

**Ofer Dynes:**

**The Establishment of the Hapsburg Secret Police and the Rise of Modern Jewish Prose in Galicia, 1815-1839**

This paper explores how the establishment of a Secret Police Office in the Hapsburg Empire around the years 1815-1830 conditioned the emergence of *Maskilic* prose in Galicia. The Galician *Haskalah* literature, I will argue, tried to participate in the new culture of policing and surveillance, adopting the “point of view” of the omniscient police state.

First, I will exemplify my argument focusing on what is considered by some as the first Hebrew novel: Yosef Perl’s (1773-1839), *The Revealer of Secrets* (Megale Temirin, Vienna 1819). Coupling a literary theory driven analysis of Joseph Perl’s prose with a close reading of his posthumously published secret police reports and denunciation letters, I will conceptualize Perl’s innovative prose as an attempt to fashion a normalizing literary space which aims to “systematically participate in a general economy of policing power”. In the first part of this paper, I will analyze Perl’s *The Revealer of Secrets* in tandem with his denunciation letters to the local authorities. In his prose, I will argue, Perl projected the internal Hasidic-Maskilic divide onto the relations between subjects and state. For example, I will explore how the novel casts the Hasidic leaders as juridical subjects implicated in smuggling activities, illegal border crossing and theft perpetrated against government officials, offering a narrative where literary and legal concerns coincide.

I will then move onto the emergence of the category of the omniscient narrator in the *Maskilic* literature in relation to practices of spying and policing. For instance, Yitzhak Erter’s *A Watchman unto the House of Israel* (*Hatsofe Lebeyt Israel*,

[1822]1997), imagines the *maskil* as a watchman of the Jewish population, an image which is very much in line with the language of Hapsburg police ministers, whose self-declared function was “to survey the entire territory of the state so as to discover every danger to security. This trope of the writer as an invisible eye, I will argue, demonstrates an internalization of the state’s point of view. To see like a state, argues James Scott, “implies a viewer whose place is central and whose vision is synoptic.” Both Perl and Erter’s *maskilic* projects strive to take part in the state’s project of legibility, of rendering in-group information accessible, readable, interpretable to the regime.