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One summer day in 1939, a young Jewish girl named Gerta Vrbová went for a walk with her Christian neighbor, Marushka Simončič. Disrupting what promised to be a lovely afternoon, Marushka told her friend that, “because you are Jews, you will soon be taken away, and then we will be able to take over your father’s shop and we will move into your house.” (37) Surprised, Gerta expressed indignation. Marushka clarified,

Everyone says that you had too much money, that you exploited us and that it’s time for the people to take over everything. Well, you are richer than my family, aren’t you? They will send you to a work camp, and everyone thinks that it will be good for you to learn to work hard, whilst the people you exploited enjoy themselves. I think that this is just, and although I’ll miss you, it will be nice to live in your house. (37)

Gerta went home immediately, feeling betrayed by her friend and newly cognizant of the casual anti-Semitism of people she believed she could trust.

Stories of betrayal fill Agnes Grunwald-Spier’s new book, *Who Betrayed the Jews? The Realities of Nazi Persecution in the Holocaust* (2016). In her monograph, Grunwald-Spier takes an expansive and candid look at an array of betrayals of Jews during the Holocaust. Using personal testimonies, she tells the story of the Jews’ betrayal by the whole of civilized Europe, from neighbors to local administrators, medical professionals to multi-million dollar corporations, family friends to governing bodies. By exploring acts of betrayal, Grunwald-Spier hopes to raise awareness of racism, xenophobia, and anti-Semitism in the modern world. However, Grunwald-Spier does not universalize the Holocaust; instead, she explores it as Jewish tragedy, hoping to shed light on persecutions of Jews, the effects of which are still being felt today. Throughout the book’s twenty-one chapters, Grunwald-Spier shares her research into legal claims of art theft and restitution, against the SNCF (the French national railway) for their part in deportations, and of slave labor used by companies like IG Farben, which owned Bayer pharmaceuticals from 1925-
1952. Specifically, she illuminates systems of betrayal that uniquely and disproportionately affected Jewish Europeans. For example, Grunwald-Spier highlights the ways in which the Nazis intentionally violated Jewish holidays and profaned Jewish religious texts and beliefs. Perhaps overwhelming in scope and organization, a structure that mimics both the enormity of the Holocaust and the variety of its betrayals, *Who Betrayed the Jews?* does not shy away from asking and answering probing, uncomfortable questions. Grunwald-Spier approaches the material, not from the perspective of an academic, which she herself admits, but as a child survivor who felt that the onus was on her to write and speak about the Holocaust so that the phrase “Never again!” might be actualized. Grunwald-Spier catalogs European betrayals of Jews, arranging her book topically, rather than chronologically. This organization underscores the sheer number of ways in which Europeans betrayed their cultural norms in persecuting their Jewish neighbors. Moreover, Grunwald-Spier especially reveals the persecutions of little-known Jewish communities like Rhodes, Kos, Corfu, and Crete, communities that were virtually wiped out by the Nazis, evoking memories of a lost and nearly forgotten Europe. Of special interest to the readers of *Women in Judaism*, Grunwald-Spier highlights the experiences of Jewish women. Inspired by these stories, Grunwald-Spier is writing a new book about women’s experiences in the Holocaust, due out in early 2018.

Never losing sight of her central thesis about betrayal, Grunwald-Spier confronts her readers with many painful but important truths, most notably her claim that “most non-Jews were indifferent to the fate of the Jews but were enthusiastic about getting their hands on the Jews’ property—whether it was a valuable art collection or a few old rags of clothes.” (546) For Grunwald-Spier, the Jews of Europe were betrayed by almost everyone. But importantly, she does not leave these betrayals to history; she also indict modern Europe as bolstering anti-Semitism. She boldly claims, “the reality is that ‘never again’ has only really been observed by Jews and Israelis…They know that ultimately no one else can be relied upon when Jews are threatened and betrayed.” (546) In a personal interview, Grunwald-Spier remarked, “there is an
increase in anti-Semitism everywhere, which is extremely worrying; however, it is not just from the right, but also from the left.” Perhaps most tellingly, she claimed, “it feels as though the Jews and Israel are everybody’s favorite enemy.” A stark look into the state of world Jewry, *Who Betrayed the Jews?* is a warning that, with the increasing anti-Semitism of people and institutions across the political spectrum, we are not immune to the betrayals of the past.