Stephen Silverstein, *The Merchant of Havana: The Jew in the Cuban Abolitionist Archive*. Nashville TN: Vanderbilt University Press, 2016. xi + 205 pp. (Cloth US\$ 55.00)

The Merchant of Havana contributes importantly to research on anti-Semitism in nineteenth-century Latin America, a field that has received too little research in the past. (Maria Tucci Carneiro's *O Anti-semitismo nas Américas* [2008], covering the entire period from the 1500s to the present, is one of the few existing studies.) Stephen Silverstein's methodology of extracting "Anti-semitism" out of famous Cuban and Puerto Rican abolition-centered literary works, which he calls the Cuban Abolitionist Archive, is appreciated but limited. His academic background in literature makes understandable his tweaking, in the book's title, of Shakespeare's "Merchant of Venice," which of course, more than reeks of anti-Semitism.

To appreciate hatred of the Jews in nineteenth-century Spanish Cuba one must understand the roots of Spanish anti-Judaism in the Castilian "blood purity" laws of 1449, as well as the evolution of "mandatory conversion" and the "expulsion" decree of 1492. Despite the implementation of such disabling mechanisms, Cuba had a long history of adaptation and cohabitation, beginning with the converts Luis de Torres (Columbus's interpreter on his first voyage) and Inés de Bobadilla (the first female governor of Cuba, 1539–43). Unfortunately, the complexity of the Cuban situation cannot be adequately understood through Silverstein's brief mention of single or one-time events. For example, with respect to Cuba's Early Modern period, he cites anti-Judaism statements of two Capuchin missionaries who traveled to Havana in 1681 and criticized the fact that "Jews publicly possess Christian slaves against ecclesiastic law" (p. 6). Silverstein merely opens the door, refraining from proposing an exploration of why Jews were being singled out for a crime that Catholics and other Christians were committing.

In a similar context, his processing of data from texts such as Eli Faber's *Jews, Slaves, and the Slave Trade* (1998) and Saul S. Friedman's *Jews and the American Slave Trade* (1998) might help readers gain an awareness of the stereotyping of Jewish slave traders. But in terms of the nineteenth century this would need to have been combined with a deep entry into the debate on Jewish merchant capitalism in the Caribbean. Accordingly, it is generally the nature of the "trade" elements that Silverstein misses since he fails to lay out the character of the enmity against Jews in late nineteenth-century Cuba. Instead he constructs a seventeenth-century literary figure, the Merchant of Havana, to demonstrate an anti-Semitism that did not exist in Cuba before the 1880s.

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In Chapter 1 Silverstein attempts to reconstruct anti-Semitism by citing negative statements regarding what it meant to be a Jew according to travel memoirs of the nineteenth century. He argues that anti-Semitism existed then even though there were no Jews in Cuba. But in fact there were. Further, important ports like Havana, Cienfuegos, and Santiago de Cuba were frequented by Jewish traders, many from Kingston, which until about 1870 had the largest Jewish community in the western hemisphere. But the phenomenon of Ashkenazi Jewish peddlers reached continental America and the Caribbean, including Cuba, only in the 1880s. Silverstein borrows from Gertrudis Gómez de Avellaneda's abolitionist novel, *Sab* (1840), but her English merchant Jorge Otaway can hardly represent Jewish merchants in the period of abolition in Cuba. Ultimately when Silverstein discusses "Jewish businessmen," he links them to financial capitalism, which is not a relevant feature of Cuba until the twentieth century.

Silverstein's Chapter 3 is the best of his book, providing deep insight into "Abolitionist discourses" in Cuba between 1830 and 1890. Even here, though, he relies on famous literary works on Cuban and Puerto Rican abolition. For historians, abolition archives are not a library of novels, poetry, and travelogues related to the period. The chapters based on a vast storehouse of knowledge by historians are well elaborated, but unfortunately they do not draw on primary sources to provide evidence of systematic and systemic hatred of Jews in Cuba. Most of the quotations are abstracted from novels, poetry, and travel memoirs, almost always reflecting Catholic anti-Judaism, which has a long and tiresome history. For example, Silverstein's use of the notion "Don Judas" as an anti-Jewish stereotype references not so much a term of anti-Semitic origin but one reflecting the old conflict between Christians and Jews.

While one has to be indebted to Silverstein for addressing the nature of anti-Semitism in late nineteenth-century Cuba, his book leaves one uncertain as to whether he has discussed adequately the history of Havana, the merchant history of Cuba, or the history of its Jewish communities. I cannot agree with many of Silverstein's interpretations based on factors such as economic rise or political influence because those hinge less on Jewishness than hostility against foreign capitalism in general.

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