

AJS PERSPECTIVES

The Magazine of the Association for Jewish Studies

IN THIS ISSUE:

jewish
AUTOBIOGRAPHY
AND BIOGRAPHY



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FROM THE EDITOR

Dear Colleagues,

We see signs everywhere of an intensified new interest in Jewish biography and autobiography. Nextbook and Schocken Books' Jewish Encounter Book Series, which "includes biographies of major figures from Moses to Emma Lazarus to Marc Chagall," is well underway. Under the auspices of Yale University Press, Anita Shapira and Steven Zipperstein will soon launch a series called "Jewish Lives." In Israel, the Shazar Center has already published several biographies in a new series devoted to outstanding figures in Jewish cultural history, including volumes on Saadia Gaon, Rashi, Moses Mendelssohn, and Abraham Isaac Kook. Noteworthy collections of Jewish autobiographies (such as Jeffrey Shandler's *Awakening Lives: Autobiographies of Jewish Youth in Poland before the Holocaust* and Jocelyn Cohen and Daniel Soyfer's *My Future is in America: Autobiographies of Eastern European Jewish Immigrants*) appear with increasing frequency. And then there are studies based on autobiographies, like Guy Miron's *German Jews in Israel: Memories and Past Images*, and books analyzing them, like Marcus Moseley's *Being for Myself Alone: Origins of Jewish Autobiography*. In the spring of 2005, the *Jewish Quarterly Review* devoted almost an entire issue to "different aspects of the autobiographical genre." A lot, in short, is going on at once. What, if anything, does all of this signify?

When we first conceived of devoting an issue to the subject of biography and autobiography, we thought we might search for answers to this

question. Somehow, however, as we were mapping out the territory that we would cover, it slipped out of view. What we have managed to assemble for you in the end is not a set of analyses of the current concern with biographical and autobiographical literature but six essays that offer a variety of perspectives on our overall subject. All of them are by individual scholars who have been actively engaged in writing biographies, autobiographies, or about autobiographies.

Although we did not consciously set about to do so, we ended up collecting essays that devote much more attention to autobiography than biography, and even the pieces more directly focused on biography are themselves in large part autobiographical. Marcus Moseley concentrates on Michah Yosef Berdichevsky's innovative theoretical observations concerning an "intro/extrospective oblique approach to the self" that is itself, he says, "by no means unique in Yiddish autobiographical writing." Barbara Kirshenblatt-Gimblett has provided us with an excerpt adapted from her contribution to what she calls her father's "extrospective" autobiography (as well as the permission to reproduce some of his work on the front and back covers of this issue). Jeremy Popkin's reflections on the lives of two of his forbears demonstrate how Jewish history, family history, and autobiography can at times be "part of the same project."

Guy Miron concisely summarizes the history of German Jews' autobiography writing as well as the ways in which the products of their efforts have served as "sources for the German Jewish past 'as it really was' despite their subjectivity" and "sources for 'the social history of memory' and for the self-consciousness of the writers precisely because of their subjectivity." Alanna Cooper reflects on the ways in which the autobiographical writings of three Jewish exiles from Muslim

countries "explore the events leading up to their authors' departures from their countries of origin, offer meditations on Jewish identity in the Muslim world, and dwell on the Jews' relationship to exile and home." Alyssa Sepinwall relates how writing a book about a Catholic priest enabled her "both to reexamine universalism and to elucidate key questions in Jewish studies" and how "creative use of the biographical genre" helped her "to gain a new perspective on reactions to Grégoire on the part of Jews in his own time as well as in the last two centuries."

In our technology section, Heidi Lerner tells us what is accessible on the Internet in the area of Jewish biography and autobiography and hints at ways in which we ourselves might encourage publishers and other providers to make more material available. In our graduate student corner we do not, this time, have a report on a recent conference but a Jewish Theological Seminary student's account of the way in which his reading of an important Jewish autobiography colored his perceptions of Israel during his first and unfortunately timed visit to the country. This issue concludes with an obituary of one of our colleagues, Tikva Frymer-Kensky, whose untimely passing is a source of great sorrow not only to her many friends but to all of those who have learned from her.

Our next issue will focus on recent scholarly treatments of racial definitions of Jewishness. We will still be in the early stages of planning it when this issue reaches you, so if you have any ideas you would like to share, please get in touch with us. Also, we are always open to publishing unsolicited material on any subject related to our overall mission, especially from graduate students. And we welcome any advice or complaints you may have to offer.

Allan Arkush
Binghamton University

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Deadline for reduced advance conference registration rates (\$100.00 USD regular/associate members; \$50 USD student members; \$145 USD non-members) is November 15, 2007. See AJS website for registration information.

Make your visit historic.

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FROM THE PRESIDENT

Dear Colleagues,

I am honored by the trust my colleagues have placed in me by selecting me to serve as president of AJS. In this, my first direct address to AJS members as the new president, I want to present you with a snapshot of this moment for our organization. In an encapsulated fashion, I thought to capture both its robustness and complexity, and to stimulate all of us, as individuals and as part of AJS, both to look back at where we have been and to contemplate where we might want to be headed. Thinking about what to write, these terms came to me, bulleted and staccato: Age. Space. Technology. Culture.

What is the age of AJS? The empiricists among us can quickly come up with a number (hint: it's on our website). But I mean something more akin to developmental stage, or phase. As an association, we are young enough so that a number of our members still remember our origins, still recollect the first AJS conference. We are old enough for some *enfants terribles* in our midst to have morphed into *eminences grises*, alternately vexed, challenged, and intrigued by new *enfants*.

Perhaps, as the Joni Mitchell song has it, we look around us and sing out collectively, with surprise, "We're middle-aged." To put it differently, as a learned society, we have been on the academic radar long enough to be confident of our place among learned societies. Thanks to a healthy membership and strong leadership, we are on solid enough financial footing to be

able to take on new initiatives and expand in new directions, and to solidify what we do well. We could say, as an organization of scholars, that we know who we are; we know, as well, how provisional, complicated, and evolving that knowing is.

The space of AJS has changed, in many senses. Once hosted only in a single hotel in Boston, and then at a series of hotels located in close vicinity to that hotel (our ur-conference?), our annual meeting has since zigzagged across the United States, and is about to cross an international border for the first time. In taking the space of AJS with us to different locales, we bring our work to new academic and local communities, and open our doors to their ideas, as well. But, since we are also increasingly global, AJS looks to create formal links with colleagues and institutions in other places.

Our textual spaces, too, have evolved. *Perspectives* has undergone a sea change, developing from a utilitarian newsletter into a stimulating and thought-provoking magazine, taking the pulse of our profession, under the direction of former editor, Riv-Ellen Prell, and now under Allan Arkush. Our journal, *AJS Review*, always interdisciplinary, has reached out in recent years to encompass new voices and new methodologies.

Established and emerging technologies affect how we teach, how we do our academic work, how we communicate with one another and with this association. Increasingly, technology shapes the way AJS accomplishes much of its business. As conference chair for the most recent three AJS conferences, one of my priorities was to bring us up to par with other learned societies by updating presentation technologies at the conference. We also continue to upgrade the

technology that helps with the smooth and efficient planning and mounting of the conference. Many of our members grew up in the era of computers, LCD projectors, and digitization, and the incessant demand of "now." Others remember making painstaking manual corrections to typescripts, doing laborious word counts and text analyses, and celebrating the advances of the IBM Selectric and xerography, and 5-inch floppies. We will continue to seek out, adapt, and utilize new technologies that enhance the work of our association. As scholars, we will continue to think through, as well, how these technologies shape the nature of our work.

We will soon enter our fifth decade as a learned society. The culture of our organization has evolved—in both ways its founders had hoped and in ways they might not have envisioned. AJS has not only grown larger, but more diverse. As the fourth woman president to serve the association, I cannot help but note the gendered changes to AJS culture—visible in how we work, what we work on, who we are, and how we think about our work. New fields and new methodologies are represented at the conference and in our membership, reflecting shifting and often competing paradigms for this multidisciplinary nexus we term Jewish studies.

As a robust society with a healthy and active membership, AJS can look towards future development. In recent years, under the leadership of past president Judith Baskin, with the support of Executive Director Rona Sheramy, and with the initiative of individual members, we have made a strong start on many important projects to benefit our members and the profession. We will continue to attend to the needs of graduate students and scholars at the beginning of their careers, and to

establish stronger ties with colleagues beyond North America and Israel, particularly in regions where Jewish studies has not had a long history or a strong presence. As we identify them and our resources allow, we will meet other important needs of our members.

The changing locations of the conference and the anchoring of our administrative offices in New York facilitate the process of heightening our profile both within the academy and in the wider community. We will continue to compile information about ourselves, our work, our institutions. This information can help us in our work as scholars and teachers, facilitating important connections and cross-fertilization. It can also help others to know more about us, and to tap our

expertise, experience, and knowledge.

I am delighted to welcome a dynamic group of officers who bring to the table a wealth of ideas and creative energy. Marsha Rozenblit of the University of Maryland is vice president for program, responsible for conceptualizing and planning the annual conference. Ephraim Kanarfogel of Yeshiva University serves as vice president for publications, working with *Perspectives* editor Allan Arkush, and *AJS Review* editors Hillel Kieval and Martin Jaffe. James E. Young of the University of Massachusetts Amherst, is vice president for membership and outreach and will represent our organization among the leadership of learned societies, as well as develop membership

initiatives. Barbara Kirshenblatt-Gimblett of New York University is secretary-treasurer, responsible for all financial matters. I look forward to working closely with them and I cannot thank them enough for volunteering their time and talent for the good of AJS.

Indeed, during my service as vice president for program, I was repeatedly struck by the generosity of so many colleagues on behalf of AJS—generosity of time, of energy, of spirit. Behind every conference, every publication, every new initiative were the goodwill, work, and wisdom of colleagues and associates. I look forward to further growth, development, and initiatives, and welcome your ideas.

Sara R. Horowitz
York University

The AJS is pleased to announce the recipients of the 2006 Eastern European Scholar Travel Grants:

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Central European University

Arkady Kovelman

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Their participation in the 38th Annual Conference of the Association for Jewish Studies was made possible through the generous support of:

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The Association for Jewish Studies wishes to thank the Center for Jewish History and its constituent organizations—the American Jewish Historical Society, the American Sephardi Federation, the Leo Baeck Institute, the Yeshiva University Museum, and the YIVO Institute for Jewish Research—for providing the AJS with office space at the Center for Jewish History.

FROM THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

Dear Colleagues,

The most recent AJS conference in San Diego welcomed more than 940 registrants, 450 presentations, and, for the first time, twenty-six poster presentations. Attendance figures rivaled those for past conferences on the East Coast, reflecting the geographical diversity of AJS membership and the commitment of AJS members to attend the conference in new venues, near and far. With this in mind, AJS eagerly looks forward to its Thirty-ninth Annual Conference, to be held December 16–18, 2007 at the Sheraton Centre in Toronto, Ontario. This meeting represents the first time in the organization's history that AJS will hold its conference outside the United States, and is indicative of the international reach of the organization and the vitality of Jewish studies at Canadian institutions. AJS welcomes this opportunity to convene near a core of its membership constituency, and to welcome new Canadian members and conference attendees who will be participating in the AJS conference for the first time. Detailed information about the conference and visiting Toronto can be found on the AJS website at www.ajsnet.org. As a reminder, please note that as of January 2007, all persons, including U.S. citizens, traveling by air between the United States and Canada will be required to present a valid passport.

2007 also brings several other new initiatives, including:

Cahnman Foundation Publication Subvention Grants

AJS is pleased to launch its first publication subvention grant program, underwritten by a generous three-year grant from The Cahnman Foundation of New York. The Cahnman Publication Subventions will help subsidize costs associated with preparation of first books for publication. Manuscripts that explore Jewish engagement with and impact on artistic, intellectual, and cultural life in Europe and North Africa (e.g., through art, architecture, music, philosophy, science, politics, or literature) will be eligible for consideration. The selection committee will consider proposals for up to \$5000 in support. Applicants must be AJS members, have completed their Ph.D. degrees within six years of the deadline, written their project in English, and have a commitment for publication from an academic or university press. Further information can be found on page 14 of this issue and on the AJS website.

Syllabi Directory on AJS Website

AJS is expanding the Resources section of its website to include a directory of syllabi in all fields of Jewish studies. The purpose of the directory is to assist early-career academics in developing courses for the first time, and to help scholars at all stages of their careers identify new readings and assignments to incorporate into their courses. This directory is also meant to give institutions that are developing Jewish studies programs an overall sense of the field and of approaches to teaching Jewish studies on the undergraduate and graduate levels. This directory will be accessible to AJS members only. Please e-mail your syllabi as a Word document or pdf to the AJS office at ajs@ajs.cjh.org.

Eastern European Scholar Travel Grant Fund

Thanks to generous grants from the Ronald S. Lauder Foundation, the Forward Association, the YIVO Institute for Jewish Research, and private donations, AJS subsidized the participation of eight scholars from Eastern Europe at its most recent conference in San Diego. These scholars—four from Poland, two from Russia, one from Hungary, and one from Romania (see page 6 for names)—represented a diversity of disciplines and institutions, bringing innovative research and new perspectives on the field of Jewish studies to the AJS conference. The scholars also met with the AJS International Cooperation Committee, chaired by Berel Lang, to discuss ways in which AJS could help support Jewish studies programs in their countries. AJS plans to expand the Travel Grant Program for the 2007 meeting in Toronto by funding a greater number of scholars and providing additional opportunities for discussion with AJS members. If you or a colleague is interested in applying for a travel grant (applicants must be full-time academics in Jewish studies at an Eastern European research center or university), please contact the AJS office.

We hope that you are able to take advantage of the above opportunities, and we look forward to announcing new initiatives for AJS members in the months to come.

Rona Sheramy
Association for Jewish Studies

jewish

AUTOBIOGRAPHY AND BIOGRAPHY

DOUBLE TALK: TOWARD A YIDDISH POETICS OF THE SELF

Marcus Moseley

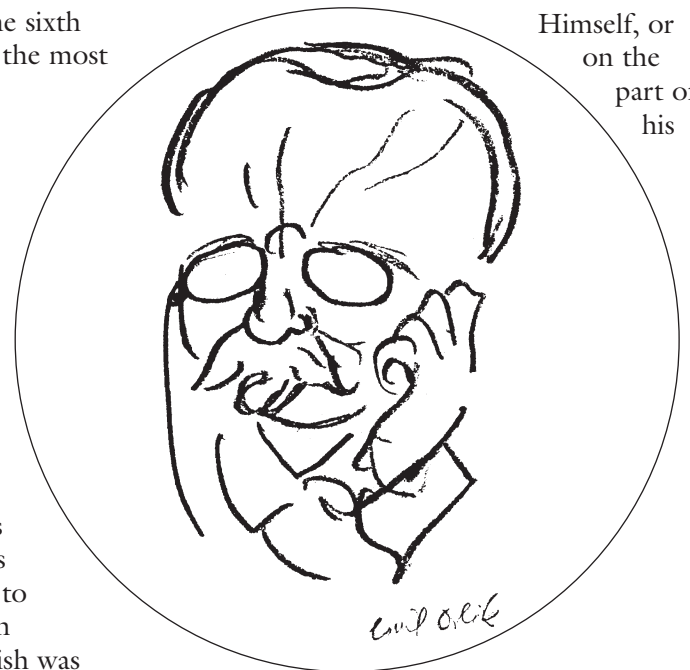
We jargon-Jews are perhaps the only people in the entire world upon whom lies the bitter curse, never to know the sweet taste of a beloved and intimate mother-tongue. The language in which we were raised in our childhood years, by means of which we received our earliest notions and in which we first gave expression to our childish emotions, this very language holds no intimacy for us, is alien to us. We feel no tenderness toward it . . . For we all know, that it is in truth completely alien to us, a sort of stigma of exile, which our bitter fate imposed upon us with violence, like the yellow mark of disgrace that in times past, our oppressors forced our ancestors to wear on their breast . . .

Since the inception of the *Haskalah* movement in late eighteenth-century Berlin, many cruel things have been said about Yiddish. In sheer venom, callousness of tone—not to mention masochism—few assaults on this language could match the above diatribe penned by the spiritual mentor of the

“Renaissance” period of Hebrew literature, Ahad Ha’am. His indictment of his own *mame loshn* is all the more odd in that this “letter to the editor,” printed on the first page of the bimonthly *Der yud*, thus constituting in effect its leading article, marked both the Yiddish literary debut of Ahad Ha’am and, not surprisingly, his swan song in the language. Stranger still is that this article is followed almost immediately by the sixth chapter of one of the most celebrated autobiographical depictions of childhood to be written in Yiddish, Sh.Y. Abramovitsh’s (Mendele Moykher Seforim) *Shloyme reb khayims*. The implicit conundrum that emerges from this publication data is how it is possible to speak of the self in “jargon,” as Yiddish was almost universally referred to at this period and later by both its proponents and detractors—a language so

utterly “alien,” indeed inimical to the “man.” The conundrum is further compounded by the fact that Ahad Ha’am himself spoke freely and fluently in Yiddish—a phenomenon that left the militant Hebraist Yosef Klausner utterly aghast. It should be noted that Abramovitsh himself, the “grandfather” of Yiddish literature, was by no means immune to the symptoms of self-alienation described by Ahad Ha’am. “My very being,” he writes in a letter, written in 1882 in his none-too-perfect Russian, to a close friend:

bears unmistakable witness to a strange error, either on behalf of the Creator Himself, or on the part of his



Sketch of Michah Yosef Berdichevsky by Emil Orlik from cover of *Boded be-ma'aravo: Mikvah Yosef Berdits'evski be-zikhronam shel bene zemano*, ed. Avner Holtzman, introduction by Nurit Govrin (Holon: Dvora and Emmanuel House, 1998). Courtesy of Avner Holtzman.

ministering angel: removing from the box, marked with some specific number, one of those souls designated for a privileged, fully enfranchised man, of a generous disposition, he betook himself, by some mistake, to some place in a shtetl, Kapulie, and inserted it—what a fool—into the body of some Jewess, a decent woman, but poor, downtrodden etcetera—and so it came to pass that there was born to the world a strange creature, one who is not in accord with himself!

Yiddish emerges, by implication, from the above-cited passages as a sort of dybbuk that sets self and anti-self at loggerheads within the psyche.

No Hebrew or Yiddish writer explored the phenomenon of Jewish duality or split consciousness at greater depth and length than Michah Yosef Berdichevsky (1865–1921), nor did any other writer of his day conduct so extensive an enquiry into the socio-psychological implications of Jewish bi- and tri-linguism. Since he wrote in Hebrew, Yiddish, and German, he knew whereof he spoke. Of special interest are Berdichevsky's meditations on language, since he was one of the very few Hebrew or Yiddish writers who underwent his literary apprenticeship in the school of *Haskalah* to evince an unqualifiedly positive attitude to his mother tongue. He is nonetheless at one with Ahad Ha'am in positing an ineradicable distinctiveness between Hebrew and Yiddish. Thus he writes in an essay included under the rubric *Sheniut* ("Duality"):

In the *Hebrew language*, the language of the book, we immerse the entire ancestral heritage in words and phrases, in ideas and images, in various visions and conceptions within

our own soul, and we give new birth to the language through the grafting of our spirit making of it a new creation . . . This is not true of the *Yiddish*

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language, the language of the moment, bereft of a past, in which we do not give of ourselves—any *investment of the self* in it (Yiddish) only leads to *the destruction of the language*—rather do we receive, receive from the quotidian, the utterances of the moment.

With Yiddish as opposed to Hebrew poetics, Berdichevsky writes further:

We do not have to do with a narrator telling of events that occurred to himself or to others, but rather these others come to tell us of their own lives in their own way, pass before us and speak and we are but the listeners . . . We do not find in the Yiddish language and in Yiddish poetics, in the authentic and not counterfeit sense of these terms, a poet speaking on his own behalf, proclaiming his individuality. It is the spirit of the people, rather, which speaks from his throat.

While Berdichevsky and Ahad Ha'am are diametrically opposed in their emotional stance toward their mother tongue, they share essentially the same premise: Yiddish is somehow stamped with an irreducible alterity. For Berdichevsky, it is precisely the alterity deplored by Ahad Ha'am that constitutes the distinction, in both senses of the term, of this language. He of all people, arguably the most autobiographically driven Hebrew writer of his day, embraces the prospect afforded by Yiddish of voiding of authorial self and reducing the narrator to a type of ventriloquist's puppet from whose "throat" issues the "voice of the people." In view of Berdichevsky's psycho-historical conception of Yiddish as "the utterances of the moment," it is understandable that he accords pride of place in his Yiddish writings to the monologue—a literary category virtually absent in his Hebrew writings. Ever the master of contradictions, however, Berdichevsky manifested a strong penchant for the simultaneous embrace of mutually exclusive alternatives. As Shmuel Werses points out, it is precisely in Berdichevsky's monologues, "although he only participates in these monologues as a listener, never stopping his interlocutor's confessional outpourings," that his autobiographical presence is most keenly felt. The negative of the verbal snapshot of the "moment" is somehow transformed into a positive as it meets the reader's eye.

Berdichevsky wrests autobiographical presence from autobiographical absence by implanting within the monologue of the "others who come to tell us of their lives" a ubiquitous consciousness of their unspeaking addressee, repeatedly addressed as "Reb Yos!" or "Yosl *dem rovs*,"

whose real-life identity is beyond doubt. The monologists also frequently allude to the occasion of their encounter with this “distant relative,” his return to his home town, Dubova, in 1902 to introduce his newly wed third wife, Rachel, to his family. Berdichevsky’s autobiographical presence-in-absence is well illustrated in the monologue “*Af der elter.*” “Yosl,” the monologue begins:

Do you [“Yosl” is addressed in the intimate “Du” throughout] not remember me at all? I am after all your teacher’s wife. How long is it since you attended our Kheyder, some twenty years perhaps...Who could then have predicted of you that you would become a German! We thought that you were cut out to be a rabbi [Rov] in Berditshev. Are you at the least a Reform rabbi [Rabiner] out there? For all that you are still a Jew and you have not forgotten our shtetl, no! No! How God guides His world: There you sit without a hat and I come to you and see that same Yosl, that nice little boy with *Peyes* . . . If Yoyel were alive he would have sounded you out in Toyre study, so as to see whether by now you have forgotten it all. Master of the universe! I see you still, sitting at the table sunk in thought over the *Gemore*. Then I said to myself: that one is peering into some place different . . . Yoyel was the great Talmudist, as you know, but he did not see beneath the surface, did not know his own pupils. But I had

eyes to see . . . I can tell from your eyes that you are no hater of *Yidishkayt*. How long are you going to be staying with us? . . . I just cannot get it into my head that you are that Yosl from so long ago. Tell me the truth, do you ever recall once in a while your teacher and the wife of his? Have you any idea how much we loved you!

Berdichevsky sets into play here an elaborate game of mirrors in which self and other are alternately cast into ironic relief; the same kind of reverberation is effected by Rimbaud’s formulation “*Je est un autre.*” Which leads one to ask, is this really the “voice of the people” that speaks from the writer’s “throat” or high sophistication masquerading as folksy reportage?

While not the first to employ this intro/extrospective oblique approach to the self, Berdichevsky innovated in giving theoretical expression to a “duality” (*Sheniut*) or cleavage of self that is by no means unique in Yiddish autobiographical writing, as is so richly demonstrated in the pioneering studies of Dan Miron in nineteenth-century Yiddish literature. Striking confirmation of such duality/cleavage is the election of both Abramovitch and Sholem Aleichem to speak of themselves in the third person in their auto/allo/biographies. Consider the following passage, taken from what must be one of the most bizarre autobiographical preambles ever written, by Sholem Aleichem, a writer whom Berdichevsky worshipped, acclaiming him as “the

only one who knows the Yiddish language and who created the Yiddish language”:

“Write your autobiography”—the real story, not an invented tale—is easier said than done...That’s why I chose a special form of autobiography: memoirs in the form of a novel. I’ll talk about myself in the third person. I, Sholem Aleichem the writer, will tell the true story of Sholem Aleichem the man, informally and without adornments and embellishments, as if an absolute stranger were talking, yet one who accompanied him everywhere, even to the seven divisions of hell.

Having cited the “grandfather” and the “grandson” of Yiddish literature, I conclude with a citation from a monologue written by the “father” of Yiddish literature, Y. L. Peretz, a monologue that the young Berdichevsky so much admired that he provided a Hebrew translation/reworking of the piece:

How is it possible for a man in this world to understand himself? . . . I want to tear myself out of my body, I want to stand apart from myself, or have the Other stand apart from me. Then “he” can look at I-he or I-he can look at him-I.

Marcus Moseley is associate professor of Jewish studies in the Department of German at Northwestern University.

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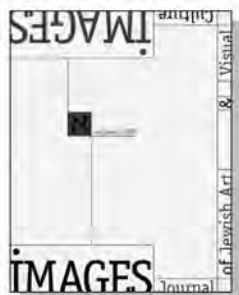
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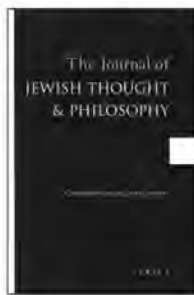
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BRILL

THEY CALLED ME MAYER JULY

Barbara Kirshenblatt-Gimblett

The following is an excerpt adapted from "A Daughter's Afterword," in *Mayer Kirshenblatt and Barbara Kirshenblatt-Gimblett, They Called Me Mayer July: Painted Memories of a Jewish Childhood in Poland Before the Holocaust* (Berkeley: University of California Press, forthcoming September 2007), to accompany an exhibition at the Judah L. Magnes Museum in Berkeley.

They Called Me Mayer July: *Painted Memories of a Jewish Childhood in Poland Before the Holocaust* arises from a forty-year conversation between a father and a daughter. I began interviewing my father, Mayer Kirshenblatt, in 1967 with the intention of both salvaging what he could remember of his life in Poland, and documenting his immigrant experiences. He was born in Opatów (Apt) in 1916 and came to Canada in 1934. Over the years, as I continued to interview him, it occurred to me that someone whose memory was so visual should be painting what he remembered: whenever he would explain how to bridle a horse or how to make a shoe, he would make a quick sketch to show me what he meant. Finally, in 1990, after a decade of coaxing, he began to paint at the age of 73.

With the paintings in hand, the interviewing intensified and the idea for a book that would integrate

images and words emerged. But what kind of book would it be? As I began to compile the manuscript from the transcribed interviews

and Mayer's pithy writings, I decided that the text for *They Called Me Mayer July* would be entirely in Mayer's voice and that its structure would arise from an internal logic, yet to be discovered, in the tangled network of stories and images that he had created.

When I say that *They Called Me Mayer July* is entirely in Mayer's voice, I mean to distinguish this book from such works as Art Spiegelman's rightly celebrated *Maus*, which is structured around "the story of the story," that is, around the process of creating the work. *Maus* shows both parties to

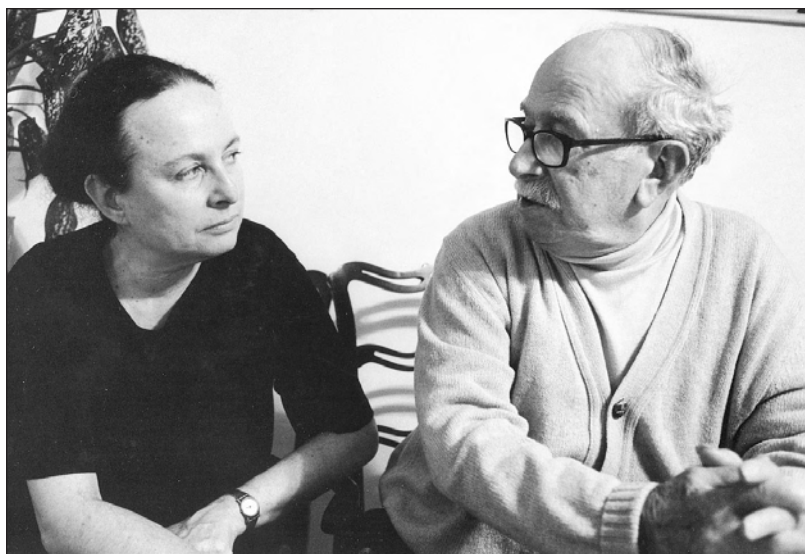
the contrary, it is profoundly dialogic, but without our forty-year conversation appearing as such in the text.

In *They Called Me Mayer July* the voice of the text is the voice of our collaboration. There were many other ways we could have composed this text. I could have told Mayer's story in the third person. I could have written in my first-person voice and quoted him. I could have preserved the form of the interview. Or, in the manner of Charlotte Salomon, we could have matched a sequence of images to a sequence of discrete texts.

We chose instead what anthropologist Barbara Myerhoff calls the "third voice," which she explains as follows: something new, a "third person," is created "when two points of view are engaged in examining one life."

That voice can be heard in the text's orientation to the listener: "the authorial word enters the other's utterance from the lived subject position of the listener, that is, as if it were a gift of loving attention," as Mark Kaminsky explains in his account of Myerhoff's approach. For Myerhoff, who

developed these ideas while working on *Number Our Days*, a book and film about elderly Jews living in Venice, California, listening is an ethical stance; it is essential to what she calls "growing a soul." The third voice that emerges from the listening relationship is realized textually through an approach to editing that she calls "soulwork." To be present in the text as a listener is not an act of self-



Barbara Kirshenblatt-Gimblett and Mayer Kirshenblatt. Photo credit: Frédéric Brenner.

the collaboration in conversation, overtly representing their relationship and way of working together. Indeed, for Spiegelman "the story of the story" is the story. This is decidedly not the case in *They Called Me Mayer July*: here, the story is the story. Nonetheless, to say that *They Called Me Mayer July* is "entirely in Mayer's voice" is not the whole story because the text is anything but a monologue. Quite

effacement, but one of intense attentiveness.

What did Mayer remember and how? “It is perhaps in the artisan that one must seek the most admirable evidences of the sagacity, the patience, and the resources of the mind,” writes Jean Le Rond d’Alembert in his “Preliminary Discourse to the Encyclopedia of Diderot.” This too was Mayer’s philosophy. With the town as his classroom, Mayer pursued a self-designed curriculum of gestural knowledge, embodied intelligence, and know-how connected to tools, materials, processes, and workspaces: the cooper, ropemaker, blacksmith, butcher, goldsmith, carpenter, brushmaker, tailor, and shoemaker. Delight in how things work—“the pleasure taken in observing processes”—is what Neil Harris calls the operational aesthetic.

Mayer says he has no imagination, by which he means that he is more interested in the “made” than in the “made up.” Mayer’s disclaimer notwithstanding, memory and imagination go together. His capacity to find the extraordinary in the ordinary is the form that his imagination takes. We might call this kind of imagination extrospective because it is more concerned with the palpable world than with interiority. In this respect, *They Called Me Mayer July* is an instance of what Paul John Eakin calls the referential aesthetic.

What makes Mayer’s stories memorable is precisely that they do not force “the psychological connection of the events” on the reader (or the listener); this is a hallmark of the art of the storyteller as Walter Benjamin understands it. When Mayer says, “What I am trying to do basically is not to

glorify myself, but to portray life as it was,” he points to what makes *They Called Me Mayer July* an extrospective autobiography. It is a prime example of the “dependence of the self for wholeness on its surroundings,” in John Dewey’s words.

Mayer’s account differs from the autobiographies that the YIVO Institute for Jewish Research had

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hoped to solicit from Jewish youth in Poland during the 1930s through a series of autobiography contests. What YIVO wanted were autobiographies that would yield insights of psychoanalytic value, the better to understand a generation that in many cases saw little hope for a future in Poland. The more introspective, the better. Mayer could easily have been a contestant; he was in Poland at the time and the right age to enter the contest. But would he have won a prize?

And, is *They Called Me Mayer July* an autobiography, strictly speaking? If, as Elizabeth Buss states, “There is no intrinsically autobiographical form,” what kind of autobiography is *They Called Me Mayer July*, particularly when Mayer asserts, as he often does, that his project is about Apt, not about himself, and that all such towns were pretty much the same? This kind of autobiography, which gives precedence to the world in which Mayer lived, is what I am calling extrospective; others have called it autoethnographic, because of its strong documentary impulse and focus on daily life. Although many

examples can be cited, to mention only Henry Louis Gates, Jr. and Zora Neale Hurston, Jewish autobiography has been characterized not only as a late flowering within the history of autobiography more generally but also as decidedly not in the confessional mold of St. Augustine and Rousseau, whose accounts have traditionally defined the genre. It follows, some have argued, that most Jewish autobiographies are therefore not autobiographical because their focus is “not upon the self of the author but upon the community, the first-person singular of the autobiographical narrator being, in effect, a trope for the

first-person plural of the collective,” as Marcus Moseley discusses in his magisterial history of Jewish autobiography. Given that all autobiographies are relational and that they can take any form, *They Called Me Mayer July* may not look like Rousseau’s *Confessions*, but that does not make it any less autobiographical.

Moreover, the distinction between extrospective and introspective, while useful, quickly dissolves, for the material world as lived has a way of exceeding its concreteness: “A house that has been experienced is not an inert box,” as Gaston Bachelard writes. The experienced house, however extrospectively described, has the capacity to “become the topography of our intimate being.” Doorways and windows in Mayer’s paintings often open to mysterious spaces, rather than to precisely defined locations in Apt, suggesting a psychic topography yet to be charted, in an affective territory that is at once oneiric and foreboding. For all its discomforts, the house in which Mayer grew up is described in fine detail: the stenciling of the walls,

construction of the oven, and repair of the ceiling. Mayer's home is a vital space intensely inhabited. In Bachelard's words, "by remembering 'houses' and 'rooms,' we learn to 'abide' within ourselves."

Mayer's way of knowing the world may account in part for his ability to remember, for there is something intrinsically mnemonic about his bodily engagement with an intelligent material universe. Its relational logic makes it memorable, whether the articulation of parts, the workings of a mechanism, the entailment of steps in a process, the

arrangement of things in space, or the connection of a thing, process, or space to a vivid person. His descriptions of things, tools, and machines are narratives in their own right, and they are endowed with a poetics of their own—if we agree with Barthes, writing about the images in Diderot's *Encyclopédie*, "to define Poetics as the sphere of the infinite vibrations of meaning, at the center of which is placed the literal object."

In a letter dated June 6, 1982, Mayer wrote to tell me that he had carefully packed the porcupine he made from an intact eggshell and

toothpicks, and that he hoped this time it would arrive in one piece. He included a few Yiddish children's rhymes in the letter and a P.S.: "This should make your day a happy day for you." Indeed, it did. *They Called Me Mayer July* is the culmination of many such happy days.

Barbara Kirshenblatt-Gimblett is university professor and professor of performance studies at New York University. She is also secretary-treasurer of the Association for Jewish Studies.

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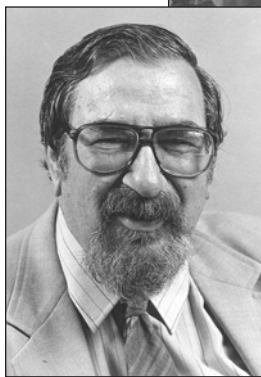
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JEWISH HISTORY, FAMILY HISTORY, AUTOBIOGRAPHY: MY GRANDMOTHER, MY FATHER, AND MYSELF

Jeremy Popkin

In December 1999, I caused a scandal at the annual Association for Jewish Studies meeting. I delivered a scholarly paper, based on original research in primary sources, on the subject of my grandmother. Word got around, and at the meeting of the program committee, a prominent member of the association somberly warned his colleagues of the danger posed to the organization if it allowed the spread of “grandmother studies.” Jewish studies has struggled too hard for academic respectability to risk its status by letting the AJS program become an opportunity for anyone with Jewish ancestors and a Ph.D. to come and tell family stories.



Richard H. Popkin
(1923-2005).
Courtesy of
Jeremy Popkin.

So, what were Grandma and I doing at AJS? She—Zelda Popkin (1898–1983), novelist and public-relations person—was doing, posthumously, what I had often seen her do when she was alive: showing off. After all, hadn’t she written one of the first American novels with a Holocaust theme—

Small Victory, set in occupied Germany after the war, and centering around the treatment of Jewish survivors in the DP camps, published in 1947—and hadn’t she also written the first American novel about the creation of the

state of Israel? Yes indeed, my grandmother should have been Leon Uris: her book, *Quiet Street*, appeared in 1951, seven years



Zelda Popkin sizes up her grandson and future biographer.
Courtesy of Jeremy Popkin.

before *Exodus*. It drew on the impressions she had gathered during a two-month visit to the newborn state of Israel in late 1948, and, by 1999, it seemed appropriate to note that the first novel on the subject had been written by a woman author and told the story through the experiences of female characters. Admittedly, my grandmother’s two novels were commercial failures, but surely they entitled her to a modest place in the story of American Jewish literature and in Jewish women’s history.

But what was I doing channeling my grandmother at AJS? I am a professional scholar, but my normal bailiwick is the history of the French Revolution. To be sure, at the University of Kentucky, I have taught an undergraduate course on the Holocaust since the late 1970s, but I have never committed myself to do much scholarly research in that area. The only reason I wrote about the author of *Small Victory* and *Quiet Street* was that she was my grandmother, and that I had been surprised to learn that the standard study of American fiction about Israel, Andrew Furman’s *Israel Through the American-Jewish Imagination* (1997), made no mention of her book. Zelda had certainly loomed large in my life. When I was a child, she was the family celebrity. Her Manhattan apartment seemed unbelievably glamorous compared to our house in Iowa City, Iowa, where my father, the historian of philosophy Richard H. Popkin, was a university professor, and her chain-smoking, Scotch-drinking lifestyle was my initial image of sophistication. On visits to the East Coast, my other grandmother tried to interest me in her vegetable garden, while Zelda—she taught her grandchildren to call her by her exotic first name—explained to me the best ways to commit undetectable murders, a subject she had mastered in order to write the detective stories that had started her writing career.

Zelda might not have approved of the way I turned my interest in her into a scholarly project. “Write something that will sell,” she always told me, advice I still haven’t learned to follow. At her death, she had left her literary papers to the Twentieth-Century American Authors collection in the Boston University library. Working in BU’s rare book room, I was in my world, not hers. A one-time journalist, she liked to be out talking to people, not sitting at a desk. The proof was

in the notes in the tiny spiral notebooks from her trip to Israel that I found in her files, from which I could see how she transformed her experiences into a book. Her letters conveyed the bitterness with which she reacted to her novels' failures: she blamed American Jewish readers of the early 1950s, who, she concluded, were scared to identify with Jewish characters. With the superior wisdom of those who come afterward, I noted that she reached this conclusion just as Bernard Malamud, Saul Bellow, and Philip Roth were proving otherwise. But I did (together with my mother, the literary agent Julie Popkin) succeed in getting *Quiet Street* back in print (with Bison Books, in 2002). For that, Zelda might have forgiven me for burying her under a pile of footnotes in an article published in *Shofar* a year earlier. It was a way for me to make a small connection with the world of Jewish scholarship—and to see that my own ambivalent relationship with Jewishness was part of a family tradition.

And then my father died, in April 2005. By that time, I had moved beyond my original specialty in French history and begun to write about autobiography and life-writing: when I saw my father for the last time, I was able to show him the first copy of my book, *History, Historians and Autobiography*, and remind him that some of my first insights into the subject had come from listening to him thinking out the issues involved when he was writing an autobiographical essay for his own *festschrift*. His death had a much greater emotional impact on me than that of my grandmother. In addition to everything else that he represented for me, it was his example that I had followed when I

chose my own profession. And if Zelda had been Jewish because, having grown up with and then rebelled against Orthodox immigrant parents, she couldn't be anything else, my father had modeled a far more complicated relationship to Judaism. Allergic to almost everything having to do with religious practice, he was

IN THE LETTERS, I COULD HEAR MY FATHER'S VOICE, AND ENJOY THE SENSE OF HUMOR WITH WHICH HE HAD TURNED OUR FAMILY ADVENTURES INTO STORIES FOR HIS STORY-WRITING MOTHER'S BENEFIT.

nevertheless fascinated with the Jewish past and especially with the intellectual legacy of the Marranos. In his scholarship, he had elevated them to the status of the progenitors of modern thought.

I didn't have to launch scholarship on my father by myself. UCLA's William Andrews Clark Library, where he worked for the last two decades of his life, sponsored a two-day conference on his contributions to the history of philosophy and Jewish studies in June 2006, and an even larger meeting is scheduled to take place in Brazil in October 2007. The Clark Library generously invited me to participate in their conference, but, beyond representing the Popkin family, what was I to contribute? At first I thought I would just share some personal stories, but then my academic instincts took over. My mother still had Dad's old correspondence: could a historian resist the lure of such documents? Above all, there were twenty-five years' worth of letters my father had written to Zelda, and which she had stuffed into an old hatbox that my parents had inherited when she died. My father hadn't been interested in looking at them, but he had let me put them into chronological order. Now, I actually sat down and read them.

In the letters, I could hear my father's voice, and enjoy the sense of humor with which he had turned our family adventures into stories for his story-writing mother's benefit. I relived my own childhood, as my father recounted it, and, even more poignantly, that of my sister Maggi, who died tragically and unexpectedly just a month after my father. And I realized I could offer something to the scholars interested in my father's thought: the letters provided valuable clues about the way in which his ideas, including his perceptions about the importance of the Marranos, developed. Of course, I couldn't pretend to be doing objective scholarship—among other things, I couldn't help contrasting my own memories of events with what my father had written—but, on the other hand, I had a unique view of how my father's private life and his scholarly interests connected. Surely it is significant that our family only began holding Passover seders shortly before Dad "discovered" the Marranos and began the research that made him a major figure in Jewish studies!

Doing "academic" research on my father—going through his correspondence to organize it for donation to the Clark Library—is also teaching me things I hadn't known about him. For example, his correspondence with his longtime friend Judah Goldin, for many years dean of the Jewish Theological Seminary, provides a very different perspective on his interest in Judaism than his letters to Zelda. Going through my father's papers also meant rethinking Zelda, especially when I found her replies to the letters my father had written to her. From them, I learned that there had been another side to my

grandmother's seemingly glamorous life during my childhood. When I was growing up, she was a published author but also a penniless one, reduced to begging for financial support from her son. She worried when he became fascinated with Judaism, fearing that her own father's Orthodox genes might be reasserting themselves. Putting the two sides of the correspondence together, I realized I was looking at the long and arduous process by which an adult child tried to come to terms with a difficult parent. It's certainly an experience I can relate to.

As I gather more of my father's and grandmother's papers, I am learning more about both of them. Will I become their biographer? Probably not: I have my own scholarly interests, which for the moment

have come to center on a new subject far removed from my family past, namely, the Haitian Revolution of the 1790s. Will I nevertheless share some of what I have learned by combining family history with the methods of professional scholarship? I certainly

. . . JEWISH HISTORY, FAMILY HISTORY, AUTOBIOGRAPHY: IN THIS CASE, THEY ARE ALL PART OF THE SAME PROJECT.

hope so. I think my academic training allows me to make sense out of these family documents in a way that I wouldn't be able to do otherwise. Will the results matter to scholars of Jewish studies? I think

they should. I don't think it's just family pride that makes me believe that the lives of Zelda Popkin and Richard Popkin illuminate some important issues in twentieth-century Jewish life. And will these be academic projects like the others I engage myself in? Obviously not! My grandmother and my father are too close to me; among other things, thinking about their own complicated ways of being Jewish necessarily makes me think about my own struggles with Jewish identity. Jewish history, family history, autobiography: in this case, they are all part of the same project.

Jeremy Popkin is the T. Marshall Hahn, Jr., Professor of History at the University of Kentucky.

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AUTOBIOGRAPHY AS A SOURCE FOR THE STUDY OF GERMAN JEWRY IN ITS HOMELAND AND IN DISPERSION

Guy Miron

From the end of the eighteenth century onward, and with steadily increasing frequency in the nineteenth century and the first decades of the twentieth, autobiographical writing became one of the primary ways in which German Jews expressed themselves and sought to describe and preserve their world. The nature of this literature and the intentions of its authors, who wrote with an eye to posterity, make it one of the most interesting sources for historians focusing on the study of this particular Jewish community. This kind of personal writing, which is often quite intimate, naturally yields insights unavailable in more public sources such as communal records, the statutes of organizations, Jewish newspapers, etc. These personal details, and the necessarily subjective vantage points from which they are described, were once thought to be of little significance and perhaps even problematic by historians who focused on the political history of Jews, on their struggle for emancipation and afterwards also on the demise of their world in the Nazi era. But since the 1970s Jewish

autobiographies have been recognized as highly valuable sources for the history of German Jewry.

The rise of the autobiographical genre among the Jews of Germany was inextricably bound up with the fact that the majority of them

became part of the German middle class and consequently tended to identify with an ethos that emphasized the value of the individual. The central importance of family values in bourgeois culture also contributed to the composition of autobiographies intended for

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ANTI-SEMITISM, AND THE DECLINE OF TRADITIONAL JUDAISM
AS WELL AS THE DIFFICULTY OF SUSTAINING A MEANINGFUL
JEWISH LIFE IN THE MODERN ERA.

family purposes (some of them were even written as family chronicles), many of which were written by women. Apart from these factors, which were characteristic of the German bourgeoisie in general, the uniqueness of German Jewish autobiography stems from the variety of ways in which the writers grappled with the formation of their identities as German Jews facing the challenges of emancipation, anti-Semitism, and the decline of traditional Judaism as well as the difficulty of sustaining a meaningful Jewish life in the modern era. The last wave of German Jewish autobiographies, and perhaps the

largest of all, was produced by hundreds of Jews who left Germany as emigrants, refugees, and even survivors of the Nazi regime. These autobiographies, written as early as the 1930s, continued to be produced throughout the twentieth century and have not yet come to a halt. They have appeared in German as well as in the different languages of the countries of emigration (English, Hebrew, Spanish, etc.) and constitute the last stratum of the heritage of German Jewry.

The Nazi regime's violent destruction of German Jewish life, in addition to inspiring many German Jews to record the story of their lives, was also an impetus to more institutionalized efforts to foster this kind of writing, collect it, and place it at the disposal of future researchers. I will give two examples of this.

In August 1939 the *New York Times* published a small notice announcing an essay contest on the subject of "My Life in Germany Before and after January 30, 1933." The initiative was undertaken by an interdisciplinary

research team operating out of Harvard University (a historian, a sociologist, and a psychologist) and yielded a total of 180 full-length autobiographical narratives (almost a third of which were, incidentally, written by women). This collection has since served no small number of scholars of twentieth-century German Jewry and its offshoots. In recent years, a team of German researchers centered around Detlef Garz has been busy publishing selected manuscripts from this collection and pursuing research based on the rich materials it contains.

Another, more comprehensive collection of German Jewish memoirs began after the establishment of the Leo Baeck Institute in 1955. In the middle of the 1950s several people affiliated with the Institute in Jerusalem began to collect family memoirs and autobiographies written by German Jewish émigrés and even to encourage the writing of additional ones. At the end of the 1950s the center of this project shifted to the New York branch of the Leo Baeck Institute, where it was directed by Max Kreutzberger. As Miriam Gebhardt has recently shown, the New York collection quickly became the world center for German Jewish autobiographical heritage. More than three hundred autobiographies were included in the “Kreutzberger catalogue” that was published in 1970. The total number of writings included today in the collection has reached around 1,200, most of which were written by German Jewish émigrés in the United States after 1945.

An important landmark in the study of these autobiographies and in the effort to make them accessible to the public was the work of Monika Richarz, who, in the course of the 1970s, assembled 126 autobiographical excerpts from the life stories collected in New York and published them in German (partial editions were subsequently published in English and Hebrew). Richarz marked the beginning of an effort to go beyond collecting the material to the systematic use of it in reconstructing the social history of German Jewry. In addition to providing material pertaining to the assimilation of German Jews into German society, their intellectual creativity, and anti-Semitism, these autobiographies offered a most important source for scholars

investigating questions relating to social life, family structure, and gender. Scholars relying on the autobiographies in these ways generally approached them from a positivistic standpoint—they assumed that despite their subjective point of view, the descriptions embedded in them were fundamentally accurate and could be used to reconstruct history “as it really was.” Illustrative of this



Julie Braun-Vogelstein writing at desk, 1916.
Courtesy of the Leo Baeck Institute, New York.

tendency are the books of Marion Kaplan on home and family life and on developments in the realm of gender among German Jews in the imperial period and in the Nazi era. The volume Kaplan has recently edited on the everyday life of German Jewry is likewise based on extensive use of autobiographical sources in this manner.

The 1990s witnessed the emergence of a different approach to German Jewish memoirs and autobiographies on the part of scholars influenced by the increasing

attention to Jewish collective memory (as evoked by Yosef Hayim Yerushalmi’s book *Zakhor*) as well as the constantly expanding theoretical literature produced by scholars from a variety of non-historical disciplines (literature, sociology, psychology, and anthropology) on matters dealing with social memory and life stories. For these scholars, the autobiographies served not as sources for the German Jewish past “as it really was” *despite* their subjectivity, but as sources for “the social history of memory” and for the self-consciousness of the writers precisely *because* of their subjectivity. Two studies that approached German Jewish autobiographies in this way were Miriam Gebhardt’s book (*Family Memory*, 1999), written in Germany, and my book (*German Jews in Israel*, 2004), written in Jerusalem. It is interesting to note that we worked simultaneously, on the basis of similar assumptions, and that at a certain point we made contact with each other to compare our results.

With respect to studies like these that are based on the reconstruction of the self-consciousness of the writers *at the time of writing* the question of *where and when* the autobiographies were written is of crucial

importance. Gebhardt chose, therefore, to occupy herself systematically with works written by Jews *in Germany* from 1890 to 1932. Because she was mainly interested in investigating the influence of emancipation, bourgeoisification, and integration of the Jews into the German environment on personal and family memory, she systematically omitted autobiographies written after 1933 from her sample, assuming that the rise of the Nazis to power and later occurrences had a decisive impact on the writers in their

reconstruction of their earlier past. My book is based on the autobiographies of several dozen German Jews who were born and raised in Germany during the age of emancipation but who all wrote the story of their lives after the Nazis' rise to power and in most cases also after the Holocaust. Moreover, my wish to examine the writers' formation of their memories in a definite context inspired me to focus my research only on those who made aliyah, immigrated or fled to Palestine/Israel, and composed their life stories when they were living there. With the aid of control groups I compared the ways in which these writers construed their pasts as Jews in Germany and as émigrés to a number of autobiographical writings that were written by German Jews who migrated to the United States and also to some who migrated to Israel but chose to return to Germany after the war and wrote their memoirs there.

The writer's retrospective assessment of his or her past decisively influences, it seems, what he or she chooses to remember and to put on paper and also what he or she chooses to repress

and forget. Thus Gebhardt highlights in her book writers who describe the story of the rise of German Jewry "from the ghetto to the villa" as the central—if by no means only—theme of the sources with which she is concerned. Many of the writers in Germany, she shows, sought to promote the values of the emancipation and tended, therefore, to downplay anti-Semitism or to minimize it. The writers with whom I concerned myself chose, naturally enough, different narrative strategies. Some of their autobiographies were written in order to describe the greatness of "the world that was" but also its collapse. They sometimes praised the achievements of emancipated German Jewry, but since they were writing at a much later date they were much less reluctant to display its weaknesses and tended, sometimes, to describe the anti-Semitism of the imperial period and the era of the Weimar republic as foreshadowing the later demise of the German Jewish community. Others focused their stories precisely on the story of Zionism and aliyah to Israel, while reducing the German Jewish past to nothing more than the background to these subjects. Religion, profession, gender, and

additional topics also figure in some of these autobiographies as central themes around which the reconstruction of the autobiographical memory takes shape.

Jewish autobiographies in Germany will in all likelihood persist in being a fruitful source for different kinds of research. The enormous range of sources, which may still increase in the future, the diversity of subjects they treat, and the variety of scholarly points of view from which they can be regarded—perspectives that do not contradict but rather complement one another—will continue to draw the attention of a wide variety of scholars. Their ranks will include those German Jews who bequeath their personal memoirs to posterity as well as those who will make use of these documents in the preparation of comparative studies.

Translated from Hebrew by Hanan Ben-Yehudah.

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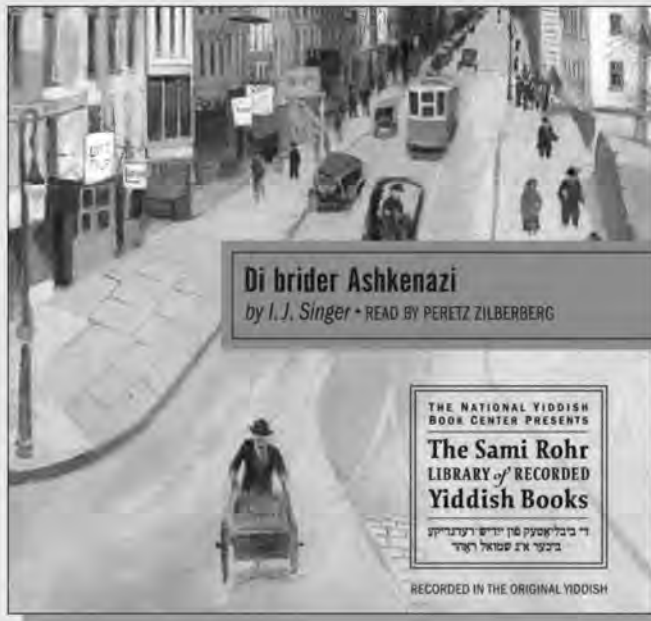
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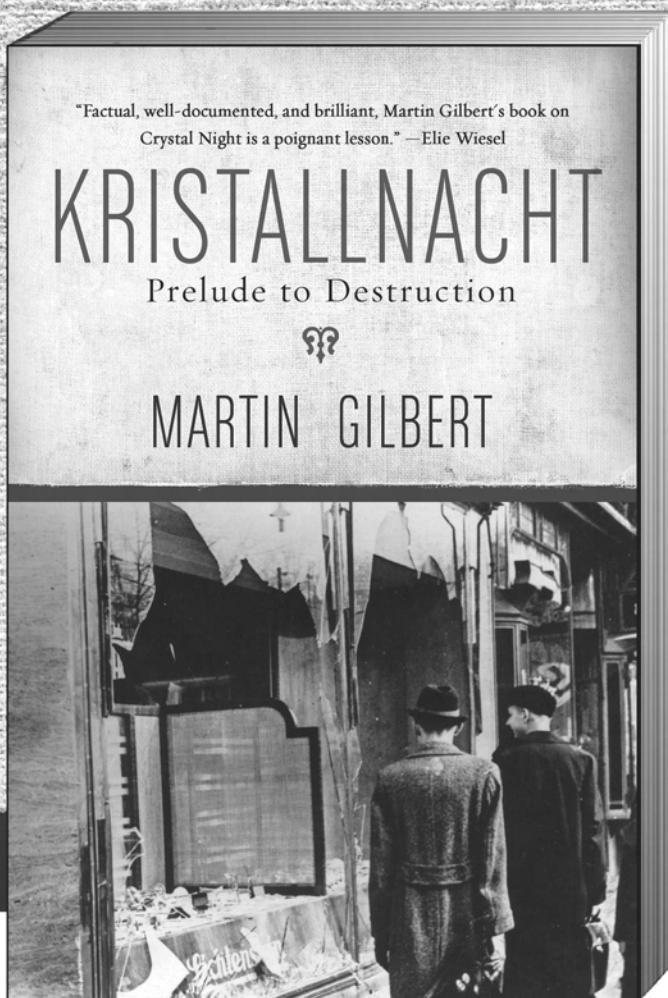
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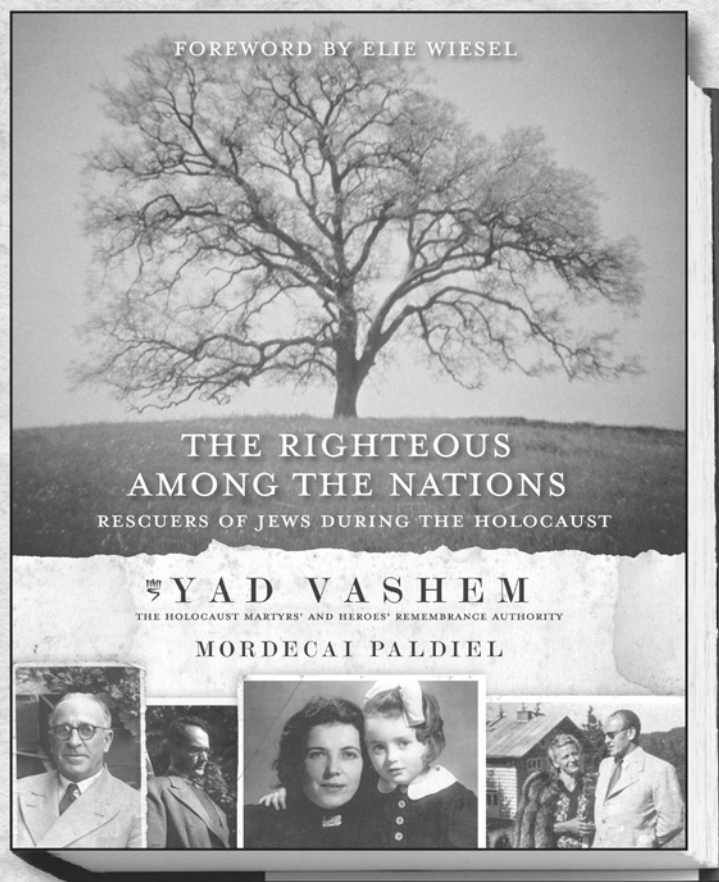
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REMEMBERING HOME AND EXILE: MEMOIRS BY JEWS OF MUSLIM LANDS

Alanna E. Cooper

A century ago, close to a million Jews inhabited the Muslim lands of North Africa, the Middle East, and Central Asia. Today, less than fifty thousand remain. Popular and academic accounts of this population shift focus mainly on the

political processes that generated it. Roya Hakakian's *Journey from the Land of No* (2004), Andre Aciman's *Out of Egypt* (1994), and Albert Memmi's *Pillar of Salt*

(1953), are part of a small but important group of Jewish autobiographies that provide a different focus. Writing about the twentieth-century Muslim world on the eve of massive Jewish emigration, these three Jewish authors navigate the tension-riddled relationship between their own growing sense of self and the volatile, maturing countries in which they live. These memoirs explore the events leading up to their authors' departures from their countries of origin, offer meditations on Jewish identity in the Muslim world, and dwell on the Jews' relationship to exile and home. As a group, they

provide three models for understanding the experience of Jews born in Muslim lands in modern times.

Journey from the Land of No

Roya Hakakian's story begins in

the courtyard of her family's home in Tehran. In this idyllic childhood setting, the strands of her identity are seamlessly linked. Under the Shah's rule, her family celebrates Jewish holidays, worships in the

THESE MEMOIRS EXPLORE THE EVENTS LEADING UP TO THEIR AUTHORS' DEPARTURES FROM THEIR COUNTRIES OF ORIGIN, OFFER MEDITATIONS ON JEWISH IDENTITY IN THE MUSLIM WORLD, AND DWELL ON THE JEWS' RELATIONSHIP TO EXILE AND HOME.

synagogue, and marks its home with a mezuzah but at the same time fully partakes in Iranian culture and

security abruptly ends. Yet the youthful, optimistic Hakakian manages to maintain an integrated sense of self until she emigrates in 1985.

The descriptions of her efforts to remain true to both to her Iranian-ness and her Jewishness provide an unexpected view of the revolution in which she and her friends take part. Not, of course, as advocates of Islamicization but rather as fighters against the poverty, corruption, and censorship that prevailed under the Shah. Aspiring to an era of freedom and equality, Jewish youth—like their Muslim counterparts—participated in the exhilarating

project of shaping the future of their beloved country.

One morning, for instance, Hakakian and her classmates in Tehran's large, all-girls Jewish day school found that their principal had

been replaced by a veiled, Muslim woman. The bewildered students mocked the new principal behind her back, but diligently attended her lessons in the Koran. However, when Mrs. Moghadam declared that attendance would be required during Passover, the students refused to go along. Storming the classrooms and crashing windows, they rebelled as both the "children of Moses, freer of slaves," and as Iranian "daughters of the revolution," who fought tyranny in all its manifestations.



Egyptian-Jewish emigrants, before embarking on the ship to Marseilles, France. Port of Alexandria, Egypt, 1956.

© Beth Hatefutsoth Photo Archive, courtesy of J. Stambouli, France.

public life. In 1979, with the fall of the Shah, her life of comfort and

Throughout the memoir, Hakakian

insists that the revolution—like her “Passover Rebellion”—was essentially a struggle for freedom and equality, and that the persecution she suffered after 1979—as both a Jew and as a woman—was simply a symptom of a revolution gone awry. Nevertheless, the Jews’ worsening situation eventually leads her family to emigrate. In exile, she becomes not only geographically displaced but alienated from herself, as her Iranian identity is negated. Almost fifteen years later, she writes her autobiography to mend the breach. This process becomes integral to the memoir itself, as it is through the act of writing that she is able to reclaim both her Jewish and her Iranian heritage.

Out of Egypt

Like Hakakian’s, Andre Aciman’s autobiography recounts the events leading up to his family’s expulsion at a time when the inhabitants of his homeland were redefining their national identity. The similarities, however, end here. Whereas Hakakian’s work is linear—beginning in her courtyard, where the coordinates of home and self are solid, and ending with the trauma of exile—Aciman’s book elides trajectory. Like a dream, it moves back and forth in time. Identities are constantly in flux and the shifting category of “home” is elusive and ephemeral. Much like floating characters in a Chagall painting, Aciman’s mobile, cosmopolitan family members are painted in brilliant colors and playful forms, without a horizon line to ground them. They live in Alexandria but are not rooted there, having arrived from Istanbul at the turn of the twentieth century along with a large influx of immigrants—Jews and non-Jews alike—who were

attracted by the city’s favorable economic conditions.

Taking full advantage of the country’s social and financial opportunities, Aciman’s grandparents and their siblings become closely connected with the centers of political and economic power. Yet, over the course of their three-generation sojourn in Egypt, they never become Egyptian—an identity they deride as primitive and barbaric. They are above all cosmopolitans, ready to move, if the conditions are right, anywhere a business opportunity presents itself.

The family is Jewish too. But with no sense of connection to a religious covenant, to an enduring community, or to a scattered people, this aspect of their identity

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is also fleeting and cosmopolitan, shaped by the particulars of their own complex past. Their ancestors were fifteenth-century exiles from Spain who resettled in the Ottoman Empire in the sixteenth century, and who acquired various forms of European citizenship in the nineteenth century. For them, Jewishness is an identification with those who share their history. Others—like their Jewish brother-in-law from Iraq (whom they refer to as an “Arab”)—are simply outsiders.

It is, perhaps, the historical memory of their ancestors’ *converso* experience in fifteenth-century Spain that most strongly informs Aciman’s family’s Jewish identity. This legacy is fully realized when the young Aciman and his father

convert to Christianity, not out of conviction but as an act of self-preservation in the face of Egypt’s growing anti-Jewish sentiment. “I understand,” the priest says, “Communion on Sunday, but Fridays the *Shema*. With you Jews nothing is ever clear. . . . You’re citizens nowhere, and traitors everywhere, even to yourself.”

Just as Aciman’s memoir does not begin with a stable starting point—where home and identity are clearly defined—it does not end with rupture. Like Hakakian’s memoir, it does, however, close with the family’s forced migration. For Aciman, though, departure from Egypt belongs to a long history of expulsions. “Everything repeats itself,” his father tells him as he packs to leave, relating stories of a string of ancestors who had done the same.

In this case, exile comes in the wake of the Suez crisis. As Egyptian nationalist fervor peaks, foreign property is

expropriated and expulsion notices are issued to French and British nationals as well as to Jews. “But we are not Israelis!” Aciman’s uncle Isaac protests. “Tell that to President Nasser,” another uncle retorts.

Reacting to the imposed link between Jewish and Israeli identity, Aciman struggles against any intimation that the Jews are a people with a national homeland. Israel, for him, is not home. But neither is Egypt. For Aciman the persistent condition of exile poses no rupture, as it does for Hakakian, but hardship that is mitigated by the magnificent opportunities accompanying it. Exile in *Out of Egypt*, is akin to the adulteress liaisons in which Aciman’s father and uncles indulge. Rather than

focusing on their domestic relationships, they forever chase the allure of the lover, who is fully adored only when she is a transient, fleeting, affair. Likewise, it is not until the eve of Aciman's departure from Egypt, that he finds himself longing for Alexandria, a city that he never knew he loved.

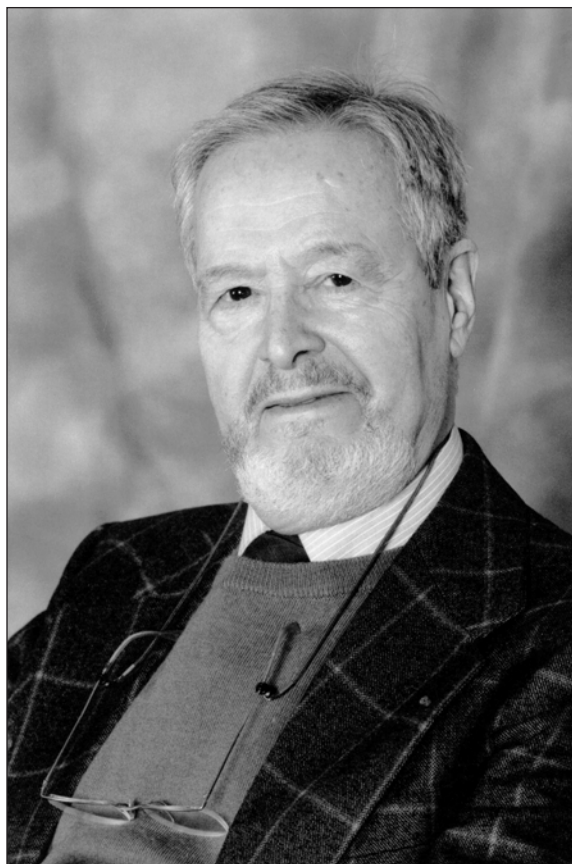
Whereas memoir-writing for Hakakian is an act of reclaiming her Iranian identity, denied to her by Khomeini's regime, for Aciman, memoir-writing is a romantic celebration of exile. No home—Spain, Egypt, Turkey, Israel, France—is worth a tale unless it is fondly remembered from a safe distance.

Pillar of Salt

Albert Memmi's semi-autobiographical *Pillar of Salt* takes place in Tunisia in the years prior to the country's independence in 1956. These same years correspond to his development from boyhood to manhood, and to the events leading up to his decision to emigrate. Unlike the memoirs of Hakakian and Aciman, Memmi's work concludes by highlighting the impossible contradictions faced by the Jew in the postcolonial Muslim world. Where Hakakian depicts the allure of the revolution, and Aciman lingers over the romance of exile, Memmi's character broods, offering no good resolution to his painful, persistent state of alienation.

Alexandre Mordekahi Benillouche, Memmi's alter-ego, leaves the safe alley of his boyhood to attend the local *Alliance* school. Here he begins to view himself through the eyes of his enlightened, western, colonial educators. Later, in his French lycée, he comes to loathe the indigenous Jewish customs of

his mother's home, which he learns to characterize as primitive and backward. Working to separate himself from his family, he immerses himself in the academy and in French high culture, and ceases to speak his native Arabic dialect.



Albert Memmi. Courtesy of Le félin.

When World War II erupts and Tunisia's Jews are threatened by advancing German forces, Benillouche turns to his French teachers and employers for protection. They refuse his requests, identifying him as Jew and a native, rather than a true Frenchman. Benillouche faces the second traumatic rift in his identity. "I had rejected the East, and had been rejected by the West. What would I ever become?"

Betrayed, Benillouche contemplates reconnecting with his roots, not via the muddy, narrow streets of his youth but via the modern nationalist movement. He is

encouraged by a Muslim colleague who reaches out to Benillouche as a fellow "native-son." But after an eruption of anti-Jewish violence and destruction, Benillouche again faces alienation from himself and from those around him.

Having rejected—and been rejected by—his native Jewish community, the French, and Muslim nationalists, Benillouche experiences a disintegration of identity and an utter loss of home. He contemplates suicide, but chooses migration instead. He packs a few bags, says goodbye to his parents, burns his diaries, and sets sail for Argentina, a land to which he has no ties.

Unlike *Out of Egypt*, which ends with Aciman gazing out at the Mediterranean, imagining himself in his new home looking fondly back towards Egypt, *Pillar of Salt* closes on the sea. Under dark skies, Benillouche feels the uneasiness of the ocean, and ponders how he might refashion himself in a strange, new land. In part, he does so through the writing of his memoir. "As I now straighten out this narrative," he writes, "I can manage to see more clearly into my own darkness and find my way out." It is significant that it is Benillouche, not Memmi, who is the protagonist in this narrative. European colonialism and Tunisian nationalism have forever alienated Memmi, so that even in writing his own life, he remains an exile.

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WHAT'S A NICE GIRL LIKE YOU DOING WITH A PRIEST LIKE THIS? BIOGRAPHY, JEWISH STUDIES, AND GENTILE SUBJECTS

Alyssa Goldstein Sepinwall

When I began graduate school at Stanford University in 1992, I certainly did not imagine writing a biography of a French Catholic priest. As an undergraduate at the University of Pennsylvania, I had eaten my dinners at Hillel, but spent my days studying European intellectual history rather than Jewish studies. After a postgraduate year in Israel working with new immigrants and immersed in the rich texture of Jewish life, however, I arrived at Stanford eager to delve more deeply into Jewish history. Already planning to study the Enlightenment and French Revolution in Stanford's History Department, I decided to pursue my degree jointly with the university's Program in Jewish Studies.

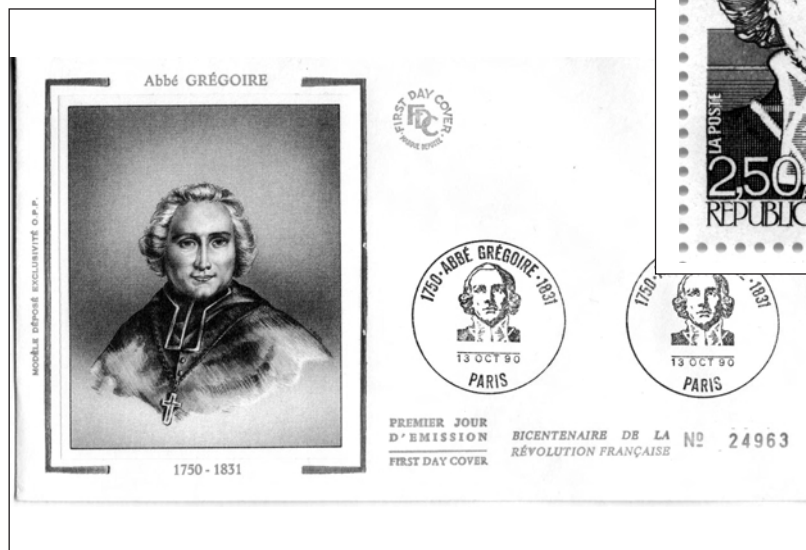
During my first year in graduate school, I wrote a seminar paper on the debates during the French Revolution over Jewish citizenship; for my second-year seminar, I analyzed Orientalism among London Jews in the 1890s. For my dissertation, I knew I wanted to pursue a topic related to Jews and the French Revolution, but I was also developing broader interests in issues of universalism/particularism, particularly regarding comparisons between the status of Jews and that of colonial subjects. I tried to imagine a dissertation project that

would allow me to think about universalism comparatively, studying Jews while also involving a colonial and/or gender dimension. I considered comparing the Revolution-era debates on granting citizenship to Jews, women, and people of color in the French Caribbean, but pursuing archival work on all three topics would have involved far more sources than was feasible for a doctoral thesis. Other possibilities I considered seemed unattractive as well, either because of the opposite source problem (too few materials) or because they did not let me look at universalism as comprehensively as I hoped.

In the end, I opted not to make Jews the center of my study, and instead wrote a biography of the French revolutionary and priest Henri Grégoire (later published as *The Abbé Grégoire and the French*

Revolution: The Making of Modern Universalism, Berkeley, 2005). Grégoire is most well known among Jewish historians for his 1789 *Essai sur la*

régénération physique, morale et politique des juifs, which urged tolerance towards Jews but also their conversion to Christianity. He was also involved, however, in a host of other issues, from campaigning for the abolition of slavery to seeking to Christianize the French Revolution. One might think that my choice to work on Grégoire detached me from Jewish studies, since recent scholarship in the field has emphasized Jewish agency, studying Jews as actors rather than as objects discussed by others. In some ways, the decision did take me away from Jewish



Abbé Grégoire stamp cover issued for the French Revolution Bicentennial by La Poste in France, 1989.



Stamp featuring the abbé Grégoire issued for the French Revolution Bicentennial by La Poste in France, 1989.

studies, in that the expertise I developed in my research on Grégoire has led me to work at least as much in Enlightenment and postcolonial studies as in Jewish history. Moreover, my days spent with Grégoire were not always easy; I wrestled with his texts and with how he described Jews, sometimes feeling grateful, sometimes repulsed.

Nevertheless, writing about a Catholic priest enabled me both to reexamine universalism and to elucidate key questions in Jewish studies in ways that

I would not otherwise have been able to do. First, studying Grégoire and his views on multiple populations in France allowed me to look at

universalism in a more complex way than if I had focused on Jews alone. Second, following Grégoire's lifepath led me to new documents on French Jewry (both by Grégoire and by French Jews themselves) that historians had not previously found. Finally, by creative use of the biographical genre, incorporating insights from social history and postmodernism, I was able to gain a new perspective on reactions to Grégoire on the part of Jews in his own time as well as in the last two centuries.

The decision to write a biography for my dissertation was not in fact an easy one. By the time I began graduate school, biography seemed passé to many academic historians. Its decline began in the early twentieth century, when members of the *Annales* school argued that historical change occurred because of structural forces, not the actions of individuals. Biography was further hampered in the 1960s by the ascent of "history from below," which regarded studies of political leaders as elitist and old-fashioned; and in the 1980s by the writings of

poststructuralists, who were skeptical about the idea of a coherent "self" and about whether individuals could transcend the dominant thinking of their eras. For many historians, biography seemed a sort of hagiography, presenting an old-fashioned recitation of an already-famous figure's heroic achievements.

As I learned when I began to consider writing about Grégoire, however, the genre was in the process of being reformulated in

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certain corners of the historical profession. A movement of "social biography" arose in the 1980s in American women's and social history, which focused on recovering the lives of marginalized individuals. Within French history, scholars influenced by postmodernism began to use notions of "self-fashioning" to do cutting-edge work in gender history; they argued that the study of individuals was an especially effective way of dissecting complex issues. Even scholars influenced by the *Annales* began to reassess biography, suggesting that where structural studies lent a sense of inevitability to historical change, biographical studies could restore attention to chance.

In my case, I found that writing a biography of a figure like Grégoire allowed me to contribute to modern Jewish historiography in several ways. First, focusing on Grégoire's early years led me to an essay contest on the Jews sponsored by the Société des Philantropes de Strasbourg (SPS) in 1778, seven years before the more famous Metz

Academy contest of 1785–1788. Though the Strasbourg contest was eventually cancelled for lack of funds, it may have had a powerful impact on the development of emancipationist ideas in Europe. Both Grégoire and the Prussian writer Christian Wilhelm Dohm (*Über die bürgerliche Verbesserung der Juden*, 1781) were SPS members, and Grégoire would later say that the contest "gave [me] the idea of considering this question proposed later by the Academy of Metz."

Second, by reading more of Grégoire's oeuvre (encompassing more than four hundred books, articles, and parliamentary

discourses), I was able to arrive at a fuller understanding of philo-Semitic ideas such as his than could be gained by reading the *Essai* on regeneration alone. In later writings, Grégoire made clear his certainty that the Jews would "return to Him whom their ancestors pierced." I came to understand that, for him, writing about Jews and other persecuted groups represented genuine interest in helping them, but also a particular kind of Christian apologetics in the age of Enlightenment.

In addition, focusing on Grégoire's relationships with Jews led me to new information on late eighteenth-century Jewish leaders' views on emancipation and "regeneration." Grégoire's private papers include letters from *maskilim* such as Isaiah Berr-Bing and Moses Ensheim, showing their warm affection for Grégoire while also some discomfort with his ideas. These letters, plus careful reading of printed texts, helped me understand the "strategic friendships" that these men had with Grégoire, an idea I

developed in my essay in *Renewing the Past, Reconfiguring Jewish Culture* (Philadelphia, 2003).

Though the abbé liked to portray himself as the Jews' great hero, my sources suggested that Jews had a range of reactions to the priest, depending on their vision of the best path for Jews to take in the future. Jewish leaders' conflicted feelings about Grégoire paralleled their feelings about emancipation. Even as they embraced many aspects of the Revolution, they did not always agree with Grégoire and other revolutionaries.

Finally, examining Grégoire's views on other marginalized groups in the French empire enabled me to understand French universalism in a new way, and to realize that

categories such as race, religion, and language were viewed by the revolutionaries as pliable, whereas gender was not. The two years it took the National Assembly to award equal citizenship to Jews seemed inconsequential compared to the longer wait for free and enslaved people of color (whose equality was decreed only after they launched a revolt in what is now Haiti, and then revoked in 1802), and to women, who were barred even from participating in political clubs.

Certainly, not every non-Jewish figure would be as useful a biographical subject for Jewish studies as the abbé Grégoire. In general, I would agree that focusing on Jews themselves remains the best

way to write Jewish history. Yet Grégoire shows us that we can occasionally learn more about Jews by shifting our gaze away from them. More broadly, he reminds us that biography remains a uniquely valuable historical genre, particularly when we study figures not only in terms of their own actions, but also in terms of their reception by others. An icon of universalism long since his death, the abbé Grégoire is a prime example of how individuals can be extremely useful sites for studying complex historical processes such as emancipation.

Alyssa Goldstein Sepinwall is associate professor of history at California State University, San Marcos.

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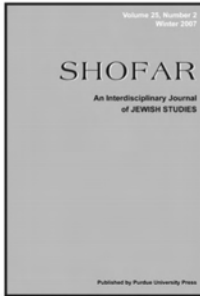
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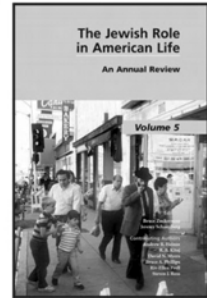
Required Reading in Jewish Studies

JOURNALS



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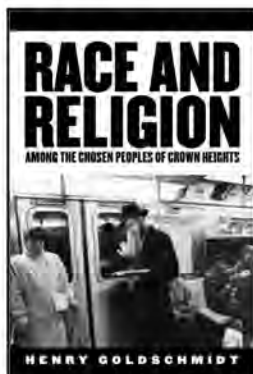
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INTERNET RESOURCES FOR JEWISH BIOGRAPHY AND AUTOBIOGRAPHY

Heidi Lerner

Directories, Biographical Dictionaries, and Encyclopedias

For many years, *World Biographical Index*, issued by K. G. Saur, the prominent German publisher of biographical and other scholarly reference books, has been one of the best online resources for Jewish studies scholars in need of retrospective biographical information. The index directs scholars to biographical articles culled from a variety of reference books and encyclopedias in Latin script published between 1781 and 1958. In addition to leading to the source articles, the entries for each person in this index contain names, pseudonyms, the years of birth and death, and occupation. Now, K. G. Saur is bringing online and making commercially available one of the most extensive and comprehensive collections of biographical information. The soon-to-be-completed *Jewish Biographical Archive (JBA) Online*, based on the microfiche edition of the *Jewish Biographical Archive*, will contain almost 100,000 entries from 133 sources describing 52,000 persons. Searchers will have a variety of search options including name, occupation, dates, and reference sources. This archive follows the basic concept of the K. G. Saur biographical archives on microfiche. It reproduces the entries from biographical reference books and

cumulates all of the entries for each individual. Each entry is a replica of the original source with a citation to the original source at its head.

While the “Who’s Who” types of biographies are useful for determining addresses, institutional

AN ENORMOUS NUMBER OF WEBSITES EXIST THAT ARE DEVOTED TO INDIVIDUALS AND PROVIDE EXTENSIVE BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCHES, PHOTOGRAPHS, CRITICAL ARTICLES, WEB LINES, AND BIBLIOGRAPHIES.

affiliations, and other basic information about contemporary Jewish scholars and leaders, they generally offer little in the way of critical assessment. The national biographies, on the other hand, usually offer an evaluation of the subject’s contributions. *American National Biography Online* is available by subscription and published by Oxford University Press under the auspices of the American Council of Learned Societies. Oxford University Press also produces the digital version of its *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography* and makes it available by subscription. The digital forms of these two resources supplement their print versions. Computer access to the information contained in these works significantly increases their utility and the service that they provide to scholars. The *Oxford*

Dictionary of National Biography offers better search options for locating Jews than the *American National Biography Online*. Although both products offer advanced search features which allow combinations of searches according to various criteria such as name, dates, occupation . . . [et al.], only the *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography* includes a search option for religious affiliation. *American National Biography Online* allows readers to focus their research in specialized collections, such as Black History. Strikingly, a separate collection for Jewish Americans is not included, although researchers can limit their search to “Jewish Clergy” or “Jewish Lay Leaders” or “Zionists” under the search box “Occupations and Realms of Renown.” Jewish studies faculty, scholars, and librarians may wish to raise the issue of this gap with the publishers.

Modern Hebrew Literature—a Bio-Bibliographical Lexicon [לקסיקון הספרות העברית החדשה] compiled by Yossi Galron, Jewish studies librarian at Ohio State University, is a work-in-progress (library.osu.edu/sites/users/galron.1). This free database provides lists of works and brief biographical data concerning authors writing in Hebrew since the 1960s.

Another project that serves as a biographical and bibliographical guide to Hebrew authors is the Hebrew author database maintained by the Institute for the Translation of Hebrew Literature and freely available on the Web (A directory to the authors can be found at: www.ithl.org.il/authors.html). Entries include a short biography, a

list of books published in Hebrew, and a list of books in translation.

In addition to the above resources, several commercial biographical databases provide useful and reliable information about Jewish individuals. Two competing but complementary products are the Gale Group's *Biography Resource Center* and H. W.

Wilson's *Biography Reference Bank*.

Covering a larger number of individuals, *Biography Reference Bank* pulls content

from more resources—in particular, more periodical titles. While both of these products feature full-text articles from resources across a range of ethnic groups, disciplines, and subject

areas, neither includes a single biographical or subject biographical tool devoted exclusively to Jews.

The only way to locate biographies of Jewish persons in these two databases is to know who you are looking for. *Biography Resource Center* uses sources produced by the

Gale Group, the *Marquis Who's Who* series, and a number of periodicals. *Biography Reference Bank* includes many titles from

Oxford University Press, Greenwood Press, and Garland Publishing. This second group of

publishers have produced print versions of many core works of Jewish biography, which should be included in the resources offered by *Biography Reference Bank*.

Websites and Portals

The Jewish Music Webcenter (www.jmwc.org) is a free website created and maintained by Judith S. Pinnolis, a reference librarian at the Goldfarb Library at Brandeis University. The site functions as a portal to academic, organizational, and individual sources in Jewish

music. Among many other things, it provides details about individual musicians and online biographies of Jewish composers and performers.

An enormous number of websites exist that are devoted to individuals and provide extensive biographical sketches, photographs, critical articles, web lines, and

MOST INSTITUTIONS ARE ABLE TO DIGITIZE ONLY A FRACTION OF THEIR COLLECTIONS. ALTHOUGH AN INCREASING NUMBER OF DIGITIZED PRIMARY SOURCES ARE BECOMING AVAILABLE ELECTRONICALLY, TO UNDERSTAND THE FULL RANGE OF A REPOSITORY'S HOLDINGS, ONE SHOULD SEARCH ITS FINDINGS AIDS.

bibliographies. Paul Celan Homepage (polyglot.lss.wisc.edu/german/celan) was developed by two students at the University of Wisconsin and is dedicated to the Eastern European poet and Holocaust survivor. The Franz-Kafka Website

(www.kafka.uni-bonn.de) was set up by the Germanistisches Seminar of the University of Bonn as a multimedia teaching project. The Saul Bellow Society website features a definitive annotated bibliography of Bellow's works and includes full-text access to the society's newsletter (www.saulbellow.org).

Primary Sources: Digital Collections of Primary Sources

1. Archives: Finding Aids

Most institutions are able to digitize only a fraction of their collections. Although an increasing number of digitized primary sources are becoming available electronically, to understand the full range of a repository's holdings, one should search its findings aids. Many of these are available online, even if the primary sources themselves may

not be. Standards are being developed within the library and archival communities, which allow finding aids from many different repositories to be brought together and searched all at once. Two notable examples are: the California Digital Library's Online Archive of California (www.oac.cdlib.org)

which has an extensive database of archival finding aids for archival and manuscript collections within California; and the Center for Jewish History's website (www.cjh.org/collections/findingaids.php), which guides users to more than one hundred electronic finding aids to archival collections held by the Center's five partners.

2. Archives: Databases and Websites

The Jewish Women's Archive (JWA) was founded in 1995. Its easily navigable website (www.jwa.org)—searchable by type, time period, or topic—includes a variety of textual, video, and audio materials: oral history projects, biographical sketches, and primary sources. Many of its digital projects are created in partnerships with other institutions. In 2003, in collaboration with the Emma Goldman Papers project and headed by Goldman biographer Dr. Candace Falk, the JWA mounted an online exhibit containing a wide variety of primary resources, biographical, and contextual information (www.jwa.org/exhibits/wov/goldman).

In the First Person: Index to Letters, Diaries, Oral Histories, and Other Personal Narratives, produced by the Alexander Street Press, is a free resource that indexes more than 2,500 collections of oral history in English from around the world (www.inthefirstperson.com/firp). It includes letters, diaries, memoirs,

autobiographies, and other personal narratives, providing citations, and in many cases links to full-text, and audio and video files that are freely available on the Web or via Alexander Street Press databases.

Searching in this database can be done in two ways: full-text searching allows users to look for specific words or phrases that appear in the actual texts; field searching utilizes indexed descriptive fields. An “All Subject(s)” search is a search of all the subjects in the database. This database uses two different types of subject headings: standard Library of Congress subject headings and non-standardized headings created by repositories. Forty-three subject headings are listed with the words “Jews” or “Jewish.”

The Alexander Street Press produces two other products available by subscription that contains material of interest to Jewish studies scholars. *North American Women’s Letters and Diaries* and *North American Immigrant Letters, Diaries, and Oral Histories* both include letters and diaries, oral histories, interviews, and other personal narratives. The collections also include biographies and an extensive annotated bibliography of the sources in the databases. The *North American Women’s Letters and Diaries* database includes 1,496 documents related to Jews. The “Find Authors” search screen includes a “religion” limit. The

collection includes letters by Rebecca Gratz, Emma Lazarus, Gertrude Stein, and other Jewish American women. Collections of oral, video, and textual collections of Holocaust testimonies are housed in universities, Holocaust museums,



Emma Goldman on a street car, 1917. From Emma Goldman Papers website. Courtesy of the Library of Congress, www.loc.gov.

research museums, and also exist independently. Projects such as the USC Shoah Foundation Institute (www.usc.edu/schools/college/vh) and Fortunoff Video Archive for Holocaust: Testimonies (housed at Yale University, www.library.yale.edu/testimonies/excerpts) allow users to search their catalogues, access their collection, and view, listen, and read clips of testimony at their computers.

The Einstein Archives Online is a joint project of the Einstein Papers Project at the California Institute of Technology and the David and Fela Shapell Digitization Project at the Jewish National and University Library, the Hebrew University of Jerusalem. The site includes

digitized images of his manuscripts, a database of Einstein and Einstein-related archival items, and a finding aid (www.alberteinstein.info).

The website, Sabato Morais Ledger (sceti.library.upenn.edu/morais), is produced by the Schoenberg Center for Electronic Text and Image (SCETI) at the University of Pennsylvania. A Sephardic Jew born in Livorno, Italy, Sabato Morais (1823–1897) was a historian and founder of the Jewish Theological Seminary. The ledger’s contents can be browsed directly and searched through the catalogue index or by keyword.

3. *Online Diaries and Weblogs*

Thousands of affiliated and unaffiliated techno-savvy Jews are going beyond conventional print to share their stories, and record and comment on their day-to-day experiences in online diaries, blogs, and webrings. As published texts on the Internet, these genres are accessible to anyone with a computer. Their authors mix various forms of media such as audio, video, and photographs with text. Blogging tools enable readers to provide comments, cross-reference each other’s posting and recommend other sites of mutual interest.

Content can be published and syndicated using an RSS feed. Readers can then subscribe to the feed to automatically receive updates of new postings. New applications are emerging that make it easy for bloggers to share their stories in secret. The individuals creating these digital texts write about personal and intimate feelings and also about a wide variety of subjects.

Dr. Michael Keren argues that blogging “provides an exciting new arena for public discussion” but warns that it “suffers from the anonymity of the web” (“Online Life Writing: One Israeli’s Search for Sanity,” *Auto/Biography* 13, 2005). William O’Shea has described in the *Village Voice* (July 22, 2003) how blogs of Hasidic and Haredi Jews have opened a door into an otherwise closed and secretive world. The anonymity of the blogging world protects the authors from harassment and possible banishment from their

communities. Edward Portnoy warns, “like the blog medium in other languages, Haredi blogs appear and disappear, depending on the whim of the writer” (Modiya website, modiya.nyu.edu/handle/1964/265).

The easiest way to look for blogs is on large sites where they are organized by “tags.” A tag is a keyword or category used to describe the subject matter or topic of a blog post, Web page, online photo, digital video, or audio creation. With the emergence of social networking and collaborative websites such as flickr.com, YouTube.com, del.icio.us, and the blogging websites, users are taking the initiative to organize and describe their digital creations themselves, thus doing the kind of work previously done only by professional librarians, indexers, and information architects. Researchers can search self-described collections of Jewish blogs such as

JewishBlogging.com, Israblog, and Jrants.com.

Conclusion

The Internet offers an array of diverse biographical and autobiographical resources for Jewish studies scholars. Many of the subscription-based and for-fee resources come with a very high price tag and the fact that they exist does not mean necessarily that libraries acquire or subscribe to them. Many of the free resources lag in their currency or eventually disappear. This overview is not complete or comprehensive. The sites described here were chosen mostly for the variety of information that they provide, and their sophistication of design and search interface.

Heidi Lerner is the Hebraica/Judaica cataloguer at Stanford University Libraries.

Heidi Lerner’s “Perspectives on Technology” column, with links to featured websites, now in Resources section of AJS website: www.ajsnet.org

Contribute to New Syllabi Directory on AJS Website

AJS is expanding the Resources section of its website to include a directory of syllabi in all fields of Jewish studies. Members are invited to contribute to the directory by emailing syllabi in MS-Word or pdf format to the AJS office at ajs@ajs.cjh.org. The directory will be accessible to AJS members only.

The screenshot shows the AJS website homepage. At the top left is the AJS logo (Association for Jewish Studies) with a menorah. To the right are three images: a scroll, a building, and a group of people. Below the logo is a vertical navigation menu with links: Home, About Us, Membership, Conferences, Publications, Positions Listing, AJS Resources, Advertise & Exhibit, Giving Opportunities, and Contact Us. To the right of the menu is a section titled "About the AJS" with text describing the organization's history and mission. Below that is a section titled "WHAT'S NEW AT THE AJS:" with sub-sections for "Cahman Publication Subvention Grants" and "AJS 39th Annual Conference" (December 18-19, 2007, Sheraton Centre, Toronto, Ontario, Deadline for Submissions: May 1, 2007). Other links include "New Available Online:", "Call for Papers", "General Information", "Visiting Toronto", and "Sessions Seeking Participants".

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READING HANS KOHN IN HAIFA

Brian M. Smollett

I have been doing work in Jewish studies and studying Hebrew for some years now, but it was not until this past summer that I visited Israel for the first time, planning to spend a month at the University of Haifa's *ulpan*. One of the books that I took with me to reread was Hans Kohn's autobiography, *Living in a World Revolution*. In ways that I had not anticipated, this book continuously intruded into my thoughts during what proved to be a very short stay in Israel.

Living in pre-World War I Prague, Kohn had been strongly influenced by Martin Buber and the writings of Ahad Ha'am. During the war he served in the Austro-Hungarian Army and was captured by the Russians, who imprisoned him first in Samarkand and then in Siberia for five years. Having witnessed the vast destruction of war and the dehumanizing effects of Russian imperialism, Kohn turned away from his earlier neo-romanticism and became committed to the ideals of the Enlightenment which sought to uphold the dignity of every individual.

Kohn moved to Palestine in 1925 in the hope that these ideals could be implemented there. What he saw over the next eight years eventually convinced him otherwise and he departed for the United States in 1933, having concluded that the ongoing struggle between Zionists

and Arabs would lead to the creation of a Jewish state that could only be protected by "bayonets." After resigning from the Zionist Organization, Kohn predicted a stark moral future for the entire enterprise: "The means will have determined the goal. Jewish Palestine will no longer have anything of that Zion for which I once put myself on the line." These words struck me very powerfully when I first read them and they continued to ring in my ears in Israel.

My first roommates in the Jewish state were Arabs, Israeli citizens from the village of Cana where, according to the New Testament account, Jesus turned water into wine. Ahmad and Khalil both came

HAVING WITNESSED THE VAST DESTRUCTION OF WAR
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from large families. Ahmad's father was a physician who had been trained in Budapest, where he met the Hungarian Christian woman who returned to Israel with him as his wife. Khalil's parents were both Muslim. Though he doesn't follow the rigorous demands of Islamic practice, Khalil believes in God and respects "anyone who believes in one God—Muslim, Jewish, or Christian." When I asked him if Zoroastrians made the cut, he emphatically denied that they do. Ahmad had a much more cynical attitude toward religious belief, perhaps on account of his mixed origins. "Look around us," he exhorted me, "all of this—it sucks. We kill each other over whose myth is more right." Whereas Khalil, a

nursing major, was excited about the growth of jobs in his field in Israel, Ahmad, a computer science student, hoped to move to Australia where he expected to find "nice weather and beautiful women."

I had scarcely settled into the dormitory and begun to become acquainted with my roommates when the second Lebanon war began. Returning from class on the first night of the war, I found Ahmad and Khalil sitting outside our building. I joined them. Soon afterwards, Khalil picked up a *kippah* that our Canadian suitemate, Ari, had left on one of the chairs and held it in his hands. During a pause in our conversation, he put it on—first toward the front of his head, whereupon he began chanting in Arabic and mimicking Muslim prayer, then toward the back of his head, as he feigned davening. As Khalil started to move the *kippah* back into the "Muslim position," Ahmad called out to him.

"Stop, Khalil! Leave it in back! You will be good for their demographics!"

Ahmad was joking, but no one laughed. I stood awkwardly waiting for someone to change the subject. Soon, Khalil took off the *kippah* and we discussed my Hebrew class until he got tired. Before he went to bed, he assured me that he always had time for questions about Hebrew.

After Khalil left, Ahmad and I stood outside and continued to talk, until I finally asked him the basic question that had been on my mind. "What is it like to be an Arab and live here?" "It's all a mess," he replied. "We live here but it isn't home for us. It can't be." I asked if

he would prefer to live in an Arab country. "It's a mess there too. There is nothing for me in the Middle East." He felt that to make the most of his life he would have to leave for "Australia, or maybe New Zealand, since anything is better."

It wasn't long before Hezbollah was hitting Haifa with Katyushas and, at least for a while, our conversations were taking place not outdoors but in the room in our suite that had been transformed into a bomb shelter. We listened to the radio in Hebrew, and I relied on Ahmad to fill in the details that I couldn't catch. "It is all sad," Ahmad muttered, and I concurred. I wanted to know more than I thought was possible to ask about how he, as an Israeli Arab, felt at a time like this.

After some hours we were permitted to leave the shelter rooms but were forbidden to leave our dormitories. I sat awake for most of the night, wondering whether the reality of a Jewish state could ever be reconciled with the need for peace and the obligation to preserve human dignity. Though I was

anything but hostile to the idea of a *Jewish* state, I couldn't help but ask whether it was worth the price of turning people like Ahmad and Khalil into demographic threats to the country in which they lived. I couldn't help but wonder, too, whether it was worth the price of constant fighting with one neighbor or another. Decades earlier, Hans Kohn decided that it wasn't and

pondering the questions that Hans Kohn symbolizes for me, questions that continue to linger in my mind. They press upon my intellect and burden my conscience in new ways because they are now connected with living, breathing human beings who want to make the most of their lives. Although my historical training has taught me to try to keep an objective distance from the



University of Haifa campus. Courtesy of Communications and Media Relations, University of Haifa.

left. He ultimately settled in the United States, where he believed that the values of the Enlightenment stood a much better chance of flourishing.

When our *ulpan* closed down on account of the war, I was back at Ben-Gurion Airport and on my way home to America after having spent just eleven days in Israel. Even as I left the country, I was still

subject of my study, I don't think my brief experience in Haifa will stand in the way of my future scholarship. Rather, it has reinforced for me the importance of certain crucial questions and will, I suspect, influence the direction of my own work for years to come.

Brian Smollett recently completed an M.A. at The Graduate School of The Jewish Theological Seminary.

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(see page 4 for further details)

REMEMBERING OUR COLLEAGUES

TIKVA SIMONE FRYMER-KENSKY (1943–2006)

Jeffrey Tigay

I first met Tikva Frymer-Kensky around 1960 when we were both students in the undergraduate school of the Jewish Theological Seminary, although at the time she was still in high school and commuting to the seminary after-hours. Over the years we were classmates both at the Seminary and later in graduate school at Yale, and subsequently we were colleagues and family friends.

Tikva and I first encountered each other in the classes of Yochanan Muffs, then one of the future greats of the Seminary faculty, whose brilliance and passion for the Bible were mirrored in Tikva's, and whose devotion to the study of ancient languages provided a life-long model of grounding one's scholarly enthusiasm in solid linguistic and textual data. His impact on her was so great that she later dedicated one of her books to him. Already fluent in Hebrew, Tikva went on to master Aramaic, Akkadian, and Sumerian, as well as several other ancient languages. She earned a bachelor's degree (A.B.) in ancient world studies from City College of New York in 1965, a bachelor's in Hebrew literature (B.H.L.) in Bible-Talmud from the Jewish Theological Seminary in 1965, a master's in West Semitics from Yale University in 1967, and a doctorate in Assyriology and Sumerology from Yale University in 1977.

In the course of her studies, Tikva was exposed to a veritable who's who of Biblical, Near Eastern, and Jewish scholarship, and I want to mention their names because they meant so much to her: in addition to Muffs there were H. L. Ginsberg, Shalom Paul,

Moshe Held, Abraham Halkin, Avraham Holtz, and Joel Kramer at the Seminary; Jacob Finkelstein, William Hallo, Franz Rosenthal, and Marvin Pope at Yale; and in her postdoctoral days Hebrew University's Moshe Greenberg and Harvard's Thorkild Jacobsen.

Tikva delved deeply into the civilizations of ancient Israel and Mesopotamia as well as a broad range of Judaica, eventually focusing on the areas of law, religion, and literature. She wrote her dissertation on trial-by-ordeal in the ancient Near East, and began to publish a steady stream of articles and books about ancient Mesopotamia and the Bible, and about Jewish theology. One of my favorites is her masterful study of the Babylonian and Biblical accounts of the flood ("The Atrahasis Epic and Its Significance for Our Understanding of Genesis 1-9"), which I have assigned to my students for years.

Over the years Tikva's scholarship was recognized with prestigious awards. She won several postdoctoral research fellowships and in recent years she won both a Koret Jewish Book Award and a National Jewish Book Award for her book *Reading the Women of the Bible* (Schocken, 2002). Just last year the Jewish Publication Society published a collection of her articles, *Studies in Bible and Feminist Criticism*, in its *Scholar of*



Distinction series. A colleague wrote to me that just a week before Tikva died he had worked through this volume trying to formulate "what a Frymer-Kensky 'theology of [the Bible]' might look like . . . and [he] was going to send her a draft to learn if what [he] said rang true to her."

Apart from *Reading the Women of the Bible*, Tikva's best-known work was her other "feminist" book, *In the Wake of the Goddesses: Women, Culture, and the Biblical Transformation of Pagan Myth* (Free Press, 1991). Because of her erudition and meticulous scholarship, the book was unsurpassed for reliability, and one reviewer called it "probably the best factually based survey of [ancient Mesopotamian] religion available today." In it, Tikva explores "what happens in the Bible . . . to the functions and roles once played by goddesses" in Mesopotamian religion, and she argues that "the absence of goddesses causes major changes in the way the Bible . . . looks at humanity, culture, society, and nature." God himself absorbs most of the functions of the

goddesses, including control of fertility, and as a result the divine is sexually neutralized: God is non-sexual; he is masculine only in grammar and metaphor, but not in actual gender. And corresponding to the absence of gender differentiation in the divine is the Biblical concept of humanity that transcends gender. One of Tikva's major insights is that the Bible does not see men and women as being different *in essence*. They are *socially* unequal, and women are subordinate, "but they are not inferior in any intellectual or spiritual way." Misogyny and notions such as feminine wiles and the battle between the sexes are absent. To the extent that such ideas are found in Judaism, Tikva attributes them to Greek ideas that entered Judaism in the Hellenistic period. She sees the Bible's positive evaluation of women as one of the beneficial effects of Biblical monotheism, and considers the challenge of returning to this gender-neutral vision as part of the unfinished business of monotheism. But she also notes negative effects of the Bible's removal of gender from the divine, particularly the fact that the Bible, and Judaism and Christianity in general, have so little to say about such important things as human sexuality and reproduction. In fact, her desire to fill this gap is one reason why she wrote her book *Motherprayer* (Riverhead, 1995), a remarkable anthology of little-known prayers, meditations, and reflections on every aspect of female reproductive life, drawn from ancient Near Eastern, Jewish, and Christian sources.

Reading the Women of the Bible consists of a close reading of more than two dozen Biblical narratives about women. The book is studded with countless fine insights reflecting Tikva's multidisciplinary linguistic, historical, literary-critical, and psychological acumen. But its

most notable feature lies in its methodology and attitude. Modern literary scholarship, both feminist and other types, has sometimes been characterized as operating with a "hermeneutic of suspicion," a view that writers serve ulterior motives and political agendas. Some feminist scholarship is written with a good deal of anger. This was not Tikva's approach, though she did not entirely deny its value. In fact, she insisted that "If we tell the Biblical stories about women *without* taking note of the [inequitable] social system that gives them symbolic value, and [without] naming its inequities, then we unwittingly help to perpetuate the skewed system that the Bible assumes." But Tikva was a lover of the Bible as well as a feminist, and she added to the hermeneutic of suspicion her own "hermeneutics of grace," a method of interpretation that recognizes the basic decency and well-meaning character of the Biblical authors." A reviewer noted Tikva's "irenic," anger-free tone and observed that "whether . . . celebrating the women of the Bible . . . or mourning [their victimization]," Tikva's "book . . . enables readers to navigate through the most violent . . . texts of terror in the Bible free from the stranglehold of rage."

This irenic approach was consistent with Tikva's character. She had a notably positive and constructive attitude toward life and people, and I rarely heard her express anger even over things that displeased her. That outlook was surely helpful to her in the past several years. Despite serious illnesses she kept up a pace that would have been impressive even for someone in good health. She continued to teach at the University of Chicago Divinity School (where she had been on the faculty since 1995) and to attend scholarly conferences and completed various publications, including her

last two books. She was active almost to the very end.

The loss of a scholar of such brilliance, erudition, range, and imagination will be felt in all the fields of scholarship in which Tikva was engaged. But the loss goes far beyond the world of scholarship. Tikva was deeply committed to writing for readers beyond her academic peers. As she explained: When I study the Bible . . . I am aware . . . of the impact that my study can have on people, of the possible transformations that it can occasionally cause in Judaism and [in] the spiritual lives of people who might never even hear my name."

Part of our bereavement lies in the fact that Tikva left a large, unfinished agenda of publications. There was so much more that she would have taught us. But for those who knew and cherished her, the loss is deeper and more personal, a gap in our lives. It's been said that you can't make old friends. I knew Tikva for over forty-five years, and I had hoped to know her much longer. May her memory be blessed.

Jeffrey Tigay is the A.M. Ellis Professor of Hebrew and Semitic Languages and Literatures at the University of Pennsylvania.

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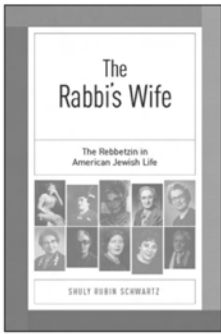
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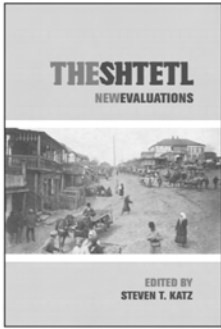
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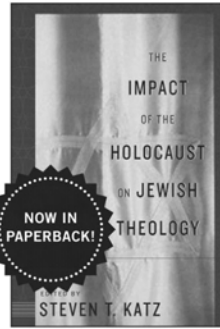
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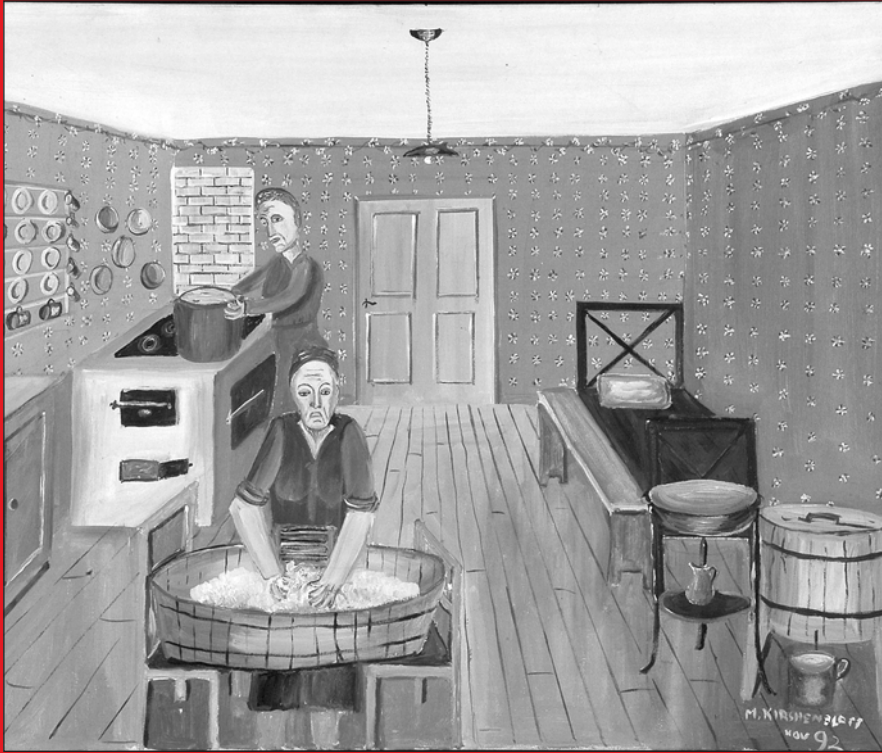
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Jadwiga washing laundry by Mayer Kirshenblatt, November 1992. Acrylic on canvas, 24" x 30".

"One day there appeared in our doorway a tall gaunt woman, with her meagre possessions in a little bundle. My mother exclaimed, "Boże mój! Jadwiga!" (My God! Jadwiga). They fell into each other's arms, had a little cry, and sat down for a long chat. Jadwiga had been my mother's wetnurse. Now an old lady, Jadwiga was on hard times. Mother took her in. She became our maid. You can see her here washing the heavy laundry.

After a few years, Jadwiga got very sick. My mother fermented milk every day for her. Being the oldest, I was delegated to take the sour milk to her in the hospital every day.

After a few weeks, Jadwiga passed away. She left a little money and a note requesting that my mother use the money for a decent funeral and a requiem mass. Jadwiga did not trust her relatives. Mother went to the local priest and made the arrangements. We did not go into the church to listen to the service, but we did follow the cortege to the gates of the cemetery.

Every once in a while, mother and I went to the cemetery to lay a few wild flowers on Jadwiga's grave. She was such a wonderful, kind person. She was the one who fed us and bathed us. If there is a paradise, she must surely dwell there."

(Cover Photo)

The human fly by Mayer Kirshenblatt, November 1995, Acrylic on canvas, 36" x 24".

"Mandelbaum was the richest citizen in our town. He had a beautiful house in Apt and a residence in Warsaw. His place in Apt was the biggest residential building in the city. A man who advertised himself as the human fly would climb the corner of Mandelbaum's building. Large corner stones projected from the masonry and provided him with hand and foot holds. Once he got to the top, he fastened a projecting pole to roof, somehow, and did some acrobatic tricks from that pole. He descended in the same way. His helper passed the hat around."

Mayer Kirshenblatt and Barbara Kirshenblatt-Gimblett, *They Called Me Mayer July: Painted Memories of a Jewish Childhood in Poland Before the Holocaust* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2007). Exhibition opens at the Magnes Museum in Berkeley on September 9, 2007, and will travel from there.

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