidden me not in order to have me demonstrate my obedience to His inscrutable command, but forbidden me precisely as a means of discipline so that the state of moderation be firmly established in my soul." (22) Congruent logic may also apply in the case of anger. Kaplan's Jew could say, "If God were not part of the picture, then there would be nothing wrong with my becoming reasonably angry at an unjust person or event--however, my anger would be forgetting my Father in heaven, and thus will always be wrong."

While nothing in the argument about chukkim would be treif from a Jewish standpoint, it is incoherent with an Aristotelian system, which would always prefer that its practitioners act from virtue rather than from continence. Moreover, Maimonides lacks an Aristotelian justification for the chukkim. Thus, even Kaplan's reading of Maimonides' discussion of the chukkim functions merely as a Jewish apologetic; it makes a Jewish claim in the language of a non-Jewish system. However, Maimonides does not say in the language of the Aristotelian system why Aristotle requires the chukkim. Aristotle's notion of habits is such that one will inevitably be formed by one's practices. Thus, even if the purpose of the chukkim is, in fact, to cultivate discipline, the outcome of those prohibitions will be that the prohibited acts will seem repulsive or foreign to those who habitually avoid them. As such, it is not clear that Kaplan's reading of

Maimonides can resolve the tension between the latter's acceptance of the division of commandments into chukkim and mishpatim, an instrumental conception of halacha, and an all-encompassing theory of law. In this discussion, it seems as though Maimonides has successfully preserved the integrity of the halachic system; he has no problem doing this, as he argues that the halachic system has always had Aristotelian purposes in mind. However, he does not successfully resolve the tensions between the obedience seemingly demanded by the halachic system and the goals laid out by Aristotle--to do such a thing, he would have to lodge an objection to Aristotle, on Aristotelian terms, that would necessitate an Aristotelian adoption of halacha. Such an argument about the present topic is not clear in the works discussed herein, nor does it follow from them.

Regardless of how one reads Rabbi Shimon, Maimonides could argue that it is precisely the chukkim that gives his system a leg up on that outlined in the *Nicomachean Ethics*. Observance of chukkim, even if the objects prohibited are not themselves harmful, separate those who are observing the Law--God's revealed path towards the middle way--from those who are not. Thus, with regard to central virtue-forming institutions for Aristotle, such as friendship and politics, the chukkim set the virtuous apart from those who have not accepted the yoke of the mean. Man will live more perfectly according to his telos if he is surrounded by and accountable to those who are also pursuing a life of virtue. The virtuous person may have no reason to act from virtue in rejecting

cheeseburgers and shaatnetz, but it is precisely her love of virtue that should motivate her to eschew these things.

In most of Maimonides' discourses that I have examined herein, it appears that Aristotle is speaking to Rabbi Shimon, who is left to find resources within his own tradition to accommodate the Stagirite. However, this reading is complicated by the fact that Maimonides presents a univocal idea of what Judaism is; Rabbi Shimon was already been adapted to Aristotle before the conversation began, or perhaps the two were more in agreement than some commentators suggest. While the discussion is happening along Judaic lines, the teleology that will order the debate for Maimonides is fundamentally Aristotelian. Thus, Rabbi Shimon must speak to Aristotle in a way that preserves Maimonides' synthesis. I have outlined one way in which Maimonides gestures at such an argument, an argument that, while it is not Maimonides', would not be foreign to Maimonides' system of thought.

I had my own war...

Holocaust Memory in the Dress of Celina and Alicia Rottenberg

by Rachel Hogue

"And dresses, light dresses will be left after me."

– From Zuzanna Ginczanka's "Non Omnis Moriar" [1]

DRESS: JEWISH REFUGEE'S. IMPERIAL WAR MUSEUM

THE DRESS IS STILL BRIGHTLY COLORED,
ALTHOUGH A RED BUTTON IS MISSING.
THE DELICATE RAYON HAS ONLY BEEN MENDED IN A FEW PLACES,
OVER YEARS OF DISPLACEMENT.
THE DRESS'S OWNER WAS MURDERED,
THE DRESS' OWNER SURVIVED.
THE DRESS HIDES IN A MUSEUM COLLECTION.
THE DRESS ESCAPED POLAND
SOMETIME AFTER LIBERATION IN 1945.
THE DRESS WHISPERS THAT MEMORY CANNOT DIE.
THE DRESS SCREAMS THE QUESTION 'WHY'? [2]

In 1968, Alicia Rottenberg Gornowski recorded a nearly two-hour oral history of her Holocaust survival story. Sometime before 2004, a striped rayon dress connected to the Rottenbergs was accessioned to the Imperial War Museum and catalogued alongside Alicia's audio files. The dress does not feature in Alicia's recorded memories of escaping the Warsaw ghetto, hiding throughout the Polish countryside, and eventually journeying to England in a post-war Kindertransport. From the most basic facts listed in the short museum description and understood through immediate observation, what I have written after the excerpt from Zuzanna Ginczanka's poem "Not all of me will die" is in simple terms a short history of the Rottenberg dress. In Zuzanna Ginczanka's evocative poem, the imagery of dresses is an imperative that her life will not be forgotten. Her poem and its explication by Polish literature scholar Bozena Shallcross, specifically from the perspective of a Jewish woman and her material goods, gives Holocaust memory a striking air of materiality.[3] Arguably, the Rottenberg dress's existence speaks to the same sense of tangibility as well as Ginczanka's themes of femininity and resistance imbued into a garment. This essay will attempt to traverse the journey of the dress and its owners, even in its thorny ambiguity shaped by trauma. That it has become a museum piece, now

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[1] Zuzanna Grinczanka, "Non Omnis Moriar" translated in *The Holocaust Object in Polish and Polish-Jewish Culture*. Bozena Shallcross (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2011.) 37-38

[2] As someone who writes poetry and seldom gets to include it in my academic work, I was inspired by the structure of Charlotte Delbo's *Auschwitz and After* and *how* her narrative weaves poetry in and out when words have to be written in a nontraditional way to explain the unexplainable. These lines were my first responses to the short museum note given to the dress.

[3] Zuzanna Grinczanka, "Non Omnis Moriar" translated in *The Holocaust Object in Polish and Polish-Jewish Culture*. Bozena Shallcross (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2011.) 37-38

physically removed from victim and survivor, is also an important matter of discussion. As a dress, it connects to not only object histories of the Holocaust writ large, but specifically the use and poignancy of textiles and sewing as bearers of memory and their use in memorialization.

Alicia's story of survival as spoken in her own words is one of continual displacement. Not long after the Nazi regime forced her family into the Warsaw ghetto, Celina and Moses, Alicia's parents, placed her and her grandfather in hiding with relatives. In palpable constant fear, as understood by her oral history, Alicia was moved about continuously by relations, rescuers, and Polish friends of friends who took her in for varying lengths of time, some from a place of kindness and others from a place of financial need. A repeated phrase in the last two reels of her oral history is 'I had no one.' She included somber references to her own luck after recounting the murder of her two young cousins who were discovered in the same hiding place as herself when she had gone out for the day.[4] She spent the last years of the war in what can best be called 'open hiding' by pretending to be married to her Polish boyfriend and pretending to be a Catholic. Hans Schneider, in reflecting on his Kindertransport rescue, states that such a form of childhood displacement requires "a memory loss of one's previous life."[5] Arguably, Alicia's necessary-to-survival changes of name, location, and eventually the very country in which she resided resulted in what Schneider

[4] Alicia Gornowski, Interview by Conrad Wood, 23 March 1968, Imperial War Museum, reels 2-3.
[5] Hans Schneider, "Into the Arms of Strangers: Stories of the Kindertransport," Shofar. West Lafayette (University of Nebraska Press, 2002): 116

discusses. Yet for Alicia, this is a continual necessary upheaval of one's own life's story and therefore memory for survival that defined her childhood long before her Kindertransport displacement.

The Rottenberg dress therefore stands as an unlikely constant that can bear memorial witness to an identity the core identity that Alicia was forced to shed, at least outwardly to survive the Holocaust. What this garment speaks to the study of Holocaust memory is that memory imbued in an object can differ from the memory of the very survivor who owns it. The object itself has a memory of its own. This memory can certainly buttress the memory of the survivor and yet remains its own entity and thing. Alicia's story told in her oral history is underpinned by the knowledge that the dress silently survived with each of her displacements; its silent survival denotes its existence through each episode of Alicia's Holocaust trauma.

When Alicia is admitted into a Polish hospital while in open hiding, she speaks about having no clothes and needing her friend to bring clothing to the hospital for her to wear to disguise herself as a hospital visitor and escape. While Alicia does not state that her mother Celina's dress was in the bundle handed to her, we can assume that either in this packing by a friend or in the time after the hospital when she was still located in Warsaw after the liberation, this dress made its way into her secured possession before leaving for the UK at the age of twenty

in a post-war Kindertransport.[6] The dress becomes enveloped in the journey from apartment to suitcase to hospital, tracing the path of a friend who engaged in resistance effort to assist Alicia as well as speaking to her own experience. It stands as witness to survival, resistance, and deportation. For Celina the dress could have been a tangible form of longing for her pre-war life, carefully preserved and mended as a means of hope. The original intention could have always been for her daughters to have the dress, or Alicia may have been given the dress when she entered hiding outside the ghetto from her parents, not because of specialty but because of its commonplace nature: clothing as a necessary gift. The murder of Alicia's parents and the garment's history as a pre-war item weigh the garment down with complex memories of ordinary family life and Holocaust tragedy. Perhaps the garment's inexplicable connection to trauma explains Alicia's omission of the dress from her oral history. It is not that the dress is unimportant but that it is too important for words; it must speak for itself. The dress not standing testament in Alicia's oral history may be evidence of the "inability to fully engage with and directly confront past traumatic episodes" that Stephanie Homer describes in her work on Kindertransport survivors, especially if it was the last, tangible distinct connection Alicia had to both the vibrant pre-Holocaust life of her parents and sister and their deportation and murder.[7]

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[6] While much later than the government organized Kindertransports right before the war, the post-war transports organized by Rabbi Schonfeld are still called "Kindertransports" in the Imperial War Museum biographical notes on Alicia's dress.

[7] Stephanie Homer, "Kindertransport Memoirs: Between Formulating Knowledge of a Painful Past and Containing Traumatic Impact," *German Life and Letters* 72, no. 4 (2019):486.

and Janina, a symbol of the comfort and joy in the life Alicia's family had before the Holocaust that is recalled in her oral history.[9]

However, since the dress is not mentioned in Alicia's recording, the garment bears witness to separate lines of memory that move beyond just Alicia's remembered experience. The Rottenberg dress bears witness to Celina's story first, and beyond her daughter's oral history it is the tangible reminder and memory of her life before the Holocaust, her experience in the Warsaw ghetto, the things she gave to save her daughter, and her deportation and murder by the Nazis. The dress acts as an embodiment of memories for the public as a museum object. While on display, it testifies that Celina Rottenberg's victimhood cannot be ignored, and neither can her life of vibrancy and motherhood before the Holocaust.

Alicia's omission of mentioning the dress suggests is may have not been central to Alicia's own memories of the Holocaust. A suitable comparison of a childhood garment that survived the Holocaust with its owner is Krystyna Chiger's green sweater that never left her side in the months of hiding beneath the Lodz ghetto. Krystyna's garment became central to her memoir of survival, but Alicia's dress is not noted as a symbol of personal survival and hope in the narrative of her recollected memories.[10] Both pieces of clothing have stood on

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[9] Alicia Gornowski, Interview by Conrad Wood, 23 March 1968, Imperial War Museum, reel 1, 0:50. Piano note taken from the museum notes on the dress. https://www.iwm.org.uk/collections/item/object/30092814

[10] Krystyna Chiger, *The Girl in the Green Sweater: A Life in Holocaust's Shadow*, (New York: St. Martin's Griffin, 2008)

The ambiguity of the dress's material history and the fragmentary nature of Alicia's oral history produce two witnesses that operate in tandem. This ambiguity in memories, rather than delegitimizing Alicia's recorded story, heightens the sense that Holocaust survivors move through memories that almost seem to belong to other people. The concept of common memory and deep memory discussed in relation to the writing of Charlotte Delbo can be applied at least in part to explain the memory separation between Alicia's recorded history and the dress as an object bearing witness. The chronology of Alicia's recording has a trajectory, a start and ending that aligns with the idea of common memory. Delbo describes how she lives "next to it, Auschwitz is there, unalterable, precise, but enveloped in the skin of memory" and that deep memory means that the Holocaust "past is not really past."[8] Since objects exist in the present as tangible memory, and the ordinariness and relevance of clothing gives it a timelessness, it is as if Alicia's oral history is a form of common memory while the dress holds a place in deep memory that must exist 'next to' the survivor's testimony, bearing witness on its own, 'enveloped' in the fabric of memory. As a material object this dress begs questions of whose memories are imbued in a dress worn by both a survivor and a victim of the Holocaust. Before the Holocaust this dress was potentially made-up in fabric from the "big store, textile store" Alicia's father Moses owned, the silky rayon may have brushed against the piano bench of Celina Rottenburg, the first wearer of the dress, when she played for her daughters Alicia

[8] Charlotte Delbo, *Auschwitz and After*, (Yale university Press: New Haven and London, 1995) xi

exhibit in two prominent public history spaces memorializing the Holocaust, the Imperial War Museum and the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum. However, the difference in how their owners have elevated or not elevated each piece explains that clothing that bore witness to the Holocaust that live in museums is reliant to an extent on what the owner is able to remember. Krystyna Chiger writes about how her sweater, gifted by her grandmother, was tangible hope for her in hiding of "nice things," and therefore the sweater can more easily serve as an object of hope in a museum context.[11] We do not know exactly what form of memory Alicia attached to her mother's dress, or what about that memorialization kept it preserved in her possession; therefore there are limits to what a museum can speak to on an object of memory. For the public this can operate as a natural explanation to the characteristic of Holocaust memory that its limits are palpable and intrinsic to the trauma of the survivor whose object is being viewed.

The dress celebrates Celina at the piano with her daughters and it screams the destruction of how that celebration was destroyed by the Holocaust. It has memories woven on memories in the very threads of its existence. It is an object that should never have needed to be in a museum, an idea that emanates from Bozena Shallcross's work *The Holocaust Object*. While she specifically discusses the objects displayed at death camps, now museums, her thoughts on the 'ordinary' and 'utility' of such objects speak poignantly to the Rottenberg dress:

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[11] Krystyna Chiger, *The Girl in the Green Sweater: A Life in Holocaust's Shadow,* (New York: St. Martin's Griffin, 2008) 4-5.

"this clash between the former owners' hope to live and their imminent death continues to produce the symbolic core meaning of Holocaust objects."[12] As Alicia's dress, the garment memorializes survival. As Celina's dress for her daughter, its memory mourns a loss of the 'correct' way a beloved dress should be passed down to a daughter. While not physically at a death camp, it is still an object whose right context is ripped away from its intended life by the Holocaust. Shallcross's work, in its focus on Holocaust objects forced to be abandoned at a death camps, demonstrates how the Holocaust object defines categorization. Alicia's dress is both the memory of a victim and a survivor.

It is also a memory of girlhood and childhood interrupted by the Holocaust. Alicia's dress is not unique in this regard, specifically in its connections to clothing, textiles, and girls of the Kindertransport. A sewing box intentionally purchased for Lilli Schischa in 1939 for train travel, the box colorfully emblazoned with a train full of children and filled with unused threads, also bears witness to the displacement of children who survived the Holocaust but who had to face the "loss of one's previous life."[13] These objects together, while unable to be categorized and distilled in their memories beyond loose terms of 'Holocaust object' do overlap in a distinct way that speaks to some of

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[12] Bożena Shallcross, *The Holocaust Object in Polish and Polish-Jewish Culture* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2011) 2.

[13] Travel sewing box with 16 floss spools carried by a Kindertransport refugee, 1939, United States Holocaust Memorial Museum, Lilli Schischa Tauber family collection; Hans Schneider, "Into the Arms of Strangers: Stories of the Kindertransport," Shofar. West Lafayette (University of Nebraska Press, 2002): 116

Shallcross's analysis of the Holocaust object *represented*. They were all owned by women and are decidedly material culture of a textile or sewing nature. While outside what can be fully developed and explored in this project, the overlap of femininity and materiality that Shallcross discovers in Ginczanka's poetry are themes that need to be returned to in understanding Holocaust objects of this kind.[14]

As a publicly displayed source of Holocaust memory, the post-war history of the dress is perhaps more ambiguous and hazier than what we can know of its path during the Holocaust. The dress comes in and out of focus to be paired with fragments of personal memory and museum purpose. Sometime before 2004 the dress was accessioned to the Imperial War Museum, as the collection notes state it was almost used in the exhibition "Children's War" that year,[15] Did the complexity of Alicia's story not 'fit' a traditional story of the Kindertransport and therefore was left from public view? She was not a small child in the pre-war period entering England to greet an adopted family. She was nearly a grown woman, living with a non-Jewish man in open hiding before the war ended and she left England through a post-war Kindertransport led by Rabbi Schonfield when Alicia was twenty.[16] When Holocaust memory is constructed to fit a

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[14] Bożena Shallcross, *The Holocaust Object in Polish and Polish-Jewish Culture* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2011)
[15] Dress: Jewish refugee's, Imperial War Museum, https://www.iwm.org.uk/collections/item/object/30092814

[16] "Rabbi Schonfeld," The National Holocaust Centre and Museum, https://www.holocaust.org.uk/rabbi-schonfeld; Alicia Gornowski, Interview by Conrad Wood, 23 March 1968, Imperial War Museum, reels 3 and 4.

museum purpose and specific exhibit them there is the risk that stories that untidy a desired narrative are omitted. If the dress was used to memorialize childhood during the Holocaust in a museum setting as it almost did, the dress as a primarily girl-owned object could possibly overshadow the original owner Celina's life to favor that of her daughter who survived. Thankfully, digitized museum collections arguably combat this problem of public memory. More stories can reach the public even in their complexity through a digital form. Stories such as Alicia's can be contextualized by objects and oral history digitized in the same collection.

Digitization is notably important for textile objects because of their fragility. Their preservation is vital because of their relevancy to everyday life. Textiles are poignant because of this connection to the owner, they are often the objects closest to a person, quite literally. They can serve not only as embodiments of historical memory but as a facilitator to healing and memorialization. When Kirsten Grosz wanted to memorialize her and fellow *Kinder's* stories of survival, stories were collected alongside quilt square designs.[17] Fabric became the tangibility of survival testimony. The quilt squares were intended to carry stories of trauma and memory of the Holocaust; Alicia's mother's dress was not. It may have been crafted for a special occasion for Celina, her mother, or was meant to be worn on ordinary days. The quilt squares stand

[17] Kirsten Grosz, *"Memory Quilts,"* Kindertransport Association, May 8, 2023, https://kindertransport.org/history/memory-quilts/

together in organized memory; the dress must stand alone detached from ordinary purpose for which it was created. It is important to remember that objects of Holocaust survivors were not created to be the visual manifestations of trauma and stolen life.

Objects, particularly garments, are fragments much like the fragmentary characteristic of many survivor testimonies and oral histories. Clothing's fragile state, its near impossibility for prolonged preservation, marks it as a particularly poignant material for carrying memory. "It was luck" is a repeated phrase of Alicia Gornowski's own testimony of her survival and her explanation for her to survival and by proxy the survival of her mother's dress. It took a woman, a girl, leaving at her parents' instruction with relatives of relatives to escape the ghetto, to hide beneath one of the women who took her in when Germans searched her hiding place one night, to leave sick from a Polish hospital disguised as a visitor, to escape Poland after the war ended, and to do all this with the rayon dress of her mother in tow, in near perfect condition.

"Clouds of fresh down from pillows and quilts,
Glued on by my blood, will turn their arms into wings,
Transfigure the birds of prey into angels."

- From Zuzanna Ginczanka's "Non omnis moriar" translation by Boston U[18]

[18] Zuzanna Ginczanka, "Non Omnis Moriar," AGNI Boston University translated by Nancy Kassell and Anita Safran (2006) https://agnionline.bu.edu/poetry/non-omnis-moriar/


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