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PRESS RELEASE

The Renegade

A novel by Ariel Toaff
Translated by Cristina Popple
Paperback and e-book
366 pages
Available Now

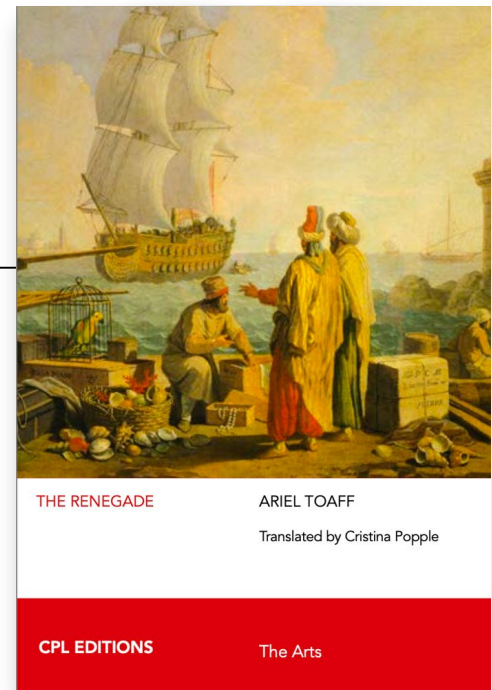
In Nablus, 1840, David Ajash—an Italian rabbi and kabbalist of Algerian origin—is found dead by gunshot. Known for his enigmatic past, David left behind only a mysterious manuscript inscribed: “To my son Moisé.”

Years earlier, David had abandoned his wife and three children, including his eldest son Moisé. Now a rabbi himself, Moisé remains resentful of the father who deserted him. When David's friend Abram delivers the manuscript, Moisé reluctantly agrees to read his father's final testament.

What unfolds is an intimately interwoven dual narrative—father's confession and son's discovery. Through David's eyes, we traverse the vibrant Jewish community of Livorno and the Mediterranean world of the early 19th century. From Jerusalem to Pisa, from kabbalistic mysteries to Masonic intrigues, from crisis of faith to brothels and forbidden love, from Hebrew printing to gambling, sea trade, food and scents—the story pulses with life, with Moisé's commentary revealing the painfully unresolved conflicts between father and son. The question lingers: Did David commit suicide?

“My father's memoir ends here. I cry unwillingly, in silence.”

This debut novel from historian Ariel Toaff, originally published in Italian by Neri Pozza in 2021, is now available in English. It marks a transition from scholarly work to historical fiction. Cristina Popple's translation skillfully captures the tone of the original Italian.



Ariel Toaff, rabbi and historian, was born in Ancona, Italy, and resides in Tel Aviv, where he is professor emeritus of Medieval and Renaissance History at Bar-Ilan University. He came to international prominence in 2007 with the publication of his controversial *Pasque Di Sangue* (Blood Passovers, Gyan Books Hong Kong, 2007). Among his many works: *The Jews in Medieval Assisi 1305-1487* (1979), the three-volume *The Jews in Umbria* (E.J. Brill, 1993-94), *Love, Work, and Death: Jewish Life in Medieval Umbria* (The Littman Library of Jewish Civilization, 1996), and *Eating Jewish Style: Jewish Cooking in Italy from the Renaissance to the Modern Age* (2000). A new expanded edition of his *Jewish Monsters: The Jewish Imaginary from the Middle Ages to the Early Modern Era* is forthcoming.

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