Getting Everything Wrong at NYRB
The Beginning of the End of Kevin Madigan

Justus George Lawler

The initials in the title stand for The New York Review of Books, one of the most esteemed publications in the Anglophone world---specializing in evaluating serious literature---as well as one of the most widely circulated, averaging 137,000 copies per issue. The issue of interest here is that of November 21, 2013, and the title above is an allusion to the lead article of that issue, "Getting Jews and the Vatican Wrong," by Kevin J. Madigan, a medievalist who teaches religion at Harvard. The specific book that Madigan believed was responsible for getting those particular subjects wrong was, Were the Popes Against the Jews? Tracking the Myths, Confronting the Ideologues by the present writer. .

The date mentioned above may also be related to the hundredth anniversary of the Mendel Beilis trial for ritual murder, a trial that plays an important role in what follows, as it had already played an important role in David Kertzer's The Popes Against the Jews; as well as---it goes without saying---in my Were the Popes Against the Jews? (WPAJ from here on). That this role, in turn, is not related merely to some obscure early twentieth-century scandal and its academic commentators is indicated by the fact that the trial has been described in recent articles in various Jewish venues, most notably the Foreward (December 20, 2013), "My Grandfather's Blood Libel," by Jay Beilis. The highlight of the article is that Mendel Beilis himself had said that his "outstanding impression" of the trial was of, "The Russian gentiles who sacrificed themselves for me…. They knew that by defending me their careers would be ruined." There is nothing new about the statement itself; it occurs in his memoir, Blood Libel: The Life and Memory of Mendel Beilis, a work that is still available in print. Of more immediate interest and importance is the publication in February, 2014, of A Child of Christian Blood: Murder and Conspiracy in Tsarist Russia: The Beilis Blood Libel by Edmund Levin---soon to enter this discussion.

One of the benefits of this resurgence of interest in Beilis was the inclusion of a photo on the first page of the NYRB article of Beilis himself, as he was surrounded by Tsarist police. Accompanying the photo is this caption: “Pope Pius X said of Beilis, ‘I hope that the trial will end without harm to the poor Jew.’” We are indebted for both the photo and the caption to the editor of NYRB, Robert Silvers. However, what is most interesting about the caption is not that it had originally said, I pray that the trial…etc."; but that the previously mentioned David Kertzer had spurned as totally unacceptable the sincerity of the pope when he made that statement. Kertzer had similarly rejected the original discoverer of the quotation and its background, the researcher, Andrew Canepa (WPAJ, 141-43).

Since that event will be examined closely in what follows, this brief introduction will close with one of the oddly warped themes running through all of Kertzer's (and therefore also of Madigan's) treatment of the trial: while the Pope is viewed as indifferent to its outcome, the Tsar is described as anxious for exoneration. But as I show in considerable detail, such a condemnation of the Holy Father and exaltation of the Little Father flies in the face of emphatic assertions to the contrary by every knowledgeable authority. Among them can be mentioned Léon Poliakov, Maurice Samuel, and Ezekiel
Leikin—scholars who, on this issue and probably a slew of others, utterly eclipse David Kertzer and his would-be defender Kevin Madigan. Poliakov discusses the trial in Suicidal Europe, 1870-1933. Leiken is the author of The Beilis Transcripts: The Anti-Semitic Trial that Shook the World. And Maurice Samuel is the author of Blood Accusation: The Strange History of the Beiliss Case. (NB: The spelling of the surname of the accused varies.) Not only do these scholars show that the Tsar did not want exoneration, they clearly indicate that it was he who personally initiated the entire process. "Facts" that are simply denied by David Kertzer.

Moving briefly away from Mendel Beilis, and what is literally a "front page story," some readers may have already seen in the journal, U.S. Catholic Historian (Volume 30, Number 4), “Harvard Weighs in---Tenuously,” my response to Robert A. Ventresca’s review of WPAJ in the Harvard Theological Review---a publication that is co-edited by Madigan. There is a link to an updated version of this article titled, "Robert Ventresca and the Harvard Charade," that can be readily accessed on the web at: Justus George Lawler - Official Website. The significance of this particular article is that in it Ventresca openly lied about David Kertzer's own unquestionable deception whereby he erased the original reference to "the Russian ambassador" as the party who prevented exonerating documents from being entered at the Beilis trial.

This erasure was perpetrated in order that the onus would fall on the Vatican Secretary of State, Cardinal Merry del Val. The historic facts and a photocopy of the crucial document are set forth in WPAJ (128-132), and the entire event will emerge---in all its warped contextualization by Madigan---later in this critique. The trial remains an important matter, not of course because its first warping was the achievement of David Kertzer (whom Ventresca then emulated), but because it was the focus of public attention in much of Western Europe for months on end, both before and after it had occurred. This is confirmed by the aforementioned A Child of Christian Blood: Murder and Conspiracy in Tsarist Russia: The Beilis Blood Libel by Edmund Levin. (2014)

Admittedly, at this point in time some of that is a side issue---although, one which nevertheless does provide a foretaste of Madigan’s larger undertaking. But what may be of more immediate interest now is that on p. 68 of the U.S. Catholic Historian article, one can read this excerpt regarding future projects from Madigan’s CV, as it had originally appeared in the Harvard Divinity School Bulletin: “'A Nasty Piece of Work': On J. G. Lawler’s Were the Popes Against the Jews? forthcoming in The New York Review of Books." Interestingly, the date of that entry was, “August, 2012,” while the title of the review has now been changed to the somewhat unwieldy, “Getting Jews and the Vatican Wrong.” But that, at least, is somewhat less scornful than Madigan’s original title, which is also ambiguous as to whether the adjective, “nasty,” refers to the book or to its author---though it is not unlikely it refers to both. More immediately significant, however, is the fact that shortly after reading Madigan's note I had written Robert Silvers about this projected breach of editorial protocol (i.e., reviewers do not have a vested interest, favorable or unfavorable, in books they are reviewing). I also provided him with the page numbers in WPAJ where I had seriously criticized Madigan, particularly for his embrace of Hitler’s Pope (1999) by John Cornwell. Madigan subsequently has tried to weasel out of that embrace, maintaining that "it is so far from the truth that it hardly deserves a response." Nevertheless, the fact remains that almost every quotation from Cornwell is praised. Phrases like these abound: "As Cornwell correctly points out…"; "that Cornwell evokes so accurately…"; "Cornwell himself states…"

The obvious sign that little of the above had registered with Robert Silvers came when I received my regular subscription copy of NYRB last October 31. So, while Silvers had scored a point
for including Pius X's expression of concern for Beilis—something that Kertzer denigrated—that point was in effect cancelled by the persistent violation of protocol in retaining the axe-grinding Madigan as reviewer of a book where he himself was severely criticized. Nor was I singling out Madigan in the broader discussion, which actually was focused on Pius XI. There are several other writers (for want of a better term) in this queue: Richard L. Rubenstein, John K. Roth, Daniel Jonah Goldhagen. In any case, Madigan's review of *Hitler's Pope* was undeniably laudatory, and not all the shrill rants in NYRB about Lawler's nastiness can erase that fact.

As for Cornwell himself---to get a painfully embarrassing subject *and* object out of the way---it goes without saying that his public disavowal of his own book occurred only several years after it was published: eight to be exact. This was well after he had cashed in his chips on a work his publisher had described as "an international best seller"---and which Kertzer on the jacket of *his* book referred to as "the recent bestseller." (And which Lawler in *his* book referred to as "trash talk with footnotes,") It was in an interview in *The Catholic Herald* (July 27, 2007) that Cornwell---now, tens of thousands of dollars (and/or pounds) wealthier---went on the record as undergoing a change of mind that can be described as only a little short of transubstantial. As for the chummy guilelessness of his description, it is best described as "sycophantic candor":

I would now argue, in the light of the debates and evidence following *Hitler's Pope*, that Pius XII had so little scope for action that it is impossible to judge the motives for his silence during the war while Rome was under the heel of Mussolini and later occupied by Germany. What the book is really about is the penalties *you* pay for having over-centralisation in the Church. And *you* can't tell what these penalties are, how weakened the Church is by centralisation, until the chips are down and there's a great struggle. A lot of people have misunderstood the book, and possibly it's my fault---the title could so easily be misunderstood. (italics added)

It need not be emphasized that this is a broken record---not the least indication of which is that Rome was no more under the heel of Mussolini during the war than before it, while the German occupation lasted from September 1943 to June 1944. Nevertheless, from Cornwell's self-serving meanderings there hangs a tale. On June 12 of last year, Cornwell reviewed in *The Times Literary Supplement* the recently published books on Pius XII by, respectively, Frank J. Coppa and Robert A. Ventresca (briefly mentioned above). "Hitler's Pawn?" was the putatively clever title of a review that had nothing to say about "centralisation," but everything about the kind of racism Cornwell had originally accused Pius XII of embracing. "At the liberation of Rome, Pacelli warmly greeted Allied troops of many nationalities in St Peter’s Basilica, while requesting that the American authorities ban black troops from the Holy See lest they debase Roman womanhood." (Other versions of the original tale—which had also been enthusiastically embraced by Garry Wills---refer to "colored troops.

As I pointed out in what were three successive antagonistic exchanges in the "Letters" page of TLS, the specific mention of debauchery was Cornwell's new embellishment of the same revolting fiction he had originally launched in *Hitler's Pope*, aka "the book whose title could so easily be misunderstood." Needless to say, Cornwell's overall goal remained the same: to show that the pope, whom Cornwell had already "proved" was an anti-Semite, had also been an anti-black racist. From Kevin Madigan's wholehearted embrace and defense of Cornwell, one can only assume that he too shares these sentiments. (As we shall see when examining Madigan's "full disclosure" footnote at the bottom of column 4, that defense goes back several years.)

This was immediately confirmed by Madigan's arbitrary attack on the legal scholar, Ronald Rychlak, who in a massive and magisterial work---the revised edition (2010) of *Hitler, the War and
The Pope—showed, in more detail than I have space here to quote, that the pope himself "spoke of 'Marocchini,' (i.e., 'Morrocans') not of 'black troops' or 'colored troops'" in the original Vatican request. But Madigan, from his aerie in Cambridge Mass, shows no hesitation about intentionally referring to one of the South's most distinguished legal scholars as "professor of gaming law at the University of Mississippi." Needless to say, this is but another arbitrary display of the kind of pettiness that is one of the motivating forces behind "Getting Jews and the Vatican wrong." What was said denigratingly of Rychlak was then echoed by Madigan's reference to the remarkable research scholar, William Doino, as "a journalist for Inside the Vatican." Readers who may have winced at my initial mention of Madigan as someone who teaches religion at Harvard now know by personal experience the pedagogical function of that obviously denigrating description. (As for Doino, he shall be heard from shortly.)

This was the final communication with the TLS, and also the excision of Cornwell

Sir: - In response to John Cornwell (Letters, June 28, 2013), readers may remember his original claim was that Pius XII requested "that the American authorities ban black troops from the Holy See lest they debauch Roman womanhood." But if the concern was over Americans troops, why had it been expressed to the British representative at the Vatican (who transmitted it to London where in the event nothing was done about it), rather than to the American one? Secondly, why would American troops of any color come to mind as the object of the pope's "hope," since his obvious concern was with the North African Moroccan soldiers who would be condemned publicly in L'Osservatore Romano less than a year later? This is confirmed by Andrea Tornielli, author of a recent life of Pius XII, who wrote in Il Giornale (March 23, 2007) that "the term 'colored troops' does not appear in the Vatican's Archivio Segreto, but the term, 'Marochchini,' is used." In sum, the reference had entirely to do with North African soldiers; soldiers whose shocking conduct has been described in excruciating detail by Rich Atkinson in The Day of Battle: The War in Sicily and Italy, 1943-1944 (2007).

With that as prologue, we can turn now to the first of Madigan's eleven columns in NYRB, the one which begins with a summary of David Kertzer's "widely praised book." First, however, even that little tribute needs to be scrutinized since in the print version (not the published version), there is a footnote here where Madigan vents some more of that nastiness which, as we shall see, is fast becoming his exclusive trademark. ["See, e.g., Marc Saperstein, 'An Indictment: Half Right,' Commonweal, Vol. 128, No. 16 (September 28, 2001). Kertzer responds convincingly in a letter to Commonweal, Vol. 121, No. 20 (November 23, 2001)."] That Madigan is being duplicitous is evident from the fact that there is nothing in this Commonweal exchange that could be described as a convincing response from Kertzer. Rabbi Saperstein was certainly in no way convinced, and remained critical of Kertzer here and elsewhere, censuring him for, among other defects, his "broad and unsubstantiated incendiary claims." This is clearly evident in WPAJ where there are three times as many references to Saperstein (all positive) as there are to Madigan (mainly negative). But at precisely this point, what remains unexplained, if not entirely incomprehensible, is that Madigan's own footnote then arbitrarily goes on for another half-dozen lines in the attack we have already partially witnessed, on …? (whom else) Ronald Rychlak! And this is only footnote number 1.

Returning to Madigan's text, the reader will learn that "the distinction between anti-Semitism and anti-Judaism made by ecclesiastical writers in the late twentieth-century was 'an article of faith' that relieved the Church of any responsibility for what happened during the Holocaust." (italics added) As we shall see, this is not the only instance in which a technical theological term will be subverted to Madigan's journalistic goals. He then proceeded by stating that Kertzer had also "found that almost
all of the elements of modern anti-Semitism—including allegations of racial difference—were not only embraced by the Church but actively promulgated by official and unofficial Church organs.”

But certainly Madigan, presumably a specialist in Roman Catholic history and theology (or at least an ex-altar boy), must have known how preposterous was this contention—unless, perhaps, he too had grown tone-deaf from all those imaginary Church organs. Unfortunately for his own credibility, that the latter in fact is true becomes evident from his final observation, which is a kind of credo that also invokes another specifically ecclesiastical term (here italicized)

Kertzer went on to argue that far from resisting the rise of modern anti-Semitic ideas, "Catholics (including diplomats, priests, journalists, and writers) helped promulgate many anti-Semitic slurs and libels about Jews and their 'Talmud-based religion'; and popes lent them the sacred imprimatur of the Vatican." (italics added) It is more than clear that this is not merely something that Kertzer forcefully argues, it is something that Madigan personally believes. However, earlier he had been more explicit in referring to the "Professor of Social Science at Brown University who argued convincingly that the Vatican's account of anti-Semitism 'is a history that many wish had happened, but it is not what actually happened.'" Since the paragraph concludes with that assertion, the reader is left with the unavoidable conviction that Madigan himself personally embraces the warped notion of a papal imprimatur—and a "sacred" one at that—for "anti-Semitic slurs and libels."

So, the question arises: now that Kevin J. Madigan has glimpsed the truth, will he share it with all those pro-papist doubting Thomases he seems to contend? Or are these "secret sayings"—on the knotty issues that he has been singularly blessed to untie—going to be fully revealed only to that elite body of visionaries who peruse NYRB; and who, as a consequence, are not "getting Jews and the Vatican wrong"? One thing is certain: the Professor of Ecclesiastical History at Harvard seems to fancy himself a kind of Didymus ("the T-WINN Professor") to whom all the answers to all those mysterious questions have been revealed. What that observation is skirting, if not directly implying, is Madigan's obvious assumption of access to a higher form of knowledge than that attainable by lesser folk. (That such knowledge echoes the Nag Hammadi version of the Gospel of Thomas is not entirely accidental.) However, in the very last and shortest section of his entire "review" (4), where the indescribable triad of Dino, Lawler, and Rychlak are described, Madigan will wax "philosophic" or at least "reflective" about his goals and motives.

I proffer this one instance of what may be termed "the higher metaphysics," mainly as an inducement to the reader to stay with this rather lengthy and complicated narrative to the end. I promise it will only get better. First, Madigan quotes an Australian blogger, Paul O'Shea: "For several years now apologists, that is, a group of neo-conservative writers and journalists, some with academic qualifications, many with none, have taken it upon themselves to 'set the record straight' on Pius XII, the Catholic Church and everything related to it." Then Madigan, channeling his inner Kertzer, steps in to read the minds and to philosophize over this insidious neocon group:

It seems likely that many of the apologists are using the popes as proxies in a larger cultural war. Some may be Catholic restorationists [sic] longing for simpler days when the human failings of those who occupy the See of Peter were not publicly recognized, and the vast majority of Catholics obeyed papal teachings unquestionably. But mostly, the apologists for certain nineteenth- and twentieth-century popes strike me as simply people who find the truth too painful to confront. Rather than admit the failings of these popes, they prefer to attack the bearers of bad news, often viciously." (italics added)

At this juncture, it is almost an automatic response to say something like, "Believe me, you can't
make up this kind of stuff!"--and, believe me! I didn't. That Madigan fancies himself the victim of vicious attacks by Catholic "restorationists" (aka, "apologists"), presumably like Doino, Lawler, and Rychlak--that has got be unparalleled in the annals of paranoia.

As for O'Shea, he was handpicked by Madigan to "set the record straight' on Pius XII, the Catholic Church and everything related to it." That is a large order, and one can easily imagine the newly commissioned blogger thinking to himself, "Here's a first-rate opportunity to run things with impunity, and indulge in the felicity of unbounded eccentricity; as I take on those apologists--using both my arms and fists." (With apologies to G and S.---but the "vicious restorationists" needed a shot of reality.)

Presumably Madigan made that choice because O'Shea was so dedicated a neo-liberal that he would instinctively put those "neo-conservative writers" to shame. O'Shea was also chosen by Madigan to review Soldier of Christ: The Life of Pope Pius XII by Robert Ventresca in the Harvard Theological Review. Unfortunately, not much of anything distinctive or distinguished showed up in what was titled, "Eugenio Pacelli --- Man and Pope." However, not unlike Madigan himself, O'Shea confessed: "This reviewer [the blogger] was among those who initially considered Cornwell's work a significant interpretation of the life and work of Pius XII. I have long since reconsidered my position on this."---as he too weasels his way out of his past. That Ventresca had been chosen by Madigan to review Lawler’s book in that same Harvard venue was another blessing in disguise, since serious scholars---by definition transcending popular opinion---know better than to take a hired gun as somebody of serious consequence.

My own encounter with O'Shea and his blog was brief but enlightening, although it began with another of his exercises in self-inflated credentializing---and then culminated in a final exercise in cliché history for which Madigan's favorite modifier, "nasty," is the best description.

I am familiar with Kertzer’s work and have found it sound, well researched with evidence drawn from archival sources and reliable secondary sources.... Several things in Lawler’s book cause concern, not least of which are repeated unfounded inaccuracies. A simple example is the assertion that appears to form the principle thesis, namely that Kertzer asserts there was some secret Antisemitic conspiracy promoted and led by popes and their secretaries of state. This theme chimes like a chorus throughout the book. It reaches a high-point in chapter four, where Lawler says that Kertzer "invented a papal conspiracy." This is arrant nonsense. Not only does Kertzer not speak of plots and conspiracies, his writing points to an accepted culture of contempt, a political-cultural milieu where Jews were perceived as negative influences on Christian society." (all emphases added)

Presumably that chiming chorus was accompanied by those "official and unofficial Church organs" we heard about earlier. In any case, it's all off-key since the one Kertzerian refrain, belted out over and over, relates precisely to those never spoken about plots and conspiracies.

On page 126 Kertzer writes of Pius IX: “The Pope embraced a conspiratorial theory of the world … an outlook that would shape Catholic attitudes for decades to come.

On page 127, Kertzer writes: “Pius IX returned to the theme that it was the ‘synagogue of Satan’ that lay behind the worldwide conspiracy.”

On page 138, Kertzer writes: “But the theme of a vast Jewish conspiracy against Christian society was far from new.”

On page 223, Kertzer writes: “Like his predecessor, Pius X saw conspiracies against the
Church everywhere….”

On page 267, Kertzer writes: “As the new ‘evidence’ of the Jewish world conspiracy began to circulate in Western Europe, the Vatican daily turned to the question.”

So much for O'Shea's blog on Lawler’s “arrant nonsense” about Kertzer’s speaking “of plots and conspiracies.” But again the thoughts emerge: "You can't make this stuff up!" "Where do people with these kinds of fantasies come from?" Instinctively, one notes that our blogger is also a boaster, but it would be too facile to suggest that being from "down under" he almost impulsively traffics in low blows. Whatever it is or whatever he does, it's more than a little bit alarming.

The assumption running through much of this also seems to have been that the central issue raised in WPAJ merely related to conventional disagreements between left and right, liberals and conservatives, etc. And while, of course, one can never ignore the influence of ideology, the core contention of that book had very little to do with conventional motives, and very much, with personal commitment to the absolute and transcendent obligation of truth-telling. For that reason the analysis of Kertzer's texts that were rigged, doctored, deleted, etc. are at the very core of the argument.

Madigan next drifted off into a lengthy critique (over a full column) attacking Owen Chadwick—who is quoted about a dozen times in WPAJ; whose original review of The Popes Against the Jews is cited by Michael Burleigh on the book’s jacket; and who wrote Lawler (September 16, 2009), after expressing regrets for the brevity of his reply due to minor health matters: “Glad you are tackling the problem”; said problem being The Popes Against the Jews by the ubiquitous, and now obnoxious, David Kertzer. There is also—a propos de rien—a very touching TV interview with the aged Chadwick that can be readily accessed on the web by simply keying in his name. Watch it and be truly edified

In his review, Madigan also provides two lengthy paragraphs of niggling over Chadwick’s assertions to the effect that “the Holocaust was not born in the last years of dilapidated papal Rome. Nor was it born in the anti-Semitism of some members of the clergy." Where it was born are matters that I took a detailed look at in chapter four, "Proclamation V. Reprisal,” of Popes and Politics—a book that, as we shall soon see, Madigan doesn't much care for. As to the reason why? There are two basic reasons: one, he isn't mentioned favorably in it; and two, his then hero Cornwell is roasted there. A propos of none of that, as I was writing those lines I happened to notice that there was, literally a host of sites on the web with headlines like "Grade Inflation at Harvard," "Massive Harvard Grade Inflation Revealed," etc. What then occurred to me is that perhaps the problem is not with what is happening among the students, but with what is happening among the faculty. Certainly, to dismiss the premier Anglophone historian of modern Christianity as "unconvincing" because, in effect, he thinks other than what the inimitably correct Kertzer thinks—certainly, that is self-inflation puffed up to an explosive degree. As for the other worrisome Harvard headlines, they literally concern monkey business in laboratories that is too appalling to even think about, much less discuss here.

In the event, Madigan, after having disposed of Chadwick, gets to Lawler. But Madigan's conscience (or rather, his sense of PR) is so focused on not appearing in any way biased that he ends up inventing an exaggerated lingo of “above-the-fray” commendations. In fact, what he sounds like is a crafty literary agent hyping a favorite author. The debasement in praising someone whom all the signs, and indeed the rest of this article, indicate Madigan personally abhors—all that exposes a character willing to sacrifice fundamental views to a transient goal.
Thus, in the most simon-pure of tones (along with a Victorian vocabulary), the reader is informed that Lawler “has achieved considerable and well-deserved distinction as a man of letters. His work as an editor has brought to publication many fine and influential books, often with Continuum, an independent publishing house with which his name will be long and honorably linked." Unfortunately, that link is about to break: "Lawler is also founder and editor of a journal with the same name." Not that it matters much to anyone---except, perhaps, our burgeoning Victorian---but first came the journal and then came the publishing house. Lastly, there is this mingled and mangled accolade: "A literary critic by training, Lawler’s readings of English poetry are demanding, even abstruse and often perceptive.” I couldn’t help thinking: "Wow! this is almost as good as winning the Papa John's Bowl." (As to that final hybrid---perceptively abstruse---it's obvious that the strain of all the synthetic pampering and cossetting of Lawler has left even Harvard's pride and joy confused about where he really stands)

 Needless to say, the goal of all this was twofold---at the least. As most hyper-talented editors know---editors like Madigan, like Lawler, like Silvers of NYRB---it is important that a reviewer not appear predisposed to condemnation of a given author's book. But there is also something self-betraying about a critic who traffics in plaudits, knowing he can easily erase them by a subsequent flaming critique---which Madigan, in fact, will launch. However in this instance, there was also a possibly "political" motive behind the rain of plaudits above: some of his Harvard colleagues---not to mention religious scholars across North America---had also published books with that distinguished "man of letters." In any event, and regardless of intent, it must be said that at least Madigan's description here is an improvement on “A Nasty Piece of Work”---a motif to which we shall of necessity return.

 However, there does remain one historic fact which, in this bustling quest for laudatory Lawleriana, is either unknown or mysteriously unmentioned. This is the phenomenon of a celebrated “man of letters" and "literary critic" having his major work, Celestial Pantomime: Poetic Structures of Transcendence (Yale, 1979) being vehemently panned in NYRB. Fortunately, the title wasn't, "Getting Lawler and His Book Wrong." But, as Madigan would say: "Wait, there's more!" It was panned, notwithstanding the fact that it had received what David Kertzer (describing his own book) would term “glowing reviews.” Such reviews were by the much to be mourned John Hollander, who wrote the foreword; and by Harold Bloom, Kenneth Burke, Sallie McFague, Thomas McFarland, J. Hillis Miller, Kenneth Rexroth, and Wylie Sypher. Of these, only Rexroth was among the authors of “those fine and influential books” that are so “honorably linked” to Lawler’s name. Rexroth, who will put in a cameo appearance here presently, published half a dozen titles with Lawler, and was influential in bringing The Selected Poems of Czeslaw Milosz (before he became Nobel laureate) to Lawler's list. Milosz, in turn, paid homage to Rexroth in “Bringing A Great Poet Back to Life,” published in none other than the slowly-getting-to-be-esteemed NYRB (February 15, 1996). As for my personal emphasis here on Celestial Pantomime, it stems from the conviction that precisely what is absent from most theological-religious discourse (and disagreement) is an appreciation of belles-lettres, and a foundation in literary criticism

 The above observations also bring Madigan back into the twenty-first century---if not intellectually, then at least chronologically. “Unfortunately, in his 2004 book Popes and Politics Lawler bent [sic] the application of his New Critical ‘close reading’ method to the study not of popes but of historians of popes.” Unfortunately, like the "abstruse" abuse above (as we alliterationists say), this observation is the product of very un-close reading---as an examination of the first pages of Celestial Pantomime makes quite clear. There the New Criticism and the New Critics are both subject to just plain ol' American criticism.
Madigan then went on his own bender, as he insisted that Lawler had charged those very same "historians of popes with 'verbal legerdemain,' ‘doctored texts,’ ‘bogus scholarship,’ ‘manipulation of data,’ and "above all ‘fabrication.’” Although there are no names attached to these targets of Lawler’s charge, the following would appear to be among those Madigan has in mind, including (surprise!) international celebrities like John Cornwell and Rolf Hochhuth. The others, mentioned in the index, include Berenbaum, Michael; Carroll, James; Goldhagen, Daniel Jonah; Kertzer, David; Maurras, Charles; McInerny, Ralph; Neuhaus, Richard; Novak, Michael; Pawlikowski, John; Phayer, Michael; Wills, Garry; and Zuccotti, Susan.

Of these, only Carroll, could accurately be described as among the “historians of popes”; but, certainly, Hochhuth and his Anglophone emulator, Cornwell, could be described as engaged in “above all ‘fabrication.’” As for Hochhuth’s achievement itself, the previously mentioned poet-critic, Kenneth Rexroth, referred to the influence of “The Deputy” as the result of a world-wide "hallucination publicitaire." While the subtitle of Hochhuth’s drama was “A Christian Tragedy,” an alert commentator could here have more effectively deployed that ubiquitous mantra, "A Nasty Piece of Work."

Although I have no hesitation about describing several of the people criticized in *Popes and Politics* as having manipulated data or doctored texts, in fact the book was much less splenetic and censorious than our authority on nastiness has described it. The tone of it was often conversational and even light-hearted, as witness the verses below, which I had referred to in the book as “anonymous, pseudo-Victorian doggerel.” (Needless to say, Madigan, if only he were a little more literate, would probably have preferred the more modish Keatsian term, "bitcherel.")

Wills the journalistic sleuth  
Discover popes don't tell the truth.  
In *Constantine* Carroll cries  
Theology's a pack of lies.  

Such statements how can we combine?  
This perhaps explains the mystery;  
Wills thinks Carroll a divine,  
And Carroll looks to Wills for history

The non-medieval oriented reader is invited to compare the mood and tone of those light hearted lines from *Popes and Politics* with the ham-handed phraseology of denigration running through Madigan’s review---although there's a fifth column on the horizon which is going to make things even worse. Not least of the ironies above is the phenomenon that Wills is now advocating the abolition of the priesthood altogether in *Why Priests?* much to the chagrin of "The Colbert Report" (February 11, 2013); while a sheepish Carroll is back in the fold, sensibly---and without too much self-exaltation---assaying the past and future of Pope Francis ("Who Am I to Judge?" *The New Yorker*, December 30, 2013).

Notwithstanding the inevitability of change, Madigan soldiers on: “The same critical tone, charges of fabrication, and lack of familiarity with the recent scholarship can now be found in his (Lawler’s) latest book, *Were the Popes Against the Jews?*” This segues into the next paragraph---here reproduced literally *ad litteram*:

“As Lawler himself concedes, he had 'mentioned' [Kertzer’s *The Popes Against the Jews*] favorably in *Popes and Politics.* But now he has not only comprehensively changed his view. He has composed a book nearly four hundred pages in length devoted largely to withdrawing that praise and
dispensing criticisms of the book he once lauded." (emphasis added)

I almost feel guilty. Yes, it must be acknowledged that this account of fluctuating approbation—or what experts in this field call comprehensive compositional change—is all too true. (Though it is a bastion of stability when compared to the reversals executed by Carroll and Wills.) But, unfortunately—or as medievalists like Madigan would say, "alas and alack!"—I have no idea, first, when in the decade between those two books I conceded anything; or, second, what the scare quotes at "mentioned" are supposed to represent. There are only five (I repeat, "5") sentences in the whole of Popes and Politics where Kertzer's name even appears, and they are exclusively in the context of Wills' and Carroll's uncontrolled exaggeration and exultation regarding The Popes Against the Jews—a mood and a mode that I treated emolliently in those two stanzas above. So, my "change of view" or "volte-face" is Madigan's own fabricated fable. It is also one which relies on a type of analysis exercised in the Medieval period and dependent entirely on hyperbolic plots and exaggerated imagery. Only that can explain how a bland term like "mentioned favorably" can be transmogrified into the tautological praise of the book he once lauded. Moreover, nowhere, not anywhere, n'existe pas, nada, nirgends, niente (anybody for Urdu?), is Kertzer and/or his book found to be praiseworthy or laudable.

However, Lawler can readily point to a truly significant "change of view," a volte-face in the most literal sense, and one that relates directly to something and to someone that Madigan and Lawler are both familiar with. The "someone" is the Robert Ventresca mentioned earlier who was invited by Madigan to review Lawler's "nearly four hundred pages" in the Harvard Theological Review, a journal of which Madigan is Co-editor. Presumably the reason for that invitation was that Madigan knew Ventresca was an enthusiastic disciple of Kertzer. This, Ventresca proved to be. Those who are interested in seeing that proof need merely key in "Justus George Lawler" on whatever browser they have. There they will see this link; "Robert Ventresca and the Harvard Charade." Among the data that will show up is a text which proves that, whereas Lawler had earlier only mentioned Kertzer favorably, the now venerated Ventresca had utterly damned Kertzer—along with Madigan's favorite "historian of popes," the over-mentioned, John Cornwell, who leads this parade. A really damning "volte-face" looks like this:

Books such as John Cornwell's Hitler's Pope, Daniel Goldhagen's A Moral Reckoning, and David Kertzer's The Popes Against the Jews have attracted the attention of historians, journalists, and the public at large, but they are just the tip of the iceberg. The works of Cornwell, Goldhagen, Kertzer and others tell essentially the same tale: Christianity, and more specifically, institutional Catholicism, has often preached and practiced anti-Semitism and the Holocaust. What is more, the argument goes, this record of theological, liturgical, and cultural anti-Judaism helped prepare the groundwork of Nazism. Sadly, arguments against such reductionism and bad scholarship cannot be heard above the din of the mythic version of this particular debate.

These words of Robert Ventresca, written less than a decade ago, are certainly what can be called a "change of view"—if not, in fact, a somersault—from his present posture. Moreover, that change relates to none other than the Madigan-canonized, David Kertzer. Even more interesting is that this discovery was first made by William Doino, who will again enter the NYRB discussion at No. 4, the last paragraph of "Getting Jews and the Vatican Wrong." There it will become more than obvious that skilled researchers like him—the papal scholar and Contributing Editor to Inside the Vatican—are so plainly the object of Madigan's envy that they get dismissed with some arbitrary pejorative. Unfortunately, few things more betray Madigan's own pusillanimity and fragile confidence
than the deployment of these denigrating labels.

Similarly with the following opinion: “As Lawler himself concedes, he had ‘mentioned’ [Kertzer’s *The Popes Against the Jews*] favorably in *Popes and Politics*. But now he has not only comprehensively changed his view. He has composed a book nearly four hundred pages in length devoted largely to withdrawing that praise and dispensing criticisms of the book he once lauded.” This in turn segued into Madigan's focus deriding "hints" and "tics," mentioned in the Introduction as a mode of "discovering conjectural calamities," for which Madigan does, at least, provide an accurate quotation. "In themselves these may be insignificant and readily corrected errors, but they are often a clue to something beneath the surface of the author's presentation that demands greater attention." What Madigan doesn’t recognize is that it was the utilization of devisals such as those that led to the celebratory literary accolades he had launched earlier on Lawler's “work as an editor.” The reader will recall that Lawler "brought to publication many fine and influential books ... with which his name will be long and honorably linked." It was Lawler who "achieved considerable and well-deserved distinction as a man of letters.” But Lawler didn’t just create out of thin air these notions he called “tics” and “hints”; they are intrinsic to the process known as "close critical reading," a process that in the practical order of things exposes cheating by students and deceptions by academics—the latter to go unnamed here.

Nevertheless, according to our modern medievalist: “For Lawler, such minor and inevitable errors in orthography or punctuation are evidence of nothing less than Kertzer’s anti-papal ideological agenda.” Actually, as Madigan knows quite well, it is not that simplistic, since he himself relishes nothing less than exposing minor orthographic blunders—and here I digress briefly to proffer proof for that assertion. Madigan tells all of us that, "on one page, Lawler makes three Italian errors of his own: he has Revista for Rivista; dei modernista rather than dei modernisti; and Bonaiutti for Bonaiuti"

I have no idea what "Italian errors"—whether of his own or of others—really are. But if Madigan would have read further on that page (35), he would have seen that "Revista" is taken from a *Catholic Encyclopedia* article, and that the rest are typos—as when Madigan makes "errors of his own" in referring to "Cardinal Merry de Val." But what adds a note of ironic comedy to this entire exposé is that Madigan cites as one of Lawler's "own errors," the name "Bonaiutti"—which according to our Harvard orthographer should be "Bonaiuti." (It obviously takes two to T.) As a matter of simple fact Madigan as well as Lawler got it wrong. The work I was citing was an important study on the Modernist movement whose translation is owed to C.J.T. Talar in *U.S. Catholic Historian* (Winter, 2007): "Ernesto Buonaiuti and Il programma dei modernisti," by Giacomo Losito Moreover, Talar was also responsible for editing that entire issue of USCH under the title: "Pascendi dominici gregis. Centennial Essays on Responses to the Encyclical on Modernism." Luckily, there are no typos to exploit. But Madigan's nitpicking does provide a welcome opportunity to make the point that Professor Talar is among the three symposiasts who more than favorably assessed WPAJ in that same journal: *U.S. Catholic Historian* (Fall, 2012).

That publishing vehicle may not have the chic éclat that the editors of the *Harvard Theological Review* imagine they have, but under the two-decades leadership of the American-church historian, Christopher Kaufman, it has never deviated into providing a venue for vilification or defamation of character—such as HTR is now engaged in. As for the opinions of the trio contributing to the symposium, they fly in the face of Madigan's entire critique. Moreover, unlike Madigan's collegial colleagues (meaning *buddies*) these were scholars whom I knew of only by reputation, though I had corresponded with Talar years ago on Umberto Benigni, the fanatic anti-Semite, who had written that article on the
Italian press for the aforementioned Catholic Encyclopedia. The entire USCH symposium ran to fifty pages, including a response by the author, and his photo, "at the grave of Wallace Stevens, 1992"---the latter, a grace note, that embellished everything involved. For the edification of Madigan, I proffer these one-sentence excerpts from the symposium:

"Lawler demonstrates conclusively that at key points in Kertzer's argument he has done violence to his sources … which renders suspect his appeal to history. Scholars cannot afford to ignore this book...." WILLIAM L. PORTIER, University of Dayton

"… a meticulous examination of the questionable use of sources … calls into question Kertzer's conclusions and objectivity. Even Lawler's obiter dicta make rewarding reading!" THOMAS J. SHELLEY, Fordham University

"Through the retrieval of sources and the rereading of texts in their setting, Lawler goes beyond the mere correction of shocking errors to radically overturn The Popes Against the Jews. He makes a compelling case." C. J. T. TALAR, University of St. Thomas Houston

As for Madigan, he terminated his rambling reprimand of Lawler with this certainly creative and novel admonition: "A little learning, as all readers of Alexander Pope should know, is a dangerous thing" (emphasis added). Yes, that certainly sounds like sound advice from a sound advisor, especially when coming from someone who has been noisily haunting Parnassus in search of "hints" and "tics," and who has at last learned the importance of being Ernesto Buonaiuti. "All readers of Alexander Pope should [also] know" the following from that same poem:

Let such teach others who themselves excel,

And censure freely who have written well.

Nevertheless, for backward-thinking traditionalists like myself, I am less inclined to invoke Alexander Pope and more inclined to cite Pope Alexander. This was the pontiff who---after writing Inter Caetera which divided up almost a whole continent---appreciatively commended his own achievement, and in the process unknowingly made the perfect riposte to our pretentious medievalist by describing the decree as follows: "That's a lot of Bull." (Of course, it sounds better in Latin.) Moreover, it was precisely in anticipation of the kind of thinking which derides those hints and tics that I wrote the following. "Not for nothing did the ancient creators of the trivium link mistakes in grammar to mistakes in logic and rhetoric." Those "hints" and "tics" betray, refer to, predict, or signify, precisely the kind of sloppy thinking which, in turn, exposes historical obfuscations and deceptions of the sort that Kertzer and his protégé, Madigan, repeatedly put on display.

Thus when I pointed out Kertzer's tic in referring to "the defeat of the Axis powers" in World War I," this was predictive of (or a prelude to) the following even more blatant blunder: "It was into this postwar background that the Vatican librarian stepped in June, 1918." Even grade school youngsters---and certainly more so when David Kertzer was growing up---memorized exactly when the "postwar" period began: "on the eleventh hour of the eleventh day of the eleventh month." For the Madigans of this world, perhaps enmeshed in medieval orologia and rusty sundials, I graciously translate: "eleven o'clock in the morning of November 11, 1918." Kertzer, the omnifarious medievalist, is off by only half a year. That's not too bad for an amateur chronicler of events occurring well before he was born---though it does suggest that maybe, as a gesture of solidarity, Madigan should clean his colleague's clock. As for the impossibility of anyone stepping into the background of anything, maybe Kertzer needs to fall back on what he elsewhere refers to as "a sobering account." A couple of shots of
whatever is in that account will at least clear his head.

As for those rusty sundials and *orologia,* "all readers of Alexander Pope [like Madigan] should know" the following: "'Tis with our judgments as our watches, none / Go just alike, yet each believes his own." Lastly, as readers reach the foot of column four they will see the following note: "In the interest of full disclosure I should make it clear that on pages 186-192, 202, and 230 of *Were the Popes Against the Jews?* Lawler criticizes several articles I wrote on the *history of the papacy* during the Nazi era, disapproving of my comments on Kertzer and several other writers as well. I invite readers to compare this review to Lawler's comments on those pages."

I must admit that never was an invitation more delightfully received than by this reader of *those pages.* As to what's on those pages, all readers should know by now that "history of the papacy" is euphemistic jargon for the writings of people like John Cornwell, Daniel Jonah Goldhagen, and assorted (and sordid) lesser folk like Richard L. Rubenstein and John K. Roth; not to mention Madigan's very own, David Kertzer. Needless to say, it is a fascinating half-dozen pages. (Or, as *The Oxford Dictionary and Thesaurus* says when providing an illustration of the colloquial use of the noun "read": "a really good read.") But what *is* important here is that once again the "methodology" regarding "hinting" and "tinging"---which has been so gleefully derided by Madigan---will be seen as exposing violations on his part that are almost as damning as those of his model, David Kertzer. This will be evident most disastrously, in Madigan's treatment of Hubert Wolf's *Pope and Devil: The Vatican's Archives and the Third Reich.* In that instance, there is a Cornwellish effort to indict Pius XII---but this time, not as a Jew-hating or a Black-hating pope, but as a man indifferent to human slaughter of any kind. Any one reading the last five pages of chapter seven in *Were the Popes Against the Jews?* cannot but be shocked at Madigan's scandalous rigging of a crucial text. Lastly, as a bonus for just about everybody, Madigan concludes his discourse on tics and hints with the observation that, "readers will discover that Lawler delivers not a critique, but an unfair attack." That, I suppose, is a judgment that will be made in the light of what readers will find in the following paragraphs.

The immediate process of discovering the unfair attack is at No. 3. "As he read further into the book, Lawler realized that Kertzer 'seemed almost entirely dependent on the scholarship of Giovanni Miccoli.'" This was followed by a brief description of Miccoli's importance as a scholar---something no one had questioned---and concluded with the assertion that, "In effect, Lawler is accusing Kertzer at best of *recycled work,* at worst of *plagiarism.*" (italics added) The absurdity of this either-or accusation in Madigan's fifth column is evident from the fact that he is talking about a statement made at the beginning of the *first* chapter of WPAJ. In fact, it is made on page 8, only after that horrifying notion of "tics" and "hints" had been introduced, and following a paragraph that innocently began as follows: "Moreover, Kertzer seemed as knowledgeable about the 'secular history' of modern Europe as about the history of the popes and papacy." Lawler's next paragraph is the source of the nightmare---*copy cat or plagiarist*---that Madigan has dreamt up.

In fact, as one read further, Kertzer’s mastery of secular history gradually appeared more impressive than his achievements in the religious arena, particularly those relating to his research in the Vatican archives, which was the publicized *raison d'être* of his entire enterprise. Concerning the latter, it gradually became more and more difficult to avoid the impression that he seemed almost entirely dependent on the scholarship of Giovanni Miccoli, who in the body of the book is mentioned only once in a single sentence, and that was in a context that Kertzer had spurned—"Pius XII and the Holocaust"—but who appeared to be the source of almost every archival discovery or novel position and perspective in *The Popes Against the Jews.* Kertzer acknowledges standing "on the shoulders" of the Italian historian, but
unlike others invoking that imagery, Isaac Newton famously, the acknowledgment was of dependence on the entire previous tradition of scholarship, not on the research of one person.

In a footnote to the above lengthy quotation, I wrote the following:

Micolli is mentioned by name in a sentence in the Introduction and again in the Acknowledgments, where the “standing on the shoulders” reference is introduced. Although he appears as the source of insights and information in over a dozen endnotes, there is only one page reference after his name in the book’s Index... The entire point of this—which has simply evaded Madigan altogether—is that for all of his broad-gauge (not to say "total") dependence on Miccoli, there is almost no public acknowledgment by Kertzer of that fact.

What seems to have been lost on Madigan, though obviously not on Kertzer himself, is that the Brown University Provost is very wary of sharing his "discoveries" with their real discoverer.

Fortunately, now that Madigan's "either-or" incubus has been exorcised, he manages to broach more conventional violations---as he announces: "Even more serious than the charge of overreliance (sic) on another scholar [Miccoli] is the allegation that Kertzer has 'doctored' or 'fabricated' texts." By some unexplained route, all this leads to issues having to do with the translation of documents, and to this assertion: "Later he [Lawler] refers to Kertzer's 'alleged command' of Italian. These are dangerous claims as one's own Italian has to be good enough...."

Madigan continues his discussion of alleged translation errors by citing next the following report to Rome from the future Pius XI when he was the Vatican's representative in Poland after the war---all, as mentioned above. "The more I have come to admire the goodness and faith of their people...the more I fear that they may fall into the clutches of the evil influences (cattive influenze) that are laying a trap for them and threatening them." Madigan continues as follows:

"Kertzer translates cattive influenze accurately, as 'evil influences.' Lawler retaliates [sic] that this translation is wrong because one would never translate cattivo tempo as 'evil weather.' This is nonsense. Giuseppe Zanichelli’s authoritative dictionary translates cattivo as 'evil,' 'bad,' 'mean,' or 'nasty,' among other definitions. Kertzer has chosen the correct adjective."

As usual, Madigan doesn't even know what is at issue here, but he would certainly have been more accurate if he had used his favorite adjective, "nasty." First of all, the underlined passages a few paragraphs down address the problem about "cattivo." Next, it is necessary to read Kertzer's version of the original text, along with his gloss. First the text, then the gloss.

For my part, and as a duty that I believe my mission imposes on me, I never stop repeating to these Most Excellent Bishops and Most Reverend priests that the more I have come to admire the goodness and the faith of their people, having gotten to see and know it close up, the more I fear that they may fall into the clutches of the evil influences that are laying a trap for them and threatening them. Unfortunately, if they are not defended by the work of good influences, they will certainly succumb.

"After this vague, abstract assessment, Ratti then finally comes to the point. Just who are these enemies of Christianity, of the Church, of the Polish people? One of the most evil and strongest influences that is felt here, perhaps the strongest and the most evil, is that of the Jews."

This is the commentary on the above that appeared in WPAJ. It certainly puts the lie to Madigan's "assessment."

Although the statement refers to “influences,” anyone who has followed the narrative this far will not be surprised that there is no explanation for how Kertzer transforms that word in the first quoted paragraph into “enemies” in the next paragraph—much less for how those “influences” have that inimical
relationship with “Christianity,” “the Church,” and “the Polish people.” Nor is it clear how something which is “perhaps the strongest and most evil” then becomes definitively “the most evil.” Nevertheless, what Kertzer intends to convey is clear enough, even without this subsequent post-publication revisionism: “Achille Ratti, three years before becoming Pope Pius XI, reported to the Vatican secretary of state that ‘the most evil’ influence in Poland was the Jews.” This doctored version was presented by Kertzer himself in a letter published in Commonweal (November 21, 2001), responding to a critical review of his book by the previously mentioned, Rabbi Marc Saperstein.

Kertzer’s view, by his own assertion, has now become canonical. But like most revisionist history, the original has been transformed if not transmogrified in the process of reiteration. Excised are the modifiers, “one of the most evil,” and, “perhaps ... the most evil.” Thus does bogus history become canonical.

The relevant texts are not from a document in Kertzer’s usual archival source for quotations by Ratti, but from the third volume in a collection titled Achille Ratti (1918-1921). Acta Nunciaturae Polonae (Rome, 1995-99), an unquestionably reliable source which contains well over two hundred Ratti documents of which over fifty are “reports” to Cardinal Gasparri. Given this large number of documents, the question must arise as to how representative those few sentence above are, since they occur in only one of those reports—in this instance a document of approximately six thousand words. Since that entire volume is a rather large haystack in which to locate this needle, it seems unlikely that anything in those hundreds of other pages are stained by strident anti-Semitism. Relying on what may be called the Zuccotti Factor, it is safe to assume that if anything else even slightly incriminatory had been present, it would certainly have been tracked by Kertzer. (Zuccotti was originally referring to the Vatican's Acts et Documents du Saint Siège relatifs à la seconde guerre mondiale--of which she said: "Although much that is unfavorable may have been omitted, it is reasonable to assume that all that is favorable was included.)

Unfortunately, to maintain his ideological perspective and to make his case, Kertzer has to manipulate the language and the structure of the original text—as some wearisome but necessary exegesis will show. As to structure, he omits a lengthy passage (ten lines) that occurs between the first reference to evil influences and the second. Since the omitted passage pertains to “influences” on Catholics in Italy, it can possibly be regarded as only in a general way relevant to the situation of Catholics in Poland. However, its omission does make the two references to “evil” appear as not just rhetorically parallel but as identical. It is another juggled translation that will betray the fact that the apparent parallel and identity are non-existent. The first reference was in the context of Ratti’s fear that the people “may fall into the clutches of the evil influences [cattive influenze] that are laying a trap for them.” This is a translation which is adequate, at best, for if one took Leonardo’s well-known remark about the appearance of people’s countenances in cattivo tempo, and said that it referred to how people looked in “evil weather,” one’s suspicions about Kertzer’s devotion to accuracy might be rekindled.

Moreover, the second reference about “one of the most evil and strongest influences” is in the original, “una della più nefaste e della più forti influenze,” which no matter how it is translated, obviously cannot be worded with the identical English term “evil.” Unless one were seeking to hoodwink the readers——inconceivable as that notion may be---the only responsible way to determine the most accurate translation would be to rely on the Latin root which relates to “fate” or “destiny,” and thus requires deployment of a word that indicates such notions as “unlucky,” “ill-fated,” “inauspicious,” etc. That being so, one has to weigh whether the following would sound quite as threatening as
Kertzer’s text. “One of the more unfortunate and more powerful influences that is felt here, perhaps the most unfortunate and most powerful, is that of the Jews.”

Madigan continues on a new track. "As for Lawler's charges of 'doctoring,' 'fabricating,' or 'rigging' of arguments and texts, I will cite here only the two cases he takes to be Kertzer's most serious misrepresentations." The first is an actual legal case, the previously mentioned Beilis trial, about which Madigan observes: "Lawler speaks of Kertzer's 'effort to convict a pope and his secretary of state of having refused to save the life of an innocent Jew at the ritual murder trial in Kiev.' That is as close to an accurate statement about the trial as Madigan will get. But what readers of "Getting Jews and the Vatican wrong" will not hear about at all is the most damning excision in Kertzer's book; an intentional deletion that is visible, public, and blatant---to be examined shortly. However, what is in some ways more strange, at least in terms of Kertzer's sweeping ignorance, is his persistence in asserting the Tsar's concern for the innocence of Beilis.

As for "a pope and the secretary of state," in the fall of 1913 they had been petitioned by a group of concerned Jews in England and Germany to validate the authenticity of previous papal documents condemning ritual murder. The petition itself was sent to Rome by the Duke of Norfolk---all as described by Kertzer's major source, "The Impact of the Beilis case on Central and Western Europe," Zosa Szajkowski ("American Academy for Jewish Research Proceedings: 31:197-218": 1963.) This is his description of these events: "On October 18, 1913, Cardinal Merry del Val, Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs of the Vatican, replied affirmatively. This was a sensational blow against Beilis' accusers. The correspondence between Lord Rothschild and Cardinal del Val was published in all the newspapers."

Following that passage Szajkowski traces the document to its destiny in Kiev, as Kertzer follows him word for word along the same route.

Szajkowski writes:
   On October 22, 1913, Dr. Nathan was already in possession of a copy of the 'Vatican's reply certified by the Russian Embassy in London.

Kertzer writes:
   By October 22, a copy of the secretary of state's letter, certified by the Russian Embassy in London, was in the hands of Paul Nathan in Berlin,

Szajkowski writes:
   He [Nathan] immediately sent the copy by special messenger to Kiev, where the copy was in the hands of Beilis' lawyers on October 27.

Kertzer writes:
   He [Nathan] immediately sent it by special courier to Kiev, where it reached Beilis's lawyers on October 27.

Szajkowski writes:
   However, the Russian government didn't allow the use of the document as evidence in court.

Kertzer writes:
   But the Jews were soon disappointed, for the Russian court refused to accept the document.

Szajkowski writes:
   Officially it was stated that the document had first to be certified by the
Vatican. But the Russian Ambassador in Rome did everything possible that the document should arrive in Kiev too late to be submitted as evidence in favor of Beilis." (underline added)

Kertzer writes:

It could only be admitted if Merry del Val himself sent it directly to the court.

We are now at the crux of the Kertzer charade, and at the real reason why defenders of Kertzer like Madigan become so uncontrollably vehement in defense of what is nothing less than an intentional obfuscation of historical events: events, which in this particular instance, are laid bare in WPAJ by a full-size (p. 129) photocopy of the original page in Szajkowski's document. There, anybody (Madigan apparently excepted) can see in its original context the underlined sentence above, which was intentionally deleted by Kertzer so that he could introduce his personally selected villain, the Cardinal Secretary of State.

And this is how Kertzer's flimflamery has been handled by another exposé expert, Robert Ventresca, now writing at Madigan's personal invitation in the Harvard Theological Review. (The complete discussion of the review can be accessed at U.S Catholic Historian Fall, 2012: "Were the Popes Against the Jews?"---Harvard Weighs in---Tenuously," and at: Justus George Lawler - Official Website: "Robert Ventresca and the Harvard Charade.") This is the telling passage from Ventresca's piece:

The cycle of parsing, wishful inference, and forced argument reaches its high point when Lawler critiques Kertzer’s claims of papal “duplicity” in the resurrection of old blood libel myths in prominent legal proceedings around the turn of the century. Emblematic in this regard is the discussion of a notorious case of the ritual murder trial of a Russian Jew, Mendel Beilis, in Kiev (Ukraine) in 1913. (emphases supplied)

Whatever this “is emblematic” of, it is certainly not of Lawler’s fatuous three-fold cycle of linguistic and logical violations emphasized above. But this certainly is exemplary of the barefaced lies that Ventresca launches under the mask of middle-ground politesse and saccharine gentility. He knows full well that Lawler is absolutely correct in his critique of Kertzer's treatment of the Beilis trial. In fact, Lawler's emphasis has been throughout this discussion precisely on the irrefutable documentation of Kertzer’s fraudulence regarding this particular trial. Fortunately, there are some scholars studying these matters who are not blinded by their personal loyalties to duplicitious historians, i.e., Kertzer and his public spokesmen.. In The New York Review of Books (February 6, 2014) there is a letter by Edmund Levin who is described as author "of a forthcoming book, A Child of Christian Blood---Murder and Conspiracy in Tsarist Russia: The Beilis Blood Libel. Although he is mildly critical of me for an insignificant chronological error---of no practical consequences and to be analyzed presently---Edmund Levin's text demands attention

Kertzer holds Merry del Val responsible for delaying the transmission to Kiev of a document certifying as authentic a denunciation of the blood libel by Pope Innocent IV in 1247. Lawler correctly points out that it was not Merry del Val but the Russian ambassador to the Vatican … who contrived to delay the arrival of the [Vatican] authentication to the court in Kiev."

Kertzer's complicated concealment of the Russian ambassador---so that blame shifts to Merry del Val---was described in detail in WPAJ. In fact the treatment of the trial is the central point in Were the Popes Against the Jews? just as it is the low point in Kertzer’s The Popes Against the Jews. That is why the complete narrative of the trial in WPAJ has been made publicly accessible at the
aforementioned: **Justus George Lawler - Official Website:** "Beilis Trial."

I continue with Ventresca’s intentionally obfuscating *and* doctored excerpt above:

The long and the short of the matter is that then Cardinal Secretary of State, Merry del Val, did offer written confirmation of the validity of these repudiations. Yet, largely due to the obstructionist role of the Russian ambassador in Rome, the cardinal’s note arrived too late to influence deliberations and the eventual verdict—a hung jury—which set Beilis free. (emphasis added)

This characteristically confident, condescending, *and* contemptible observation is indeed the short of it; since the entire purpose of Kertzer (and his surrogate, Ventresca) in minimizing all treatment of this trial is that readers will learn as little as possible (and preferably *nothing whatever*) about the Russian ambassador’s very active role in preventing the papal documents from being entered at the trial. Nor, of course, did our Canadian authority know anything whatever about this trial until he read Lawler’s book—where as we have seen the following statement is emphasized:

Kertzer has followed his only source step by step, as the cardinal’s letter goes from London to Kiev to its rejection by the Russians. The two statements are running on parallel tracks, until an unexpected—and for Kertzer an intolerable—new player enters the scene. Immediately following Szajkowski’s excerpt about “Officially it was stated” is the following sentence—which I here underline and which Kertzer omits entirely: “*But the Russian Ambassador in Rome did everything possible that the document should arrive in Kiev too late to be submitted as evidence in favor of Beilis.*” The obvious conclusion from Kertzer’s deliberate deletion is that the Russian ambassador has been omitted in order to make room for someone else—who ends up being the villain pre-designated by Kertzer, both in the preceding chapter and in this one: the Cardinal secretary of state, Merry del Val.

What I find continuingly amazing is the brazenness of Kertzer and now of Ventresca, in imagining that this hard fact could simply be wished away, and the entire hoax would go unexposed. Kertzer’s own deception is undeniably complicated since it entailed considerable research and maneuvering to doctor the texts at issue. On the other hand, his protégé, Ventresca, merely had to read my book—which he did, and then tweak the evidence, as he does in this begrudging but lying statement: “*Yet, largely due to the obstructionist role of the Russian ambassador in Rome...*” I repeat, no Russian ambassador appears in Kertzer’s narrative, and thus Ventresca's personally face-saving adverbial phrase, "largely due," is another illustration of the sham ethic underlying Kertzer's, Madigan's, and now Ventresca's doctorred "history."

What then tends to evoke Joseph Welch on Joseph McCarthy, “have you no sense of decency,” is that the original sentence in Szajkowski about “the Russian Ambassador in Rome” doing everything possible to have Beilis found guilty is replaced by the reference to “Merry del Val himself” working toward that end. There is no issue here regarding dubious testimony; the issue has to do with manufactured testimony by Kertzer. In addition to Maurice Samuel’s book, there is *The Beilis Transcripts: The Anti-Semitic Trial that Shook the World,* by Ezekiel Leikin (1993); here one may read: “In a letter to his superior ... Nelidoff [the Russian Ambassador] bragged about his clever ruse....” This book is one of the titles that buttresses Kertzer’s *quite* impressive bibliography, and which he refers to in an endnote, guiding his readers to more supporting information: “for details on the Beilis case, see ... Leiken 1993.” The presumption of even a lay person when reading this would be that Leiken’s book had been consulted by Kertzer, although at this point it is certainly not inconceivable that he may merely have mentioned it to inflate his list of sources, and thus inflate his credentials.

Lastly—and by way of making clear that we are not talking about some obscure items like those “dug up” by Miccoli in various Vatican archives—Léon Poliakov in *Suicidal Europe 1870-1933*
also discusses the Beilis trial but concentrates, as a literary historian, on the tricked up testimony of the Catholic priest, Pranaitis. Nevertheless, Poliakov notes that, “The Russian ambassador in Rome distinguished himself by sabotaging the dispatch of copies of pertinent bulls in which past popes condemned the legend of ritual murder.” (italics added) This book is also cited in Kertzer’s aforementioned impressive bibliography: “Storia dell’antisemitismo, L’Europa suicida, 1870-1933.”

Of course Ventresca’s subservient role here is to defend Kertzer against the wiles of Lawler, and thus prove the former to be the ideal scholar, commemorated by his followers, honored by his international peers, and, in his own words, “America’s foremost expert on the modern history of the Vatican’s relations with the Jews.” But, unfortunately for that line of defense, Lawler’s entire treatment of this ritual murder trial stresses the fact that Kertzer never mentioned the Russian ambassador anywhere or at any time because his real target was the Cardinal Secretary of State to whom Kertzer wanted all blame to accrue. Thus we first read about the long and the short of the matter, and then about "the obstructionist role of the Russian ambassador in Rome," and finally about the cardinal's note arriving too late to influence the verdict.

Nevertheless, even though Kertzer nowhere mentions the role of the Russian ambassador, Ventresca (our mind-reader in residence) has the audacity to assert the following, along with some distracting new data gathered to change the subject altogether—here underlined:

Kertzer acknowledges all of this, but guardedly and skeptically, reasoning that neither Merry del Val nor the pope, by this time Pius X, moved decisively or quickly enough to seize on a golden opportunity to repudiate publicly all charges of ritual murder being leveled against Jews. (emphasis added)

In fact, the lies are continuing. Kertzer acknowledges none of this, whether “guardedly” or “skeptically.” Furthermore, the insertion of the term “reasoning,” allows Ventresca—as he has done throughout his article—to divert attention from what the reader has in fact just read, and onto Ventresca’s own skill in reading the mind of Kertzer. In other similar instances this “skill” was exercised on various third parties or entities. Usually this had entailed reading the mind of some pope or ecclesiastic who is related to some alleged moral or political aberration or—what amounts to the same thing—some defender of such aberrations like Lawler. But more often it was a flood of verbal distractions intended to illustrate Ventresca’s evenhanded viewpoint, accompanied by an occasional mild slap on the wrist for Kertzer. Hence, it is no surprise that the reader is subjected immediately to Ventresca’s next non-incriminating, but certainly trivial and intentionally distracting, observations

Moreover, Kertzer complains that there was nothing like an official rebuke of the campaign conducted in various Catholic newspapers around Europe that spoke assuredly of Beilis’s guilt and expressed righteous indignation at the very thought of Jews asking the Holy See to authenticate papal statements on the public record. To that end, Kertzer points out that there was never any public repudiation of articles in La Civiltà Cattolica, for instance, which in the spring of 1914, were suggesting that Beilis was guilty of ritual murder. (italics added)

Then come more gems from a seemingly "critical assessment" of Kertzer’s position, but which are also made up of bits of irrelevant trivia—here underlined. Again, the goal is to create the impression that Ventresca is genuinely and truly committed to honestly assaying the real role of Kertzer, even if what is cited to do this is so incidental as to be vacuous. One may note also the almost maternal gentleness of anything that even approaches criticism of the Brown University Provost. Thus, "sources suggest," "criticisms leave something to be desired," Kertzer "fails to acknowledge fully," he also "fails to appreciate fully," etc. The passage below illustrates how a self-designated and self-described
truth-seeking scholar goes about "having it both ways":

An attentive reading of the relevant sources suggests that Kertzer’s account of the Beilis trial and his criticisms of the role of the Vatican leave something to be desired. Kertzer fails to acknowledge fully, for instance, that the exchanges between Lord Rothschild and Cardinal Merry del Val were widely publicized in the major newspapers of the day, leaving an embarrassed anti-Semitic Catholic press to dismiss the cardinal’s conclusions as a matter of what Zosa Szajkowski described as “personal opinion” rather than papal policy. So, too, does Kertzer fail to appreciate fully that Beilis’s defenders generally favored a “discreet diplomacy over brash public statements, for fear of provoking any strong public reaction at the prospect of such high-level intervention on behalf of a lone Jew on trial for murder.”

(emphasis added)

After parsing Ventresca’s exercise in the “balanced” criticism of his mentor, David Kertzer, what reader of the Harvard Theological Review (not to mention “what Editor of the Harvard Theological Review, e.g., Kevin Madigan”) wouldn’t applaud this agreeably acquiescent pupil? This Canadian Kertzerian offspring has managed to rig texts so that the real villain, the Russian ambassador, disappears from the narrative altogether, and everybody can now focus on something as trivial and, in fact, as inconceivable as “an embarrassed anti-Semitic Catholic press.”

Lastly, as a definitive dismissal of Madigan and his pretentious guesswork, there is the passage below which makes abundantly clear that he too has simply no idea as to what is going on—nor does he have the least indication of the swamp where he is floundering. Thus, there is his assumption that the Tsar wanted Beilis vindicated—a notion that no reputable scholar endorses—as the earlier citations of Leon Poliakov, George Kennan, Maurice Samuel, and Ezekiel Leikin explicitly emphasized.

Notwithstanding any or all of that, Madigan engages in his own brand of guesswork: "Here, however, Kertzer argues that it was likely that a letter from del Val, which may have been read by the tsar, was instrumental in exonerating Beilis." (italics added). But, as a mere matter of fact, Kertzer makes no such argument. Again, we have this impossible notion that the tsar wanted Beilis exonerated. Totally ignored is the widely acknowledged fact among historians (who don’t have an axe to grind) that the Tsar was behind the prosecution of Beilis. Thus, for a final refutation, one may read the following by Leon Poliakov: "It was in the field of ritual murder that the regime waged its last stubborn battle against the Jews." Secondly, there was no "letter" from del Val; there was a simple statement acknowledging the veracity of two earlier papal condemnations of the ritual murder libel.

Then digging deeper, and probably compelled by the realization that his sham arguments above might be exposed, Madigan continues: "Far, then, from arguing that anyone at the Vatican attempted to have him convicted, Kertzer actually contends that Cardinal del Val [at least we got the spelling right this time] and Pope Pius X attempted to defend him." (emphasis added) Of course, Kertzer contends nothing of the sort, otherwise why would he have gone to all that trouble to delete the reference to the Russian Ambassador doing "everything possible that the [del Val] document should arrive in Kiev too late"? Nevertheless, Madigan soldiers on---this time into another abyss of self-generated deception. The following excerpt is the immediate continuation of the "Kertzer actually contends" clause above.

(There is no break between the two.)

He [Kertzer] concludes, “After decades of papally approved campaigns smearing the Jews with the brush of ritual murder, a pope had stood up and defended them”; and he quotes the Pope as saying: “I pray that the trial will end without harm to the poor Jews.” Lawler responds to this by claiming that Kertzer has attempted “to debunk” the pope’s expression of concern for the Jews. As proof, he cites, somewhat puzzlingly, a section of Kertzer’s book “immediately following the quotation about ‘the poor
Jews," in which Kertzer asks, “But if we take a step back, what exactly does the Beilis case show?”
(underline supplied)

What is either duplicitous or just plain dumb is that this is not something that "Kertzer concludes"; it is not even something of which Kertzer mildly approves. Everything substantive regarding what the pope said and what the pope did was taken from an article by one Andrew Canepa, a scholar with whom Lawler had been in contact, and who expressed concern at how his material was being used by Kertzer. Less significantly, there is Kertzer's initial treatment of Canepa (p. 224-25) as among an unnamed group of scholars who had a "view," made a "case," and supported a "thesis" that was moderately favorable to Pius X.

Canepa was particularly apprehensive about Kertzer's utilization of his material in this context---a context of which, clearly, Kertzer wants no part: "For those who view Pius X as making a radical break with the Vatican's past attitudes toward the Jews, the Beilis case marked a historic turning point. After decades of papally approved campaigns smearing the Jews with the brush of ritual murder, a pope had stood up and defended them." But then Kertzer, even more clearly than above, separates himself further from "those" with that particular "view," and with chilling neutrality mentions only the name of the source of his data:

Andrew Canepa, in support of this interpretation, cites a letter that the Pope himself sent to his old friend Romainin Jacur, three weeks after Merry del Val sent his famous [sic] telegram to Lord Rothschild. In referring to the ongoing trial in Kiev, the Pope assured his friend that "the Holy See will study every means to prevent the fatal consequences of the infamous fanaticisms of those populations," and he added, "I pray that the trial end without harm to the poor Jews." (emphasis added)

That concluding, and now celebrated, statement goes without any comment at all from Kertzer. Even more invidious---certainly from the viewpoint of someone disclosing a large body of information hitherto almost unknown in the Anglophone world---was this bland observation which immediately followed the papal quotation. "But if we take a step back, what exactly does the Beilis case show?"
That is where Madigan interrupted the narrative because he found it "puzzling."

For that reason he (prudently) moves on to Kertzer's twelfth chapter, "A Future Pope in Poland"---where we will catch up with him, however "puzzlingly," as soon as we have actually taken that "step back" into the Beilis case to find what exactly it shows. This is the response to Kertzer (and now, also to poor befuddled Madigan) which is proffered in chapter six (page 144) of WPAJ:

Two possible answers are that the Beilis case shows, first (as we have seen in the above exposition) how biased historians succumb to deceit; and second (as we are about to see) how history books are cooked. The recipe for the latter is familiar: 1, re-phrasing the issue; 2, argument ex silentio; 3, exposition of the “real” views of the pope; and 4, citations from publications in the worldwide network of the Vatican-linked press where those views are enshrined. (Apart from the bracketed numbers below, this is Kertzer's "show and tell.")

[No.1] First of all, the statement released by the Vatican could hardly have been more limited and circumspect. It simply acknowledged the authenticity of two Church texts whose authenticity was never in any serious doubt. [No. 2] Neither the pope nor his secretary of state took advantage of the request to make a general statement repudiating all ritual murder charges against the Jews. [No. 3] More significantly, by not taking this step, the pope allowed the Catholic press ... communicating the pope’s true sentiments, to continue to tar the Jews with the ritual murder charge. [No. 4] L’Unità cattolica, in Florence, known for reflecting papal perspectives.... L’Univers ... the French paper closest to the
Kertzer concluded his treatment of the entire matter with four pages of quotations, presumably communicating what the pope really believed about the blood libel accusation, particularly as it had been articulated by the Jesuits in *La Civiltà Cattolica*. As for Lawler, he observed: "There is no need to comment further on the above; nor any need to elaborate further on Kertzer's own conspiracy with himself whereby he became his own secret sharer in the omissions, the doctorings, and the truncations exemplified throughout this chapter."

However, a pertinent observation was made by Archbishop Sergio Pagano, the Prefect of the *Archivio Segreto Vaticano*. That latter institution was first encountered in the treatment of Cornwell's scam alleging that, "American authorities ban black troops from the Holy See lest they debauch Roman womanhood." It was also referred to by Kertzer himself as the research resource where he had been given special privileges. As for the Prefect himself, he described the author of a "book on the relations of the popes and the Jews" who was researching the trial in Kiev, and who cited a document with accusations against Pius X. "Inside the same folder that he was consulting, there were also various letters of thanks from Jewish personages to Pope Sarto that were systematically ignored, and of which there is not a trace in the book." Maybe Madigan will also find it "puzzling" to determine the identity of this author.

Although the previous discussion may have left many readers exhausted, at least they, like the rest of us, will now have the satisfaction of catching up with Madigan after his Polish epiphany. This is his declaration---written, understandably, in the unique patois of "Getting Jews and the Vatican Wrong"---at the end of column seven. (As always, in what follows stress indicators like italics, underlining, etc., unless otherwise noted, have been added.)

Finally, there is Lawler's argument regarding what he solemnly condemns as "the most blatant distortion of the pope's words in the entire book." Lawler charges Kertzer with "concoction," "slander," and all manner of scholarly dereliction. The question at stake is whether and how, Achille Ratti's experience as nuncio in Poland early in the twentieth century shaped the views of European Jews he would later hold as pope. Lawler charges that it was really Kertzer, utilizing his "ventriloquial virtuosity," not the pope, who had emphasized the distinction between Italy's Jews and the Jews of Central and Eastern Europe.

In the chapter at issue the word "concoction" doesn't occur, and the only instance of the second term is an irrelevant reference to "a campaign of slander by the Polish Socialist Party…" Apart from that, what Lawler actually wrote about any kind of virtuosity was the following:

This assertion is raw, undiluted Kertzer. Like the earlier “satanic synagogues” or “Jewish dogs,” these threatening hordes are non-existent save in the author’s imagination. But there is a significant difference in that previously when assaying the mentality of any figure in the Vatican, from pope or secretary of state to the most incidental underling, there was at least some basis in an official document—a letter, a report, a book. Similarly, when Kertzer misinterpreted statements by popes, cardinals, bishops, etc., or completely dismissed their statements in favor of their “real” meaning to be found in various Catholic newspapers, there was at least a semblance of a foundation in something that had actually at one time or another been said by those personages or published in those venues. Now, in order to round out his entire discussion of the overwhelming importance of those “three years” in Poland, and to make them the foundation of Ratti’s oncoming anti-Semitic pontificate, words are simply invented by the author to be put in this pope’s mouth—far more drastically than when they were put into the mouth of Leo XIII, by changing his concern about the economic innovations that contributed to the “rule of money” into his concern about a
As to that last observation, since it illustrates a penchant (or perhaps an instinct) on the part of Madigan for warping translations, I include here a passage originally omitted from these discussions, but which is directly related to that underlined sentence. It also illustrates the extremes of mistranslation to which Kertzer's work is open.

First Kertzer is quoted, and Lawler comments

In general, he [Leo XIII] kept to a traditional Church outlook, stressing the role of the popes in protecting the Jews and inviting the Jews to accept baptism and convert. However, in warning of a new plague that was affecting modern society, which he termed “the kingdom of money,” and insisting on the need to defend against it, the Pope—without naming the Jews—tapped into one of the main themes of the Catholic anti-Semitic campaign of the time. (emphasis added)

With this passage the kinds of linguistic ruses encountered earlier again come into play, as the author shows that his command of French is apparently less intimidating than his alleged command of Italian. (Readers will recall that my use of that phrase was an affront to Madigan's sensibilities.) The passage from the pope—which in the translation by Miccoli/Kertzer exemplifies his presumed preoccupation with pestilential Jews—is the following brief sentence: “Et voici qu’après tant d’autres fleaux, le règne de l’argent est venu”—meaning simply, “and thus after so many other calamities, the rule [or reign] of money has come.” The more or less self-evident reason for the statement occurring in this interview with this pope is that the topic “clearly had been preying on his mind”—to cite Kertzer on Pius IX and Jewish dogs. As for Leo XIII, it had been preying on his mind at least since the previous year when he published his revolutionary encyclical, Rerum Novarum, subtitled “On Capital and Labor”—both terms rather obviously having to do with money, but neither having anything in particular to do with Jews, save in Kertzer’s self-referential speculations.

Miccoli mistranslated the French “règne” as “regno,” meaning “kingdom,” rather than “reign” or “rule,” and so transformed an abstract category into a personal entity—which his American protégé does also—as they both tap into one of the main themes of the imaginary war against the Jews, i.e., that the popes endorsed modern racist anti-Semitism with all its baggage of Jews as vermin-carrying aliens. The fact is that Leo said nothing about a plague, whether new or old. Kertzer follows Miccoli in transforming the original French plural noun into a singular; but at least Miccoli does use a cognate of “fleaux,” the Italian, “flagelli” (ET: “flails”). But neither in the original French nor in the Italian can the word be Englished as “plague.” “Scourges” would be acceptable but clumsy; so, given Leo’s specific context, “calamities” (or its synonyms) is the only possible translation—resulting in the italicized passage in the preceding paragraph.

The reason Kertzer persisted in his misreading is that, as seen earlier, this is the language of nineteenth-century popularizers of Darwinian stereotypes, and thus of the specifically racist anti-Jewishness referred to in the subtitle of the book: “The Vatican’s Role in the Rise of Modern Anti-Semitism.” It is of the latter that Kertzer has been trying to convict the popes—as we shall see again at the end of this discussion, in what I have earlier referred to as the author’s most shocking rhetorical subterfuge. Concerning the “kingdom of money”—to conclude this excursus—it too was a topos that in his introductory remarks on Pio Nono’s homily to the Roman women Kertzer himself had tapped into, and which by his lights the entire text of Rerum Novarum would not only be tapping into but could even be identified as the source of “the main theme of the Catholic anti-Semitic campaign of the time.”
Ignoring the incidental slurs, one must still contend with Madigan's war with himself in his varying views of Achille Ratti. In a lengthy Commentary article (“Two Popes, One Holocaust,” December, 2010), Madigan reversed himself and suggested that Pius XI and not Pius XII, should really be the candidate for sainthood. That position, of course, collides with the following from Madigan's revered source, David Kertzer, who had written: "The story I tell here for the first time about Achille Ratti in the years just before he became Pope Pius XI in 1922 can be seen in this light. In the literature on Pius XII’s failure to speak out during the Holocaust, he is often compared unfavorably to Pius XI, 'the good pope,' portrayed as a firm foe of anti-Semitism.... But what if we find that Pius XII’s benevolent predecessor shared the same stridently anti-Semitic views?"

Unfortunately, that is precisely what “we” did find when reading Kertzer---as well as when reading Madigan. So the real question is how does a scholar in a lengthy article systematically undercut the “first time” story told in what he regards as a literary masterpiece, and then proceed to exalt the benevolent predecessor (Pius XI) who was also stridently anti-Semitic. Moreover, if Madigan is to be taken seriously, it means that each of the essential themes of Kertzer’s “A Future Pope in Poland” is irrelevant. No longer is it possible to believe that “the whole twentieth-century history of the Church might have been different” if Ratti had never been sent to Poland. Similarly, what was previously asserted as an obvious truism—“Ratti did everything he could to impede any Vatican action on behalf of the Jews”—is now to be rejected. It no longer matters that, according to Kertzer’s earlier masterpiece, the future pope in Poland had said that, “One of the most evil and strongest influences that is felt here, perhaps the strongest and the most evil, is that of the Jews.”

Similarly, those scrupulously annotated “reports and documents” that Kertzer assembled do not really “allow us, for the first time, to understand the attitude toward Jews that Pius XI brought with him when he became pontiff.” By Madigan’s lights, those “precious” and “priceless” resources and insights that originally proved the anti-Semitism of Ratti have been utterly devalued. But if that is really true, then that lauded “national treasure” of which Madigan wrote contains only fool’s gold. It is just not possible to have it both ways: to at once rave over Kertzer’s scholarship and literary achievement and, at the same time, to be laudatory about the pope whom Kertzer exposed as being at heart just another anti-Semite. Moreover, the more basic question must arise as to how any defense of Kertzer's views on papal anti-Semitism can be made by Madigan. It was he who wrote in his Commentary piece that "as early as 1928 Pope Pius XI had authoritatively repudiated modern anti- Semitism." It also raises a question as to what such a shift in villains says about who is "getting Jews and the Vatican wrong"?

Madigan at the end of section 3 then cites a passage which is based on one paragraph---in fact the last one---in Kertzer's chapter titled "A Future Pope in Poland." It is also a passage to which Lawler devoted four pages of explication. Madigan refers to the pope as saying that the Italian Jews, as opposed to those in Poland, "represented an exception." Madigan then proffers his first papal quotation in the vernacular: "… Italian Jews represented an exception (In Italia, tuttavia, gli ebrei fanno eccezione)." This had been triggered by the future pope saying in Kertzer's translation: "When I was in Warsaw I saw that the [Bolshevik] commissioners . . . were all Jews. For this one, he doesn't quote the original which emphasizes that the commissioners were both male and female. ("Quando io ero a Varsovia vidi che in tutti reggimenti bolscevichi il commissario o la commissaria erano ebrei,"

But the whole of section 3 ends with the observation that the Jews whom Ratti "saw in Poland seemed to be afflicted with what he called 'Judaism's anti-Christian antipathy.'" Madigan's paraphrase continues with a reference to how the pope thought Italian Jews did "not share this antipathy." It is hard to say whether this wording is the result of obtuseness or of affected derring-do, since if there is one
thing that is stressed in WPAJ it is that the original text never used the word "antipathy" but the word "aversion" = l'avversione--as in the undeniably more gentle papal expression: "l'avversione anticristiana del giudaismo." It was another of the violations by Kertzer that this original term was "translated" as antipathy.

Unfortunately, the final section "4" does not concern translations. Rather it concerns transmogrifications whereby Madigan reverts to his earlier role as authority on the higher metaphysic. In that role he will again be accompanied by the down-under blogger so they can share their transcendent concern over the previously mentioned threat represented by "the apologists." This dangerous sect---known apparently only to a small elite in Australia and the U.S.---was earlier described as using the popes as proxies in a larger cultural war. It was Madigan who had personally, but arrogantly, opined that these "apologists for certain nineteenth- and twentieth-century popes strike me as simply people who find the truth too painful to confront. Rather than admit the failings of these popes, they prefer to attack the bearers of bad news, often viciously"---said "bearers" being himself and the "down under" authority, Paul O'Shea, who announced that Kertzer never spoke of plots and conspiracies.

The reader can only wonder whether there are typos here. Certainly, as the tradition from Aristotle through Aquinas and on into the present indicates, just as the good is the proper object of the will, the truth is the proper object of the intellect. Given that truism, perhaps those who are pained by the truth refers to what Madigan thinks of as "simple people," people who lack the insights of intercontinental visionaries: people like "the rest of us," whom the Divine Thomas jovially referred to as bearing the burden of imbecillitas intellectus nostris.

"Stay tuned" is the conventional closure to this kind of message; but rather than that, I would say: "Tolle, lege!" Unlike Augustine, when you do that you may not hear singing, but possibly the Kertzers and Madigans of this world will hear the death knell to their historical fabrications. This will also put an end to Madigan's uncontrollable and unfathomable rants, exemplified by the following from his letter in the NYRB (February 6, 2014) on Were the Popes Against the Jews? "... meandering," "uninformed," "unfair," "deservedly panned," "extremely tedious," "nasty, very nasty," "terribly long," "hatchet job," "fails miserably," "outright misrepresentations," "inflamed rhetorical exercise," "atrociously bad." This kind of outburst is now known as "The Litany of Vendetta."