

Jews and Gender: The Challenge to Hierarchy

Jonathan Frankel

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Preface

When we began publishing this annual in 1984 (actually, we were not sure then that it could come out every year), we stated the hope that it would become a “clearinghouse” for scholars around the world working in the field of modern Jewish studies. The inclusion of a large book-review section in every volume represents one way in which we have tried to further this idea. And the same goal is served by setting aside a central place in every issue of *Studies* for a “symposium,” an extensive collection of articles grouped around a selected theme. But, of course, if the annual is to be a clearinghouse, it cannot always be (to mix metaphors) at the “cutting edge” of scholarly fashion.

In choosing the theme for a given symposium we have to be confident that there is a relatively large pool of scholars available from whom we can request articles that will be—or so we hope—at once relevant, original, thought-provoking, readable, and, when taken together, also varied and comprehensive. It is for this reason that we chose to delay until now the decision to devote a symposium to gender-related issues. As a number of contributors to this volume point out, the impact of feminism and of women’s studies on Jewish scholarship has made itself felt only gradually (and, some of them would doubtless say, painfully). But whether or not we were right to wait as long as we did, there can be no doubt that the collection of articles in volume XVI more than meets our expectations. There is a fascinating mix of the descriptive and prescriptive, of the neutral and polemical, the “modern” and “postmodern” approaches. No less varied are the extraordinarily disparate topics selected by the contributors as well as the many areas of specialization: history; rabbinic and Judaic studies; sociology; anthropology; and literature. At the same time, for all the heterogeneity, these 12 articles do collectively suggest that feminism, however fragmented, has by now intruded its own perspective into almost every nook and cranny of Jewish life, Judaism, and Jewish scholarship—hence, the subtitle of this volume, which was arrived at only after the contributions had been received and their content mentally assimilated: “The Challenge to Hierarchy.”

We are very grateful for the ongoing and extremely important support that *Studies* has again received from the Lucius N. Littauer Foundation of New York and the Federman Fund of the Institute of Jewish Studies at the Hebrew University. And, as in the past, it is the editor’s privilege to be able to thank the two managing editors, Laurie Fialkoff and Hannah Levinsky-Koevary, who are not only marvelously professional, creative, and exacting, but who also ensure that nobody entering the editorial room is allowed to take things (himself or herself, life or whatever) too seriously.

J.F.

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Symposium

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Modern Orthodoxy and the Challenge of Feminism

Tamar Ross
(BAR-ILAN UNIVERSITY)

In 1982, the Israeli thinker Yeshayahu Leibowitz published a short and little-known article in which he declared that the topic known as “[the status of] woman in Judaism” was more crucial to the future of Judaism than any of the unforeseen halakhic problems that had arisen as a result of the newly established sovereign Jewish state.¹ As he saw it, “avoidance of serious response to this issue endangers the very continuation of Torah and mitzvah Judaism in our world.”² I think that today, 18 years later, many people would concur, and now more than ever would regard the status of women in Jewish tradition as the greatest current challenge to Orthodoxy. The question I would like to explore in this article is: Why is this so?

When my writing about women’s issues first ventured beyond the expression of my own personal frustrations,³ I adopted a rather conservative, wait-and-see attitude regarding change within the framework of Jewish law. I had little doubt that the “women’s revolution” was here to stay and would only gain momentum as the years went by. But I felt that it was not my place to agitate actively for halakhic reform. In this I was very much influenced by two models for legitimate halakhic change that I had extrapolated from the writings of R. Avraham Yitzhak Hacohen Kook.⁴

The first model sees the impetus for halakhic change as stemming from new societal pressures that are forced upon the community of believers by outside factors beyond its control. Because the break that such pressures impose upon tradition is blatant and intrudes upon normative halakhic practice, it is not one that should initially be introduced by the community of the halakhically observant. However, if such changes are adopted by those who do not know any better (or even by those who do know but do not care) and then become widespread, the community may eventually make its peace with them and even assume that their general acceptance is a sign from heaven that this is now what is meant to be. “Leave them be,” we read in the responsa, “Israel need not be challenged; if they are not prophets themselves, they are the descendants of prophets.”⁵

The second model sees the divergence from past practice or attitude as originating from the voluntary acceptance of higher standards of religious observance, motivated by internal religious considerations. These standards are sometimes expressed in the adoption of behavior that is beyond the letter of the law (*lifnim meshurat hadin*)—

that is, actions that involve no violation of previous norms but are merely the assumption of an additional stringency. Although this model does not involve any break with halakhic norms, R. Kook warns against the attempt on the part of a select minority to impose such changes upon the community at large before they undergo the proper institutional procedures of formal rabbinic legislation (*pesikah*). Since they do not involve the abrogation of existing law, there is nothing to stop an individual who feels ready for heightened normative demands from adopting them. But the new standard would not become common practice unless it were imposed by a providential conjunction of external factors; reinstated by the *beit din hagadol* (presumably, R. Kook is referring here to a reinstituted Sanhedrin);⁶ and grounded on a valid source within the Torah.

Applying these halakhic models to the situation of women, I regarded “untraditional” innovations that were taking place on the periphery of Orthodox Judaism as interesting developments that might eventually have repercussions on my inner circle, but certainly nothing that I felt called upon to support. For instance, although I regarded any agitation for redressing the situation of “chained wives” (*‘agunot*; referring to women whose husbands are either missing or who refuse to grant them a divorce) as fair battle, I accepted the rabbinic judgment that, for the sake of preserving halakhic integrity, such problems had to be addressed by ad hoc solutions. More positive change, I felt, had to be limited to expanding the area of women’s opportunities to explore Jewish texts and encouraging the select group of women who chose to do so. But as the years have gone by, I have come to feel less reticent about a more active association with what some would call the Jewish women’s movement. The realm of “untraditional” but halakhically permissible activity that I would personally condone has also expanded considerably. To this day, reciting kiddush or leading a quorum for the grace after meals does not come naturally to me, but my husband and children occasionally insist upon my taking on these initiatives. I have no particular desire to participate in women’s prayer groups, but I would certainly fight for women’s right to have them, and I thoroughly enjoy my daughter’s organized private reading of the Purim megillah every year. I have little patience for the arbitrary exclusion of women from traditionally male-based centers of power. People who listen to me say that I have become more radical, although I am not sure that I would agree.

To my mind, the reason for my change of heart is threefold. First, the rapid rate at which the changed perception of women’s roles in Western society has taken hold extends to large segments of the Orthodox community as well. On an everyday non-polemical level, a number of things that previously appeared to be farfetched now seem to many to be plain commonsensical. If, only a few years ago, the circle of militant women could be dismissed as peripheral to the halakhic heartland—where moderate Orthodox woman appeared to be quite satisfied with the status quo so long as their opportunities for learning were ensured—it now seems as though there is a growing degree of merging between the two groups of women. The militants’ anger is being somewhat dissolved into a greater zeal for learning, whereas the patience of women involved in learning is thinning as they attempt to translate their knowledge into acceptable avenues of expression.

Second, my exposure to feminist thinking—despite the antihalakhic attitude promoted by some of its expositors—has given me more insight into what we might call

the “male bias” in Jewish tradition, and the courage to articulate that insight. This observation does not in itself entail a negation of the general concept of respect for the sages (*kevod hakhamim*) or a rejection of my previously held conviction that the leading and reputable rabbinic authorities try their best to be objective and disinterested in rendering the law as they see it. Nevertheless, I believe there is significance to the fact that halakhah has been molded primarily by men, and I believe we should be willing to explore that significance.

I understand, by way of analogy, that when special-interest groups in Israel such as Shas or the National Religious Party demand that more members of their respective camps be appointed as religious judges, they are not challenging the integrity of current authorities. Rather, they are simply voicing the view that true rabbinic legislation demands interaction with a variety of rabbinic decisors (*poskim*), thus attaining access to the full range of the observant Jewish community. In times gone by, women were never regarded as a special class. It was always assumed that their interests would be sufficiently represented by their male counterparts. It is this perception that has been modified by my heightened awareness of the limitations in today’s world of a unilaterally male perspective in halakhah. Such a process of decision-making, almost by definition, leaves no scope for the direct input of independent women’s practical experience, expertise, and self-knowledge. No matter how benign to women, the considerations that are taken into account by male authorities must of necessity remain, on some level, typically male.

Third, largely as a result of research that has been done in recent years by some of the concerned women themselves and by their male sympathizers, I am now much more aware of the variety of halakhic precedents and possibilities. Stringency is sometimes a matter of religious zeal. At other times, it results either from fear of the unknown or from ignorance of the many halakhic avenues to flexibility. In this connection, I am now also more conscious of the vast gray area between what is permitted (*mutar*) and what is prohibited (*asur*) and more sensitized to the degree to which optional decisions of public policy regarding women’s issues have often been presented misleadingly as clear-cut halakhic responses.

I do not purport to be an expert in halakhah. Here too I bow before the superior achievements of my daughters, who—as a sign of the times—are more competent than I am at mining the primary sources for themselves, whereas I rely almost completely upon work that has been done by others. But what I propose to do in this article is to pursue what I consider to be the philosophical and sociological implications of these findings.

This article, then, will proceed as follows. First, some of the problems that trouble feminists in relation to women’s status in Jewish law will be discussed. Following this is a review of various strategies that have been traditionally employed in adjusting halakhah to a changing social reality, with several examples pertaining to the status of women. The third section deals with the factor of public policy as a conservative force (which generally works against such adjustments). Following this, I propose several explanations for the fact that the question of the halakhic status of women is *sui generis* and, as such, generates extremely volatile reactions within the religious community. I then focus on the question of feminist ideology and its relationship to women’s halakhic status, delineating some of the implications of feminist

awareness both for the halakhic status quo and for traditional Jewish theology. Finally, I will highlight a basic problem stemming from heightened feminist awareness: that of discriminating between valid and invalid halakhic change.

Hierarchy and Jewish Tradition

Although Judaism has surely never adopted a caste system comparable to that found in India, there is no denying that Jewish tradition, as opposed to contemporary liberal Western thought, is based on a hierarchical view of society. The functional distinction between priests (*kohanim*) and “ordinary” members of Israel (*yisreelim*) is a good example of this. In terms of status, however, one of the most cutting distinctions is that between men and women. It is not hard to see how a disinterested reader of the vast body of halakhic literature might come to the conclusion that the male is taken to be the representative Jew, with the role and value of women often defined and limited by male interests and considerations.⁷ Women’s primary function emerges as that of enablers whose merited status is earned vicariously through their husbands’ and sons’ religious achievements.⁸ Men are counted as part of the minyan; women are not.⁹ Men acquire women in marriage and initiate divorce.¹⁰ Men have greater obligations in the study of Torah¹¹ and in the performance of mitzvot,¹² and for this reason their lives take precedence over those of women in most life-threatening situations.¹³ Men possess greater rights and privileges than women in all matters of communal leadership and authority. They are the official heads of their families and normally the sole inheritors in property law.¹⁴ Not only are women not the intended audience of halakhic stipulations, being generally excluded from the public or communal arena; in practice, they have also had no official part to play in the legislative and interpretive process.¹⁵ Along with this distinction in status, of course, comes a whole set of background assumptions regarding the nature of masculinity and femininity and the way the two should ideally interrelate. A woman who functions in the modern world—even an Orthodox woman fully committed to halakhah notwithstanding its nonegalitarian structure and its view of the mother as the nurturer of the family—cannot help but be disturbed by all of this.

Indeed, one quickly realizes that this portrait of the woman’s role in Jewish society stands in direct opposition to Western democratic ideals and to modern notions regarding the nature of gender distinctions. In a growing number of societies around the world, a more egalitarian reality is developing where women are engaged in careers outside the home and where men and women share responsibility for household and communal affairs. This new reality has created pressure for official legal and social recognition of women’s equality in law, in financial remuneration, and in opportunities for education and leadership. Even in the more stringently Orthodox, or haredi, sections of the community (where there is ideological opposition to such change), a new financial reality is taking hold wherein the wife is often not only the main breadwinner but also the decision-maker in matters of household and even family policy. All of this does not easily fit the image of woman as found in the traditional sources. The unavoidable question is to what degree these two realities can continue to be dichotomized.

Adjusting the Halakhah to Reality: The Strategies

Before outlining, on a practical level, the different strategies that have been adopted by halakhists (or accepted by them after the fact) in the effort to adjust the existing halakhic status of women to the new reality, I would like to comment on what is by now an infamous catchphrase: "Where there is a rabbinic will, there is a halakhic way."¹⁶ Many Orthodox opponents of feminism feel that this obvious overstatement is sufficient proof of the distortion involved in any call for adjusting halakhah to feminist claims. The facile formulation troubles me as well, but it is difficult to offer an adequate and nuanced rebuttal to what is essentially an appealing, persuasive, and snappy slogan.

In reality, the process of rabbinic decision-making is an unwieldy procedure that is not easy to summarize with a few concise rules and regulations. It is complicated by many factors and considerations, some explicitly outlined in such compendia as Maimonides' *Mishneh Torah*, and others implicit in the conventions of halakhic practice that have become commonly accepted in the course of time. Clarity is further obstructed by the discrepancy between ideological rhetoric, which tends to be extremely conservative and does not include the word "change" in its vocabulary, and what happens in actual practice in order to enable the halakhic system to remain alive and functioning under all circumstances.

Even in the Talmud, there are various formulations regarding the degree of autonomy and creativity exhibited by the sages as they interpreted the written Torah given to Moses and, in so doing, developed the Oral Law.¹⁷ Some statements would seem to deny the existence of any innovative liberty shown by the rabbis in the process of interpretation. This conservative conception of the role of the rabbinic authorities intensified for obvious reasons with the demise of the Sanhedrin and with the breaking of the original chain of rabbinic ordination (*semikhah*) that dated back to Moses. The discrepancy between ideology and practice became particularly marked, however, during those times when halakhic ideologists sensed a threat to the system's preservation, continuity, and integrity and were therefore provoked into ever more rigid expositions of its legislative mechanisms. When taken seriously, such a tendency has appeared at times to have had a crippling effect on the shape of halakhic jurisdiction.¹⁸

A major factor contributing to a sense of halakhic freezing in the modern period is the decentralization of Jewish communal authority. In the medieval period when Jewish communities were still allowed complete judicial autonomy, the range of halakhic decision-making was much broader, including all aspects of civil law. With the withdrawal of local autonomy, however, most rabbinical decision-making has been restricted de facto to ritual matters such as prayer, the observance of the Sabbath and festivals, and kashruth. Matters affecting personal status, such as marriage and divorce, although still handled in Israel through the rabbinical courts, are dealt with in the diaspora on a much more limited scale. The main halakhic function of pulpit rabbis and holders of rabbinic office in the diaspora is simply to disseminate information regarding existing halakhic practice. Actual decision-making (that is, applying and adjusting the existing law to changing conditions) is reduced to a minimum in most cases. And in Israel, as also in a few diaspora communities, where many members of the observant community are well versed in halakhah, the decision-making function of official

rabbis is sometimes even less pronounced, since the same legal resources that serve the rabbis are equally accessible to the educated layperson.¹⁹ The lack of formal central institutions; the restricted sphere of jurisdiction in the communal courts; and the spread of mass communication that, when combined with the general ideological fragmentation of the modern Jewish community, renders it virtually impossible to find one rabbinic authority who is accepted by everybody—all of these factors have brought about a situation where the bulk of halakhic deliberation consists of ascertaining whether a particular case at issue is covered by the accepted codes.

When the issue to be resolved involves no more than a basic inquiry, the existing situation can be quite adequate; no issue of formal ratification by a recognized authority is usually involved. When, however, the situation is more complicated, even the learned layman will feel the need to turn to a recognized rabbinical decisor (*posek*) who will investigate the original sources alongside the interpretations of the early and late expositors, and then decide what the law should be. The status of such an authority nowadays does not necessarily depend on any formal appointment to an official position. Rather, it devolves upon select individuals both by virtue of their expertise and by informal popular consensus: the fact that people actually turn to them for halakhic advice.

Thus it has come about that today, more than ever, halakhic authorities do not see themselves as ideologists or social planners who accommodate or even anticipate popular need. In their own self-image, they are merely interpreting the law, using the given sources at their disposal with maximal intellectual integrity in order to apply them to constantly evolving situations. Given this modest perception of their calling and their increasingly limited scope of authority, the current role of poskim is, in their own eyes, merely to facilitate the execution of established halakhah, rather than to imbue it with new purpose. Occasionally they will find justification or even an actual precedent for an alternative interpretation more suited to the situation at hand. But such innovations, especially when the issue involves ideological and not merely technical ramifications, are usually addressed ad hoc to individual cases as they arise, and are therefore intended to exert only a temporary and local impact.

This is how the halakhic process looks on paper and when viewed through its own ideological lenses. However, life finds its own unconventional methods of overcoming the constraints of ideology, covertly discovering various nooks and crannies in which to develop solutions. Thus, in the real-life application of the halakhic process, there are many qualifications to be considered, which turn halakhic decision-making into something more fluid.

For example, although most poskim are nonideological and do not see their function as social planners who bend their interpretations to accommodate predefined demands, the acute historian even of modern times will occasionally be able to trace an extrahalakhic ideology that exerted an influence on them. When two existing halakhic principles come into conflict as the result of new circumstances, sometimes the decision as to which is to be preferred cannot exclude subjective, ideological considerations.²⁰ The halakhah itself allows for the application of certain socioeconomic or moral principles²¹ that may override strictly technical considerations, and the question of when they are to be invoked leaves much leeway for subjective assessment.²²

Second, although poskim nowadays generally address only concrete problems as

presented to them by specific people in specific situations, broad general policies do eventually become established as the responsa gradually build up and gain a cumulative effect.²³ (It should also be noted that, even after the dissolution of the Sanhedrin, there were certain periods in history when the Jewish people were sufficiently united in their acceptance of halakhic authority to enable the initiation of more “global” halakhic policies. Such initiatives were not always mere correctives to existing problems or strictly limited to technical, nonideological issues;²⁴ they sometimes also anticipated sociological currents that, in the opinion of the posek, were destined to become crucial to the more substantive development of the halakhic community.²⁵)

Finally, although the established interpretive procedure when veering from existent norms has always been to look for precedent, this precedent is sometimes found in customary popular practice rather than in books. So long as popular religious observance functions according to internalized religious standards that are not governed exclusively by issues of convenience and self-interest, the tradition of the people and their intuitive religious sensibilities, even when arrived at via methods independent of the fine points of halakhah, have often been regarded both as a bona-fide element in halakhic deliberation and as the wellspring of living Torah.²⁶ In other cases, even when reliance upon previous codified sources is invoked, the reasoning involved is so flimsy that its subordination to popular custom or need is absolutely transparent.²⁷ There are also instances in which the posek believes that the new factors he faces are so compelling that he has the authority to innovate not only against previous rulings but even contrary to popular practice.²⁸

For all these reasons, the claim that there can be a “value-free” method of rabbinic decision-making is not all that simple. When I was still convinced that the halakhah was limited by “absolute constraints,” it was easier for me to reject the slogan claiming that where there is a “rabbinic will” there is a “halakhic way.” But with the years I have come to believe that this catchphrase does bear at least a half truth, for there are, of course, no a priori limits to rabbinic exegetical ingenuity²⁹ or to the authority of rabbis to enact an ad hoc ruling created under unique circumstances (*horaat sha’ah*) or a new ruling that is not based on interpretation of previous sources (*takanah*). So there are indeed a plethora of halakhic ways. Where the argument turns out to be problematic is in its facile reliance on the “rabbinic will.” It seems to indicate that there are no limits at all other than a rabbinic intransigence that refuses to will in the required way. Indeed, it seems to be suggesting that whenever there is a *popular* will, there should be a halakhic way.

This suggestion, however, ignores the more elusive tension always exhibited by halakhic decision-making between the moral or practical weightiness of the need for the change; the degree of religious commitment and the willingness of the relevant community to accept that change; and the conviction of any given posek that no matter how inventive his halakhic reasoning, he is still to be regarded as a student sitting before his rabbinic master, using the same language, techniques, frames of reference, and considerations that would enable at least dialogue, if not agreement, between the past and the present. The prime consideration is whether the result will enhance the religious objective of “sanctifying the name of heaven” and increasing observance of the Torah and the mitzvot.³⁰ This “subjective commitment to an objectified understanding” of the halakhah (to adopt the formula of Robert Cover) is

what lends haredi authorities the appearance of added integrity, therefore making them impossible to ignore when mapping out a campaign for the future of halakhic Judaism, despite the fact that a significant portion of the “centrist” Orthodox population would often prefer to dismiss them. In addition to sociological and other psychological factors,³¹ it is this strong sense of allegiance and obligation not only to the content but even to the forms of a sanctified legal tradition that gives ultra-Orthodox poskim added credibility in playing out this halakhic dialectic. This holds true even though the halakhic reasoning for their stringencies may at times leave something to be desired.³²

This having been said, let us outline some of the paths, open and covert, that the halakhic authorities have followed when confronted with the need to respond to the challenges of a changing social situation and its concomitant moral sensibilities. Open, because societal and intuitive moral considerations are no strangers to halakhic discussion, and in the past have constituted legitimate factors to be taken into account in halakhic deliberations; covert, inasmuch as the diverse ways in which such adjustments are made reflect varying degrees of tension with what is formally mandated by halakhah or what are perceived to be its theological or philosophical underpinnings.

Apologetics

The most subtle method of response is one that ostensibly bears no degree of tension at all with the letter of the law but does diverge from its original spirit. This is evident in efforts to offer some line of apologetic reasoning for maintaining and defending the old halakhic norms as they stand, which nevertheless incorporates in its rhetoric new values and judgments that indicate some measure of accommodation to the very forces and sensibilities it ostensibly seeks to resist. Take, for example, various arguments that turn the rationale for the traditional distinctions between men and women on its head by stipulating the superior nature of women, who therefore do not need the added obligations of men in order to connect with the divine.

Consider the well-worn example of the blessing “who has not made me a woman” (“shelo ’asani islah”) that is recited by men. Some would have us believe that only contemporary feminists take offense at such a daily blessing. Yet it is likely that there were many women in previous generations who shared the reaction of Rayna Batya, the wife of R. Naphtali Zvi Berlin and the daughter of R. Yitzhak of Volozhin. Her nephew, R. Barukh Epstein (author of the *Torah temimah*) recalls:

How bitter was my aunt, as she would say from time to time, that every empty-headed ignorant man, every ignoramus who hardly knew the meaning of the words and who would not dare to cross her threshold without first obsequiously and humbly obtaining her permission, would not hesitate to boldly and arrogantly recite to her face the blessing of “shelo ’asani islah.” Moreover, upon his recitation of the blessing, she was obliged to answer “Amen.” “And who can muster enough strength,” she concluded with great anguish, “to hear this eternal symbol of shame and embarrassment to women?”³³

Similarly, more than a century and a half ago, R. Aaron Worms (a disciple of the famed Shaagat Aryeh), who also served as a rabbi, rabbinic judge, and head of the yeshiva in Metz, wrote in his *Meorei or*: “It seems to me that we are forbidden to say [the blessing] ‘shelo ’asani goy’ [who has not made me a Gentile] publicly [in the syna-

gogue], because it will engender hatred. And as to saying ‘shelo ’asani ishah’ [aloud]—how can we publicly humiliate someone?”³⁴

It is not farfetched to suggest that this blessing might well reflect an initial attitude that regarded women as religiously underprivileged because they were not obliged to study Torah or fulfill certain religious observances. (This difference in halakhic obligation is also what determined their inferior ontological status.³⁵) This view is simply stated in the Tosefta on tractate Berakhot³⁶ and is corroborated by the fourteenth-century liturgical commentator, R. David Abudarham,³⁷ who explains that when women recite their own form of the blessing “who made me according to His will” (“she ’asani kirzono”), they are engaged in an act of “ziduk hadin,” that is, making their peace with a divine ruling or sentence.³⁸ In the course of time, such assumptions served as the basis for essentialist arguments that stipulated the existence of certain eternal metaphysical differences between men and women. Following the Aristotelian tradition, men were regarded as “form” and women as “matter,”³⁹ and this served as an explanation for the natural ontological superiority of men, upon which their preferred halakhic status was based.

But as women’s status in society changed over the years, discomfort with such a blatantly denigrating view found expression in subtle changes in the application of the form-matter distinction. Thus, although R. Kook still employs this distinction in defining male-female differences,⁴⁰ “matter”—while remaining secondary to “form” in his scheme—does not bear the same negative, wild, and unruly qualities that it represented for some of the medievalists.⁴¹ Relying on the more value-neutral use of these concepts by mystics in the Neoplatonic tradition,⁴² R. Kook sees “matter” as serving a more benign function: in its passive obedience, it enables “form” to carry out its task. Even in this view, however, qualitative inborn differences still remain between different classes of souls, each with its own task, and to deny this would be to work against each one’s uniquely authentic essence.

The practice of relating halakhah to an essentialist framework has not lost its appeal for some modern halakhic apologists, since it implies a natural order of the universe that would be disrupted if the halakhic distinction between the sexes were to be opposed. Grounding the difference in the two blessings on eternal essential differences between men and women rather than on halakhic status obviates the possibility of viewing the difference as merely a response to a social reality and therefore perhaps open to change. Nevertheless, alternative explanations for the blessings such as those developed by R. Samson Raphael Hirsch, R. Eli Munk, and R. Aaron Soloveitchik,⁴³ which seem to be based on the authority of R. Yehudah Loew of Prague (Maharal, the renowned sixteenth-century Jewish thinker),⁴⁴ manage to turn the initial ontological statement on its head by telling women: “You don’t need men’s ego trip. The reason for the phrasing of your blessing is because you are the embodiment of the true ideal of God’s creation and situated at the highest level of elitism. All of those extra obligations that men have were really created to keep them out of mischief.”

Such explanations are overtly conservative. Their accommodation to new realities is often unconscious and not easily discernible to the observer. Nevertheless, although the ostensible objective of such efforts is to reinforce the rationale for existing halakhic practice, the elevation of women’s nature is in essence a breakdown of the traditional hierarchical picture and a move toward a “separate but equal” version of egal-

itarianism. Despite the conservative motivation, such a shift in rhetoric, which begins on the extrahalakhic level, can sometimes pave the way for a more far-reaching halakhic accommodation that is translatable into actual practice.

Another example illustrating the attempt to bridge existing halakhic categories and new social realities is the apologetic approach developed to explain women's exemption from time-bound religious obligations. Of course, it could well be that this mishnaic exemption, rather than reflecting the attempt to limit women's participation in religious ritual, should actually be understood as an innovative acknowledgement that women possess an independent status before God and can relate to Him directly.⁴⁵ In modern apologetics, however, the mishnaic view comes full circle with the suggestion that women are exempted from time-bound obligations because, unlike men, the very nature of their constitution absolves them from the need to be made aware of the sanctity of time,⁴⁶ or because they innately possess greater religious fervor and enthusiasm and therefore require fewer devotional reminders.⁴⁷ Although the limitation upon women's ritual obligations is maintained, there is a great difference between saying that this is because they are not *worthy* of mitzvot and saying that they are *above* them.

However, for apologetics to work, they need to be convincing—and a *sine qua non* would certainly be admitting, for example, that the negative view of women that can be perceived in the “shelo 'asani ishah” blessing reflects a real strand in the tradition. In any event, in a situation of rapidly growing disparity between the old and the new norms, apologetics have only a limited problem-solving ability.

Reviving Neglected Practices

Another form of adjustment that strives for minimal divergence from the law involves reviving practices that were neglected for sociological rather than halakhic reasons. Although these practices sometimes introduce an obvious dissonance with current religious custom, and indeed the impetus for their adoption today might at times stem from forces that are not purely halakhic, their formal halakhic grounding is impeccable. Such practices might include women leading the grace after meals (*birkat hamazon*), reciting kiddush for themselves, or participating in the ritual ablution (*mayim aḥaronim*) that precedes the grace after meals.⁴⁸

Voluntary Increased Participation

In other instances, such as women wearing a prayer shawl (*talit*) or ritual fringes (*zizit*), divergence from past practice can be justified as representing an increased voluntary participation in religious activities on the part of sincerely motivated women—to be likened to women's acceptance of the obligation to hear the shofar, which is also a time-bound observance.⁴⁹ In such cases, the innovation in halakhic practice is certainly not antithetical to halakhic values.

The Establishment of Context-Related Concepts

More flexible interpretations of existing norms are occasionally justified by the fact that some halakhic definitions are context-related and not absolute. More lenient de-

definitions of modesty belong to this category, such as questions relating to woman's singing (*kol ishah*),⁵⁰ whether as a solo voice in mixed company (as in performances), or as part of a group (for example, participating in Sabbath songs in mixed company);⁵¹ women delivering religious homilies (*divrei torah*), or working professionally and socializing in mixed company. By the same token, what seems to be a violation of the principle of communal honor (*kevod ha'zibur*) in the appointment of women as judges or public leaders in the state of Israel is justified by the argument that if the community voluntarily accepts a woman's leadership, this is sufficient indication that it does not regard her being a woman as a negative reflection upon itself.⁵² Although not all rabbinic authorities originally regarded the concept of "communal honor" as relative to the society they lived in, establishing it now as context-based opens up new halakhic possibilities. Today's favorable attitude toward women's religious study is also sometimes based on the recognition that the implications of women's commitment to Torah are different in the modern world, and that, in order to remain religiously committed, women need to acquire an independent knowledge of sources.⁵³

Overarching Halakhic Principles

A greater degree of tension with normative halakhah is evidenced in instances of innovations that are supported by calling into prominence overarching halakhic principles. In effect, support is given to new practices that do not quite tally with the traditional conventions or assumptions, even though the assumptions themselves are not challenged head-on. What is involved here is the balancing of one halakhic principle against another. Thus, for example, the establishment of bat mitzvah celebrations, despite superficial similarities between this custom and Christian confirmation ceremonies, is approved out of consideration for the feelings of present-day adolescent girls who would otherwise feel insulted at being excluded from such activities.⁵⁴ This policy is reminiscent of the Second Temple practice of allowing women to lay their hands on the sacrificial animal. According to the sages, this practice was allowed "in order to appease the women" ("bikhdei la'asot nahat ruah lanashim").⁵⁵

Other innovations that are perceived as more problematic halakhically (or as more radical because they run blatantly counter to previous practice and ideology) may be justified after the fact (*bedi'avad*) for reasons of "prudence." An example is R. Yehiel Weinberg's decision to condone the mixed singing of Sabbath songs at the family table, which he justifies not only on the grounds of avoiding unnecessary offense to women, but also out of the fear that such exclusion could drive women from the Torah community.⁵⁶ R. Yisrael Meir Hakohen Kagan (the Hafez Hayim) was motivated by this same consideration when he sanctioned women's formal study of Torah with what became a well-known remark: "Better this form of frivolity [*tiflut*] than another."⁵⁷

By now it is difficult to recall that the first move that opened the floodgates to the basic and far-reaching changes that have developed in religious education for women were grounded on considerations of force majeure (*'et la'asot*). Since then, more positive justifications for women's religious learning have been expressed, such as the centrality of textual learning in Jewish religious experience; the beneficial influence it has on one's entire involvement in the Torah; and the fact that such increased knowl-

edge merely enhances women's effectiveness—particularly in this day and age—in their traditional roles as wives and mothers.⁵⁸

Creative Exploitation of Halakhic Lacunae

In cases where all of the above measures do not suffice, the next move is to exploit to the maximum any lacunae that exist within the parameters of halakhah in order to find more creative ways to close the gap whenever modern mores run blatantly counter to the implied or even explicit intent of traditional practices. This step is called for especially in instances where the application of existing halakhah so offends all moral sensibilities that the rabbinic authorities feel justified in resorting to so vague a rationale as “the ways of the Torah are ways of peace” (“*derakheha darkhei no'am*”). Examples of such innovations are the move to institute prenuptial agreements designed to lessen the power of recalcitrant husbands in the case of divorce proceedings,⁵⁹ or the acceptance of women's testimony in rabbinical courts under certain circumstances, not as formal testimony (*'edut*) but as what is known as “appraisal” (*umdenah*).⁶⁰

Ignoring Past Halakhic Stipulations

The most drastic option of all is to ignore past halakhic stipulations, relegating them to dead-letter status. This measure is obviously not freely used or condoned, and it is generally prompted not by ideological considerations, but simply by the practical inapplicability of old norms in the context of new social settings. An example of this is the flagrant violation of the halakhically well-founded prohibition against unmarried men and *all* women—both married and unmarried—teaching young children, the intent being to avoid a situation where parents coming to fetch their children might engage in immodest mingling of the sexes.⁶¹ In his commentary to Maimonides' *Hilkhot talmud torah* where this prohibition appears, R. Moshe Sternbuch, a contemporary authority who now serves as one of the leaders of an ultra-Orthodox community in Jerusalem, asks: Why is this halakhah ignored in such widespread fashion in our day? Could it be that it is the influence of the widespread mixing of the sexes in the modern marketplace? Although his query is voiced incredulously, this rhetorical suggestion is obviously the main answer.⁶²

Public Policy: The Political Factor

The existence and application of halakhic strategies such as those described above is an important factor in the widespread modern perception that, given the proper institutional circumstances (that is, a general consensus of opinion among a recognized community of major rabbinic authorities), a solution to almost every basic problem can be found. But the freedom that halakhic authorities feel in thus resolving problems is often tempered by contrary considerations of public policy. Factors of this kind encourage greater conservatism out of concern for issues such as the integrity of the halakhic system or the need to clearly mark off the halakhic community in the face of

threats to its authority, either within the Jewish community or in the world at large. At issue for the posek is not simply his own community, but also other, more extreme communities from which he would not want to cut himself (or his followers) off.

One example of public policy considerations is the widespread contemporary objection to women publicly reciting the mourner's prayer in synagogue, despite known precedents for this practice in Lithuania (where bereaved women were even allowed in some communities to stand in the men's section). A few poskim have quite frankly admitted that the practice is permissible⁶³ and that their opposition is grounded exclusively on the danger they perceive in adopting a practice that could either weaken allegiance to existing Jewish customs, or else serve as a precedent encouraging more radical egalitarianism.⁶⁴ The same consideration is used as a basis for opposing the right of women to recite some or all of the seven blessings that are part of the marriage service, for fear that this would lead to demands for mixed seating in public prayer;⁶⁵ or for opposing women's readings of the Purim megillah for fear that this would lead to a situation in which women's prayer groups were accorded the status of a minyan.⁶⁶

An established standard used to measure the danger to the integrity of the halakhah is that of motivation: if a rabbinic authority believes that an innovation, even though permissible, is being proposed out of motives that are not purely halakhic, this is regarded as sufficient basis for the ban. The prevalence of this argument is a fair indication of the challenge that poskim currently perceive in the face of a rapidly shifting social milieu vulnerable to extrahalakhic influences. Some examples of this are R. Moshe Feinstein's ruling regarding women's donning a talit—although he allows the practice, he seems to do so reluctantly⁶⁷—as well as the virulent opposition to women's prayer groups by various authorities, based on the suspicion that the drive behind these changes is primarily the wish to score feminist points rather than bona fide religious zeal.⁶⁸

The argument in all such considerations of motivation is that women's increased ritual participation must flow from the realities of halakhah, and not vice versa. What complicates matters, however, is that the lines between the two options are not always clear-cut. One might question whether, in practice, such distinctions between religious and feminist motivations can readily be drawn; the very wish for greater participation may already reflect the subconscious influence of feminist attitudes and new self-images. Alternatively, the interest of women in performing a broadened range of mitzvot may also be the result of their increased exposure to the sources, combined with the breakdown of the mimetic tradition (as described by Haym Soloveitchik).⁶⁹ Moreover, the search for new applications of halakhic norms as represented by the reappropriation of neglected halakhic practices or the voluntary adoption of new ones does not always lend itself to easy distinctions between context-free halakhic zeal and the incorporation of new ideals under the cover of pure religious fervor. Even the redefinition of certain context-based halakhic concepts or the search for extenuating halakhic considerations may be motivated less by practical difficulties than by a radical shift in religious attitude.

In the clash between conservatism and change, issues of public policy remain the most elastic and open to debate. Thus, the argument that the integrity of the halakhic system demands unswerving allegiance to the status quo can be used against virtu-

ally any relaxation in the law. Going one step further, some poskim regard the prohibition even of what has been permitted as a proper safety measure. Others, however, have recognized that such a rigid approach might well drive the faithful to transgression. Leaning toward leniency, R. Aaron Soloveitchik has argued, for example, in favor of allowing women to recite the mourner's prayer publicly, even though this practice is not universally accepted:

Nowadays, when there are Jews fighting for equality for men and women in matters such as being called up to the Torah, if Orthodox rabbis prevent women from saying kaddish even when it can be permitted, it will strengthen the influence of Reform and Conservative rabbis. It is therefore forbidden to prevent [them] from saying kaddish.⁷⁰

The Status of Women—A Special Problem

The tug of war between conservatism, on the one hand, and the pressure for halakhic solutions that seem to run counter to the intention or spirit of the law, on the other, is a well-known phenomenon in the history of halakhah. Sometimes adjustments to new demands have been incorporated fairly painlessly and have become so well entrenched in tradition that any traces of the battle leading up to their acceptance are totally forgotten; while at other times, the struggle and resistance to change have extended over centuries, providing powerful testimony to the fact that anachronism is the natural condition of legal systems in general. As examples of the latter tendency, one can mention the modification involving moneylending and interest (*heter 'iskah*);⁷¹ the technical sale of leavened products to a non-Jew before Passover (*mekhirat ḥameẓ*), and similarly—an ongoing controversy—the technical sale of Jewish-owned land in Israel to non-Jews during the sabbatical year (*heter mekhirah*). Nevertheless, the “women's issue” seems to fall into a class of its own. Whenever any suggestions are made regarding the application of any of the strategic methods listed above (save for apologetics), tempers run high: discussions generate uniquely violent reactions involving the extent to which it is religiously legitimate to condone a deep split between current halakhic applications and the hallowed traditions of the past. Questioning the assumptions that underlie these traditions is even more problematic. Why is this so?

One reason for the uniqueness of discussions regarding the status of women in halakhah is the urgency of the issue. The change in women's status in the general world is proceeding so rapidly, albeit in some countries more than in others, that the sense of inconsistency and anomaly experienced by Orthodox women is extremely pressing. Critical problems are being raised that require immediate and global solutions. Thus, the traditional caution displayed in most halakhic decision-making is often perceived as akin to applying a bandage to a wound that requires major surgery.

Further, issues involving women often relate to moral sensibilities that are pivotal to human experience. Even an apparently localized problem such as that of an individual 'agunah is not easily relegated to one circumscribed area capable of resolution by a simple legal technicality. The changes being demanded touch upon religious attitudes and principles involving our total vision of ourselves, the nature of human sexuality, the Jewish family, and the community at large. What is the cost of minimizing gender differences and destroying the cultural halos with which tradition has sur-

rounded them, as against the gains of greater self-fulfillment, freedom of expression, and independence for the women concerned? Is there a specific feminine contribution to society that would be lost if taken outside the home and brought into the public arena? Or conversely, are the Jewish people forfeiting half of their spiritual talents and energies by confining women to the domestic sphere? Does acceptance of women's changing status in society necessarily lead to other positions often associated with feminism, such as abortion on demand or the acceptability of lesbianism and homosexuality, which are unequivocally contraindicated by halakhah?

Compelling as they are, these explanations are not complete. The history of halakhah provides other examples of deep ideological shifts involving issues at the heart of Jewish spirituality and moral sensibilities. I am thinking here of such questions as the attitude of Jews to non-Jews, the toleration of secular by religious Jews, or the move from more ritualistic to more philosophical forms of worship. Even when such changes appeared to take place gradually and imperceptibly, without much explicit ideological fanfare, the discerning onlooker can perceive a causal connection between halakhic change and shifting societal attitudes. It is precisely here, however, that we find another key to the uniqueness of the women's question: the fact that in addition to the centrality of the issue in and of itself, its solution ultimately involves an ideological enterprise of such major proportions that it cannot simply slip unnoticed into Jewish life. Changing the fundamental halakhic status of women has profound implications for the halakhic system at large; in effect, it constitutes a major upheaval at the very foundations of Jewish tradition as we have known it for centuries. It is in this sense that the issue can be said to constitute the test case par excellence of the halakhic system's ability to adjust to modern human and social realities.

The Threat of Feminism

While Orthodox leaders have not yet spelled out for themselves the broader implications of the women's revolution, I believe that many of them have a vague intuitive sense of what is involved. Where these implications *are* being spelled out is in the feminist movement, which may be why the very mention of "feminism" so often generates extreme anxiety and discomfort in Orthodox circles. The term frequently conjures up a specter of nearly demonic proportions, as evidenced by the vehement objection to its inclusion in the title of two recent international conferences on feminism and Orthodoxy (and by the amount of casuistry concerning the order in which the two words were placed). Of course, what is meant by the term "feminism" is itself a matter of debate. All too often, however, the opposition to the movement as a whole refers exclusively to antihalakhic stances that have been adopted only by its more extreme wing.

This approach to the feminist challenge is short-sighted and mistaken. Not only is the movement more complex than its opponents are willing to admit, but—on a deeper level—it poses questions that go far beyond specific clashes with existing halakhah. Even some of the more positive and sympathetic Orthodox treatments of women's issues, such as that of Joel Wolowelsky (who suggests that "it is now time to move past this fear of feminism"),⁷² fail to take into account the full depth of the feminist cri-

tique, which highlights several aspects of the women's revolution that are profoundly problematic for halakhah, and which Orthodox thinking evades at its own peril.

Feminist thinking is not something that can be sidestepped easily. It raises a new point of view—one with values and moral overtones that are, at least in part, intuitively persuasive for modern (and particularly postmodern) thinkers. And these values constitute a genuine challenge to the traditional Jewish worldview. This does not mean that Orthodox Jews are obliged to accept these new values en masse, or even partially. But “recognizing the enemy” is the first necessary step toward developing a reasoned and adequate response.

Although the feminist movement started as a drive for equal opportunities and rights for women, the ideology it has generated has transformed it into something broader and deeper. Ultimately, it purports to represent a spiritual revolution offering an alternative reading of the world, God, and history.⁷³ The main argument of feminist ideology is that the current status of women results from a longstanding power struggle between the sexes, sometimes conscious but more often hidden beneath the surface. Moreover, the feminist critique regards the mainstream monotheistic religions as a powerful tool of patriarchy, in the sense that these have classically developed images of both divine and human reality that are specifically congenial to males.⁷⁴ In attributing such constructs of reality to a divine source, these religions have essentially accorded them the status of absolute truth.

In a matriarchal society, they argue, different ideas of the divine—more pantheistic (all the world is God and God is the world) or panentheistic (all the world is God and God is more than the world) in nature—would have been favored. A “matriarchal” religious view would stress the interrelated rather than the atomistic nature of the self, or the immanent nature of God as opposed to His transcendence—in short, a sense of the cooperative rather than the authoritarian element in the relationship between God and His creatures. Instead of obedience and law, such a vision would convey the emotionality, personal nature, and intimacy of women's piety; the awareness of the presence of God in the immediate experiences of motherhood, marriage, and the home; in the domestic routine of everyday life, in the biological sensibilities peculiar to women; and in their view of themselves as serving God through concrete acts of nurturing and helping others (*hesed*). In contrast, the all-powerful creator-God who rules over the universe and commands humanity as king of kings, even if He is regarded as a kindly father figure as well, is incontrovertibly male—with regard to role more than gender. And this image, in turn, strengthens the notion of patriarchy as a mode of imitatio Dei.

There are, to be sure, other movements in contemporary society that threaten organized religion. However, armed with this feminist theory, the women's movement is a unique threat, for it is directed against the basic social model of hierarchy and domination upon which authoritarian religions—as authoritarian—depend for their survival. In the Jewish arena, the feminist critique challenges the assumption that the Torah begins with a “pure” and uniquely Jewish view of women that only requires occasional adjustment in order to accommodate new societal concerns and realities. Instead, it suggests that the basic halakhic model of male-female relations is socially based and culture-bound—and as such, a reflection of a set of assumptions that are traceable to palpably “ungodly” and “un-Jewish” forces in the history of human cul-

ture. Indeed, once the status of women in halakhic sources is set against a broader anthropological backdrop, and especially when compared with other monotheistic religions, it is difficult to attribute the problem to uniquely halakhic factors.⁷⁵ The phenomenon of attaching the highest prestige and status to exclusively male activities, argue the feminists, is not a Jewish preserve. Such sexual discrimination, as well as all the institutional devices that were created to protect it in the name of God, has striking parallels both in Christianity and in Islam.

It may well be that this alternative feminist reading is exaggerated and overstated. My own view is that the notion of a longstanding power struggle between the sexes (which brings to mind the class struggle of Marxist ideology) is a mythical construction with flimsy basis in historical fact; it seems more likely that, for centuries, given certain economic, sociological and other factors, the patriarchal model served the interests of both men and women. Similarly, slavery in the premodern world prevailed as long as it did because it reflected the vestiges of an economy that was not viable without the existence of a serving class. In both cases, the dissatisfaction and arousal of feelings of injustice came about only when circumstances had so changed as to make the disadvantages blatantly clear to the oppressed group, who could afford to rebel once other options became available. But even if the idea of a “male conspiracy” is rejected, we must confront the suggestion that men and women sometimes have different interests, and that it was the male interpretation of reality that, by and large, was incorporated as definitive in our foundational religious models and metaphors. The highlighting of male perspectives and interests in the very self-image of halakhic decision-making seems to relativize its legitimacy. As a result, the authority of hierarchical precedent in the halakhic process looks less objective, absolute, and clean of bias.

Some Implications of Feminism for the Halakhic Reality

Giving Women Their Own Voice

One effect of the women’s revolution has been to imbue women—even those who do not consciously identify with feminist ideology—with the confidence to find their own voice.⁷⁶ As feminist research gradually uncovers the extent to which a predominantly male perspective has been instrumental in shaping the development of halakhah, women are now gaining the courage to look at its background narrative more critically and to voice aloud their hitherto unspoken skepticism regarding its objectivity. In the face of men presuming to define what women are and what they should be feeling about themselves, the Jewish feminist movement has empowered women to turn the tables and do the same to men. It is now women who are (perhaps gratuitously) both telling men what their essential nature is, and passing judgment on their motives.

Emboldened by their heightened critical awareness and their increased recognition of the role that nonjuridical considerations play in introducing flexibility to the application of halakhic principles, Jewish feminists are now beginning to question whether the halakhic process has in fact always been a mere pristine playing out of the logic

of its original sources and principles. The feminist critique makes the official explanation for many of the legalities that seem to discriminate against women—namely, that these are a simple and technical working out of objective halakhic principles—appear unconvincing.⁷⁷ Opening the books for themselves, they point out, allows women not only to appreciate the absolute limits of the halakhah, but also the extent to which these are capable of being extended whenever societal and moral pressures threaten to render halakhic observance either impracticable or irrelevant. The newfound proficiency that women have gained by independently reading halakhic sources, they continue, leads them to suspect that the resistance to some women's initiatives today, even when heavily masked by the pious concern for preserving halakhic integrity, is at least in part an unconscious defense against the threat that such audacity poses to traditional authority. Even setting aside questions of motivation, women's increased Torah knowledge gives them the tools and the confidence to question the judgment of poskim in assessing the relative weight of public policy against permissible solutions in various cases where women may be more sensitive to the societal implications of a given decision.

The objections that women are now raising to what they see as the sacrifice of their interests and sensibilities on the altar of "halakhic integrity," as in questions of marriage and divorce, are fired by a moral pathos that refuses to be marginalized as irrelevant to religious practice. In their eyes, the implicit compliance of the rabbinical courts with financial extortion as a necessary step in many divorce proceedings, or their binding a woman against her will to a violent or philandering husband in the name of "domestic peace" (*shalom bayit*) and the preservation of the institution of marriage, is a travesty of justice. This critique engages Jewish tradition with what it sees as a preexistent underside of halakhic development—in other words, a second and suppressed voice that careful feminist rereadings of Torah and of halakhah are gradually uncovering. Thus, for example, feminist scholarship will seek out the counterpoint, filtering through mystic midrashim, that links the souls of Tamar (Gen. 38:1–30) and Ruth and (so it can be argued) implies approval for their (farsighted) violation of sexual or social norms, thus ensuring the seed of the messiah.⁷⁸ Or they will take note of a "second voice" that may be reconstructed from the many tales strewn throughout the Talmud of women challenging men in the study house, in which family loyalties are placed above the value of abstention from family life for the sake of rabbinic learning;⁷⁹ or of genuine piety and spontaneous acts of *hesed* that win out against formal conformity to rules and authority.⁸⁰

On a more profound level, the feminist critique might be said to involve a devaluation of the general halakhic mentality as it reflects a uniquely male perspective. The very concept of a religion that is law-governed, dependent upon our performing a detailed series of mandated acts, is regarded as expressive of a male way of thinking. Rather than placing formal obedience to rules at the top of their list of moral and spiritual priorities, a feminine view might emphasize more the importance of religious feeling and a sense of the presence of God. By the same token, some exponents of feminist theory have argued that women tend to develop a value system that is more pragmatic than formal, less concerned with the law itself than with how the law affects daily life.⁸¹

*Threatening the Exclusively Male Preserve
of the Official Halakhic Establishment*

The move to intensify women's knowledge of Torah was not originally motivated by any political agenda of rebellion against the exclusivity of male rabbinic authority, but rather out of a genuinely conceived need both to intensify attachment to the Jewish tradition and to upgrade women's Jewish literacy to a level commensurate with that of their general knowledge. Once begun, however, the phenomenon of women's learning has become a time bomb. Barring a flagging of interest on the part of the women themselves, no degree of effort expended at making fine distinctions (between learning for theoretical purposes or for practical knowledge of halakhah, versus more informed influence upon halakhic decision-making) will be able to keep the lid down on what must eventually erupt in the form of agitation for greater participation on the part of women in the halakhic process. Just as the Hafetz Hayim's original dispensation allowing women to learn simple religious texts of Torah opened up the floodgates—from study of the commentaries on the Pentateuch to study of the Mishnah and Gemarah on stenciled sheets, to learning Talmud from the talmudic text itself (*lefi haseder*)—so too the “slippery slope” has already been entered with regard to the interpretive halakhic process, starting from the training of women religious advocates (*to'anot*) in Israeli rabbinical courts, and female consultants in matters of ritual purity, to the publication of the first compendium of halakhic exposition (*berurei halakhah*) written exclusively by women;⁸² and on to the growing partnership of rabbis and women professionals (psychologists, social workers, and the like) in devising practical solutions to halakhic problems in areas such as adoption.

Literacy is the great democratic equalizer, blotting out class differences as it grants access to power and privilege. Especially in a society that accords learning the highest value as a religious activity, every student of Torah is in principle on his (or her) way to becoming a fully active participant in the interpretive process.⁸³

All of the above notwithstanding, the sociological issues involved in women's taking on positions of religious authority, even when halakhically permissible, are far from insignificant. The phenomenon of women devoting many years of serious learning in order to gain the expertise required for halakhic decision-making could have a considerable—and possibly negative—impact on the age of marriage and on family and child-rearing patterns. Perhaps even more important, women's gradual entry into the interpretive arena of halakhic process could also have important repercussions on the content of halakhic decision-making. This does not suggest that any given issue would necessarily be decided differently by a woman. But it is probable that an active female presence in halakhic discussion would encourage special focus upon issues of female concern and perhaps give added weight to previously neglected avenues of response. To draw a parallel, no one thought that as more women took up senior positions in the medical establishment, they would suggest the adoption of different medical strategies for known diseases: there is a seemingly objective quality to science just as there is to Torah. Yet as more women oncologists, for example, entered senior positions, there was an added push to develop alternatives to radical mastectomies.

Threatening the Authority of the Halakhic Establishment

The enhanced attachment of women to talmudic learning need not be a threat to halakhic authority as such. On the contrary, two of the most powerful factors tying the hands of the halakhic establishment in modern times, inhibiting its ability to act boldly in decision-making, have been, as noted, the fragmentation of rabbinic authority (there being no one rabbinic authority who is generally accepted by all), and the lack of a sufficiently broad-based and religiously learned constituency that will accept their decisions in problematic cases. In this sense, the formation of a critical mass of women who, because of their intensified commitment to learning and tradition, are willing to listen to the voice of halakhic expertise could serve to bolster such authority (male or female) by providing it with a wide and stable constituency. The very extension of the number of devoutly religious women who tread the fine line between tradition and modernity, and who are willing to turn to a posek for expert guidance, is precisely what could empower the authorities to widen the scope of their decision-making by taking women and their problems into account.

But to the extent that the halakhic establishment continues to ignore this burgeoning political force, preferring instead to work exclusively with the conservative elements of Jewish society, rabbinic authority is in danger of losing much of its power and practical relevancy. When leading poskim cannot arrive at satisfactory solutions that alleviate the human suffering and sense of spiritual diminishment and moral outrage involved in many women's issues, female consciousness in our time is led to dwell on the ineffectualness of the existing halakhic establishment, its lack of religious viability, and the inadequacy of its tools. The result is a sense of futility in seeking authoritative halakhic response.

Propelled by a combination of desperation and newfound confidence, women themselves are launching grass-roots initiatives in search of solutions for various halakhic problems. Such initiatives pose a serious threat to formal rabbinic status. The danger is that, as a critical mass of Orthodox women scholars develops, their inclination might be to seek independent solutions to their problems. This would, of course, be counterproductive for both groups, for just as women require the encouragement of leading rabbinic scholars to support their cause, so too do the leading scholars require a learned constituency that is able to appreciate their guidance. What will remain of traditional rabbinic authority when it is threatened by the growing self-awareness, literacy, power, and activism of women articulating their own sense of themselves, establishing their own religious realities, and exerting their influence on more general forms of Jewish spirituality?

Associated with the issue of formal halakhic status is the respect for authority in general. Some women would regard as antirationalist dogma the demand that they acquiesce in a given ruling simply because someone with a formal title—whether male or female—so decrees. In contrast to the view that regards the ideal religious personality as one who disciplines himself uncritically to obey heteronomous decrees,⁸⁴ feminism may be interpreted as heralding an alternative concept of religious spirituality. Such a view, whatever its merits, raises serious questions as to how it can be reconciled with traditional religious notions of submission to God's authority (*ka-*

balat 'ol malkhut shamayim) and the concept of a transcendent God. To define the delicate balance between the two values thus becomes a matter of urgency.

Challenging the Divine Origins of Halakhah

In claiming to reveal that the traditional Jewish model of hierarchy is the product of an ancient system of power in human society, the feminist critique appears not only to challenge halakhah, but also to question the divinity of the underpinnings upon which Judaism is based. As this critique points out, not only is the Torah a book that places men at the center, but the world it constructs in order to make sense of Jewish experience is viewed from a male perspective and bears an implicit but all-pervasive male bias (albeit so subtle that innocent readers usually remain unaware of its existence). The Torah text often seems to be addressing the male exclusively, viewing woman as the Other in relation to him.⁸⁵ Women's experiences are generally passed over in silence, or are at best reflected through male categories of thought. The radical conclusion that may easily stem from this perception—which, even when unarticulated, exerts a corrosive influence on the very foundations of traditional Jewish belief—is that the discernibly patriarchal nature of this tradition bears extremely upsetting implications for the prevailing Orthodox concepts of revelation and the divine character of the Torah. The feminist reading of the Torah, which begins in suspicion of its male bias and continues in an attempt to redress that one-sidedness with the addition of a female perspective, often ends up with a refusal to assign the status of divine revelation to a text that, it is felt, simply establishes and reinforces the injustices of patriarchy.

The reasoning runs as follows: if the Torah is from God, it should be above any human conditionality. But if the Torah's understandings of the self, the world, and God so clearly reflect a patriarchal social order, how are we to view its source? What sort of a God is it who ignores women's voices and experiences? Since the perspective of the Torah is so limited, can we really credit it with being divine? Is it really describing God in words that God has revealed to us—or perhaps these words are merely the projection of our own wishes or our own social systems onto the cosmos? The problem intensifies when we realize that all rabbinical commentary and halakhic legislation is based upon the legal and narrative sections of the Torah, which were always regarded by tradition as stemming directly from God, and therefore immune to human conditioning.

In seeking to measure the extent to which not only the forms but even the contents of revelation reflect a view of reality that has been filtered through male spectacles, feminism is in a sense reviving with a vengeance the old threat of historicism that was raised by the Haskalah, by Reform, and by the *Wissenschaft des Judentums* of the nineteenth century. Orthodoxy somehow weathered that storm both by virtue of modernist counterarguments that addressed the localized issues of science and religion on a factual plane and by the generalized formulation that “the Torah uses the everyday language of people” (“dibra torah bilshon benei adam”), without really addressing the heart of the problem. But now that the clash between Orthodoxy and historicism is less over facts and more over issues of general biases and the ubiquitous traces of cultural relativism, these panaceas do not suffice.

Implications for the Future of Orthodoxy

The feminist critique of the ostensibly patriarchal orientation of tradition thus poses formidable questions and possibilities. With respect to some of these, it seems as if Orthodoxy has no choice but to accept modifications of traditional norms—at the very least, regarding such change as a necessary evil imposed by forces beyond its control. Regarding other modifications, there is still the option of building a higher wall between the halakhic reality and the outside world, so as to allow the old norms to continue to prevail. But there is also a third possibility: to acknowledge that there are precedents in Jewish tradition that provide the basis for a religious framework that can accommodate the new-found reluctance of both women and men to maintain patriarchy as the ideal societal mold, and further, to view such accommodation as a positive development.

Although the prospect of women's active participation in the halakhic process evokes deep visceral opposition in some sections of the Orthodox community, the exclusion of women from this realm is actually more a sociological aftereffect of their traditional role in Jewish society than a strictly halakhic issue. As Israel's Sephardic chief rabbi has put it: "Women may be great talmudists [*gedolei hador*] and they may serve as arbiters of the law [*morei horaah*] and as teachers of Torah and practical halakhah, because the authority for these positions flows from the individual's talents."⁸⁶ In a world in which women are being propelled into positions demanding a high level of secular education, it is questionable whether they can or should be barred from doing the same with their training in Torah. So, too, it is questionable whether the contemporary halakhic world can afford to dispense with the potential contribution of women's unmediated insights and methods of approach.

As noted, women's grass-roots initiatives and greater participation in the halakhic process pose a threat to formal rabbinic authority. Yet it is possible that the outcome may be a welcome revival of the old Jewish ideal of the aristocracy of learning, as opposed to the idealization of formal authoritative status per se. A communion of learning between men and women could serve to foster leadership that is based on genuine excellence in Torah scholarship and piety, rather than on official appointments (although the assumption here, that scholars whose authority stems from rabbinic learning and not from official titles would be less subject to the political stresses of public policy, may be no more than a utopian dream).

In this connection, it should be noted that the present-day distaste for idealization of the submissive variety of religious spirituality is not an exclusively feminist preserve. It merges well both with a more general modern preference for independent decision-making and for a democratic opening up of the books, and with the fact that the issue of autonomy and critical thinking—versus subjugation to authority—is much more at the fore of our communal lives. Moreover, many Orthodox Jews sense a dry legalism dominating contemporary halakhic discussion, a lack of spirituality and emotion in the synagogue, a widespread insensitivity to broader issues of "making the world a better place" (*tikun 'olam*), and an almost all-pervasive communal divisiveness. Of course, one can find many examples in Jewish history when a spiritual and moral upsurge rooted in a male world superseded legal formalism, as in the critique of some aspects of the dominant rabbinic ideology engendered by the hasidic

and musar movements. Nowadays, however, this corrective is being revived in an analogously powerful manner by the heightened influence of women's sensibilities. One example is the new emphasis on more personalized, creative, and meaningful forms of ritual and prayer, which are being initiated almost exclusively by women. Another is the current public campaign against wife abuse in the Orthodox community, initiated by Abraham J. Twerski and carried into American yeshiva high schools by organizations such as Project SARAH (Stop Abusive Relationships at Home).⁸⁷ In the past, such issues were rarely discussed in public.

Regarding the theological challenge that the feminist reading of sources poses, one can only hope that this too will serve as an antidote to the current lack of sophistication in Orthodox thinking. Since the nineteenth century, the popular Orthodox line regarding halakhah has been completely ahistorical, maintaining that the original halakhic ethos emerged in total independence of time and place. In contrast to Maimonides' suggestion that, if we knew "the doctrines of the Sabians . . . and were cognizant of the events that happened in those days, we would know in detail the reasons of many things mentioned in the Torah,"⁸⁸ the Orthodox line denies that the halakhah and even the Torah were born in a context, leaving little room for thinking in terms of history, sociology, or comparative religion. We are told that "normative Judaism teaches that Halakhah is not derived from any temporal 'worldview' or 'social situation' but expresses the transcendental worldview of the Divine Lawgiver."⁸⁹ The inadequacies of such a notion are exacerbated by the sarcastic ad hominem invective that sometimes accompanies it, which, in a typical sample, labels those who disagree as "self-crowned enlightened people . . . so-called leaders who do not subjugate themselves to the authority of the Torah and its tradition."⁹⁰ Does "acceptance of an evolving halakhah" or the idea that "Torah values and the manner in which mitzvot are performed . . . adjust to changing social realities" indeed entail denial of divine revelation (*torah min hashamayim*) as the true basis of the law? Is dismissal of such conceptions as "embracing the doctrine of Reform"⁹¹ a sufficient or even honest response?

It is obvious that if the feminist critique in its Jewish mold threatens to make conditional the whole corpus of traditional halakhah, Orthodox Jews stand in desperate need of a contemporary theology that will accommodate the following two requisites: first, the ability to acknowledge with a maximum of intellectual integrity the degree to which the Torah and halakhah are formulated in a time- and culture-bound social mold; and second, the ability to demonstrate that this same Torah is nevertheless the eternal voice of God speaking to us—with every word of that voice equally holy and indispensable. Such a theology should be able to find meaning in the fact that sacred and revered Jewish texts have until now been bound to the implicit patriarchal premises that feminist thinkers have been highlighting.

Precedents in Jewish tradition can provide a basis for the accommodation of both these prerequisites without resorting to untenable pictures of God and His intentions. Elsewhere, I have coauthored a preliminary view of what such an articulation might look like.⁹² What follows is a brief summary of our notion of a "cumulative unfolding," in which the ultimate significance of the original revelation at Sinai reveals itself over time by means of interpretations that accrue to it within the framework of the Oral Law.

The divine word, which is God's Torah, is by definition eternal, perfect, and all-encompassing. But since mankind is placed in time and space, all *receptions* of that word (including the one at Sinai) are time- and culture-bound. They are inevitably conditioned by the current social and historical situation, and they are attuned to the spiritual condition and the intellectual understanding reflected in the conceptions, practices, and institutions shared by the community of loyal Jewish believers at any given period. Time- and culture-bound conditions also form the background to the rabbinic understanding and interpretation of the Written and Oral Law with which the Sages were entrusted. However, such conditions, from the time of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob until the present, are no mere accidents of history. There is divine significance to the precise sequence and nature of these conditioning factors, which are—so to speak—the continuing reverberations of God's eternal word. Thus, religious importance is attached not only to the circumstances precipitating subsequent interpretations of the primary revelation at Sinai, but also to the fact that it was the Sinaitic revelation that came first and that was accorded foundational value.

Such a view of revelation allows us to view patriarchy (somewhat as we nowadays look back at the premodern institution of slavery) not as an eternally fixed ideal social form, but rather as something with a certain logic in its time, but which can now be recognized as a mere stage on the way to greater moral sensibilities.⁹³ We can thus entertain the thought that some feminist understandings may reflect a more sharply honed moral sense capable of refining the original model, and even altering its meaning, without violating its formal status as an immutable element in the Jewish foundational canon.⁹⁴

There is much support for the various components of this dynamic understanding of Judaism in *agadot*, in kabbalistic literature, and in the writings of many of the Hasidic masters who viewed revelation as a reflection of God's metaphysical unfolding. But I draw particularly upon the writings of R. Kook, one of the very few traditional Jewish thinkers of the twentieth century who was prepared to take the historicist view into account when developing his theology. R. Kook basically turned reductionist conclusions on their head by arguing along the following lines: "Of course revelation is influenced by history and the evolution of ideas (even when such ideas or parallels are to be found in non-Jewish sources)⁹⁵—but history and the evolution of ideas themselves are also the instruments of revelation!" In his eyes, revolutionary developments are the most significant instruments of all, for these are a clear sign that we have outgrown more primitive forms of spirituality and are ready for a new, more refined stage. In this vein, he writes: "The crux of the matter is that the time at which an idea or thought makes its appearance . . . is predetermined. Nothing is haphazard. . . . When you understand this, you will know that there is sublime value in what is revealed and in what is hidden."⁹⁶ Further, "in general, this is an important rule in the struggle of ideas: we should not immediately refute any idea which contradicts something in the Torah, but rather we should build the palace of Torah above it, and through this exaltation the ideas are revealed, and thereafter, when we are not under pressure, we can also confidently take up the struggle against it."⁹⁷

Not all traditionalists, of course, will be equally enthusiastic about embracing a doctrine of cumulative revelations, or "hearings," via the conduit of history rather than through the one-time dictation from God at Sinai. Some, especially those who

are more literal-minded in their understanding of the mechanics of revelation, or who regard a Torah revealed over time as insufficient grounds for absolute commitment, will prefer rival theologies that do not submit history to such grandiose claims. For them, it may suffice to explain the discrepancies between current practice and ancient religious sensibilities by the inability of ordinary human understanding to absorb an ideal message already revealed to Moses in full. Alternatively, they may prefer to interpret such discrepancies as resulting from the adaptation of perfect fixed principles to the vicissitudes of imperfect and changing situations. Whatever theology is developed, however, it can only be effective in its confrontation with the modern world, and in its revalidation of the primacy of the halakhic rubric in approaching contemporary problems, if it both faces the feminist critique squarely and incorporates some of its genuine insights into halakhic reality.

The stakes of this argument should be kept in perspective. When all is said and done, it is not a debate over “the facts of the matter.” These can never be definitively determined or contained by human thought. Rather, the argument revolves around which theological approach can best express and maintain faith and loyalty to a Judaism and halakhah that, we believe, grants us some intimation of the Ultimate Being, the object of all religious belief. Even though I personally find the doctrine of revelation through history theologically appealing for a variety of reasons, my main purpose here is to argue for the desirability of a direct confrontation with the feminist challenge, regardless of which position ultimately prevails.

The Innocence Factor

Assuming a measure of success in addressing the theological agenda, which thereby results in halakhic space for newfound, more egalitarian sensibilities, there is one further problem that the feminist critique intensifies. The same heightened questioning of motivation and bias that historicism in general, and the feminist movement in particular, have generated, also acts to inhibit the freedom to correct the situation.⁹⁸ In the past, as previously noted, shifts in broad ideological positions did take place, but they occurred for the most part imperceptibly, and their influence upon halakhic adjustments was employed in an unconscious manner.⁹⁹ In a sense it was this innocence, this absence of a predetermined agenda in ideological shifts, that insured their legitimacy—the fact that, at least on the conscious level, halakhic adjustments that involved some distancing from previous articulations were never understood as deliberate divergences but merely as technical applications of old standards to a new reality. Indeed, motivation was one of the major criteria for distinguishing between legitimate and illegitimate changes in halakhah, and it was assumed that a motive was disinterested only when it did not involve conscious concession to extraneous pressures. Thus, regarding Conservative attempts to change the situation of women in the synagogue, the comment is made that:

It is the pretense of seeking halakhic authenticity and the distortion of sources in order to arrive at preconceived conclusions which is particularly offensive. . . . [It is] precisely because halakhah is not bound to any contemporary ethos, [that] it possesses an enduring validity which, while applicable to changing circumstances, is not subject to change by

lobbying or by the exertion of pressure in any guise or form. Nor may independently held convictions, however sincere, be allowed to influence our interpretation of halakhah.¹⁰⁰

Here, in its enterprise of consciousness-raising and emphasis upon critical self-awareness as an important political tool, feminism—even more than historicism—effectively excludes the possibility of such innocence as a legitimizing factor. This leaves us with the task of reformulating our criteria for distinguishing between authentic and inauthentic attitudinal changes. Given our lost innocence, what criteria remain for distinguishing, on the one hand, between halakhic decisions that bear revolutionary ideological consequences but which are nevertheless legitimate, and, on the other hand, reformist tendencies that use halakhah in a totally instrumentalist manner, devoid of any religious validity?

In order to answer this question, it is instructive to note two of the very few modern responsa regarding women that do explicitly adopt the new assumptions implied in the changing societal situation, and actually use these as a rationale for changing halakhic practice. One example is the responsum of a former Israeli chief rabbi, R. Ben-Ziyon Uziel, in which he supported giving women the right to vote, based on a type of “no taxation without representation” argument. As he put it, you cannot demand obedience to representative leadership without granting participation in their election,

for in these elections we appoint leaders over our heads, and give them the mandate to speak in our name . . . and the women directly or indirectly must heed their public and national obligations. So how can we give them obligations without the right to vote? Did you ever hear of appointing guardians over a grown woman without her consent?¹⁰¹

Another example is R. Hayim David Halevi’s explanation for the ruling that all women should recline at the seder table, which runs counter to the original talmudic ruling that a wife “in the presence of her husband” does not recline, unless she is “an important woman.”¹⁰² The criteria for “an important woman”¹⁰³ previously offered by the fourteenth-century Manohah of Narbonne, the author of the *Sefer Manohah*,¹⁰⁴ comply with the traditional patriarchal notion offered earlier by Rashbam, who explains that normally a woman may not recline because “the fear of her husband is upon her, as she is subjugated to him.”¹⁰⁵ Halevi, however, comments that “this is not true nowadays, as no woman is subjugated to her husband and the fear of him is not upon her. Therefore she must recline.”¹⁰⁶ This comment is not followed by any expression of regret over the matter; if anything there appears to be an implied note of satisfaction. Notwithstanding, Halevi engages in a detailed effort to incorporate his ruling within the halakhic framework by conscientious implementation of genuinely halakhic argumentation and categories of thought. The possibility of circumventing this traditional procedure is totally out of the question for him.

It may not be coincidence that both R. Uziel and R. Halevi were Sephardim, who tend to be more pragmatic in their approach to halakhah. Beyond that, these poskim doubtless felt that they were addressing an already existent religiously committed community in which the new attitudes represented by their rulings would be readily internalized. The final criterion for distinguishing a legitimate from a questionable ruling, then, may be the retroactive decree of history as it unfolds within the halakhic community. As R. Yehiel Weinberg remarked regarding the decision in favor of per-

mitting women to vote: "Time, not logical debate, will eventually settle the controversy."¹⁰⁷ The same conception is reiterated in Uziel's remarks with reference to the delay in publication of his decision: "I wrote this responsum at the time in order to clarify halakhah for myself, but I did not want to publish it. . . . But now, as the question has resolved itself, I found it a good idea to make it public, in order to aggrandize Torah."¹⁰⁸

Conclusion

Using criteria such as these employed by Halevi and Uziel (especially if supplemented by a belief in the divine orchestration of history), women's claims may be listened to with sympathy and understanding, without their being considered a deep violation of Jewish tradition.¹⁰⁹ Indeed, such claims may offer a providential opportunity to reflect on and correct a number of spiritual deficiencies. Hopefully, such an approach will find ways to eliminate or at least minimize the exclusion of women from the centers of religious practice, leadership, and interpretive power, while keeping intact a continuity with the halakhic past.

It might seem strange that a secular movement that carries so much antinomian baggage could be pressed into the service of halakhic Judaism as a beneficial spiritual catalyst. But it may also be that some of the unsettling implications of feminism on the epistemological level have been grossly overrated, and that when the dust settles these will prove to have had no more lasting impact than that left today by Marxist ideology. Nonetheless, as in the case of Marxism, the changing status of women in Western society will prove to have exerted at least some residual influence on the social and cultural character of Western society.

If this proves to be the case, it will not have been the first occasion when historical developments that seemed to stand in contradiction to divine intentions were subsequently understood by the Jewish religious authorities to have carried a positive message.¹¹⁰ Only if halakhic Judaism is prepared to face the full implications of this apparent threat with faith rather than fear, can it develop ways to incorporate into religious life whatever in this movement is of genuine value. Filtered through the prism of tradition in a constructive manner, this social revolution has the important potential to enhance rather than destroy the foundations of Torah, while deepening its relevancy for our time.

Notes

An earlier version of this article was delivered at a forum in New York in 1998. Various versions of its contents have been circulating ever since, most of them without my permission. As a result, I have had the benefit of discussing some of the points raised herein with many colleagues and readers, whose comments have sometimes helped me improve the formulation of my thoughts. One particular reader, whose scholarship and opinion I greatly respect, strongly advised me not to publish the essay at all on the grounds that it would be grossly misunderstood and misused. Perhaps I am being naive, but despite such hazards, I still believe in the overall advantages of the free dissemination of ideas and the furthering of open discussion. I would like to hope that even when issues cannot be finally or perfectly resolved, it is both in-

tellecually beneficial and educationally desirable to cultivate a certain degree of trust in the dynamics of the honest exchange of opinions.

1. Yeshayahu Leibowitz, *Emunah, historiyyah ve'arakhim* (Jerusalem: 1982), 71–75.

2. *Ibid.*, 71.

3. My first articles dealing with women's issues in Judaism were written in my student days, before the terms "feminism" or even "women's lib" were common currency. See Tamar Wohlgeleerter Ross, "Bein emunah lehaskalah," *De'ot* (Spring 5718 [1958]), 24–25; "Simhat Torah be'ezrat hanashim," *ibid.* (Hanukah 5719 [1959]), 63–64; "Hinukh dati lebanot," *ibid.* (Winter 5722 [1962]), 3–15.

4. For further elaboration of these two models, see Tamar Ross, "Can the Call for Change in the Status of Women be Halakhically Legitimated?" *Judaism* 42, no. 4 (Fall 1993), 478–492; and *idem*, "Ma'amadah shel haishah beyahadut," in Yeshayahu Leibowitz: *'olamo ve-haguto*, ed. Avi Sagi (Jerusalem: 1995), 148–161.

5. See Pesahim 66a.

6. The Sanhedrin was the highest authority for the interpretation of the laws of the Torah, for the enactment of *gezerot* and *takanot*, and for the temporary suspension of any prohibition or positive commandment of the Torah.

7. In the Mishneh Torah, *Hilkhot ishut* 15–20, Maimonides explains that a woman is to honor her husband greatly and look on him as a king or lord. She is to do whatever he tells her, and she is to follow his desires and stay away from what is hateful to him.

Women's subordinate status is especially notable in all the laws pertaining to modesty (*zeni'ut*), which are phrased in terms of the temptation that immodest women pose to men. Of course, Jewish law also protects women and imposes on men certain obligations to support and satisfy them. For a view of the way in which non-Orthodox Jewish feminists perceive the treatment accorded to women in halakhah, see, for example, Rachel Adler, "The Jew Who Wasn't There: Halakhah and the Jewish Woman," *Davka* (Summer 1972), 7–11, reprinted in *On Being A Jewish Feminist*, ed. Susannah Heschel (New York: 1983), 12–18; *idem*, *Engendering Judaism: An Inclusive Theology and Ethics* (Jerusalem: 1998); Paula Hyman, "The Other Half: Women in the Jewish Tradition," *Conservative Judaism* 26 (Summer 1972), 14–21, reprinted in *The Jewish Woman: New Perspectives*, ed. Eve Koltun (New York: 1976), 105; Rachel Biale, *Women and Jewish Law: An Exploration of Women's Issues in Halakhic Sources* (New York: 1984); Judith Plaskow, *Standing Again at Sinai: Judaism From a Feminist Perspective* (San Francisco: 1990), 60–74. For an Orthodox perspective see, for example, Tamar Frankiel, *The Voice of Sarah: Feminine Spirituality and Traditional Judaism* (New York: 1990); Moses Meiselman, *Jewish Woman in Jewish Law* (New York: 1978); Saul Berman, "The Status of Women in Halakhic Judaism," in Koltun (ed.), *The Jewish Woman*, 114. For an effort to improve the status of women within traditional Jewish law, see Blu Greenberg, *On Women and Judaism: A View From Tradition* (Philadelphia: 1981); Eliezer Berkowits, *Jewish Women in Time and Torah* (Hoboken: 1990).

8. For example, in Berakhot 17a, it is taught that the reward promised to women is greater than that given to men because the former send their sons to the synagogue to learn Torah, send their husbands to the house of study, and wait for their husbands' return.

9. The exclusion of women from a minyan is argued on a number of grounds. See Aryeh Frimer, "Women and Minyan," *Tradition* 23, no. 4 (Summer 1988), 54–77; *idem*, "Ma'amad haishah behalakhah: nashim uminyan," *Or hamizrah* 34, nos. 1–2 (Tishrei 5746 [1985]), 69–86.

10. The nonreciprocal right of the husband to divorce his wife by means of writing her a *get* is grounded in Deut. 24:1–3.

11. Shulhan Arukh, *Yoreh de'ah* 246:6; Kidushin: 29b.

12. From the wording of the Tosefta on Berakhot 6, it might seem that according to the Torah, women were not obligated to observe *any* mitzvot. However, two rabbinic scholars, the fourteenth-century Menahem ben-Solomon Meiri (Meiri) and the twelfth-century Eliezer ben-Yoel Halevi of Bonn (Ravia), understand the Tosefta as saying that women are not obliged to perform *all* of the mitzvot, and this seems to be the amended reading of the Sages, as evidenced in the Palestinian Talmud (see there Saul Lieberman's commentary).

13. Mishnah Horayot 3:7, with amplifications and qualifications in later rabbinic sources.

14. There is, however, an understanding of the institution of the dowry as being a remedy for the exclusion of daughters from their father's inheritance. See Yisrael Yuval, "Hahesderim hakaspiyim shel hanisuim beashkenaz bimei habeinayim," in *Da'at vekalkalah: yahasei gomlin*, ed. Menahem Ben-Sasson (Jerusalem: 1995), 191–207; Judith Hauptman, *Rereading the Rabbis: A Woman's Voice* (Boulder: 1998), 183–184.

15. Very rarely, women's opinions are quoted approvingly as an authoritative source of knowledge, but generally because they are wives or daughters of renowned male scholars and as such had privileged inside knowledge. This applies even to so independent a spirit as Beruriah, the wife of R. Meir—see Tosefta on Kelim, Baba me'ziyah 1:6.

16. To the best of my knowledge, the phrase was first coined by Blu Greenberg in *On Women and Judaism*.

17. For an exposition of the various views, see Avi Sagi, "Elu ve'elu": *mashma'uto shel hasiah hahilkhati* (Tel-Aviv: 1996); Yohanan Silman, "Lo bashamayim hi," *Bar Ilan Yearbook* (Ramat Gan: 1987); idem, *Kol gadol velo yasef: torat yisrael bein shelemut lehishlalmut* (Jerusalem: 1999); Aaron Kirshenbaum, "Subjectivity in Rabbinic Decision-Making," in *Rabbinic Authority and Personal Autonomy*, ed. Moshe Sokol (Northvale, N.J.: 1992).

18. Jay Michael Harris has written a masterly historical survey of this dynamic. See his *How Do We Know This? Midrash and the Fragmentation of Modern Judaism* (Albany: 1995).

19. For further discussion of the challenges raised by the heightened historical awareness of the modern age to traditional criteria for authentic halakhic decision-making, see Menahem Kahana, "Mehkar hatalmud vehalimud hamasorati bayeshivah," in *Behevlei masoret utemurah: asufat maamarim lezikhro shel Aryeh Lang*, ed. Menahem Kahana (Rehovot: 1990); esp. 129–133. Kahana relates this breakdown of traditional authority, among other factors, to the universally anti-Zionist stance taken by the great halakhic leaders in Europe during the Holocaust. Regarding the broader issues involved, see Sokol (ed.), *Rabbinic Authority and Personal Autonomy* (Northvale, N.J.: 1992); Simha Friedman, *Emunat hakhamim* (Tel-Aviv: 1982); and Zeev Safrai and Avi Sagi, *Bein samkhut leautonomiyah bemasoret yisrael* (Tel-Aviv: 1997).

20. A case in point is the *heter mekhirah*, the formal sale of all Jewish-owned fields and vineyards in the land of Israel to non-Jews during the sabbatical year (*shemittah*) in order to enable Jews to continue working the land. The heter mekhirah began as a one-time measure in 1889, approved by a group of leading rabbis that included R. Yitzhak Elchanan Spector of Kovno, but opposed by the Ashkenazic rabbinical community of Jerusalem, whose members included R. Yehudah Leib Diskin and R. Shmuel Salant. Seven years later, the heter was renewed. In 1910, it became the subject of a dispute between R. Avraham Yitzhak Hakohen Kook (then chief rabbi of Jaffa), who supported the measure, and R. Yaakov David Wilikowsky of Safed, who opposed it. During subsequent sabbatical years, the chief rabbinate has continued to abide by the lenient ruling; opponents, basing themselves on a ruling by R. Avraham Yeshayahu Karelitz (the Hazon Ish), have grown more numerous. The basic issue concerns the paramount importance of strict observance of mitzvot connected with Eretz Israel (known as *mitzvot hateluyot baarez*), versus the need to safeguard the livelihood of the growing Jewish community. In R. Kook's view, the problem of running a modern economy while at the same time strictly observing the laws of shemittah could be solved on a national scale only when there existed a sufficiently large community of Torah-observant Jews in Israel.

21. These principles include the following: fear of significant financial loss (*hefsed merubeh*); consideration for others (expressed in such terms as *darkhei no'am*, *darkhei shalom*, *nahat ruah*, and *kevod habriyot*); the fear of defaming God's name (*hilul hashem*); or the recognition that the community is unable to abide by a given stringency (*gezerah sheein hazibur yakhol la'amod bah*).

22. An example of such a discussion may be the ruling of a contemporary non-Zionist posek, R. Moshe Sternbuch, in his *Moadim uzemanim hashaleim* (Bnei Brak: 1964), pt. 8, section 251, in which (in opposition to some earlier authorities) he declares that children should be educated to fast on Tisha b'Av before they reach bar/bat-mitzvah age. R. Sternbuch's innovation is based on the notion that fasting belongs to that group of mitzvot that should be taught to children from an early age as part of their Jewish education (*hinnukh*). The general rule of

hinukh applies, he argues, even though there is no special reason why children need to fast on Tisha B'av. In contrast, R. Kook, according to the testimony of R. Zvi Neriya (in his *Moadei reiyah* [Jerusalem: 1982], 549), made use of the concept of hinukh to come to the opposite conclusion. According to R. Kook, children should be inculcated with the belief that the Temple may be restored at any time. By his reasoning, there is no need to teach children to fast, given that the fast will be nullified as soon as the Temple is built. The difference in these two rulings clearly reflects contrasting intuitions regarding the imminence of redemption.

23. For an exemplary illustration of this dynamic, see Jacob Katz, *Bein yehudim legoyim* (Jerusalem: 1960) and idem, *Goy shel shabbat* (Jerusalem: 1983).

24. A much-cited example of a corrective is the *heter 'iskah*, which was developed in order to provide a bridge between, on the one hand, a halakhic system based upon the assumptions of a small-time barter economy and, on the other, a money-based society that relied upon the provision of credit in order to survive. See Haym Soloveitchik, *Halakhah, kalkalah, vedimui azmi: hamashkonaut bimei habenayim* (Jerusalem: 1985). Another example pertaining to a technical, nonideological issue is the halakhic ruling (not accepted by all) that milk guaranteed by European or U.S. public health authorities as being 100 percent cows' milk can be relied upon as kosher even though the milking was not supervised by Jews from start to finish.

25. Some of the takanot of Rabenu Gershom (Meor Hagolah)—among them, his ruling against polygamy—would qualify as examples of this type of halakhic initiative.

26. An example of this was the tolerance shown by the poskim of medieval Ashkenaz of the women's practice of donning jewelry on the Sabbath, despite the fact that this practice ostensibly conflicted with their ruling that wearing jewelry on the Sabbath was a form of carrying, and thus prohibited. See Yisrael Ta-Shema, *Halakhah, minhag umeziyut beAshkenaz, 1000–1350* (Jerusalem: 1996). A more extreme example was the condoning by some leading tosafists of the practice of some parents to slaughter their children (for the sake of sanctifying God's name) rather than allowing them to fall into the hands of the Crusaders. See Haym Soloveitchik, "Religious Law and Change: The Medieval Ashkenazic Example," *AJS Review* 12, no. 8 (Fall 1987), esp. 200–209. An explanation for the rabbis' tolerance may be their recognition that community practice often reflected alternative mores that had been established in the Palestinian Talmud, even though these conflicted with rulings in the superseding Babylonian tradition. See the introduction in Ta-Shema, *Halakhah, minhag umeziyut beAshkenaz*.

27. An example of this is the dispensation allowing for an 'eruv, a legal device that allows for carrying various objects within the public domain on the Sabbath. The 'eruv is a symbolic enclosure, nowadays usually constructed out of wire and poles. According to some scholars, even a modern metropolis the size of Manhattan may be transformed, via an 'eruv, into a "common property" with the status of a private courtyard, where carrying is permitted.

28. The Hazon Ish, for example, set his own contours for the international dateline—in so doing, going against accepted practice—because of his strong preference for relying upon Jewish sociological considerations (the location of existing Jewish communities) rather than non-Jewish political considerations (the decisions of the British empire).

29. A striking example of this point was a short-lived furor in Israel in March 1998 concerning the alleged rape of a woman on her way to a mikveh in Bnei Brak. Since the woman's husband was a kohen, he was in theory obliged to divorce her. According to the rumor, halakhic authorities were unable to find a solution to this tragic dilemma. As to be expected, news of the alleged incident led to rampant editorializing in the press and to the picketing of the offices of the Tel-Aviv rabbinate by outraged feminists. After several days, it became known that the story was a fabrication, presumably the work of antireligious elements.

One clue to the suspect nature of the rumor was the interesting rabbinic response elicited in the investigation. As reported by Avirama Golan, who interviewed a rabbi named David Stav, "The wife of a kohen who has been raped is indeed forbidden to her husband. . . . However, the poskim have never been daunted by this. In order for her to be forbidden, there have to have been two witnesses testifying that the rape took place, [a situation that is] almost impossible."

Moreover, "there is an enactment of the rabbis that a woman 'should not be believed in such a matter, lest she had set her eyes on someone else.' In other words, we allow the husband not to believe her story." Further, "the poskim wrote that a man is not allowed to say that he be-

believes his wife, both because of the *herem* of Rabbenu Gershom, according to which a man may not divorce his wife against her will, as well as because of the suspicion that perhaps he has set his eyes upon another woman and is using the occasion to get rid of his wife. Thus the beit din is entitled to refuse the husband's acceptance of his wife's testimony."

Finally, Golan notes that "according to Rabbi Yehudah Rabinowitz, the head of a rabbinical court in Jerusalem, 13 similar cases . . . were resolved by such methods this past year in his court alone, without recourse to divorce. There were also situations that were resolved by a more meticulous examination of the circumstances, which raised questions concerning whether the kohen was indeed a genuine kohen" (*Ha'aretz*, 6 March 1998 [p. 4b]).

A more classic example of rabbinic ingenuity in the effort to overcome the morally intolerable consequences of dry application of the law is the well-known story in the Palestinian Talmud (cited by the Rosh in his commentary on Kidushin, 4:7, in the name of the author of "halakhot gedolot") of the man who went to sea for a year and returned to find his wife pregnant. In order to clear the newborn infant of the stigma of illegitimacy, the rabbis raised the possibility that the husband had returned to his wife during the year via theurgic use of the divine name.

30. Robert Cover makes a similar suggestion regarding the importance of the community's commitment as a criterion for the general legitimacy of legal interpretation. His criterion of "objectification of that to which one is committed" (that is, viewing the norm as an objective demand) seems to parallel the rabbinic constraint of "a senior student sitting before his teacher"—that is, continuity with the "language game" of tradition. See Cover's foreword to the review of the U.S. Supreme Court's 1982 term, "Nomos and Narrative," in *Harvard Law Review* 97, no. 4 (1983), 44–45.

31. For further discussion and examples of these sociological and psychological factors, see Yitzchak Gilat, "The Halakhah and Its Relationship to Social Reality," *Tradition* 13, no. 4 (Spring 1973), 68–87; Chaim Waxman, "Toward a Sociology of Pesak," in Sokol (ed.), *Rabbinic Authority and Personal Autonomy*, 217–238.

32. This is the case, for example, in the rabbinic rulings forbidding women to don tefillin or a talit, on the grounds of either presumption (*mishum yoharah*), or of feminine hygiene (*nikayon haguf*); or R. Moshe Feinstein's definition of the obligation to place a physical barrier (*mehizah*) between men and women in a synagogue as an ordinance grounded in the Written Law (*medeoraitah*) rather than in the Oral Law (*derabanan*)—the former status allowing less room for varying interpretations, leniency, or innovation.

33. Boruch Epsztejn [Barukh Epstein], *Mekor Barukh* (Vilna: 1928), pt. 4, ch. 46, sect. 3 (p. 981). The significance of this memoir is discussed in Don Seeman, "The Silence of Rayna Batya: Torah, Suffering, and Rabbi Barukh Epstein's 'Wisdom of Women,'" *Torah U-Madda Journal* 6 (1995–1996), 91–128.

34. Avraham Worms, *Meorei or*, vol. 4, *Beersheva* (Metz: 1831), 20. The phrase he uses with regard to publicly humiliating women is "lehalbin penei havoro berabim"—an offense whose moral severity is likened in the sources to murder.

35. Quoted in the name of the fifteenth-century authority Mordechai ben-Avraham Yoffe (the Levush), on the benediction "shelo 'asani ishah."

36. In Berakhot 6, R. Yehudah teaches that a person is obligated to recite three benedictions daily: "Blessed is He who did not make me a Gentile"; "Blessed is He who did not make me a boor"; and "Blessed is He who did not make me a woman." As he goes on to explain:

A Gentile—as it is said: all the Gentiles are as nothing against Him, regarded by Him as naught and chaos. A boor—for there is no boor who is fearful of sin. A woman—for women are not obligated to perform the mitzvot. With what can this be compared? With a king of flesh and blood, who told his servant: cook me something, and [the servant] had never cooked anything before in his life, so that he ended up spoiling the food and annoying his master. [The king commanded him], fold my robe, and he had never folded a robe in his life, so that in the end he soiled the robe and annoyed his master.

37. David ben Yosef Abudarham, *Sidur shel hol* (Jerusalem: 1963), 39–40. This explanation was brought by an earlier authority, R. Jacob ben Asher, in the Tur, *Orah hayim* 46.

38. Abudarham's stance may also have expressed a polemical opposition to Christianity, where distinctions between slave, woman, and heathen had been abolished. Paul, in his Letter to the Galatians (3:28), declares that under Christ, "There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither bond nor free, there is neither male nor female." This theory is explored in greater detail by Yosef Tabori in an unpublished paper, based on his lecture at the 1997 World Congress of Jewish Studies, entitled: "The Blessings of Self-Identity and The Changing Status of Women and of Orthodoxy." My thanks to him for allowing me to read and cite from the manuscript. See also: Yitzhak Elbogen, *Hatefilah beyisrael behitpathutah hahistorit* (Jerusalem: 1972), 70. According to the above hypothesis, the original formulation of the benediction is evidence of a rabbinic wish to keep these distinctions alive and not allow them to be overcome by the concept expressed during a certain redemptive moment in Jesus' ministry. Paul's statement may indirectly reflect the denial on the part of Christianity of the role of sexuality in human life, as opposed to the rabbinic emphasis on the power of the sexual drive and the consequent necessity of keeping it under control.

39. For a discussion of this equation of the form/matter distinction with the male and female in Maimonides' writings, see Susan Shapiro, "A Matter of Discipline: Reading for Gender in Jewish Philosophy," in *Judaism After Gender*, ed. Miriam Peskowitz and Laura Levitt (New York: 1996), 158–173. Similar ideas can be found in the writings of Maharal—see, for example, the commentary in his *Gur Aryeh* on Gen. 1:23 and elsewhere regarding the creation of man, and in his *Ḥidushei agadot* to Kidushin: 70a ("amar Ravah"). In the latter, he likens woman to the moon that absorbs the light of the sun. On the basis of this equation, the biblical commentator Abravanel goes even further and denies that women were created in the image of God—see his commentary on Gen. 1 regarding the creation of Eve.

40. Avraham Yitzhak Hakohen Kook, *'Olat reiyah* (commentary on the siddur), vol. 1 (Jerusalem: 1985), 71–72.

41. See for example, Maimonides' understanding of matter in his commentary on the "Eshet ḥayil" prayer in *Guide to the Perplexed* 3:8.

42. See Nahamanides, *Igeret hakodesh*, in which he writes that the form of man imprints its influence on the matter of woman via his thoughts and fantasies during the act of sexual intercourse, thus establishing the nature of the new life that is conceived.

43. See Samson Raphael Hirsch, *Judaism Eternal*, vol. 2 (London: 1960), ch. 2, 49–96; Eliyahu Munk, *'Olam hatefilot* (Jerusalem: 1974), 36; Aaron Soloveitchik, *Logic of the Heart, Logic of the Mind: Wisdom and Reflections on Topics of Our Times* (Jerusalem: 1991), 92–97.

44. Despite Maharal's adoption of the matter-form distinction and his generally uncomplimentary picture of women, in his *Derush 'al hatorah* (found in *Kol kitvei Maharal* [London: 1964], 27), he states that man was given additional mitzvot in order to enable him to learn to overcome his more turbulent nature, in contrast to woman, whose innate calm renders her more naturally receptive to higher forms of spirituality. Referring to Berakhot: 17a, Maharal views woman as requiring fewer formal obligations; she is capable of attaining ideal levels of perfection without the rigorous training in mitzvot that is assigned to men. She therefore also receives greater reward for merely sending her husband and sons to the house of study, without actually having to personally engage in intense Torah study. See also the Maharal's commentary on Ex. 19:3 in *Gur Aryeh*, where he explains that women ("beit ya'akov") are mentioned before men ("benei yisrael") because they are more receptive to God's commandments. This theme is further developed by R. Zvi Yehudah Hakohen Kook in "Kohah shel haishah beseder hamin haenoshi-hayehudi," in *Haishah vehinukha—asufat maamarim behalakha ubemahshavah*, ed. Ben Zion Rosenfeld (Kfar Saba: 1980), 57–59.

45. See Saul Lieberman, *Tosefta kifshutah*, on Berakhot 6:38–39 ("ḥayavot bemizvot").

46. Emanuel Rackman: "Arrogance or Humility in Prayer," *Tradition* 1, no. 1 (Fall 1958), 17; Norman Lamm, *A Hedge of Roses* (Jerusalem: 1977), 76.

47. See Samson Raphael Hirsch, *The Pentateuch: Translation and Commentary* (London: 1967), on Lev. 23:23.

48. See Joel Wolowelsky's excellent summary of this issue in *Women, Jewish Law and Modernity: New Opportunities in a Post-Feminist Age* (New York: 1997), 34–42 (grace after meals), 32–34 (kiddush), 29–31 (mayim aḥaronim).

49. See Moshe Feinstein, *Igerot Mosheh, orah hayim* (Bnei Brak: 1974), pt. 4, responsum 49 (p. 80f).
50. See Ovadiah Yosef, *Yehaveh da'at*, vol. 4 (Jerusalem: 1981), responsum 15 (p. 75–78). For a halakhic survey of the question of *kol isha*, see Saul Berman, “Kol ‘Isha,” in *Rabbi Joseph H. Lookstein Memorial Volume*, ed. Leo Landman (New York: 1980), 45–66.
51. See Yehiel Yaakov Weinberg, *Seridei esh*, vol. 2 (Jerusalem: 1977), responsum 8 (pp. 13–17).
52. See Ben-Ziyon Uziel, *Piskei ‘Uziel* (Jerusalem: 1980), no. 44.
53. Menahem M. Schneersohn, “Hovat hanashim belimud hatorah uvehinukh,” speech delivered on Lag baOmer (April 13, 1990); published in *Kfar Habad Newsletter*, 430 Iyar 5750 (21 April 1990), 5–7.
54. Yehiel Yaakov Weinberg, *Seridei esh*, vol. 3 (Jerusalem: 1977), responsum 93 (p. 297); quoted in Wolowelsky, *Women, Jewish Law and Modernity*, 51–52.
55. Sifra yayikra, parshetah 2; Hagigah 16b.
56. Weinberg, *Seridei esh*, vol. 2, responsum 8.
57. Israel Meir Hakohen (Kagan) (Hafez Hayim), *Likutei halakhot*: Sotah 20b.
58. See Aharon Lichtenstein, “Ba’ayot yesod behinukh haishah,” in Rosenfeld (ed.), *Haishah vehinukha*, 158–160; Yeshayahu Leibowitz, “Ma’amadah shel haishah beyahadat: halakhah umetahalakhah,” in *Emunah, historyah ve’arakhim*, 72; Weinberg, *Seridei esh*, vol. 2, responsum 8.
59. For one version of this proposal, see Shlomo Riskin, *Women and Jewish Divorce* (Hoboken: 1989), 134–142. In the first edition of this book, the proposal is attributed (on p. 140) to J. David Bleich, who is generally opposed to halakhic innovation.
60. An appraisalment procedure appears in halakhah and is applied by Maimonides (in *Mishneh Torah*, *Hilkhot sanhedrin*, 24:1) in monetary matters, where a judge, in Maimonides’ opinion, may come to a decision by relying on persons—including women—he deems to be trustworthy. For further discussion of this issue, see Emanuel B. Quint, “The Role of Women in the Beth Din System,” in his *A Restatement of Rabbinic Civil Law*, vol. 1 (Northvale, N.J.: 1993), 4–17.
61. Maimonides, *Mishneh Torah*, *Hilkhot talmud torah* 2:4.
62. Moshe Sternbuch, *Emunah vedorah* (Bnei Brak: 1979), 72. For a contrasting and more positive reaction to present-day violation of this halakhah as it appears in the *Shulhan Arukh*: 588, see Hayim Hirschensohn’s stand in *Sefer malki bakodesh* (St. Louis: 1919), part 2, responsum 5 (pp. 16–17), and Eliezer Schweid’s discussion of Hirschensohn’s views in his *Demokratiyah vehalakhah: pirkei ‘iyun bemishnato shel harav Hayim Hirschenson* (Jerusalem: 1978), 96–98.
63. See Wolowelsky’s review of this issue in *Women, Jewish Law and Modernity*, 84–90.
64. See the ruling by the seventeenth-century R. Ya’ir Hayim ben-Moshe Shimshon Bacharach in *Havot Ya’ir*, responsum 222; Shlomo Halevi Wahrman, *Sheerit Yosef*, vol. 2 (New York: 1981), 299f; and Yisrael Meir Lau, *Yahel yisrael*, vol. 2 (Jerusalem: 1992), responsum 90, (p. 479).
65. See Moshe Halevi Steinberg, *Mishberei yam* (Jerusalem: 1992), responsum 85 (p. 96).
66. See Menashe Klein, *Mishneh halakhah*, vol. 1, *Tinyanah* (Brooklyn: 1992), responsum 650 (p. 467).
67. See Feinstein *Igerot Moshe, orah hayim*, part 4, responsum 49.
68. See Abba Bronspigl, “Minyanim meyuhadim lenashim,” *Hadarom* 54 (Sivan 5745 [1985]), 246; Hershel Schacter, “Be’inyanei beit knesset,” *Or hamizrah*, Tishrei 5746 (1985), 328–332; idem, “Ze lakh be’ikvei hazon,” *Beit Yizhak* 5745 (1985), 118–134. See, in contrast, R. Weinberg’s ruling allowing bat mitzvah celebrations on the assumption that the impetus for this custom is sincere intention (*leshem miẓvah*), and not a desire to imitate the non-Jewish world, in *Seridei esh*, vol. 3, responsum 93.
69. Haym Soloveitchik, “Rupture and Reconstruction: The Transformation of Contemporary Orthodoxy,” *Tradition* 28, no. 4 (1994), 64–129.
70. Aaron Soloveitchik, *‘Od Yisrael Yosef beni hai*, no. 32 (Chicago: 1993), 100.

71. For a discussion of the developments that led to the acceptance of the *heter 'iskah*, see Soloveitchik, *Halakhah, kalkalah, vedimui azmi*.

72. Wolowelsky, *Women, Jewish Law and Modernity*, x.

73. For a fuller exposition of the feminist reading, see Mary Daly, *Beyond God the Father* (Boston: 1973).

74. See Catherine Keller, *From a Broken Web: Separation, Sexism and the Self* (Boston: 1986), 33–38, 78–92; Daphne Hampson, *After Christianity* (Valley Forge, Penn.: 1996), ch. 4; Judith Ochshorn, *The Female Experience and the Nature of the Divine* (Bloomington: 1981).

75. This point was brought home to me on a plane trip to Boston, where I struck up a conversation with an African American woman sitting next to me. It quickly transpired that we were “in the same business,” as she was traveling to give some religion classes on behalf of her church. When I asked her if the church had trained her for her profession, she answered: “Oh yes. I took a course for the ministry,” then winked and added: “They just called it another name.” As the sages noted, “*sadna dear’a had hu*”—the surface of the earth is everywhere the same.

76. A pointed example of this new self-confidence was exhibited at the first conference of Bekolekh, the Israeli religious women’s lobby, during the summer of 1999, at which hundreds of women participants signed a petition to the chief rabbinate declaring that they did not conform to the talmudic principle that all women prefer to be married (to any husband) rather than remaining single—an assumption still acted upon by members of rabbinical courts in instances where they pressure women to remain locked in an undesired and sometimes even physically abusive marriage.

77. Thus, for example, we have the assertion that the ineligibility of women for inclusion in a minyan is “not a form of discrimination, but simply another instance of Halakhah’s recognition of the distinctive roles and obligations of men and women within Judaism” (J. David Bleich, *Contemporary Halakhic Problems*, vol. 1 [New York: 1977], 81–82, quoting David Feldman’s defense of women not being counted as part of a minyan). R. Bleich goes on to argue that a male-only minyan is “not to be indicted for oppressiveness” for merely being “a technical construct true to its own categories,” and that “quite apart from the fact that no halakhic basis for counting women is offered, this innovation would make a *hukha utelula* [mockery] of traditional forms by appearing to concede to the feminist charge of oppressive discrimination or inequality.” This charge does not sit well with those who are familiar with the inventive technical solutions that have been found for other halakhot based on a social, political, or economic reality that is very different from that which we now experience. While the “technical construct” argument is perfectly true, it is not inconceivable that, in due time, the most traditional of halakhic authorities, taking note of changing circumstances and communal readiness, might invoke a societal application of the argument that “nature has changed” (*nishtanu hatevaim*) and assert that the women of today, being different from those of earlier generations, may be regarded as part of the *eidah* and hence permitted to be counted in a minyan. For a much more nuanced and context-related approach to this issue, see Hirschensohn, *Sefer malki bakodesh*, vol. 2, 193–202. Similarly, just as the Sages recognized the fact that men had taken on praying the evening prayer (*‘aravit*), and thereby transformed its status from being voluntary to obligatory, so too future halakhists might rule that because women had consistently taken on some specific mitzvah, its status should be transformed into that of an obligation. Of course, “communal readiness” refers to the community of the halakhically committed, not the general Jewish community.

78. *Zohar hadash* (Sulam ed.), 78b toward end; *Zohar vayera*: 109a–111a. The same idea is developed by R. Moshe Hayim Luzzato—see *Kinat Hashem zevaot* (Warsaw: 1888), 17, where the redemptive value to be found in occasional breaking of sexual norms is specifically linked to women, since they are “the ground of the world.” According to Luzzato, other types of halakhic transgressions may occasionally serve as a corrective (*tikun*) even when committed by men, so long as they are recognized as an emergency measure. For further discussion of this theme in Luzzato, and his attempt to purge it clean of its antinomian Sabbatean roots, see Isaiah Tishby, *Netivei emunah uminut: masot umehkarim besifrut hakabalah vehashbataut* (Ramat Gan: 1964), 169–185. Some sources view such acts, though necessary, as sinful in and

of themselves, with their merit coming about only because of divine providence. Others, however, attribute merit both to the acts themselves and to their agents, provided that these have been propelled by a prophetic vision of their redemptive value. Our interest here in these sources is not to build upon their antinomian conclusions, but rather to highlight a preexisting appreciation in Jewish tradition for the corrective value of female insight—precisely because of its connectedness to real life—and the tension it betrays concerning the inadequacies of strictly formal halakhic norms.

79. See Berakhot 34b, which contains one of several clusters of *agadot* dealing with this theme. For further discussion and sources, see Daniel Boyarin, *Carnal Israel: Reading Sex in Talmudic Culture* (Berkeley: 1993); Judith Abrahams, *The Women of the Talmud* (Northvale, N.J.: 1995); Shulamit Waller, *Nashim besifrut hazal* (Tel-Aviv: 1993); and Chana Safrai, “Nashim beveit hamidrash: etgar vetigar,” in *A Good Eye—Dialogue and Polemic in Jewish Culture: A Jubilee Volume in Honor of Tova Ilan*, ed. Nahem Ilan (Tel-Aviv: 1999), 160–180.

80. See Ta’anit 23b–24a; Baba Batra 74a; Ketubot 67b.

81. For one exposition of this view, see Carol Gilligan, *In a Different Voice: Psychological Theory and Women’s Development* (Cambridge, Mass.: 1982).

82. See Michah D. Halpern and Chana Safrai, *Jewish Legal Writings by Women* (Jerusalem: 1998), a collection of original articles on Jewish law by contemporary religious women from around the world. While recognizing that this is only a first step in women’s mastery of highly technical halakhic material, one can already discern the novel contribution of women to the field. In this sense, the book, which has received mixed reviews, is indicative of things to come.

83. Regarding the interface between religious women, Torah literacy, and active participation, see the anthropological study of the development of Torah study among religious Jewish women in Israel in Tamar El-Or, *Bepesah haba: nashim veoreyanut beziyonut hadatit* (Tel-Aviv: 1998).

84. This modern-era idealization of uncritical submissiveness has been especially propagated in certain schools of the musar movement. See Tamar Ross, “Hamegamah haantirazyonalit bitnu’at hamusar,” in *’Ale! Shefer: Studies in Jewish Thought Presented in Honor of Rabbi Dr. A. Shafan*, ed. M. Halamish (Ramat Gan: 1990), 145–163. Opposition to this trend can be found in certain streams of Hasidism and in the writings of R. Kook. An eloquent expression of the disagreement is focused in various interpretations of the story of the binding of Isaac—see Jerome Gelman, *The Fear, the Trembling and the Fire—Kierkegaard and Hassidic Masters on the Binding of Isaac* (Lanham: 1994).

85. The paramount example, of course, is the Ten Commandments.

86. See Eliyahu Bakshi-Doron, *Binyan av* (Jerusalem: 1982), responsum 65 (p. 287). See also *Enẓiklopediyah talmudit*, vol. 8 (p. 494, “hora’ah”), and the sources brought there in n. 109.

87. Abraham J. Twerski, *The Shame Borne in Silence* (Pittsburgh: 1996); and the review of the book by Joel Wolowelsky in *Tradition* 32, no. 1 (Fall 1997). Project SARAH’s activities are briefly described in a letter to the editor of *Tradition* 38, no. 2 (Winter 1998), 174. Although the halakhah opposes wife-beating in principle, most poskim in the past have approved of it for “educational purposes”—for example, when the wife refuses to perform any of the tasks she is obligated to do (see Maimonides, *Mishneh Torah Hilkhot ishut* 21). Physical force may be used against sinning males as well. With regard to men, only the bet din may employ force, whereas some poskim do not stipulate this proviso in the case of women. The reason for the difference is that the wife is legally the responsibility of her husband and therefore directly subjugated to him. For further discussion of this issue and a list of relevant responsa, see Mikhel Wolf, “Iluf hasoreret,” *Meimad* 11 (March–April 1998), Rachel Lebel’s response in *ibid.* 12 (May–June 1998), and Wolf’s rebuttal in *ibid.* 13 (July–August 1998).

88. Maimonides, *Guide to the Perplexed*, 3:50.

89. Bleich, *Contemporary Halakhic Problems*, 82–83. The very attribution of a “world-view” to God is an unfortunate formulation; surely He is above that!

90. Soloveitchik *Logic of the Heart, Logic of the Mind*, 96–97.

91. See “Orthodoxy and Feminism: How Promising a Shiddukh?” *The Jewish Observer* (April 1997), 8–9.

92. See Tamar Ross and Yehudah Gelman, "Hashlakhot hafeminizm 'al teologiyah yehudit ortodoksit," in *Multi-Culturalism in a Democratic and Jewish State—Professor Ariel Rosen-Tsvi Memorial Volume*, ed. Menahem Mautner, Avi Sagi, and Ronen Shamir (Tel-Aviv: 1998), 443–465.

93. For an application of this idea to developments in women's status in Judaism, incorporating ideas from Lurianic kabbalah and Hasidism, see Daniel Shalit, *Or shivat hayamim* (n.p.: 1998); and Dov Schwartz's article on R. David Hachohen (R. Kook's disciple-friend, known as the "Nazarite," who had similar views on this issue), "Harav hanazir 'al ma'amad haishah," in his *Haziyonut hadatit bein hegayon lemeshihyut* (Tel-Aviv: 1999).

94. The notion of primary conceptions as necessary stepping stones to more sophisticated understandings is central to R. Kook's gradualist philosophy. For example, he applies something akin to the idea of a prism in a discussion of the relationship between monotheism and pantheism, when describing the former as an indispensable "vessel and vestibule" for the latter. See his *Orot hakodesh* (Jerusalem: 1985), 399–401.

95. See Avraham Yizhak Hachohen Kook, *'Eder hayakar* (Jerusalem: 1982), 42–43.

96. Kook, *Igerot reayah*, vol. 1 (p. 106).

97. *Ibid.*, 164.

98. See Kahana, "Mehkar hatalmud bauniversitah velimud hamesorati bayeshivah."

99. Such was the case, for example, in halakhic expressions of shifts in attitudes of the Jew to non-Jews, or of the religious Jew to secularists. One could say that such was formerly the case even with regard to certain changes that were instituted regarding the status of women, where the function of apologetics regarding women's status was often to surreptitiously introduce new values while ostensibly upholding the old. In many cases, the apologists did not realize that this indeed was what they were doing when they offered their rationalizations for existing laws.

100. Bleich, *Contemporary Halakhic Problems*.

101. Uziel, *Piskei 'Uziel*, responsum 64 (p. 229).

102. Hayim David Halevi, *Mayim hayim*, vol. 1 (Tel-Aviv: 1991), responsum 28 (p. 128).

103. An "important woman" has no husband whom she must serve; she is the head of her household; she is creative and productive; she is the daughter of the generation's leading scholar, or has maids and servants who relieve her from the duties of preparing the meal, which would otherwise take precedence over her duty to recline at the meal.

104. Quoted by R. Yosef Karo in his commentary on the Mishneh Torah, *Kesef mishneh: hamez umazah* 7:8.

105. See Rashbam's commentary on Pesahim 108a.

106. Halevi, *Mayim hayim*.

107. Weinberg, *Seridei esh*, vol. 3, responsum 105 (p. 322).

108. Uziel, *Piskei 'Uziel*.

109. For further discussion of the question of criteria, see Yuval Sherlo, "'Al hahavhanah bein reformah lehithadeshut datit," *Akdamot: A Journal of Jewish Thought* 7 (July 1999), 101–122.

110. An echo of this idea can be found, for example, in the words of Yosef Eliyahu Henkin, who suggested that the lack of renewal of semikhah and the Sanhedrin in our day might be seen as an act of providence that comes to prevent the reinstatement of capital punishment, thus heralding messianic times. See his article in *Hadarom* 10 (Sept./Oct. 1959), 5–9.

Two Models of Modernization: Jewish Women in the German and the Russian Empires

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Like most phenomena in Jewish history, the ways in which European Jews were modernized has been discussed almost exclusively without consideration of gender differences. By modernization, a highly contested term, I mean the socioeconomic, political, and cultural changes that occurred as a consequence of emancipation (or its promise), capitalist development, and the exposure of Jews to secularism. It includes the erosion of Jewish communal autonomy and of rabbinic authority, the dissemination among Jews of secular culture, and the reconsideration of their self-definition as well as of their relations to the larger society. These changes, many of which continue into our own time, first gained real momentum during the “long nineteenth century,” which extended from the French Revolution until the First World War.

Even the recent edited volume *Paths of Emancipation*, which offers a theoretically sophisticated comparative study of the entry of Jews into the different modern polities in which they lived, presumes that differentiating Jews by gender is not relevant to the subject at hand.¹ With the exception of Steven Lowenstein’s *The Jews of Berlin*, which is concerned with the social and religious crisis experienced by the Jewish elite in Berlin at the end of the eighteenth century and the beginning of the nineteenth, and a few scattered references in Todd Endelman’s *Radical Assimilation in Anglo-Jewish History*, only books devoted specifically to Jewish women’s history or related studies have explored the role of gender in the acculturation and identity formation of Jews in the modern period.²

Yet historians have demonstrated that women experienced the new conditions that accompanied the social and political changes associated with emancipation differently from Jewish men. Moreover, the “woman question” preoccupied Jewish communal leaders as they struggled to define an identity that would facilitate their integration into the larger society while setting boundaries to complete assimilation. As Sander Gilman, Daniel Boyarin, and I have demonstrated, the “feminization” of male Jews in the common discourse of Central European culture in the fin de siècle heightened the tensions involved in the process of assimilation and stimulated male criticism of Jewish women’s behavior.³ Looking to the patterns of bourgeois society in

the West, East European *maskilim* focused on the position of women in their own midst in accord with their critique of traditional Jewish society and despite their ambivalence about some aspects of modernization. Jewish women, in turn, responded both to the opportunities presented by the new prescriptions for appropriate female behavior and also to the criticism that they encountered within the Jewish community, both in Germany and in the Russian empire.

In comparing the roles in Germany and Russia of Jewish women striving to forge modern identities and stake out a position for themselves within their respective societies, I aim to integrate women into modern Jewish history and to illustrate the importance of including gender in any consideration of social change and self-understanding. A gender-sensitive approach contributes to the growing recognition of the diversity of Jewish experiences of modernity, the need for contextualizing such sweeping issues as acculturation and the erosion of tradition, and the insights offered by historical comparison.

Women in Germany and Russia played different roles in the modernization of their respective Jewish communities, but in each locale they were criticized for failing in their duties. The level of embourgeoisement in each society, as well as the available Gentile models, shaped both the Jewish discourse on femininity and the possibilities available to Jewish women. Despite the considerable divide separating the social and political contexts of German and Russian Jewry, women in both communities used communal criticism and prescriptions for appropriate gender roles to expand their public activity and articulate their own social attitudes.

Our understanding of women's roles in the modernization of German Jewry has been transformed in the past generation. Until the emergence of feminist scholarship in the 1970s, even the most prominent of Jewish historians, such as Jacob Katz and Michael Meyer, took the salon Jewesses—a small coterie of German and Austrian Jewish women who were active in the last decades of the eighteenth century and the beginning of the nineteenth—as paradigmatic.⁴ Women, they argued, took the lead in the abandonment of Jewish tradition because the established Jewish community failed to provide them with a solid Jewish education. Hence, they were particularly vulnerable to the lure of the new doctrines of Enlightenment and, later, Romanticism. Some earlier writers had even chastised the salon Jewesses for the abandonment of their people.⁵

Recent research into that chapter of history and into subsequent generations of German Jewish women has demonstrated convincingly that the salon Jewesses represent a phenomenon linked to specific conditions within German aristocratic and Enlightenment society as well as among the Jewish elite, especially in Berlin, during a particular and relatively brief period of time. As Deborah Hertz has shown, they followed a typical female path of social mobility through marriage; because of the social and economic climate of their time and place, advantageous marriages to Christian nobles were available.⁶ Steven Lowenstein has argued that only in the case of the salons and of conversion did Jewish women predominate in the crisis that affected the Berlin Jewish elite; regarding interreligious romance and the subsequent birth of illegitimate children, for example, Jewish men were at least as involved as women. The greater attention paid to female sexually aberrant behavior in the Jewish community he attributes to the “double standard” common at the time.⁷ Both Hertz and

Lowenstein find the traditional argument, that deficient Jewish education is the key to understanding the defection of the salon Jewesses from Judaism and the Jewish community, to be too simplistic.

In the period that followed the Napoleonic wars and into the twentieth century, in contrast to the earlier years, Jewish women throughout Germany displayed fewer signs of radical assimilation, such as intermarriage and conversion, than did Jewish men. Even on the eve of the First World War, they accounted for no more than 40 percent of Jewish converts.⁸ More importantly, Marion Kaplan has demonstrated that Jewish women were a conservative force within the German Jewish home, maintaining aspects of Jewish ritual custom even as their male kin abandoned them.⁹ While the salon Jewesses contributed to the dissolution of Jewish identification and domestic culture, women in the nineteenth century generally served as a brake on the wholesale abandonment of Jewish practice.

The conservative role played by Jewish women in Germany was intimately linked to the embourgeoisement of German Jewry. German Jews experienced significant economic mobility in the nineteenth century, which was especially rapid from the 1850s on, and Jewish women followed the bourgeois pattern of retirement from economic activity. By 1907, only 18 percent of Jewish women worked outside the home—half of them were either East European immigrants or else were connected with family businesses—as compared with 31 percent of all German women.¹⁰ As German Jews accepted the norms of middle-class culture and actually achieved middle-class status, they adopted the gender divisions that characterized the German *Bürgertum*.¹¹ As Uta Frevert has demonstrated in her study of women in German history, in the first half of the nineteenth century, prescriptive bourgeois gender roles were quite distinct. Men were destined by nature to be out in the world, to take their part in the civic life of the state and to realize their ambitions both in economic and political activities. Women, in contrast, were naturally those who cared for husband and children. Their very identity was shaped by their marriage and family responsibilities. Indeed, ideal family life, with its “well-ordered intimacy, where one could sit in contemplative peace,” depended on women.¹²

Although entry into the urban middle class occurred gradually for German Jewry, many of whom remained in villages in the countryside until the second half of the nineteenth century,¹³ German Jewish elites were able to disseminate their view of appropriate masculine and feminine behavior on the pages of the Jewish press. Sharing the German view prevalent among the middle classes, Jewish leaders made it clear that men and women were expected to be model burghers, beyond reproach. Men were to function in the public sphere, earning their family’s living and being active in the world. Women, ideally, were to be located in the home, where they would take care of not only the physical, but also the spiritual and moral needs of their husband and children.

The sentiments that Fanny (Shmiedl) Neuda, the widow of one rabbi and the sister of another, expressed in most of the prayers and in the introductory essay, “A Word to the Noble Mothers and Women of Israel,” included in her popular *Stunden den Andacht (Hours of Devotion)*¹⁴ could have been accepted as easily by good Christian bourgeois women as by its target audience of Jewish housewives. Notwithstanding, Jewish women had a task that was specific to their minority community’s goals. Not

only were they to rear well-behaved and carefully educated children, primed for economic success in the case of boys and efficient and loving household management in the case of girls, they had also to ensure that their offspring would remain loyal to their Jewish heritage (although not necessarily to its traditionally observant component). In adhering to this bourgeois division of labor, Jewish women enacted the female version of the modern Jew; they were not resisting Western values, but were rather expressing them in the form deemed most natural for persons of their sex.

As household managers, Jewish women in Germany supervised family celebrations connected to the Jewish calendar, such as Friday night dinners and Passover seders. Although the religious content of these events was likely to have been minimal, they sustained an awareness of the Jewish calendar and promoted a Jewish consciousness, formally religious but actually religioethnic, within the home. Moreover, women were responsible for maintaining family and social networks. They kept up contacts with cousins and promoted leisure-time activity. They thereby strengthened the informal Jewish marriage market that developed side by side with formal matchmaking in the first half of the nineteenth century and surpassed it in importance by the end of the century.¹⁵

Although their domestic roles moderated the pace of assimilation and served to maintain the socializing contexts that sociologists have deemed so important to the survival of minority groups,¹⁶ Jewish women were also involved in decisions that modernized the structure of Jewish life. The early decline of fertility among German Jews, well before that of other Germans, and its continued rapid decline in the second half of the nineteenth century required the consent and the efficient cooperation of women.¹⁷ There is evidence from the early twentieth century that some Jewish women took the initiative in birth control. Marion Kaplan suggests that women may have initiated birth control measures even earlier because of their particular sensitivity to the dangers of childbirth.¹⁸ Just as women were central to the decline in Jewish fertility, so were they integrally involved in the migration of Jews from rural villages and small towns to the city.

Jewish women also engaged in activity that integrated Jews into German society. They were responsible for the cultural ambiance of the family and presided over the decisions made about their children's education.¹⁹ Their integrative activity was not limited, however, to the home. Historians of women have long been aware that even when the classical bourgeois gender ideal reigned, women were not confined exclusively to the domestic sphere. They retired from participation in family businesses but became increasingly engaged in establishing their own institutions, which provided assistance to the poor and the sick. Although it challenged the neat demarcation of the public from the private that underlay the bourgeois gender division, this social welfare work was easily justified within the bourgeois schema because it simply extended women's domestic concerns from their own families to less fortunate individuals within the larger society.

Often these female charitable associations began as affiliates of religious institutions before becoming secularized. Such was the case with German women of the middle classes, and so it was with Jewish women of the same social class. In fact, Ute Frevert asserts that Jewish women were more likely to join organizations than were Gentile women.²⁰ Once restrictions on women in the university were lifted, they also

were more likely to receive higher education and to enter the professions. Particularly prior to 1920, Jewish women comprised an extremely high proportion of all female students in Central European—that is, German, Austrian, and Swiss—universities. Harriet Freidenreich has identified and studied 460 women of Jewish origin who studied at Central European universities in the first decades of the twentieth century; they tended toward medicine and the liberal arts, rather than law, where the obstacles that Jews and women had to overcome to achieve positions were formidable. Moreover, women who originated in Central as opposed to Eastern Europe did not usually become politicized during their university years.²¹

In imperial Germany (1871–1918), as Marion Kaplan has suggested, Jewish women, especially during the First World War, succeeded in forging bonds with German women through their joint participation in social welfare work. Many Jewish women who were active in Jewish women's groups also belonged to secular women's organizations. In fact, they expected that their secular volunteer activity would diminish antisemitism.²² To what extent Jewish women had stronger social bonds than men with Gentile Germans is a subject that necessitates further research. Kaplan tentatively speculates that "it may have been easier for Jewish women than men to achieve a modicum of integration. At the very least . . . women's voluntary social organizations . . . offered a less constrained atmosphere for acquaintances or friendships based on mutual interests rather than business opportunities."²³

Jewish women's philanthropic organizations expanded greatly in the second half of the nineteenth century. To be sure, traditional associations concerned with the burial of females or with providing dowries for poor brides survived and may even have predominated until the latter part of the century. However, following general German trends, a growing number of Jewish women's organizations, as with Jewish communal agencies as a whole, moved from the haphazard provision of charity to the needy to the more systematic methods of modern social work, broadly addressing issues of social welfare within the Jewish community and particularly among its East European newcomers.

The proliferation of local Jewish women's organizations culminated in the establishment of the nation-wide League of Jewish Women (Jüdischer Frauenbund) in 1904. The League quickly joined the Federation of German Women's Associations (Bund Deutscher Frauenvereine), the umbrella association of middle-class German women that had been founded a decade earlier. On the eve of the First World War, the League of Jewish Women was one of the four largest among 46 independent groups affiliated with the Federation.²⁴ Bertha Pappenheim, the head of the Jüdischer Frauenbund, gratefully acknowledged that the German women's movement gave "the shy uncertain advances of Jewish women direction and confidence."²⁵ Thus, Jewish women's social welfare work provides a measure of Jewish integration into German society, as indicated by the extent to which it was modeled on German organizations and called for cooperation with secular women's institutions.

Women's involvement in social welfare work also indicates that the emergence of modern forms of Jewish political activity in Germany extended beyond the standard Jewish defense organizations. For the decision of Jewish women to organize separately in the League of Jewish Women, rather than becoming a female auxiliary of an already existing Jewish communal institution, was a political decision, especially at

a time (before 1908) when German law forbade the membership of women in political organizations. The League of Jewish Women lobbied among the Jewish public in favor of women's suffrage in the *Gemeinde*, and ultimately in the German empire as well. Moreover, insofar as political activity is the exercise of power to attain defined social goals, then organized Jewish women asserted their right to act politically, and autonomously, in meeting the needs of women and children—particularly regarding the issue of white slavery, in which Jews from Eastern Europe were involved both as victims and victimizers. Most importantly, by refusing to join the boards of Jewish organizations as long as they were denied the right to vote, they insisted upon a decision-making role within the Jewish community.²⁶

In the Russian empire and in the post-1918 nation of Poland, the roles played by Jewish women were more variegated than in Germany. The size of the Jewish population and its geographical dispersion produced a diversified population in terms of social class and cultural patterns. Modernization came late to Jews, as it did to Russia in general. Among Russian Jewry, the bourgeoisie did not become the predominant social class as was the case in Germany. There is some suggestion that among those Jews who did attain wealth and became part of a small upper bourgeois stratum of Russian Jewry, as in Germany, women were more reluctant than men to jettison Jewish practice and identity. That was certainly the argument that Pauline Wengeroff presented in her memoirs, *Memoiren einer Grossmutter*, published in two volumes in Berlin from 1908 to 1910.²⁷ She described her own dismay at the radical assimilation demonstrated by her husband and sons and asserted that in her social milieu of well-to-do merchants in Minsk, women resisted, rather ineffectually, the steps toward assimilation of their menfolk.

Most Jews in the Pale of Settlement, however, were not prosperous merchants or professionals. Instead, they followed traditional commercial pursuits on a modest scale, functioned as artisans, or joined the ranks of factory workers. During the nineteenth century, Russian Jews as a whole did not experience economic upward mobility. In fact, Jewish economic opportunities as a whole shrank even though some individuals prospered, as a combination of government policy, the development of the railroad, and the freeing of the serfs reduced the role of Jews as middlemen between the urban and rural economy. Only in the second half of the century did a significant proportion of the Jewish population have access to secular education. Traditional Judaism and its educational institutions remained a powerful force within Jewish society well into the twentieth century.

Yet there were modernizing elements within the Jewish population, beginning with the elite of maskilim who were culturally and politically active by the 1860s, and continuing with their successors. By the end of the century, Jewish youth in Russia were exposed to a number of political ideologies that offered different versions of Jewish identity and different visions of the Jewish future, ranging from liberalism, to Russian radicalism, to Jewish socialism, and to various forms of Jewish nationalism. In all of these sectors women played distinct roles, and the debates over their appropriate place revealed the tensions that accompanied the modernization of Russian Jewry.

Women who followed traditional economic patterns and remained religiously observant were seen by the more radical maskilim as major obstacles to the modernization of Russian Jewry. And, to their dismay, the majority of Jewish women in the

Pale of Settlement remained traditional in religious observance and involved in the economic support of their families. Although the census of 1897 listed only 22 percent of women as economically active, that is, engaged in income-earning labor outside the home, it is likely, as the economic historian Arkadius Kahan has argued, that a large number of women who had major responsibilities in family businesses were unrecorded by census-takers.²⁸ Memoirs of the period present an unself-conscious portrait of women at work as peddlers of all sorts of wares, as storekeepers, seamstresses, and sellers of alcoholic spirits.²⁹

Eager to transform the traditional Jewish economy based on trading and, particularly, on peddling, maskilim by the second half of the century were coming to identify the presence of women in the marketplace as a deviation from the Western bourgeois model that they aspired to replicate in Russia. They also saw the phenomenon as reinforcing the traditional cultural ideal that conferred responsibility for the support of the family on the wives in order to free their husbands for Torah study. (In reality, of course, the vast majority of women who worked outside the home had husbands who worked as well; the poverty of their families necessitated multiple wage earners.) Women who worked outside the home, maskilim argued, endangered the health of their children and encouraged their husbands to be idlers. Moreover, the presence of women in the marketplace debased the women themselves and led to the coarsening of Jewish commercial norms, since women haggling for business were seen as more crass and competitive than men.³⁰

As one feature of their program calling for the adoption of Western bourgeois standards of economics and culture, maskilim addressed the question of the Jewish woman's status and education. In his poem "Kozo shel yod," for example, the Haskalah poet and activist Judah Leib Gordon used the victimization of women under Jewish law as a powerful weapon against traditional Jewish society, which accepted the injustice imposed on women by such inequities as the Jewish system of divorce.³¹ The status of women thus became the symbol of the backwardness of traditional Jewish society. Maskilim therefore saw the improvement of the status of women as a means of transforming Jewish life.

Although they established schools for girls in part because such schools did not compete directly with traditional *hederim* or *yeshivot*, and hence attracted less notice and hostility from the Orthodox establishment, maskilim also focused on women's education because they adhered to the notion that mothers exercised a powerful influence on their children. By shaping the values of future mothers in accordance with Western cultural standards, they would facilitate the adoption by Jewish society as a whole of modern patterns of behavior while retaining the virtues of the traditional Jewish family.

Maskilim may have viewed the status of women in traditional Jewish society as a sign of the cultural deficiencies of Jewish life, and they may have called for an end to the blatant subordination of women to men, but, as in Germany, they accepted that men and women were destined for distinctive social roles (based on their essentially different natures). Consequently they did not promote the full equality of women with men, although radical maskilim did endorse Jewish marriages based on equality between the sexes. In the Russia of the 1860s and 1870s, maskilim in fact displayed discomfort when they encountered "modern" Jewish women, whether the pupils they

met as tutors in prosperous homes or in girls' schools or the working-class women they saw in cities. They were particularly ill disposed to accepting as equals the small number of educated women who had pretensions to joining their own intellectual coterie as writers. Such women they placed in the category of pseudo-maskilim. The Haskalah as an ideological movement did not, therefore, create a cadre of women promoting modern currents within the Jewish community.³²

Such a cadre did exist, but ironically, it was the product of the educational patterns of traditional Jewish society at the end of the nineteenth century. Because education in Hebrew and rabbinic texts was reserved for males, education in Russian Jewish society was highly gendered. Although about half of the Jewish women in Russia at the end of the nineteenth century were still illiterate, families that valued learning and could afford education for their daughters tended to provide them with secular instruction, either through public or private institutions or through home tutoring, while sending their sons to *heder* and *yeshiva*.³³

As the literary scholar Iris Parush has noted, within traditional Jewish society "there were circles of women whose exposure to fine literature and its influences actually preceded that of the men." Such women learned European languages and read secular novels, sometimes on Sabbath afternoons. Or they acquired a modern education through reading in Yiddish literature and periodicals, which introduced modern ideas, as women later testified in their memoirs. Parush has also noted at least two cases in the late nineteenth century—Mendele Mokher Seforim and Hayim Zelig Slonimsky—where women introduced men to foreign languages and literature. It is likely that men other than writers and editors had similar experiences that were not recorded.³⁴ Often the secular education of Jewish women led to a loss of faith; sometimes it could be reconciled with the retention of Orthodox practice.³⁵

It is difficult to determine how widespread was this phenomenon of girls from traditional religious homes being exposed to secular education. Although memoirs can illuminate the meaning and consequences of this development for those who experienced it, they give us no indication of its statistical significance. We have only one piece of published statistical evidence from Galicia in 1890 (then still in the Habsburg empire and a bastion of traditional Jewry), which indicates that 40 percent of Jewish girls were enrolled in public primary schools, as opposed to 25 percent of their brothers.³⁶ More revealing, perhaps, is the fact that, beginning in the 1870s, contemporaries of different ideological and social backgrounds began commenting on the disparity between the education and culture of males and females within the Jewish community. Writers in Hebrew and Yiddish depicted girls from traditional families who received secular education and then scorned as marriage partners the elite males of their own communities—the products of *yeshivah* study—or, if constrained by an arranged marriage, mocked their traditionally educated husbands.³⁷

By the beginning of the twentieth century, there was widespread concern that a generation of mothers was emerging whose alienation from traditional Jewish culture prevented them from raising children who would identify with the Jewish community and its cultural or religious expressions. In 1902, the *Yidishe froyenvelt*, a newspaper published in Cracow that sought to improve the situation of Jewish women through education, lamented the consequences of the one-sided secular learning girls were likely to receive. Well-educated Jewish women, the author of one article com-

mented, “go away from us simply, without quips [*khokhmes*] and questions, exactly as though they were throwing away clothes.”³⁸

Both Orthodox and Zionist leaders reached similar conclusions, and both thought to solve the problem of women’s defection from the religious community or the Jewish nationalist camp through Jewish education. In 1903, at a conference of Polish rabbis, Rabbi Menachem Mendel Lando criticized the traditional neglect of girls’ Jewish education and called for the creation of Orthodox Jewish schools for girls.³⁹ Fourteen years later, Sarah Schnirer, a seamstress and daughter of a hasidic family, established a study group for women and girls in Cracow that, with rabbinic support, became the nucleus in 1918 of the network of Beys Yankev schools for Orthodox girls. Less concerned with Jewish religious practice than with securing the loyalty of women to the Jewish people, Jewish nationalists increasingly articulated the dire consequences of not providing girls with an education that would be both modern and Jewish. Jacob Ruderman, a religious nationalist teacher, included what he described as a new question, the education of girls, in a slim volume on educational issues that was published in 1902 and addressed to modern teachers:

Will not every man in whose heart beats national sentiment explode upon seeing how our daughters—our future mothers—grow up without [the Hebrew] language and without any knowledge of our history . . . ? How can we hope to see [born] from women such as these who are distant from Judaism . . . good sons, . . . observing the commandments and knowledgeable in Torah? In my opinion, so long as we do not strive to repair the evil of our daughters’ education we will never arrive at our fundamental goal in the education of our sons. . . . It is up to you to found schools in which we will teach them [our daughters] our holy language and our long history so that our daughters too will be Hebrew women knowledgeable in language and scripture. . . .⁴⁰

In response to their diagnosis of this grim situation, Zionists did establish both regular and supplementary schools to ensure the Jewish nationalist consciousness of the future mothers of Israel.⁴¹ The widespread perception of a problem in the cultural formation of women leads to two conclusions: that all sectors of the Jewish community shared the view that mothers were central to the inculcation of Jewish identity—however ideologically defined—in children; and that there was a gendered difference in the cultural formation of a significant segment of Jewish youth in Poland and Russia in the decades preceding the First World War.

It was from among the women who had acquired a secular education that there emerged the most conspicuous representatives of modern ideas within Russian Jewry. A striking number of Russian Jewish women succeeded in studying abroad, primarily at Swiss but also at French universities. According to a report of the German consul in Zurich in 1906, more than 62 percent of the 1,920 Russian students studying at Swiss institutions of higher education (the vast majority of whom were Jewish) were women.⁴² At the University of Paris in the decade preceding the First World War, Russian and Romanian women, most of them Jewish, accounted for more than one-third of all the female students and about two-thirds of those who were foreign.⁴³ Some of them limited their influence to their families; others assumed a public role.

With the development of modern political parties—among them, a number that were Jewish—in tsarist Russia, women who acquired secular education were likely to become aware both of the political ferment within the larger society and of the op-

tions that were available to them as politically alert young Jews. Women were not conventionally expected to be political activists or terrorists, a reason why they were often used to smuggle illegal information or even weapons hidden in their skirts.⁴⁴ The fact that women revolutionaries broke with the entrenched view of women as passive observers of political events contributed to the horror they inspired. Jewish women radical activists also provided convenient evidence for the rationalization that Jews were behind the Russian revolutionary movements. A Jewish woman, Hesia Helfman, was involved in the plot to assassinate Tsar Alexander II in 1881; Rosa Luxemburg, of Polish Jewish origin, became one of the most important theorists of revolutionary Marxism in Central Europe, and a participant in revolutionary activity in both Poland and Germany; Zhenia Hurvich had a long career as a revolutionary activist, from her university days when she joined a group of Russian Populists to her later work both with the Bund and with the Russian Social Democratic Workers Party.⁴⁵

Women seem to have been drawn particularly to the Bund, whose commitment to gender equality was reflected in a larger number of women among the middle ranks of leadership than was common among other groups. It has been estimated that women comprised one-third of the membership of the Bund in its early years; Y.S. Hertz's *Doyres bundistn* includes 55 women among its biographies of 320 significant activists.⁴⁶

Although the Zionist movement as a whole was ambivalent toward women, and many Zionist groups were hostile to women's participation, some women became committed to Zionism and surmounted the many obstacles erected to marginalize them.⁴⁷ One former activist in Russian and Russian Jewish revolutionary movements, Manya Wilbushewitz (later Shohat) was a member in 1906 of the earliest group to experiment with collective settlement in the Yishuv.⁴⁸ Most East European women in the Zionist movement, however, worked in the Russian and Polish Jewish community, organizing other women in support of the Zionist cause.

Puah Rakowski, born in Bialystok in 1865 and active in Poland until she emigrated to Palestine in 1935, provides an example of the influence that a female leader could have.⁴⁹ As an educator, Rakowski promoted Zionist ideology among her students, first in Lomza, and then for almost a quarter of a century in Warsaw. In 1891, she became a teacher in a school founded by the Zionist society B'nai Moshe; two years later, she founded and directed Warsaw's first modern Jewish girls' school. From the time of her arrival in Warsaw, she was active in Zionist affairs, which were then still not fully legal. Through her writings, which appeared in newspapers and as pamphlets, she made it clear that acquiring a modern Jewish and secular education, including vocational training, was essential if women were to support themselves and their families, as well as to enhance their own culture and transmit Jewish consciousness to their children.

By the end of the First World War, Rakowski was combining her Zionism with feminism, calling for the self-determination of both Jews and women. She served on the national council of B'nos Zion, established in 1919 to gather money for Zionist projects, to teach women Hebrew, and in general to prepare women for Zionist activity. When the leaders of the Zionist Executive in Poland refused to recognize the women's council and to provide funds for its organizing efforts (despite their previous

promises), Rakowski and her colleagues seceded from the council and continued their activity independently. Once they had succeeded in establishing 72 groups of women throughout Poland, they won recognition from the Zionist Executive that had previously scorned them.

Several years later, Rakowski served on the secretariat of an explicitly feminist organization, the Jewish Women's Association of Poland (YFA), also established after the war. She was active in that organization for more than a decade, until her emigration to Palestine. Promoting both women's equality and Zionism, the Association also specifically addressed economic needs, providing vocational training and child care to the neediest of Polish Jewish women. Through its publications, it also brought contemporary feminist ideas to a Yiddish-reading, female public. Its short-lived weekly newspaper, *Di froy*, proclaimed that "the Jewish woman must lead a double struggle as a woman belonging to an oppressed and persecuted people." The paper combined its feminism with respect for some aspects of traditional Jewish life, calling, on the one hand, for a "new modern woman" who would have access to education and to the wider world and, on the other hand, supporting the desires of women to sustain "the sweet, beloved Jewish home with its . . . unassuming traditions of modesty characteristic of the Jewish woman of old."⁵⁰

While it is clear that Puah Rakowski's career choices and volunteer political activism encouraged the women with whom she came in contact in the direction of modern Jewish politics, culture, and identity, she was hardly typical of the educated women of her generation. Her life-long commitment to full-scale work within both the Zionist and feminist movements was quite unusual. However, her story points to issues that educated women could raise in the Jewish community simply by virtue of their active presence. They challenged the gendered division of education within the Jewish community. They demonstrated that women were capable of political action and that intelligence and professionalism were not the attributes of men alone. Whether they were teachers or dentists or physicians, their lives were an argument for woman's suffrage and for entrusting women with responsible positions. Insofar as the growth of equality for women is one of the markers of modernization, the East European Jewish women who benefited at the end of the nineteenth century from the gendered structure of education among traditional Jews moved the Jewish community as a whole toward a more modern social structure.

In the very different contexts of Germany and Russia in the nineteenth century and the beginning of the twentieth, then, Jewish women played significant roles in their communities as they faced the challenge of accelerating change. In both societies, women served as a conservative force, retarding complete assimilation and maintaining domestic rituals. In Germany, their domestic conservatism, which proved resilient throughout the long nineteenth century, reflected a gendered form of assimilation and involved a selective retention of traditional Jewish custom. Accompanying their retirement from the public sphere, their conservative role was grounded in their new bourgeois status, in a society in which the bourgeoisie retained an attachment to religion. By the beginning of the twentieth century, bourgeois gender divisions had become less rigid, and middle-class German Jewish women, like other women in Germany, used their prescribed moral sensibilities to engage in public welfare activity that brought new

ideas of women's equality into communal discourse. Some also challenged their exclusion from higher education, the professions, and political life, although German Jewish women did not use their higher education in the service of radical politics.

In Russia, in contrast, although there existed a small number of bourgeois women who seem to have followed the gender patterns set in Central Europe, women who reinforced conservative social forces were drawn overwhelmingly from a non-bourgeois milieu. They were traditionally pious, given little education, secular or Jewish, and they carried out their tasks as wives and mothers faced with the pressing economic needs of their families. However, some Jewish women became strongly identified with modern culture, at a time when educated Russians tended increasingly to embrace not religion, but anti-clerical and secular ideologies. The fact that these women usually lacked a specifically Jewish education was widely perceived by contemporary communal spokesmen of diverse backgrounds as detrimental to the transmission of Jewish identity to the younger generation, and thus stimulated discussion and programs for the education of women. Because of the tasks traditionally assigned to them as future mothers, their secularization and their frequent recruitment into universalist radical movements were perceived within the Jewish community as ultimately more threatening than similar behavior by men.

In both Germany and Russia, the "woman question" provoked debate about the future of Jewish society and culture and ultimately served to introduce new ideas about women's equality. In Germany, these ideas were voiced within a bourgeois context; in Russia, as part of the radical intellectual and political ferment at the turn of the twentieth century. Although the discussions about the "woman question" and the activities of women have largely been ignored in Jewish historiography, they are part and parcel of the emergence of modern forms of Jewish consciousness and culture in two ways. As historical agents—professionals, educators, and activists—women shaped "Jewish modernity" within the boundaries of their different societies. As the subjects of communal debate, they became the touchstone of just what modernity would mean.

Notes

1. See Pierre Birnbaum and Ira Katznelson (eds.), *Paths of Emancipation: Jews, States, and Citizenship* (Princeton: 1995). Aron Rodrigue does mention the extension of education to girls in Turkey for the first time in Sephardic Jewish history and its consequences for the social advancement of Jewish women (*ibid.*, 248).

2. See Steven Lowenstein, *The Berlin Jewish Community: Enlightenment, Family, and Crisis, 1770–1830* (New York: 1994); Todd Endelman, *Radical Assimilation in English Jewish History, 1646–1945* (Bloomington: 1990); Marion Kaplan, *The Making of the Jewish Middle Class: Women, Family, and Identity in Imperial Germany* (New York: 1991); Paula Hyman, *Gender and Assimilation in Modern Jewish History: The Roles and Representation of Women* (Seattle: 1995); Judith Baskin (ed.), *Jewish Women in Historical Perspective*, 2nd ed. (Detroit: 1998); Daniel Boyarin, *Unheroic Conduct: The Rise of Heterosexuality and the Invention of the Jewish Man* (Berkeley: 1997).

3. See Boyarin, *Unheroic Conduct*, esp. 4–5, 231–243; Sander Gilman, *Jewish Self-Hatred: Anti-Semitism and the Hidden Language of the Jews* (Baltimore: 1986), 243–245; *idem*, *The Jew's Body* (New York: 1991), 52–53; Hyman, *Gender and Assimilation*, 134–160.

4. See Michael A. Meyer, *The Origins of the Modern Jew: Jewish Identity and European*

Culture in Germany, 1749–1824 (Detroit: 1967), 85–114; Jacob Katz, *Out of the Ghetto: The Social Background of Jewish Emancipation* (Cambridge, Mass.: 1973), 56, 120.

5. The most extreme work is that of Solomon Liptzin, *Germany's Stepchildren* (Philadelphia: 1944).

6. See Deborah Hertz, *Jewish High Society in Old Regime Berlin* (New Haven: 1988); idem, "Emancipation through Intermarriage? Wealthy Jewish Salon Women in Old Berlin," in Baskin (ed.), *Jewish Women in Historical Perspective*, 193–207; idem, "Seductive Conversion in Berlin, 1770–1809," in *Jewish Apostasy in the Modern World*, ed. Todd Endelman (New York: 1987), 48–82.

7. See Lowenstein, *The Berlin Jewish Community*, 104–110, 162–176.

8. See Todd Endelman, "The Social and Political Context of Conversion in Germany and England," in *Jewish Apostasy in the Modern World*, 90.

9. See Kaplan, *Making of the Jewish Middle Class*, 64–84; idem, "Tradition and Transition: Jewish Women in Imperial Germany," in Baskin (ed.), *Jewish Women in Historical Perspective*, 227–247.

10. See Monika Richarz (ed.), *Jewish Life in Germany: Memoirs from Three Centuries*, trans. Stella P. Rosenfeld and Sidney Rosenfeld (Bloomington: 1991), 15–16. On the upward economic mobility of German Jewry in the nineteenth century, see Jacob Toury, "Der Eintritt der Juden ins deutsche Bürgertum," in *Das Judentum in der deutschen Umwelt, 1800–1850*, ed. Hans Liebeschütz and Arnold Paucker (Tübingen: 1977), 139–242.

11. See David Sorkin, *The Transformation of German Jewry, 1780–1840* (New York: 1987).

12. See Ute Frevert, *Women in German History: From Bourgeois Emancipation to Sexual Liberation*, trans. Stuart McKinnon-Evans (Oxford: 1988), 63–69. The quotation is from p. 67.

13. See Steven Lowenstein, "The Pace of Modernization of German Jewry in the Nineteenth Century," *Year Book of the Leo Baeck Institute* 21 (1976), 41–56, reprinted in his *The Mechanics of Change: Essays in the Social History of German Jewry* (Atlanta: 1992), 9–28.

14. See Fanny Neuda, *Stunden der Andacht: Ein Gebet- und Erbauungsbuch für Israels Frauen und Jungfrauen* (Prague: 1855). The book was published in 28 editions, into the 1920s, and was translated (freely) into English in 1865. As Daniel Boyarin notes, there are few specifically Jewish references and much that reflected popular bourgeois ideology of the time. See Boyarin, *Unheroic Conduct*, 248, 276.

15. See Kaplan, *Making of the Jewish Middle Class*, 85–116.

16. For a statement of this position in the case of modern Jewish history, see Calvin Goldscheider and Alan Zuckerman, *The Transformation of the Jews* (Chicago: 1984).

17. See Lawrence Schofer, "Emancipation and Population Change," in *Revolution and Evolution: 1848 in German-Jewish History*, ed. Werner Mosse, Arnold Paucker, and Reinhard Rürup (Tübingen: 1981), 79–80.

18. See Kaplan, *Making of the Jewish Middle Class*, 42–43.

19. See Richarz *Jewish Life in Germany*, 23.

20. See Frevert, *Women in German History*, 69–71, 112–13. Both the organizational and educational proclivities of these women may have reflected Jewish historical experience and values.

21. See Harriet Pass Freidenreich, *Educated, Jewish, and Female: Central European University Women in the Early Twentieth Century* (Philadelphia: forthcoming).

22. See Kaplan, *Making of the Jewish Middle Class*, 198–199, 206, 208.

23. Ibid., 206.

24. On the Jüdischer Frauenbund, see Marion Kaplan, *The Jewish Feminist Movement in Germany: The Campaigns of the Jüdischer Frauenbund, 1904–1938* (Westport, Conn.: 1979). On the membership statistics of the Federation affiliates, see Frevert, *Women in German History*, 329–331.

25. As cited in Kaplan, *Making of the Jewish Middle Class*, 213.

26. See Paula Hyman, "The Jewish Body Politic: Gendered Politics in the Early Twentieth Century," *Nashim: A Journal of Jewish Women's Studies and Gender Issues* 2 (1999), 37–51.

27. See Pauline Wengeroff, *Memoiren einer Grossmutter: Bilder aus der Kulturgeschichte der Juden Russlands im 19 Jahrhundert*, 2 vols. (Berlin: 1908–1910). Shulamit Magnus is preparing an annotated English translation of these important memoirs, to be published by the University of California Press.

28. See Arcadius Kahan, "The Impact of Industrialization in Tsarist Russia on the Socioeconomic Conditions of the Jewish Population," in his *Essays in Jewish Social and Economic History*, ed. Roger Weiss (Chicago: 1986), 6, 64–65.

29. See Hyman, *Gender and Assimilation*, 64–65, 67–68.

30. See Mordekhai Levin, *'Erkei hevrah vekalkalah beideologiyah shel tekufat hahaskalah* (Jerusalem: 1975), 151–153.

31. See Y.L. Gordon, *Koẓo shel yod* (Lvov: 1935); for a biography of Gordon, see Michael Stanislawski, *For Whom Do I Toil?* (New York: 1988).

32. See Shmuel Feiner, "Haishah hayehudiyah hamodernit: mikreh-mivhan beyahasei hahaskalah vehamodernah," *Zion* 58 (1993), 453–499; idem, "The Pseudo-Enlightenment and the Question of Jewish Modernization," *Jewish Social Studies* 3, no. 1 (Fall 1996), 62–88.

33. See Shaul Stampfer, "Gender Differentiation and Education of the Jewish Woman in Nineteenth-Century Eastern Europe," *Polin* 7 (1992), 63–87.

34. See Iris Parush, "Readers in Cameo: Women Readers in Jewish Society," *Prooftexts* 14 (1994), 2, 7, 9–13; idem "The Politics of Literacy: Women and Foreign Languages in Jewish Society of 19th-Century Eastern Europe," *Modern Judaism* 15 (1995), 188–190, 206 (n. 64).

35. For an example of the former, see Puah Rakowski, *Zikhroyes fun a yidisher revolutionerin* (Buenos Aires: 1954); for an example of the latter, see Ita Yellin, *Leẓeeẓai* (Jerusalem: 1928).

36. See Stampfer, "Gender Differentiation," 79–80.

37. See Parush's "Readers in Cameo," 7–9 and "Politics of Literacy," 196–197.

38. N. Tcherniak, "Unzere gebildite tekhter," *Di yidishe froyenvelt* [Cracow] 18 (29 Oct. 1902), 2.

39. See Deborah Weissman, "Education of Jewish Women," *Encyclopedia Judaica Yearbook*, 1986–1987 (p. 33). Lando's name is erroneously printed there as "Lands."

40. Jacob Ruderman, *Ma'arekhet halimudim o haheder hametukan* (Warsaw: 1902), 44.

41. For an elaboration of this point, see Hyman, *Gender and Assimilation*, 50–51, 58–60; idem, "East European Jewish Women in an Age of Transition, 1880–1930," in Baskin (ed.), *Jewish Women in Historical Perspective*, 275–277.

42. Cited in Jack Wertheimer, "The Ausländerfrage at Institutions of Higher Learning: A Controversy over Russian-Jewish Students in Imperial Germany," *Year Book of the Leo Baeck Institute*, 27 (1982), 188 (n. 2). German universities, depending on their location, accepted female students only later.

43. See Nancy Green, "L'émigration comme émancipation: les femmes juives d'Europe de l'Est à Paris, 1881–1914," *Pluriel* 27 (1981), 56–58.

44. For one example, see Bilhah Dinur, *Lenekhdotai: zikhronot mishpahah vesipurei havayot* (Jerusalem: 1972), 42–43.

45. On Hesia Helfman (Gesia Gelfman, in Russian), see Barbara Alpern Engel and Clifford N. Rosenthal (eds. and trans.), *Five Sisters: Women Against the Tsar* (New York: 1975), passim. For a biographical essay on Rosa Luxemburg that explores her Jewishness, see Robert Wistrich, *Revolutionary Jews from Marx to Trotsky* (London: 1976), 76–92. For information on Zhenia Hurvich (Gurvich, in Russian), see J.S. Hertz (ed.), *Doyres bundistn*, vol. 1 (New York: 1956), 243–247; and Henry Tobias, *The Jewish Bund in Russia: From Its Origins to 1905* (Stanford: 1972), 348.

46. *Doyres bundistn*, 2 vols. For a history of the early years of the Bund, see Tobias, *The Jewish Bund in Russia*. On the development of the Bund and of other forms of Jewish socialism, see Jonathan Frankel, *Prophecy and Politics: Socialism, Nationalism, and the Russian Jews, 1862–1917* (Cambridge: 1981). On women in the Bund, see Harriet Kram, "The Story of the Sisters of the Bund," *Contemporary Jewry* 5, no. 2 (1980), 27–43; and Naomi Shepherd, *A Price Below Rubies: Jewish Women as Rebels and Radicals* (Cambridge, Mass.: 1993), 137–171.

47. See Hyman, *Gender and Assimilation*, 146–150; idem, “Eastern European Jewish Women,” 280.

48. See Shulamit Reinharz, “Toward a Model of Female Political Action: The Case of Manya Shohat, Founder of the First Kibbutz,” *Women’s Studies International Forum* 7, no. 4 (1984), 275–287.

49. The sources of this narrative include Rakowski, *Zikhroynes*; idem, *Di yidishe froy* (Warsaw: 1918); Yitzhak Grinbaum (ed.), *Enziklopediyah shel galuyot—sidrat Polin*, vol. 6, Warsaw, part 2 (Jerusalem: 1959).

50. *Di froy* 1 (8 April 1925), 1–2.

A Political Tradition? American Jewish Women and the Politics of History

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In 1997, the publication of *Jewish Women in America: An Historical Encyclopedia* announced to the world of American Jewish historical scholarship that the consistent neglect of women and women's activities in the Jewish past had come to an end.¹ After even a cursory skim of the encyclopedia's 1,770 pages with its 910 entries—800 biographical profiles and 110 topical entries—no one could possibly claim that Jewish women did not have a history worth telling, or that their lives had been lived out in such domestic obscurity that they could not be reconstructed. Topical entries included sports, science, law, medicine, scholarship, literature, art, dance, and academia, all of which represented zones of endeavor in which Jewish women contributed mightily. Moreover, *Jewish Women in America* made it abundantly clear that women helped to shape the American Jewish world. In the realm of American Judaism as a system of ritual and belief, Jewish women played formative roles in sustaining traditional practice, fostering Jewish learning and loyalty, and creating new modes of expression and behavior.

Its profiles of individual women, organizations, and institutions made it clear that women assisted in the transfer of Jewish communal life to America. And in fashioning and sustaining the institutions of American Jewish communities, Jewish women did not play an incidental role; rather, they stood squarely at the center of this process.

Clearly, the encyclopedia emerged from a cultural moment, an era in which Jewish women as scholars and feminists had already created a body of evidence that challenged the dominant and long-standing paradigm of Jewish history as the history of men. The encyclopedia's editors, members of its editorial board (myself included), and its many writers (myself included) created a formidable text that showed how that kind of thinking ought to be seen not so much as offensive, but as historically inaccurate.

All of this notwithstanding, there is one respect in which the encyclopedia continues a decidedly anachronistic tradition. It includes no entry for "politics" or "political activity."² Its entry on "Philanthropy" comes closest to synthesizing the shaping influence of Jewish women on American Jewish communal life.³ Yet even here, the encyclopedia helps to perpetuate the notion that Jewish women's communal work is

motivated by altruism and lacks any political punch. There is no single thematic heading in *Jewish Women in America* for the material—scattered throughout the extant sources and on its own pages—concerning the powerful role played by Jewish women in the institutional political life of American Jewry. Indeed, despite the many entries detailing how Jewish women sought, used, and struggled over the distribution of power and authority, both among themselves and vis-à-vis Jewish men, the absence of a focused discussion on politics and political culture seems particularly glaring. Despite its manifest virtues, *Jewish Women in America* continues a longtime analytic tradition of decoupling Jewish women from political culture.

Historians have downplayed the gendered nature of Jewish politics by representing it as that which men alone did in the name of the Jewish community as a unified whole. By placing women's communal activities in a separate category of analysis, usually philanthropy and service, they have ignored the ample cues strewn through a vast body of writing about the meaning of politics. Politics need not operate only in a *state system*: it exists throughout the complex web of interactions between individuals as they engage in any shared enterprise. But even the most conventional definitions of politics allow for the inclusion of Jewish women's communal activities within their political framework. Writing in the 1950s, V.O. Key described "politics as power," which in his view consisted "fundamentally of relationships of superordination and subordination, of dominance and subordination."⁴ A decade later, Robert Dahl, in characterizing the framework in which politics exists, noted that a "political system is any persistent pattern of human relationships that involves, to a significant extent, power, rule, or authority."⁵

While neither Key nor Dahl directly addressed such issues as the exercise of power by those who seemingly have none, or "who governs" and where in the voluntary sector, their definitions do offer an analytical window into the world of Jewish women's politics. Indeed, since the era in which the above definitions served as the prevailing paradigms for analysis, political scientists have broadened the idea of politics. In the 1980s, Karl Deutsch succinctly conceived of politics as the "capacity of an actor to shift the probability of outcomes" in dealing with other people.⁶ More recently, the entry in the *Concise Oxford Dictionary of Politics* (1996) argued that "politics occurs when people disagree . . . and have at least some procedure for the resolution of such disagreements." Furthermore, according to the dictionary, politics is "the practice of the art or science of directing and administering states or *other political units*."⁷ In other words, politics takes place outside of government as well as within. It is present both in the voluntary sector, a key part of the "public sphere,"⁸ and in the actions of those who lack formal power—which does not prevent them from making their will known and affecting change.

Feminist scholars have further complicated notions of politics by arguing convincingly that the "personal" and the "political" reproduce the same or similar patterns. All relationships involve hierarchies, and hierarchies essentially inform and are informed by the exercise of power. In *Gender and the Politics of History*, Joan Scott has pulled together a set of her essays, written under the influence of poststructuralism, that explore the varying ways in which social phenomena—including politics—have been represented and described. Politics, for Scott, "is the process by which plays of power and knowledge constitute identity and experience." Thus, in her book,

she calls on historians to “eschew the compartmentalizing tendency” that has associated women with the family and politics with “governments and states.”⁹

Obviously, if politics were to be limited to governments and states, then Jews—regardless of gender—would have had no power except in periods of Jewish national sovereignty. Such a limited definition of politics strips it away from Jewish men just as surely as it does from Jewish women. But David Biale, in his *Power and Powerlessness in Jewish History*, made patently clear that Jews found ample ways to exercise power even when they lacked any semblance of a state of their own.¹⁰ Power, defined as the ability of groups to act autonomously in their own name and for their own agenda, even in the face of resistance from well-placed individuals, from other competing groups, or from structures that opposed this autonomy, constituted part of the Jewish repertoire at most times. Moreover, Jews also enjoyed the exercise of power, the other component of politics. In various ways, tempered by the particular diaspora political culture in which they made their home, Jews had the ability to structure their own communal institution of governance. They formulated the rules and procedures that undergirded the Jewish community and its multiple associations, and they controlled the institutional purse strings by organizing the collection and distribution of internal resources.¹¹

Almost any formulation of politics, with the exception of one narrowly predicated on holding the reins of government in a sovereign state, could be used to demonstrate the political nature of Jewish communal history. The history of the American Jewish community raises some particularly intriguing political issues. In contrast to most other countries, including other Western, liberal democracies, the government in the United States took little or no interest in the inner workings of the American Jewish community. Consequently, American Jewry had an essentially unbounded arena in which to jockey for the power both to shape its institutions and to define the communal agenda.¹²

From the earliest years of settlement, clusters of Jews created an array of institutions in order to provide Jewish “services” for their communities.¹³ This communal infrastructure was built around leaders who mobilized their followers and consisted of a web of religious, charitable, social, and defense-oriented organizations and institutions. They generally functioned as formal bodies with constitutions, officers, and procedures for the transfer of power and the disbursement of resources. Groups and individuals within each institution vied with one another for influence, while the leaders maintained some level of authority over rank-and-file members. Different local Jewish institutions often represented “parties,” in the Madisonian sense of factions, and they too competed among themselves—in this case, for the right to define the community and its agenda.¹⁴ On the national level, there were also a number of bodies that laid claim to serve as a kind of Jewish shadow government. With competing ideologies and strategies, they vied against each other for the right to speak for the Jews and for mass support on behalf of their particular projects.¹⁵

In the broader sphere encompassing both Europe and the United States, the historian Ezra Mendelsohn has located Jewish politics in the modern era, a moment in time when the disestablishment of the Jews’ corporate status deeply problematized the structure of Jewish life and created “the Jewish question.” He succinctly defines Jewish politics as “the programs formulated by these new movements . . . the differ-

ent ways in which they viewed the future of the Jewish people and their proposals for solving" the Jews' uncomfortable status. In his view, "the competition among them for hegemony" characterized the basic nature of the Jewish political landscape.¹⁶ Mendelsohn thus joins a long line of commentators on the political implications of the Jewish condition and historians who have sought to understand the ways in which different diaspora Jewish communities formally constituted themselves and carried out their politics.¹⁷

Yet in all of this historical writing and contemporary analysis, issues of gender and the gendered nature of politics have been noticeably absent. Modern Jewish politics has emerged in the scholarly discourse as a phenomenon characterized by the differences of ideology, geography, and time. But one difference that goes unmentioned is the implicitly gendered differentiation of Jewish political work. The actions of men are defined as "Jewish," or some variant thereof: "Orthodox," "Zionist," "socialist," "Revisionist," and the like. The "Jewish struggle" was carried out by men who sought both to create viable communities on the domestic front and to smooth out relations with the larger, non-Jewish world. Their ideas and projects represented the community's political voices and programs. In contrast, women's organizations are labeled "Jewish women's" organizations, and if they merit analysis at all, they do so as ancillary to the main, "male" narrative. In the realm of Jewish politics, women have constituted the ephemeral "Other."

This essay will not tell the history of Jewish women as central players in the political history of their American communities. That history can be written: throughout the secondary literature at our grasp are to be found hundreds of stories of Jewish women doing what Key, Dahl, Mendelsohn, Scott, and many other analysts have defined as politics. Rather, I want to draw attention to a number of such "stories" or moments, explaining how and why they have not been analyzed in their political context.

To the extent that they have been considered at all, American Jewish women have been ensconced in a different analytic framework. Their narratives have been understood as service-oriented, as doing good for its own sake. As such, the history of American Jewish women has been located outside the political arena. Defined in the Jewish communal consciousness as "helpers" and "sustainers" of good works for the poor, orphans, children, immigrants, "fallen girls," and the like, Jewish women have, by and large, been imagined in terms of moral uplift and selflessness, two concepts that are generally irrelevant to the categories of political analysis.

Women did provide the core of Jewish philanthropy, and we have a veritable library of scholarship and contemporaneous commentary about the communal "acts of loving kindness" (*gemilut ḥasadim*) of Jewish women in the public sphere. We know a great deal about the Jewish communal leaders and writers (men) who have lauded Jewish women for their support of community endeavors without the need for public acclaim or wages. Rabbis, philanthropists, and community leaders (all men), along with community chroniclers and subsequent historians, sang paeans of tribute to the selfless women. A good example is the encyclopedic work by Hyman L. Meites on the history of the Jews in Chicago, published in 1924. Meites repeatedly extolled the great, humanitarian service of the Chicago Jewish women as he described the com-

munity's institutional web. In his discussion of the city's first Jewish old-age home, he wrote:

Jewish women and women's organizations have since the beginning rendered vital aid to B.M.Z. [Beth Moshav Zekanim]. Without their help the Home would surely not have progressed as it has; might not, indeed have weathered the many trials of its trying early years. . . . The women took upon themselves the manifold duties of seeing to it that the old people of the Home had every comfort and care. . . . Always their work has been characterized by a joyous zeal born of their love and sympathy for their aged beneficiaries.¹⁸

Meites also commended the many Jewish men who rendered invaluable service to the old-age home, formally incorporated by them as the Orthodox Jewish Home for the Aged. Notably, however, he described the men in terms of the amounts of money they contributed, their election to various offices on the board, the length of their service, and their organizational efforts, all without the glowing praise of "zeal," "sympathy," "comfort," or "care." He neither described them as "men" nor commented on the sterling values that informed their activities. The women described by Meites "took upon themselves" their "self-assumed labors." Such language clearly indicates that Jewish women's work on behalf of the old-age home was voluntary. Men's activities, however, fall into the realm of communal politics; as men, they naturally lead and join.

Male communal leaders in Boston paid similar homage to the women who made possible the creation of Beth Israel Hospital in 1915. The first report of its Board of Directors noted the role of Jewish women as sustainers and helpers. "It must be here admitted," read the report, "to the great credit of Jewish women . . . they who were the first to realize the urgent need of the Hospital for the Jewish poor of this city." The phrases "credit" and "for the Jewish poor" imply the largesse of philanthropists motivated from the goodness of their empathetic hearts.

In fact, the origins of the hospital can be seen in a more specifically political framework. As early as 1909, a handful of "Jewish mothers," all recent immigrants from Eastern Europe living in Boston's South End, a particularly poor Jewish enclave in the city, gathered regularly at Hyman Danzig's Three and Nine Cent store. They no doubt had much to converse about, from the purely personal to the broadly civic. Among the issues that came up was the lack of adequate medical care in their neighborhood. Rather than turn to others to fill the void, they formed themselves into a committee and came up with a scheme to raise money. They constructed miniature bricks and sold them at 50 cents apiece. By 1911, they reconstituted themselves as the Beth Israel Hospital Association. They enlisted other groups, particularly neighborhood *bikur holim* societies (whose purpose was to visit the sick) to join them, while at the same time recruiting doctors and local philanthropists. By 1915, the poor neighborhood mothers had formed themselves into an official corporation, purchased an old estate, and brought into being a 45-bed hospital.¹⁹

Both the women who created the old-age home in Chicago and the women who founded Beth Israel thought and acted politically in the name of social amelioration. They meshed their good deeds with strategic thinking about how to rationalize life on "what was sometimes called the 'Jewish Street.'"²⁰ Like male community leaders, they grappled with the problem of disorganization in American Jewish life. Like the men, they decried the chaos caused by too many competing organizations, which un-

determined the possibility of unified community action and made Jews vulnerable to attacks from the outside.

Jewish women's political activities from the end of the nineteenth century onward played themselves out amid the ameliorative tropes of social service and "making the [local] world a better place." Their behavior, their political project, and the tone in which they articulated it dovetailed perfectly with the mighty enterprise of the Progressive era and the work of women. Suffragist leader Rheta Childe Dorr spoke for the progressive women of America when she noted that "women's place is in the Home, but Home is not contained within the four walls of an individual home. Home is the community."²¹ Jewish women in their local communities undoubtedly understood those words, translated them to fit their own actions, and used them to justify their own activities. The Jewish community was their responsibility, and while they may have linked their activism on its behalf in terms that were appropriate for their era and their class, these projects involved the effort to shape the community.

Bringing order to Jewish institutional disorder has been defined by community activists and analysts as *the* central internal political problem of American Jewry since the middle of the nineteenth century. In various local communities, Jewish unity was too often a desired but elusive end. In the 1950s, Eli Ginzberg bemoaned this characteristic of American Jewry. "In the entire history of the Diaspora," he wrote in his *Agenda for American Jews*, "no group of Jews has ever been confronted with a problem comparable to that facing American Jewry, namely to organize and operate a community without internal sanctions . . . and without external sanctions."²²

Historians have written extensively about a series of failed efforts to rationalize Jewish community life. Yet no one to date has acknowledged that a group of Jewish women in Chicago made the first sustained effort in that direction. In 1910, a group of Jewish women activists created the Conference of Jewish Women's Organizations, an umbrella group representing 80 different Chicago Jewish women's groups that extended across a wide religious and economic spectrum. Its goal was the coordination of activities and nonduplication of efforts. Rather than having each organization go its separate way, starting programs ignorant of the successes and failures of others, the Conference sought to create a kind of Jewish women's organizational clearinghouse. As such, it fitted in neatly with the ethos of the Progressive era, which promoted the rationalization and bureaucratization of social activism.

The Conference clearly set forth its purpose in its constitution, which stated that the constituent organizations would seek "to expedite work which is of common interest, to consider all new work reported by one or more of the organizations, and to present the work of such organizations as desire cooperation." Conference leaders sought to maintain a low profile, and they speculated that their work, carried out "quietly and unostentatiously . . . has done more to counteract any latent anti-Semitism than a thousand treatises, for it has given ample proof of the eagerness of the Jewish woman to shoulder more than her share of responsibility for the welfare of the community."²³

The Conference's motto, "In unity there is strength," bore witness to the political nature of the group's work. It represented more than 30,000 Jewish women, and among its cited accomplishments were "reducing waste in charitable work" by creating a Central Bureau of Charities; "promoting knowledge of, and interest in, all

pending legislation"; "establishing greater cooperation between religious bodies through a Round Table for all Sisterhoods, liberal and conservative," and fostering a mechanism by which Jewish women's organizations could cooperate "militantly" with non-Jewish entities such as the League of Women Voters, the Student Fellowship, the Juvenile Protective League, and a string of other Chicago nonsectarian groups. A president of the Conference, the Russian-born "Mrs. Abe Simon," saw its work as a bridge between the internal Jewish communal agenda and the larger goal of creating a more livable city.²⁴

This effort at local Jewish self-governance in America predated by more than a decade the first Jewish community councils of the late 1920s.²⁵ Whether it succeeded or failed is less significant than the intensely political way in which these Jewish women operated, and the counternarrative they offer to that of soft-hearted women interested only in doing good deeds.²⁶

Despite the highly political nature of this and many other Jewish women's organizational projects, Jewish women have been consistently referred to as "volunteers" and "club women." They have been described both in negative terms, by that which they did not get, namely remuneration, as well as in positive terms, by that which they did get, personal pleasure from their activities. Most commentators, like Meites, have hailed their voluntarism and free choice as examples of Jewish women's selflessness, the living embodiment of the biblical "woman of valor." Alternatively, commentators such as the authors of the Beth Israel Hospital annual report have noted the exceptionalism of women's initiatives. That exceptionality, however, amounted to marginality. The marginality in turn depoliticized women's activism. Jewish women did their communal work in their "leisure" time, an apolitical category never used to depict men's communal efforts. In embedding "women's work" in the category of "leisure," a frivolous commodity, it could be discounted, even when defined as good and philanthropic.

The enormous gap between how Jewish women's organizations have been described—social, benevolent, apolitical—and how they actually functioned historically (and in the contemporary setting) can be seen in the case of Hadassah, The Women's Zionist Organization. According to Daniel Elazar in his classic work on Jewish communal politics, *Community and Polity*, this national women's group "remains the largest single Jewish organization in the United States." Elazar, however, chose to interpret Hadassah's activities in a nonpolitical context, noting that "in many parts of the country the organization plays down its Zionist connection and functions simply as a prestigious Jewish women's group."²⁷ This conventional presentation of Hadassah ought to be juxtaposed with the entry on Hadassah in *Jewish Women in America*, in which Deborah Dash Moore details not only its good works and mass popularity among American Jewish women, but also its highly political nature.²⁸

According to Moore, Hadassah, on several occasions, asserted its autonomy from the larger male Zionist domain. It took stands on the crucial political issues of the day. It ran its own slate of candidates for the World Zionist Congress. It pursued its work for Youth Aliya in the face of criticism from other Zionist organizations that the project represented a misallocation of resources. It publicly opposed McCarthyism in the

1950s, at a time when other national Jewish organizations, such as the American Jewish Committee, stood nervously on the sidelines.

How much did Hadassah soft-pedal its Zionism? In contrast to Elazar, Moore quotes a document from 1948, in which Hadassah leaders located the propagation of Zionism squarely within the organization's agenda:

Ever greater numbers of Jewish women should be drawn into Hadassah where they have the opportunity to work on two fronts: as Zionists, for the welfare of the Jewish people in Israel, and as Americans, for a democratic America and a democratic world to help bring peace and security to peoples everywhere.²⁹

Hadassah struggled valiantly to be recognized as a political force within the Zionist movement. A recent article in *American Jewish History* by Mary McCune convincingly depicts the antipathy of male Zionists to Hadassah because of their fundamentally male definition of the Zionist project. Zionism was to create, quite literally, a new male Jewish body, whereas Hadassah's practical philanthropic work was aimed at healing both Jews and Arabs. Hadassah's leaders were keenly aware, according to McCune, of the disdain that male Zionists harbored toward them as women operating in a men's political world. A 1927 bulletin of the organization noted that "even when [our detractors] concede our claim to the Zionist heritage, they dub us lachrymose, whining sisters of a brotherhood that stands for staunch manhood and dignified self-assertion, and looks upon charity as a necessary evil at best, and the need for exercising it as a blot upon civilization's escutcheon."³⁰ Despite or perhaps because of this disdain, the Hadassah leadership struggled to maintain its autonomy and define its work on its own terms. True, Hadassah understood and used Zionist ideology differently than the predominantly male groups. This, however, rendered it neither devoid of ideology nor apolitical.

Henrietta Szold founded the Hadassah organization in 1912 out of a sense that the Federation of American Zionists was squandering time and energy on internal bickering and incessant squabbling over personalities. She focused on health care as an issue that could unite American Jewish supporters of the Jewish community in Palestine (the Yishuv).³¹ In 1933, Hadassah severed its bonds with the Zionist Organization of America and received separate representation in the World Zionist Organization, an act that allowed it to chart its own course. In 1937, as noted, it ran an independent slate of eighteen delegates to the World Zionist Congress. Although Hadassah had earlier not taken a stand in favor of a partition of Palestine, it supported the Biltmore Platform of 1942, which called for an independent Jewish state. Hadassah's behavior, although defined by its "practical humanitarianism," clearly had political muscle. Its leaders deliberated whom and what to support, when, and how. Indeed, its focus on hospitals and medical clinics, refugee orphans, and other kinds of direct service was hardly disentangled from the realm of politics. As is even more apparent today, the history (as well as current state) of health care, child services, and refugee policy have been thoroughly informed by political considerations.

In *Community and Polity*, Elazar broadly concludes that Jewish women join communal organizations "because a particular local chapter is composed of their friends or of those whose friendship they aspire to gain."³² Elazar, moreover, distinguishes

“Jewish organizations” from “Jewish women’s” organizations. The men’s activities, which inform the bulk of his work, constitute the essence of Jewish communal infrastructure. Women’s activities dangle on the margins as ancillary (or “auxiliary” to use the commonly tacked-on adjective), essentially outside of the political construct. As such, they are analyzed separately and unequally. This bifurcation is particularly significant for American Jewish history, wherein the American Jewish constellation of voluntary associations has been understood generally, and by scholars like Elazar in particular, as the uniquely American form of Jewish community life.³³

This analysis of Jewish communal politics amounts to a conceptual double standard. Men and women are assumed to have joined, worked, and led Jewish organizations in different ways and for different reasons. Women, the traditional analysis goes, organized themselves since they had to do something in their leisure hours that did not jar with culturally appropriate female altruistic functions. Men, however, “naturally” wanted to shape the institutions of the community, or some part of them. In a word, they sought power.

Such a dichotomization of the American Jewish community—men doing politics, women volunteering to do good—has little analytic substance behind it. There is no reason to assume that Jewish men who showed up at the branch and board meetings of their various organizations, did not, like their wives and sisters, do so for social purposes. Doubtless they too mingled with friends and derived personal satisfaction from their Jewish communal work. They too fitted their activities into their schedules without the benefit of a paycheck.³⁴ However, men and their activities have been presented shorn of the feminine term “volunteer,” and no one has felt compelled to explain just why they sat on synagogue, charitable society, and Jewish school boards.

Falling outside the recognized boundaries of Jewish politics, Jewish women’s organizational work was often the subject of unflattering controversy. Commentators at the time and later historians interpreted women’s “social” work—organizing dinners, luncheons, bazaars, and other social activities—as trivial, demeaning to Jewish institutions, or even harmful. One Tennessee rabbi in the 1890s, for example, described the National Council of Jewish Women (NCJW) as “a gigantic Kaffe Klatsch,”³⁵ while H. Joseph Hyman, writing in the *American Jewish Record* in 1914, complained that the “destinies of the poor are too precious to be placed in the hands of persons whose only qualifications are their *willingness to act* as social workers.”³⁶ Stephen Wise, then a rabbi in Portland, Oregon, went further. “What manner of children,” he declared, “are to be reared by a generation of bridge experts, of women half-crazed with the pleasure of card tables to whom no prize of life is more precious [than] the temptations of bridge whist?”³⁷

Interestingly, while there may well have been some women (and men) in Wise’s Portland congregation who frittered away their time in card-playing, other Jewish women in the city found quite political ways to fill their time. In March 1907, for example, members of the Portland section of the National Council of Jewish Women unanimously passed a resolution protesting the practice common among the local newspapers (particularly the *Oregonian*) of affixing the term “Jew” to any crime suspect who happened to be Jewish. As the resolution noted, the practice was “uncalled for . . . unless newspapers all adopt the same system against all others and designate them as Presbyterian, Episcopalian, Catholic, Unitarian or otherwise as the case may

be.” Going beyond a mere declaration, NCJW representatives also met with the publishers of several Oregon newspapers and successfully extracted a promise that the offensive labeling would cease.³⁸

Since its establishment in the 1890s, the NCJW had been a force to be reckoned with on the American Jewish communal scene. The organization operated in a Janus-faced manner. Part of its mission was internal, as it organized Jewish women in local communities for self-education, religious self-expression, and service to the Jewish community, in particular, those areas it defined as especially relevant to the social needs of women and children. At the same time, the NCJW operated in the broader sphere of intercommunal public relations. Interacting with nonsectarian women’s groups, public welfare agencies and private charitable bodies, courts, legislatures, and a range of other non-Jewish associations, it represented the Jewish community and spoke in the name of the Jewish people on matters involving women, children, poverty, immigration, social hygiene, crime, family, and education.

For instance, at the turn of the twentieth century, NCJW leaders such as Sadie American and Hannah Solomon became concerned about reports of the widespread involvement of young Jewish immigrant women with prostitution. They joined forces with Jewish feminists in England who were also seeking to eradicate “white slavery,” or at least any Jewish association with it. Viewing prostitution not only as harmful to the internal stability and health of Jewish communities but also as a danger to the Jews’ image in the American popular consciousness, the NCJW launched a series of initiatives. It lobbied Congress. It stationed agents both at the immigrant receiving stations on Ellis Island and in Philadelphia to offer protection to unaccompanied Jewish women. In 1908 alone, these agents met and assisted 10,000 women, accompanying them to family or friends already in the United States, or else taking them to “council houses,” temporary shelters established by the organization.³⁹

NCJW saw this issue as having national, and indeed international, ramifications for the fortunes of the Jewish people. And so it created a Department of Immigrant Aid, which hired agents stationed in 300 American cities. The NCJW also worked closely with the nonsectarian Travellers’ Aid Society, as well as with court officers around the country.

By all standards this constitutes political action. Moreover, the NCJW was also seen by men as competition. Male professionals in several key Jewish agencies deeply resented its activities and successes. The Hebrew Immigrant Aid Society, for instance, tried to convince the Baron de Hirsch Fund, which funded both bodies, to replace the “volunteer” women with professional men. The men lost, the women won, and the NCJW scored a dramatic political victory based on its successful manipulation of the Jewish political system.⁴⁰

In many cases, Jewish women’s organizational activities engendered controversy, particularly when women admitted to the political nature of their behavior or when they asserted their right to organize themselves as they saw fit. In 1925, for example, Sophie Udin challenged the men who made up the leadership of the Poalei Zion Labor Zionist movement, to which she had been deeply committed since the age of 14. Together with several other women, she sought to create a women’s labor Zionist organization, “to be part of the party, an organic part, but independent.”⁴¹ They were aided by a number of female leaders from the Yishuv, notably Manya Shohat and

Rachel Yanait, who had several times turned to American Jewish women to undertake specific projects in Palestine.

Realizing that an independent women's organization would face stiff opposition, Udin, together with Yanait, began their efforts a year before the 15th annual Poalei Zion convention. Udin strategically placed a letter in *Der Tog*, a New York-based Yiddish newspaper, planting the idea of such an organization in the consciousness of the newspaper's readers. The letter played on female imagery, no doubt understood by most to be nonthreatening to male prerogatives. Women would take responsibility, the letter noted, for a girls' school and an adjacent tree nursery that needed a well. The water from the well would nurture the green saplings, which would be a special gift from the Jewish women of America to the Jews in Palestine.

Although couched in the language of nurturance, Udin's call for a separate women's group was staunchly opposed by the leadership of Poalei Zion. The notion of gender equality—or at least the illusion of it—informed the party's ideological framework. Poalei Zion leaders believed that their party had already emancipated women, who therefore did not need a separate women's entity. If women themselves wanted to be leaders, they argued, nothing stood in their way within the framework of the party as it was then constituted.

The women, however, did not agree either that they had been emancipated or that they could ever hope to achieve authority within the predominantly male organization. When Udin spoke at the Poalei Zion convention in 1925, she knew full well that she and her cohort would not get what they wanted. Accordingly, after addressing the body, the women seceded and formed themselves into the Pioneer Women, which proceeded to put together a program that conjoined Zionism, socialism, and the education of Jewish women in America. Directed primarily to women who had been born in Eastern Europe or (increasingly) to the daughters of such women, its goals included striving "through systematic cultural and propaganda work to educate the American Jewish women to undertake a more conscious role as coworkers in the establishment of a better and more just society in America and throughout the world."⁴²

During that same decade—which also saw the passage of the women's suffrage amendment to the Constitution—a very different group of Jewish women, operating out of a different set of ideological assumptions, behaved in a manner that was quite similar to Udin and her socialist sisters. Since before the First World War, Orthodox Zionist women had been cooperating with their men through the Mizrachi movement. For about a decade, these women had seemed quite content to play ancillary roles in support of the "real work" being done by the men. Visiting rabbis who traveled across the United States on behalf of the movement, for instance, would come to a city and organize a group of women to facilitate meetings and other local gatherings. These women, in turn, would collect local funds and dutifully turn them over to the speaker, who would then go on to the next city to organize another ad hoc group of women.

Among these women was Bessie Gotsfeld, who had worked on a volunteer basis for a number of Jewish women's undertakings in both Seattle and New York. In 1924, Gotsfeld put together a loosely organized group in Brooklyn that was named *Achios Mizrachi*, the sisters of Mizrachi. Very quickly, she came to realize that this informal group did not fit her vision of what Orthodox women could do for Jewish life in

Palestine. In order to put their impress more effectively both on the life of Jewish Palestine and on that of Jewish communities in America, the women needed autonomy.

Facing opposition from the men of Mizrahi—who, like their Poalei Zion brethren, believed that women did not need a separate organization—Gotsfeld took advantage of her attendance at the 1925 Mizrahi convention in Cleveland to meet quietly with women from around the country. She encouraged them to organize independently into local clubs, still tied to the men's organization. Over the course of the next decade, some 50 clubs sprang up. By 1932, Gotsfeld felt justified in launching a nationally circulated newsletter, *American Mizrahi Woman*. Orthodox Zionist women had also created enough organizational space for themselves to conceive of a project of their own, the creation of Beth Zeiroth Mizrahi in Jerusalem, the Yishuv's first vocational school for girls (established in 1933). With 50 chapters, a publication, and a culturally acceptable project, the time seemed propitious for Gotsfeld and the women of Mizrahi to declare their independence. In 1934, they created the Mizrahi Women's Organization of America, constituted as a separate, independent body, with its own constitution, budget, leaders, and projects.⁴³

Even in an era of Jewish feminist scholarship, Jewish women's organizational activities continue to be understood in social rather than political terms. In part, this may be a result of the fact that Jewish women's historical studies emerged primarily from the sphere of social history—and, more specifically, from the “new social history,” which sought to locate experience in lived life and to understand the everyday behavior of the poor as a form of resistance to the hegemony of those who held formal power. In the hands of scholars such as E. P. Thompson and Herbert Guttman, the actions of the powerless came to be understood in terms that were political only in the broadest sense of the word.⁴⁴ Social historians thus steered clear of the formal mechanisms of authority. They also preferred labor history to the history of political institutions, and the historians of American Jewish women concurred. Although more Jewish women have belonged to Hadassah and to the National Council of Jewish Women than ever belonged to a labor union, a rich scholarship has been produced on the unions and precious little on Jewish women's organizations.⁴⁵

Feminist scholars, moreover, have generally been interested in demonstrating how little power Jewish women had, rather than examining the skillful ways in which they manipulated whatever power they did have and how successfully they increased it.⁴⁶ Likewise, working within the framework of American women's historiography as it developed during the 1970s and beyond—with its emphasis on the emergence, in the mid-nineteenth century, of a distinctive women's culture held together by the “bonds of womanhood”⁴⁷—scholars who have dealt with the organizational activities of American Jewish women have stressed the importance of such activities to women's lives. This inward focus decouples women's public communal involvements from their inherently political moorings.

Current studies of affluent Jewish women's organizational activities examine the complex and clever ways in which these women historically claimed to have been doing service-oriented, rather than political, work. Like other women of their class, Jewish women rhetorically eschewed politics while at the same time engaging in it.⁴⁸

In an article on Atlanta's Jewish club women, for example, Beth Wenger demonstrated how Jewish women engaged in new, public activities, but "camouflaged the change in gender roles by clinging to the symbol of the Jewish woman as self-sacrificing enabler."⁴⁹ The placement and content of Wenger's article is itself illustrative. Appearing in March 1987 in *American Jewish History*, the premier journal in the field, it focused on and used the title "Jewish Women of the Club." Like the Atlanta Jewish women themselves, it skirted the issue of political power even as it addressed the inner meaning of club activity. In the same issue, Mark K. Bauman published a portrait of an obscure Atlanta Jewish man, "Victor H. Kreigshaber: Community Builder." The different choices in language resound with the different conceptions of power and authority.⁵⁰

The social history paradigm has worked well both for American women's history and for American Jewish women. But it has come at a cost. The paradigm deemphasizes the highly political nature of what really went on within women's organizations, between the various Jewish women's organizations, and within the larger Jewish communal structure. It is true that women in Hadassah, the NCJW, and temple sisterhoods in Reform, Conservative, and Orthodox congregations claimed, as women, to be above and outside of politics. But their actions told a different story. In many instances, American Jewish women refused to give up power and public space when it was demanded of them. They created organizations and institutions and spoke for their own causes, all the while realizing that they and their male counterparts did not face each other as equal players.

The history of every American Jewish community points to the fact that women have not enjoyed power equal to that of men. But equality of power is not a prerequisite for inclusion in the realm of politics. It may rather show how much those who have power do not like to give it up. At the same time, this very inequality between Jewish women and men in the realm of Jewish politics may explain why scholars continue to shy away from looking at Jewish women as political actors.

The avoidance of the subject manifests itself throughout the scholarship. No one has written a history of Hadassah, the largest Jewish organization in the world, and the largest women's organization in the United States. To date, the only full-length scholarly (as opposed to in-house) history of a Jewish women's organization is Faith Rogow's study of the National Council of Jewish Women, an organization that could be used to exemplify Mendelsohn's definition of Jewish politics. Rogow shows how members of the NCJW took stands on every major political issue of the day: social welfare, immigration policy, civil rights, nuclear disarmament, the Holocaust, anti-semitism, Israel, McCarthyism. She demonstrates how they resisted criticism from rabbis, professionals, and Jewish "clubmen" who challenged their right to speak for the Jews and to create communal institutions. Yet Rogow stops short of conceptualizing the history of NCJW in political terms. Indeed, the very title of her book, *Gone to Another Meeting*, negates the possibility of a political history. Rogow instead emphasizes the way in which women got a "sense of self-worth," and "lifelong friendships" out of their work with the NCJW.⁵¹

A definition of politics as a manifest set of structured relationships, embedded in human activities and based on struggles for power and authority, fits the behavior of American Jewish women. And any definition of *Jewish* politics that has at its core the

struggle among Jewish groups for the right to define the nature of Jewish life also applies to the particular ways in which American Jewish women, through their informal and formal organizations, played a part in that process. Framing their words around culturally acceptable tropes, these women defined their priorities, influenced others, exerted authority, and shaped communal agendas. If this did not constitute politics, what does?

Notes

1. Paula E. Hyman and Deborah Dash Moore (eds.), *Jewish Women in America: An Historical Encyclopedia*, 2 vols. (New York: 1997).
2. "Politics" and "political activity" here refer to the inner workings of Jewish communities. Likewise, *Jewish Women in America* did not include any entry on the role of Jewish women in the American political system as officeholders, voters, lobbyists, and other participants in the workings of American government. It did, however, contain biographical entries on politically active Jewish women, in both the Jewish and general American arenas.
3. See Susan Chambre, "Philanthropy," *Jewish Women in America*, vol. 2, 1049–1054.
4. V. O. Key, *Politics, Parties, and Pressure Groups*, 5th ed. (New York: 1964), 2–3.
5. Robert A. Dahl, *Modern Political Analysis* (Englewood Cliffs: 1963), 6.
6. Karl Deutsch, "Intellectual Development," in *International Handbook of Political Science*, ed. William G. Andrews (Westport, Conn.: 1982), 9.
7. Iain McLean (ed.), *Concise Oxford Dictionary of Politics* (New York: 1996), 388–389, emphasis added.
8. See Steven Seidman (ed.), *Jurgen Habermass on Society and Politics: A Reader* (Boston: 1989).
9. Joan Wallach Scott, *Gender and the Politics of History* (New York: 1988), 6.
10. See David Biale, *Power and Powerlessness in Jewish History* (New York: 1986).
11. Salo Baron's *The Jewish Community, Its History and Structure to the American Revolution* (Philadelphia: 1942) is to date the largest compendium examining the multiple and complex ways in which Jewish communities structured themselves, used power, dispensed resources, enforced authority, and coexisted with the states in which they lived.
12. On differences in Jewish communal structures as shaped by the degree of state involvement in religious matters, see Hasia R. Diner, *A Time for Gathering: The Second Migration, 1820–1880* (Baltimore: 1992).
13. *Ibid.*, 86–113.
14. Starting in the 1930s, Jewish communities formed Jewish community councils, which were usually organized as bicameral structures that were made up of the community's various organizations. See Hasia R. Diner, "Jewish Self-Governance, American Style," *American Jewish Historical Society* 81, no. 3–4 (Spring–Summer 1994), 277–295.
15. For a specific study on how large national Jewish organizations acted as political entities, see Stuart Svonkin, *Jews Against Prejudice: American Jews and the Fight for Civil Liberties* (New York: 1997). A review of this book appears in this volume on p. 350. Svonkin's book is particularly interesting in the context of this essay. He studied the way in which the "big" three Jewish organizations in America: the American Jewish Congress, the American Jewish Committee, and the Anti-Defamation League, negotiated the terrain of American politics from the 1940s through the 1960s. Although Hadassah and the National Council of Jewish Women, which had many more members than the above-mentioned organizations, dealt with the same issues and disseminated information on a national level, the "big three" have never become the "big five"—neither in the world of Jewish politics nor in that of Jewish historiography.
16. Ezra Mendelsohn, *On Modern Jewish Politics* (New York: 1993), viii.
17. See, for example, Daniel J. Elazar, *Kinship and Consent: The Jewish Political Tradition*

and *Its Contemporary Uses*, 2nd ed. (New Brunswick: 1997); Will Maslow, *The Structure and Function of the American Jewish Community* (New York: 1974); Seymour Martin Lipset, "The American Jewish Community in a Comparative Context," in *The Ghetto and Beyond: Essays on Jewish Life in America*, ed. Peter I. Rose (New York: 1969), 21–32.

18. Hyman L. Meites (ed.), *History of the Jews of Chicago* (Chicago: 1924), 637–639.

19. See Susan Ebert, "Community and Philanthropy," in *The Jews of Boston: Essays on the Occasion of the Centenary (1895–1995) of the Combined Jewish Philanthropies of Greater Boston*, ed. Jonathan D. Sarna and Ellen Smith (Boston: 1995), 224–225.

20. Mendelsohn, *On Modern Jewish Politics*, viii.

21. Rheta Childe Dorr, *What Eight Million Women Want* (Boston: 1910), 327.

22. Eli Ginzberg, *Agenda for American Jews* (New York: 1950), 13.

23. Quoted in Meites, *History of the Jews of Chicago*, 573–574.

24. *Ibid.*

25. Diner, "Jewish Self-Governance."

26. Meites, *History of the Jews of Chicago*, 573–574.

27. Elazar, *Community and Polity: The Organizational Dynamics of American Jewry* (Philadelphia: 1976), 199–200.

28. Deborah Dash Moore, "Hadassah," in *Jewish Women in America: An Historical Encyclopedia*, vol. 1, 571–583; see also Allon Gal, "Hadassah and the American Jewish Political Tradition," in *An Inventory of Promises: Essays on American Jewish History in Honor of Moses Rischin*, ed. Jeffrey S. Gurock and Marc Lee Raphael (Brooklyn: 1995), 89–114.

29. Moore, "Hadassah," 578.

30. Quoted in Mary McCune, "Social Workers in the *Muskeljudentum*: 'Hadassah,' 'Manly Men' and the Significance of Gender in the American Zionist Movement, 1912–1928," *American Jewish History* 86, no. 2 (June 1998), 135–165.

31. See Melvin I. Urofsky, *American Zionism: From Herzl to the Holocaust* (Garden City: 1975), 142–143.

32. Elazar, *Community and Polity*, 12.

33. See, for example, Elazar's discussion of the Organization for Rehabilitation and Training (ORT). Elazar refers to ORT as one of several organizations that "have played significant roles in the postwar period" (*ibid.*, 223). Yet when he discusses Women's ORT, he groups it with those Jewish groups that "have definite social colorations despite their very specifically defined public missions" (*ibid.*, 202). The implication is that men show up at their meetings for serious business only; the women may do good work but, presumably because they are women, also socialize with one another.

34. See Henry L. Feingold, *A Time for Searching: Entering the Mainstream, 1920–1945* (Baltimore: 1992), 45, who notes: "The 'professional board lady' who emerged in the twenties may not have had her worth validated by a paycheck, but the tasks she performed and the responsibilities she bore were far more broadening than housekeeping. Often such volunteers supervised sizable staffs and handled budgets as big as that of any middle-sized corporation." Feingold, it should be noted, essentially treats women's political activities as a reasonable way to fill the void once they were liberated from the drudgery of housework.

35. Quoted in Faith Rogow, *Gone to Another Meeting: The National Council of Jewish Women, 1893–1993* (Tuscaloosa: 1993), 97.

36. Quoted in Beth Wenger, "Jewish Women and Voluntarism: Beyond the Myth of Enablers," *American Jewish History* 79, no. 1 (Fall 1989), 29 (emphasis added).

37. Quoted in William Toll, *The Making of an Ethnic Middle Class: Portland Jewry Over Four Generations* (Albany: 1982) 42.

38. See Steven Lowenstein, *The Jews of Oregon: 1850–1950* (Portland: 1987), 169.

39. See Rogow, *Gone to Another Meeting*.

40. See Linda G. Kuzmack, *Woman's Cause: The Jewish Woman's Movement in England and the United States, 1881–1933* (Columbus: 1990), 71–73.

41. Quoted in Mark A. Raider, *The Emergence of American Zionism* (New York: 1998), 54–55.

42. *Ibid.*

43. See Michael Dobkowski, *Jewish American Voluntary Organizations* (New York: 1986), 69–71; Jenna Weissman Joselit, *New York's Jewish Jews: The Orthodox Community in the Interwar Years* (Bloomington: 1990), 114.

44. See E.P. Thompson, *The Making of the English Working Class* (New York: 1966); and Herbert Guttman's essays in *Power and Culture: Essays on the American Working Class*, ed. Ira Berlin (New York: 1987).

45. See, for example, Alice Kessler-Harris, "Labor Movement," *Jewish Women in America*, vol. 1 (pp. 771–781), which includes an extensive bibliography.

46. See, for example, Jenna Weissman Joselit, "The Special Sphere of the Middle-Class American Jewish Woman: The Synagogue Sisterhood, 1890–1940," in *The American Synagogue: A Sanctuary Transformed*, ed. Jack Wertheimer (New York: 1987), 206–227; Toll, *Making of an Ethnic Middle Class*, 42–76; Beth Wenger, "Jewish Women of the Club: The Changing Public Role of Atlanta's Jewish Women," *American Jewish History* 76, no. 3 (March 1987), 311–333.

47. See Nancy Cott, *The Bonds of Womanhood: "Women's Sphere" in New England, 1780–1853* (New Haven: 1977).

48. See, for example, Carroll Smith-Rosenberg, *Disorderly Conduct: Visions of Gender in Victorian America* (New York: 1985); Kathryn Kish Sklar, *Catherine Beecher: A Study in American Domesticity* (New York: 1973). Since the 1980s, the trend in American women's historiography has been to repoliticize the seemingly "good" work of women. Indeed, individuals such as Jane Addams, Florence Kelley, Grace and Edith Abbott, and others in that powerful generation of social reformers used power and influence consummately. Scholars such as Kathryn Kish Sklar in her recent biography of Florence Kelley have begun to situate their discussions in the context of the political discourse of the Progressive era. See Sklar, *Florence Kelley and the Nation's Work: The Rise of Women's Political Culture, 1830–1900* (New Haven: 1995).

49. Beth Wenger, "Jewish Women of the Club."

50. Mark K. Bauman, "Victor H. Kreigshaber: Community Builder," *American Jewish History* 79, no. 1 (Fall 1989), 94–110.

51. Faith Rogow, *Gone to Another Meeting*, 199–200. As a noteworthy point of contrast, Rogow's work might be pitted against the far more political and politically charged work by Evelyn Brooks Higginbotham, *Righteous Discontent: The Women's Movement in the Black Baptist Church* (Cambridge, Mass.: 1993). Effectively linking the personal and the political, Higginbotham has demonstrated that, for this particular group of women, no such divide actually existed. Black Baptist women used their "struggle for self-definition" both as an integral part of their quest to improve the ordinary lives of African American people and as a part of their activities aimed at ending racial discrimination and oppression. To date, no scholar has analyzed Jewish women in this manner.

The Jewish Response to the Third Reich: Gender at the Grassroots

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In the sometimes vitriolic debates about gender and the Holocaust, both sides recite the litany that the Holocaust was about the destruction of the Jewish *people*. Why it is necessary to repeat something so obvious has everything to do with the attackers' reproach: opponents of gender studies imply that gender analysis assigns co-responsibility for the catastrophe to Jewish men and Nazis, essentially pitting Jewish men against Jewish women. Women's historians, historians of gender, and feminists, in turn, insist that the Nazis were solely to blame, but that gender nonetheless mattered.

This attack on the "accusatory gaze" of gender studies is part of a conservative backlash against feminism. It lumps feminist historians with scholars who deny or relativize the Holocaust or with feminists interested solely in "consciousness raising"—or with both.¹ Without entering into the (de)merits of these allegations, it is also important to realize that there is a more general discomfort with a gender analysis of the Holocaust, which is seen as "privileging" women—that is, as raising women's suffering above that of men.

Looking at daily life, at the quotidian responses of German Jews in the Nazi era, can address these concerns. German Jewish responses to the Nazi onslaught show that women and men often perceived, and reacted to, the same events differently. The impact of gender could be muted, an ordinary backdrop to the way people grasped or responded to events. But gender could also be a matter of life and death. We know, for example, that women were more eager than men to flee Germany, yet, in the end, more men fled. What produced the crucial (and the more mundane) decisions? More portentous than Jewish reactions, however, was Nazi behavior. In the prewar years, the Nazis treated men and women differently. They threatened and bullied men while sparing women and, in so doing, sent an ultimately erroneous message to the Jewish community.

Especially if one is interested in grassroots developments, in the perceptions and actions of the Jewish victims as the noose tightened—irregularly and unpredictably—in the years before the November pogrom of 1938 (*Kristallnacht*) and in the swiftly deteriorating circumstances thereafter, gender is an indispensable factor of analysis. The experiences of German Jews varied in accordance with gender, age, class, and geography²—with urban or rural settings, Catholic or Protestant villages,

middle or working-class neighborhoods³—but even observers at the time noticed the salience of gender. Gender (although this is hardly the term they used) was understood to be exceptionally important during the 1930s and 1940s—that is, not just in retrospect by historians and feminists. Whether we turn to the staff of German Jewish organizations or to their leaders, or to Emmanuel Ringelblum, the chronicler of the Warsaw ghetto, we find that contemporaries were aware that men and women experienced the Nazi onslaught differently.

Gender is also unavoidable when we attempt to gather sources about the era. A focus on Jewish women's memoirs, letters, interviews, and diaries often illuminates the inner sancta of Jewish life far better than similar writings by men. Women focused on feelings, family, and friends. They acknowledged their distress, gave vent to anxieties. Men's documents focus more on public events, on economic and political signals. Thus, to find out the ways Jews coped privately, their daily feelings and personal accommodations, women's sources are essential.⁴

From the outset, the Nazi government used legislation, administrative decrees, and propaganda to defame and ostracize Jews and to lower their social, economic, and legal standing. But Nazi propaganda put the emphasis on Jewish men—"the Jew" or *der Jude*—usually strangely distorted males with huge noses and stomachs. These "rulers of the world" were occasionally accompanied by an obese woman bedecked in jewelry and her grotesque children, but generally it was the Jewish male whom the Nazis caricatured and vilified. Hence, Jewish men and "Jews" were usually conflated. For example, at a dinner party in late 1933, the vice mayor of Berlin, Oskar Maretzky, assured the Jewish journalist Bella Fromm that "I am only against Jews, not against Jewish women. Especially not against charming Jewesses."⁵

Germans often believed that Jews resembled the antisemitic caricatures in Nazi newspapers. Strangers on trams, in stores, and even on the street tested their knowledge of who "smelled" or "looked" Jewish and pronounced their suspicions loudly. Of course, non-Jews frequently mistook Jewish people for "Aryans" and vice versa. Still, Jewish men, more exposed in public, may have been the targets of such mortifying encounters more frequently than women. Women's identities were less easily ascertained by their profession, since fewer Jewish women than men worked outside the home. Moreover, Jewish men, heavily concentrated in commerce and the professions, could fall prey to economic boycotts or worse, whereas the women could further escape detection by avoiding unfriendly storekeepers who knew them to be Jewish. Most importantly, Nazi gender conventions, their hesitancy to brutalize Jewish women—although this reluctance did not extend to female political opponents—both allowed and forced Jewish women to take on roles formerly left to Jewish men.

Gender Role Reversals in the Face of the Nazi Attack

At a time when Nazi ideology shrilly reaffirmed male privilege, relegating "Aryan" women to "*Kinder, Küche, Kirche*" ("children, kitchen, church"), Jewish women took on new roles as breadwinners, family protectors, and defenders of businesses or professional practices. Gender roles in Jewish families shifted because of devastating economic, social, and emotional realities—forcing families to embrace strategies that

they would never have entertained in ordinary times. The Nazis essentially destroyed the patriarchal structure of the Jewish family, leaving a void to be filled by women.

Increasingly, women found themselves representing or defending their men. Women often faced routine danger and dramatic situations that required both bravery and luck. Many tales have been recorded of women who saved family members from the arbitrary demands of the state or from the Gestapo. In one small town, a Jewish family decided to send two of its women to the city hall in order to request officials not to use part of their house as a meeting place for the Nazi party. They were successful.⁶ Twenty-year-old Ruth Abraham urged her parents to move to Berlin to escape the hostility in their small town. The Nazis permitted this move only if the father would appear at Gestapo headquarters weekly. Ruth always accompanied her father to these perilous interrogations. When her uncle was arrested in Düsseldorf, she hurried from jail to jail until she found out where he was and then requested his release from a sympathetic judge.⁷ Other women interceded for male family members with German emigration or finance officials.

Women also took responsibility for the entire family's safety. Liselotte Mueller traveled to Palestine to assess the situation. Her husband, older and more educated than she, who previously had been the decision-maker, told her: "If you decide you would like to live in Palestine, I will like it too."⁸ Ann Lewis' mother acquired the residence and work permits that saved her family members' lives. She was the one fluent in English and, as a psychoanalyst, she was welcomed in England while her husband, a medical doctor, was not. Lewis wrote of her mother: "It was thanks to her . . . determination that we were able to leave Germany as soon as we did, and it was always to be a great source of pride to her that it was she who obtained the permit."⁹

As unemployment and business failures began to plague the Jewish community, many Jewish women who had never worked outside the home before suddenly needed employment. While some sought jobs with strangers, others began to work for their husbands who could no longer afford to pay employees. The hope was that "work for married women [was] only . . . an expedient in an emergency."¹⁰ By defining women's new position in terms of a temporary crisis, Jews, both male and female, could dream of better times and ignore the unsettling issue of changing gender roles in the midst of turmoil. Contrary to their hopes, by 1938, there were "relatively few families in which the wife [did] not work in some way to earn a living."¹¹

Many women either trained for paid work for the first time or else tried to retrain for new jobs. Some prepared for work in Germany, many for jobs they hoped to fill abroad. The Jewish communities in various towns and cities offered courses in which women eagerly enrolled. In Hamburg, such courses included cooking and baking, sewing and tailoring, hat-making, glove-making, artificial flower-arranging, and smocking. Communities also offered typing, shorthand, bookkeeping, photography, and language classes.¹² Zionist organizations played a large role through their *hakhsharah* centers, which taught practical skills needed in Palestine. About 23,000 young people—about one-third female—prepared for such jobs as raising chickens, or becoming locksmiths, tailors, or baby nurses.¹³ According to Jewish observers, women appeared to be "more accommodating and adaptable" and had "fewer inhibi-

tions” than men; were willing to enter retraining programs at older ages; and were more amenable to changing their lives to fit the times. Leaders of the Berlin community also noted that retraining for women was less costly and took less time.¹⁴

The reversal of roles may have increased stress in some cases, but in general both women and men appreciated the importance of the women’s initiatives. As Edith Bick summed up the situation, “in the Hitler times . . . I had to take over, which I never did before. Never.” Her husband “didn’t like it.” But, “he not only accepted it. He was thankful.”¹⁵ As conditions worsened, role reversals became ever more common, some women putting up a strong front when their men were losing hope. One woman struggled to retain her self-control as her husband sank into a deep depression:

He stopped eating, as he said no one had the right to eat when he did not work and became . . . despondent. . . . He feared we would all starve . . . and all his self-assurance was gone. . . . These were terrible days for me, added to all the other troubles, and forever trying to keep up my chin for the children’s sake.¹⁶

The Desire to Emigrate

As emigration became more and more crucial, gender significantly determined the desire and the decision to escape. Women usually saw the danger signals first and urged their husbands to flee Germany. Among rural Jews, “the role of women in the decision to emigrate was decisive. . . . The women were the prescient ones . . . the ones ready to make the decision, the ones who urged their husbands to emigrate.”¹⁷ Urban Jewish women reacted similarly. Marta Appel described a discussion among friends in Dortmund about a doctor who had just fled in the spring of 1935. The men in the room, including her husband, a rabbi, condemned him:

The women . . . found that it took more courage to go than to stay. . . . “Why should we stay here and wait for our eventual ruin?” [they said. Later my husband asked me,] “Could you really leave all this behind you to enter nothingness?” . . . “I could,” I said, without a moment’s hesitation.¹⁸

In part, women were more inclined to emigrate because they were not as integrated into the wider world. For example, they rarely saw themselves as indispensable to the Jewish public. One man declared in his memoirs that he could not leave Germany because he thought of himself as a “good democrat” whose emigration would “leave others in the lurch” and would be a “betrayal of the entire Jewish community.”¹⁹

Women were also less involved than men in the economy, even though some had been in the job market for their entire adult lives. This had several consequences. First, Jewish men had a great deal more to lose. To emigrate before they had lost their positions or before their businesses or professional practices had collapsed would have required men to tear themselves away from their life work, their clients, and their colleagues.²⁰ In addition, men were the primary breadwinners and, as such, feared the poverty associated with emigration. They wondered how they would support their families in a new land for which they possessed neither the appropriate language nor skills. In short, the family could be moved more easily than a business or profession.

In light of men's close identification with their occupations, they often felt trapped into staying. Women, for whom identity was more family-oriented, struggled to preserve what was central to them by fleeing with those they loved.

Women's subordinate status in the economy probably eased their decision to flee since they were familiar with the kinds of work, generally domestic, that they would have to perform in places of refuge. Lore Segal described how her mother, formerly a housewife and pianist, cheerfully and successfully took on the role of maid in England, whereas her father, formerly a chief accountant in a bank, experienced his loss of status as a butler and gardener with great bitterness.²¹ Even when both sexes fulfilled their refugee roles well, women seemed less status-conscious than men.²² Perhaps women did not experience the descent as intensely as men since their status had always been derived in large part from that of their fathers or husbands.

Finally, women's lesser involvement in the economy allowed them more time for greater contact with a variety of non-Jews, from neighbors to schoolteachers.²³ Jewish men very often worked with other Jews in traditional Jewish occupations and may have been more isolated than women from non-Jewish peers. This spared men direct interactions with hostile peers, but also prevented their becoming aware of deteriorating circumstances. Many Jewish men were isolated further as the boycotts of Jewish concerns intensified, and as the clientele of the surviving Jewish businesses turned predominantly Jewish²⁴—those few non-Jews who did remain loyal would have provided evidence of "good" Germans, hence indicating a reason to remain in Germany. In contrast, Jewish women (even those who worked in the same sector) tended to pick up more subtle warning signals from their neighborhoods and children.

Men and women led relatively distinct lives and often interpreted daily events differently. Although less involved than men in the work world, women were more integrated into their immediate community. Raised to be sensitive to interpersonal behavior and social situations, women's antennae were not only more finely tuned than their husbands but were also directed toward more unconventional—what men might have considered more trivial—sources of information. For example, mothers reported on the increasing isolation of their children at and after school; wives noted when neighbors stopped greeting them; and one American Jewish woman who resided in Hamburg during the 1930s listened carefully to her household help. She wrote: "Any woman knows . . . her best source of information are the servants."²⁵ Women registered the increasing hostility of their immediate surroundings without being distracted by a loyal employee, a sympathetic patient, or a kind customer. Women took relatively mundane warning signals more seriously than men.

Men, in contrast, felt more at home with culture and politics. Generally more educated than their wives, they cherished what they regarded as German culture—the culture of the German Enlightenment. This love for their German liberal, intellectual heritage gave men something to hold onto even as it "blunted their sense of impending danger."²⁶ When Else Gerstel fought with her husband, a former judge, about emigrating, he insisted that "the German people, the German judges, would not stand for much more of this madness."²⁷

A widespread assumption that women lacked political acumen—stemming from their primary role in the domestic sphere—gave women's warnings less credibility.

One woman's prophecies of doom met with her husband's amusement: "He laughed at me and argued that such an insane dictatorship could not last long. . . ." ²⁸ Even after their seven-year-old son was beaten up at school, he was still optimistic. Many men also pulled rank on their wives, insisting that they were more attuned to political realities. "You're a child," said one husband, "You mustn't take everything so seriously. Hitler used the Jews . . . as propaganda to gain power—now . . . you'll hear nothing more about the Jews." ²⁹

One could argue that men were more "German" than women not only concerning their education but also with regard to their sense of patriotism. Even in a situation gone awry, there were war veterans who refused to take their wives' warnings seriously. These men had received reprieves because of President Hindenburg's intervention after the exclusionary "April Laws" of 1933 (although the reprieves proved to be temporary). Typically, their wives could not convince them that they, too, were in danger. ³⁰

Men, in short, attempted to see the "broader" picture and claimed to maintain an "objective" stance as they scrutinized and analyzed the confusing decrees and the often contradictory public utterances of the Nazis. They mediated their experiences through newspapers and broadcasts. Politics remained more abstract to them, whereas women's "narrower" picture—the minutiae (and significance) of everyday contacts—brought politics closer to home. When one woman "gave vent to [her] anger and hatred" in response to the way in which her husband's employees were treating him, "he always protected them: 'They are not bad, only riled up.'" She reacted to the immediate kinds of behavior that she witnessed, whereas "he had a feeling of objectivity and said repeatedly: 'We have to guard against generalities.'" ³¹ Summing up, Peter Wyden recalled the debates within his own and other Jewish families in Berlin:

It was not a bit unusual in these go-or-no-go family dilemmas for the women to display more energy and enterprise than the men. . . . Almost no women had a business, a law office, or a medical practice to lose. They were less status-conscious, less money-oriented than the men. They seemed to be less rigid, less cautious, more confident of their ability to flourish on new turf. ³²

Even given the gender differences in picking up warning signals and desiring to leave, it is crucial to recognize that the danger signals mounted in stages and that women, too, could be confused by Nazi policies and events. Alice Nauen and her friends "saw it was getting worse. But until 1939 nobody in our circles believed it would lead to an end" for German Jewry. What in retrospect came to be seen as clear signs of impending catastrophe—boycotts, antisemitic legislation, increasing social ostracism—were often profoundly mixed at the time. ³³ Random kindnesses, the most obvious "mixed signals," gave some Jews cause for hope. One woman wrote that every Jewish person "knew a decent German" and recalled that many Jews thought "the radical Nazi laws would never be carried out because they did not match the moderate character of the German people." ³⁴ Moreover, much like other Germans, Jews did not understand that Hitler was an entirely new type of leader. As Fritz Stern has noted, most Germans "saw in him . . . a caricature of something old and known; they adjusted him to their own limited imagination." ³⁵ This was certainly the case for many German Jews. At worst, they expected a return to some form of earlier, pre-

emancipation status. They did not (and could not) predict what Christopher Isherwood described as the “terror in the air.”³⁶

That women and men often *assessed* danger differently reflected their distinctive contacts and frames of reference. Still, the actual *decisions* seem to have been made by husbands—or, later, by circumstances. Despite important role reversals, both men and women generally held fast to traditional gender roles when it came to decision-making unless they were overwhelmed by events.

The common prejudice that women were “hysterical” in the face of danger worked to everyone’s disadvantage. Charlotte Stein-Pick begged her father to flee in March 1933. Her husband brought her father to the train station only moments before the SS arrived to arrest the older man. Not knowing about the SS visit, her husband said upon returning home: “Actually, it was entirely unnecessary for your parents to have left, but I supported you because you were worrying yourself so much.”³⁷ Another husband believed his wife to be completely overwrought when she suggested—in 1932—that he deposit money in a Swiss bank. While cabaret artists were already joking about people taking trips to visit their money in Switzerland, her husband refused.³⁸

Men’s role and status as the traditional breadwinners made them hesitant to emigrate and gave them the authority to say “no.” Else Gerstel fought “desperately” with her husband of 23 years to emigrate. A former judge, he refused to leave, insisting that “there is as much demand for Roman law over there as the Eskimos have for freezers.” She wrote, “I was in constant fury,” describing their dispute as a great strain on their marriage.³⁹

Despite myriad obstacles set by the Nazis and the countries of refuge, Jewish emigration was far from negligible, although it took an uneven course. By late 1938, about 170,000 Jews out of the 525,000 recorded in the 1933 population figures had emigrated.⁴⁰

The November pogrom decisively tipped the balance toward emigration. For those recently incarcerated in concentration camps, the only way out was proof of readiness to emigrate; for those not in camps, the violence influenced their decisions. From late in 1938, essentially every Jew was trying to leave. Some wives broke all family conventions by taking over the decision-making since they realized unequivocally that their husbands’ reluctance to flee would result in even worse horrors. Although Else Gerstel’s husband had been arrested once, he was still not imprisoned and “had no intention of leaving Germany, but I sent a telegram to my brother Hans in New York: . . . ‘Please send affidavit.’”⁴¹

Women displayed extraordinary nerve and tenacity in saving many men and in facilitating a mass exodus in 1939. For instance, women whose men had been incarcerated in concentration camps were told that they would be freed only if they had emigration papers. Charlotte Stein-Pick wrote of the November pogrom:

I tried . . . day in and day out, to find a connection that could lead to my husband’s release. I ran to Christian acquaintances, friends, or colleagues, but . . . people shrugged their shoulders, shook their heads and said “no.” And everyone was glad when I left. I was treated like a leper, even by people who were well-disposed towards us.

Undaunted, Stein-Pick entered Nazi headquarters in Munich, the notorious “Brown House,” to request her husband’s freedom based on his status as a war veteran. There

she begged repeatedly for his release, promising to return monthly to clear up some bookkeeping questions the Nazis had about his student fraternity. She did this until they emigrated.⁴² One prominent lawyer, rescued by his wife, wrote that: "our wives . . . worked tirelessly to obtain our release. . . . Women . . . thought nothing of going to authorities we normally did not approach without a good deal of trepidation."⁴³ Some women saw not only to their husbands' release and the necessary papers but, once the men had returned—ravaged from their camp experiences—also sold their joint property. Accompanying her husband after his imprisonment, one wife explained that she had just sold their house and bought tickets to Shanghai for the family. Her husband recalled that anything was fine with him, as long as they could escape.⁴⁴ Expressions of thankfulness tinged, perhaps, with a bit of surprise at women's heroism can be found in many men's memoirs. They were indebted to women even after their ordeal, when many of them were too beaten in body and spirit to be of much use in the scramble to emigrate.

It is striking that both men and women later emphasize women's calm, dry-eyed, self-control in the midst of turmoil. For example, a Jewish community leader wrote that "the highest praise . . . goes to our wives who, without shedding one tear, inspired the hordes, some of whom had beaten their men bloody, to respect them. Unbroken, these women . . . did everything to have their men freed . . ."⁴⁵ Charlotte Stein-Pick recalled her husband's counsel on the day of the pogrom: "'Just no tears and no scene' . . . But even without this warning I would have controlled myself."⁴⁶ When the Nazis confiscated all of her valuable ritual objects and jewelry, a Hamburg woman wrote in a poem expressing her grief and her quiet defiance, "I will separate myself without tears."⁴⁷

Such stoic calm in the face of danger was not merely a proclamation of female stalwartness to counter the stereotype of female "frailty." Many women strove to maintain their self-control as a way of preserving the family's dignity and equilibrium in the face of persecution. In addition, Jewish bourgeois upbringing had always valued decorum, and so women maintained their dignity as part of their Jewishness in the face of general dishonor. Jewish women's heroism reproached "Aryan" savagery and suggested a new task for women. Traditionally, men had publicly guarded the honor of the family and community; suddenly, women found that they stood as the defenders of Jewish honor and pride. Men rarely describe their own self-control, probably because they took it for granted, while women, previously allowed and encouraged to be the more "emotional" sex, were particularly conscious of their own efforts at self-control and their husbands' fragility.

On their own, many women faced the dizzying procedure of obtaining proof of immediate plans to emigrate in order to free a relative from a concentration camp. They had to organize the papers, decide on the destination (if they had not already discussed this previously), sell property, and arrange the departure. In spite of their apparent calm, the inner stress for women was massive.

Immigration restrictions in foreign countries and Nazi bureaucratic and financial roadblocks stymied many Jews. During the worldwide depression of the 1930s, countries of potential refuge thwarted Jewish entry. In addition, countries with open doors needed farmers, not middle-class, middle-aged professionals and business people. Another major obstacle was the government's restrictions on the amount of currency

and property Jews could take with them. From the beginning, the Nazis levied huge taxes on Jews leaving the Reich. Before long they blocked their bank accounts, forbade them from sending money abroad, and forced them to turn in all valuable jewels and metals. By November 1938, most could only take ten marks with them. A major obstacle to emigration for most was not having relatives or friends abroad who could sponsor admission into a country of refuge.

Once they received permission to *enter* a foreign country, Jews still had to acquire the papers to *exit* Germany. "Getting out . . . is at least as difficult as getting into another country and you have absolutely no notion of the desperation here," wrote 66-year-old Gertrud Grossmann to her uncomprehending son abroad.⁴⁸ Getting the required papers took months of running a bureaucratic gauntlet, which many women faced alone, meeting officials who could arbitrarily add to the red tape at whim: "There was no rule and every official felt like a god."⁴⁹ Mally Dienemann, whose 63-year-old husband languished in Buchenwald, raced to the Gestapo to prove that they were ready to emigrate. Next, she rushed to the passport office to retrieve their passports:

After I had been sent from one office to another. . . I had to go to . . . the Emigration Office in Frankfurt, the Gestapo, the Police, the Finance Office, [send] a petition to Buchenwald, a petition to the Gestapo in Darmstadt, and still it took until Tuesday of the third week, before my husband returned. . . Next came running around for the many papers that one needed for emigration. And while the Gestapo was in a rush, the Finance Office had so much time and so many requests, and without certification from the Finance and Tax offices . . . one did not get a passport, and without a passport a tariff official could not inspect the baggage.⁵⁰

Finally arriving in Palestine in March 1939, Rabbi Dienemann died from his ordeal.

By 1939, new arbitrary laws slowed emigration even more. Herta Nathorff wrote in her diary that there was "always new fear and new crises . . . not only did we need to get new passports and assorted transit and regular visas, we also needed shipping permits, certificates of harmlessness (*Unbedenklichkeitsbescheinigungen*), and customs documents. . . ."⁵¹ The elderly were physically ill equipped to endure the strains of this paper chase. Gertrud Grossmann confided by letter: "I dread going to the consulate and possibly standing around there for hours, which is physically impossible for me." The situation deteriorated so much that by 1940 she wrote her son: "Your emigration [in 1938] was child's play compared to today's practically insurmountable difficulties."⁵²

Bribery often helped to speed the process. Women not only broke gender barriers, negotiating with officials for the first time, but also normal standards of legality. Many memoirs report that Nazi officials had to be bribed and that, despite their original shock at such requirements—and their lack of experience—women quickly handed them the necessary goods or money.⁵³ Many Germans exploited the situation financially; some exploited it sexually. One bureaucrat, eyeing a Jewish woman who had come to his office several times for emigration visas for her husband and family, told her: "We know each other very well by now, don't we. I can see, you are wearing a different blouse today. You really look very attractive in it." She could not respond to him, but she told her daughter: "It is written all over his face. . . . How appetizing she [looks]. How good she will taste."⁵⁴ Another woman believes her mother saved their lives by having sex with a bureaucrat in charge of their papers.⁵⁵

Who Actually Emigrated

A gender analysis of the desire to emigrate highlights women's unique expectations, priorities, and perceptions. They wanted to leave well before their men. After the November 1938 pogrom, they heroically struggled to free their men. It does not follow, however, that more women than men actually left. On the contrary, fewer women than men left Germany. Why?

Although life became increasingly difficult, there were still compelling reasons to stay. First, women could still find jobs as teachers in Jewish schools or as social workers, nurses, and administrators in Jewish social-service institutions, or as clerical workers for the Jewish community. Hedwig Burgheim, for example, found challenging and important work. In 1933, she was forced to resign as director of a teacher training institute in Giessen. Thereafter she directed the Leipzig Jewish community's School for Kindergarten Teachers and Domestic Services, which trained young people for vocations useful in lands of emigration. After the November pogrom, her own attempts at emigration having failed, she taught at the Jewish school and, by 1942, headed the old-age home in Leipzig. Along with its residents, she was deported in early 1943 and died in Auschwitz.⁵⁶

While the employment situation of Jewish women helped to keep them in Germany, that of men helped to get them out. Some men had business connections abroad, facilitating their immediate flight, and others emigrated alone in order to establish themselves and then send for their families. Among East European Jews who returned east between 1934 and 1937, for example, the majority were male, even though almost half of them were married. A handful of men, some with wives, received visas to leave Europe from groups hoping to save eminent intellectuals and artists. Women's organizations worried about too many women remaining behind and urged husbands to take wives with them.⁵⁷

Before the war, moreover, men faced immediate physical danger. Men who had been detained by the Nazis and then freed, as well as boys who had been beaten up by neighboring ruffians, fled Germany early.⁵⁸ After the November pogrom, in a strange twist of fortune, the men interned in concentration camps were released only upon showing proof of their ability to leave Germany immediately. Women strained every resource to provide the documentation to free these men and send them on their way while some of the women remained behind. Alice Nauen recalled how difficult these emigration decisions were for Jewish leaders:

Should we send the men out first? This had been the dilemma all along. . . . If you have two tickets, do you take one man out of the concentration camp and his wife who is at this moment safe? Or do you take your two men out of the concentration camp? They took two men out . . . because they said we cannot play God, but these are in immediate danger.⁵⁹

Even as women feared for their men, they believed that they themselves would still be spared serious harm by the Nazis. In retrospect, Ruth Klüger reflected on this kind of thinking and the resulting preponderance of women caught in the trap:

. . . one seemed to ignore what was most obvious, namely how imperiled precisely the weaker and the socially disadvantaged are. That the Nazis should stop at women contra-

dicted their racist ideology. Had we, as the result of an absurd, patriarchal short circuit, perhaps counted on their chivalry?⁶⁰

Despite their trepidation, parents sent sons into the unknown more readily than daughters. Bourgeois parents worried about a daughter traveling alone, believing boys would be safer. Also, families assumed that sons needed to establish economic futures for themselves whereas daughters would marry. In 1935, one family sent its son to Palestine because "it was proper for a young man to try to leave and find a job elsewhere." However, his parents were reluctant to send their daughter abroad. Like other young women, socialized to accept their parents' judgement, she consented to remaining behind and even made it "possible for him to go abroad by supporting him financially."⁶¹

As more and more sons left, daughters remained as the sole caretakers for elderly parents. One female commentator noted the presence of many women "who can't think of emigration because they don't know who might care for their elderly mothers . . . before they could start sending them money. In the same families, the sons went their way. . . ."⁶² Leaving one's aging parent—as statistics indicate, usually the mother—was the most painful act imaginable. Ruth Glaser described her own mother's agony at leaving her mother to join her husband, who had been forbidden reentry into Germany: she "could not sleep at night thinking of leaving her [mother] behind." Men, too, felt such grief, but proportionately more of them left nonetheless.⁶³

As early as 1936, the League of Jewish Women, noting that far fewer women than men were leaving, expressed the fear that Jewish men of marriageable age would intermarry abroad, leaving Jewish women behind in Germany with no chance of marrying. Still, the League was not enthusiastic about emigration to certain areas because of anxiety about the possibility of forced prostitution. The League also turned toward parents, reminding them of their "responsibility to free their daughters" even though daughters felt "stronger psychological ties to their families than sons do, [which] probably lies in the female psyche."⁶⁴ As late as January 1938, one of the main emigration organizations, the Hilfsverein, announced that "up to now, Jewish emigration . . . indicates a severe surplus of men." It blamed this on the "nature" of women to feel closer to family and home and on that of men toward greater adventurousness. It promised that women's emigration would become a priority. Yet only two months later, the society announced it would expedite the emigration of only those young women who could prove their household skills and were willing to work as domestics abroad.⁶⁵ Other Jewish organizations likewise provided less support to emigrating women than to men.⁶⁶

Palestine, a major destination in the early years,⁶⁷ did not seek women nor did it attract many. Moreover, bourgeois parents did not encourage daughters to live on a kibbutz. One survey of graduating classes from several Jewish schools in late 1935 showed that 47 percent of the boys but only 30 percent of the girls saw life in Palestine as a goal. Statistics for the first half of 1937 indicate that of those taking advantage of Zionist retraining programs, only 32 percent were female. Overall, fewer single females than males emigrated to Palestine: 8,209 "bachelors," compared with 5,080 "single" females, entered from German-speaking lands between 1933 and 1942.⁶⁸ Finally, Youth Aliyah, which rescued several thousand German Jewish children, re-

quired 60 percent boys and 40 percent girls because of what its leaders considered to be the division of labor on the kibbutzim where the children were to be placed.⁶⁹

The growing disproportion of Jewish women in the German Jewish population also resulted from the fact that, to begin with, there were more Jewish women than men in Germany. In 1933, women accounted for 52.3 percent of the Jews, as a result of such factors as male casualties during the First World War, conversion among Jewish men, and greater longevity among women. For the proportions to have become equally balanced, a greater absolute number of women would have had to emigrate. The slower rate of female than male emigration, however, meant that the female proportion of the Jewish population rose from 52.3 percent in 1933 to 57.5 percent by 1939. In 1939, one woman wrote:

Mostly we were women who had been left to ourselves. In part, our husbands had died from shock, partly they had been processed from life to death in a concentration camp and partly some wives who, aware of the greater danger to their husbands, had prevailed upon them to leave at once and alone. They were ready to take care of everything and to follow their husbands later on, but because of the war it became impossible for many to realize this intention, and quite a few of my friends and acquaintances thus became martyrs of Hitler.⁷⁰

A large proportion of these remaining women were elderly. Age, even more than being female, worked against timely flight. Together, the two factors were lethal. Between June 1933 and September 1939, the number of young Jews in Germany under age 39 decreased by about 80 percent. In contrast, the number of people over 60 decreased by only 27 percent. By 1941, two thirds of the Jewish population was past middle age. In Berlin alone, the number of old-age homes increased from three in 1933 to 13 in 1939 and to 21 in 1942. Even in 1933, the elderly had consisted of a large number of widows.⁷¹ In 1939, there remained 6,674 widowed men and 28,347 widowed women in the expanded Reich.⁷²

In short, in slightly less than eight years, two thirds of German Jews emigrated (many to European countries where they were later caught up in the Nazi net), leaving behind a disproportionate number of elderly individuals and women.⁷³ When Elisabeth Freund, one of the last Jews to leave Germany legally in October 1941, went to the Gestapo for her final papers, she observed who was standing in line with her: "All old people, old women."⁷⁴

The War and Beyond

Well before the outbreak of the Second World War, Jews existed under warlike conditions. After Germany went to war, the Nazis accelerated their economic and social persecution of Jews. The government confiscated Jewish business and personal property and limited food and clothing purchases. It herded Jews together, tagging them and compelling them to do forced labor, and it banned Jewish emigration. Jewish women and men shared increasing deprivations and, like the other German civilians, faced frightful bombings. Still, gender differences persisted—and why would we expect otherwise?

In this situation, the government, in a mixture of racism and sexism, declared Jewish

men in intermarriages at greater risk than Jewish women who were similarly situated. Acting upon its misogynist bias, the regime decided to favor male over female "Aryans" in intermarriages with Jews. The Nazis declared childless intermarriages in which there was a Jewish woman and an "Aryan" man to be "privileged." Partners in these marriages were allowed to remain outside of designated "Jew houses" (*Jüdenhäuser*), and the Jewish spouse did not have to wear the yellow star. Childless couples consisting of a Jewish man and an "Aryan" woman were deemed "nonprivileged mixed marriage."⁷⁵ Thus, Jewish men in such marriages faced greater disability and risk.

Jewish reactions to extreme danger and deprivation were twofold. As noted, women took on the tasks of representation and rescue. But they also remained responsible for gender-related tasks: for shopping, making food stretch, repairing tattered clothing, organizing their children's schooling and free time and, even in ghetto housing, providing a home life and community for their families. Moreover, vis-à-vis their husbands, many continued in previously gendered roles. The letters of Rabbi Salomon Samuel and his wife, Anna Samuel, during these years depict the wife as the housekeeper, her husband as the scholar. Typically, as Anna Samuel faced the increasing challenges of furnishing meals, clean clothing, and a comfortable abode, Salomon Samuel reread Goethe's *Wilhelm Meister*, studied Jewish history, and provided intellectual comfort and, hence, moral support, to his wife and immediate Jewish community.⁷⁶ Being solely responsible for all the necessary shopping in the one daily hour allotted to Jews unnerved Anna Samuel.⁷⁷ Nazi regulations, including long lists of foods forbidden to Jews, were only part of the problem. Anna Samuel also endured jeers from neighbors whenever she went shopping. In December 1941, seeing the yellow star on her coat, teenage girls taunted her. "And *such* big girls," Anna Samuel wrote, "who could reflect on what they are doing!" One year later, she wrote that trips into town felt like running the gauntlet.⁷⁸

It was in some "Jew houses" that women first experienced the physical brutality that Jewish men had come to fear. In Dresden, for example, an integral part of daily life in a *Judenhaus* was the dreaded spot checks by the Gestapo to search for forbidden food and to make sure that the Star of David was tightly sewn on clothing. In reality these were mini-pogroms.⁷⁹ Members of the Dresden Gestapo, spitting at residents and hitting them, burst into Jewish apartments, destroyed whatever furniture or bedding was left, and stole money and food. Gestapo agents kicked, slapped, or punched elderly women or smeared their faces and clothing with food. In 1942, Gestapo members attacked women between the ages of 70 and 85 in Dresden's Jewish old-age home.⁸⁰

It was in the years of the deportations that female suicide rates, always lower than male rates, may have actually exceeded them. The obvious reason for this is that, as has been seen, more Jewish women than men remained in Germany. The gradual realization that the deportations meant death, especially for the elderly, may have impelled many aged women, often widowed, to commit suicide.⁸¹

Whereas in the early 1930s many suicides were impulsive, by the time of the deportations, as reports and rumors of suicides raced through the *Judenhäuser*, the vast majority of them seem to have resulted from careful consideration. Women and men planned these later suicides well in advance, paying an exorbitant price for the drugs

with which to kill themselves, and carefully choosing the time in which to do the deed. In one case, a grandson did his 83-year-old grandmother's bidding by helping her into a gentle suicide: she talked about her youth, happier days, and read from Schiller. Then she took a large number of sleeping pills and poison and "in the end she fell asleep. . . ." ⁸²

During the bombings, Jews—both women and men—were less anxious about death from the sky than at the hands of the far crueler Gestapo. Jews suffered "the fairy-tale horror of our existence: fear at every knock on the door, persecution, humiliation, life-threatening danger, hunger (real hunger), constant new prohibitions, ever more gruesome enslavement, . . . absolute helplessness." ⁸³

Conclusion

Although the calamity that hit German Jews affected them as Jews first, they also suffered on the basis of gender. Racism and sexism were intertwined in the minds of the torturers. The Nazis attacked Jewish men first, demolishing their careers and businesses and leaving women to carry the burden of maintaining their homes and families, of keeping their households together. Jewish men were far more vulnerable to physical assault and arrest until the deportations began. Even if the Nazis ultimately turned on Jewish women as well, Jewish women at the beginning saw their men harassed and arrested and tried to rescue them.

Not only did persecution mean something different for women and men, so did survival strategies in both practical and psychological terms. The victims reacted not always and not only simply as Jews, but as Jewish women and men. Gender made a difference in deciding between fight and flight—and in actually getting out. It made a difference in the daily tasks that people performed, in the way they analyzed their situation, and in the way that situation was resolved.

But the crisis of the 1930s also challenged traditional gender roles. In what Raul Hilberg described as communities of "men without power and women without support," ⁸⁴ we find, for the most part, active women who early on expanded their traditional roles. We see anxious but highly energetic women taking note of the hostile environment and formulating strategies of response. Many women experimented with new behaviors rarely before attempted by *any* bourgeois women: interceding for their men with the authorities, seeking paid employment for the first time, selling their homes on their own, and deciding on countries of refuge by themselves.

Often taking on "male" roles both within and outside the family, they absorbed much of the domestic stress caused by such accommodations and transformed their own female identities, at least for the duration of the crisis. However, even though women transcended certain gender roles, gender as such continued to have consequences with regard to emigration, forced labor, and hiding.

I have emphasized the importance of gender not only because it helps us to tell a fuller and more nuanced story of daily life in Nazi Germany, but to give Jewish women a voice long denied them and to offer a perspective long denied us. To raise the issue of gender can never place blame on other survivors for the disproportionate deaths of German Jewish women. Blame rests with the murderers. To raise the issue of gender also does not place it above racism. We know that the Nazis did not want

“to share the earth with the Jewish people.”⁸⁵ Studying the ways in which women and men were treated differently and the frequently distinctive manner in which they reacted demonstrates how important gender was in influencing decisions and destinies. In short, to quote one of the founders of the study of gender and the Holocaust, Joan Ringelheim: “The end—namely, annihilation or death—does not describe or explain the process.”⁸⁶ Being male or female mattered during the Holocaust.

Notes

1. Although there is no broad-based critique on issues of gender and the Holocaust, Gabriel Schoenfeld's article in *Commentary* of June 1998, titled “Auschwitz and the Professors,” (pp. 44–46), singled out such scholarship as part of its attack on Holocaust studies.

2. With some exceptions, I do not tell the story of the significant minority of working-class, East European Jews residing in Germany. On this subject, see Yfaat Weiss, “The Encounter between German Jewry and Polish Jewry during the Nazi Era” (Ph.D. diss., Tel Aviv University, 1996).

3. Another probable factor was political inclination or ideology, but this point needs further study.

4. Fortunately, those sources that document women's history—the majority of my sources—encompass men as well. The memoirs and interviews of Jewish women provide an inclusive viewpoint, whereas men's documents, with some exceptions, do not. For one such exception, see Victor Klemperer's two-volume *Ich will Zeugnis ablegen bis zum letzten: Tagebücher* (Berlin: 1995), which provides insight into the author's feelings as well as presenting a keen account of daily, personal life. Both volumes were more recently published in an English version: vol. 1, *I Will Bear Witness: A Diary of the Nazi Years 1933–1941*, trans. Martin Chalmers (New York: 1998); vol. 2, *I Will Bear Witness 1941–1945: A Diary of the Nazi Years* (New York: 2000).

5. Quoted in Bella Fromm, *Blood and Banquets: A Berlin Social Diary* (London: 1942), 119–120. Klemperer notes this as well; see *Ich will Zeugnis ablegen bis zum letzten*, vol. 1 (pp. 554, 564).

6. Memoirs of Jacob Ball-Kaduri, Leo Baeck Institute, N.Y. (hereafter: LBI), 30.

7. Memoirs of Ruth Abraham, LBI, 2.

8. Memoirs of Liselotte Mueller Kahn, LBI, 23.

9. *Ibid.*; memoirs of Ann Lewis, LBI, 264. See also memoirs of Kurt Ball-Kaduri, LBI, 30; memoirs of Lisa Brauer, LBI, 43, 57.

10. *Israelitisches Familienblatt*, 14 July 1938 (p. 12).

11. *Ibid.*, 19 Jan. 1938 (pp. 13–14); see also *ibid.*, 14 July 1938 (p. 12); *C-V Zeitung*, 25 Aug. 1938.

12. Memoirs of Senta Meyer-Gerstein, LBI, vol. 1 (p. 36); for information on courses, see Bundesarchiv (Coswig) 75C, Jüdischer Frauenbund, Verband Berlin, folder 37; on home economics, see Bundesarchiv (Potsdam), Jüdische Haushaltungsschule, Frankfurt/Main, 1925–1939 (49.01 10250); on economic relief, see Zentralstelle für jüdische Wirtschaftshilfe, in *Zedaka: Jüdische Sozialarbeit im Wandel der Zeit*, ed. Georg Heuberger (Frankfurt: 1992), 324.

13. See Hazel Rosenstrauch, *Aus Nachbarn wurden Juden: Ausgrenzung und Selbstbehauptung 1933–1942* (Berlin: 1988), 61.

14. Of those seeking retraining in Berlin in 1933–1934, 51 percent of the women, versus only 26 percent of the men, were over the age of 30 (of these, 15 percent of the women and 8 percent of the men were over 40).

15. Interview with Edith Bick, Research Foundation for Jewish Immigration, N.Y. (hereafter: Research Foundation), 19.

16. Memoirs of Hilde Honnet-Sichel, Houghton Library, Harvard University (hereafter: Harvard), 72–73.

17. See Ulrich Baumann, "Die sozialen Beziehungen zwischen Christen und Juden in süd-badischen Landgemeinden 1862–1940" (Master's thesis, University of Freiburg, 1995), 40.
18. Quoted in Monika Richarz (ed.), *Jüdisches Leben in Deutschland: Selbstzeugnisse zur Sozialgeschichte 1918–1945*, vol. 3 (Stuttgart: 1982), 237. This gender-specific reaction in dangerous situations has been remarked upon by sociologists and psychologists: men tend to "stand their ground," whereas women avoid conflict, preferring flight as a strategy. See also Martina Kliner-Fruck, "*Es ging ja ums Überleben*": *Jüdische Frauen zwischen Nazi-Deutschland, Emigration nach Palästina und ihrer Rückkehr* (Frankfurt: 1995), 79.
19. Memoirs of Leo Gompertz, LBI, 7.
20. Even businesswomen, however, appeared less reluctant than their spouses to emigrate. See interview with Evelyn Rubin in *The Long Island Jewish Week*, 19 Nov. 1978.
21. Lore Segal, *Other People's Houses* (New York: 1958); see also Sibylle Quack, *Zuflucht Amerika: Zur Sozialgeschichte der Emigration deutsch-jüdischer Frauen in die USA, 1933–1945* (Bonn: 1995), chs. 6–7; idem (ed.), *Between Sorrow and Strength: Women Refugees of the Nazi Period* (Cambridge: 1995).
22. See memoirs of Marianne Berel, LBI, 16.
23. See Claudia Koonz, *Mothers in the Fatherland: Women, the Family, and Nazi Politics* (New York: 1987), ch. 10.
24. See Avraham Barkai, *From Boycott to Annihilation: the Economic Struggle of German Jews 1933–1945*, trans. William Templar (Hanover: 1989), 2–3, 6–7, 80–83.
25. See memoirs of Elsie Axelrath, Harvard, 37.
26. Claudia Koonz, "Courage and Choice Among German-Jewish Women and Men," in *The Jews in Nazi Germany, 1933–1945*, ed. Arnold Paucker (Tübingen: 1986), 287.
27. Memoirs of Else Gerstel, LBI, 71.
28. Memoirs of Erna Segal, LBI, 45–47, 61.
29. Quoted in G.W. Allport, J.S. Bruner, and E.M. Jandorf, "Personality under Social Catastrophe: Ninety Life-Histories of the Nazi Revolution," *Character and Personality: An International Psychological Quarterly* 10, no. 1 (Sept. 1941), 3.
30. See memoirs of Erna Segal, LBI, 45–46, 61. See also memoirs of Elisabeth Drexler, Harvard; memoirs of Charlotte Hamburger, LBI, 40–41; Marta Spiegel, *Retter in der Nacht: Wie eine jüdische Familie überlebte*, 2nd ed. (Cologne: 1987), 15; Hilda Branch, quoted in Sylvia Rothchild, (ed.), *Voices from the Holocaust* (New York: 1981), 34.
31. Memoirs of Elisabeth Bamberger, LBI, 21.
32. Peter Wyden, *Stella: One Woman's True Tale of Evil, Betrayal, and Survival in Hitler's Germany* (New York: 1992), 47. See also: Mary Felstiner, *To Paint Her Life: Charlotte Salomon in the Nazi Era* (New York: 1994), 74. Carol Gilligan's theory that men tend to view and express their situation in terms of abstract rights, whereas women base their views on actual affiliations and relationships, applies here. See her *In a Different Voice: Psychological Theory and Women's Development* (Cambridge, Mass.: 1982).
33. Interview with Alice Nauen, Research Foundation, 8.
34. Memoirs of Charlotte Hamburger, 41, 46.
35. Fritz Stern, *Dreams and Delusions: National Socialism and the Drama of the German Past* (New York: 1989), 125.
36. Daniel Guérin, *The Brown Plague*, trans. Robert Schwartzwald (Durham: 1994), 24.
37. Memoirs of Charlotte Stein-Pick, 2, 38.
38. Memoirs of Elisabeth Bamberger, 5.
39. Memoirs of Else Gerstel, 71.
40. About 37,000 Jews left Germany in 1933. More discrimination, however, was not matched by more emigration. In 1934, 23,000 fled. By early 1935, about 10,000 had returned because of the increasing economic difficulties faced by middle-class Jewish émigrés abroad, many of whom were sliding into poverty. By the end of 1935 (following the Nuremberg Laws), approximately 21,000 more had emigrated, followed by another 25,000 in 1936 and 23,000 in 1937. With increasing persecution in 1938, another 40,000 emigrated. See Herbert Strauss, "Emigration," *Leo Baeck Institute Year Book* 25 (1980), 357. It is estimated that a total of 60,000–65,000 refugees—Jews and non-Jews—left Germany in 1933 and that about 40 per-

cent of them went to France. Shortly after 1933, Paris began to restrict the flow. See Michael Marrus, *The Unwanted: European Refugees in the Twentieth Century* (New York: 1985), 196–247; Vicki Caron, *Uneasy Asylum: France and the Jewish Refugee Crisis, 1933–1942* (Stanford: 1999). The proportion of emigrants who fled overseas grew dramatically as the conditions in Europe worsened.

41. Memoirs of Else Gerstel, 76.
42. Memoirs of Charlotte Stein-Pick, 41–45.
43. Interview with Max Moses Polke, a Breslau lawyer, Harvard.
44. See Margarete Limberg and Hubert Rubsaat, (eds.), *Sie durften nicht mehr Deutsche sein: Jüdischer Alltag in Selbstzeugnissen 1933–1938* (Frankfurt: 1990), 325; also see memoirs of Charlotte Stein-Pick, 45.
45. Memoirs of Leo Gompertz, 10.
46. Memoirs of Charlotte Stein-Pick, 39.
47. Paula Kleve, quoted in Miriam Gillis-Carlebach, *Jedes Kind ist mein Einziges: Lotte Carlebach-Preuss, Antlitz einer Mutter und Rabbiner-Frau* (Hamburg: 1992), 238.
48. Letter from Gertrud Grossmann, 17 Jan. 1939 (my thanks to Atina Grossmann for sharing these letters).
49. Memoirs of Hanna Bernheim, Harvard, 51.
50. Memoirs of Mally Dienemann, Harvard, 35.
51. Memoirs of Herta Nathorff, LBI, 127–133.
52. Letters from Gertrud Grossmann, 3 Jan. 1939 and 22 Feb. 1940. The government continued to add new impediments to emigration, banning it altogether in October 1941.
53. See, for example, the memoirs of Lisa Brauer, 43, 57.
54. Quoted in Andreas Lixl-Purcell, *Women of Exile: German-Jewish Autobiographies since 1933* (Westport: 1988), 84.
55. Interview with Elyse Reichenstein, New York, 1997.
56. Hedwig Burgheim (biographical sketch), LBI.
57. Trude Maurer, “Ausländische Juden in Deutschland, 1933–39,” in Paucker (ed.), *The Jews in Nazi Germany*, 204; on women’s organizations, see *Blätter des jüdischen Frauenbundes* (Dec. 1936), 5.
58. See Ruth Eisner, *Nicht Wir Allein: Aus dem Tagebuch einer Berliner Jüdin* (Berlin: 1971), 8.
59. Interview with Alice Nauen (whose father was secretary of the Hilfsverein in Hamburg), Research Foundation, 19.
60. Ruth Klüger, *Weiter leben* (Göttingen: 1992), 83.
61. Quoted in Douglas Morris, “The Lives of Some Jewish Germans who Lived in Nazi Germany and Live in Germany Today: An Oral History” (B.A. thesis, Wesleyan University, 1976), 43.
62. *Blätter des jüdischen Frauenbundes* (April 1937), 5.
63. Memoirs of Ruth Glaser, LBI, 26, 71. See also memoirs of Erika Guettermann, LBI; memoirs of Charlotte Stein-Pick (on her husband leaving his parents), 46.
64. *Blätter des jüdischen Frauenbundes* 12, no. 36 (p. 1); Bundesarchiv (Coswig), 75C, Jüdischer Frauenbund, Verband Berlin, folder 37.
65. Protokoll der Arbeitskreis tagung vom 2 Nov. 1936; on the Hilfsverein, see articles in *C-V Zeitung*, 20 Jan. 1938 (p. 5), 3 March 1938 (p. 6).
66. For example, in 1937, of the 7,313 émigrés supported by the emigration section of the Reichsvereinigung der Juden in Deutschland (Central Organization of Jews in Germany), there were approximately 4,161 men and 3,041 women. The Hilfsverein supported 3,250 men and 2,512 women. The Palestine Bureau supported 911 men and 529 women. See *Informationsblätter* (Jan./Feb. 1938), 6–7. Overall immigration into the U.S. showed a higher proportion of men until 1938–1939. See *American Jewish Year Book 5699 (1938/39)* (1938), 552–554; *ibid.*, 5701 (1940/41) (1940), 608–609; *ibid.*, 5702 (1941–42) (1941), 674–675.
67. Between 1933 and 1936, more German Jews went to Palestine than to any other country. See Strauss, “Jewish Emigration,” *Leo Baeck Institute Year Book* 26 (1981), 345.
68. Surveys in *Jüdische Wohlfahrtspflege und Sozial Politik* (1935), 188. The programs in-

cluded: Hehaluz, Habonim, and Makabi Hazair. See *Informationsblätter*, Aug./Oct. 1937, 60. On Palestine statistics, see "Jewish Immigration from Germany during 1933–1942 (includes Austria since 1938 and Czechoslovakia and Danzig since 1939)," reprint from "The Jewish Immigration and Population" issued by the department of statistics of the Jewish Agency. See also *Jüdische Wohlfahrtspflege und Sozial Politik* (1933/34).

69. Until April 1939, Youth Aliyah sent 3,229 children from Germany to Palestine. My thanks to Sara Kadosh of the Joint Distribution Committee Archives for providing the figures on Germany. Norman Bentwich claims that 7,000 children were brought into Palestine—see his *Jewish Youth Comes Home: The Story of the Youth Aliyah, 1933–1943* (London: 1944), 62, 82. Others claim a figure of 10,000 by 1944. See, for example, the pamphlet put out by the Children and Youth Aliyah of London, *Ten Years of Children and Youth Aliyah* (London: 1944), 2.

70. Quoted in Lixl-Purcell, *Women of Exile*, 92. Women were also a majority of the Jewish populations of German-dominated Europe. See Raul Hilberg, *Perpetrators, Victims and Bystanders* (New York: 1992), 127; *Israelitisches Familienblatt* 9 (27 Feb. 1936); Bruno Blau, "The Jewish Population of Germany, 1939–1946," *Jewish Social Studies*, 12, no. 2 (1950), 165.

71. The ratio for Jews above the age of 65 was 1,400 Jewish women to 1,000 men.

72. On age, see Strauss, "Jewish Emigration" (1980), 318–319 and Blau, "The Jewish Population of Germany," 165; on old-age homes, see Wolf Gruner, "Die Reichshauptstadt und die Verfolgung der Berliner Juden 1933–1945," in *Jüdische Geschichte in Berlin: Essays und Studien*, ed. Reinhard Rürup (Berlin: 1995) 242, 251.

73. See Richarz, *Jüdisches Leben in Deutschland*, 61; *Jüdische Wohlfahrtspflege und Sozial Politik* (1937), 96–97; *ibid.* (1937), 161–163; *ibid.* (1937), 200–201; Klemperer, *Ich will Zeugnis ablegen bis zum letzten*, vol. 1, 475; *Israelitisches Familienblatt* 16 Jan. 1936.

74. Memoirs of Elisabeth Freund, LBI, 146.

75. Marriages in which children were baptized were also considered "privileged." Since children of intermarriages tended to be baptized, there were far more "privileged" than "non-privileged" marriages. "Nonprivileged" marriages also included an intermarried couple whose child had been enrolled in the Jewish community as of September 1935. The deportations (and some last-minute emigration) raised the proportion and the number of mixed marriages relative to "pure" Jewish marriages. By the end of the deportations, the majority of Jews left in Germany (including those with false papers or in hiding) were those of "privileged" mixed marriages.

76. Angela Genger, *Durch unsere Herzen ziehen die Jahrtausende: Briefe von Anna und Salomon Samuel, 1933–1942* (Düsseldorf: 1988), 177, 195.

77. *Ibid.*, 99, 112, 120, 134, 137.

78. *Ibid.*, 140, 172, 178, 190.

79. See Bernd-Lutz Lange (ed.), *Davidstern und Weihnachtsbaum: Erinnerungen von Überlebenden* (Leipzig: 1992), 159; see also Klemperer, *Ich will Zeugnis ablegen bis zum letzten*, vol. 2 (pp. 141, 143, 215).

80. On Dresden house searches, see *ibid.*, 19–20, 41, 46, 51, 57, 61, 94, 102, 121, 142. On attacks against old women, see *ibid.*, 72, 79, 82, 95, 111–112, 121, 199, 228; for descriptions of attacks against old people in general, see *ibid.*, 111, 151.

81. Konrad Kwiet suggests that the average age of the suicides by the time of the deportations was about 65. See his article, "The Ultimate Refuge: Suicide in the Jewish Community under the Nazis," *Leo Baeck Year Book* 29 (1984), 150 (n. 38), 151–152, 164–165.

82. Quoted in *ibid.*, 167.

83. Klemperer, *Ich will Zeugnis ablegen bis zum letzten*, vol. 2 (p. 104).

84. Hilberg, *Perpetrators, Victims, Bystanders*, 127.

85. Hannah Arendt, *Eichmann in Jerusalem* (New York: 1965), 279.

86. Joan Ringelheim, "Reflections on Gender." Paper presented at the conference on Women and the Holocaust, The Hebrew University, June 1995.

Women's Bodies and the Rise of the Rabbis: The Case of Sotah

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In the very foundation legend of rabbinic Judaism, the legend of R. Yohanan ben-Zakai,¹ we are informed at one point that:

When adulterers multiplied, [the rite of] the bitter water [*sotah*] ceased, and R. Yohanan ben-Zakai brought it to an end, for it is written, "I will not punish your daughters when they fornicate and your daughters-in-law when they commit adultery, for they [the men] go off alone with harlots and sacrifice with sacred prostitutes" [Hosea 4:14].²

What we find here is a defining moment in the assertion of rabbinic power in the abrogation of a rite that is frequently associated with the most extreme misogyny—and precisely in the context of accounts of rabbinic misogyny. The abrogation, moreover, is engendered in the name of an attack on a version of the "double standard." The battle for power is between the men of the rabbinic party and the men of the traditional priestly circles for whom continuation of such biblical rituals was undoubtedly at the center of their religious lives and values. The new rabbinic regime of knowledge/power was epitomized (or perhaps, one might say, epistemized) via the concept of Torah, which is the rabbinic ideology of an oral tradition communicated and transmitted from Sinai and of which they were the sole possessors. Crucial to the success of this epistemic shift was the disenfranchisement of the previous holders of power/knowledge, the priests, as well, as we shall see, of other traditional sources of knowledge, including women.

The "feminism" of the abrogation of the sotah ritual is thus to be read as part of a larger struggle for power on the part of a new male elite. Ancient and contemporary analogies abound.³ As Shahar Pinsker has recently written,

The internal logic of the abolition suggests that the laws of the sotah and the heifer were possible to enact only in a world in which there are harmonious relations between God and the People of Israel. In the new situation that was created in the historical arena, there are different ways of dealing with the social order, and the one that the Mishnah privileges is the textual/discursive activity of Torah study. In this sense, R. Yochanan abolished the physical ritual, but its function as means of control and power (in the Foucauldian sense) is preserved through the activity of Torah study. This is a powerful

way of understanding this seemingly contradictory move—the simultaneous abolition of ritual and the textual energy that is devoted to it.⁴

In this paper, I wish to explore the crucial role of “gender” in new approaches and methods for the study of rabbinic history and historiography. This text in Mishnah Sotah can function as an initial emblem for the problem I will treat here.

Many feminist discussions of the rabbis have charged them with particularly crude versions of misogyny and total disregard for women's subjectivity. These polemics have been mobilized from various vantage points, including Christian feminist apologetics that have sought to locate misogyny and patriarchal dominance within Christianity in its supposed, only partially superseded, Jewish antecedents,⁵ as well as from Jewish feminists rightly angered at the oppression of women within traditional Jewish culture.⁶ At the same time, other Jewish feminists have sought to understand rabbinic gender culture in more nuanced terms, seeing ways in which the rabbis sought to ameliorate the legal standing of women or ways in which the halakhic system itself produced spaces for female autonomy “against its will,” as it were.⁷

Interesting for my purposes here are specifically the efforts of Judith Hauptman. In searching for a contemporary re-vision of Jewish traditional life that will answer the feminist demand for gender justice, Hauptman develops a unique methodology avoiding both polemics and apologetics. Rather than judging or defending the rabbis and their “attitudes” or practices with respect to gender, Hauptman seeks a dynamic model of description. What was the directionality of rabbinic thought on gender? Was it leading in what we would call a progressive direction vis-à-vis its authoritative text and past, the Torah, or was it tending toward the greater oppression and exclusion of women?

In the past, many have argued for the latter option. The great innovation of Hauptman's book is that it arduously argues for the former thesis, and largely convinces.

Hauptman, it is important to stress, is not arguing that the rabbis were feminists. Indeed, she makes it quite clear that the opposite is the case. She does characterize them, however, as antimisogynists by and large and as seeking to ameliorate the legal situation of women, as “helpful to women”—benevolent patriarchs and patrons of women. One could easily see that the halakhic innovation of R. Yohanan fits into this category. Sotah, a particularly obnoxious rite in which a woman is shamed, stripped bare, dirtied, and cursed in public, and all because her husband has suspected—merely suspected—her of adultery, has frequently been the site of the sharpest of feminist polemics, especially since the rabbis in the Mishnah elaborated at length and with their characteristic passion for detail precisely how this shaming and abuse was to be carried out. What has been overlooked is that all this elaboration came within the context of the explicit and total abrogation of the rite at the *arche* of the entire rabbinic enterprise, decidedly a patronizing amelioration but not, at any rate, a misogynist assault on women. My point is not, of course, to delegitimize the forceful feminist critique of the discourse of sotah, but rather to indicate the necessity for a deeper consideration of the role of gender (not gender roles) in the construction of rabbinic authority, both synchronic and diachronic. What we need when

we study early rabbinic Judaism is a mode of feminist critique that is capable of exposing the “sexist” strategies precisely of these rabbis who were by and large antimisogynist.⁸

In order to accomplish this purpose, what I propose to do is to look at several narratives concerning the rise of rabbinic power to see how gender is implicated in these founding legends (one could even call them myths of origin). Moshe Halbertal has written:

The idea that expertise in the text is a source of authority—an idea that gives rise to the centrality of the scholar in the Jewish hierarchy—defines an important feature of text-centeredness. Such expertise may become the main source of authority, and then priests and prophets are replaced by scholars. The leading role of the scholar constituted a revolutionary, postbiblical conception of religious authority within Judaism, challenging other conceptions.⁹

What Halbertal apparently misses is the extent to which the revolution was not only in the transfer of power from priests and prophets to scholars but also in the particular role that the concept of the Oral Torah played in locating all religious authority in the hands of one community of scholars, the rabbis, and one institutional locus, the house of study (*beit hamidrash*). The epistemic shift begins, to be sure, with the Mishnah at the end of the second century,¹⁰ just as the process that Athanasius and his Nicaea were to bring to fruition began, in some sense, with Justin and Irenaeus at about the same time. Athanasius’s *ek Pateron eis Patera* (from Father to Father) is strongly reminiscent of the Mishnah’s succession list, which represents the oral Torah received by Moses on Sinai and codified at Yavneh by the “fathers” in the eponymous mishnaic tractate called *Avot*. But just as Christian orthodoxy received its definitive formation in the fourth century, so too the social form, that is, the heteroglossic, or multivocal, regime of power/knowledge of rabbinic orthodox Judaism was formulated much later than the Mishnah. The codified “dissensus,” the agreement to disagree, was as efficient a mode of power for the achievement of “consensual orthodoxy” for rabbinic Judaism as were the creeds and councils of orthodox Christianity. Yavneh and Nicaea can thus also be said to represent a twin-birth of orthodoxies.¹¹

In some of its most central self-founding and self-fashioning legends, rabbinic texts focus crucially (and disturbingly) on gender. It is a virtual commonplace by now that the rabbis produce some kind of pluralism. While I would (and do elsewhere) argue that these commonplaces require serious historicization,¹² it nevertheless remains apparent that late rabbinic literature more than once offers self-descriptions in which the notion of irresolvable controversy over central issues is made an emblem of the pattern of Jewish truth. This is occasionally thematized within the texts in the form of divine approbation of the undecidability of a given point of interpretation or law. The following talmudic text, from tractate *Gittin*, dating from circa fourth-century Babylonia, is both scandalous and revealing. The text explores a biblical locus: “And his concubine went astray” (Judges 19:2). Two rabbis, in interpreting this story, try to discover what had caused the concubine’s husband in anger to drive her out of his house:

R. Evyatar said, He found a fly on her.

R. Yonatan said, He found a hair on her.

R. Evyatar met up with Elijah [the prophet], and said to him, What is the Holy Blessed One up to?

[Elijah] said, He is studying [the story of] the concubine of Gibeah.

[Evyatar]: And what does He say about it?

[Elijah] said to [Evyatar], He [God] says, Evyatar my son says thus, and Yonatan my son says thus.

[Evyatar] said to [Elijah], God forbend—is there doubt before Heaven?

[Elijah] said to him, These and these are the words of the Living God: [the husband] found a fly and did not get angry; [but] he found a hair and got angry.

R. Yehudah said, The fly was in the cup, and the hair was in that place [her vulva]. The fly is disgusting, but the hair is dangerous.¹³

R. Hisda said, A man should never produce fear within his household, for behold the concubine of Gibeah; her husband produced fear in the household, and there was a massacre of tens of thousands in Israel. (Gittin 6b)

This rabbinic narrative deals with one of the most horrifying of biblical stories, the so-called “concubine of Gibeah” in Judges 19–21. In this story, a wife (or concubine) leaves her husband and is eventually violated and murdered. The story is a savage narrative of the most appalling violence toward a woman. It results in civil war, but for the rabbis it conveys the domestic moral that a husband should not display anger toward his wife, for if he does, she may run away with devastating personal and public consequences. The rabbis debate what fault her husband found in her that made him so angry that the concubine grew afraid and ran off. According to one of the rabbis, he had found an unwanted fly; according to the other, he had found unwanted hair. The remarkable thing about the rabbinic text is that it seemingly encodes radical undecidability in the biblical narrative itself.

Let us follow this process with the text. In the first move, when Elijah, the mediator of divine knowledge, is asked what God Himself has to say on the question that the rabbis are debating, the text informs us that all He does is quote His “sons,” the rabbis: “Evyatar my son says thus, and Yonatan my son says thus.” According to the rabbis, even God, the author of the Book, can only say with certainty that there are various interpretive possibilities; He can only repeat the tradition of interpretation that is extant in the *beit midrash*. As if in panic at its own suggestion that the text is inhabited by such radical undecidability, that even God can only “teach the controversy” and not resolve it, the narrative then opts for harmonization of the two views: The husband found both fly and hair. However, we already note that the legitimate site of such radical undecidability, the parameters of undecidability, are to be set only by Evyatar, *My son* and Yonatan, *My son*.

In the spaces opened up by this controversy, at the level of the narrative of God’s doubt, and then at the level of the retraction of that narrative, we can read a little historical allegory of the history of rabbinic Judaism. At the first stage of the *tamuldic* story, there is controversy; at the second stage, undecidability; at the third, harmonization. Stories such as these have been taken up in much contemporary writing on rabbinic Judaism as encoding either radical undecidability in the theoretical sense or radical pluralism in the social sense. No one, scholars suggest, can exercise control over interpretation according to the rabbinic system of *midrash*, for the rabbis allegedly understood that no textual interpretation is ever definitive, even that of the

Author himself.¹⁴ Somewhat less lyrically, but still idyllically, we sometimes find this structure described as one of a radical democratization of interpretation within rabbinic polity.¹⁵ Neither of these two constructions, however, pays attention to the fact that interpretative authority is located exclusively in the rabbinic study house. Far from representing a utopian moment of ludic interpretative freedom,¹⁶ the project of a hermeneutic parable like this one is rather, in my view, to advance the rabbinic program of exclusive control over the religious lives of Jews and to secure the interpretation of the Torah for their institution, the house of study, in whose controversies all truth and authority lie.¹⁷

Rabbinic Judaism, so it can be conjectured, is the end-product of an extended struggle for hegemony by a particular version of religious authority that locates it exclusively in the hands of a male elite devoted primarily to the study of Torah, that is, to the preservation and development of their particular traditions and modes of interpretation. Paying close attention to these narratives will help us uncover the “significance[s]” of Yavneh. This history can be read, as it were, between the lines of various talmudic narratives. It is no accident that this struggle is enacted in no small measure as a contest for control over sexuality—and, at that, a struggle between the rabbis, a.k.a. the Torah, and women. Consider the following passage from tractate Nedarim:

Rabbi Yohanan ben-Dahavai said, The ministering angels told me, Why are there lame children? Because they [their fathers] turn over the tables [have intercourse with their wives on top]. Why are there dumb children? Because they kiss that place. Why are there deaf children? Because they talk during intercourse. Why are there blind children? Because they look at that place.

Rabbi Yohanan—not the same as R. Yohanan ben-Dahavai—dissents from the halakhah that the angels communicated through that former Yohanan:

Rabbi Yohanan said, These are the words of Rabbi Yohanan ben-Dahavai, but the sages say, Anything that a man wishes to do [together] with his wife, he may do, analogously to meat that comes from the shop. If he wishes to eat it with salt, he may; roasted, he may; boiled, he may; braised, he may. And similarly fish from the store of the fisherman.

And next:

Amemar said, Who are the ministering angels? The rabbis, for if you say literally, *ministering angels*, then how did R. Yohanan say that the law is not like R. Yohanan ben-Dahavai? After all, angels certainly know embryology!

Through his reinterpretation of the “angel” as a metaphorical representation of “our rabbis,” Amemar transforms the conflict in this text from a contest over power between different forms of authority, different modes of power/knowledge, into a normal rabbinic controversy within the same kind of episteme, the realm of Torah, the rabbis themselves. He does this by converting the “angels” of the earlier text into ordinary rabbis. The use of “the sages” (*hakhamim*) and “the rabbis” (*rabanan*) here marks this subtle shift, since both designate the same group. It should be emphasized, however, that Amemar only renders explicit what was implicit in R. Yohanan’s dissent, wherein the latter already transformed the angelic knowledge into an ordinary rabbinic opinion of Yohanan ben-Dahavai.

The narrative continues with “actual cases,” precedents that both illustrate and buttress the point made in the preceding section:

A certain woman came before Rabbi [R. Yehudah Hanasi], and said to him; Rabbi: I set him a table, and he turned it over. He said to her, My daughter, the Torah has permitted you; and I, what can I do for you?

A certain woman came before Rav. She said to him, Rabbi, I set him a table, and he turned it over. He said, How is the case different from fish? (Nedarim: 20a–b)

Quite understandably, this passage has usually been read by scholars as a sort of rudimentary rabbinic *scientia sexualis*, or at least, as an *ars erotica*, one, moreover, that is particularly obnoxious in its disregard for women's sexual rights over their own bodies. At first glance, it seems as if a wife is being compared to a fish. I shall not be disregarding this element if, at the same time, I suggest that there are even more compelling political forces at work here: that the text represents part of a rabbinic project of takeover and disenfranchisement of *all* sources of traditional religious authority among Jews, including the authority of women's traditions. It is thus not an accident that so many of these crucial narratives of struggles over power and authority are connected with sexuality, because these struggles are implicated in strife against sites of women's traditional power/knowledge. The struggle for rabbinic authority is, in part, a campaign for control of women's bodies and sexuality.

Now we must engage in some lexicography. The term “turning the tables” can most likely be identified as vaginal intercourse with the woman on top.¹⁸ Most interpretations of the narratives of the two women who come to the rabbis complaining of having “set the table,” which the husband overturned, and the rabbis' refusal to intervene, understand this as rabbinically sanctioned marital sexual abuse.¹⁹ The full context, however, suggests another interpretation. This is, I suggest, a text primarily about the acquisition of rabbinic power and the rabbis' struggle with other forms of Jewish authority, and not principally “about” sexuality at all.

According to R. Yohanan ben-Dahavai, one of the sexual practices proscribed by the “angels” is precisely the activity that the two women claim their husbands desired. Moreover, according to this “angelic” eugenics, intercourse in this position produces damaged children. My assumption is that this nascent embryology represents a form of popular Jewish pietistic practice of sexual hygiene, one that would have been the province of women as well as men. The complaint of these wives is not that their husbands wish to engage in a painful or distasteful form of sex but that they wish to engage in intercourse that the old mores of the Jews considered improper and dangerous to the fetus. The responses of Rabbi and Rav do not, therefore, counsel submission to abuse, which would indeed indicate that the wife is either the husband's sexual property or a “consumable,”²⁰ but rather assert the sole authority of “Torah” over any other kind of religious leadership, whether angelic or traditional, including the traditional power/knowledge of women.²¹ If the Torah does not prohibit an activity, no other source of authority has any jurisdiction over Jewish behavior, according to the rabbis; neither angelic nor popular, including women's culture.

The metaphor of the fish does not refer to the wife's body but to intercourse itself; since the Torah permits sex in general and does not prohibit any specific form of it, just as a kosher fish may be cooked in any fashion desired, therefore, women's and

other popular traditions of interdiction are immaterial. You may have intercourse on top, says the male rabbi to the woman, because the Torah—that is, the rabbis—say that it is permitted, your women’s customs notwithstanding. The irony is, of course, palpable, and the cloaking of control as license conjures up Foucault: Women on top in intercourse, but not in discourse.²²

The interpretation of “Torah” in this context as referring to rabbinic power is supported and specified by another puzzling talmudic text having to do in part with sexuality:

We have learned in a *baraita* that R. Akiva said, Once I followed R. Yehoshua into the privy and I learned from him three things. I learned that one does not eliminate standing up but sitting; I learned that one does not eliminate facing east to west but north to south, and I learned that one does not wipe with the right hand but with the left.

Ben-Azai said to him, Were you indeed so brazen-faced with your teacher!?

[Akiva] said to him, It is Torah and I must learn it.

We have learned in a *baraita* that ben-Azai said, Once I followed Rabbi Akiva into the privy and I learned from him three things. I learned that one does not eliminate facing east to west but north to south, I learned that one does not eliminate standing but sitting; and I learned that one does not wipe with the right hand but with the left.

R. Yehudah said to him, Were you indeed so brazen-faced with your teacher!?

He said to him, It is Torah and I must learn it.

. . . R. Kahana entered and lay down beneath the bed of Rav. He heard that he was talking and laughing and having sexual intercourse. He said, The mouth of Abba [Rav’s name] appears as if it has never tasted this dish [that is, he has never had intercourse].²³

He [Rav] said to him, Kahana, get out; this is not proper behavior! He [Kahana] said to him, *It is Torah, and I must learn it* (Berakhot: 62a).

To my mind, the crucial moment in this story is the three rabbis’ “defense” of their strange behavior in the statement that there is nothing that escapes from the purview of Torah. Torah here is not the written word, not Scripture, but the behavior of the rabbi/master. The rabbinic project is to subsume everything under the control of Torah, that is, under the lineage of spiritual fathers and sons of which the rabbinic tradition and its *paradosis* consists, a “married” version of the celibate paternal relations of bishop to bishop in the contemporaneous Christian polity.²⁴ This interpretation is significantly strengthened by the doubling of the first sequence. Surely ben-Azai could have learned what he had to learn from his teacher Akiva’s report on his observation of Yehoshua’s practice. Why, then, does the text insist that ben-Azai embarrassed his teacher in the same way? By this means, the text inculcates the message that Torah involves directly observing the behavior of the master as well, and therefore can only be acquired within the confines of the rabbinic institution. The very contradictions between such an idolized homosociality and heterosexual relations are thematized in this story as well.

This interpretation, however, does not render the text any less “sexist”; if anything, it is more male-dominant in its implications, precisely because of the power/knowledge nexus that it institutes, one in which all control is arrogated to the “Torah”—that is, to the community of rabbinic scholars. Even though we do not have here a tale of possible sexual abuse of wives by husbands, we have an even more powerful grab, by a male elite, of control of all traditional and religious knowledge and power.

Accordingly, this is one of the founding moments of rabbinic Judaism, defined as Judaism in which a group called rabbis are the only religious virtuosi.

One could read Amemar's later intervention (interpreting the angels as rabbis) as a further step in the same process of denial of all power/knowledge outside of the rabbinic collective. The ultimate issue is not what kind of sex Jews will engage in but who gets to decide: angelic (i.e., mantic) authorities, women's tradition, or the "Torah" (the rabbis). This seems to me a plausible construal of the text in that it renders the actual "cases" into illustrations of the principle articulated by R. Yohanan, who, together with Rabbi and Rav are surely central figures in the narrative of the rabbinic rise to domination. Deploying in this text precisely these three crucial culture heroes in the struggle against alternative sources of authority indicates the centrality of the encoded narrative in telling the story of the rise of the rabbinic episteme. Nothing that I am arguing here, of course, diminishes the salience of the fact that here, as so often, the battle between men for power is being carried out across the discursive bodies of women.²⁵ Thus, the story of the concubine of Gibeah is, perhaps, not so inapt a figure in this struggle, since that biblical story itself is also a narrative of shifting modes of authority played out across the body of a woman.²⁶

With this point made, we can return to the seeming paradox of the abrogation of the ritual of sotah, precisely in the context of its elaborate discursive expansion in the talmudic tractate. It can now be seen that these two seemingly contradictory moments are in fact in perfect consonance with each other. The rabbis are engaged in a struggle for hegemony over the religious lives of the Jewish people. As is well known, the Pharasaic Creed includes three reservations in its definition of who is a legitimate Jew.²⁷ The first mishnah of the tenth chapter of tractate Sanhedrin reads: "All Israel have a place in the next world, and these are they who have no place in the next world: one who denies that the resurrection of the dead is a dogma of the Torah; one who denies that the [oral] Torah is from heaven; and [Jewish] Epicureans." Since Torah here clearly means the oral Torah, that is, the Mishnah, to which this text was arguably an introductory passage,²⁸ we see that wresting control over the religious lives of Jews from prophets and priests was a central theme of the establishment of rabbinic orthodoxy. Substituting for a priest-centered ritual, a Torah-centered discourse would have provided one powerful and explicit tool in this epistemic shift within the Jewish world. Without denying, then, the ethical (perhaps even protofeminist) impulses of the rabbis, we can nevertheless engage a hermeneutics of suspicion that unmasks the very processes by which those rabbis, through their very ameliorating praxis, are nevertheless engaged in a political enterprise, the function of which, *inter alia*, was to remove all legitimacy from female religious power.

It now makes perfect sense that it is precisely in this tractate of the Mishnah that we find the main locus of the controversy over women studying the Torah. The Mishnah, in accordance with the practice I highlighted in this essay, goes into great and very specific detail in prescribing the conditions under which the sotah ritual is to be performed, and its effects. Immediately after indicating what happens to the guilty woman upon her imbibing of the water, the text says:

If she had merit, her merit will mitigate [the punishment] for her. On this basis ben-Azai said, A man is obligated to teach his daughter Torah, so that if she drinks [the bitter wa-

ter], she will know—for merit mitigates. R. Eliezer says, Anyone who teaches his daughter Torah, teaches her lasciviousness (*tiflut*) [Mishnah Sotah 3:4].²⁹

The two Talmuds have very different interpretations of this text. The Palestinian reading is that the merit that mitigates the punishment is the merit of having studied Torah; therefore, a father who wishes to protect his daughter should teach her Torah. The Babylonian Talmud, however, although not directly interpreting ben-Azai, manages to imply that according to him, all that the father is intended to teach his daughter is the very fact that merit mitigates.³⁰

The reason that such teaching should be important, and indeed why ben-Azai should phrase such a limited teaching as “teaching Torah,” is left unexplained. Moreover, according to that reading, the merit that mitigates is *not the merit of knowing Torah*, but some other merit entirely. According to the Palestinian reading, in contrast, the knowledge that the daughter should have of Torah is in no way restricted to issues having to do with the ritual of the errant wife, and it is the very merit of having studied Torah that stands in her favor. In theory, this view should have led to a practice in which women would have studied Torah no less than men, for in a situation in which merit is required, the more the better. Since the rabbinic discourse had enormous normative force in Jewish culture, such an interpretation would have had quite radical implications for the status of women in a society in which the study of Torah was the most valued of all practices. It would have led to a construction of gender in which the roles of the sexes in symbolic life are not nearly as sharply differentiated as they have been in all traditional West Asian societies, including that of the Jews.

The Palestinian Talmud comments directly on ben-Azai, seeming to understand him in a straightforward way to mean that the merit of studying Torah is what will stand in good stead for the woman should she undergo the sotah test. It then seeks with some vigor to undermine this possible practical conclusion:

R. Elazar ben-Azaryah’s opinion contradicts ben-Azai, for it is taught that there was an incident in which R. Yohanan ben-Broka and R. Elazar Hasma were on their way from Yavneh to Lydda, and they went to visit R. Yehoshua in Peki’in. He asked them, What was innovated in the House of Study today? They answered, We are all your disciples and we drink *your* water. He said to them, For all that, it is impossible that there was nothing new said in the house of study. Who gave the discourse today?

—Rav Elazar ben-Azaryah.

—And what was his text?

—*Convoke the nation, the men the women and the children* [Deut. 31:12].

—And what did he say about it?

—Since the men come to study and the women to hear, for what do the children come? Indeed to provide reward for those that carry them.

Said R. Yehoshua: The generation that has R. Elazar ben-Azaryah in it is no orphan! (PT Sotah 3:4)

Ben-Azai’s view is contradicted here by showing that a counterview has been expressed. R. Elazar ben-Azaryah had stated that the only reason that women are obligated to come to the grand convocation for reading the Torah, which takes place once in seven years, is merely to hear the Torah being read and not to study it, as do

their husbands. It is clear, therefore, that his opinion is opposite to that of ben-Azai, and no merit accrues to women for the study of Torah.

From here, I infer that ben-Azai indeed was understood to mean that the merit that would protect the wife is precisely the merit of having studied Torah. This is consistent with rabbinic theological notions in general, whereby sinners are protected from punishment for their sins if they have studied much Torah. On the interpretation that I have suggested in this essay, it is not coincidence that this talmudic discussion is placed precisely in the context of tractate Sotah, for it is there that the drama of the rabbinic, and thus male, takeover of all Jewish power/knowledge is being played out at the center of the stage. If the sotah ritual has been abolished at Yavneh at one level of society, thus improving the actual situation of women, a reaction that leads to the total exclusion of women from any possible direct contact with Torah—the epistemic regime of rabbinic Judaism—is put into place at the very same moment. An adequate feminist historicist interpretation of rabbinic Judaism will have to contend with both moments at one and the same time.

Notes

Various forms of this argument, with different emphases, are being published in other forums. All will be combined, deo volente, into a chapter (or more than one) of my work-in-progress on the rise of the rabbinic episteme.

1. For the latest study of this legend, see Israel Jacob Yuval, "Jews and Christians in the Middle Ages: Shared Myths, Common Language," in *Demonizing the Other: Antisemitism, Racism, and Xenophobia*, ed. Robert S. Wistrich (Amsterdam: 1999), 88–107.

2. Mishnah Sotah 9:9.

3. See Kate Cooper, "Insinuations of Womanly Influence: An Aspect of the Christianization of the Roman Aristocracy," *Journal of Roman Studies* 82 (1992), 150–164.

4. Shahar Pinsker, "Essay on Sotah" (unpublished paper, Berkeley, 1999).

5. On this issue, see Katharina von Kellenbach, *Anti-Judaism in Feminist Religious Writings* (Atlanta: 1994).

6. A particularly sophisticated version of this issue is found in Miriam Peskowitz, "Engendering Jewish Religious History," *Shofar* 14, no. 1 (Fall 1995), 8–34.

7. See, for example, Judith Hauptman, *Rereading the Rabbis: A Woman's Voice* (Boulder: 1998); and Charlotte Fonrobert, *Menstrual Purity: The Reconstruction of Biblical Gender in Christianity and Rabbinic Judaism* (Stanford: 2000).

8. For an assessment of misogyny in rabbinic and other cultures, see Daniel Boyarin, *Carnal Israel: Reading Sex in Talmudic Culture* (Berkeley: 1993), 77–106.

9. Moshe Halbertal, *People of the Book: Canon, Meaning, and Authority* (Cambridge, Mass.: 1997), 27.

10. See Daniel Boyarin, "Hersiology, Dialogue, and the Production of Jewish-Christian Difference: Justin Martyr and the Rabbis," *Church History* (forthcoming).

11. Regarding this "twinning," Esau (Nicaea) is slightly the elder; see Alan F. Segal, *Rebecca's Children: Judaism and Christianity in the Roman World* (Cambridge, Mass.: 1986).

12. See Daniel Boyarin, "Hersiology"; idem, "A Tale of Two Synods: Nicaea, Yavneh and the Making of Orthodox Judaism," *Exemplaria* 12, no. 1 (Spring 2000), 21–62.

13. An interesting bit of sexual lore is alluded to here. Women were apparently expected to shave their pudendas, and even one hair was understood to represent a danger of castration during the act of intercourse (see Rashi on this passage, referring to Deut. 23:2).

14. See Susan Handelman, "Fragments of the Rock: Contemporary Literary Theory and the Study of Rabbinic Texts—A Response to David Stern," *Prooftexts* 5 (1985), 73–95.

15. See Moshe Halbertal, *People of the Book*, 7. In fact, this is no more a democratization than is the “medicalization of childbirth,” on the assumption that “everyone” can become a gynecologist. Halbertal explicitly refers to the fact that all men (!) had theoretical access to the beit midrash as proof of its democratic nature, not noticing that the stringent controls that the institution placed on interpretation, legitimate and illegitimate, represented an even more general set of exclusions (that is, of all those who did not accept the rabbinic program) rather than simply the exclusion of women, which Halbertal duly and fully remarks.

16. Cf. Susan Handelman, *The Slayers of Moses* (Albany: 1982); as a major corrective, see David Stern, “Midrash and Indeterminacy,” *Critical Inquiry* 15, no. 1 (Fall 1988), 132–162. Also see Halbertal, as discussed in the previous note.

17. I mean by this to ascribe nothing sinister to the rabbis, although the effects on some Jews (especially women) might well have been very deleterious, as the subject matter chosen for this hermeneutic parable might hint. It is not inapposite for me to mention that I am one of the scholars whose (former) opinions I am here revising—cf. my *Intertextuality and the Reading of Midrash* (Bloomington, Ind.: 1999), esp. 33–37.

18. In the past scholars, including me, have wavered between this interpretation and identifying it as anal or dorsal vaginal intercourse. The standard lexica understand it as anal intercourse, although traditional commentaries do not. There is no philological or contextual support for that interpretation, however, and in the context of our text, where it is understood to lead to conception, anal intercourse can hardly be comprehended. There is, moreover, another very common term for the latter. While it is possible to see why “turning the tables” could metaphorically suggest anal penetration, that is, turning the woman who has “set the table” over, an image of the “bottom” player becoming “top,” also makes great sense. Indeed, in English we use this very metaphor to refer to a reversal of dominance, although not in sexual contexts. See also Michael L. Satlow, *Tasting the Dish: Rabbinic Rhetorics of Sexuality* (Atlanta: 1995), 239 and especially Rachel Biale, *Women and Jewish Law: An Exploration of Women's Issues in Halakhic Sources* (New York: 1984), 137–139, who also compares this text with Gittin: 70a, where it is stated that “she above and he below is the way of brazenness.”

19. Typical, if judicious in his formulation, is Satlow, who writes: “From this passage, it is again not clear what activity is being performed. Clearly, though, these women do not like it” (*Tasting the Dish*, 240).

20. The alimentary metaphors are perhaps less unsavoury when they are read against the semantic field of the Song of Songs.

21. This interpretation is supported by the continuation of the text:

And I will remove from you the rebellious ones and the criminals [Ez. 20:39]. Said R. Levi, These are nine categories: children of fright; children of rape; children of a despised woman; children of excommunication; children of exchange; children of strife; children of drunkenness; children of one whom he has divorced in his heart; children of mixture; children of an audacious wife.

—Indeed? But did not Shmuel ben-Nahmani say that R. Yohanan said, Any man whose wife approaches him sexually will have children such as were unknown in the generation of Moses.

—This refers to a case where she arouses him [but does not explicitly and verbally request sex].

It is hard to credit an interpretation of the text that leads us at one moment to assume that the rabbis are saying that a wife has no control over sexual practice, and a few lines later indicates, using the same language of eugenics, that unless there is love and harmony between the couple, their progeny will be rebellious criminals.

Furthermore, as indicated by my translation, the phraseology in Hebrew “anything a man wishes to do [together] with his wife (*beishto*),” does not necessarily suggest objectification of the wife’s body. As in English, “do with” is ambiguous. Finally, as Lisa Lampert has suggested to me, part of the point is that women are responsible for cooking in that culture. Just as the “Torah” would disregard women’s customs and taboos with respect to food that are not enshrined in the rabbinic high religious law, so too with respect to sex. Given the control that

women had over the preparation of food, the rabbis' statement to the wives is most plausibly read as: "you have the fish, you are permitted to cook it in any fashion by the Torah," and not "you are the fish; your husband is permitted to cook it in any fashion according to the Torah." Lampert remarks:

The talmudic discussion of the level of intimacy implied by wives serving food and drink and Bynum's arguments about food preparation as a key site of control for women seem to come into play here. The erotic and food could be linked or at the very least, they are both, to some degree, under women's control. I think just remembering that these rabbis probably were not cooking for themselves helps me to see your point much more clearly, since I do think one's first impulse, given the feminist focus on the objectification of women's bodies, is to want to see a parallel between the wife and the meat, which leaves out the importance of what women quite often do control in a culture—the food (personal correspondence, March 1999).

My point here is surely not to "defend" the rabbis in any sense but to arrive at a more exact interpretation of the regime of power/knowledge that they are setting up; it does not, I remain convinced, operate by ceding power over women's bodies to individual nonrabbinic men, but rather by retaining all such power in the hands of the rabbis themselves [the "Torah"], thus maintaining control over the nonrabbinic husbands as well as the wives and abrogating the authority of traditional sexual mores of both men and women.

22. This interpretation is a revision, if not quite a *retractatio*, of my reading in *Carnal Israel*, 109–120.

23. This is Rashi's commentary on the phrase.

24. See Burrus, "Fathering the Word"; for the rabbinic version, see Boyarin, *Carnal Israel*, 205.

25. On this point, see Burrus, "The Heretical Woman as Symbol in Alexander, Epiphanius, and Jerome," *Harvard Theological Review* 84 (1991), 229–248; and Cooper, "Insinuations of Womanly Influence."

26. See Mieke Bal, *Death and Dissymmetry: The Politics of Coherence in the Book of Judges* (Chicago: 1988). In a later chapter of the present research, I plan to make a more thoroughgoing analysis of the role of gender and sexuality in the production of rabbinic authority per se and thus explain why so many narratives of the construction of authority and power involve sexuality in their thematic matter. Indeed, the story of R. Eyyatar is cited in the Talmud in order to buttress his opinion on a matter of divorce law. It strains credulity to imagine that this is mere coincidence.

27. See Louis Finkelstein, *Mavo lemasekh tot avot ve avot derabi Natan* (New York: 1950), 226.

28. See *ibid.*

29. For this as the correct reading, see Jacob Nahum Halevy Epstein, *Introduction to the Text of the Mishna* (Jerusalem: 1964), 536. The word *tiflut* means literally "childish things" or "foolishness," as we find in the midrashic collection Bamidbar Rabah 4:20, where we are told of a child who speaks "tiflut" during prayer, to which his father answers, "What shall I do? He is a child and he plays!" However, it is also a frequent euphemism for lasciviousness, as we can see clearly from the following text:

To bring Vashti the queen before the king in her royal crown [Esther 1:12]. Rabbi Aibo said, It is the atonement of Israel that when they eat and drink and are merry, they bless and sing the praises of God; when the nations of the world eat and drink, they deal in matters of *tiflut*: one says Medean women are beautiful, and the other says Persian women are beautiful. That fool [Ahashuerosh] said to them, The vessel that I use is neither Medean nor Persian but Chaldean! Do you wish to see her? They said, Yes, on condition that she is naked [Esther Rabah 3:13].

In this misogynistic context (actually one quite hostile to the king's misogyny), it is quite clear that "tiflut" has the sense of lasciviousness. See also Tanhuma Exodus 28, which declares that "all kisses are of tiflut, except for the kiss of parting, the kiss of honoring and the kiss of meet-

ing.” Finally, the very context of our mishnah supports this interpretation, for the continuation is R. Yehoshua’s claim that a woman “prefers one measure of food with *tiflut* to nine measures with sexual abstinence,” that is, a poor but lusty husband is preferable to one who is better off but more abstemious. Incidentally, the context of R. Yehoshua’s statement suggests that the term is not even being used pejoratively by him. This, however, needs further investigation. Epstein deals with this passage in *ibid.*, 670.

30. In all candor, it must be admitted that this is the simplest translation of the text as well, for it most easily is read as, “she will know *that* merit mitigates.” However, as I claim in the text, this makes the statement practically incoherent, and the Hebrew must be read as I have translated it, which certainly seems to be the Palestinian understanding.

The Impact of Feminism on Rabbinic Studies: The Impossible Paradox of Reading Women into Rabbinic Literature

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The rabbinic corpus that was written and compiled between 70 and 600 C.E., consisting of the Mishnah, the Tosefta, the two Talmuds, and the collections of midrash, forms the cornerstone of postbiblical Judaism. While scholars are increasingly coming to the consensus that in its historical context the rabbinic movement held minimal sway over the Jewish populations in Palestine and Babylonia¹ (and even less in the Greco-Roman diaspora), the literature produced by the rabbinic movement has had enduring influence. These documents not only set the norms for Jewish behaviors and rituals, but they also convey the primary myths that form the basis for post-biblical theology and belief systems. How are we to explain the paradox of a canon that holds so much power in the imagination of later generations, yet was not definitive in its own day? The key lies in the ability of these texts to project a vision into the future, and in the willingness of future generations of Jews to accept this program as inevitable. A unique feature of rabbinic literature, then, is the dialectic it proposes between itself and future generations: its influential power lies somewhere between past, present, and future.

Jewish feminists in the past 25 years have identified what they see as a tragic flaw in the world and identity promulgated by this body of literature: it denies women a voice in its creation. The role imagined for women in rabbinic literature is riddled with serious legal limitations and debilitating, negative stereotypes. Jewish feminist readers of rabbinic literature face an irreconcilable paradox: they, like other Jews, turn toward this corpus as a wellspring for identity and yet find it incapable of reflecting back a vision of who they would like to be. This essay will explore various possibilities for mediating between the two contradictory impulses that this body of literature inspires: embrace of its compelling authority and rejection of its deprecating exclusion.

I begin with a short analysis of a group of rabbinic texts on the topic of Torah study as a form of oral transmission. These texts display two features relevant to this essay. First, they demonstrate the rabbinic capacity to project into the future a world that does not yet exist, but which is an authentic amplification of who the rabbis are. This

deep connection between past, present, and future is accomplished through the mechanism of Torah study. The selected texts show how those who pass on traditions through the chain of oral transmission amplify and augment the message they have received, and also reveal the disability imposed upon women who might wish to enter the stream of transmission. At the very root of this generative project lies a definitive exclusion of women. Consequently, not only are women denied a favorable representation in the rabbinic corpus itself, but they are excluded from the transformative role of interpreter. In this analysis, I hope to show that the challenge facing feminist readers of the rabbinic corpus lies not only in dealing with the obvious chauvinism of the literature itself, but also in confronting the masculinist hermeneutic that the literature perpetuates.

In the second part of this essay, I will discuss three major strategies that have been employed to reconcile the conflict of commitments engendered by the lure of rabbinic texts with their flawed construction of gender relations. While each of these strategies is shown to be inevitably imperfect in some way, I identify a common strength they share: loosening the grip of the inherited hermeneutic on the corpus' interpretive future. So whereas it may be impossible to alter objectionable features within the authoritative literature, an equal part of the corpus is the world it projects into the future, and feminist readers do have the ability to alter this trajectory.

The Feminist Project

Before delving into the body of this essay, it is useful to begin with some basic definitions. What is the feminist project, and how does it relate to rabbinic literature? Feminists have come to that literature primarily via two different routes; consequently, they bring different sets of goals to their study of rabbinic texts. On the one hand are feminists from the world of academia, who perceive rabbinic culture and its literary artifacts as one historical phenomenon among many others.² The goal of feminist study in this case is to restore women's place in the narration of the past, effectively taking women's experiences "out of the margins" of history as has been done in so many other domains of historical study.³ The academic historical enterprise first confirms that "women" (their status, their experiences, their circumstances) are a legitimate domain of inquiry and then attempts to refashion the categories by which history is narrated in order to reflect the particularities of women's experience.⁴

Tal Ilan writes with a touch of humorous irony about the first of these tasks:

One might argue, therefore, that since women's visible contribution in the sources for the period under study is so small, there is essentially no justification for writing their history separately, and we should be satisfied with what is said about them in books on general history. But by the same argument, if there is no justification for writing the history of half of the human race, there would be much less justification for trying to compose the history of the people like the Moabites, who left no historical traditions. . . . The history of Jewish women is certainly no less important an historical inquiry.⁵

But the historical task is complicated by the fact that rabbinic sources do not preserve women's voices without the mediation of male transmission and recording. Conse-

quently, even where female actors appear in the literature, it is difficult to interpret them as expressions of female agency in history. Daniel Boyarin has coined the phrase “thinking with women” to describe the “notion that men often talk about women when referring in fact to their own sexuality.”⁶ A number of feminist historians have compensated for the male-authored character of the corpus by reading rabbinic texts alongside other sources (archeological evidence, inscriptions, nonrabbinic literary sources) that provide more direct access to knowledge about women’s lives and experience.⁷ Additionally, Ilan has developed a methodology based on traditional scholarly attention to textual variants, parallel sources, and networks of family relations, which is specifically aimed at ferreting out information about women from what initially appear to be unyielding raw materials.⁸ Another strategy focuses on questions that *can* be resolved by examining the evidence of male-authored texts, such as the legal status of women in rabbinic literature⁹ and the construction of gender identities in rabbinic culture.¹⁰ In all of these cases, academic historians attempt to fill in gaps about our knowledge of Jewish women’s status in the past.

On the other hand, feminists have also come to the rabbinic corpus as contemporary Jews. From this perspective, rabbinic texts are seen in their canonical aspect, with a requisite power to define what Judaism is and will be. In this case, the goal is to use the sources to refashion the place of women in contemporary Judaism so that they may contribute meaningfully to the shape of Jewish culture in the present and future.¹¹ The primary aim here is to establish a hermeneutical stance that both grants the texts their generative authority within the tradition *and* establishes a mechanism to override their patriarchal conception of women.¹² Those Jewish feminists who approach the rabbinic corpus from the standpoint of its contemporary relevance are less beholden to the historical context in which it was produced. They are more concerned with how the texts function in contemporary religious life—whether as normative texts for ritual behavior or as the basis for theology.¹³

These two paths—of feminist students of the past and of contemporary feminist practitioners—are not always clearly distinguished. As we have noted, rabbinic texts themselves presuppose essential links between past, present, and future.¹⁴ Even scholars whose explicit aim is to uncover historical information about the status of women’s agency often do so in a manner that makes the texts more palatable to those who have difficulty with the gender dynamics they encode. For example, while affirming that he employs conventional scholarly tools so that his reading of texts is a “plausible reconstruction on the data before us,” the rabbinic historian Daniel Boyarin also acknowledges his “[intention] to construct a . . . ‘usable past,’ discovering and marking out those areas within [talmudic] culture that can serve us today.”¹⁵ Scholars who deal primarily with historical issues can also display their contemporary concerns in a number of ways. They may try to identify protofeminist voices within the texts,¹⁶ account for the patriarchal control of women’s lives,¹⁷ or explore the constructed character of gender relations¹⁸ so that, in the words of Miriam Peskowitz, “[we] need not repeat their habits for our futures.”¹⁹ In each of these ways, historians acknowledge and embrace their personal stake in how history is represented. The past, then, is not a relic that we observe with dispassionate interest, but a heritage that offers a clue as to who we are today. For historians, rigorous study can be a mechanism to affirm the links between the past and present.

Reproducing Rabbis, Not Women

The rabbis of old also wanted to establish links between generations and to see their reflection in the past and future. For them, the chain went all the way back to Mount Sinai and forward in time to the end of generations. Projecting their program back, they suggested that “Scripture, Mishnah, Talmud, *halakhot* and *agadot*, and even the question that a bright student would one day ask his master, was already transmitted to Moses on Mount Sinai” (PT Hagigah 1:8 [76d:33–35]). They also hoped that the rabbinic project would be perpetuated by future generations. As with contemporary scholars, study was a means to establish that continuity. The rabbis imagined that pre-rabbinic generations had studied as they did—employing a curriculum of Mishnah, midrash, Talmud, *halakhot* and *agadot* in rabbinic academies (*batei midrash*).²⁰ And so their understanding was that they were perpetuating an age-old tradition, not initiating a new one; the hope was that future generations would be fashioned in the same image. To this effect, the rabbis of the mishnaic (tanaitic) and talmudic (amoraic) periods crafted a curriculum of study that they believed would reproduce identity and transmit the rabbinic program to future generations.

The aspiration to reproduce identity expresses itself in the fact that the rabbis often use the rhetoric of biological reproduction in discussing their own rabbinic project.²¹ For example, the following text draws an analogy between fathers and sons, on the one hand, and masters and disciples, on the other.²² This early rabbinic commentary to Deuteronomy glosses a well-known passage (part of the Shema prayer) about transmitting the words of Torah to the next generation.

And you shall teach them [these words] to your sons [Deut. 6:6]. *Sons*.²³ These are your disciples. And thus do we find that everywhere [in Scripture] disciples are called sons. . . . And just as disciples are called sons, so too the master is called a father . . . (Sifrei Deut., piskah 34).

Here, the midrash speaks of the links between masters and disciples as a kind of biological kinship: the chain of transmission does not merely convey knowledge, but reproduces identity as though on genetic lines. The biological connection between fathers and sons is used metaphorically to confirm the power of the transmissional process. When masters transmit the store of traditions to the next generation, they not only find a repository for their knowledge, but they also ensure that their genetic code is perpetuated. The master’s identity is preserved even after the master himself passes away.

Using the metaphor of biological reproduction to describe the work of cultural reproduction fits a pattern that has been observed by Mary O’Brien. She notes that political theorists from Plato to Marx have referred to expressions of cultural and spiritual creativity as a kind of second birth. However, to use the language of biological reproduction to describe processes that essentially are not biological carries with it other implications. O’Brien observes that “the conditions of this second birth, . . . which are an integral part of many male dominant religions, are very different from the conditions of first birth. They are conditions created and controlled by men, both human and divine, and no female reproductive labor is required for this significant

genesis.”²⁴ Indeed, the rabbis conform to the paradigm described by O’Brien; even as the language of reproduction provides a powerful paradigm for understanding the project of rabbinic regeneration, it invokes a concomitant exclusion of women.

We find, for instance, the following text in the Mishnah, from approximately the same time period as the previously cited text:

[Regarding] all of the commandments [that pertain] to the child, and [which are incumbent] upon the parent²⁵—men are obligated and women are exempt (M. Kidushin 1:7).

Though women are associated with childbearing, and usually with subsequent child-rearing duties, here the father is given primary responsibility. The basis for this unexpected division of labor is clarified in a parallel passage found in an addendum to the Mishnah known as the Tosefta:

What are the commandments of the parent to the child? To circumcise him, to redeem him, to teach him Torah, to teach him a trade and to marry him off²⁶ (T. Kidushin 1:11).

The important difference between the mother’s invisible child-rearing responsibilities and those explicitly noted for the father is the cultural weight of the latter. Each of the duties that the father performs for his child maintains and perpetuates the central covenant with God. The Tosefta places parental duties in a spiritual setting that is the primary domain of men, which explains the basis for the unexpected exemption of women from family-related responsibilities. The first two obligations state the covenantal component of these rituals explicitly in the biblical context.²⁷ The third of the duties, teaching Torah, is also integrally related to perpetuating the covenant since, in rabbinic culture, that act functions as an ongoing reenactment of the original revelation and covenant at Sinai. Finally, by teaching his son a trade and marrying him off, the father creates the familial infrastructure for the next generation. The father’s familial duties ensure the continuation of a line of progeny—but in a cultural and spiritual, rather than a biological sense. This statement from the Tosefta thus functions as a mirror image of the commentary on the Shema from Sifrei Deuteronomy. Whereas the midrashic passage imports a vocabulary of biological kinship to describe bonds that are forged in the spiritual and cultural domains, the passage from the Tosefta transforms the family from a site of “mere” biological replication to one where central cultural values are transmitted. In so doing, however, the contribution of the mother is ignored and discounted.

The transformation of the family from the site of biological to cultural reproduction is made even more explicit in another text from the tanaïtic period. Here again the shift in the significance of the family is accompanied by an ironic exclusion of women:

A man may not refrain from the command to “be fruitful and multiply,” unless he already has children. Beit Shammai says, two male children. Beit Hillel says, one male child and one female child, as it is said: *male and female He created them* (Gen. 5:2). . . . Men are commanded concerning “be fruitful and multiply,” but not women (M. Yebamot 6:6).

This source deals with the fundamental act of biological reproduction. Yet as in previous sources, the female’s central role in perpetuating the nation is ignored. Birth is constructed not as a function of the laboring female body, but as an act that confirms

the covenant with God by expressing the allegiance of the commanded to the commander.²⁸ As such, it is something incumbent upon men, the primary participants in the covenantal relationship, and not upon women, though they in fact are the central actors in any fulfillment of the command to be fruitful and multiply. The fact that birth is constructed as a spiritually significant event in the perpetuation of male culture, rather than as a biological event in the female body, is highlighted in a parallel to this mishnaic statement. The passage—from Tosefta Yebamot 8:4—elaborates with a proof-text on the above-cited view of Beit Shammai:

Beit Shammai says: [He is required to produce] two male children, as did Moses, who had two sons, as it is written, *And the sons of Moses were Gershom and Eliezer* (Chron. I 23:15).

In this source, Moses, the initial transmitter of Torah, is taken as the paradigm for male reproduction. Moses' most commonly acknowledged role in rabbinic culture is that of the prototypical rabbi. By receiving the Torah directly from God at Sinai, he is the first to study and transmit Torah, and he is thus known as "Moshe rabenu," Moses our master. Here the clout of that established personage lends new meaning to the obligation to biologically reproduce, pulling it into the sphere of cultural reproduction. Moses initiates this process in two senses: he is the first Israelite to receive and transmit Torah, and he also gives birth to two sons. Yet again, a central act of female creativity is contextualized in such a way that its cultural and spiritual aspects are highlighted—with women excluded.

All of the texts discussed thus far originate in roughly the same period. They represent the earliest stratum of rabbinic literature, recording the opinions of the *tanaim*, or rabbis of the mishnaic period (70 C.E.–200 C.E.). Three themes emerge from these texts: the importance of replicating identity between the generations through Torah study; the use of biological kinship and reproduction as metaphors to describe that replication of identity; and finally, the exclusion of women from the line of cultural reproduction. When read together in this way, the sources allude to a nascent sense among the rabbis that perpetuating their program entailed a necessary exclusion of women. The connections between these three interrelated ideas become even more apparent in a text from a later stratum of rabbinic literature.

The talmudic commentary (that is, the *gemarah*) on M. Kidushin 1:7 and Tosefta Kidushin 1:11 consolidates these three themes into a more concise textual expression. The *gemarah* makes it clear that the line of spiritual and cultural progeny emanating from the rabbinic corpus is one that excludes women. After citing the mishnah, which states only that fathers and not mothers are obligated to perform the commandments related to offspring, the *gemarah* brings a version of the toseftan passage quoted above that clarifies what these commandments are (circumcision, redemption, teaching Torah, marrying the son off, and teaching him a trade). The bulk of the talmudic passage consists of a sustained exercise in supplying the biblical basis for each of the father's obligations. For the first three duties, the biblical proof-text is then interrogated: first, the father's obligation to perform each of these respective duties is confirmed; next, it is shown that where the father does not meet his obligation, the son himself must do these things for himself; and finally, it is shown that the mother is not obligated to step in, even where others fail to meet the obligation. In the treatment of the

obligations to redeem the first-born child and to teach Torah, it is further determined that sons only, not daughters, are the subject of the commandments.

We pick up the talmudic passage in its discussion of the third of these duties: teaching Torah.²⁹ Again, our interest in this passage is in how it ties together the three interrelated themes (maintaining continuity between the generations through Torah study, the metaphor of biological reproduction, and the exclusion of women) that appeared in diffused form in the tanaitic texts:³⁰

To teach him Torah.

A. From where do we know this? As it is written, *And you shall teach them* ["velimadetem"], *your sons* ["beneikhem"] (Deut. 11:19)

B. And where his father did not teach him, he is obligated to teach himself, as it is written, *and you shall study* ["ulemadetem"] (Deut. 5:1).

C. How do we know that she [the mother] is not obligated [to teach]? Since it is written *and you shall teach them* ["velimadetem"], [which has the same spelling as] *and you shall study* ["ulemadetem"]: thus, whoever is commanded to study is commanded to teach; whoever is not commanded to study is not commanded to teach.

D. And how do we know that she is not obligated to teach herself? Since it is written *and you shall teach them* ["velimadetem"], [which has the same spelling as] *and you shall study* ["ulemadetem"]: thus, the one whom others are commanded to teach is commanded to teach himself; the one whom others are not commanded to teach is not commanded to teach himself.

E. How then do we know that others are not commanded to teach her [the daughter]? Since it is written, *and you shall teach them, your sons*—your sons, but not your daughters (Kidushin: 29b).

The passage begins by bringing two different prooftexts, one that provides the basis for the father's obligation to teach his son (par. A.) and the other that provides the basis for the son's obligation to teach himself (par. B.). These two prooftexts undergird the entire argument that follows, in that the central verbs in the two biblical verses are spelled identically (the "u" and "v" are both represented by the letter *vov*). The next two steps in the argument (pars. C. and D.) respectively prove that women are obligated neither to teach others nor to study themselves. In each case, the Talmud proves its point by drawing an analogy between the two verses cited above. The one who studies is like the one who teaches others, and vice versa. As noted, the analogy is based on the shared spelling of the two key verbs: "and you shall teach them" (*v-l-m-d-t-m*) and "and you shall study" (*u-l-m-d-t-m*). This linguistic similarity suggests to the talmudic commentator a seamless connection between the one who transmits (the previous generation), the one who studies (the present generation), and the one who receives (the future generation)—all of whom are presumably men. The one who teaches others now was recently one who studied himself, and before that was one who was himself taught by others. The interchangeability of these roles is what ensures the faithful reproduction of rabbinic culture.

Here, however, it is employed as the basis for the exclusion of women from the chain of transmission. Women are understood to be foreign agents both in the realm of Torah study and in the chain of transmission embodied by it. This fundamental point is established in the concluding lines of the argument (par. E.): "How then do we know that others are not commanded to teach her [the daughter]? Because it is

written, *and you shall teach them, your sons*—your sons, but not your daughters.”³¹ Tracing the logical progression from the conclusion to the beginning of the argument, then, it seems that women are not commanded to be taught, therefore they do not study themselves, and therefore they do not teach others. In the earlier tanaïtic texts, the metaphorical use of biological reproduction to describe cultural and spiritual reproduction provides the basis for excluding women from the chain of transmission. By way of contrast, the later talmudic text presents the notion of women’s exclusion as an uncontested fact in the nature of rabbinic transmission.³²

Observing the consolidation of the three themes in a more concise textual expression opens a window onto the actual work of the rabbinic transmissional process. Indeed, ideas were passed on from earlier to later generations—and with a high degree of continuity. In the later expression, we see a consolidation of the themes that in turn serves as a frame for the earlier materials. Whereas in the earlier texts the notion of transmitting identity in a gender-exclusive manner is diffused among several texts and must be teased out of the relationship among them, the later text crystalizes these ideas. It accepts the agenda of the earlier texts, and indeed amplifies and augments it by giving it clearer expression. And this process of perpetuating a masculinist reception of the texts can be replicated *ad infinitum*. The *gemarah*, in turn, becomes the starting point from which post-talmudic generations initiate their learning, modeling themselves in its image—and further articulating and emphasizing the exclusion of women from the chain of Torah transmission.

What becomes apparent from this discussion is the extent to which reading women into rabbinic literature is a complicated task. It is to this project that we now turn.

Addressing the Masculinist Hermeneutic

Feminist readers of rabbinic literature come to their work with a variety of commitments—which, as previously noted, often exist in a tense relationship. For some, the lure of the corpus compels an identification that makes it desirable to discern protofeminist voices in the conglomerate of competing voices within rabbinic literature. Different scholars have devised different strategies for identifying these protofeminist voices. For example, Judith Hauptman systematically identifies legal innovations that the rabbinic-legislators, as she calls them, made to improve women’s lives, thereby finding in the ancient rabbis an expression of the same concerns voiced by contemporary feminists. In particular, she focuses on innovations made in the transition from biblical to rabbinic law, but she also notes some changes introduced within the rabbinic era, between the tanaïtic and amoraic periods.³³ By way of contrast, Daniel Boyarin uses a very different strategy to identify protofeminist voices within the corpus. He takes rabbinic literature to be the record of cultural contestations, and so identifies both the dominant voices that “won” the battle for cultural hegemony and those countervoices that “lost.”³⁴ On several important issues (for example, whether women may study Torah or whether family life is compatible with Torah study), the concerns expressed by the countervoices correspond to those of contemporary feminists.

For other scholars, the clash of conflicting commitments is best resolved by crafting a neutral stance and simply describing the legal or social status of women in rabbinic times.³⁵ For yet others, there is a need to disown the heritage of the rabbis as a source for contemporary identity.³⁶ Miriam Peskowitz concludes her interesting analysis of the spindle in rabbinic culture with the disclosure that she initially began her project with hopes of finding a direct access to female culture in antiquity with which she as a contemporary women might identify. However, she found that there is no such thing as a “pure” woman or an “essential” woman of the past that exists outside of rabbinic cultural constructs of gender, and consequently she found no past to which she can return.³⁷

Though one set of commitments takes priority over others in the work of any given scholar, they necessarily remain in tension. So the scholar who distills protofeminist voices from within rabbinic literature may be accused of apologetics by those whose commitments lie in a different direction.³⁸ Likewise, those who disown the rabbinic heritage leave themselves open to the objection that they nonetheless turn to the corpus—engaging, for example, in a not unsympathetic albeit critical analysis of rabbinic texts—even while they overtly claim to be disavowing it.³⁹ Of course, the question of whether rabbinic literature offers contemporary Jewish women material on which to base their identity cannot be determined by objective standards, only by each individual’s particular sensibilities. Even the middle path, that of seeking a straightforward description of women’s lives or legal status, fails to resolve the tension of commitments, since it does not directly engage itself either with the women’s issue or with the corpus as a whole.⁴⁰

In opting for any of these divergent paths, however, scholars do share some common ground, namely, exposing and redressing the masculinist hermeneutic. In so doing, they reinscribe the world in which rabbinic literature is transmitted and so in some small, but very effective way, change the future that the literature projects, and thus the literature itself.

Scholarship that disengages rabbinic literature from the patriarchal hermeneutic falls into two basic categories. Some of the research focuses on the gender-biased sensibilities of the ancient rabbis. This body of scholarship demonstrates how the masculinist outcome was not inevitable, but was rather the product of a concerted effort. In other words, the social structures that placed women at a distinct disadvantage in rabbinic culture had to be instituted. Scholars of this school examine the genesis of attitudes that later generations simply took for granted. Others, in contrast, focusing on the fact that later generations received gender-biased sensibilities from their predecessors, examine the ways in which acceptance of these values has shaped later interpretations of the rabbinic corpus and other early sources.

Identifying the Hermeneutic in Its Promulgation

To trace the emergence of the masculinist hermeneutic from its inception is a methodologically complex task that requires rabbinic literature to be read as the record of cultural transformations in process. The resolution imposed by the editors and redac-

tors of the text is dismantled and interrogated for evidence of the contestations out of which it grew. The texts are not read as if they were a transparent window onto a historical reality that existed in rabbinic times, but rather as documentary traces of the struggle to create a particular version of Jewish culture. What is innovative in this method of reading rabbinic texts is that it resists the temptation to accept the program the texts themselves propose, even though this program has been accepted without question by many generations of Jewish readers. When put to feminist purposes, this methodology seeks to demonstrate that the masculinist program of the rabbis is not intrinsic to rabbinic culture.

Daniel Boyarin offers one such reading of rabbinic culture in his book, *Carnal Israel*. There he presents both what became the hegemonic view that dominated later discourse (and that was taken by later generations to represent rabbinic culture) and the countervailing voices that prove, in his view, that this discourse was not uncontested in antiquity. Boyarin documents several instances in which different voices vie against each other, in this way expressing cultural anxiety around such issues as 1) whether or not women may engage in Torah study, and 2) whether they may express sexual desire directly to their husbands, or else must repress it for the sake of their husbands' Torah study. For example, while he thoroughly documents the rabbinic exclusion of women from the culturally significant domain of Torah study—and shows how the story of a failed woman Torah scholar was employed rhetorically to keep women out of this domain—he also brings other texts that indicate that women nonetheless did participate (at least theoretically) in this culturally significant activity.⁴¹ Likewise, while he establishes that the dominant discourse required women to deny themselves the companionship of their husbands in order to facilitate the latter's Torah study—and again he shows how a story about a self-sacrificing wife rhetorically supports this perspective—Boyarin also brings evidence of rabbinic opposition to this point of view.⁴² In the introduction to his book, Boyarin explains why he is committed to exposing differing standpoints:

Most scholarship on such a culture [one for which historians have no record other than its own self-promoting sources] is non-critical, at best reproducing the ideology of the dominant voices structuring the texts of the culture. My practice here will be to look at texts as (necessarily failed) attempts to propose utopian solutions to cultural tensions. . . . I hope that by observing the effects of the energy expended by the culture in attempting to suppress . . . the tensions, the underlying strains and pressures can be brought to light.⁴³

Revealing the different stances held with respect to the role of women demonstrates that no single ideology was accepted in the rabbinic world without conflict. In showing how the reigning ideologies of rabbinic culture were instituted only through a concerted effort, Boyarin disengages the texts from the purposes to which they have been put by generations of readers, namely, reproducing ascendant gender biases. He exposes the path *not* taken historically, but which is nonetheless theoretically present within rabbinic culture.

Miriam Peskowitz's work also emphasizes the extent to which rabbinic sensibilities concerning gender roles are not "natural." In order to make her point, she turns to the arena of "daily labors," the repetitive work that people do without noticing its larger implications. She observes that women, regardless of their social station, were

associated with textile work (the classic task was spinning), and that this work was a signifier of their feminine identity, of which one key component was sexual fidelity. Male identity, in contrast, was defined by the labor of Torah study. Peskowitz argues that this division of tasks represented a rabbinic utopia of gender identities. However, the very same texts that promulgate this ideal vision also indicate that such pure divisions of labor did not actually obtain in rabbinic times. In fact, men also engaged in textile work, so that such employment was actually an ambiguous symbol of feminine identity. According to Peskowitz,

the rabbinic instruction is caught in a tension between what they see as current practice—in which crafts are not gender-segregated—and a utopian desire, in which they will be. . . . The passage [which directs men into a “clean and easy trade,” and later glossed as Torah study] envisions a society in which habits of work and gender were much more clear than the rabbis’ own.⁴⁴

Like Boyarin, Peskowitz demonstrates how instituting gender identities into a cultural system is necessarily a far more complex process than the dominant elite might have us believe.

Peskowitz shows not only how the rabbis constructed ideals about what it meant to be male and what it meant to be female, but also how the rabbis enforced these ideals in rabbinic society. The question of enforcement is particularly intriguing, since rabbinic culture in the tannaitic period lacked strong institutional structures with the authority to implement their desired norms. She writes that,

what remains are clues within rabbinic texts for how they imagined their regulation of gender and sexuality into a discipline of practice in everyday life. . . . Women were not part of the all-male system of study and collegiality rabbis envisioned for themselves, but women’s adherence to rabbinic halakhah, and to a (rabbinic) Jewish ethos was necessary for the support and continuation of that very system.⁴⁵

Interestingly, Peskowitz focuses on nonlegal mechanisms of enforcement, noting the importance of social pressure in creating an environment of compliance. Social pressure was exerted when higher-status members of the social structure (the “virtuous” spinning women) gossiped about transgressors (women who violate the sexual norms prescribed to them by the rabbis), and when talk occurred in the marketplace more generally. In identifying the social mechanisms by which rabbinic culture enforced its norms, she suggests that implementation was by no means simple. It was one thing for rabbinic culture to formulate norms with respect to gender identities, and another to ensure that the Jewish population accepted them. Enforcement is necessary only when such social structures are in fact not natural.

Adopting similar methodological approaches, both Boyarin and Peskowitz show how much effort had to be invested in order to promulgate the rabbinic set of expectations with respect to masculine and feminine roles. But an additional step has to be taken if the rabbinic corpus is to be disengaged from its authoritative role as an anchor for traditional gender identities. One must also analyze how the sensibilities examined by Boyarin and Peskowitz at the stage of promulgation were inherited by subsequent generations of Jews, affecting how they read and interpreted the received sources. Concurrently, another group of scholars has been working to address this task.

Intercepting the Hermeneutic at Its Reception

By the early twentieth century, rabbinic Judaism had evolved into a culture where it was assumed that women neither perform the public functions in the synagogue nor even sit together with men. Bernadette Brooten, however, has demonstrated how these conditions of contemporary Jewish life have interfered with scholars' ability to interpret accurately the inscriptional and archeological evidence about women's roles in the ancient synagogue.⁴⁶ Brooten's study begins with the citation of an Ionian inscription, which states that Rufina, a Jewess, occupied the position of "head of the synagogue." Scholars since 1883 have interpreted this inscription as one that bestowed an "honorific title" on Rufina. Such a designation would have carried no functional duties since, as Brooten explains, the dominant trend in scholarship was to assume that "a woman, *qua* woman, could not have held such a post."⁴⁷ Brooten presents extensive inscriptional and literary evidence to challenge these accepted scholarly assumptions. She concludes her analysis with the following statement:

Rather than trying to fit these inscriptions [she discusses three altogether] into our pre-conceived notions of what women were (and are) and of what Judaism was, would it not be more reasonable to take these inscriptions as a challenge to our pre-conceptions, as traces of a Judaism of which we know very little?⁴⁸

In the course of her argument, Brooten also addresses the issue of whether women actually sat in a separate gallery. In her detailed analysis of the architectural structures of ancient synagogues, she again shows how scholar's presuppositions concerning the status of women in the synagogue have colored their interpretation of the evidence: "They look for a women's gallery and they find one."⁴⁹ Rabbinic texts are one among the many literary sources that she uses to buttress her various arguments concerning women in leadership positions and the nonexistence of a women's gallery in ancient synagogues. Most importantly, her work demonstrates the extent to which unreflective reading practices may lead to the perpetuation of unexamined gender biases, which the ancient materials in many cases do not warrant.

Tal Ilan also shows how received preconceptions about women have interfered with the accurate interpretation of early sources. Ilan's work, in contrast to Brooten's, focuses on how these preconceptions functioned in antiquity.⁵⁰ Ilan notes that "women are always anomalous in ancient texts, and their mere presence [had] to be sufficiently explained. If a persuasive explanation for their presence [was] not available, an editor, a redactor or even a scribe often deleted them."⁵¹ This process, which Ilan calls the "censorship of women," indicates how a masculinist hermeneutic affected the construction of knowledge about women even in antiquity. Ilan identifies such censorship in several different layers within the ancient rabbinic corpus. First, she shows how tanaaitic sources were transformed in their transmission from the unofficial transcription (which today can be found in the Tosefta) to the authoritative and canonical formulation recorded in the Mishnah.⁵² She also notes how toseftan sources were revised when they appeared as *baraitot* ("outside" material—that is, material that was not included in the Mishnah) in the Babylonian Talmud.

Among the examples of censorship Ilan brings are cases where the attribution of a halakhic statement to a woman, or the implication that women engaged in Torah study

and wore ritual phylacteries and fringes (*zizit*) were written out of the sources. She also observes that the Babylonian Talmud engages in “self-censorship,” wherein tales concerning women are alluded to rather than being recorded in full. Finally, she uses the manuscript tradition to observe that the mention of women was often censored out of the printed edition, which aimed at a much wider distribution. At each level of transmission (from the unofficial toseftan version to the canonical mishnaic formulation, from the earlier Tosefta to the later Talmud, from unofficial oral tradition to the scribal record of the Talmud, and from individual manuscript versions to the printed editions) a set of preconceptions about women affected how the earlier materials were reformulated and passed on. In this process, valuable information about women was lost. By redirecting scholars’ attention to the earlier sources and to important manuscript variants, Ilan subverts the long-prevailing hermeneutic.

Working independently, Judith Hauptman has observed a phenomenon similar to that of Ilan’s censorship. In some areas of law (procreation, divorce, inheritance, Passover observance, and the voluntary performance of commandments from which women are exempt),⁵³ Hauptman finds that the Tosefta records more liberal positions with respect to women than does the canonical Mishnah, which set the standards for later normative Judaism; thus, she corroborates Ilan’s findings in this area of research. In the work of both Hauptman and Ilan, one sees how the more influential the texts of the tradition—whether the canonical Mishnah and Talmud as opposed to the less authoritative Tosefta, or the printed edition of the Talmud as opposed to obscure manuscript variants—the deeper becomes the masculinist imprint.⁵⁴

Scholars who turn to rabbinic literature with an interest in reinscribing women into the world of the texts are motivated by a wide variety of personal commitments and passions. These passions are in many ways the fuel that propels their work. But how do feminist readers of rabbinic literature balance their personal passions and derivative commitments with the shared goals of the broader community of scholarship? One step toward transcending the personal character of commitment is to frame it in terms that make clear how the collective body of knowledge that is the primary domain of scholarship is served. Virtually all of the scholars discussed in this essay share the goal of restructuring our understanding of the ancient corpus so that its exclusion of women is not so definitive.

In disengaging the sources from the masculinist interpretive frame, feminist scholars have succeeded in attaining two related goals. First, they are widening and deepening the state of our communal knowledge about women’s lives and experiences. But equally important, from the feminist point of view, their work restructures the framework within which rabbinic texts are transmitted and rendered authoritative. Women enter the chain of transmission that brings the texts to life and, in so doing, transform the way that the texts will be received by the next generation.

Notes

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and commenting upon the final manuscript. I would also like to thank Drew Alexander for his editorial comments on the final manuscript. I, of course, accept full responsibility for all errors and shortcomings that remain.

1. See Lee Levine, *The Rabbinic Class in Greco-Roman Palestine* (New York: 1989); and Catherine Hezser, *Social Structure of the Rabbinic Movement in Roman Palestine* (Tübingen: 1997).

2. The major contributions are listed below in chronological order. Though not all of these works will be discussed in the body of this essay, given the fact that this essay functions in part as a bibliographic review, it seems appropriate to provide a more inclusive list: Judith Hauptman, "An Assessment of Women's Liberation in the Talmudic Period," *Conservative Judaism* 26, no. 4 (1972), 22–28; idem, "Images of Women in the Talmud," in *Religion and Sexism*, ed. Rosemary Radford Ruether (New York: 1974), 184–212; Jacob Neusner, *Method and Meaning in Ancient Judaism* (Missoula: 1979), 79–100; idem, *A History of the Mishnaic Law of Women*, vol. 5 (Leiden: 1980); Bernadette Brooten, *Women Leaders in the Ancient Synagogue* (Chico, Calif.: 1982); Rachel Biale, *Women and Jewish Law: An Exploration of Women's Issues in Halakhic Sources* (New York: 1984); Judith Baskin, "The Separation of Women in Rabbinic Judaism," in *Women, Religion and Social Change*, ed. Yvonne Yazbeck Haddad and Ellison Banks Findly (Albany: 1985), 3–18; Judith Wegner, *Chattel or Person: The Status of Women in the Mishnah* (New York: 1988); Shaye J.D. Cohen, "Menstruants and the Sacred in Judaism and Christianity," in *Women's History and Ancient History*, ed. Sarah B. Pomeroy (Chapel Hill: 1991), 273–299; Judith Wegner, "The Image and Status of Women in Classical Rabbinic Judaism," in *Jewish Women in Historical Perspective*, ed. Judith R. Baskin (Detroit: 1991), 94–114; Ross Shepard Kraemer, *Her Share of the Blessings: Women's Religions among Pagans, Jews and Christians in the Greco-Roman World* (New York: 1992), 93–105; Daniel Boyarin, *Carnal Israel: Reading Sex in Talmudic Culture* (Berkeley: 1993); Judith Hauptman, "Feminist Perspectives on Rabbinic Texts," in *Feminist Perspectives on Jewish Studies*, ed. Lynn Davidman and Shelly Tenenbaum (New Haven: 1994), 40–61; Tal Ilan, *Jewish Women in Greco-Roman Palestine* (Peabody, Mass.: 1996); idem, *Mine and Yours Are Hers: Retrieving Women's History from Rabbinic Literature* (New York: 1997); Miriam B. Peskowitz, *Spinning Fantasies: Rabbis, Gender and History* (Berkeley: 1997); Judith Hauptman, *Rereading the Rabbis: A Woman's Voice* (Boulder: 1998). A complete review of scholarship on women and rabbinic literature, including material that predates the wave of feminism covered by the above list, can be found in the introduction to Ilan's *Jewish Women in Greco-Roman Palestine*.

3. In this vein of feminist work, Sarah B. Pomeroy, a historian of women in ancient Greece, writes that "the articles [in this volume] are feminist in that women are at the center of each author's inquiry. . . . Thus it is to be hoped that this book will serve to expand the paradigms of ancient history to include women." See *Women's History and Ancient History* (Chapel Hill: 1991), xiv–xv.

4. See Miriam B. Peskowitz, who discusses the second of these tasks in "Engendering Jewish History," in *Judaism Since Gender*, ed. Miriam Peskowitz and Laura Levitt (New York: 1997), 17–39.

5. Ilan, *Jewish Women in Greco-Roman Palestine*, 1–2.

6. Boyarin, *Carnal Israel*, 145.

7. It is the interpretive strategies of scholars that draw the information about women out of these cryptic sources. Nonetheless, they offer greater potential access to women's lives and experience than rabbinic texts alone. On the use of inscriptional and archeological evidence, see Brooten, *Women Leaders in the Ancient Synagogue*; on the use of archeological evidence, see Peskowitz, *Spinning Fantasies*; on the use of so-called Jewish-Christian sources (the *Didascalia*), see Charlotte Fonrobert, *Menstrual Purity: Rabbinic and Christian Reconstructions of Biblical Gender* (Stanford: 2000).

8. See Ilan, *Mine and Yours Are Hers*. In developing a set of criteria for determining the best textual version especially suited to the specific problems of researching women, Ilan responds to what Judith Hauptman observed is an impediment to the integration of feminist work

into the broader field of rabbinic studies (which is still largely concerned with text-critical issues). See Hauptman, "Feminist Perspectives on Rabbinic Texts," 40–42.

9. See Biale, *Women And Jewish Law*; Wegner, *Chattel or Person*; and Hauptman, *Rereading the Rabbis*.

10. See Boyarin, *Carnal Israel* and Peskowitz, *Spinning Fantasies*.

11. Examples of this sort of feminist endeavor include Elizabeth Koltun, (ed.), *The Jewish Woman: New Perspectives* (New York: 1976); Blu Greenberg, *On Women and Judaism: A View From Tradition* (Philadelphia: 1981); Susannah Heschel (ed.), *On Being a Jewish Feminist: A Reader* (New York: 1983); Judith Plaskow, *Standing Again at Sinai: Judaism from a Feminist Perspective* (San Francisco: 1990); Susan Grossman and Rivka Haut (eds.), *Daughters of the King: A Survey of History, Halakah and Contemporary Realities* (Philadelphia: 1992); essays by Leonard Gordon, Rochelle Millen and Laura S. Levitt in *Gender and Judaism: The Transformation of Tradition*, ed. Tamar Rudavsky (New York: 1995); Laura Levitt, *Jews and Feminism: The Ambivalent Search for Home* (New York: 1997); Rachel Adler, *Engendering Judaism: An Inclusive Theology and Ethics* (Philadelphia: 1998).

12. In this regard, Jewish feminists have much in common with feminist disciples of other religious canons, such as the New Testament. They share the goal articulated by New Testament scholar and theologian Elizabeth Schussler Fiorenza, who writes, "we have to reclaim biblical religion as our own heritage because 'our heritage is our power.' At the same time I insist that such a reclaiming of our heritage can only take place through a critical process of feminist assessment and evaluation." See her *Bread Not Stone: The Challenge of Feminist Biblical Interpretation* (Boston: 1984), xiii.

13. See the ongoing debate between Judith Plaskow, Cynthia Ozick, and Rachel Adler as to whether the primary domain of contemporary reconstruction should be theological, sociological, or halakhic. Essays by these authors appear in Susannah Heschel (ed.), *On Being a Jewish Feminist*. For a further amplification of their respective positions, see also Judith Plaskow, *Standing Again at Sinai* and Rachel Adler, *Engendering Judaism*.

14. Nonfeminist readers of rabbinic texts must also negotiate the dual perspective posited by the texts. See for example, Steven D. Fraade, who discusses this issue in *From Tradition to Commentary: Torah and Its Interpretation in the Midrash Sifre to Deuteronomy* (Albany: 1991), 13–22, esp. 21. Fraade writes of the "perspectival shuttle" one must adopt when reading rabbinic texts in the following manner: "thus, my own commentary to that of the Sifre will be seen to be somewhat dialogical, alternating between the perspectives of the text's formation and reception" (*ibid.*, 21).

15. Boyarin, *Carnal Israel*, 19–20.

16. For example, Judith Hauptman states that her work "demonstrates that patriarchy was the dominant form of social organization among the rabbis," but it "is feminist in that I show . . . that some of the rabbi legislators . . . put forth countervoices, calling into question the patriarchal basis of Jewish law" (*Rereading the Rabbis*, 11). Similarly, Boyarin's stated goal is to "recover . . . [voices that were] resistant or even oppositional [to the dominant hegemony] The texts when read in the way that I am proposing to read do not only reflect a dissident protofeminist voice within Classical Judaism; they constitute and institute such a voice" (*Carnal Israel*, 242).

17. See Wegner, *Chattel or Person*, 186–198.

18. See Boyarin, *Carnal Israel*; and Peskowitz, *Spinning Fantasies*.

19. Peskowitz, *Spinning Fantasies*, 171.

20. For example, the rabbis assumed that the biblical patriarch Jacob spent his time studying in the academies of Shem and Eber; see Gen. Rabah, 63:10.

21. Howard Eilberg-Schwartz has already noted the assimilation of the vocabulary of biological reproduction when talking about what he calls "Torah production." See his *The Savage in Judaism: An Anthropology of Israelite Religion and Ancient Judaism* (Bloomington: 1990), 229–234. See also Boyarin on the "problem of reproducibility," a discussion of the tensions between biological and cultural reproduction in rabbinic culture (*Carnal Israel*, 206–219).

22. The metaphorical connection between “fathers” / “sons” and “masters” / “disciples” is expressed in Sifrei Deuteronomy, piskot 305 and 335, as well as in the passage cited below.

23. It is interesting to note that most prayer books translate the key word of this biblical passage, which literally means “sons,” as “children.” This move reflects the desire to detach gender from the idea of transmitting the central covenantal relationship conveyed by the Shema. However, the mishnaic dictum (Berakhot 3:3) that exempts women from saying the Shema would seem to indicate that the rabbis of antiquity *did* understand the covenantal relationship conveyed by the Shema in a gender-specific manner. Reuven Hammer’s translation of this passage from the Sifrei fluctuates between the gender-neutral term “children” and the gender-specific term “sons,” reflecting his competing desires to maintain a gender-neutral sensibility with respect to the central text of the Shema, while at the same time acknowledging the rabbinic understanding of the gender-specificity in the body of the passage. See Hammer, *Sifre: A Tannaitic Commentary on the Book of Deuteronomy* (New Haven: 1986), 64.

24. Mary O’Brien, *The Politics of Reproduction* (Boston: 1981), 121.

25. I have translated the terms “son” and “father” in this passage in a gender-neutral manner as “child” and “parent,” because even though these duties are in fact incumbent only on fathers and in fact only pertain to sons, by raising the theoretical possibility that mothers and daughters might also be included in the obligation, the passage suggests a more inclusive use of the terms “father” and “son.” Indeed, the second half of the passage, not cited here, uses the same terms “father” and “son” when describing obligations that *do* pertain to mothers and daughters.

26. An addendum to this source reads: “Others say: to teach him to swim.”

27. The biblical commandment of circumcision draws a clear connection to the covenant: “and throughout the generations, every male among you shall be circumcised at the age of eight days. . . . Thus shall My covenant be marked in your flesh as an everlasting pact” (Gen. 17: 12–13). Similarly, given the fact that the exodus from Egypt serves as the historical basis for the covenant, the connection between redemption and the covenant is made equally clear:

. . . and you must redeem every first-born male among your children. And when, in time to come, your son asks you, saying, “What does this mean?” you shall say to him, “It was with a mighty hand that the Lord brought us out from Egypt, the house of bondage. When Pharaoh stubbornly refused to let us go, the Lord slew every first-born in the land of Egypt. Therefore I sacrifice to the Lord every first male issue of the womb, redeeming every first-born among my sons” (Ex. 13: 13–15).

In other words, the father replies, I redeem my sons because God took us out of Egypt and so we entered a relationship that obliges us toward God.

28. The curious exemption of women from the command to reproduce, when they are so centrally involved in the process, has long attracted attention. Some have suggested that the rabbinic dictum is fashioned after Roman law, which required men to marry and have children. See David Daube and Robert Gordis, “Be Fruitful and Multiply: Biography of a Mitzvah,” *Midstream* 28 (1982), 21–29. Others argue more along the lines suggested in this essay, that by commanding an otherwise “natural” act, it is drawn into the sphere of the spiritual, which is the domain of men and not women. See Jeremy Cohen, “*Be Fruitful and Increase, Fill the Earth and Master It*”: *The Ancient and Medieval Career of a Biblical Text* (Ithaca: 1989), 158–165. For a presentation of both views, see David Biale, *Eros and the Jews: From Biblical Israel to Contemporary America* (New York: 1992), 35, 242 (notes).

29. It should be noted that the discussion of the second duty, redemption, follows an identical progression in its logical and argumentational structure.

30. The three themes can also be seen to be closely related to each other in a passage on the page that follows the text cited below. See Kidushin: 30a:16–25. Unfortunately, space does not permit discussion of this passage.

31. The linchpin that holds the logic of this passage together also has tannaitic roots. See Sifrei Deuteronomy, piska 46 on the intent of Deut. 11:19 to refer to sons and not daughters.

32. Rachel Biale has noted the circular character of this talmudic reasoning: women can’t

teach because they aren't taught, and they aren't taught because they cannot teach. See her discussion in *Women in Jewish Law*, 31–33.

33. See Hauptman, *Rereading the Rabbis*. As she notes elsewhere, “if many sympathetic voices are found, it may be necessary to revise the regnant view of rabbinic Judaism as unrelievedly patriarchal.” See her “Feminist Perspectives on Rabbinic Texts,” 55.

34. See Boyarin, *Carnal Israel*, esp. 107–196.

35. See for example, Wegner, *Person or Chattel*, vi–vii. Wegner concertedly tries to mediate between what she calls feminist “polemic” and “apologetics” by keeping her study squarely in the sphere of historical description. See also Ilan, *Jewish Women in Greco-Roman Palestine* and idem, *Mine And Yours Are Hers*, whose work is primarily concerned with historical description.

36. A similar move of rejecting or condemning rabbinic attitudes toward women has been made by Christian feminist scholars who juxtapose Jesus' innovations to his Jewish background. This practice has been widely criticized by Jewish feminist scholars. See Susannah Heschel, “Anti-Judaism in Christian Feminist Theology,” *Tikkun* 5, no. 3 (May/June 1990), 25–28, 95–97. The strategy of Christian feminists reveals the problematic nature of accepting or rejecting the rabbinic corpus as a paradigm that is either “good for women” or “bad for women.” This issue can only be resolved on the basis of factors that lie outside the purview of the rabbinic corpus itself.

37. See Peskowitz, *Spinning Fantasies*, 154–171.

38. See Ilan, *Jewish Women in Greco-Roman Palestine*, 14, where such a critique is made of Boyarin. Hauptman's book, published in 1998 and not yet widely commented upon, can likewise be criticized for highlighting the protofeminist voices over and against other voices in the corpus.

39. This point is made by Charlotte Fonrobert in her review of Miriam Peskowitz's book in the *Journal of the American Academy of Religion* 67, no. 1 (1999), 247–248.

40. See Laura Levitt and Miriam Peskowitz's introduction in *Judaism Since Gender*, 2–5, in which they discuss how feminist scholarship acknowledges its commitments and does not seek the stance of objectivity that has so characterized *Wissenschaft* scholarship. The concept of objectivity too often focuses on the male experience as normative, even while trying to portray it as universal. Lynn Davidman and Shelly Tenenbaum also question the possibility of “objectivity” in scholarship, particularly when the scholarship is engaged in a feminist critique. See their introduction in *Feminist Perspectives on Jewish Studies*, ed. Lynn Davidman and Shelly Tenenbaum (New Haven: 1994), 6–7.

41. Boyarin, *Carnal Israel*, 167–196.

42. Ibid., 134–166.

43. Ibid., 15.

44. Peskowitz, *Spinning Fantasies*, 61.

45. Ibid., 133.

46. Brooten, *Women Leaders in the Ancient Synagogue*.

47. Ibid., 7.

48. Ibid., 32.

49. Ibid., 103.

50. See Ilan, “Censorship,” in *Mine and Yours Are Hers*, 51–84.

51. Ibid., 54.

52. Ilan here presumes the antiquity of toseftan materials over and against mishnaic materials. On this position, see Shamma Friedman, “The Primacy of Tosefta in Mishnah-Tosefta parallels—Shabbat 16:1,” *Tarbiz* 62 (1993), 313–338 and Elizabeth Shanks Alexander, “The Fixing of the Oral Mishnah and the Displacement of Meaning,” *Oral Tradition* (forthcoming).

53. See Judith Hauptman, “Mishnah Gittin as a Pietist Document,” *Proceedings of the Tenth World Congress of Jewish Studies*, Div. C, Vol. 1 (Jerusalem: 1990), 23–30; idem, “Maternal Dissent: Women and Procreation in the Mishnah,” *Tikkun* 6, no. 6 (1991), 81–82, 94–95; idem, “Pesach: A Liberating Experience for Women,” *Masoret* (Winter 1993), 8–9; idem, “Women's

Voluntary Performance of Commandments from which They are Exempt,” *Proceedings of the Eleventh World Congress of Jewish Studies*, Div. C, Vol. 1 (Jerusalem: 1994), 161–168; idem, “Women and Inheritance in Rabbinic Texts: Identifying Elements of a Critical Feminist Impulse,” in *Text, Intratext, Intertext*, ed. Henry Fox (forthcoming). Much of the same material is also reviewed in *Rereading the Rabbis*.

54. Ilan does note one exception to this pattern, where a later scribal correction of Nedarim 4:2–3 is more liberal than the original mishnah with respect to its attitude toward women studying Torah. See Ilan, *Mine and Yours Are Hers*, 82–84.

The Midrashic Enterprise of Contemporary Jewish Women

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For the first time in almost two thousand years of Bible interpretation, Jewish women are composing and publishing their own midrash. They began in the 1970s in North America, their works appearing in alternative religious ceremonies and in marginal publications. While not yet a familiar form of Jewish religious writing, women's midrash can now be found in commercially successful books; printed and analyzed in journals; and featured in public lectures, adult education classes, and midrash-writing workshops.

Women's venture into the field of midrash, one common explanation has it, is due to their "taking the easy way" by avoiding talmudic studies and settling for the more accessible biblical stories. This explanation overlooks crucial points about midrash in general and about contemporary midrash in particular. Midrash is not simply one genre of Jewish literature; it is "the central enterprise of almost all Jewish religious writing until the modern period."¹ Midrash is at the heart of the Passover seder, life-cycle ceremonies, festival and Sabbath sermons, and it is likely to be cited whenever Jewish values, beliefs, and laws are explicated. Midrashic literature is integral to the efforts of religious Jews of all stripes to make Jews more ritually observant and culturally literate. More engaging than lectures on theology and halakhah, stories involving biblical characters serve as a point of entry into Judaism and are particularly effective as a tool in what is essentially an ongoing campaign for adult Jewish remedial education in the United States.² Furthermore, halakhic creativity is often buttressed by links to the biblical narrative. Women who produce new midrash or who repackage the old midrash have grasped the crucial role that it plays in Jewish life. Some clearly want to influence halakhah or the communal rule-makers by presenting an alternative reading of the Torah.³ Most, however, find this battle unwinnable, ill-informed, or simply irrelevant; they turn to midrash as the mode of religious and artistic expression best suited to explore their own identity, their relationship to others, and their encounter with the sacred.⁴

The diversity of contemporary women midrashists and the work they have written should not obscure their shared concerns. First and foremost, all authors present a perspective drawn from their experiences as women. This is no mere addition; their midrashim reconfigure and embellish the biblical narrative and interpretive literature

in novel ways. Second, women midrashists generally ignore theology and are unconcerned with establishing a rationale for the commandments—matters that preoccupied premodern midrashists. Instead, they focus on articulating the dynamics of social relationships. Perhaps because they are so attuned to social issues, they exhibit a strong emotional resistance to, or connection with, the text. Their insights often emerge out of pain or anger and a desire for reconciliation. Finally, while the writers employ different strategies and manifest diverse and competing ideals of womanhood, they all use midrash to raise the self-esteem of contemporary Jewish women. The reader is hard-pressed to find new midrashim that display women in a negative light. Obvious shortcomings of particular women in the Bible are explained sympathetically as a function of the narrow constraints within which women then lived and the double standard of behavior in ancient societies. The reluctance of contemporary women midrashists to criticize the women of the past speaks of a feeling of loyalty across the centuries and of a need for validation.

Classical Midrash and the Inception of Women's Midrash

Midrash as a term refers both to a literary technique and to discrete pieces of literature.⁵ Classical midrash consists of explanations and literary expansions of biblical and, to a lesser extent, postbiblical texts. There are five discernable types of classical midrashic literature. *Exegetical* midrash consists of discrete, short comments on scriptural passages. *Homiletical* midrash takes the form of sermons anchored together by interpretations of scripture. *Narrative* midrash is the body of stories and legends about heroes and events from biblical or postbiblical times. Most of the exegetical, homiletical, and narrative materials are of unknown authorship, collected and edited into volumes by anonymous editors years after composition, and published between the third and thirteenth centuries. In contrast is the genre that first appeared in the High Middle Ages, the *running commentary*. This type of midrash represents a named individual's idiosyncratic perspective on the biblical text, and it invariably incorporates earlier midrashic material reworked for the author's purposes. Finally, there is *midrash halakhah*, which is embedded within rabbinic analysis and commentaries published from the third century onward. All these forms of midrash are being generated to this day.

Midrash as a technique developed as a consequence of the Bible's literary style. Terse, lacking in detail, typically silent regarding the thoughts or motives of its characters, the biblical narrative alone was often insufficient for those turning to it for inspiration and direction. Classical midrash furnishes the details missing from the biblical narratives; explains apparent contradictions and resolves confusions; supplies rationales for God's behavior or that of individuals; teaches values; aligns the Bible's ancient traditions with the reader's contemporary reality; and provides the opportunity for speculation and theology. The imaginative and often fantastical form of narrative midrash offers a safe structure for the presentation of new ideas and for challenges to Jewish norms. Midrash halakhah is designed to justify the promulgation of religious law, biblical or rabbinic, and to provide an opening for related insights or incidents.

Classical midrashists considered the text of the Torah—in its narrow meaning, the Pentateuch, or Written Law (*torah shebikhtav*)—to be Moses' faithful recording of God's words as revealed on Mount Sinai and afterwards during the 40-year trek through the desert. They believed that the details and application of the written law, as well as the teachings conveyed by God that remained in oral form (*torah sheba'al peh*), were transmitted faithfully by the leaders of one generation to the next. Midrash was distinct from this dual Torah. Premodern Jews, however, understood the plain text, or *peshat*, of the Torah through the lens of midrashic writings, in no small measure because midrashists described their interpretations as latent within the Torah. Even when the classical midrashists reformulated laws and introduced new ideas and values, or when they substituted a midrashic extrapolation of a word for its plain meaning, they tended to claim that their midrash was merely uncovering what was already there. Not only did they blur the boundaries between revelation and midrash; they tended to see Scripture and rabbinic literature as an interrelated and seamless whole. Thus, a considerable amount of classical midrash consists of short comments that connect disparate texts to one another; for example, to show that a word in the Song of Songs clarifies a phrase in Exodus describing the power of God in Egypt. In this manner, the midrashist displayed his breadth of learning and the internally consistent message of Torah—in its broadest meaning, God's teachings.

In the premodern era, it was a rare Jewish woman indeed who was formally trained in Torah and its interpretation. Rabbinic leaders insisted that women were obliged to know the biblical and rabbinic laws that applied to them, but they consistently dissuaded men from teaching their wives and daughters Torah (that is, rabbinic law, Bible, and commentaries). There were the exceptional exemplary women who studied alone or who found an instructor, but overall, this directive was overwhelmingly heeded. Consequently there is no piece of premodern biblical interpretation attributed to a woman.⁶ Only when secular education for girls was mandated in the West in the nineteenth century did rabbinic leaders modify the traditional injunction. Educational opportunities for girls—albeit typically based on a different, less text-based curriculum than that provided to boys—gradually increased among all sectors of Jewry except among the most conservative religious circles and secular Jews.⁷

Many girls and women now study Bible and midrash in the curricula of Orthodox and Conservative day schools, supplementary classes, postsecondary seminaries and yeshivot, in adult education, and on college campuses. This by no means represents a majority of Jewish women. Over the past two decades, American Jewry has become progressively polarized: an increasing majority of American Jews offers their children little or no Jewish education, while a passionate minority “has invested a lot of energy in creating and nurturing innovative programs that encourage religious revival.”⁸ Educational programs in synagogues, summer camps, and on the postsecondary level have significantly expanded since the 1960s and 1970s—particularly Jewish day schools. The percentage of girls receiving a Jewish education has increased dramatically, and they are participating in the more intensive forms of education. The current generation of Jewish women probably contains the largest block of Jewish book-learned women in history.⁹

Education alone is not sufficient to motivate women to write midrash; if it were, Hebraically educated religious women would have turned to this medium earlier in

the century. Over time, a number of forces, each of them a rebellion against traditional Judaism, converged and exerted an important impact. The era in which formal Jewish education was extended to girls was also characterized by the growing influence of the critical historical approach to religion. Except in the most insular settings, one could not study sacred texts without being aware that their divine origin had been called into question. Furthermore, in recent decades, second-wave feminist leaders have been pointing out that men alone had shaped, promoted, and perpetuated religious institutions in order to further male interests, often at women's expense. From the early 1970s, the women's liberation movement began to have a noticeable effect on the organized American Jewish community as college-aged women and men began publicly objecting to the patriarchal character of communal institutions.¹⁰ Among other factors, religious texts—particularly the Bible, prayer book, and rabbinic codes—were implicated for sanctioning and perpetuating women's oppression and exclusion.

Yet American Jewry has not dismissed religion, *per se*. Rather, those who have included religion in their lives over the last three decades have done so in a manner that is more individualized, experiential, and outside the established conventions. Creative modes of religious expression, in turn, have influenced the mainstream religious institutions and moved them toward change. Women have been increasingly allowed to attain positions of leadership. Girls taught by female rabbis, educators, and religious mentors who demonstrate facility with Torah interpretation are likelier to venture down that path themselves. The autobiographical references and acknowledgments in women's midrash publications testify to the fact that the contemporary surge of writing owes much to the authors' previous exposure to Jewish education and role models.

Jewish feminism progressed historically through stages similar to those apparent in the larger woman's movement, and these are evident in their encounter with the biblical text.¹¹ The initial phase was an emerging realization that women and women's perspectives were underrepresented or missing. Previously taken for granted or understood without any concomitant sense of exclusion, the near-absence, silence, or powerlessness of women in the Bible was now identified and named for what it was.¹² This declaration was often accompanied by anger at oneself and others for contributing to the centrality of a religious text that perpetuates women's subordination. The first interpretations of biblical texts—most frequently analytical essays, as few actually attempted to write midrash¹³—reflect the outrage and shock of women who have just become aware that they personally (not simply their predecessors) have been ignored and misrepresented. These women struggled between feelings of bitterness at Jewish tradition and gratitude for the myriad gifts it had bequeathed them.¹⁴

Some of the most incisive critiques of biblical literature were produced by Jewish lesbians. The Bible renders them invisible, making no reference whatsoever to an eroticized relationship between women, sexual or otherwise.¹⁵ Unlike heterosexual women, whose experience of violence or oppression at the hands of men often gets tempered by the hope and expectation that they will one day find fulfillment with the right man, most lesbians are not comfortable with the heterosexual ideal promoted in biblical and postbiblical Jewish literature. Those who live freely as lesbians in a like-minded community have few restraints on their critique of the sexism in the Bible and

their creation of alternative material. Clarifying the lesbian contribution to contemporary women's midrash is difficult, though, because many lesbians prefer to keep their sexual identity private, for various reasons—among which is the well-founded belief that publishers are reluctant to support work that is written by an obvious lesbian or that targets such an audience. Although anecdotal evidence indicates that Jewish lesbians were overrepresented among the creators of new women's ceremonies and literature in the 1970s and 1980s, only a minute number of the midrashim recently published have been written by women who are openly identified as lesbians.¹⁶

Whether lesbian or heterosexual, Jewish women influenced by feminism eventually moved away from raw anger to generate more positive ways of relating to Jewish culture. One method was to draw attention to the women of the Bible and Talmud and to raise them to a place of greater honor. Feminist theory taught women to tell each other their personal stories as a means of validating women's experiences and "hearing each other into" existence.¹⁷ The same tactic was applied to the biblical narrative. This effort at inclusion, already evident in the early 1970s, involved greater scrutiny of the literature of classical midrash. Women learned that classical midrash contained details about women named in the Bible, as well as nameless women or women whose existence was never mentioned. The strategy of inclusion is a form of religious expression in which women from all denominations—even those unsympathetic to feminism—could engage, for it involves portraying biblical women as role models according to one's particular understanding of the behavioral ideal. Midrashic study enabled women to integrate stories of biblical women into their Passover seders, Rosh Hodesh ceremonies, and traditional rituals.¹⁸

This task was simplified by the availability of classical midrashic literature in English-language translations and anthologies, either newly published or else reissued to fill the demand created by the growing number of Jewish studies courses at the universities. Quite unlike the verse-centered, choppy writing that was characteristic of ancient and medieval midrashists who linked together diverse biblical texts—often with little clarification—these anthologies exposed American Jews to a narrative mode of midrash that was both compatible with modern sensibilities and accessible to people with limited Jewish education. One of the handiest resources was Louis Ginzburg's multivolume *The Legends of the Jews*. Ginzburg had culled midrashim from hundreds of ancient and medieval commentaries and had arranged them into a single grand narrative. His work was translated from the original German and included two volumes of full citations and an extraordinarily complete index.¹⁹ Books like these, and the stories of Jewish heroes that comprised so much of the Jewish educational curriculum and synagogue sermons, suggested to American Jews that midrash was primarily a narrative genre. Translated hasidic tales and popular Jewish literature such as the works of Isaac Bashevis Singer and Elie Wiesel—writings that gave a place of honor to the quest for religious authenticity—fueled the imagination of Jews seeking to define their own viewpoints.²⁰ Moreover, the American cultural heritage inclined them toward this mode of expression. And even had these influences not been present, Jewish feminists would have eventually taken on the role of story-centered midrashists. They were determined to insert women into the national mythology, and this necessitated a reshaping of the biblical narrative.

Contemporary Women's Midrash

Today the term midrash is used very loosely and can refer to any literary embellishment of the biblical text. This may include poetry, scripts of plays, fictional correspondence between biblical characters, Greek choruses, essays, and dialogues of study groups. The appellation has also been applied to the visual or plastic arts—drama, painting, sculpture, dance, textiles, multimedia—when a piece of work includes, expands upon, or refers to biblical characters and themes.²¹ It is noteworthy that often the artists themselves want to designate their creations as midrash. Clearly there is perceived prestige or enhanced merit in the religious designation. For the purposes of this essay, I will utilize a narrower—and, admittedly, a still inadequate—definition: midrash is literature modeled on the classical rabbinic forms that extends and clarifies biblical language and narrative in order to articulate a religious perspective.²² Nevertheless, a measure of confusion is inescapable. For example, it is difficult to clearly define the boundaries between literary studies of the Bible and the writings that, like classical midrash, are situated primarily within a confessional context. Contemporary writers (who, enabled by technological inventions, are far more verbose than their predecessors) have created blended genres. A particularly popular compositional form is the homiletical discourse, which opens with a phrase from the Torah as a starting point for a reflection on the role of religious values in confronting life's dilemmas, and then returns to the biblical text for the conclusion. Many other recent midrashic writings are autobiographical, as a writer recollects her own life and how a biblical character has figured in it.²³

The construction of new styles of midrash may sometimes represent a strategy for expanding the concept and content of Jewish learning and identity to include Jewish women. There is probably truth in the observation that these new literary forms are indicative of acculturation, reflecting the inability of contemporary Jews to deal on a sophisticated level with complex Hebrew texts. They may also manifest the current passion for self-revelation, the democratization of religious authority, and the influence of postmodern literary theory. Exploring these theories lies outside the scope of this essay. Instead, I shall attempt to survey the large accumulation of women's midrash produced over the past 30 years, mainly by American Jewish women, arranged along the spectrum from Orthodox to secular.

Starting at the conservative pole are authors who assume, as did their ancient and medieval predecessors, that the Torah was delivered by God to Moses, who faithfully recorded it in his lifetime. Belief in the divine authorship of the Torah is a defining doctrine of Orthodox Judaism. Modern Orthodox midrashists establish their legitimacy by stressing that when they supply the thoughts, feelings, motivations, and conversations of biblical characters, they derive these details primarily from rabbinic literature—either from the Talmud, classical midrash, mystical teachings, or later commentaries. They may stray from the traditional format, often adding parallel stories from their personal experiences and original meditative poems and prayers of their own. Yet they are careful to distinguish between their own material and authentic midrash. The following is how one such author describes her work:

[This book] is merely a web of my own ideas and thoughts based on Torah commentaries and sources which are meant to be an attempt, among the other valiant attempts, to pro-

vide some food for thought on this subject. I took the pains of adding extensive (although by no means complete) footnotes and sources to emphasize that although some of the ideas expressed in this book are original they are all firmly based on traditional Torah sources.²⁴

To elaborate upon the biblical text by relying primarily upon one's insight and imagination is simply not valued—it certainly does not merit the designation of midrash.

One's view of revelation and the image of God can be correlated to the amount of detail provided in a midrash and the level of intimacy that is established between author, reader, and subject. Modern Orthodox writers generally profess what we might call the classical image of God: a personal deity who is the ruler of the universe, the guiding hand of history, who rewards and punishes, and who is ultimately moral but can appear arbitrary and utterly alien to human sensibilities. When this theology is accompanied by the belief that the Torah is—literally or figuratively—made up of God's words, midrashic elaboration is naturally limited. The midrash functions not as an independent story, but as a vehicle for arriving at a greater understanding of God's will and of people's attempt to live in accordance with it. Biblical characters are made into archetypes. Thus, the Orthodox midrashist may describe Sarah as an old woman, but she would regard a graphic depiction of the physical disabilities and difficulties of the very aged (muscle aches and pains, the intimate details of eating and eliminating waste) as irreverent and distracting; details are allowed only if they are symbolic or absolutely essential for the lesson. There is a strict economy of language and an effort to establish a certain distance between the reader and the character.

This point is made explicit in the book by Tamar Frankiel, author of *The Voice of Sarah: Feminine Spirituality and Traditional Judaism*. Frankiel argues that the matriarchs are archetypes of an expansive notion of motherhood, one that incorporates leadership, a concern for the education of children beyond her own, and an activism based on logical reasoning enhanced by a uniquely female intuitive knowledge:

The first mother, Sarah, reveals many dimensions of this maternal archetype. This woman, who had no children for ninety years, the wife of a respected chieftain and equal to him in rank, did not spend her time milking the goats or mending tent covers. The midrash tells us that, on the contrary, she worked as what we would today call a women's spiritual leader: she taught women about the one God, while Abraham taught the men. The great insight that resulted in the overthrow of paganism was his, but her work was equally important. She was so successful at drawing people to her that, when they worked in a new location, Abraham set up her tent first (Bereishis Rabba, Gen 12:8). She was a "mother" of souls.²⁵

This midrash goes beyond the plain text to explain Sarah's role, but it does not elaborate too much on the details. Frankiel points out that disclosure can never be complete, as the Torah merely speaks in hints and the midrash gives little more than glimpses.²⁶ Clearly, she does not feel that the reader needs much beyond that in order to benefit from the model of religious behavior exemplified by Sarah.

Yet Orthodox women must struggle with the reality of a biblical text that skims over the lives of women. Those who write midrash acknowledge an inadequacy, but they are constrained by their loyalty to exonerate the biblical and rabbinic heritage. This is bound to produce some convoluted reasoning. One midrashist explains that the very absence of women's experiences in the Bible testifies to their worth. A car-

dinal virtue of biblical women, according to Rivkah Zakutinsky, is that they remained “hidden,” precious and treasured as pearls, doing God’s will in the domestic or private realm. In her aptly titled book, *Beyond Pearls and Merchant Ships: Finding the Woman of Valor*, Zakutinsky draws portraits of great biblical women who shunned a public role. The Bible’s reticence with regard to women, while hindering the midrashist’s ability to present them as models, contains a deep message, Zakutinsky writes:

[Women’s modesty] may be precisely why there are so few detailed or explicit descriptions of righteous Jewish women in the Written Torah. To catch a glimpse of the “Woman of Valor,” we have to search for hints that indicate her way . . . our foremothers, *our shepherdesses*, were experts at concealing themselves. Solomon’s words, “*Who will find her?*” is not rhetorical; it is a clue. . . . Fairy tales only dare to hint at what the truly accomplished Jewish woman knows: *invisibility empowers*.²⁷

This statement directly challenges the feminist call for women’s voices to be heard.²⁸ Inexplicably, she ignores the fact that when Orthodox women emerge as teachers of midrash, they are making Jewish women both visible and audible.

This dilemma helps explain the very small number of books on Torah and midrash published by Orthodox women. The study of midrashic texts is made available to girls in Modern Orthodox schools, but not in schools just to the right on the Orthodox spectrum.²⁹ Reservations regarding women’s Torah study persist even in Modern Orthodox institutions, however, and across the spectrum, women who are learned in the field are not offered the same public arena as are men. Women-authored works that manage to be published—with one exception, discussed below—have as a major objective the refutation of feminist criticism. This is an important task not just for external outreach or community relations; it serves the community internally, affirming the wisdom of its adherents and responding to their doubts.³⁰ Perhaps Orthodox women writers nevertheless take on a public role because they feel personally challenged by feminism, and they recognize that a defense of the Torah from the charge of sexism is more credible when delivered by a woman. Women’s public Torah instruction receives greater sanction when it is directed specifically to women and affirms the legitimacy of traditional women’s norms.³¹

The spotlight focused specifically on women in Orthodox women’s midrash, however, attests to the assimilation of at least some aspects of feminism into North American Orthodoxy. Orthodox midrashists stress the autonomy of biblical women and take great pains to show that they were not victims. Zakutinsky draws upon the Bible and midrash to provide contemporary women with models of Jewish womanhood. The twenty sketches in her book depict women of strong piety, determined to advance God’s will, struggling to fulfill their own needs but never at the cost of breaking religious law or stepping out of the restricted bounds of the woman’s realm.

One of her chapters is devoted to Rebecca, a matriarch who falls short of common feminist virtues—she did not confront Isaac about his favoritism for Esau but chose to trick her husband and involve Jacob in the subterfuge, helping him to flee home with a false excuse (Gen. 27). A feminist might point out that ancient women had no choice but to resort to guile in order to assert their independent will in a patriarchal society.³² Zakutinsky, however, defends Rebecca as a woman who possessed tremen-

dous powers of discernment, independence of will, and great discretion. She describes her as one of those women who knows her own mind; indeed, Zakutinsky finds inspiring a midrash that states that Rebecca was only three years old when she determined by herself to accept Isaac's marriage proposal, leave her family, and become a wife. It is to Rebecca's credit that at this age she knew how to be Isaac's wife and how to comfort him over the loss of his mother; moreover, she understood that a man with his personality could not be directly confronted. According to Zakutinsky, Rebecca was the manifestation of the "woman of valor" (*eshet hayil*) of Proverbs 31 because—among other things—she "never criticized her husband. Even when she disagreed with him, she used great discretion."³³ Rebecca was the real master of the household, Zakutinsky implies, and only untutored eyes would regard the matriarch as subservient. Here feminist values have been transformed and integrated into a lesson on Orthodox womanhood.

Similar themes appear in the works of women of Chabad (Lubavitch) hasidic background. Chabad hasidism is exceptional among the Orthodox movements in its institutional support for women's religious writings. This policy is motivated by the belief, fostered by the last Lubavitcher rebbe, that Jewish women have a greater role than men in hastening the final redemption.³⁴ Chabad's messianic enthusiasm and its general outreach effort together fuel the creation of literature by women and for women. One such work is Chana Weisberg's *The Crown of Creation*, a slim volume of midrash assembled from rabbinic and mystical sources and meant to inspire the reader to emulate the heroic bravery and selflessness of seven model women. The women in her portraits err not because they are drawn toward evil behavior, but because they are acting in response to men and for men's sake; they assume the burden of sin and guilt for others in order to advance God's plan for humanity. For example, Weisberg explains why, although both Abraham and Sarah laughed at the prophecy that Sarah would bear a child (Gen. 17:17), only Sarah was rebuked. Abraham's faith in God was weaker than that of Sarah, she explains, and he would have suffered ill effects from God's direct scolding. Sarah, however, understood perfectly well why God chose to rebuke her.³⁵ The matriarch was manifesting the sublime religious value of self-sacrifice (*mesirat nefesh*), a virtue necessary for the attainment of a state of *bitul*—which, according to Chabad philosophy, is the nullification of one's self that is essential for a full experience of one's spiritual purpose and connection to God. As Weisberg explains:

The common denominator of great Jewish women has been bitul, total selflessness. Although bitul was a dominant force in the lives of all great Jewish leaders, both male and female, women have characteristically been endowed with a greater capacity of self-effacement.³⁶

Weisberg teaches that the time of greatest need for women to achieve *mesirat nefesh* is during an era when many Jews abandon Torah and embrace assimilation. That time is now. Weisberg thus appeals to modern liberated women's desire to set an example. They will join the ranks of the Jewish heroines of old by rejecting the idolatry of feminist and secular values and embracing lives of self-sacrifice.

Indeed, Orthodox teachers conducting outreach to secularized Jewish women like to emphasize that a traditional Jewish lifestyle offers the type of supportive women's

environment so idealized, yet never achieved, by feminists.³⁷ Orthodox women have distinguished themselves by their cooperative childcare efforts and by establishing networks of women who arrange for care of the sick, provide comfort to mourners, offer hospitality, and guide and assist brides. The Orthodox midrashists, however, pay little attention in their writings to women's friendships, alliances, and bonds of sisterhood. Biblical women, like men, are held up as ideals and evaluated as servants of God; for women, this "servitude" means acting as wives and mothers and rearing children to follow Torah. Relationships with other women are important only insofar as they facilitate these roles. Orthodox institutions are so indebted to a heterosexual worldview that an emphasis on same-sex female relationships does not make sense and is ultimately subversive.

A rather atypical Orthodox midrashist is Judith Antonelli, author of *In the Image of God: A Feminist Commentary on the Torah*. She shares with other Orthodox midrashists an emphatic insistence on the divinity of the Torah; she goes beyond them to voice utter contempt for biblical critics and their work. Like them, she insists that God and the Torah are perfect, and that to attribute any sexism or misogyny to the Torah demonstrates a lack of understanding on the reader's part. Antonelli, however, believes that sexism infected the oral, not written, Torah because Jewish men were influenced by surrounding cultures. Had Jewish women been allowed to study Torah, they would have noticed this foreign accretion. A considerable amount of Antonelli's commentary defends the Torah text from the charge of sexism while carefully discriminating between reliable and unreliable midrash.³⁸

For instance, in discussing the story of the rape of Dinah (Gen. 34), she states that much of the rabbinic commentary is sexist and then follows with an exposition of a number of rabbinic comments that blame the victim for her rape, rationalize male dominance, and urge female seclusion. "Controlling men by confining women," she writes, "remains the logic of Orthodox rabbis today who, while not going so far as to seclude women in the home, still restrict their participation in the public sphere because of the possibility of male sexual arousal." Antonelli, however, is also unhappy with feminist revisions of the story that depict Dinah as Shekhem's lover rather than his victim: "'Feminist retellings' are even worse, as they deny that Dinah was raped and assert that 'she wanted it!'"³⁹

Further to the left on the theological continuum are writers who believe in the divinity and authority of the Torah text, yet who explicitly admit to inserting new elements into their midrashim. If they draw these from classical midrash, they utilize them in unconventional ways; additionally, they may unapologetically construct a midrash from their own insight, personal experiences, or non-canonical literature. In their free-ranging attitudes to the holy texts, they display motives and use methods similar to those employed by the classical midrashists. This strategy is important for Jews who are committed to observing the laws of the Torah but who cannot abide some of its teachings. For example, the rabbinic prohibition of sexual liaisons between females is derived from Lev. 18:3: "You shall not act according to the deeds of the land of Egypt . . . and Canaan." Lesbians with Orthodox leanings substitute new—and, on the face of it, less inventive—midrashic explanations of this verse.⁴⁰ Thus, the au-

thority of the biblical text is preserved in a way that allows nontraditional Orthodox Jews to feel some measure of wholeness in their lives.⁴¹

One midrashist of the more creative school is Shoni Labowitz, a nondenominational rabbi (ordained by Zalman Schachter-Shalomi) with evident Orthodox roots. Labowitz's midrashic methodology seems to presume the text's divinity while she nevertheless introduces material from the fields of psychology, archeology, and comparative religion. For example, she devotes a chapter and appendix in her book to a complex reconstruction of a biblical text that has received the attention of quite a few contemporary women midrashists. The text is found in Num. 12, in which Miriam and Aaron scold Moses "because of the Cushite woman he had married" and because they feel that he claims a monopoly on prophetic authority. God scolds Aaron and Miriam, but punishes only Miriam and inflicts her with leprosy. When Moses beseeches God to heal her, God retorts that Miriam, like a daughter so disgraced that her father had spat in her face, should be punished further with seven days of isolation. This episode is disturbing for at least three reasons: it appears that Moses' siblings—Jewish leaders—scorn their sister-in-law because of her ethnic origins; only Miriam is punished; and although Miriam is elsewhere in the Torah described as a prophet, her claim to authority is here roundly rejected.

Labowitz revises the tale into God's vindication of Miriam for her proper intervention on behalf of Moses' wife Zipporah:

. . . the Hebrew word for "anger" and "sparked," *vayechar-aff* could also mean "linger" and "glow." . . . Perhaps God wasn't angry at all; rather, God's glow lingered as a lover would who had just heard the song of the soul of their beloved. . . . Miriam was overtaken in a spiritual epiphany, and her skin became white as snow because she had just seen and touched the likeness of God and felt overwhelmed. . . . Some say that in Numbers 12:14 God said to Moses, "If her [Miriam's] father were there he would have *certainly spit* in her face, and *she would have hidden* from embarrassment for seven days." Take another look at the Hebrew. The root letters *yud, resh, kuf*, "to spit," could also mean "a green plant" or "bud that flourishes within itself." And the word for "she would have hidden," *tikalaim*, could also be translated from the root letters *kav, lamed*, *lamed* to mean "she will complete." With this new understanding we can read Numbers 12:13 as "God said to Moses, 'I will bring the bud that flourishes within her to completeness within seven days; she will retreat outside the camp and then she will rejoice you.'" ⁴²

It is important to point out that the liberty Labowitz has taken with this passage to essentially reverse its plain meaning—transforming a rebuke into praise—is not what distinguishes her midrash from many classical midrashim; the premodern interpretations that deviated far from the literal meaning were included in the canon alongside those that did not. What is novel here is having the text articulate women's perspectives on their psychological needs and physiological changes. According to Labowitz, Miriam rebuked Moses because of her brother's neglect of Zipporah as the latter was undergoing the changes of menopause, and Miriam likewise was experiencing the same transformation (the bud "flourishing within her to completeness"). Labowitz has reconstructed this passage so that it can fulfill what she believes is the role of Torah: it is God's guide to life, teaching people to find divinity within their own physical being in all its manifestations. The seriousness with which she engages in cre-

ative wordplay indicates her belief that her midrash is the text's true, immanent meaning.⁴³

Avivah Gottlieb Zornberg is by far the best known of the midrashists who employ nontraditional materials. Zornberg, who was born in Scotland and who now lives in Israel, was raised and educated within the Orthodox community and remains socially situated there. She has a fluent knowledge of midrash and exegesis from the classical period through the twentieth century as well as a doctorate in English literature. Her Torah commentaries are novel because they are thick with detailed references to European as well as to rabbinic literature, with insights drawn from psychology and contemporary literary theory. Zornberg assumes the divinity of the Torah text and does not polemicize on this issue; her synthesis of Torah and secular literature, though, speaks loudly about the wisdom of the Torah and its compatibility with modern culture. She features hasidic commentators who focus on the inner turmoil and struggle involved in the human encounter with the divine, an approach that appeals to contemporary Jewish spiritual seekers. Her characters struggle mightily to grasp an elusive God who defies the neat categories of ordinary logic; yet the basic material of their lives is suffused with a symbolism and a meaning that seems to promise the eventual achievement of self-fulfillment and holiness.

Zornberg is unique among the published Orthodox women midrashists because she does not focus on women's matters.⁴⁴ Her audience is not defined as primarily female, nor does she claim a perspective unique to women. (This fact certainly helps to explain the presence of men in her audiences and among her readership, a presence that seems to be missing for most other women midrashists.) Zornberg's contribution to the women's cause lies simply in the fact that she is a masterful teacher and scholar who is doing what no one has done before.⁴⁵

Most contemporary women midrashists do not believe in the divine authorship of the Torah. They regard it as a human product, the work of men⁴⁶ who composed, recorded, and edited their work over a lengthy period of time before the texts were finally canonized. They attribute most repetitions, variations, and contradictions within the texts as evidence of different authors and the editing process. They do not assume that the biblical text accurately reflects women's actual historical reality. But it can certainly offer clues to the reality of women's lives, and it is abundant in data testifying to men's perception of women, as well as to their construction of women's place in men's lives.

Rejection of divine authorship and acknowledgment of a bias in the text, however, does not preclude belief in divine inspiration or the possibility of creating midrash. Modern Jews who accept historical scholarship yet engage the Torah as a source of personal religious meaning are not willing to state categorically that the text is purely a human product devoid of divinity or religious value. They do tend to reject theism in its classical Jewish form. In contrast to the midrashists described above, many of those further to the left incline toward the notion of a personal deity who is less controlling and whose role in the composition of the Torah is less direct. Others hold an immanentist theology and conceptualize the sacred as an indwelling life force. For them, revelation occurs in an interactive dynamic between heaven and earth, or, less

metaphorically, when society or the individual grapples with and ultimately defines religious ideals. Their theology and view of revelation place the locus of control within human society. In their midrashim, one may hear about the regional economy, the laws of neighboring civilizations, the daily tasks of running a household, and the intimate details of a character's life. Some of these details may be supplied as an act of restoring to Jewish culture the data on women that was previously ignored. To the extent that we can tie this generosity of data to a theological message, however, it is that people determine their religious outlook. The sacred is accessed through the self, society, and nature. Because women are now to be included among those who define the religious encounter, their experiences are theologically relevant. Divine inspiration—one might even go so far as to call it revelation—is understood to be a process that did not begin and end at Mount Sinai, but continues whenever individuals immerse themselves in the Torah and its interpretations, and draw their own meanings from the stories.⁴⁷

Freed of the burden of proving that a midrash matches the intention of the original biblical text, and availing themselves of a great storehouse of materials, these authors are creative and prolific. They still do what midrashists have done before—furnish the details missing from the biblical narratives; explain apparent contradictions and resolve confusions; subvert the original text and/or its customary interpretation with an alternative message; supply rationales for the behavior of God or for that of men and women; teach values; align the Bible's ancient traditions to contemporary reality; and supply a theology—but the expanded repertoire of materials results in a very different product. Unlike the classical midrashists and the Orthodox, they are acutely aware of the distinction between the Torah text and midrash; indeed, they revel in the power of midrash to reconstruct and even subvert the recorded text.

Although few of the women midrashists in this category are professional Judaica scholars, the vast majority of them have benefited considerably from the academic research of Bible scholars from the 1970s through the 1990s; in particular, their work is indebted to female scholars who have written about biblical women from a variety of disciplinary perspectives—among them, Phyllis Trible, Mieke Bal, Cheryl Exum, Lyn Bechtel, Carole Meyers, Ilana Pardes, and Nehama Aschkenasy. One of the most obvious and cleverest examples of this approach is Ellen Frankel's *The Five Books of Miriam: A Woman's Commentary on the Torah*. Frankel presents multiple choruses of primarily female but also some male voices chiming in with their idiosyncratic reactions to the text. These are archetypes, representing variously the perspectives of biblical women, of modern feminists, and of the tough and wise women who came as immigrants to America from Eastern Europe—as well as giving voice to the collective wisdom of rabbinic authority and the Jewish folk tradition. Among these choruses are also “the Sages In Our Own Time”:

We are the rabbis of today, scholars and teachers who continue to search for secrets in the sacred writings. In our quest for truth, we use the most modern intellectual technology—literary criticism, archaeology, psychoanalysis, linguistics, comparative Semitics, feminist theory, social science. We do not fear knowledge; we revere only truth. Our goal is to unravel the tangle of piety and myth obscuring the historical core of the text, to unbind all those spellbound by religion's charms. Yet though we are critics, we are loving ones, for the Torah is our tree of life as well.⁴⁸

The response of these “sages” to dramatic narratives in the Bible vividly illustrates the ingenuity of their contributions, even though there often remains something spiritually unsatisfying in these midrashim. Commenting on the source of Jacob’s troubles in love, the Sages in Our Own Time teach that “romantic love is an invention of Western culture, a modern contrivance like the diesel engine or the ball-point pen.”⁴⁹ The character “Wily Rebecca” points out that the biblical saga of Jacob’s marriage to Leah and Rachel (Gen. 29) was meant to be ironic and to show what happens when a boy is untutored by his clever mother in the arts of love. The conversation continues as follows:

THE RABBIS CLARIFY: The Torah later proscribes a man’s marriage to two sisters, no doubt reacting to this unfortunate *ménage à trois*.

THE SAGES IN OUR OWN TIME COUNTER: No, this law already existed when the Torah was being edited. The story of Leah and Rachel was added here only to explain and justify that law.

LEAH AND RACHEL QUIP: In either case, no one asked us!⁵⁰

Frankel’s presentation of numerous perspectives prevents a rigid, dogmatic reading of the text and showcases a multiplicity of women’s reactions. The Torah is not only what God revealed but also what Jews, in all their diversity, have constructed.

The desire to acknowledge multiple voices is supported by the feminist ideals that course through the writings of the midrashists on this side of the ideological spectrum. Crucial, too, is the feminist concept of sisterhood, the principle that in a male-dominated society, women find authentic understandings of their lives as women only when they freely share their experiences with other women. Women, the theory posits, can then release themselves from the false definitions of womanhood shaped by men’s needs, and, allied with other women, can begin to transform cultural values and institutions for the good of all. Beyond this larger redemptive goal, though, the concept of sisterhood teaches that women’s bonds to each other are potentially nurturing and require no further justification.

Thus it is not surprising that many women inspired by the ideal of sisterhood are disturbed by the biblical examples of conflict between women. The episode that most troubles contemporary liberal midrashists is the conflict between Sarah and her servant Hagar, which results in the banishment and near death of Hagar and her son (Gen. 21: 9–21). Unlike their Orthodox counterparts, the non-Orthodox midrashists tend to ignore the assurance given by God in the biblical text that Sarah’s behavior is appropriate, and they also pass over the midrashim that elaborate on the evil behavior of Hagar and son.⁵¹ Few comment upon the story without criticizing what appears to them to be Sarah’s excessive haughtiness and cruelty.⁵² The following is Ruth Behar’s interpretation:

And Sarah, unforgivably, treats Hagar harshly. More than harshly. The original biblical language reads, “Sarah afflicted her,” the same expression used to characterize the subsequent affliction of the Hebrew slaves in Egypt, except here it ironically depicts the suffering of a lone Egyptian slave woman at the hands of a Hebrew woman in Canaan.⁵³

Behar and others extend the story’s message beyond the Middle Eastern arena, hoping that women’s recognition of their own social marginality would sensitize them to the plight of other oppressed and unjustly despised groups.⁵⁴ One of the most tragic

aspects of the episode, according to Behar, is that Sarah and Hagar did not recognize their sisterhood:

It is a story that makes you want to weep precisely because it unfolds between two women, both of whom are ultimately insignificant under patriarchy, both of whom are unable to recognize their mutual insignificance and thereby become truly significant to one another.⁵⁵

Would that women unite with and help each other, she continues, instead of internalizing the social norm according to which their individual worth resides in their ability to bear male heirs.

On its face, the biblical story of Leah and Rachel is also one of competition and conflict. The first generation of women's midrashim elaborated upon this theme.⁵⁶ However, the most recent portraits of the relationship between Leah and Rachel question the accuracy of the text's version of events and portray the sisters as allies. Here is where a more radical approach to Scripture finds common cause with the classical interpretive tradition. There are a number of rabbinic midrashim suggesting that Rachel colluded on the wedding night to protect Leah from shame, that the sisters acted compassionately toward each other throughout the marriage and (along with the concubines Zilpah and Bilhah) prayed for each others' well-being. These particular midrashim speak to the ideals of sisterhood and shared purpose, and they are frequently cited by contemporary midrashists.⁵⁷

Ruth Sohn hints at the reason for the change in the direction of women's midrashim on Leah and Rachel. While competition between women is natural and quite real, she points out, it is more fruitful to elaborate upon the more cooperative model provided by the traditional midrash.⁵⁸ The distance traveled by feminist midrashists in their refusal to accept easy answers, though, is evident in a careful study of the contemporary midrashic treatment of Zilpah and Bilhah by Elizabeth Wyner Mark. She notes that many liberal women eager to raise the image of Leah and Rachel for the purpose of including them in the liturgy of the Amidah prayer do so at the expense of Jacob's two other consorts.⁵⁹ In the name of feminism and sisterhood, Mark suggests that women adopt the stance of traditional commentators that all four women were co-wives, full mothers of their own children, who formed one indivisible unit.

It is worth noting at this point that not all the midrashists on the liberal side of the spectrum necessarily reject the idea of divine revelation. Devotees of Rabbi Zalman Schachter-Shalomi, for example, champion a particular viewpoint that seems to fit on the liberal half of the ideological spectrum because it asserts the human authorship of the biblical text and the very individualized, subjective voice behind midrash. But at the same time, in their view, certain forms of midrashic creativity can awaken one's personal memory of the revelation that occurred at Sinai. This conviction is based on a principle from the Kabbalah, found also in classical midrash, which teaches that the soul of every Jew was present at the time the Torah was given to the Jewish people. Gila Gevirtz explains this principle as follows:

The drama of Mount Sinai, recorded in luxurious detail in the book of Exodus, was embroidered by these [rabbinic] sages. By their account, every Jewish soul that ever was and would be was present as God simultaneously revealed the Torah to the community as a whole and to each soul according to its individuality. I share this midrash when I teach,

and weave my own embellishment: The story of Torah *awakens the memories of our souls*, and until each of us has shared those memories of the community, Revelation will remain incomplete.⁶⁰

Writers in this camp seem to blend midrash with meditation, and they can be found describing the revelatory messages that are derived from the contemplation of Hebrew letters.⁶¹ North American Jews who are interested in spirituality, and who desire to become aware of the connectedness of all creation over time and space, seem to be attracted to this form of midrash.⁶² For this reason, it is often taken up by organizations trying to develop Jewish outreach efforts, as it elevates imagination over knowledge of the Bible and its commentaries.

Currently one can find a considerable corpus of literature that develops biblical themes for humanistic purposes, with no effort made to articulate a religious outlook. More imaginative and artistic than literary criticism of the Bible, this genre appears very similar to much of the contemporary midrash described above. The authors in this group write narratives that may include God as a character or as a perceived force, but neither God, religious belief, nor observance are the objects of the authors' inquiry. Their primary concern is to flesh out the lives of the individual characters: feelings, relationships, tensions between the self and the environment. The Bible and midrashic stories are simply good sources from which to spin out a contemporary literary genre. When the novelist Norma Rosen, for instance, fills in the gaps in the story of Rebecca and Isaac, she informs her reader that her attention is riveted on the feelings that Rebecca must have harbored:

How did Rebekah respond to barrenness? And what was the effect on Rebekah of becoming the wife of a man whose father had been willing to kill him as a sacrifice to God? Might not these aspects of Rebekah's married life have contributed to the forging of her astonishing plan to rearrange the order in which her sons, Jacob and Esau, receive their father's blessing, and to her ability to carry out that plan?⁶³

The amount of detail in compositions like these is extensive. The reader hears Sarah discuss her feelings and learns exactly where she was when Hagar and Abraham conceived Ishmael, watches as Rachel tugs a comb through Leah's stringy hair, and listens as Dinah remembers walking barefoot on the sand, sandals dangling, her feet roughening.⁶⁴

Another genre outside the bounds of midrash is the biblical exposition designed to teach psychological self-awareness. The Bible and midrash may be plumbed for examples of, say, parents who behave dysfunctionally, their defective coping mechanisms for rearing children passed down over generations until their descendants finally learn better.⁶⁵ Utilizing biblical literature for psychological purposes or calling the humanistic renderings "midrash" appeals to modern Jews who rebel against a dogmatic approach to religion. Jews who lack a clearly articulated theology, whether theistic or immanentist, or who do not believe in divinity at all, may create an elaborate humanistic midrash to establish their connection with the Jewish people and culture.

While these authors are not necessarily trying to make any religious statement, their compositions may be adopted by others who feel this need. The disjuncture between author and audience is exemplified in the reception of the book *The Red Tent* (1997), a novelistic amplification of the story of Dinah written by Anita Diamant. This book

expands on the sparsely detailed—in Dinah’s case, the nearly silent—biblical tale, supplying a rich picture of the family life, the historical setting, and the emotional life of the main character. Central to the novel is a system of religious ritual celebrating the woman’s menstrual cycle. Diamant regards her book as a work of fiction, and she emphatically denies that her story is meant to show “what really happened.” Yet, this is how many have perceived the story, criticizing her for “desecrating” the Torah or else praising her for “telling the truth.”⁶⁶ It is not surprising that her book has filled a gap in the religious lives of modern Jewish women eager to connect to their biblical heritage. Its plot rectifies some of the Bible’s most offensive sins of commission and omission: it provides the missing mother-daughter and sister-to-sister relationships, and it supplies the women with religious rites and beliefs that teach love and reverence for women’s bodies and blood.

Midrash fills in the blank spaces between the words and letters of the Torah. Women composing midrash negotiate carefully through the openings provided. They recognize that the biblical text is privileged, meriting a regular public recitation in its unadorned, exact form. Yet the myriad interpretive readings from the past also compete to be heard. A person who crafts a new midrash is contesting or augmenting the existing renditions of the text. This is a creative act, but it is also an aggressive one that involves determination and willingness to face opposition. Women, excluded from the conversation in the houses of Torah study for so many centuries, are no longer waiting for an invitation to participate. They have added their voices to the ongoing dialogue, adding new breadth and depth to the ancient story.

Notes

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1. Barry W. Holtz, “Midrash,” in his *Back to the Sources: Reading the Classic Jewish Texts* (New York: 1984), 177.

2. Two examples of recently launched educational initiatives are the Perek Yomi project of the United Synagogue of Conservative Judaism, a regimen of daily Bible study; and the Institute for Creative Midrash, a nondenominational organization connected with the movement for Jewish Renewal that (among other activities) sponsors midrash-writing workshops to teach people how to create new midrashim out of their own personal experiences. According to the brochures advertising such workshops, neither knowledge of Hebrew nor a Jewish religious education is a prerequisite, and minimal time is devoted to the study of the classical literature.

3. It appears to me that Rachel Adler, in *Engendering Judaism: An Inclusive Theology and Ethics* (Philadelphia: 1998), utilizes midrash for this end.

4. For an excellent introduction to this topic, see Debra Orenstein, “Stories Intersect: Jewish Women Read the Bible,” in *Lifecycles: Jewish Women on Biblical Themes in Contemporary Life*, ed. Debra Orenstein and Jane Rachel Litman (Woodstock, Vermont: 1997), vol. 2, xi–xxviii.

5. Two superb overviews and discussions of midrash are Holtz, “Midrash,” 189–201; and Gary G. Porton, “Defining Midrash,” in *The Study of Ancient Judaism*, ed. Jacob Neusner (Leiden: 1995), vol. 1, 55–92.

6. It is likely, however, that some women's stories and insights were incorporated into classical writings. For a survey of women's study of Torah according to the evidence of pre-twentieth century Jewish literature, see Shoshana Pantel Zolty, "*And All Your Children Shall Be Learned*": *Women and the Study of Torah in Jewish Law and History* (Northvale, N.J.: 1993).

7. Zolty chronicles the establishment and curriculum of the Bais Ya'akov schools until about 1950 (*ibid.*, 263–300). She also summarizes and references the research on American Jewish education (*ibid.*, p. 303n).

8. Jack Wertheimer, *A People Divided: Judaism in Contemporary America* (New York: 1993), 66, 85–87, 123–126. The absolute number of children enrolled in Jewish educational programs peaked during the mid-1960s and then went into a decline. Only in the 1980s did enrollment begin to increase. Actual statistics pertaining to the number of Jewish educational opportunities are available only for college Jewish studies course offerings.

9. Little research has been done on this subject. I am indebted to Bruce Phillips for providing data analysis based on the 1990 National Jewish Population Survey. Phillips has found significant changes in Jewish women's exposure to Jewish education during the past few decades. Women from all denominations who are under age 40 report a much greater participation in Jewish educational programs than the cohort aged 40–59, and even greater than the 60+ cohort. Of those raised in the Reform movement, three times as many females in the under 40 cohort received a day-school education (compared with the 60+ cohort); the increase is tenfold for those raised Orthodox.

10. Ezrat Nashim, a study group organized in September 1971 within the New York Havurah, was perhaps the first group devoted to improving women's status within American Judaism. Several key articles protesting the position of women in Jewish life and culture had already appeared in the 1971 summer edition of *Davka*, a journal produced and addressed primarily to Jewish college students.

11. These stages are ideal constructs. While they are apparent in group consciousness and within individuals, they cannot be fit neatly into the developments of the past 30 years and do not unfold uniformly on a personal level.

12. The most influential expression of these themes focused on women's presence and absence in the description in Exodus of the revelation of the Torah at Mount Sinai; see Rachel Adler, "The Jew Who Wasn't There: Halachah and the Jewish Woman," *Davka* (Summer 1971); reprinted in *On Being a Jewish Feminist*, ed. Susannah Heschel (New York: 1983), 12–18.

13. Judith Plaskow composed a midrash (entitled "The Coming of Lilith") in 1972 that became an emblem of Jewish feminism and was reprinted frequently thereafter. She describes the evolution of the midrash in "The Coming of Lilith: Toward a Feminist Theology," in *Womanspirit Rising: A Feminist Reader in Religion*, ed. Carol P. Christ and Judith Plaskow (San Francisco: 1979), 198–210. Plaskow's work is a concise narrative midrash; there were no comparable ones published or widely disseminated for some time thereafter. An early example of the type of essay that has become a common form of women's midrashic writing is Mary Gendler, "The Restoration of Vashti," *Response*, no. 18 (Summer 1973), 154–160.

14. See Elizabeth Koltun (ed.), *The Jewish Woman: New Perspectives* (New York: 1976). Judith Stein, a lesbian activist, rewrote biblical stories for use in Jewish ceremonies, publishing and distributing them (and other works) through her fledgling Bobbeh Meises Press based in Cambridge, Massachusetts. Her early writings are ingenious, quite creative, and very angry in tone. Her reconfigured Purim story, for example, is a conservative's nightmare version of Jewish feminism: it preserves the plot line of Esther's brave effort to save her people, but it is also a saga about how Esther, who is victimized by Mordecai, joins Vashti in surmounting the violent sexual servitude of Ahasuerus' court and thereby acquires a consciousness of sisterhood. See Judith Stein, *The Purim Megillah: A Feminist Retelling* (Cambridge, Mass.: 1983; rpt. 1986). For a rich sampling of contemporary Jewish lesbian writing, which now tends to be far less confrontational, see the journal *Bridges: A Journal for Jewish Feminists and Our Friends*, published twice annually in Seattle, Washington.

15. Gay men, in contrast, find themselves excoriated in the prohibition of sexual relations between men (Lev. 18:22) or, in a more positive vein, may relate to the friendship of David for

Jonathan that “surpasses the love of woman” (2 Sam. 1:26). See Rebecca Alpert, *Like Bread on the Seder Plate: Jewish Lesbians and the Transformation of Tradition* (New York: 1997), 17–36.

16. Interviews with Yaffa Weisman, Rebecca Alpert, Jane Litman (fall 1999). A recently published survey of women’s *hagadot* includes explicitly lesbian examples in the bibliography but inexplicably ignores or minimizes the distinctive sexuality and concerns of these authors; see Maida E. Solomon, “Claiming Our Questions: Feminism and Judaism in Women’s Haggadot,” in *Talking Back: Images of Jewish Women in American Popular Culture*, ed. Joyce Antler (Hanover: 1998), 220–241. This erasure of lesbians is not a new phenomenon; see Alpert, *Like Bread on the Seder Plate*, 1–16.

17. See Carol P. Christ, *Diving Deep and Surfacing: Women Writers on Spiritual Quest* (Boston: 1980), 7, quoting Nelle Morton’s “hearing each other into speech.”

18. See Arlene Agus, “This Month is For You: Observing Rosh Hodesh as a Woman’s Holiday,” in Koltun (ed.), *The Jewish Woman*, 84–93. Agus provides both a rationale and content material for Rosh Hodesh ceremonies, focusing much attention on the Israelite women who, according to classical midrash, spurned the worship of the golden calf. The first anthology of Rosh Hodesh ceremonies appeared in 1986—see Penina V. Adelman, *Miriam’s Well: Rituals for Jewish Women Around the Year* (New York: 1986). For an analysis of women’s new ritual ceremonies, see Jody Myers, “The Myth of Matriarchy in Contemporary Jewish Women’s Spiritual Writings,” *Jewish Social Studies* 4, no. 1 (Fall 1997), 1–27. Few authors of the new *hagadot* and Rosh Hodesh ceremonies had facility with the literature of classical midrash, although a standard element in the latter ceremony was the recitation of the tales of exceptionally brave Jewish women such as Deborah and Judith. One early woman’s *hagadah* with an impressive array of historical, midrashic, and rabbinic material (entitled simply *The Woman’s Haggadah* and reproduced by photocopy machine) was compiled and written by Lynn Rosen and Rachel Adler. This, like other women’s *hagadot*, was used as a source by others who assembled their own versions. I thank Yaffa Weisman of Hebrew Union College, Los Angeles, for sharing her knowledge of this literature with me.

For Orthodox women’s meditations that incorporate stories of the matriarchs, see Tamar Frankiel, *The Voice of Sarah: Feminine Spirituality and Traditional Judaism* (San Francisco: 1990) and Rivka Zakutinsky, *Beyond Pearls and Merchant Ships: Finding the Woman of Valor* (Brooklyn: 1996).

19. Louis Ginzburg, *Legends of the Jews*, translated by Henrietta Szold, was first published in English by the Jewish Publication Society in 1909, and was reissued in 1937 and 1968. Nahum N. Glatzer’s *Hammer on the Rock: A Midrash Reader* was first published in 1948, came out in paperback edition in 1962, and went through four more printings by 1971. Unlike Ginzburg’s book, Glatzer’s does not generally elaborate upon biblical stories, but consists primarily of selections of rabbinic literature that teach Jewish doctrines and folk wisdom.

20. Perhaps the first book of women’s midrash was *Taking the Fruit: Modern Women’s Tales of the Bible*, ed. Jane Sprague Zones (San Diego: 1981). Privately issued in 1981, it was the product of the cooperative efforts of eight women of various ages. Their debt to classical Jewish literature by way of English-language anthologies is acknowledged in the bibliography (ibid., 54–55). The book was reissued in 1989 with some deletions and additions to the original.

21. Jo Milgrom is an artist who has done much to promote this definition; see her book *Handmade Midrash* (Philadelphia: 1992). *Living Text: The Journal of Contemporary Midrash* features work by Jewish artists who engage biblical themes and who might be considered midrashists, such as JoAnne Tucker (director of the Avodah Dance Ensemble who calls herself a dance midrashist); Frances Oelbaum (graphic artist); and performance artists (referred to as “Bibliodramatists”) such as Peter Pitzele.

22. I would reserve the term “religious” for the conviction that a) there is a sacred as well as a material realm of reality; and b) connections should be established between the two spheres.

23. The best collection of “autobiographical” midrash is found in Orenstein and Litman (eds.), *Lifecycles*, vol. 2. Because of space limitations, I have not included examples of this type of midrash.

24. Chana Weisberg, *The Crown of Creation* (Oakville, Ont.: 1996), xvii.
25. Frankiel, *The Voice of Sarah*, 6–7.
26. *Ibid.*, 10.
27. Zakutinsky, *Beyond Pearls and Merchant Ships*, 8–9. This passage reflects the thesis argued by Tamar El-Or in her *Educated and Ignorant: Ultraorthodox Jewish Women and Their World* (Boulder: 1994) that a central function of some Orthodox women's education is to reinforce the conviction that women are not meant to engage in formal Torah study.
28. Zakutinsky displays no longing in her book for a more manifest role for Jewish women in the future. See *Beyond Pearls and Merchant Ships*, where she describes Miriam as a model of the hidden woman both in the biblical era and in the messianic age.
29. See Zolty, *Women and the Study of Torah*, 302–304.
30. On this theme as reflected in Orthodox women's writings on the family purity laws, see Jody Elizabeth Myers and Jane Rachel Litman, "The Secret of Jewish Femininity: Hiddenness, Power, and Physicality in the Theology of Orthodox Women in the Contemporary World," in *Gender and Judaism: The Transformation of Tradition*, ed. T.M. Rudavsky (New York: 1995), 51–77.
31. The proliferation of Torah study opportunities on the Web illustrates this as well. Project Genesis: Torah on the Information Superhighway (<http://www.torah.org>) offers weekly lessons on the Torah portion of the week to subscribers and an index of previously offered lessons. None of the teachers are women, although the organization does provide the texts of lectures given at the Jewish Renaissance Center, a learning institute for women. These lectures address specifically women's issues and, unlike the men's lessons in Project Genesis, do not incorporate passages from sacred texts. See their website (<http://www.JewishRenaissance.org>). Rivka Zakutinsky's book (discussed above) promotes a right-wing Orthodox vision of Jewish womanhood, promising inspiration and validation to women who stay at home to raise children and to help their husbands. Yet Zakutinsky's enterprise seems for some reason to have met with disapproval in her community: she thanks no rabbis for their inspirational teaching and the book contains no rabbinic approbations. Chana Weisberg reported in the preface to her book that "a large Jewish publishing company" rejected her manuscript on the basis that it was too profound for Jewish women, although it might appeal to Jewish men.
32. Many of the essays collected in *Women in the Hebrew Bible: A Reader*, ed. Alice Bach (New York: 1999) make this point. See especially the article by Esther Fuchs, "Status and Role of Female Heroines in the Biblical Narrative," 77–84.
33. Zakutinsky, *Beyond Pearls and Merchant Ships*, 38.
34. The Lubavitcher rebbe's lecture, found in *Sefer hasiḥot 5752* (p. 300), is repeatedly cited in Chabad circles. He put great weight on the view of the Kabbalist Isaac Luria that the generation that will be alive at the advent of the Redemption will consist of the same souls as those freed from Egypt. According to rabbinic midrash, the merit of the Jewish women caused the redemption from Egypt. The Lubavitcher rebbe taught that he was living at the advent of the Redemption, and thus had great expectations of the women of his generation.
35. Weisberg, *The Crown of Creation*, 56–57. Weisberg's midrash on Eve reaches a similar conclusion about women's virtues relative to the men around them.
36. *Ibid.*, 7.
37. See Lynn Davidman, *Tradition in a Rootless World: Women Turn to Orthodox Judaism* (Berkeley: 1991).
38. Judith S. Antonelli, *In the Image of God: A Feminist Commentary on the Torah* (Northvale, N.J.: 1997), xxxii–xxxvi. (The commentary numbers 495 pages.)
39. *Ibid.*, 90–93. Antonelli's estimation of the worth of Jewish feminists rises to the extent that they demonstrate respect for the Torah. In one notable passage (p. 179), she castigates those who feel that the sexism they experience is Torah-based. Antonelli argues that feminists (she names Rachel Adler and Judith Plaskow) have suffered from poor Jewish education, and that they do much damage because of their ignorance. Antonelli's Orthodox feminism is so idiosyncratic, and she casts her scorn so wide, that it is unclear in whose quarter she can pitch her tent.
40. For example, they might utilize Antonelli's observation that this language elsewhere de-

scribes foreign rituals involving cruelty to animals and certain rites that are unhygienic or potentially harmful to children (see *ibid.*, 299–300). The rabbinic prohibition of lesbianism is found in Sifra 8:8.

41. A thoughtful discussion of these issues can be found in Alpert, *Like Bread on the Seder Plate*, esp. chs. 2 and 3. Alpert cites a number of midrashim of this type and provides an extensive bibliography. See also her essay in *Reading Ruth: Contemporary Women Reclaim a Sacred Story*, ed. Judith A. Kates and Gail Twersky Reimer (New York: 1994), 91–96.

42. Shoni Labowitz, *God, Sex and Women of the Bible: Discovering Our Sensual, Spiritual Selves* (New York: 1998), 156–157.

43. Labowitz displays both the standard translation of Num. 12 and her own translation incorporating her interpretation in an appendix to her book (*ibid.*, 243–247). Like Labowitz, Rivkah M. Walton's midrash on this chapter relies on knowledge of other Hebrew sources (as well as talmudic texts), utilizes wordplay, rebukes Moses, and vindicates Miriam—but it is nevertheless quite different; see *Living Text: The Journal of Contemporary Midrash* 1 (July 1997), 21–22.

44. For example, Zornberg's analysis of the creation in Genesis does not deal with Eve at all, either as a person or as an archetype; nor does she touch on gender relations or motherhood (except for a brief mention of Rashi's teaching that the pain of her curse referred to the pain of child-rearing as opposed to childbirth). See Avivah Gottlieb Zornberg, *The Beginning of Desire: Reflections on Genesis* (New York: 1995), 3–36.

45. Zornberg's interpretations are usually delivered in a public lecture format, but they have also appeared in print. In private comments after a public lecture at the Shalom Hartman Institute (July 1998) she commented, "I find that I am not drawn to the women of the Torah. The men are more interesting to me."

46. Whereas the male authorship of the Bible was assumed in the literature of Jewish feminism, it is now more common to entertain the possibility of female authorship of parts of the Bible. This question is systematically addressed by Athalya Brenner, *The Israelite Woman: Social Role and Literary Type in Biblical Narrative* (Sheffield: 1985), 46–56.

47. See Norman J. Cohen, "New Wine in Old Vessels: Creating Contemporary Midrash," in *Living Text: The Journal of Contemporary Midrash* 1 (July 1997), 12–16, who articulates his own understanding of this process. He tends to use the metaphors of wrestling and struggling to describe the contemporary creative process, metaphors rooted in the story of Jacob's encounter with the angel of God (Gen. 32). In her commentary on this passage, Ellen Frankel observes that only men, not women, could invent such a metaphor for the divine-human encounter. See Frankel, *The Five Books of Miriam: A Woman's Commentary on the Torah* (New York: 1996), 65.

48. *Ibid.*, xviii.

49. *Ibid.*, 51.

50. *Ibid.*, 52.

51. Because rabbinic midrash generally looks favorably upon Sarah's banishment of Hagar, the Orthodox midrashists concur. The harshness of their judgement of Hagar parallels the liberals' harsh judgement of Sarah. Weisberg, for example, in *The Crown of Creation*, 51–53, describes Hagar as impudent and arrogant, and about her son she writes that "all but the holiest most spiritual forces had to be purged from Avraham before he could beget this precious jewel, Yitzchak. Into Yishmael went any spiritual impurities that were in Avraham" (*ibid.*, 53).

52. The editors of *Beginning Anew* write that Sarah's banishment of Hagar "was certainly not motivated by either matriarchal protectiveness or matriarchal vision"; see Gail Twersky Reimer and Judith A. Kates (eds.), *Beginning Anew: A Woman's Companion to the High Holy Days* (New York: 1997), 24. Six of the eight essays in the first section (pp. 23–86) of *Beginning Anew* deal at least partly with this incident, which the authors understand as Sarah's harsh and uncompromising treatment of Hagar. Naomi Graetz's midrash, titled "Sarah's Three Lives," has Sarah goad Abraham into banishing the two, but Sarah is afterwards contrite; see Naomi Graetz, *S/He Created Them: Feminist Retellings of Biblical Stories* (Chapel Hill: 1993), 31–37. Frankel, in *The Five Books of Miriam*, 18, has Sarah confess, "I was bending my own will to heaven's dark designs," and Sarah recognizes that this incident leads to her subsequent dis-

appearance from the continuing biblical narrative. See also Karen Prager, "God's Covenant with Sarah," in Naomi Mara Hyman (ed.), *Biblical Women in the Midrash: A Sourcebook* (Northvale, N.J.: 1997), 23–25.

53. Ruth Behar, "Sarah and Hagar: The Heelprints Upon Their Faces," in Reimer and Kates (eds.), *Beginning Anew*, 39.

54. This is a prominent theme in the collection of new midrash published by the Reform movement, *Beginning The Journey: Toward a Women's Commentary on Torah*, ed. Emily H. Feigensohn (n.p.: Women of Reform Judaism, The Federation of Temple Sisterhoods: 1998). See especially the comments on the Hebrew midwives, 67–93.

55. Behar, "Sarah and Hagar," in Reimer and Kates (eds.), *Beginning Anew*, 42.

56. See, for example, Naomi Graetz, "Sisters," in *S/He Created Them*, 47–61; the midrash on the Leah and Rachel story in the first edition of *Taking the Fruit*, 38–39, preserves the separateness of the sisters while the midrash in the second edition (1989) has them working on reconciliation (see below).

57. See Ruth H. Sohn, midrash 13, in Zones (ed.), *Taking the Fruit* (2nd ed.); Francine Klagsbrun, "Ruth and Naomi, Rachel and Leah: Sisters Under the Skin," in Kates and Reimer (eds.), *Reading Ruth*, 261–272; Frankel, *The Five Books of Miriam*, 52–58; Antonelli, *In the Image of God*, 72–82; Norma Rosen, *Biblical Women Unbound*, 81–92; Naomi Hyman, "Leah," in her *Biblical Women in the Midrash*, 60–64. The sisters' uneasy but continuous (and eventually comfortable) cooperation is a central theme in Anita Diamant's novel, *The Red Tent* (New York: 1997). The only example of a contemporary midrash I have found that shows the lack of sympathy between Rachel and Leah is authored by a male; see Paul Cooper, "When It Was All Over," in *Living Text: The Journal of Contemporary Midrash* 1 (July 1997), 24–25.

58. See Ruth H. Sohn on Gen. 30:8, in *Beginning the Journey*, 21–23. Sohn writes, "As feminists, should we claim that it is natural for women as well as men to be competitive, and celebrate the competition between the two sisters? Or should we claim as a model the Rabbis' portraits of Leah and Rachel overcoming their jealousy and rivalry with compassion and a sense of shared purpose? How we answer the question has potentially enormous implications." It seems to me that the choice is not between these two options. Recognizing the sisters' competition does not necessarily mean celebrating it. This point is made in Jane Litman's midrash on Ex. 2:10 (*ibid.*, 90–93).

Non-Orthodox midrashists also search out texts that, through midrash, provide a positive model of women caring for each other. See, for example, Kates and Reimer (eds.), *Reading Ruth*, a collection of writings by thoughtful, well-read women who use the elements in *Ruth* to reflect on a wide range of issues—giving center stage to women's relationships.

59. The opening blessing of the Amidah prayer appeals to the "God of our fathers" Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. The Reconstructionist and Reform movements have modified the liturgy to include the four matriarchs: Sarah, Rebecca, Rachel, and Leah; and the Conservative movement has recently added to its prayer book an alternative version that includes the four matriarchs. Mark points out that the advocates of liturgical reform negate the importance of Zilpah and Bilhah by portraying them as surrogate mothers and their children as Leah and Rachel's adoptees. She does not explicitly address why the other two women could not also be included in the liturgy, although it seems that liturgical awkwardness is an issue—six matriarchs named in a prayer might make it cumbersome. See Elizabeth Wyner Mark, "The Four Wives of Jacob: Matriarchs Seen and Unseen," in *The Reconstructionist* 63, no. 1 (Fall 1998), 22–35.

60. Gila Gevitz, "To Dare in the Name of the Divine," *The Reconstructionist* 63, no. 1 (Fall 1998), 5; emphasis added. Gevitz, a midrashist who works in a number of media, is also executive editor of Behrman House, Inc., one of the largest Jewish educational publishing houses in the United States. In her description of the midrash-writing process, she concludes, "Over the years, I have found that each print and collage I create reflects an awakening of my soul, a relocating and reclaiming of sacred memory. Sometimes in the process, I sense a gentle shift inside of me. My eyes open and I feel God's breath flow through me, as if for the first time" (*ibid.*, 7).

61. See the many essays in Shohama Wiener (ed.), *The Fifty-Eighth Century: A Jewish Renewal Sourcebook* (Northvale, N.J.: 1996).

62. See Rodger Kamenetz, *Stalking Elijah: Adventures with Today's Jewish Mystical Masters* (San Francisco: 1997).

63. Norma Rosen, *Biblical Women Unbound: Counter-tales* (Philadelphia: 1996), 66.

64. These examples can be found in *ibid.*, 53–54, 88; see also Deborah Seltzer, “The Rape of Dinah,” *Living Text: The Journal of Contemporary Midrash* 1 (July 1997), 8.

65. See Barbara E. Breitman, “Mi Dor L’Dor: An Intergenerational Midrash on the Akedah,” in Wiener (ed.), *The Fifty-Eighth Century*, 115–124.

66. Phone interview with Anita Diamant, 1 June 1999. The president of the Reform movement (UAHC—Union of American Hebrew Congregations) has launched a literacy initiative urging Reform Jews to read “at least four books of Jewish substance a year,” and the movement’s department of adult Jewish growth placed *The Red Tent* on its recommended book list. See *Reform Judaism* (Summer 1999), 48–49. At the Amazon.com website, *The Red Tent* has received an unusual number of mostly glowing reviews. One woman (identified as Claudia O. Teplitsky) testifies that “this book has changed my view of women in biblical times and given me a connection to my Jewishness. . . . The strength of the group and the commitment gave me heart and faith that I come from a rich and powerful female heritage. . . . To read this is to believe and connect with the ancient past.”

Imagining “Masculinity” in the Jewish Fin de Siècle

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Esau was a skillful hunter, a man of the field, while Jacob was a quiet man, who dwelled in tents.—Gen. 25:27

R. Yosei the son of Hanina said: What is the meaning of the verse, “I shall remove the blood from his mouth and the abominations from between his teeth, and he, too, shall be a remnant for God” [Zech. 9:7]? I shall remove the blood from his mouth—this refers to their places of sacrifice. And the abominations from between his teeth—this refers to their oracles. And he, too, shall be a remnant for God—these are the synagogues and study houses of Rome [Edom]. [And also:] “He shall be like a chief [aluf] in Judah, and Ekron like a Jebusite” [Zech. 9:7]. These are the theaters and circuses of Rome [Edom], in which the chieftains of Judah in the future are to teach Torah to the public.—Megilah 6:a

When my sword has drunk its fill in the heavens, lo, it will descend upon Edom, upon the people I have doomed to judgment.—Isa. 34:5

Heterosexuality and Foundations of Jewish Modernity

The relationship between historical experience and systems of knowledge is the axis on which serious cultural history turns. What cultural historians seek to uncover are the processes whereby discourse informs practice, value is ascribed to contingency, and identity is distilled from context. As the cultural history of the Jewish experience of “modernity” is written, it, too, will need to locate a plausible point of departure. One approach that has emerged in recent works on Jewish modernism in Europe seeks the connection between various constructions of modern Jewish identity and perceptions of gender and sexuality. Daniel Boyarin has written recently about “the rise of heterosexuality and the invention of the Jewish man.”¹ Sander Gilman has related stereotypes of sexual deviance, pathology, and madness to constructions of Jewish (and black) “otherness” in European science and popular culture.² And the late George Mosse argued that the dual projects of nationalism and bourgeois respectability generated ideals of health and social-sexual normality that effectively wrote both Jews and homosexuals out of the majority community.³

Some of the impetus for the new turn in the cultural history of Jewish modernity

seems to have come from the "discovery," or, if you will, the historicization, of the concept of heterosexuality. Over the past decade, cultural historians of Europe and North America have located the social construction of the ideal of "heterosexuality" in the medical literature of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Jonathan Ned Katz, in a typical formulation, proposes that "an official, dominant, different-sex erotic ideal—a heterosexual ethic—is not ancient at all, but a modern invention." Ideas concerning sexual reproduction, sex difference, and sexual pleasure, he argues, "have been produced and combined in different social systems in radically different ways. Not until a hundred years ago . . . were those ways heterosexual."⁴ It bears pointing out, of course, that when Katz and others talk about "heterosexuality" as a social/cultural construct, they are not denying that the *naturalness* of male-female sexual intercourse was a broadly accepted assumption in Western culture over many centuries. Rather, they are arguing that modern "heterosexuality" has replaced an image of sexual behavior based primarily on the presumption of a drive for procreation by one founded on the primacy of opposite sex erotic desire (what Katz calls the "different-sex pleasure ethic").

What might be called the "foundational texts" of this new social construct are mainly located in the writings of physicians, psychologists, and sexologists, men (significantly) such as Richard von Krafft-Ebing—by most accounts the most powerful figure in Viennese psychoanalytic circles in the last quarter of the nineteenth century—and his younger antagonist, Sigmund Freud. Krafft-Ebing's oft-published and widely distributed *Psychopathia Sexualis* employed the term *hetero-sexual* to denote the erotic drive directed at members of the opposite sex. Tied explicitly to the human need to achieve pleasure, this drive was only implicitly connected to the impulse to reproduce. The complementary term *homo-sexual*, which signified same-sex desire, constituted a pathology as far as Krafft-Ebing was concerned, partly because it circumvented human reproduction and partly because it indicated a lack of control over sexual impulses as well as an inability to relegate passion to the norms and expectations of society.⁵

Pride of place among the "founding fathers" of normative, heterosexual discourse is more often awarded, however, to Freud. His "Fragment of an Analysis of a Case of Hysteria," written in 1901 but first published in 1905—the famous "Dora" case study, based on the life of the young Ida Bauer—represents a key "foundational text" in the Freudian canon. It served as the basis for his elaboration of the Oedipal theory of human sexuality and helped to cement his reputation in the eyes of many as (again, to borrow from Jonathan Ned Katz) a "master heterosexual norm builder."⁶

What, one might well ask, does the modern discourse of heterosexuality have to do with the Jewish experience in modern Europe? Did this new system of knowledge alter the ways in which Jews interacted with non-Jews, imagined themselves, or became European? The issues, it seems to me, are as complicated as they are suggestive.

Since the Enlightenment, Jews have had to contend with a discourse of "Jewishness" that was gendered in significant ways, as any perusal of the European debates over Jewish emancipation readily reveals. Typically, Jews were ascribed cultural and behavioral traits that were linked symbolically, or presumed to correspond, to predictable male/female typologies, sexual proclivities, and identities. The very ques-

tion as to whether or not Jews possessed *virtue* (the sine qua non of citizenship), debated incessantly between 1770 and 1830 (and beyond), suggested that Jews—like women, minors, and slaves—were not quite men. And when Christian Wilhelm von Dohm contended that “the Jew is even more man than Jew,” he intended not only to answer the question concerning virtue in the affirmative, not only to make room for the Jew within the universal category of *humanity*, but also to place them within the community of *men* specifically.⁷

Operating from a somewhat different perspective and following the lead of contemporary historians of gender and sexuality, Daniel Boyarin has implicated a later generation of Jewish scientists and intellectuals who (in his reading) made a major contribution to the model of masculinity that has structured social-sexual relations in Europe and America for the past hundred years. More importantly for Boyarin, this ideal of manliness reversed in significant ways an alternative paradigm that had been developed by the classical rabbis and that had constituted the dominant discourse of “Jewish masculinity” in the premodern community. According to this argument, rabbinic Judaism, as read by later generations of Jews, proposed a “counter ideal” to Western notions of masculinity, “a model of masculinity that was openly resistant to and critical of the prevailing ideology of ‘manliness’ dominant in Europe.” This alternative identity, Boyarin continues, is best epitomized by the Yiddish term *eydlkayt*, which connotes refinement and gentility. *Eydlkayt* calls to mind an ideal of a “soft,” or “feminized,” masculinity whose model subject was the *yeshive bokher*—the man who devoted his life to the study of Torah—and “his secularized younger brother, the *Mentsh*.”⁸ To the extent, then, that Freud and other artists, scientists, and public figures helped to redefine at the turn of the century what it meant to be both a healthy male and a healthy sexual being, they were guilty of overturning and delegitimizing the prevailing standard in Jewish culture of a “soft masculinity.”

The Gendered Postures of the Jewish Past

Interestingly, Boyarin’s recasting of the Jewish experience in history largely accepts Nietzsche’s contention that the Jews had inverted the “aristocratic value equation”—according to which what was good and noble accorded with what was powerful and beautiful—replacing it with an ideal in which righteousness was equated with powerlessness and suffering. Boyarin simply rejects the notion that this inversion was a regrettable move.⁹ Rather, the “need to become female,” in his words, ought to be viewed as a positive act of defiance in the face of imperial power. His point is that those practices and performances that defined the rabbi as *feminized* from the point of view of Roman culture—a lack of weapons, physical inactivity, circumcision, and political acquiescence—were precisely the qualities that constituted an important model of masculinity within the dominated culture.¹⁰ This was, to be sure, a feminized masculinity, characterized by humility, suffering, and even masochism, responses that Boyarin classifies as “a renunciation of the phallus.” Indeed it is the female body, imagined in the Bakhtinian sense as comprising “orifices” and “convexities,” which serves as “an ideal representation of Jewish culture in the Diaspora,” a site characterized simultaneously by purity and by cultural exchange. Moreover, the

long-conditioned Jewish "arts of resistance" to oppression in the diaspora happen to be—appropriately enough—the "feminine" qualities of evasion and dissimulation that are common currency among "colonized peoples," "the very opposite of such 'masculine' pursuits as 'standing one's ground.'" ¹¹

The erosion of rabbinic culture that began with the Enlightenment and the prolonged process of Jewish emancipation in Western and Central Europe (which continued well into the twentieth century elsewhere on the continent) is understood by Boyarin to have induced Jews to abandon their traditional understandings of masculinity. He posits "the invention of the modern Jewish man," the reconstruction of Jewish gendering that coincided with the rise of heterosexuality in modern culture—"especially in Vienna at the *fin de siècle*"—as both cause and effect of the "undoing of the tradition of the effeminate Jewish male." Not only Freud but also Herzl, Zionism as well as psychoanalysis, loom large as emblems of a lamentable development in the evolution of modern Jewish identity: the abandonment of traditional, rabbinic concepts of manliness in favor of "a dawning ideal of the 'New Jewish Man,' 'the Muscle-Jew,' a figure almost identical to his 'Aryan' confrères." ¹²

According to this scenario, Jewish "modernity" reached its apogee at a historical moment that was marked by the intersection of three "deeply intertwined" cultural developments: the racialization and gendering of antisemitism; the *fin-de-siècle* "production of sexualities," including homosexuality; and the increase in contemporary Christian, homophobic discourse. ¹³ The work of both Mosse and Gilman provide ample corroboration of the observation that turn-of-the-century antisemitism and homophobia (perhaps also misogyny) represented largely homologous discourses in which the symbolic elements of one social representation could be—and frequently were—exchanged with those of another. It was a commonplace of popular literature and iconography of the day to view both Jews and homosexuals as "feminized beings" who transgressed the divide between the genders. Jews frequently were portrayed as being soft, weak, and passive—hence cowardly and devious—but they were also hysterical and slaves to uncontrollable passions, simultaneously unmanly and prone to irrational violence. ¹⁴

These were threatening images, not only to the Gentile public but to Jews as well—particularly Jewish males, who, in the words of Sander Gilman, "did not seek to validate their difference from the majority." They understood that the social, economic, and political gains of the emancipation were under attack, that they themselves risked being perceived as "deviations from the norm." ¹⁵ Not surprisingly, perhaps, assimilated Jews often drew upon gendered, racial, and medical readings of the Jew (constructed variously as "feminine," "homosexual," pathological, or "black") in their own works of cultural criticism. Otto Weininger is far from the only example of this phenomenon; a partial list would also include Walter Rathenau, Max Nordau, Walter Engländer, Cesare Lombroso, Moses Julius Guttman, Maurice Fischberg, and perhaps also Freud and Kafka. ¹⁶

Boyarin parts company with those critics of Freud who in recent years have charged that his abandonment of the seduction theory of neurosis had the effect of shielding Viennese society from the truth of child sexual abuse. ¹⁷ He points out (correctly, in my view) that the theory had been seriously flawed in objective terms and that Freud's early methods of eliciting stories of childhood seduction had been suspect.

Addressing the more fundamental question of the formation of sexual identity at the turn of the century, Boyarin suggests that Freud produced the Oedipal theory of attraction to the mother in a move of repression—to obscure his own experience “as the passively desiring male” in his relationship with Wilhelm Fliess. In the end, what is denied in the Oedipal theory (or, rather, repressed) is the desire of the boy child for the father (the “negative Oedipus”).¹⁸ Boyarin thus characterizes the Oedipal narrative in broad cultural terms as “heteronormative”—both a personal “family romance of escape from Jewish queerness into gentile, phallic heterosexuality” and an effort to *normalize* the social-sexual status of Central European Jewish males:

Since within this culture, male hysteria and homosexuality are both symptoms and products of gender inversion, there is a slippage between them: the Jew was queer and hysterical—and therefore, not a man. In response, the normatively straight Jewish Man was invented to replace the bent *Ostjude*, and his hysteria—his alternative gendering—was the first victim. . . .¹⁹

Here, I should point out, Boyarin’s argument also diverges from that of other observers such as Sander Gilman and Paula Hyman, who have examined the effect of the gender divide in the formation of modern Jewish identity. Hyman writes that Jewish men at the turn of the century, finding themselves bereft of “the power and honor otherwise due them as men,” tended to respond to their marginalization in cultures influenced by antisemitism by creating negative representations of Jewish women. “Struggling to gain respect and power for themselves as men in a far from open larger society,” she argues, “male Jews defined an identity that not only distinguished them from women but also displaced their own anxieties upon women.”²⁰ Similarly, Gilman’s reading of Freud has him responding to the racism that was directed against Jews in European society by translating (“displacing”) the idea of Jewish difference into a description of the universal divide between men and women. In his aspired role as (male) scientist, Freud ascribed to women as a collectivity the very traits of victimization, debility, secrecy, and imponderability that were the currency of unflattering, contemporary portrayals of Jews.²¹ Boyarin, in contrast, while accepting Gilman’s overall contention that Freud had engaged in a “racial encoding of gender,” shifts the angle of analysis from women to sexual orientation itself. His view is that Freud basically accepted the characterization of Jews as differently gendered, as “female,” and set out to overcome this difference. The myth of Oedipus provided the road on which the Jewish male could be reinscribed as normatively heterosexual:

Freud was enacting, at the same time that he was disavowing and denying, the self-contempt of the racially dominated subject. He was discursively closeting his circumcision. What we have here is a sort of psychic epispasm, a wish fulfillment to be uncircumcised—to be a man like all other men, a fetishized whole pallas.²²

As mentioned earlier, it is not only psychoanalysis that Boyarin implicates in his gendered reading of the formation of modern Jewish identity, antisemitism, and homophobia. Zionism, which internalized some of the key assumptions of both critiques, is to be understood in the same way: as an effort to reinscribe the European Jew as *male*. At the same time, Boyarin would argue, this had been the task of the assimilationist project as well: to overcome “the political and cultural characteristics

that masked Jewish men as a 'third sex,' as queer in their world."²³ Zionism, in this sense, represented not so much an alternative to assimilation as its fulfillment.²⁴

The nineteenth-century project of Jewish integration into European society (which Boyarin treats unproblematically as "assimilation") and the turn-of-the-century affirmation of Jewish national identity—classified indiscriminately as "Zionism"—are described as having shared a number of key features, chief among which was the pursuit of *goyim nakhes*, the Yiddish language's pejorative term for trivial goals and ephemeral thrills (presumably of no interest to traditional Jews). Boyarin, however, takes it to mean specifically "those characteristics that in European culture have defined a man as manly: physical strength, martial activity and aggressiveness, and contempt for and fear of the female body."²⁵

Responding to a cue from Steven Beller, for example, he makes much of Theodor Herzl's love for the music of Wagner and agrees that the opera *Tannhäuser*—from which Herzl had requested that excerpts be played at the Second Zionist Congress—can be read in Zionist terms as an allegory in which the hero, after spending a long time in the "ghetto" (that is, in the grotto in the arms of Venus), seeks to reenter human society. Seen from this perspective, Tannhäuser's journey to Rome to receive absolution for his sins might suggest the cultural program of full assimilation into German Christian society as well as Herzl's own fantasy of offering to lead the Jews in a mass conversion in return for the Pope's aid against antisemitism. Having failed to win acceptance from the Pope, the Jew/Tannhäuser "seeks to return to his grotto/ghetto of sensuous, material, effeminate indulgence and corruption," but he is saved by Elizabeth, a figure of pure womanhood, "who translates him into another world—Zion."²⁶

While Beller sees the attraction of *Tannhäuser* in that it spoke allegorically to the Jews of their redemption from their own degeneracy, Boyarin goes a good deal further, arguing that Wagner's text represents a distillation of German romantic ideals of masculinity and, as such, "manifests itself as the apotheosis of *goyim naches*."²⁷ Moreover, one can find, both in Herzl's play *The New Ghetto* and in Zionist ideology at large, the Wagnerian glorification of redemption through death. And finally, the activity to which Tannhäuser wishes to be admitted (his reason for wanting to escape from the grotto/ghetto) is war, "the homoerotic world of the martial *Männerbund*."²⁸ Thus, with one broad stroke, Boyarin equates Herzl with Wagner, Zionism with assimilation, and both with the glorification of masculinity and violence.

New Historicism or Ahistoricism?

The readings that Boyarin gives to Jewish texts, both classical and modern, are consistently interesting and imaginative. Where the analysis falls short and ultimately fails, I would argue, is in the claims it makes regarding historical experience. *Unheroic Conduct*, disclaimers to the contrary notwithstanding, is, in the end, a book about Jewish history.²⁹ Boyarin's contextualizations of the literary material are limited, schematic, and at times arbitrary. The evidence on which he draws for illustration, while necessarily selective, is so narrowly based that it calls attention to the many obvious counterexamples that can be distilled from the Jewish past, and for

which no effort at explanation is offered. History itself, as it is deployed here, shows little movement. Hardly a record of conflict and change, of shifting perspectives, of disorder, it is rather a fixed tableau against which texts can be read. Culture, too, represents a set of paradigms rather than a contest over preferred social orderings and meanings; it is a collection of dicta, an end result, not a process. Whether Jewish or Gentile, rabbinic or modern, it is expressed in terms of paradigmatic statements, overdetermined voices, and static positions. "Masculinity" constitutes one of rabbinic Judaism's paradigms, and is marked by a lack of fluidity. It hardly changes over time; rather, it *shifts* at very rare moments in time. Boyarin's goal, it seems, is to locate those Kuhnian shifts, the few great divides in the narrative of Jewish consciousness.

Perhaps I can best illustrate what I consider to be the limitations of this method by evoking yet another "foundational text" of the crisis of modern Jewish masculinity. It consists of a scene from Freud's childhood, recounted and commented on by Freud later in life, and subjected ever since to numerous interpretations by others:

I may have been ten or twelve years old, when my father began to take me with him on his walks and reveal to me in his talk his views upon things in the world we live in. Thus it was, on one such occasion, that he told me a story to show how much better things were now than they had been in his days. "When I was a young man," he said, "I went for a walk one Saturday in the streets of your birthplace; I was well dressed, and had a new fur cap on my head. A Christian came up to me and with a single blow knocked off my cap and shouted: 'Jew! get off the pavement!'" "And what did you do?" I asked. "I went into the roadway and picked up my cap," was his quiet reply. This struck me as unheroic conduct on the part of the big, strong man who was holding the little boy by the hand. I contrasted this situation with another which fitted my feelings better: the scene in which Hannibal's father, Hamilcar Barca, made his boy swear before the household altar to take vengeance on the Romans. Ever since that time Hannibal had had a place in my phantasies.³⁰

In separate comments, Carl Schorske and Peter Gay have underscored the importance of this memory in the emergence of Freud's personal obsession with "Rome" as both a life goal and a target of revenge.³¹ Sander Gilman suggests that this tale about an antisemitic incident in the past of Freud's father left in the son's mind a problematic modeling of "adult, Jewish masculinity."³² Robert Wistrich points to the telling of the story as a traumatic event in the life of the child, a cornerstone around which were built both the boy's Oedipal struggle and his life-long sensitivity to anti-semitism.³³ Boyarin labels it "one of the initiatory stories of modernity" and emphasizes the text's centrality for his own investigation into the reshaping of Jewish "masculinity" at the fin de siècle by borrowing Freud's characterization of his father's behavior ("unheroic conduct") and deploying it in ironic terms for the title of his book.³⁴ What was "unheroic" behavior in the eyes of Sigmund Freud, Boyarin hails as consistent with the ideal of masculinity as expressed in talmudic literature and as transmitted in the traditional culture of Ashkenazic Jews. By way of contrast, the Zionist, as well as Freud's Oedipal, rejection of Jewish timidity and preference for aggressive countermeasures in the face of intimidation represents for Boyarin a regrettable cultural development.³⁵

My own view is that the story reveals rather more than psychological conflict or a gendered critique of "the father." It also functions as a complex memory of the Jewish

past, layered like sedimentary rock, and it is with this image in mind that I should like to return to the text. One would do well, I think, to try to keep within view the various types of Jewish experience that the story embodies as well as the contexts in which it was recounted. In the version reported by Sigmund Freud, four distinct moments of the modern Jewish past can be discerned: the stroll along the streets of Vienna by father and son; the incident involving the hat, which took place when the father was a "young man"; the prehistory of the protagonist, Jakob Freud (intimated by the oblique references to the Sabbath and to the fur hat, probably a *streimel*); and Freud's own recollection of his father's telling of the story, which dates to sometime between the autumn of 1896 and 1899 (when the manuscript of *The Interpretation of Dreams* was sent to the publisher), and which represents a kind of distant "memory of the offense."

Jakob Freud, who had been born into a hasidic family in Habsburg Galicia in 1815, moved at the age of 20 to the small town of Příbor in Moravia—the first stage of a radical cultural, as well as geographic, migration. It was here, in all likelihood shortly after Jakob's arrival in 1835, that the incident that stands at the core of the narrative took place.³⁶ The father then brought the family to Vienna in 1859, that is, when Sigmund was three years old. If he was indeed "eleven or twelve" when his father recounted the story of his fur hat, the year would have been 1867 or 1868, a high point in the fortunes of Austrian liberalism, set in relief by the establishment of the Dual Monarchy, on the one hand, and by the enshrinement of Jewish emancipation in the Austrian constitution, on the other. The eventual retelling of the incident by Freud himself coincided with the publication of *The Interpretation of Dreams* in 1900 or, more accurately, with the period of his self-analysis, which he undertook in the aftermath of his father's death in 1896, leading up to his rejection of the seduction theory of neurosis in favor of the Oedipus complex.³⁷

The four moments of nineteenth-century Jewish experience—1815 in Galicia, 1835 in Moravia, 1867 and 1897 in Vienna—stand separately as discrete strands of the narrative, but are also conflated in subtle ways. The opening of the story, for example, announces a blending of both time and plot: the setting is 1867 Vienna; the father takes his son of "ten or twelve" with him on some of his walks in the city and uses the occasion to reveal to his son his views on "the world we live in." But the dramatic events, in fact, concern Moravia in the 1830s; if they constitute for Jakob Freud a story about Vienna three decades later, it is by virtue of what he takes to be the impossibility of their reenactment in that historical context. The year 1867 serves as the silent backdrop of the "knowing" present to a moral about the bad old days. In the retelling of this event on the streets of liberal Vienna, Freud's father chooses not to reveal the particulars of his Orthodox childhood and youth in a hasidic milieu in Galicia, but suggests, by gentle allusion to sumptuary dress on the Sabbath (and the fact that his best hat was made of fur), that he continued to maintain certain aspects of this life even after he settled in Příbor.

It strikes me that Freud, too, in his own retelling of the story, conflates temporal perspectives. To begin with, the 11-year-old son (as remembered by the adult Freud) does not realize that the father has already gotten to the unspoken punchline of the story ("Here a Jew can walk the streets unmolested") and asks for a variant ending. He wants to know what his father's response to the Gentile aggressor was. Here, I

think, one needs to ask: Who, in fact, is asking this question of the father? Is it the preadolescent son or is it Freud later in life? The boy who is enjoying a carefree walk with his father or someone who has experienced slights and insults in his own life? When, in other words, does Freud truly begin to imagine himself as Hannibal, the “semitic” general, who both honors and surpasses his father by directing his vengeance toward Rome?

In Freud’s retelling of the events in question, it is the 1890s, not the 1860s, that constitute the implicit backdrop to the narrative. Freud reacts to the Gentile bully in Příbor not as an emblem of the past but as a living force to be reckoned with and confronted—an August Rohling, a Georg von Schönerer, or a Karl Lueger—while the original reference point, Vienna during the liberal ascendancy, has largely disappeared from view. The most telling indication of its absence can be gleaned from the contrast offered by the adult narrator between the “unheroic” conduct of the father and the image of “the big, strong man who was holding the little boy by the hand.” Can this really have been the picture presented by the 52-year-old father and the eleven- or twelve-year-old son walking in the Prater? A big, strong man holding a *little boy* by the hand? Or has Freud imagined himself as a child of three so as to accompany his father on a different walk—not through the parks of Vienna, but along the sidewalks of Příbor where (if things had gone differently) he would have seen his father reacting heroically to the gross insult? What does it mean, moreover, that the menacing bullies of the 1890s were little changed from those of the 1830s? Lastly, what is meant by the rejection of the “liberal solution” to the problem of antisemitism that is implicit in Freud’s narration?

To answer these questions, one needs first to determine *who* the Jakob Freud is whose hat is knocked into the gutter. Is he the “dweller of tents” whom Genesis contrasts to Esau the skilled hunter? Is he Jacob the trickster? (Or, perhaps, Jacob who wrestles with God?) Is he the effeminate male antihero of the rabbis? And what of the streimel, if indeed it is a streimel? Is the Jakob Freud who has moved from Galicia to Příbor and will soon take the family to Vienna really the model of premodern *edelkayt* as Boyarin would like us to believe? The point, of course, is that he is none of these types. There is no reason not to accord him his own proper contextuality, that of a mid-nineteenth century Habsburg Jew, simultaneously the product of a traditional Jewish childhood and youth in Galicia and of a young adulthood in small-town Moravia; like most Jews in nineteenth-century Europe, a man in motion; like many Central European Jewish males, intent on moving up. Whatever reproach the son directed at his father, it is not likely that he saw the man as emblematic of traditional Jewish culture before the Enlightenment.

If, for the sake of argument, we were to agree that Jakob Freud was a traditional *Ostjude* steeped in rabbinic culture, would we be any closer to knowing what type of *male* he was? I would argue no. The so-called “feminized” response of the rabbis to Roman power—what Richard Rubenstein has called “Yochanan ben Zakkai’s bargain”—does not adequately represent either the rabbinic construction of masculinity or its response to military and political domination.³⁸ Can we so confidently exclude the anti-Roman movement led by Elazar ben-Yair from the “pantheon” of rabbinic culture? Did Bar Kokhba, who enjoyed significant rabbinic support, at least in his own time, operate outside the sphere of rabbinic responses?

Freud, after all, was not the first Jew to dream of revenge against Rome. The Palestinian midrashim, for example, are laced with visions of divine retribution and violent reprisal against this enemy of the Jewish people. The Talmudic tractate Megilah predicts that the princes of Judah will one day teach Torah to the masses in the theatres and circuses of Rome. And *Shir hashirim rabah* warns that "the time of the nightingale has come," to announce the downfall of the "fourth kingdom."³⁹ But medieval Jewish eschatological dreams of retribution are perhaps best summed up in the thirteenth-century polemical tract, *Sefer nizahon yashan* when it warns that: "this [future] redemption will involve the ruin, destruction, killing, and eradication of all the nations, them, and the angels who watch over them, and their gods."⁴⁰

The very rabbinic culture of Ashkenaz that Boyarin tends to idealize as gentle and meek (frozen, as it were, in premodern, ahistoric time) has left to posterity numerous, startling examples of aggressive and even violent resistance to domination. Both the Hebrew and Latin chronicles of the First Crusade, for example, attest to the Jewish armed defense of Worms and Mainz. Equally well known are the combined Jewish-Catholic defenses of the walled cities in the Polish *kresy* during the Chmielnicki uprising of 1648–1649. Moreover, the violent responses of Rhineland Jews to the Crusades were not always defensive in nature. The Hebrew chronicle known as the "Mainz Anonymous" relates the behavior of one R. Simhah Hakohen of Worms, who, when led to the chamber of the bishop under the pretext of converting to Christianity "took out his knife and 'gnashed his teeth' in anger against the prince, the relative of the bishop, as does the lion over its prey. He . . . sank the knife in his belly, and he fell and died. He turned and stabbed two more until the knife broke in his hand."⁴¹ Finally, the aggressively uncompromising stance of Rhineland Jewry toward the culture of the Crusades manifested itself in acts of collective suicide that were shocking to Christian onlookers—the memory of which also precipitated a major reinterpretation of the concept of *kidush hashem* (dying for the sanctification of God's name) within the European Jewish imagination.⁴²

Acts of violence, dreams of retribution, suicidal defiance—all of these can be seen as plausible responses to a hostile environment undertaken within the moral structure of normative Judaism. To be sure, the prevailing mode in Western assessments of Jewish collective behavior, beginning with the pro-Jewish Enlightenment treatises of Dohm and Abbé Grégoire, and extending well into our own century, has been to insist on a basic distinction between Jewish consciousness and public displays of citizenship and power, and to consign the former to a "private," *womanly* realm.⁴³ In rhetorical terms, the emancipatory project seems to have been designed to allow Jewish males to assume a Western masculine identity; yet in social and political interactions, Jews were expected to conduct themselves deferentially toward Gentile power (more so than in the past, because there was now more to lose). One might well argue, then, that it was the pre-Zionist experience of *modernity*—rather than medieval patterns of behavior—that placed a new premium on Jewish meekness and acquiescence. And Freud's distaste for the behavior of his father may make the most sense as part of a post-liberal Jewish critique of Enlightenment civility.

Jakob Freud's streimel story, it will be recalled, was offered to the son as a parable of emancipation; and Sigmund Freud's impatience with Jewish powerlessness surely spoke more to his experience of the 1890s than to his image of the 1830s. His sense

of frustration at the diminished scope of plausible Jewish responses to aggression would only increase with time. In January 1934, he addressed a letter to the writer Arnold Zweig, who was now safely ensconced in Haifa—a “Zionist” refuge to which Zweig never managed to become acclimated. After chiding Zweig good-naturedly about his reluctance to relinquish his emotional ties to “[your] so-called Fatherland,” Freud related with some anguish an event of seemingly minor importance that had taken place a few months earlier in Vienna:

Last October there visited me a Dr. Ludwig Bauer who was known to me from some unusually intelligent and perceptive articles on the political situation. When I learnt that he was Viennese, the son of a doctor, a friend of Arthur Schnitzler and Beer-Hofmann, I treated him as a friend and discussed the dangers and prospects of our situation with him. Fool that I was! A few weeks later the fellow published an article on Austria in several newspapers, reporting also his visit to me. He described how I, good old man that I am, highly regarded and helpless, trembling with fear, had seized him by both hands and had kept on repeating just the one question: “Do you think they will turn me out, do you think they will take my books away?”⁴⁴

Reduced, through what he labeled “an impertinent fabrication,” to the image of a helpless old man appealing “to the sympathy of Europe” not to turn him out, not to take away his books, Freud chafed indignantly at the lack of political options at his disposal, at his inability to affect even the manner in which he was portrayed to a sympathetic public. His greatest hope of rescue from Austria, according to one who purported to be a supporter, was to transform him into an object of pity.

The correspondence between Freud and Zweig in the 1930s at times reveals an unexpected reversal of “voice.” Zweig, who had been a student Zionist in his younger days, complains frequently about the primitive living conditions in Palestine, to say nothing of the provincial outlook of the people whom he now has no choice but to call his own. Freud, the ostensible Viennese cosmopolitan, foreswears all ties to Germans and Austrians, protesting that he prefers to identify himself simply as a Jew.

But the one thing that one does *not* find among the letters of these two men is a valorization of diaspora. There is no talk of the Jewish dispersion as a site of “purity” and “cultural exchange.” It is neither masculine nor feminine, neither “queer” nor “straight”; at the same time, neither of the two men shows any desire to become like the Aryan, the “dominant male of Europe.”⁴⁵ Diaspora signifies dangerous space. And neither Jewish tradition nor the experience of modernity had prepared the Jews of Europe to confront the new Rome.

Notes

1. Daniel Boyarin, *Unheroic Conduct: The Rise of Heterosexuality and the Invention of the Jewish Man* (Berkeley: 1997).
2. Sander L. Gilman, *Difference and Pathology: Stereotypes of Sexuality, Race, and Madness* (Ithaca: 1985) and idem, *The Jew's Body* (New York: 1991).
3. See George L. Mosse, *Nationalism and Sexuality: Middle-Class Morality and Sexual Norms in Modern Europe* (Madison: 1985) and idem, *The Image of Man: The Creation of Modern Masculinity* (New York: 1996).

4. Jonathan Ned Katz, *The Invention of Heterosexuality* (New York: 1995), 14. See also George Chauncy, Jr., *Gay New York: Gender, Urban Culture, and the Making of the Gay Male World (1890–1940)* (New York: 1994) and David Greenberg, *The Construction of Homosexuality* (Chicago: 1988).

5. See Richard von Krafft-Ebing, *Psychopathia sexualis: Mit besonderer Berücksichtigung der conträren Sexualempfindung. Eine klinisch-forensische Studie* (Stuttgart: 1886). At least 15 editions of this book were published between 1886 and 1918, the second of which, printed in 1887, was "expanded and revised" (from 110 to 148 pages).

See the discussion of Krafft-Ebing's views of heterosexuality and homosexuality in Katz, *The Invention of Heterosexuality*, 21–32, and in Mosse, *Nationalism and Sexuality*, 10–11, 38–39, and *passim*. Mosse emphasizes Krafft-Ebing's role in the linking of masturbation to homosexuality and in the labeling of both types of behaviors as "unmanly."

6. Katz, *Invention of Heterosexuality*, 58. I recognize, of course, that this presentation is highly schematic and that it ignores, among other things, the important feminist critique of both the Dora study and central aspects of Freud's theory of sexuality. See, in this regard, Hannah Decker, *Freud, Dora, and Vienna 1900* (New York: 1991), Sander L. Gilman, *The Case of Sigmund Freud: Medicine and Identity at the Fin de Siècle* (Baltimore: 1993), and *idem*, *Freud, Race, and Gender* (Princeton: 1993).

7. Christian Wilhelm von Dohm, *Über die bürgerliche Verbesserung der Juden* (Berlin: 1781); quoted in *The Jew in the Modern World: A Documentary History*, ed. Paul Mendes-Flohr and Jehuda Reinharz, 2nd ed. (New York: 1995), 30.

8. Boyarin, *Unheroic Conduct*, 23; see also pp. 34–36. Although Boyarin does not adduce the following talmudic passage to support his notion of "feminized" masculinity in rabbinic culture, he might well have:

"To you, O men [*ishim*], I call" [Prov. 8:4]. R. Berekhia said, This refers to the rabbis [*talmidei hakhamim*], who are like women yet perform heroic deeds like men" (B Yoma 71a).

9. Boyarin, *Unheroic Conduct*, 85; cf. Friedrich Nietzsche, *On the Genealogy of Morality*, ed. Keith Ansell-Pearson (Cambridge: 1994), 19.

10. "For the Romans—at least as they were imagined by Jews and presumably for many Jews themselves—a man who did not have a weapon was not a man at all. He was castrated, but from within the rabbinic Jewish perspective he is merely circumcised. In other words, those practices and performances that defined the rabbi as feminized from the point of view of the dominant culture were those that constituted masculinity within the dominated culture—although here too the dominated men understood themselves in part, and in a positive sense, as feminized as well" (Boyarin, *Unheroic Conduct*, 142).

11. *Ibid.*, 91, 93–94. See also Carole Pateman, *The Sexual Contract* (Stanford: 1988) and Mikhail Bakhtin, *Rabelais and His World*, trans. Hélène Iswolsky (Bloomington: 1984).

12. *Ibid.*, 27, 37.

13. *Ibid.*, 208–209.

14. See Mosse, *The Image of Man*, 63–70, and Gilman, *Freud, Race, and Gender*, 162–165.

A popular account of the ritual murder trial against Leopold Hilsner in Bohemia in 1899 describes Hilsner's alleged accomplices (never identified or confirmed) in terms that attest to their liminal status as feminized males: unshaven yet smooth-skinned, unable to grow a full beard; wild in their mannerisms yet "knock-kneed," they hobbled when they walked. See Gustav Toužil, *Polná 29.3.1899: Popis vraždy Anežky Hřůzové a sensačního procesu s Hilsnerem před porotou Kutnohorskou* (Kutná Hora: 1899); see also Hillel J. Kieval, "Representation and Knowledge in Medieval and Modern Accounts of Jewish Ritual Murder," *Jewish Social Studies* 1 (1994–1995), 52–72.

15. Gilman, *Freud, Race, and Gender*, 162.

16. On this point, see *ibid.*, 93–168, and *idem*, *Franz Kafka: The Jewish Patient* (New York: 1995), 101–168.

17. See, inter alia, Jeffrey Moussaieff Masson, *The Assault on Truth: Freud's Suppression of the Seduction Theory* (Harmondsworth: 1985), and Larry Wolff, *Postcards from the End of the World: Child Abuse in Freud's Vienna* (New York: 1988).

18. Boyarin, *Unheroic Conduct*, 196, 205.

19. Ibid., 215.

20. Paula E. Hyman, *Gender and Assimilation in Modern Jewish History: The Roles and Representation of Women* (Seattle: 1995), 134–135.

21. See Gilman, *Freud, Race, and Gender*, 36–48.

22. Boyarin, *Unheroic Conduct*, 239.

23. Ibid., 222.

24. On this occasion, Boyarin employs a rhetorical flourish that, rather than advancing his argument, reveals the lengths to which he goes in order to make a point:

For Freud, Zionism was motivated as much by the Oscar Wilde trials as by the Dreyfus trial. It was a return to Phallustine, not to Palestine (p. 222).

25. The term *goyim naches* is deployed throughout the book; the definition is found on p. 78.

26. Ibid., 74; see also Steven Beller, “Herzl, Wagner, and the Ironies of ‘True Emancipation,’” in *Tainted Greatness: Antisemitism and Cultural Heroes*, ed. Nancy A. Harrowitz (Philadelphia: 1994), 127–155.

27. Boyarin, *Unheroic Conduct*, 75.

28. Ibid.

29. See Daniel Boyarin, “Response to Allan Arkush,” *Jewish Social Studies* 4, no. 3 (Spring/Summer 1998), 93–95.

30. Sigmund Freud, *The Standard Edition of the Complete Psychological Works*, vol. 4, *The Interpretation of Dreams*, ed. and trans. James Strachey and Anna Freud (London: 1955), 197.

31. Carl E. Schorske, *Fin-de-Siècle Vienna: Politics and Culture* (New York: 1980), 189–193; Peter Gay, *Freud: A Life for Our Time* (New York: 1988), 11–12. Schorske characterizes the theme of Rome in Freud’s life as a “neurosis,” while Gay writes of “fantasies of revenge.”

32. Gilman, *Freud, Race, and Gender*, 178.

33. Robert S. Wistrich, *The Jews of Vienna in the Age of Franz Joseph* (Oxford: 1989), 541–542.

34. See Boyarin’s extended analysis in *Unheroic Behavior*, 33–38. The quotation is from p. 33.

35. Boyarin writes: “As Martin Bergmann has noted, the ‘feminine’ response of Freud’s father in this incident was not ‘unheroic’ but antiheroic and indeed traditionally Jewish” (ibid., p. 34.)

36. See Wistrich, *Jews of Vienna*, 540; and Judith Bernays Heller, “Freud’s Mother and Father,” *Commentary* (May 1956), 418–421.

37. On this period in Freud’s life, see Gay, *Freud*, 90–102.

38. Richard L. Rubenstein, *Power Struggle* (New York: 1974), 171–179.

39. Megilah 6a; *Bereshit rabah* 75:9; *Shir hashirim rabah* 2:28. For these and numerous other references, see Mosheh David Gross, *Oẓar haagadah: mehamishnah vehatosefta hatal-mudim vehamidrashim vesifrei hazohar*, vol. 3 (Jerusalem: 1954, 1991), 1177–1179.

40. Quoted from the critical edition by David Berger, *The Jewish-Christian Debate in the High Middle Ages* (Philadelphia: 1979), 227 (p. 161 in the Hebrew text).

41. “Mainz Anonymous” (“S Chronicle”), as reproduced and translated by Robert Chazan in his *European Jewry and the First Crusade* (Berkeley: 1987), 231.

42. On the question of Jewish understandings of the collective responses to the events of 1096, see, inter alia: Ivan G. Marcus, “From Politics to Martyrdom: Shifting Paradigms in the Hebrew Narratives of the 1096 Crusade Riots,” *Prooftexts* 2 (1982), 40–52; idem, “History, Story and Collective Memory: Narrativity in Early Ashkenazic Culture,” *Prooftexts* 10 (1990), 365–388; and Robert Chazan, “The Facticity of the Medieval Narrative: A Case Study of the Hebrew First-Crusade Narratives,” *Association for Jewish Studies Review* 16 (1991), 31–56.

On the possible implications of the Jewish responses to events of 1096 for Jewish-Christian

relations in the twelfth and thirteenth centuries, see Yisrael Yuval, "Hanakam vehakelalah, hadam vеха'alilah," *Zion* 58 (1993), 33–90, as well as the special issue of *Zion* 59, nos. 2–3 (1994), devoted to a discussion of Yuval's thesis.

43. On the rhetorical tactic in the eighteenth-century debates on Jewish emancipation in Prussia, the Habsburg Monarchy, and France that described the necessary (and inevitable) political education of the Jews as a transformation to manhood, see Paul Mendes-Flohr and Jehuda Reinharz (eds.), *The Jew in the Modern World*, 2nd ed. (New York: 1995), 28–53, 62–74.

44. Sigmund Freud to Arnold Zweig, 28 Jan. 1934, in Ernst L. Freud (ed.), *The Letters of Sigmund Freud and Arnold Zweig*, trans. Elaine and William Robson-Scott (New York: 1970), 59.

45. See Boyarin, *Unheroic Conduct*, 93, 229–231.

The Modernist Erotics of Jewish Tradition: A View from the Gallery

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“The Animal in the Synagogue,” Franz Kafka’s only story set in a recognizably Jewish world, is an unfinished parable, a parable without a moral, about a pale blue-green marten that inhabits a small, dying synagogue and has done so for as long as anyone can remember. The animal in Kafka’s synagogue is a stubbornly opaque figure, resisting all interpretation by the congregants who mull over its origin, motives, appearance, and proclivities and by the reader, who searches in vain for what this animal, as a literary figure, might “symbolize” or mean. Yet precisely because it resists meaning, the animal is an engine that generates narratives, speculation, dogma, law, and finally ritual—tradition, in other words, in what Walter Benjamin calls its “transmissibility” rather than truth.¹ “The Animal in the Synagogue” reflects Jewish tradition-making not only in its diachronic aspect, in the movement from one generation to another, but also in its synchronic aspect, in the socially differentiated mechanisms by which tradition is constructed at a given moment in time. The interpretations that arise around the animal, in the absence of other information, are shaped by the particularities of the architecture within which the marten moves: “The animal does not dare to go down below where the men are, it has never yet been seen on the floor. If it is stopped from getting on the lattice of the women’s compartment, then at least it wants to be at the same height on the opposite wall.”² In speaking of the animal, the congregants simultaneously trace the contours of their social world.

In Kafka’s narrative, what the animal means is less important than *how* it means: it acquires significance within and through the structures it disturbs. Thus, the men debate the halakhic ramifications of its presence in a synagogue, speculate on its origins and plot its removal; the women feign fear and disguise their erotic fascination with the creature. In traversing and violating the boundaries between the sexes, the animal presents a different series of distractions, dilemmas, and diversions for the women and for the men:

To be sure, it is only the women who are afraid of the animal, the men have long ceased to bother about it, one generation has pointed it out to the next, it has been seen over and over again, and by this time nobody any longer wastes a glance on it, until now even the children, seeing it for the first time, do not show any amazement. It has become that animal that belongs to the synagogue—why should not the synagogue have a special do-

mestic animal not found anywhere else? If it were not for the women, one would hardly be aware of the animal's existence any more now at all.³

The animal not only calls our attention to the architecture of the synagogue, it also symbolically reorganizes it, displacing the traditional male center as the legislated focus of attention and reconfiguring the concentric, closely guarded circles of the Holy Ark, Jewish men and, at the periphery, Jewish women. In this story, the normative, sacral content of religion, a community of men praying to their God with women as spectator-participants, is disrupted by and subsumed to the sexual drama of women ogling a strange beast. It is impossible to resolve the question of the symbolic relation of the animal to God, to the Torah, to men, to women (polar opposites? secret doubles?); Kafka only maps these relations in spatial terms. Nor does Kafka invite us to read "animality" or "carnality," in its romantic or sexual essence, in this particular blue-green creature. For all the uniqueness of this story and Kafka's style, though, the constellation of concerns in this story is not unfamiliar. "The Animal in the Synagogue" shares with a wide range of Jewish modernist works a fascination with the processes of tradition and its breakdown, with the tensions between the carnal and spiritual, between men and women, and between normativity and transgression. In this regard, the animal in Kafka's synagogue can be said to inhabit the Jewish modernist project in its wider expression.

Theorizing the relations between sexuality and religion was central to modern Hebrew and Yiddish literature since their beginnings. For the writers of the Haskalah period, it was clear that the traditional Ashkenazic community in which they had been raised had suppressed and distorted Jewish sexuality, most devastatingly in marrying off young boys and girls before they were emotionally prepared.⁴ Haskalah novelists lamented that passionate love—the stuff of the modern European novel—was foreign to traditional Jewish culture; in his autobiographical *Bayamim haheem (In Those Days)* (1894), S.Y. Abramovitsh reflected with double-edged irony on the distance between his experience and the paradigmatic heroes of European literature:

Neither I nor my ancestors ever amazed the world with our deeds. We weren't dukes, or strategists, or warriors. We never made love to charming young women; we never wrestled like billy-goats with other men or served as seconds in duels; and we never learned how to waltz with young maidens at balls. . . . In short, all the material that could entice a reader—is lacking among us. Instead we have the *kheyder* and the *rebbe*, matchmakers and brides and grooms, old people and babies, wives and children.⁵

A generation earlier, Abraham Mapu had responded to the dilemma, for a novelist, of a community apparently devoid of sexual love by superimposing European romantic conventions on a (largely imaginary) Jewish past, setting his 1853 romance, *Ahavat Ziyon (Love of Zion)*, in the time of the prophet Isaiah, when sexually vital Jewish men and women were presumably still to be found. Abramovitsh took the opposite tack of satirically exposing what Dan Miron has called "the callous dehumanization of sex and marriage in [traditional] Jewish life."⁶ But for writers of the modernist generation that followed Abramovitsh, the maskilim who had claimed to find no passion within traditional Judaism were simply not looking hard enough.

The Hebrew and Yiddish writers who emerged from the collapse of Haskalah dreams to embrace the new Jewish nationalism turned to the very same sources the

maskilim had disparaged, discovering passion, sensuality, romance, and myth in rabbinic literature and in the Ashkenazic culture that took its authority from the rabbis. S.Y. Agnon's signature story "'Agunot" (1908) can serve as emblem and example here. A deceptively simple story of frustrated love set in the traditional world of the old Yishuv, "'Agunot" seamlessly fuses the midrashic and kabbalistic topoi that view God and Israel as husband and wife with an account of the romantic misadventures of three young people—Dinah, the daughter of a rich man who has come to live in Jerusalem; Yehezkel, the talmudic prodigy Dinah's father has chosen for her; and Ben-Uri, the artisan hired by Dinah's father to construct a Holy Ark for his synagogue.⁷ In the vast literature describing God and Israel as husband and wife, the sexual metaphor usually functions as a transparent, ultimately disposable vehicle for the crucial religious and national drama; Agnon's modernist approach, by contrast, simultaneously activates the sexual, national, and metaphysical levels of the metaphor, democratizing, in effect, the traditional hierarchy that values the national and the religious signification of a parable at the expense of its domestic-literal level. Thus, Agnon both cloaks his vision of sexual and existential alienation in rabbinic and mystical garb and infuses the dead metaphors of God-the-husband and Israel-the-wife with all the specificity, the power, and the ordinariness of human sexuality. In Gershon Shaked's terms, "'Agunot' profanes the sacred and sanctifies the profane."⁸

"'Agunot" not only discovers passion at the literary and cultural heart of Jewish tradition, it also complicates the Haskalah view that traditional Judaism was responsible for the suppression of normal sexuality.⁹ The literary conventions of the Haskalah romance had dictated a plot in which youthful love struggled against the repressive and mercenary authority of the parents' generation; in such a plot, a young couple would fall in mutual and requited love against their parents' wishes. "'Agunot" only partially follows this script: it is true that Dinah and her husband have been married to each other by parental decree, and that Dinah prefers another man to the one she has been compelled to marry. But "'Agunot" subverts our expectations at this point—Dinah is frustrated not only by her father's decree but also by Ben-Uri himself, who is too mesmerized by the Holy Ark he is intricately crafting to return Dinah's attentions: "As Ben-Uri continued to work, he cleaved more and more to the work, until his eyes and heart were completely given over to the Holy Ark and no place was free of it."¹⁰ Where the maskilim had viewed sexual frustrations and misalignments as social conditions requiring reform, Agnon uncovers psychological, existential, even cosmic dilemmas, native to the traditional as well as to the modern world—Ben-Uri's choice, between life and art, is a peculiarly modern one for a traditional craftsman. In Agnon's world, tradition is suffused with passion, but it also falls prey to the dilemmas and perversions of human sexuality.

The Holy Ark at the apex of the triangular structure of "'Agunot" is an overdetermined figure, signifying both religion and art, and functioning both to negate Ben-Uri's carnal impulses and as a seductive object in its own right. The Ark, in this story and elsewhere in Hebrew and Yiddish literature, emerges as a critical symbol for the modernist project of reconciling the material and spiritual poles. Where Kafka juxtaposes an animal and the Ark, modernist Hebrew and Yiddish literature explore their overlap, imagining the Torah in its materiality, even corporeality (we might recall that the Torah is inscribed on parchment, that is, on animal skin). The synagogue is a par-

ticularly charged site for such reconstructive work: while the Torah scroll is implicitly eroticized in synagogue ritual (the man who recites the blessing over the Torah reading, for instance, is called the *hatan torah*, or bridegroom of the Torah), this eroticization is a potentially explosive force in a social structure whose architecture encodes and enforces sexual segregation, male religious centrality and, implicitly, the absolute separation of sex and religion.

“Agadat hasofer” (“The Scribe’s Tale”) (1919) represents Agnon’s most extended and explicit use of the Torah scroll as a signifier of the interdependence of sensuality and spirituality. The protagonist, Raphael the scribe, views his work as a rigorous ascetic practice, with little of Ben-Uri’s sensual joy in the craftsmanship it entails. Neither man, though, can reconcile his religious calling with his heterosexual desires; for Raphael, God himself seems to come between his wife and him. When Miriam returns home from the mikveh, Raphael

sees his wife in all her beauty reflected in the mirror, and he is immediately drawn to her and goes over to her to engage her in pleasing talk. But when he reaches her, the name of God flashes before him from the mirror and then he fervently recites “I have set the Lord before me always” and shuts his eyes in the face of God’s glory and awe. And the two of them separate in silence. He sits in one corner and reads the Zohar with commentaries and she sits in another corner reading the *tkhines* of the Matriarchs, until sleep overcomes them.¹¹

While “Agadat hasofer” focuses on Raphael’s asceticism, the story makes clear that his approach to sexuality is far from normative; there is a deliberate irony, that is, in Raphael’s reading the Zohar, a text that imagines cosmic unity in the figure of marital sexual intercourse, rather than actually approaching his wife. The sensuality of traditional Judaism that Raphael labors to keep at bay is represented everywhere, but especially in his wife Miriam, with her longing to embrace a child and her connection to religion through its physical touchstones—embroidered proverbs, folk rituals, and talismans, the daily sustenance of her pious husband. These different approaches to religion are emblemized in the scene in which Raphael recalls, after his wife’s death, the circumstances of their meeting and betrothal. The encounter takes place, significantly enough, in the synagogue on Simhat Torah, the holiday in which the Torah as material object is most lavishly on display, partner to communal rituals of ecstatic embrace. The sexually segregated synagogue on this night, as frame for the embodied and eroticized Torah, becomes an arena of spiritually transfigured passion in which young girls as well as boys “grasp the scroll, caressing, embracing, kissing it with their kosher lips that have not tasted sin.”¹² Even the grown women, whose segregation is designed to assure the separation of religious practice and sexual desire (and whose intellectual alienation from the holiday prayer service is guaranteed by their ignorance of Hebrew), are drawn into the Simhat Torah procession by the broad sensuality of its symbolic gestures, leaning “from the windows of the women’s gallery into the study hall, their heads perched like a flock of doves along the ledge of the wall.”¹³ The imagery of Song of Songs infuses this scene, suggesting that the architecture of sexual separation is also a mechanism for erotic attraction and display—the latticework does not hide the women from the male gaze, as its ostensible function dictates, but rather provides an ornamental frame for their faces.

This episode precisely calibrates Raphael's brand of ascetic piety against the more typical religiosity of his community and future wife. Something about his song, as he holds the Torah, has a chilling effect on the ecstatic dance of the old hasidim, "although their hearts were consumed with fire." Miriam's response to the vision of Raphael in the scene in which they first meet is diametrically opposed to that of the hasidim, arousing not a frozen awe but a literally fiery passion:

And Raphael held the scroll in his arm, leading the other young men around the pulpit. At that moment a little girl (*tinoket ahat*) pushed her way through the legs of the dancers, jumped up to Raphael, sank her red lips into the white mantle of the Torah scroll in Raphael's arms, and kissed the scroll from the kisses of her mouth (*meneshikot piha*), kissing the scroll and stroking it with both hands. At that moment the flag slipped from her hand and the candle dropped onto Raphael's caftan.¹⁴

The Torah, in this scene, is conflated with the young man holding it as a single embodied object of Miriam's fervent devotion, an identification reinforced by the use of the same Hebrew word (*me'il*) for the Torah mantle and for Raphael's caftan. (Later in the story, Raphael similarly conflates the Torah and Miriam when he literally converts her wedding dress into a *parokhet*, the curtain that hangs before the Ark.) Miriam's kiss is rendered in the language of the Song of Songs, the text at the epicenter of the protracted collision, and collusion, of the sensual and the religious in Jewish tradition. And as if to make the point that the easy coexistence of sex and religion is native to this traditional scene, rather than being the superimposition of a Europeanized writer, the rabbi jokes that the damage Miriam has inflicted on Raphael's caftan can be resolved by betrothing them. In this scene, Agnon evokes the traditional custom of betrothing children to each other—while Raphael seems to be at least a young man, Miriam is described as being young enough to be allowed to dance with the men; she is certainly prepubescent, and perhaps considerably younger. But whereas the writers of the Haskalah had bitterly criticized this practice, suggesting that such marriages were born of an indifference to the sexual choices of young people, Agnon suggests that the betrothal of Raphael and Miriam arises from the rabbi's recognition of the claims of sexuality, even for the very young. Passion and piety, for Miriam and the rabbi (though not, significantly, for Raphael, the object of Miriam's pious passion) feed rather than negate each other.

Raphael imposes his asceticism on Miriam and their marriage, but the story suggests, in the final surreal and fantastic scene, that Miriam's spirit and the power of sexuality must ultimately triumph. While Miriam initiated the fateful embrace that began their marriage, the dying Raphael finally shows his own hand and belatedly welcomes this embrace, hallucinating a scene in which "the young girls come down from the women's section to see the boys dancing . . . and with their fingertips touch the Torah scrolls the boys are holding."¹⁵ The story ends with these lines: "Suddenly a tongue of fire illuminated the room. And its light revealed the face of Raphael the scribe, who had collapsed with his scroll. His wife's wedding dress was spread out over him and his scroll."¹⁶

In this last passage, the identifications that have propelled the story come full circle, from Miriam's conflation of Raphael with the Torah scroll he is holding, to Raphael's clothing the Torah in Miriam's bridal dress and, finally, Raphael's trans-

formation into Miriam. The Torah, as flexible medium for these transformations, ultimately becomes the channel not for sexual union but for a more grotesque merging. Nevertheless, the ending exposes Raphael's transcendence of sexuality as a chimera, a hopeless struggle against the apparently inescapable force of erotic desire. Asceticism cannot overcome the multifarious claims of the sexual, it can only submerge and pervert them.

S.Y. Ansky's acclaimed play *Tsvishn tsvey veltn*, better known as *The Dybbuk* (1919), could well serve as a manifesto for the modernist project of reinfusing tradition with its lost erotic wellsprings. The play is drawn from the accounts of Ansky's shtetl informants—Ansky was an ethnographer as well as playwright—and it takes place entirely in a world steeped in religious beliefs and practices; even its transgressions are borrowed from the mystical tradition. Nevertheless, the play tells as grandly passionate a story of star-crossed lovers as does Shakespeare's *Romeo and Juliet*. The dybbuk itself is symbolic of Ansky's nationalist-modernist enterprise: a figure drawn from the recesses of the premodern occult who also testifies to the modern creed of the inalienability of romantic choice. *The Dybbuk* fuses superstition and romance, erotic love and demonic possession in peculiarly modernist fashion. While Jewish literature records dozens of stories of possession, "no story before Ansky's," David Roskies writes, "had ever told of a dybbuk who was a lover in disguise."¹⁷

The conflation of the demonic and the romantic is prefigured, at the beginning of the play, in a speech by Chonon, the lover of Leah, on the inseparability of sin and holiness:

CHONON (approaches his friend, bends down to him, with a trembling voice): Which sin is the most powerful of all? Which sin is the hardest to conquer? The sin of lust for a woman? Yes?

HENEKH (not raising his head): Yes.

CHONON: And if this sin is cleansed in a great flame, the greatest impurity becomes the highest holiness, becomes the Song of Songs? (Breathlessly): The Song of Songs! (He straightens up, and begins to sing softly, but with rapturous fervor): "You are beautiful, my true love, you are beautiful. Your eyes look out like doves from beneath your brow. . . ." ¹⁸

In having Chonon insist that lust can be holy, Ansky also implies the converse, that holiness can be erotic, and that this eroticism resides at the very heart of Jewish tradition. What Ansky contributes to this emblematically modernist notion is the insight that the beauty and passion of tradition lie in its deep roots and, more particularly, in its generativity. In Ansky, not only tradition but the very processes of continuity are the erotic sources of Jewish culture. Leah's passion, unlike the freethinking rebellious love of her Haskalah predecessors, is thoroughly imbued with an aesthetic admiration for what is old. When Leah interrupts Chonon's singing of the Song of Songs by entering the synagogue, her first words (to the beadle), are: "You remember, you promised to show me the old embroidered curtains for the Ark." Her aunt explains that Leah has promised to embroider a parokhet for the Ark for the anniversary of her mother's death, reviving what has apparently become a lost art: "She will embroider the purest gold on the best velvet, the way they used to do, with little lions and eagles."¹⁹ In a scene that recapitulates the substitution, in "Agadat Hasofer," of the

Torah for the body of a lover, and which figures this spiritual-erotic passion as fiery, Leah exchanges a word with Chonon and then, following her aunt's invitation, "embraces [the Torah scroll], throws herself on it with her lips. She kisses it passionately." Freide, taken aback, responds: "Enough, daughter! One mustn't kiss a scroll for long. The Torah is written with black fire on white fire, after all!"²⁰ Freide's remonstrance, far from being a product of the psychological asceticism that comes under critical scrutiny in "Agadat hasofer," is an assessment of the hidden dangers of both Eros and Torah, dangers that find their full expression in the play. In *The Dybbuk*, sexuality and mysticism—and particularly their combination—are fiercely, mortally important, not only for Chonon and Leah but also, Ansky implies, for the fate of Jewish culture as a whole.

Ansky's conception of the dangerous erotic powers of the Jewish past is realized most fully and literally in the double provenance of Leah and Chonon's love: the story of young love frustrated by an arranged marriage is a staple of Haskalah romance, but *The Dybbuk* lays this well-worn narrative structure over an earlier, antithetical Jewish narrative tradition—that of the ramified set of folk beliefs that love is fated (*bashert*), that marriages are decreed in heaven. The young couple's love, it emerges late in the play, is an expression of the bonds of destiny and tradition—Leah and Chonon are meant to marry because their fathers had pledged them to each other before their birth, a pledge no less binding because one of the men has died and the other has apparently forgotten the entire episode. As folkloric traditions claim is true in the case of every match (although it is usually God himself who acts as matchmaker), Chonon and Leah are destined for each other from their very conception, and the love that arises between them is the inevitable expression of this preordained decree. Ignoring the oath is no light matter; tradition will have its say, whether it receives its due or is forced to return with a vengeance. In *The Dybbuk*, Ansky takes these two orientations—toward the claims of sexuality and those of tradition—at their greatest distance and brings them together with maximum impact, combining a call for freedom from arranged marriage with an insistence on the real power of the ultimate arranged marriage. Thus, the love between the protagonists is motivated and determined by two apparently contradictory notions: the belief that young people have the right to choose their mates, a notion that expressed and fueled Jewish secularization; and the belief in the mysteriously insistent demands of destiny and tradition. In Ansky's conflation, the mutual attraction of the young couple emerges simultaneously from the depth of their erotic passion for each other and from the betrothal pledge sworn by their fathers. In a startling move, Ansky suggests that the two derivations—one instinctual and preconscious, the other historical and traditional—are, in fact, one and the same.

As with Raphael and Miriam in "Agadat hasofer," the union between Chonon and Leah, and implicitly, between tradition and sexuality, is never satisfactorily consummated. Where Raphael and Miriam live in a state of suspended animation, Chonon and Leah are united only in demonic possession, a grotesque parody of mystical union and sexual coupling. Agnon's diagnosis of Raphael's sexual dysfunction hovers between individual psychopathology and the intellectual error of confusing piety and asceticism—both focusing on Raphael as an individual. In Ansky's play, the diagnosis moves directly to the broader intergenerational and cultural level, imagining what

Walter Benjamin calls the “sickness of tradition” as a hereditary disease traveling from one generation to the next. The scene in which Chonon’s deceased father Nissen brings his friend Sender to trial for “forgetting” to keep his oath to betroth their children to each other resembles nothing so much as a hypnotic recovery of suppressed memory; but it is Sender, significantly, rather than the possessed girl, whose psyche is at center stage. It is not religion or tradition but its perversion and erasure that has led to Chonon’s death and Leah’s possession. In Ansky’s construction of the erotics of Jewish tradition, Chonon and Leah will never bear children because the sacred and sexual channels of Jewish continuity have been eroded and blocked.

It is no surprise that Dvora Baron, the foremost Hebrew woman writer of the modernist period (and a Yiddish writer as well), should have revisited the traditional synagogue so often in her writing. Baron was formed as a Hebrew writer within the sexually charged architecture of a synagogue study-hall, participating in voice and spirit in the classes that her rabbi-father taught the boys of the town as she sat enclosed in the women’s section. Baron never directly describes these exclusions and transgressions in her fiction, but they nonetheless shape her work.

Baron participates in the modernist project of reclaiming tradition in many respects. As in Agnon and Ansky, her stories use the metaphor of the embodied Torah scroll to uncover the long-submerged affinities of tradition with the carnal and erotic. But unlike Ansky or Agnon, Baron does not take the young heterosexual couple as the privileged model for sensual relations. In stories such as “Genizah” and “Di bubbe Henya,” the Torah scroll functions as a focal point for the variety of relationships and identifications that characterize the Jewish world, particularly those of the family. Baron’s turn from the idealized symmetries and union of the erotic couple to the tensions and hierarchies of domestic life functions as a critique not only of tradition, but also of its modernist reconstructions.

“Genizah” (1908), one of Baron’s earliest stories, describes a shtetl’s ritual burial of its damaged and worn holy books from the point of view of the rabbi’s daughter. The ritual of *genizah* extends the symbolism of the embodied Torah beyond its usual sexual connotations, and also literalizes it: the Torah is treated as one would treat the corpse of an honored person. The equation of books and bodies also works in the other direction. Baron’s story serves as a textual monument to her dead father, to whom she dedicated the story on the occasion of the *shloshim*, a month after his death. (By contrast, “Agadat hasofer,” is dedicated to Agnon’s wife, “the mistress of my house.”)

The implicit identification of a damaged Torah and a dead father has wider resonances beyond the dedication. Baron everywhere invites the recognition that we treat our books as members of the family and, as in a family, the books are culturally ranked by age and, especially, by “gender.” Jewish books, it emerges, are gendered in two distinct ways. On the one hand, the Torah is figured as a beloved bride or spouse, an extended metaphor mobilized in Baron as elsewhere in Hebrew and Yiddish modernism; on the other hand, Baron explores more fully than the other writers examined here the gender that a text acquires by virtue of its readers. In this second scheme, which provides the tensions in “Genizah,” Hebrew texts are male (even the Torah scroll), whereas the Yiddish women’s tkhines read by the narrator’s mother are female—and only “male” texts are deemed worthy, according to her older brother, of

ritual burial. In the scene in which the book of tkhines is rejected from the pile of books to be buried, the border between the tattered book and the mother's body is rendered fluid and indistinct:

And now [my brother] picks up a little chapbook, torn, tattered; the pages are creased, covered with yellowish stains. He turns it over and looks at it; and muttering something, he flings it into a dark corner:

"Rag!"

I catch a glimpse of the book from the corner of my eye, and my heart shrinks:

"That book—it's Mother's tkhines. Those stains are Mother's tears, the same hot tears that flowed whenever she read through it."²¹

During the burial itself, after the daughter succeeds in slipping her mother's rejected book into the grave, she imagines that she hears the "male" holy books order her mother's tkhines from the grave with the same reproach her brother had used: "Filthy rag!" The equation of women and "female" texts and the exclusion of both female bodies and texts from sacred space and ritual is evident throughout the burial—even the procession to the cemetery begins with the beadle's shout, "Women to the side."

The model of embodiment Baron sets up in these passages, in which Jewish books are implicitly conflated with their readers, is in some tension with the traditional heterosexual model in which the Torah is the beloved bride, normally of a Jewish male. There is one scene, however, in which Baron mobilizes the heterosexual model, although here, too, the usual configurations of male lover-female beloved are called into question:

Father takes a few steps toward the sexton and bends his head to give the Torah a kiss. He reaches for the Torah carefully, the sexton places it in his arms and Father grasps it carefully and hugs it [or "her," in the Hebrew] close, close to his heart and kisses it again.

A mother embraces her only child, as he dozes off, in just that same way. Even though it's a shame to disturb him and she wouldn't dream of waking him—still she can't resist snatching a tender kiss, kissing him and hugging him to herself!²²

The father's tender embrace of this Torah is in keeping with the burial ritual, drawing the Torah into the semantic field of parenting and sleep as the quasi-mortal scroll is laid to eternal rest. As in the other texts explored here, the Torah scroll becomes a channel and a conduit for a modernist embrace of tradition as a rich and sensual human artifact. Baron, however, also uses the embodied Torah scroll as a critical tool to shake the patriarchal foundations both of tradition and its modernist manifestations. In his role as nurturing caretaker, we might note, the rabbi is figured as a mother; conversely, the Torah as beloved "only child" is a son, in accordance with the logic of a structure that values male over female children and male over female texts (the valuation of sons is a major theme of many of Baron's early stories). In opening up the field of metaphors for describing a Jewish man's devotion to the Torah to the full range of human love relations, Baron suggests that the rhetoric of heterosexual passion may obfuscate rather than illuminate religion.

That Baron compares the love of Jewish men for the Torah to that of mothers for their only sons, rather than fathers for daughters, is a particularly poignant choice, given the dedication, but also an appropriate one, given the gender hierarchy within which Jewish dedication to the Torah operates. Baron exposes in this story a funda-

mental gap between the erotic discourse of the love between God, Israel, and the Torah and the hierarchies and asymmetries that govern the relations between Jewish men and Jewish women. That she also, in the process, memorializes her father—an honor and obligation traditionally granted only to sons—suggests that, for Baron, traditional structures continue to have a generative, even revolutionary power.

In “Bubbe Henya” (1910), which appeared in Hebrew and Yiddish versions, Baron filters her exploration of the relationship between the erotic and the sacred through the character of an old woman, a female Elijah figure who heals a town with her magical acts of charity. Despite the reverence in which she is held, Bubbe Henya’s mysterious presence in town, as a woman without a family, arouses gossip—it is darkly hinted that Henya has lost her family through either a religious or a sexual sin, and that her charity represents her atonement. In the first of these tales, Henya is charged with having, as a young widow, accidentally suffocated her infant son after “taking too much pleasure in him.”²³ The second tale reports that Henya had been overly involved in watching her husband and seven sons learn the Talmud, eavesdropping on their Torah study from the women’s section of the study hall:

She would gaze and feel delight, look and take pride in herself: “That is my husband . . . those are my children.” Her proud words were not pleasing, as it were, before the Highest One, so a fire came down from the sky and burned the holy house while all eight souls were still between its high walls.²⁴

In “Agadat hasofer,” Miriam’s igniting of Raphael’s caftan is a manifestation of her fiery passion, and the solution to the damage inflicted is to redeem Miriam’s transgression through the sanctioned sexuality of married love. For the Henya constructed in town gossip, the fire is punishment for womanly hubris, both in intruding on male space and in acting as a (pro)creative rival to God. The taboo against the presence of women at the center of the synagogue is construed, in Agnon and Ansky, as both a heightening and a channeling of (male) sexual desire. By contrast, Baron views the exclusion of women as evidence of intellectual and creative rivalry on multiple fronts. Even the “incestuous” tale concerning Henya and her son is described as a kind of triangle, with the dead father remonstrating from the heavens against his wife’s sexual transports. If the synagogue is a sexually charged arena, it is not because it constructs a symmetrical duality of attracting opposites but because it stages a series of triangular struggles that can never be resolved into a happy marriage: among God, men, and women, with their conflicting alliances and rivalries. The very sexual slipperiness of the terms that describe these relations—the metaphorical femininity in biblical and rabbinic discourse concerning the (male-dominated) Jewish collective; a feminized Torah scroll that is jealously kept in the male domain—attest to the impossibility of stabilizing a religious system that combines a heterosexual norm, masculine privilege, and the attempts of a masculine collective to forge an erotic bond with its male God.²⁵

While the gossip surrounding Henya suggests that religious passion in women is itself perceived as a form of sexual as well as intellectual transgression, Bubbe Henya manages to overcome the suspicions by performing a number of near-miracles, including the transfer of the last five years of her life to the town’s dying rabbi. As a final act of kindness, Henya donates a Torah scroll to the town; on the last night before

she dies, the town leads her and the scroll, in a quasi-wedding ceremony, to the synagogue:

Klezmer musicians with long trumpets led the way for her, women adorned in satin and silk and the elderly rabbi surrounded by dignified old men walked behind her, and Bubbe Henya floated along under the wedding canopy with her Torah, the holy scroll pressed to her heart, two glistening tears in her eyes

And when they placed the Torah scroll beside its sisters, and closed the Holy Ark and covered it with its velvet curtain, Bubbe Henya jumped up to the pulpit, flung aside her two canes and stretched her arms heavenward.

Suddenly she stood tall, her face became youthful, and her eyes—two black suns.

“Ay, ay, Father in Heaven . . . Ay, ay, Master of the Universe! . . .”

With quick and sure steps she circled the pulpit, walked out of the synagogue, and turned toward the poorhouse:

“Ay, ay, Father in Heaven . . . Ay, ay, Master of the Universe!”

And now, hands linked together and a great circle formed, a beautiful circle, the klezmer blew their trumpets, old folk snapped their fingers, women clapped their hands, and they surged and streamed closer and closer to the poorhouse. Ten thousand flames flickered in the still air. Far away, in the distant east, a pale morning star stared with amazement at the gulch.²⁶

Baron's utopian vision of Henya's final triumph imagines a woman wed to the Torah, embodies the Torah scrolls as sisters rather than as potential mates for men, and reconstitutes religious architecture as a circle of men and women transcending not only gender but also class. The multiple transgressions of the rules of sexual segregation in this final scene, unlike those of the Simhat Torah celebration in “Agadat hasofer,” are not preludes to heterosexual union; on the contrary, in scenes like this one, the heterosexual rhetoric of religious experience is neutralized, exposed as an alibi for the exclusion of women from sacred passion.

In “‘Agunah” (1927), Baron explores the contours of a feminine relation to tradition not in the breach but in its normative structure. The story begins by describing the visit of a traveling preacher to a small town and recounting the sermon he delivers at the synagogue. The narrative perspective then shifts to the women's section of the synagogue, where Dinah, the rabbinical judge's elderly wife, sits alone, literally and figuratively “in the dark,” since she does not understand the figurative aspects of the sermon she is hearing. The physical barrier separating men and women in the prayer hall, then, is also an epistemological one, denying women access to textual intercourse. To the extent that the preacher does communicate across the partition, the multiple barriers dividing the sexes produce refracted readings, like the half-light that falls obliquely into the women's section. Dinah hears the words, but their meaning is closed to her:

And here begins the main event of the sermon, the explanation and the illumination: the parable.

Once upon a time there was a tender young princess who married a king. Her husband loved her dearly, and had canopies and beautiful textiles woven for her and gave her precious jewels and pearls, and did not leave her side until he had a golden gown made for her. Then one day the king grew angry at her, stood up and demolished the canopies, ripped off her jewelry and clothing and then left her and sailed off to a land across the seas.

The neighbor women gathered around her, shaking their heads, and saying: Woe is this poor woman, for what her husband has done to her. And there she sits desolate, her hair unkempt, writing her lament through the night to bemoan her fate, crying her eyes out.[. . .]

Above, in the women's gallery, semi-darkness reigns . . .

Close beside the stained glass letters [of the *mizrah*] stands a solitary listener—the wife of Reb Raphael the rabbinical judge, who had come in at sundown to say the kaddish and “barkhu” prayers.

Her small head, bound in a black cotton headdress, is cocked a little to one side and rests against the wall, and her two eyes are riveted to the mouth of the dear man, who's standing right there at the pulpit below.

The biblical verses and rabbinic sayings are meaningless to her, though, and stick uneasily in her mind, like the stale bread in her husband's house that scratches her toothless mouth. But it's all right: she has her sock and ball of yarn with her, and she's here anyway, getting her knitting done.²⁷

The dry bread and her toothless mouth signal the deficiencies of both the Torah and her ability to enjoy it. And even the bread, like the Torah, comes from her husband's house: she is an unequal participant not only in the religious sphere, but even in the domestic. Torah is compared to bread in a number of aphorisms, but rarely in so concretized a fashion and never so negatively. The literalization of the Torah as bread is mirrored in Dinah's remaining transfixed on the literal level of the story—when the preacher tells the parable, her attention is caught, and she wonders until long after she has returned home what happened to the unfortunate bride. Finally, she turns to her husband across the dark, dank bedroom:

“Raphael,” she stretches a gaunt hand through the air. “You understood what he was getting at, there, in the synagogue: What happened to her? What happened to the ‘*agunah*’? Did he come back to her, the husband? Did he come back?”

There is no reply. He, the old man, is not asleep, but he does not answer.

“That's what they're like, always,” she shakes her head, as it were, to the fairy-tale princess, gesturing with her head that she means “them,” men, and then she turns back toward the wall, toward the window.

The house is suffused with a damp chill and the smell of rot, a damp, moldy smell, and the night that peers through the window from outside is dark, very dark.²⁸

Baron's reading of Dinah's literalist “misreading” of the parable returns the parable to the specific situation of women, resisting the long tradition of reading the sexual conflict of such midrashic narratives as signifying the relationship between a (masculine) national collective and its (masculine) divinity. In this new midrash, Dinah's “misreading” from ignorance is reread by the narrator as an act of resistance. Together, Dinah and the narrator privilege the literal over the allegorical, the female over the male perspective, and the darkness of the sociopolitical exile of women over the national tragedy of the Jewish diaspora. The Hebrew modernist project of rescuing sacred texts from desexualized allegorical readings is rediscovered in this story in an unexpected place: in the traditional Jewish woman's ignorance of—or freedom from—the accretions of traditional masculine hermeneutics.

Baron's story is aimed not only at such hermeneutics, but also at one of its modernist incarnations, “‘*Agunot*.” Both stories involve protagonists named Dinah, both subject traditional marriage to modernist critique, and both use the ‘*agunah*’ as a fig-

ure for larger social and cosmic injustices and tragedies. But where Agnon focuses his narrative on the romantic liaisons of young men and women, Baron places the question of desertion within the daily asymmetries of patriarchal marriage. That a traditional *woman* identifying with the parable's deserted wife should produce such a "wrong" reading attests to the lengths to which the idealized and abstract level of this sexual rhetoric has been isolated from its human, social referentiality.

It is possible to read modernist Hebrew and Yiddish literature as itself something akin to a sexually segregated synagogue, with a radically different epistemology shaping the view from each section. One does not have to lose sympathy for the modernist project of reinventing Jewish tradition or to cease to admire the brilliance of its literary artifacts to notice that the project traced here is necessarily shaped by the very structures it conjures. The architecture of the traditional synagogue inevitably structures both tradition and its revolution: the eroticism of tradition, and of revolutionary traditionalism, not only means something different on either side of the synagogue divide, it also *means* differently. If for Agnon and Ansky, the breach of the lattice dividing men and women is an erotic act, that is because for the dominant male figures of modernist Hebrew and Yiddish literature, as in the synagogues they describe, women represent and embody sexuality and carnality—even if the modernists transvalue the negative connotations of these traditionally feminine attributes. This symbolic structure is everywhere apparent in their work: Where Agnon's Raphael studies and inscribes Torah scrolls, Miriam sinks her red lips into one and provides a cloak for another with her wedding dress. Where Ansky's Chonon invokes the textual universe of the Song of Songs, Leah strokes the rich velvet of the Torah mantle. In "'Agunot," "Agadat hasofer," and *The Dybbuk*, the struggle between sexuality and spirituality is prototypically a male struggle. The triangle of Ben-Uri, the Ark, and Dinah, mirrored by that of Raphael, the Torah, and Miriam, makes the project of synthesizing spirituality and sexuality an emblematically male project, in which women serve as one pole of signification and attraction. It is the "lust for a woman" that is transformed, in a hermeneutics and mysticism shaped by men, into the highest holiness. From the perspective Baron opens up, though, the major revolutionary moments of Jewish modernism continue, ironically, to follow traditional social structures.²⁹ In the view from the women's section, modernism's erotic dream is haunted, still, by the old architecture.

Notes

I want to thank Yael Chaver, Jordan Finkin, and Serguei Dolgopolskii, students in my seminar on "Modern Hebrew Literature and the Midrashic Imagination," for their valuable comments on this work-in-progress.

1. Walter Benjamin argues that Kafka was far from the first to recognize that "the consistency of truth has been lost" but that while other writers accommodated themselves to this "sickness of tradition" by "clinging to truth or whatever they happened to regard as truth and, with a more or less heavy heart, foregoing its transmissibility," Kafka "tried something entirely new: he sacrificed truth for the sake of clinging to its transmissibility, its haggadic element. . . . [Kafka's "haggadic" parables] do not modestly lie at the feet of the doctrine, as the Haggadah lies at the feet of the Halakhah. Though apparently reduced to submission, they unexpectedly raise a mighty paw against it." See Walter Benjamin, "Some Reflections on Kafka," in

Benjamin, *Illuminations*, ed. Hannah Arendt, trans. Harry Zohn (New York: 1978), 143–144. Benjamin's comments are excerpted from a letter to Gershom Scholem dated June 12, 1938.

2. Franz Kafka, "Das Tier in der Synagoge," in *Parabolen und Paradoxe*, ed. Nahum Glatzer, trans. Ernst Kaiser and Eithne Wilkins (New York: 1961 [1946]), 51.

3. Ibid.

4. For a description of the Haskalah critique of traditional Jewish sexual and romantic practices in such writers as Adam Hacoheh Lebensohn, Abraham Ber Gotlober, Mordecai Aron Guenzburg, and Moshe Leib Lilienblum, see David Biale, *Eros and the Jews: From Biblical Israel to Contemporary America* (New York: 1992), 149–168.

5. Sholem Yakov Abramovitsh, *Bayamim haheim*, in *Kol kitvei Mendele Mokher Sforim* (Tel-Aviv: 1958), 259. All translations from the Hebrew or Yiddish, except where noted, are my own.

6. Dan Miron discusses this critique as a ubiquitous feature of Abramovitsh's work. In his *Fishke der Krumer* (1869), Abramovitsh's satire of pecuniary matchmaking practices, a homosexual joke is again used to make the point, when a matchmaker's farcical attempts to cement a marriage results in the matching of two boys. For a discussion of this theme and novel, see Miron, *A Traveler Disguised: The Rise of Modern Yiddish Fiction in the Nineteenth Century* (New York: 1973), 298–299 (n. 41).

7. There is a vast literature tracing Agnon's rabbinic allusions and his intertextual poetics. For a concise analysis of "'Agunot' within the framework of its broad intertextuality, see Gershon Shaked, "Midrash and Narrative: Agnon's 'Agunot,'" in *Midrash and Literature*, ed. Geoffrey H. Hartman and Sanford Budick (New Haven: 1986), 285–303.

8. Ibid., 302.

9. The maskilic complaint that their traditional upbringing, and especially their premature and arranged marriages, had stunted their sexuality is frequently found in Haskalah autobiography. M.A. Guenzberg, for instance, blamed traditional Judaism for making him temporarily impotent. See Mordecai Aaron Guenzberg, *Aviezer* (Tel-Aviv: 1967 [1864]). For an analysis of Hebrew autobiography from the Haskalah on, including the sexual dilemmas it records, see Alan Mintz, "Banished from Their Fathers' Table": *Loss of Faith and Hebrew Autobiography* (Bloomington: 1989).

10. Sh.Y. Agnon, "Agunot," in *Elu veelu* (Jerusalem: 1953), 412.

11. Sh.Y. Agnon, "Agadat hasofer," in *ibid.*, 136. Agnon uses the different reading material of Raphael and Miriam to suggest a kind of sexually differentiated religiosity with no points of contact—parallel tracks that never meet.

12. Ibid., 140.

13. Ibid.

14. Ibid.

15. Ibid., 141.

16. Ibid.

17. David Roskies, "Introduction," in S. Ansky, *The Dybbuk and Other Writings*, ed. David Roskies (New York: 1992), xxvii. Roskies may be relying here on the research of Gedaliah Nigal, which details and categorizes dozens of recorded cases of possession. I would only qualify Roskies' remarks by adding that possession has an undeniable sexual dimension, even if it generally lacks a romantic one. Thus, possessing spirits are overwhelmingly male, whereas possessed bodies tend to be female. Even the exceptions are telling: Nigal describes a male dybbuk who possesses a man because he is angry that his wife remarried three days after his death; the man possessed by the disgruntled male dybbuk, we are told, "no longer desired women!" Gedalyeh Nigal, *Sipurei "dibuk" besifrut yisrael* (Jerusalem: 1994), 36.

18. S. Ansky, *Tsvishn tsvay veltn: der dibuk*, in *Di yidishe drame fun tsvantsikstn yorhundert*, vol. 2 (New York: 1977), 19.

19. Ibid., 20.

20. Ibid., 21–22. Among the references to the Torah's being written with fire are those found in PT Shekalim 6:1 (49d) and Yalkut Shimoni, *Berakhah* 951. See also David Stern's translation of Hayim Nahman Bialik and Yehoshua Hana Ravnitzky's *Sefer haagadah* (New York: 1992), 82:50:

Rabbi Simeon ben Lakish said: The Torah given to Moses was written with black fire upon white fire, sealed with fire and swathed with bands of fire. While writing it, Moses wiped off the reed on his hair—thus he received the radiance that was to emanate from his countenance.

21. Dvora Baron, “Genizah,” in Nurit Govrin, *Hamahazit harishonah: Dvora Baron, hayeha veyeziratah (1902–1921)* (Jerusalem: 1988), 420.

22. Ibid., 423.

23. Dvora Baron, “Di Bubbe Henya,” in *ibid.*, 459.

24. Ibid., 460.

25. This analysis of the erotic instability of relations between God and Israel is heavily indebted to Howard Eilberg-Schwartz, *God's Phallus, and Other Problems for Men and Monotheism* (Boston: 1994). Eilberg-Schwartz argues that, in worshipping a male divinity with no consort, Israelite men were required to, first of all, assume a feminine identity to bring their religious lives into conformity with heterosexual norms, and, second, distance women from divine worship to avoid competition for divine affections. “Women’s impurity,” Eilberg-Schwartz writes, “arose in part from attempts to shore up men’s access to the sacred” (p. 142).

26. Baron, “Di Bubbe Henya,” 462–463.

27. Dvora Baron, “Agunah,” in *idem*, *Perakim* (Jerusalem: 1968), 303.

28. Ibid., 306.

29. Amalia Kahana-Carmon’s, “Song of the Bats in Flight,” in *Gender and Text in Modern Hebrew and Yiddish Literature*, eds. Naomi B. Sokoloff, Anne Lapidus Lerner, and Anita Norich [New York: 1992], makes a related point about contemporary Hebrew literature, arguing that, in the Hebrew literary arena, the

supplications of the individual are preordained as trivial or inferior, compared to the central act, collective prayer. And this central activity—where does it take place? In the synagogue, a forum out of bounds for women.

Being a woman, her one place in this arena is in the women’s gallery. As a passive observer, she does not contribute anything. Someone else, acting in the name of all Israel, speaks also on her behalf (p. 237).

Body-building, Character-building, and Nation-building: Gender and Military Service in Israel

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This article examines the relationship between gender and the military in contemporary Israel. By “gender,” we refer to a dominant system of meanings that a culture assigns to biological sex differences, thus influencing the way we interpret the world around us. In this system, human qualities are divided into hierarchically arranged sets of supposedly opposite (and mutually exclusive) categories of male and female: strong and weak, rational and emotional, or public and private. With regard to the “military,” we focus on social and cultural phenomena related to the armed forces, war, and “national security.” We begin with three theoretical formulations about the relationship between gender and the military in Israel in order to clarify our own position and show the ways in which we go beyond these other works.

Our starting point is Baruch Kimmerling’s article on militarism in Israeli society, in which he contends that the military is a machoistic and male-oriented subculture.¹ According to him, the result of the military’s centrality in Israel has been the marginalization of Jewish Israeli women throughout society, since they are essentially excluded from the nation’s most important discourse, that concerning “national security.” Kimmerling’s formulation is important, but it fails to explore the particular means by which this marginality has been created and is maintained. This omission leads us to our first set of questions. What are the concrete *social practices* and *institutional arrangements* by which the cultural definitions uncovered by Kimmerling reproduce the gendered divide of inequality?

The second formulation is Nira Yuval-Davis’ examination of the sexual division of labor found in the Israel Defense Forces (IDF).² Her scheme centers on the divergence found in the Israeli army—as in all armies—between “front” (combat) and “rear” (support). Yuval-Davis shows how military roles have developed in Israel into a sexual division of labor: the men at the front filling combat-related roles, while the

women at the rear occupy support roles. Israeli women's increased entry into roles formerly reserved for men does not mean a weakening of this division of labor. Rather, it represents an expansion of the "rear," with women there simply replacing men. Yuval-Davis' assumption seems to be that while definitions of roles belonging to the front or rear may change, the essential division between male and female positions remains clear-cut.

While accepting the essentials of Yuval-Davis' thesis, we suggest a more complex view of the matter. First, rather than talking about a rigid sexual division of labor, a more apt model is a probabilistic one in which there is greater likelihood that women will fill certain roles rather than others. Such a perspective does greater justice to the empirical complexity of Israel's armed forces. Second, we posit that many of what she calls support roles (belonging to the "rear") are in themselves gendered as masculine. While warriors are undoubtedly more important than administrative staff (organizationally speaking), what we find in the Israeli military are alternative *male* roles. The role of the army driver or technician is defined as male, perhaps no less forcefully than is the "warrior." It is not a matter, then, of a simple hierarchy between "male" and "female" roles, but of a more complex relationship. Accordingly, our second set of questions has to do with how the *multiplicity* of male and female *roles* is structured, and the ways in which *alternative versions* of masculine and feminine ideals are related to this structuring.

Dafna Izraeli has formulated the most sophisticated model. Using the concept of a "gender regime," Izraeli argues that the military, as both a gendered division of labor and a gendered structure of power, takes as a given the role of women as helpmates to men.³ As such, the military intensifies gender distinctions and then uses them as justification for their existence in the first place. According to Izraeli, the military constructs images that explain and reinforce gender divisions, and thereby reproduce everyday patterns of dominance of men over women. She also examines the ways in which men accumulate different kinds of social and symbolic capital that grant them advantages in civilian life.

For all the sophistication of this explanatory framework, Izraeli does not go far enough, either in uncovering the ways in which the built-in tie between the military and gender inequality is constructed, or in examining how notions of manhood and womanhood become invisibly "naturalized" within the system of military service. In addition, Izraeli, to some degree echoing Yuval-Davis, does not theorize about how such ideals are understood in diverse ways by different groups, or how wider meanings are applied to the roles of specific groups. Thus, our third set of questions involves the ways in which gender relations become *naturalized* and *open to diverse interpretations*.

Our final point is that a bias found in all three formulations leads the authors to stress the reproduction of hierarchical gender relations while neglecting the process of their transformation. Kimmerling discusses the perpetuity of cultural codes, Yuval-Davis talks about continuities in the division of labor, and Izraeli considers the mechanisms that govern the reproduction of the system. All three authors do little to explain change. Thus, our fourth set of questions has to do with the sources and trajectories of *transformation* as they are related to gender and the military in Israel.

The Historical Context

The Zionist project of creating a Jewish homeland through the establishment of an independent state relied upon mobilizing young people to serve the needs of the (Jewish) collective. In the early days, this meant a commitment to hard physical labor and, as the Jewish presence in Palestine was met with growing hostility from Arab inhabitants and neighboring states, a willingness to risk one's life in defense of Jewish settlements. The recruitment of people to these national tasks was undertaken on the basis of assumptions and practices related to the different social roles assigned to men and women. As in other contexts, the motivation of individuals to serve the Zionist project was most potent when combined with commonsense understandings of what it meant to be a man or a woman. In this regard, one of the iconic figures of Zionism was the pioneer (*halutz*), who held a plow in one hand and a rifle in the other, while his female counterpart stood ready to help him.

The development of these ideals was complicated. The elevation of the soldier to near-mythical status resulted from the rejection of the "diaspora Jew" as weak and cowardly and the acceptance of nineteenth-century European nationalism, with its stress on virility and proximity to nature. The Zionist revolution involved a "return" to Zion, to nature, and to the body. Zionist thought radically rewrote Jewish understandings of place (the right of Jews to self-governance in "their" homeland), work (urban European and shtetl lives were rejected in favor of a romantic vision of agrarian labor), and human form (the "New Jew" redeemed through physical labor and sexual freedom).⁴ European nationalism influenced the formulation of Zionist thought through a preoccupation with the body as emblem. In this nationalism, the male body took on significance as a national sign, and a healthy male body was taken as a symbol of a healthy, vital nation.⁵

Along the same lines, this nationalism was modeled on contrasts with "lower" forms of people, primarily women, homosexuals, and diaspora Jews. Frequently their weak, imperfect bodies were presented as emblems of moral decay. Zionism's rejection of the "Jew as Other" implied emphasizing the hard male body as an emblem of the vitality of the national community, and a refiguring of the New Jew through the body. The New Jew was an answer to the imagery of the weak, effeminate body that had tainted both the common perception of the Jews and Jewish self-perception. In postcards and photographs, and in poetry and prose, the hard, tanned bodies of the pioneers symbolized the radical reformulation of Jewish life.

The place of women in this formulation was inconsistent. On the one hand, the body as a sign of national health referred to a *male* body defined in contrast to the female or effeminate form.⁶ On the other hand, in rejecting the diaspora, the socialist and egalitarian version of the Zionist project was committed to erasing the traditional sexual division of labor marking the Jewish experience in Europe. While this project wrestled with questions of equality between the sexes, in the final instance it did not establish the economic or social structures necessary to transform theory into practice. Despite the myths depicting the female pioneer as working the fields alongside her comrades, the kibbutz as the institutionalization of "sex-blindness," and the Palmach woman soldier as dying with men in battle, the concrete experience of women and

men in the prestate Yishuv period was marked by a fairly traditional division of labor between the sexes.⁷ The participation of women as fighting soldiers, for example, was considered a matter of last resort, a “necessary evil.”⁸

The link between nation and gender was further institutionalized in the state’s early years. Upon Israel’s establishment, the stress on self-defense, and the conscious attempt by David Ben-Gurion to create a coherent set of heroic images for the new country, centered on men-soldiers. Indeed, the definition of the New Jew as an active male body was magnified by the establishment of the IDF as a central institution of the new state. This period saw the reliance of the state and the IDF on the contrasting images of masculinity and femininity in order to motivate the population to mobilize for war. As Uri Ben-Eliezer suggests, this emphasis resulted not only from the state’s reaction to external threats, but were in themselves a means by which the state asserted its legitimacy.⁹

Of course, the use of gender-based imagery was not always planned, not always conscious, and not even always explicitly connected with either the military’s needs or with the roles played by men and women in the new nation-state. Led by Ben-Gurion, representatives of the new state sought to establish its unchallenged and legitimate authority by systematically undermining the legitimacy of competing political and military movements from the prestate period. As Moshe Lissak points out, one consequence of this effort was the erosion of the status of the pioneer and the elevation of the status of the IDF soldier.¹⁰ The state thus became a central focus for loyalty and identification on the part of the population.

From our perspective, policies based on the “universal” criteria of membership and citizenship (known as *mamlakhtiyut*), actually entailed the maintenance of various cleavages and inequalities. The drafting of women (and other “peripheral” groups) should be seen in this light.¹¹ The “universalism” of *mamlakhtiyut* concealed and perpetuated the dominance of the Ashkenazic (European Jewish) community over immigrants from the Middle East and North Africa, as well as the power of Jewish over Arab citizens.¹² The “universal” enlistment of Jewish individuals made it possible to see the army as the core of the nation, and military service as the ultimate form of self-fulfillment—thus preparing Israel’s diverse groups for national projects. At the same time, universal enlistment helped to perpetuate male authority. Women’s service reinforced rather than challenged traditional gender hierarchies.¹³ Women, as Joyce Robbins and Uri Ben-Eliezer suggest, did participate in national projects—“absorbing” immigrants or protecting the land—but in auxiliary roles.¹⁴

Hence, when the IDF was created, the formal military ideal of women was based on feminine characteristics: caring, support, and the instruction of “inferiors.” The coexistence of the discourse characterizing the IDF as the “people’s army” (as a site for social integration), along with the sexual division of labor within it (according to stereotypical notions of masculinity and femininity), had major consequences for the status of women. On the one hand, the disparity between men and women through the latter’s participation as nurses, secretaries, and instructors was concealed by the “myth” of the IDF as “everyone’s army.” On the other hand, through these “military” roles, women served to perpetuate this very myth. To the extent that women still serve in many such helping and caring functions within the IDF, these paradoxes are maintained today.

Moreover, and no less importantly, from the perspective of Israel's establishment, women were often seen as contributing to national security primarily through bearing children and raising families. As Nitza Berkovitch points out, the earliest laws referring to Israeli women granted them rights and obligations on the assumption that they were first and foremost mothers.¹⁵ The 1949 Defense Service Law, for example, grants women exemption from military duty if pregnant, married, or a mother—criteria still in effect today. (In the law of 1951 guaranteeing “Women’s Equal Rights,” all of the articles except the first similarly refer to women as mothers/wives.) In general, the perpetuation of inequalities under a veneer of state-sanctioned universalism remains apparent at the present time.

Myths and Rituals: Gender Images

In contemporary Israel, notions of warriorhood and motherhood—the master tropes of maleness and femaleness—are explicated through a profusion of stories, sites, and rituals. As other scholars have shown, Israeli society has consistently glorified military service and has developed a set of core narratives about valor and sacrifice, sites honoring fallen soldiers, and rituals marking the importance of war for the survival of the nation-state.¹⁶ The net effect of this development has been to link the ideals of manhood to national goals such as security and military service.

Public activities are constantly reinforced through images portrayed in the media. Newspapers and newscasts are flooded with images of soldiers, with men and women in uniform generally portrayed along stereotypically gendered lines. Edna Levy-Schreiber has shown how this distinction is expressed through references to the bodies and emotional states of soldiers. In the media, women soldiers tend to be standing still, are well-groomed and often smile, while their male counterparts tend to be in motion as if engaged in combat. Visual cues amplify the differences: men tend to look dirty and disheveled, holding their weapons at the ready, often gazing into the distance as if they are looking at enemy targets. Women hold their weapons as ornaments (or sexual objects) and gaze directly into the camera. Noncombat males are rarely depicted, and when female soldiers in combat-like roles are discussed, they are heralded with a great deal of fanfare, as if the appearance of fighting women is a parody of “real” soldiering.¹⁷

Media descriptions of soldiers’ emotional states tend to further highlight such stereotypical differences. Women are likely to be asked questions about their fears, anxieties, and homesickness, whereas men are asked how they are able to overcome their fear, sadness, or anxiety in order to fight. Moreover, while parents are often interviewed about their sons at the front, it is generally the *mothers’* anxieties and worries that are stressed. For example, the Army Radio call-in show in which parents, siblings, girlfriends, and companions deliver messages to soldiers is called “Mom’s Voice” (“Kolah shel ima”). In this manner, the femininity of worry (as the antithesis of masculinity) is reinforced at the parental level.

Together with the myths and one-sided representations, there are a variety of practices that impart specific experiences—focused particularly on body- and character-building—to pre-army youth. One set of activities takes place under the auspices of

the IDF or in schools, where youths are instructed in such things as the use of rifles, map-reading, or calisthenics, and where they meet with representatives of military units who have been invited onto school premises. The army also sponsors visits to military bases around the country. In addition, most teenagers participate in a week-long pseudo-basic training course in which they don uniforms, learn to use weapons, and in effect “play soldier” on bases specifically designated for such purposes. The aim of all these programs is to prepare young people physically and emotionally for the army, as well as to impart to them a sense of the army’s importance. A special emphasis is given to army combat units.¹⁸

Yet all of these activities are highly gendered. Consider, for example, the “Corps’ Day” (“Yom ha’heilot”), a day-long orientation seminar attended by nearly all (Jewish) twelfth-graders in cooperation with high schools. Young men and women are separated for the day. The program for the former is concerned with combat options despite the fact that only a minority of men actually serve in such roles. Action films are shown in which the soldiers on screen run, attack putative targets, and jump from heavy equipment. The young women, in contrast, are shown films that highlight the technical or emotional requirements of the jobs from which they will choose. They are also warned about the difficulties of being separated from parents and the problems they may encounter during service—an emphasis on emotional frailty that is notably absent from the program for the boys. Finally, while the males receive a lecture on the importance of physical fitness in preparing for army service, the females do not.

Youths also participate in a host of informal activities. First is the common practice of gathering information about military service from peers, siblings, parents, teachers, and the media. Youth movements such as the Scouts and B’nei Akiva incorporate promilitary messages and preparation.¹⁹ In addition, teenagers often initiate individual physical training as part of their premilitary preparation;²⁰ and a number of privately run preparatory programs have been established in the past decade. These programs, aimed almost exclusively at males, include a complex combination of physical training (running or carrying heavy loads) and learning to work in teams, as well as lectures about military service and the importance of self-awareness as a means of grappling with challenges. Finally, a number of army-related business enterprises offer the teenage public a variety of books, manuals, and military gear. (As will be discussed later; the appearance of these services, while a relatively recent phenomenon, does not signal a growing militarization so much as a growing commercialization of Israeli life.)

The guide books on the market encourage quite different body-practices for young men and women. The female body is promoted as an external form, whereas the male body is presented as being active—a pattern resonating with the media imagery of soldiers. One guide book aimed at young women (written by an ex-head of the Women’s Corps) contains a chapter titled “Looking Good” that includes advice on how to select shampoos and perfumes, along with exhortations such as: “make sure you take care of your outward appearance for the next two years, for you are a [female] soldier, who represents the IDF.”²¹ There is almost no mention of physical training in this volume. In contrast, a guide book aimed at young men contains a chapter titled “Preparing for the Draft” that provides a detailed fitness schedule complete with charts and diagrams.²²

A number of formal arrangements further reinforce messages that the army's most important functions belong to the domain of men. The IDF begins to test and categorize youths a year before their recruitment. They must make at least two trips to the draft office and undergo a battery of medical and psychological tests. For individuals being considered for elite units (reconnaissance or the Air Force, for instance), the process includes a further week of intensive psychological and endurance testing. In a relatively recent trend, young women are increasingly volunteering for prearmy training courses in skilled jobs such as radar operation, infantry instruction, and teaching. These courses are offered prior to the official induction date, since the army claims that it is not economical to train young women during their short period of service (21 months, compared with 36 months for men). Some 20 percent of women who enter the army opt for such courses, perhaps because they worry that their army service will otherwise be spent in boring clerical jobs. But the fact remains that even before induction, selected young men are subjected to testing and hardening in readiness for their subsequent service, while young women are trained for supportive military tasks.

Within the IDF: The Hegemonic Ideal

Internally, the IDF is organized around a sexual division of labor—women are almost totally excluded from combat roles; women and men often undergo separate training programs; and many jobs, while formally opened to both men and women, are segregated *de facto* according to sex. Yet this division of labor should not be understood as a simple hierarchy based on gender. Rather, status, job performance, and internal hierarchies are related not only to basic understandings of masculinity and femininity, but also to the relationship between a *multiplicity* of male and female roles.

Many scholars have observed that military service forms a rite of passage in a variety of complex societies around the world.²³ Myron Aronoff has most explicitly applied this insight to the Israeli case.²⁴ His stress on military service as a rite of passage is too general, however, because he fails to explain the internal dynamics of the rite and the manner by which it is linked to ideals of manhood, thereby excluding women.

While the aim of rites of passage is to convey individuals from one social position to another, a closer examination reveals that the period of compulsory service is intended as a *series* of tests that separate the youngster from ties with his family in order to grant him a measure of autonomy as a man. Military service conveys individuals from the status of civilian youths to that of full-fledged soldiers and male-adults through a tripartite process: they are disconnected from civilian life (through their separation from the rest of society); "something" is done to them while in the military; and they then "reemerge" as soldier-men. But what is of importance is less the ceremonial aspects of this rite and more its internal structure as a series of tests or concrete trials.

David D. Gilmore has suggested that manhood involves the idea of a "threshold" or a test that requires the boys to steel themselves by various sorts of tempering and toughening.²⁵ And Gwynne Dyer points out that the threshold for such tests during

basic training is often symbolic, since most recruits pass them.²⁶ Training at this initial level is effective not because it teaches civilians the concrete skills necessary for soldiering, but because it forcefully imprints upon them the essential messages of the army: brotherhood, physical stamina, repression of doubt or reflection, and emotional hardening of the self. In the army, soldiers must display qualities of fortitude and tenacity through practices publicly enacted before their superiors and equals. It is in this light that the harassment and humiliation that men suffer during the first stages of military service should be seen.²⁷ The notion here is that of mastering stressful situations, character-building. Based on concepts of warriorhood, the recurring idea is that real manhood is a precarious or artificial state that boys must win.

In advanced training courses, the recruit is faced with further challenges. Interviewed by Amia Lieblich, a soldier put through such a testing provided a revealing metaphor: "You simply see who breaks down and who doesn't. . . . Every one of us broke down at this stage, each in his own way."²⁸

What seems to be involved here is a subtle interplay of public performance and individual "self-discovery" about one's ability to withstand physical and mental hardship. David H. J. Morgan has suggested that a fruitful way of understanding the relationship between military life and gender is through an examination of the "body practices" by which the male body is constructed in the armed forces.²⁹ Soldiers in the IDF often talk about how, through the various trials they undergo, they gain confidence, discover personal power, and realize their ability to withstand severe stress. No less significant, rewards for completing these tests very often take the form of ornaments placed on the body, such as emblems or berets. These insignia signify that the wearer has passed certain stages on the road to manhood. (And yet, whereas the "wings" of the paratrooper are valued and highly regarded by male soldiers, women soldiers who are awarded wings after parachuting, and as a reward for packing parachutes, may not associate the same value with either the experience or the insignia. As one woman commented: "The wings are pretty, but they're not much."³⁰)

These processes are reinforced by media reports that accentuate the notion of development of the self through army experiences. Consider the following words of a Golani company commander: "You get a person from a troubled background, and it's in your power to change him from a rag (*smartut*) to a man (*gever*)."³¹ The process is not merely about changing the external appearance of the body in uniform, but of transforming the very *soul* of individuals.

The combinations of men/women, adults/boys, and soldiers/children found in these images and experiences predicate military service as a "natural" stage in the life course of "any" individual. Military service is something, like the appearance of secondary sexual attributes, that "everybody" goes through. Of course, this "everybody" hides the fact that many Israeli citizens—most Arabs and ultra-Orthodox Jews, many new immigrants, and a significant percentage of Jewish women—do not serve in the military. Furthermore, because the imagery is quite different for men and women in uniform, the message is a complex one: "everyone" may go through military service, but they do so in different ways.

What distinguishes military training from other rites of passage is the unique kind of environment for which preparation is made: combat, the localized, violent encounter of two armed organizations. In military organizations, combat is seen as the

core of masculinity, and the prime trial of men is that of mastering the stressful conditions of battle.³² (And the IDF, of course, is no exception to the rule.³³) What is the cultural logic at the base of such assumptions? In combat, the problem is one of agency. Who will be master: the situation or the individual, the circumstances or the man? Yet once the soldier is readied for war, he has also, symbolically speaking, passed the ultimate test of manhood.³⁴ Three components of the combat experience are thus directly built upon common understandings of masculinity: body strength and stamina; overcoming fear and asserting emotional control; and the readiness to risk one's life.

Accordingly, the break with childhood can be totally completed only by actual participation in battle. In a television program devoted to soldiers serving in Lebanon, an infantryman said the following:

After all, we came here from civilian life, from school, as children. You get drafted, you train, but still it doesn't feel like the army. Until you go up to Lebanon and you lose a friend, and you see the engagement with the terrorists, then you begin to understand.³⁵

Even though Israel is exceptional in its compulsory recruitment of women, the basic division of labor within the IDF differs remarkably little from the norm in other modern armies: only a minority of men participate in field units; only a smaller minority actually participate in fighting; and women are placed outside or (at best) at the margins of the military hierarchy. What are the implications of this situation?

Our first point is that, given that only a minority of men actually participate in battle, military service provides a wide range of "simulations," such as battle exercises, maneuvers, or advanced army courses. Put somewhat crudely, any soldier who keeps his cool and performs well under the conditions of basic training and other such simulations becomes a "man," even if he never gets the opportunity to participate in actual combat.

Our second point is that, nonetheless, the equation of combat with manliness implies that men will be eager to participate in battle. Many of the soldiers interviewed by Lieblich addressed this issue clearly. One paratrooper stated: "Look, it wasn't heroism or anything like that. All I thought of at the moment was that I wanted to join my buddies, and perhaps that I wanted the experience of combat, just for myself."³⁶ More recently, a commander of a paratroops company observed that "in fact, all of the fighters wait for an engagement because this is what we constantly train for. It's hard to understand from the outside, but everyone wants to test himself [to see] how he behaves at the moment of truth."³⁷ Such statements underline how combat is perceived to be the ultimate test of manhood, and how such trials include a continual exposure to the appraisal of other men.

Finally, given its centrality, service in combat units is directly related to status: status is dependent on proximity to, or distance from, the combat soldier. Soldiers are ranged along a continuum from fighters (say, the infantry or armor) to men in support units close to direct combat (say, the artillery) soldiers in auxiliary positions (various maintenance duties) and through to what in the IDF are known as "jobniks," that is, soldiers who have a support role during their military service (as, for example, clerks, cooks, or drivers). Accordingly, men who are not accepted into combat units, and therefore not provided with opportunities to prove themselves as fighters, often ex-

press shame and disillusion.³⁸ Criteria of service not only establish a boundary between men and women but also set in place certain kinds of prestige hierarchies among men.

In his path-breaking essay about gender and military service, Morgan suggested exploring the possibility of a “plurality of masculinities” found in the armed forces.³⁹ Indeed, alongside the role of man-as-fighter can be found other versions of manhood within the IDF, namely the “professional organizer,” the “administrator,” and the “laborer.” In this respect, military service involves ideals that are closely akin to those found in civilian workplaces, where becoming a man means being able to make it as a (blue-collar) craftsman, technician, or manager. Lieblisch provides a number of examples with regard to maintenance officers, cooks, and drivers in the IDF, where manhood is related to “a job well done,” and where the formal and informal tests are related to organizing men and material.⁴⁰

Where are women in this picture? The allocation of roles to women (and the status and power pertaining to them) is based on the same kind of masculine-military logic. Assumptions about femininity are called upon both to explain and to justify the assignments allocated to women. For example, it is taken for granted that there is a feminine talent for nurturing and care, and that it is therefore “natural” for women to serve as military social workers. Similarly, the notion that women’s bodies are biologically weaker than men’s translates into a consensus that women should not serve in infantry units. Indeed, a consistent IDF policy has been to remove women from the front line during times of war. Even when the IDF opens up new military roles for women, changes have occurred only within a limited array of assignments deemed suitable for women. To put it bluntly: men are designated as combat or noncombat support staff on the basis of skill, performance, and self-selection, whereas women are relegated to support roles by virtue of their sex.

But this situation implies more than the simple exclusion of women from the core of military matters. For, like men in support roles, they may be placed closer to combat as *the* site of importance (as in the case of tank instructors or radar operators) or farther away (as in the case of clerks or typists). Just as male cooks in infantry units have more prestige than cooks in army headquarters, so female clerks in combat units are more esteemed than their counterparts serving in the city. In reality, however, the majority of women, somewhere between 50 to 65 percent, fulfill support roles very far from anything to do with combat or combat training.⁴¹ No less important, in the vast majority of cases they serve under the command of male officers. Thus, even when women do serve in “male” roles, the gender divide is systematically signaled and actualized. The case of women soldiers whose job it is to teach men about such subjects as sharp-shooting, anti-tank missiles or mortars, bears this point out. While male instructors first undergo a period of combat duty, women are assigned to the post directly; and whereas women are usually limited to the classroom, men go out to the field for their instruction.⁴²

The existence of a continuum of roles and tasks in greater or lesser proximity to the core of combat thus makes the gender model of military service much more complex than it may initially appear. Each position has differing prestige and power, but all are defined by their relation to the warrior. Yet as Frank J. Barrett has noted, the link between masculinity, violence, and the military is more complicated than that

suggested by the mere image of man as warrior.⁴³ We must recognize that this is not a simple division between masculinity and femininity. Rather, masculinities and femininities are linked to each other hierarchically. In the military, alternative male postings that are akin to civilian roles, and women participating in “male” roles, are all subordinate to the warrior ideal. And this warrior ideal, in turn, is the hegemonic masculinity.

It is against this background that we may understand the ways in which male and female sexualities are portrayed and used in relation to military service. The ordering principle is an association between (male) soldiering and sexual potency and female sexuality as opposed and complementary to it. Both relations, however, are embedded within wider frameworks. William Arkin and Lynne Dobrofsky argue that, whereas in industrialized societies a male is not considered a man unless he can prove sexual power, values related to ideals of sexual potency are intensified in the masculine environment of armies. Much of the rhetoric in the IDF thus involves a link between sexual features and power.⁴⁴ For example, just as in the Marines penis size is linked to domination, so too, Israeli soldiers often describe individuals who “have balls,” meaning that they have nerve and pluck. In other instances, the imagery of potency is linked to experiences on the (ideal or real) battlefield: one combat soldier in Lebanon described his hope for an encounter with the enemy as “our wettest dream,”⁴⁵ and a paratrooper once characterized a successful jump as “catharsis and orgasm.”⁴⁶

Such imagery is indicative of the ways in which male sexuality is used to interpret and describe organizational and personal domains. Female sexuality serves a different function. In addition to being support troops, women serve both as status symbols and as a means of softening the face of the military. For example, as encapsulated in the Hebrew acronym of the Women’s Corps (*Khen*), which means “charm,” the official view stresses women’s contribution to the morale of (male) soldiers.⁴⁷ A common practice in the IDF is to assign the prettiest clerks to high-ranking commanders or to prestigious units.⁴⁸ Similarly, through photographs, advertisements, and headlines, the media often portray women’s sexuality as a “service” to male soldiers. For instance, in reporting a study about the sexual activity of men and women during their years of compulsory service—and despite the findings that men tend to be more active than women—the headline read, “What do Women Soldiers Do at Night?”⁴⁹

Within the army, jokes, pranks, and witticisms that form part of the ongoing “folklore” typical of predominantly male frameworks also revolve around issues of sex and sexuality.⁵⁰ While no doubt related to camaraderie and the exploration of male anxieties, such humor often depicts women as irresponsible and potentially faithless. In most dirty jokes told in the army, the portrayal of women is closely akin to their depiction in pornography: they are objects that offer men sexual gratification—and are sometimes even described as “mattresses.”

That the sexuality portrayed in the IDF is explicitly heterosexual is evident not only through jokes about women but, no less importantly, in the continual comments and stories that are circulated about homosexuals.⁵¹ While probably more attenuated than “fag” jokes in the American military, the theme of homosexuality is nevertheless present. Because discussion of women and sex is a uniting factor among Israeli troops, and because the assumption is that heterosexuality is the “right” sexuality, there is no

place among soldiers (at least in the public realm) for homosexuals. Indeed, we would posit that given the constrained intimacy of all male groups in the military, individuals “need” the figure of the homosexual in order to stress boundaries and acceptable (heterosexual) norms. At the same time, the supposedly strong bond between men in army units (and most emphatically in combat units) permits some expressions and actions that might otherwise be avoided in all-male groups. For example, kissing, hugging, nudity, and verbal expressions of love are all permitted within such units. Perhaps, as Wendy Chapkis has noted, it is the supreme masculinity of the army unit that allows for “feminine” emotional expression.⁵²

Notwithstanding the stress on camaraderie, a strong undercurrent of constant, if muted, competition over dominance and submission underlies much of the interpersonal dynamics within the IDF. It is in this light that the symbolic equivalencies between women and homosexuals should be seen, as they both provide ready images for portraying activity versus passivity, and power versus hierarchical inferiority. Many Israeli troops use the metaphor of homosexual penetration to depict weakness and subordination: one of the most common expressions of dominance is “to fuck [someone] in the ass.”

A final theme centering on women’s sexuality is related to struggles with enemies. In popular discourse, women’s fertility, within the wider emphases on motherhood, is a resource that must be protected as part of the national struggle with Israel’s adversaries. Put somewhat starkly, the reasoning here is that women, responsible for reproducing the nation and as the sexual possession of men, are to be protected from the enemy. This is why the potential of rape is used to disqualify women from service in combat units: they may become impregnated, we understand, by the enemy. Yitzhak Rabin stated this most explicitly: “If they are captured, who will take responsibility?”⁵³ As Dafna Izraeli, interviewed in the press, noted: “An enemy’s abuse of a woman soldier shocks us more than the sexual abuse of a male soldier.”⁵⁴

If compulsory service is a rite of passage, reserve duty underscores how national service also involves rites of affirmation. From their completion of compulsory service until the age of 50, many Israeli men serve in the reserves. By periodically revisiting their military selves, soldiers affirm their identity as citizens, as military professionals, and as men. During these periods, they are literally and symbolically removed from their civilian lives in order to partake in a collective experience in which certain key values—those of youth—are validated. The image is of older men who periodically return to their 18- and 19-year-old (male) selves.⁵⁵ In this manner, while reserve duty affirms the centrality of men-soldiers, it also (even more than compulsory service) excludes women.

Most reserve soldiers in Israel are husbands and fathers. Regardless of the usual division of labor, reserve duty forces families to restructure, placing women in much more of a “homemaker” role vis-à-vis both the household and the men who are in the army. Paradoxically, even when the men fill lower-level support roles in the military, the very fact that they are in service implies that the family must be mobilized for their support. Wives and mothers of the soldiers labor during their men’s reserve service—their child-rearing, cooking, cleaning, and household maintenance responsibilities necessarily increase. Thus, these women essentially participate in the reserve system, although, as when in uniform, their labor is in support of the male soldier.

At the stage when children—especially sons—enlist, the whole family usually finds that it is again mobilized. The resources of time, energy, and money required both for preenlistment preparations and for arrangements during service become family projects. While families tend to be “drafted” most markedly when sons serve in combat units, the labor-intensive activities involved in this change fall primarily upon the mothers. It is they who frequently prepare packages of “goodies” to send to their soldier-sons in service; they bake, cook, and clean in anticipation of their son’s return on a weekend leave; and wash and iron his clothes. In Hanna Herzog’s biting formulation, gender roles take on the image of “man-the-warrior” and “woman-the-worried.”⁵⁶

Given its basic male orientation, it is not surprising that the impact of the military on society has served to marginalize women within the most important Israeli institutions and to exclude them from the most important form of societal discourse, that of “national security.” The wider exclusion of women takes place through the conversion of military standing and skills into civilian resources—authority, social significance, and access to jobs, for example. As Izraeli has brilliantly shown, men gather significantly more social capital (valuable personal connections) and symbolic capital (prestige, reputation, or notoriety) through military service that they can later translate into resources outside the army: for example, political power, access to employment, or the right to make themselves heard in public debates.⁵⁷ Indeed, employers often view the military as a valuable training ground for enhancing managerial or other specific skills. The kind of exclusion suffered by women also pertains to noncombatant men, albeit to differing degrees. Although less handicapped than women in their ability to convert military experience into civilian status, males who do not match up in the army to the hegemonic ideal cannot (on the whole) compete with the combat soldiers for formal and informal entitlements. To reiterate a point made earlier, the gender regime predicated on the importance of the armed forces also orders relations between men.

Dissent, Resistance, and Transformation

It would be a mistake to portray the effects of the gender regime we have been exploring as the workings of a smoothly functioning system that socializes individuals, reinforces the hegemonic ideals of gender and military service, and elicits willing acceptance of social and organizational hierarchy. As a result of changes in Israeli society and the participation of the IDF in politically divisive wars and engagements, long-entrenched values are now being questioned. Among the issues becoming matters of controversy are the relations between the army and parents, the responsibility of commanders for casualties during training, and the ownership of the bodies of fallen soldiers.⁵⁸

In this context, the women’s movement has been active in both intra- and extra-parliamentary politics related to security matters. Such activism straddles the spectrum from left to right, as represented by such groups as Parents Against Silence (protesting the Lebanon War), Parents Against Burnout (which criticized continued military service in the occupied territories during the intifada), and Mothers for Israel (mainly

women from Jewish settlements on the West Bank, who call for greater military activism).⁵⁹ Sara Helman and Tamar Rapaport have suggested that the protest of mothers and wives of male warriors does little more than extend the traditional female roles beyond the domestic realm.⁶⁰ We would argue, however, that the matter is more complex, because the participation of women in such groups carries a dual message. While they may reproduce the classic role of motherhood, they also produce a new set of activities that lend added legitimacy to the public protest by women that has become a normal part of Israeli political life.

The women's lobby in the Knesset and women's groups active in the judicial sphere have often focused on the opening up of more job categories in the IDF to women, an example being their campaign on behalf of Alice Miller, who was initially denied the opportunity by the Air Force of applying for a pilot training course.⁶¹ However, as with their colleagues abroad, Israeli feminists have not been of one voice regarding their goals.⁶² Some argue that breaking the hinge linking militarism and Israeliness is a precondition for women's full entry into the national community, and that pushing women into the ultramale sphere of the military is decidedly unfeminist. Others point out that the current status quo that translates military service into social and economic capital means that, so long as women suffer discrimination within the IDF, they will never achieve full equality in the society at large. Despite these internal debates, the mainstream feminist movement, represented most forcefully by individual women members of the Knesset and by organized political groups such as the Women's Lobby, have pushed for sex-blind equality within the military and have fought for the opening up of more jobs to women in uniform.

Ironically, however, these demands reinforce certain practices related to the hegemony of militarism and nationalism. While criticizing current practices within the IDF, the efforts of the Women's Lobby and the appeal to judicial review take place within, and *assume* the continued framework in which the dominant emphasis is on the combat role. In the words of the former head of the women's corps, the struggle with the IDF centers on "women being in roles that are similar to those of men."⁶³ Such critiques, then, implicitly underline the power of the state—via the military—to control the very means of social exclusion and inclusion and the terms of public debate. By demanding full participation of women in the armed forces, such feminist movements sustain the stress on military service as the single most important criterion for gaining access to full membership in Israeli society. In this way, the participation of women in the military, even in support roles, is part of the way in which nonconscriptable groups—such as Arab Israeli citizens—are excluded from full membership in the collectivity.

From another perspective, the entry of women into male roles may signal either the feminization of certain roles or the erosion of the "natural" model of the sexual division of labor. For example, women were accepted into combat training within the Border Police in 1996. In consequence, some gender stereotypes appear to have been broken down, while others may have been reinforced.⁶⁴ On the one hand, women are regularly patrolling sensitive border areas alongside men, and can find themselves participating in violent confrontations. On the other hand, they have been restricted in their duties to some extent (they are not allowed to pursue a suspect into "enemy ter-

ritory” as are their male counterparts), and they are apparently encouraged to maintain their femininity despite their professional tasks. As one commander told the press: “I don’t want to turn them into boys. I’d better not see [a woman] who hasn’t showered in two days . . . I want to see first girls [*banot*] and then fighters [*lohamot*].”⁶⁵

Yet at the same time, being in a unit such as the Border Police does empower women. One of the first women to be trained in the Border Police stated: “If I were attacked by a rapist in a dark alley, I would know how to deal with him. Instinctively I would choke him, one blow and he’d get the message. He’d find out he’s not dealing with a loser.”⁶⁶ These examples illustrate how every action that disrupts the social order, breaks conventions, or challenges established hierarchies, is mediated by structural features that dilute the effect of that challenge.

Israel is now undergoing an interrelated process of growing individualization and consumerism, which has a number of implications for the relations between gender and military service.⁶⁷ The overlap between these various spheres—military, gender, and individualism—is a striking example of how alternative discourses can, at one and the same time, both reinforce and undermine one another.

Take the example noted before, of the hundreds of young Israelis who enroll in prearmy preparatory courses. As we observed, because such courses attract an almost exclusively male population, and because they focus on training needed for acceptance into elite combat units, they tend to reproduce both gender and military hierarchies. Thus, the growth of consumerism and individualism seems to have been easily harnessed to the preexisting valuation of the military and combat as male venues. At the same time, however, an unintended consequence of this pattern is a privatization of attitudes toward the military: one pays individuals (the instructors) for a certain service (preparation for elite units) and a certain outcome (membership and privilege). Because this is an economic transaction, if the “goods” are not delivered, one can withdraw from the deal.

This attitude expresses and reinforces a phenomenon that is encapsulated in such terms as *sayeret o nayeret* (roughly translated as “an elite unit or a cushy job”)—the idea among a growing group of secular, middle-class youths that if the army does not meet one’s expectations for self-realization, one can opt for a desk job that allows soldiers to begin their university studies or to get a head start in the labor market. Similarly, the prestige of serving in certain units and roles is interpreted in terms of individual rather than collective or national goals.

The long-term effects of the IDF’s gradual transformation into a smaller, more compact, and technologically advanced force are hard to predict.⁶⁸ On the one hand, current discussions about decreasing the number of women clerks by 10 percent, replacing them with computers and other high-tech equipment (such as answering services), is part of the process by which women are slowly entering into noncombatant yet less “feminized” positions: technicians, flight controllers, and various kinds of instructors for combat roles. In addition, the army’s need for computer operators may increasingly force it into competition with civilian employers, thereby pushing the army into being much more flexible in the enlistment and retention of women. Indeed, the acceptance of women into relatively high-status jobs may signal some significant changes. Not only do these women garner resources—social and symbolic—that can

be used upon leaving the IDF for civilian jobs, but the fact that they enter high-prestige jobs (albeit in support of combat) is itself a factor for change.

On the other hand, it cannot be denied that women continue to serve in what are still support roles. Given that the core of military activity remains combat, the trend leads, in numerical terms, to an even greater exclusion of women. Indeed, the move to a small and compact army could eventually lead to their total exclusion, or at least to a relative reduction in their status. Often the issue is linked to the length of service: if women serve only 21 months and a technical course takes half that period, the army does not get its “money’s worth” in terms of its long-term investment in women. The reasoning is often circular: women do not serve enough time to be trained for technical (and combat) roles, and thus the IDF cannot train them for such roles because their length of service is too short.⁶⁹

These examples and paradoxes well illustrate the presence, as Joyce Robbins and Uri Ben-Eliezer insightfully suggest, of two competing types of discourse in present-day Israel: one centering on professionalism (which stresses a compact, expert army) and the other focusing on participation and widespread membership in the military.⁷⁰ The controversy centers on the core image of the Israel nation-state and the manner by which it is to be constructed. What we are presently witnessing is a debate about the future of Israel—whether it is to be characterized by a continued stress on collective participation, or instead should be transformed into (just another) Western society in which personal success is measured by attainments at the workplace.

Conclusion

In this essay, we have argued that the relationship between gender and the military is critical to nation-building in Israel, because gender is a prime site for the “naturalization” of power. Our contention is that body-building and character-building are inextricably linked to the self-perception of the nation. Whereas most of the major analyses of the Israeli gender regime have emanated from a focus on the experience of women, we have examined the unmarked category of men and masculinity and have placed our analysis of gender in the context of relational terms and arrangements. Masculinity, we argue, is not a fixed entity but is rather constantly being constructed out of opposition to (and in interaction with) femininity.

An assemblage of state-mandated practices and arrangements, reverberating with private concerns, are what produce and reproduce the gendered divide of inequality. Children are socialized from a young age to accept and to act according to gendered images and body- and character-building. Diverse mechanisms, geared to the hegemonic view of the warrior and his feminine helpmate, constantly interact and reinforce each other.

The second issue that we have dealt with concerns the ways in which gender relations, however entrenched, are nonetheless open to diverse interpretations. The military is not ruled solely by “military discourse,” nor are families governed solely by “family discourse.” An examination of such discourses, however, does expose the invisible workings of power. For example, enduringly influential notions concerning

military service are rooted in the general discourse about heroism, reverberate with ideas about the Holocaust, and are connected to the master narratives of Zionism. Thus, any discussion of institutional arrangements also has to give due weight to the assumptions that underwrite them. In the case of women's exclusion from combat roles in the IDF, such assumptions include people's notions about men's and women's bodies and characters. Ideals and practices within the IDF are in part built upon the images and models of gender that circulate in the "nonarmy" world. Thus, the control demanded of men within the army is linked to wider notions of self-control as a central element of manhood in Western industrialized societies. This reverberation is not surprising, since in such societies there is a strong link between rationality and masculinity.⁷¹ By performing as soldiers, individuals are implicitly affirming the gendered division between the rational and the irrational, between men and women.

But the exclusion of women is not only rooted in deeply entrenched modes of discourse. The fact is that the meaning and character of people's bodies are actually changed by altering them physically. In Chris Shilling's words, the "physical sense of males experienced by many men comes not just from the symbolic significance of the phallus, or even simply from the images of power frequently attached to the male body by popular culture. It also derives from the transformation of the body through social practices."⁷² Consequently, demarcations of men as carriers of power are rendered not only into mental representations but into muscle tensions and postures, the very feel and texture of their bodies. This "translation" is one of the main ways in which power becomes "naturalized," that is, seen as part of the order of nature. Women, according to this reasoning, are assumed to be inferior (and therefore to merit exclusion) because they do not have the kinds of bodies that have been fashioned through military service and have not actively participated in this "bodily" transformation.

Our third set of questions addressed the assortment of male and female roles in the IDF and the ways in which they are structured. The situation in Israel's armed forces is not one of a simple dichotomous hierarchy between men and women or a plain diversity of masculinities. Rather, masculinities and femininities are linked to each other in graded hierarchies. In the military, versions of manhood associated with non-combatant jobs, and forms of womanhood associating female soldiers with the family, are subordinate to the warrior ideal, which constitutes the hegemonic masculinity. Accordingly, if we view both men and women as relational entities, we understand how conceptions and arrangements linked to gender also structure the relationships between men.

Finally, by looking at the creation of meaning as an ongoing process, we have shifted the focus of study from simple causal models to a more complex awareness of the constant potential for change. Indeed, the connection between gender and army life as it is written on the bodies and characters of individuals underscores the essential precariousness of these links, because the body and human emotions are never just socially constructed: they always include space for actions, feelings, and thoughts that are at a distance from cultural images or social institutions. It is in these spaces that we find the loci of much resistance and the proclivity for change. Similarly, neither the army nor gender are completely formed "discourses." Rather, the process of

"naturalizing" the link between them is necessarily a fragmented one. The military and "nonmilitary" realms continually employ and reconstruct each other.

Notes

As this essay was going to press at the end of 1999, an amendment to the National Service Law of 1949 was adopted by the Israeli Knesset. The law, as it stands in its new form, states specifically that women have the same access as men to all functions and roles in the armed forces. It is, therefore, logical to assume that it will greatly accelerate the process, described in the article, of gradual change in the status of women in the IDF. It should be noted that the IDF may attempt to exclude women from certain positions because of "the nature of the post." The burden of proof, however, shifts in such cases to the IDF.

Only with the passage of time will it be possible to learn whether the legal change on the eve of the new millennium marked a turning point in the history of women's role in the IDF.

1. Baruch Kimmerling, "Patterns of Militarism in Israel," *European Journal of Sociology* 34 (1993), 196–223.

2. Nira Yuval-Davis, "Front and Rear: The Sexual Division of Labour in the Israeli Army," *Feminist Studies* 11, no. 3 (1985), 649–676.

3. Dafna Izraeli, "Gendering Military Service in the Israeli Defense Forces," *Israel Social Science Research* 12, no. 1 (1997), 129–166. On the issue of gender regime, see R.W. Connell, *Masculinities* (London: 1992).

4. See David Beale, *Eros and the Jews: From Biblical Israel to Contemporary America* (New York: 1992).

5. See George L. Mosse, *The Image of Man: The Creation of Modern Masculinity* (Oxford: 1996), 151.

6. *Ibid.*, 6–12.

7. See Deborah S. Bernstein, "Human Being or Housewife: The Status of Women in the Jewish Working Class Family in Palestine of the 1920s and 1930s," in *Pioneers and Homemakers: Jewish Women in Pre-State Israel*, ed. Deborah S. Bernstein (Albany: 1996), 155.

8. See Joyce Robbins and Uri Ben-Eliezer, "Women Soldiers and the Politics of the 'Non-Military': The Israeli Experience" (unpublished manuscript).

9. See Uri Ben-Eliezer, "Rethinking the Civil-Military Relations Paradigm: The Inverse Relation Between Militarism and Praetorianism Through the Example of Israel," *Comparative Political Studies* 30, no. 3 (1997), 356–374.

10. See Moshe Lissak, "Paradoxes of Israeli Civil-Military Relations: An Introduction," in *Israeli Society and its Defense Establishment*, ed. Moshe Lissak (London: 1984), 3.

11. See Edna Lomsky-Feder and Eyal Ben Ari, "'The People in Uniform' to 'Different Uniforms for the People': Professionalism, Diversity and the Israel Defence Forces," in *Managing Diversity in the Armed Forces*, ed. Joseph Soeters and Jan van der Meulen (Tilberg: 1999).

12. See Yagil Levy, "The Role of the Military Sphere in Constructing the Social-Political Order in Israel: Management of the Israeli-Arab Conflict as a Strategy of State Control" (Ph.D. diss., Tel-Aviv University, 1993).

13. See Izraeli, "Gendering Military Service in the Israel Defense Forces," 137ff.

14. Robbins and Ben-Eliezer, "Women Soldiers and the Politics of the 'Non Military.'"

15. See Nitza Berkovitch, "Motherhood as a National Mission: The Construction of Womanhood in the Legal Discourse in Israel." Paper presented at the conference "Israeliness and Womanhood: Feminist Scholarship and National Discourse," Jerusalem, 1993.

16. See Eyal Ben-Ari and Edna Lomsky-Feder, "Introductory Essay: Cultural Constructions of War and the Military in Israel," in *The Military and Militarism in Israeli Society*, ed. Eyal Ben-Ari and Edna Lomsky-Feder (Albany: 2000); also see Emmanuel Sivan, *Dor hatashah: mitos vezikaron* (Tel-Aviv: 1991), Efrat Ben-Ze'ev and Eyal Ben-Ari, "Imposing Politics: Attempts at Creating a Museum of 'Co-Existence' in Jerusalem," *Anthropology Today* 12, no.

6 (1996), 7–13; Don Handelman and Elihu Katz, “State Ceremonies of Israel: Remembrance Day and Independence Day,” in *Israeli Judaism: The Sociology of Religion in Israel*, ed. Shlomo Deshen, Charles Liebman, and Moshe Shokeid (New Brunswick: 1995), 75–85.

17. See Edna Levy-Schreiber, “Women Warriors: The Paradox and Politics of Women in Uniform,” in *Gender, Nation and Nationalism: Feminist Approaches to Contemporary Issues*, ed. Sita Ranchod-Nilson and Mary Ann Tetreault (New York: forthcoming).

18. See Moshe Israelashvili, “Counselling in the Israeli High School: Particular Focus on Preparation for Military Recruitment,” *International Journal for the Advancement of Counseling* 15 (1992), 175–186.

19. See *Maariv*, 29 Oct. 1996.

20. See Edna Levy-Schreiber, “Heroes and Helpmates: Militarism, Gender, and National Belonging in Israel” (Ph.D. diss., University of California at Irvine, 1998).

21. Hedva Almog, *Madrikh lemitgaysot* (Jerusalem: 1993), 171.

22. See Haim Ravia and Emanuel Rosen, *Hitgayastem! Madrikh lemitgaysim hadashim lezahal* (Jerusalem: 1987).

23. See, for example, Abigail E. Adams, “Dyke to Dyke: Ritual Reproduction at a U.S. Men’s Military Academy,” *Anthropology Today* 9, no. 5 (1993), 3–6.

24. See Myron J. Aronoff, *Israeli Visions and Divisions: Cultural Change and Political Conflict* (New Brunswick: 1989), 132.

25. See David D. Gilmore, *Manhood in the Making: Cultural Concepts of Masculinity* (New Haven: 1990), 223–224.

26. See Gwynne Dyer, *War* (New York: 1985), 114.

27. See Eyal Ben-Ari, “Tests of Soldierhood, Trials of Manhood: Military Service and Male Ideals in Israel,” in *Military, State and Society in Israel: Theoretical and Comparative Perspectives*, ed. Eyal Ben-Ari, Daniel Maiman, and Zeev Rosenhek (New Brunswick: forthcoming).

28. See Amia Lieblich, *Transition to Adulthood During Military Service: The Israeli Case* (Albany: 1989), 71.

29. David H.J. Morgan, “Theater of War: Combat, the Military and Masculinities,” in *Theorizing Masculinities*, ed. Harry Brod and Michael Kaufman (Thousand Oaks: 1994), 167.

30. *Ha’aretz*, 20 Jan. 1995.

31. *Maariv*, 17 March 1996.

32. See William Arkin and Lynne R. Dobrofsky, “Military Socialization and Masculinity,” *Journal of Social Issues* 34, no. 1 (1978), 151–168.

33. See Lieblich, *Transition to Adulthood During Military Service*.

34. See Ben-Ari, *Mastering Soldiers*.

35. “Yoman hashavu’a,” 15 Nov. 1996.

36. Quoted in Lieblich, *Transition to Adulthood During Military Service*, 20.

37. *Maariv*, 23 Oct. 1997.

38. See Lieblich, *Transition to Adulthood During Military Service*, 84–85.

39. See Morgan, “Theater of War.”

40. See Lieblich, *Transition to Adulthood During Military Service*, 93–94, 157.

41. See Nat Meidan, “Rov habanot lo rozot lehiyot lohamot—vezodkot hen,” (in the “Shiv’a yamim” section) *Yedioth Ahronoth*, 15 Aug. 1997.

42. Moreover, in times of war, it is very common for civilian women to fill roles defined as being on the “home front”: they work in hospitals, deliver mail, or take over managerial or business roles so that men will be free to join the war at the “real” front. The logic here is what Kimmerling calls the “interrupted system.” During war, the interrupted system puts routine activities on hold and mobilizes all of its resources to handle the existential threat. When the hostilities are over, however, the women and men go back to their normal, routine roles. See Baruch Kimmerling, *The Interrupted System* (New Brunswick: 1985).

43. See Frank J. Barrett, “The Organizational Construction of Masculinity: The Case of the U.S. Navy,” *Gender, Work and Organization* (forthcoming).

44. See Arkin and Dobrofsky, “Military Socialization and Masculinity.”

45. “Yoman hashavu’a,” Israel Television, 3 March 1995.

46. *Ha'aretz*, 20 Jan. 1995.
47. See Reuven Gal, *A Portrait of the Israeli Soldier* (New York: 1986), 52.
48. See *Maariv*, 20 Jan. 1995; *Yedioth Ahronoth*, 24 Jan. 1995.
49. *Yedioth Ahronoth*, 12 July 1995.
50. See Liora Sion and Eyal Ben-Ari, "Weary, Hungry and Horny": *Humor and Laughter in Israel's Military Reserves* (manuscript).
51. *Ibid.*
52. See Wendy Chapkis, "Sexuality and Militarism," in *Women and the Military System*, ed. Eva Isaksson (New York: 1988).
53. Quoted in *Yedioth Ahronoth*, 6 Feb. 1996.
54. Quoted in *Davar*, 10 Feb. 1995.
55. See Ben-Ari, *Mastering Soldiers*.
56. See Hanna Herzog, *Enlisting Moms: Military-Family Relations as a Genderizing Social Mechanism: The Case of Israel* (manuscript).
57. See Dafna Izraeli, "Gendering Military Service in the Israeli Defense Forces."
58. See Don Handelman and Lea Shamgar Handelman, "The Presence of Absence: The Memorialism of National Death in Israel," in *Grasping Land: Space and Place in Contemporary Israeli Discourse and Experience*, ed. Eyal Ben-Ari and Yoram Bilu (Albany: 1997), 85–128; Edna Lomsky-Feder and Eyal Ben-Ari, "Epilogue," in idem (eds.), *The Military and Militarism in Israeli Society*.
59. See Yael Azmon, "Wars, Mothers, and a Girl With Braids: Involvement of Mothers' Peace Movements in the National Discourse in Israel," *Israel Social Science Research* 12, no. 1 (1997), 109–128; Nurit Gillath, "Women Against War: 'Parents Against Silence,'" in *Calling the Equality Bluff: Women in Israel*, ed. Barbara Swirski and Marilyn P. Safir (New York: 1991), 142–147.
60. See Sara Helman and Tamar Rapaport, "Women in Black: Challenging Israel's Gender and Socio-Political Orders," *British Journal of Sociology* 48, no. 4 (1992), 681–700.
61. See Izraeli, "Gendering Military Service in the Israeli Defense Forces," 144f.
62. See Joanna Bourke, *An Intimate History of Killing* (London: 1999), ch. 10.
63. Hedva Almog, interviewed in *Yedioth Ahronoth*, 15 Aug. 1997.
64. The Border Police is formally a component of the police organization and thus women were not banned from combat positions as in the IDF. However, the IDF "loans" compulsory-service soldiers to the Border Police, and so some women are finding themselves serving, de facto, as combat soldiers.
65. Interview in *Maariv*, 28 June 1996.
66. Interview in the *Jerusalem Post Magazine*, 7 June 1996.
67. See Daphna Birenbaum-Carmeli, "A Good Place in the Middle: A Residential Area as a Means of Constructing Class Identity" (Ph.D. diss., The Hebrew University, 1995.)
68. See Stuart Cohen, "The IDF: From a 'People's Army' to a 'Professional Military'—Causes and Implications," *Armed Forces and Society* 21, no. 2 (Winter 1995).
69. See Dafna Izraeli, "Gendering Military Service in the Israeli Defense Forces," 139–140.
70. See Robbins and Ben-Eliezer, *Women Soldiers and the Politics of the "Non-Military."*
71. See Helen Haste, *The Sexual Metaphor* (New York: 1993).
72. Chris Shilling, *The Body and Social Theory* (London: 1993), 110.

Replaying the Rape of Dinah: Women's Bodies in Israeli Cultural Discourse

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*And Adam said, "The woman you have placed with me. She gave me from the tree and I ate."
—Gen. 3:12*

And then Dina, the daughter of Leah, born to Jacob, went out to visit with the daughters of the land, and then Shehem, son of Hamor, the Hivite Prince, saw her and he took her and he lay with her and he abused her. . . . And the two sons of Jacob, Shimon and Levy, the brothers of Dina, took each his sword and came to the unsuspecting city and killed all the males. . . . And then Jacob said to Shimon and to Levy, "You made me infamous among the residents of this land, the Canaanites and the Perizites, and we are small in number and should they gang up against us and smite us, that will destroy me and my household." And they replied, "Would you have our sister made into a harlot?" —Gen. 34: 1, 25, 30–31

God speaks to Moses to say to the children of Israel. "Should any man among you find that his wife has gone astray and betrayed him and some man had lain with her sexually . . . and she was not caught. And he is then possessed by jealousy and she is defiled or he is possessed by jealousy and she is not defiled. Then the man should bring his wife to the priest . . . and the priest will place the woman before the Lord and uncover the woman's head [and administer the oath and the bitter water]" —Num. 5:11

Throughout the day of July 14, 1998, a headline story on Israel's hourly government-run radio news broadcasts reported that a Ministry of Transportation driving tester had refused to test a woman whose clothing did not, to his sensitivities, sufficiently cover her body. News analysis shows were replete with discussion of exactly what the woman in question had worn; dignitaries gravely debated whether her shirt had exposed her navel or merely part of her midriff, her shoulders or only her upper arms. In the course of the day, Israel's central labor organization, the Histadrut, was also drawn into the conflict, its spokespeople declaring that whereas women have the right to dress according to their taste, testers have the right to follow their religious dictates. This particular incident and its discursive aftermath were the only stories dealing with women to be broadcast that day on Israel's hourly news programs.

Immediately following several of the hourly news broadcasts, however, listeners were treated to a particularly riveting commercial advertising the Clinica On medical centers for the treatment of male sexual problems. The text of the commercial went

as follows: “Where will your lawyer, your reserve duty officer, and your greengrocer *not* meet? At Clinica On.” The rest of the commercial boasted of the clinic’s private waiting rooms and separate entrances for its clients, and of the renowned urologists and sexologists on its staff, concluding with a guarantee of “full discretion.”

These two items, broadcast one right after the other, both have to do with bodies in contemporary Israeli culture. Yet they reveal radically different treatment of men’s and women’s bodies. The discretion accorded to men’s bodies (especially their sexuality) contrasts dramatically with the constant and often public scrutiny of women’s bodies (especially their sexuality)—a scrutiny so widespread, so legitimate, that it is all but taken for granted. In this essay, I endeavor to partially unravel this scrutiny through an analysis of several incidents and situations involving conflict or controversy over women’s bodies. These incidents—far from constituting an exhaustive list—include contention regarding women’s public appearances and “modest” dress; friction surrounding compulsory ritual-bath attendance for brides; conflicts over women’s prayer services at the Western Wall; abortion committee rituals; and debates concerning whether women should serve in combat positions in the Israel Defense Forces (IDF). In these, as in other conflict situations, themes that usually remain implicit in cultural understandings are made explicit.

Before turning in more detail to the specific examples of conflict, I wish to discuss briefly why male-dominated cultures in general, and Israeli culture in its own particular Jewish-mythic ways, pay so much attention to women’s bodies. Whereas the natural unruliness of bodies constitutes a challenge for all cultures, the unruliness of women’s bodies is especially problematic for patriarchal societies.¹ Despite patriarchal efforts to control women and their reproductive capacities, women do experience themselves as agents, and—to a greater or lesser extent—also experience their bodies as instruments of their agency. Women therefore “need” repeated reminders that patriarchal control is in their “best interest.” Patriarchal cultures typically balance overt (or forceful) control of women’s bodies with indirect or symbolic ways of enlisting their allegiance.² Yet the indirect approach tends to preclude ultimate solutions to the “problem” of bodies.³ The use of symbolic means to control women’s bodies paves the way for contestation, for negotiation, and for surveillance aimed at “checking” whether women have in fact sufficiently internalized the patriarchal understandings of female corporeality.⁴

At the same time, from the perspective of patriarchal discourse, women’s bodies are a convenient (that is, omnipresent and multidimensional) symbol upon which to engrave cultural meanings. Feminist writers have argued persuasively that conflicts and difficulties in defining and constituting communities, nations, and states are often enacted symbolically on women’s bodies, primarily because these are understood to be the physical bearers of the group’s future members and citizens.⁵ Because women’s bodies are used to mark cultural boundaries, the scrutiny of women becomes a vehicle for “reading” culture.

In addition to the symbols of communal identity that are associated with women’s bodies, we find in Israel, as in other patriarchal cultures, that women’s bodies can also reflect the status and identity of particular men. Ownership of, or access to, an expensively adorned female body is a potent symbol of male economic success; similarly, a modestly dressed female points to a particular man’s spiritual accomplishment. And

once again, the use of women's bodies as transmitters of messages regarding male status legitimates—indeed demands—an ongoing scrutiny.

In sum, competing demands on women's bodies as symbols of communal identity and personal status, as unruly reproductive resources, and as agents mean that women's bodies easily become the loci of social conflicts and dilemmas. These sorts of processes are especially visible when groups or individuals with different ideas come into intense contact with one another, or when institutions with different interests vie for control. These conditions clearly characterize Israeli society.

Competing demands lead to intensified scrutiny of women's bodies. Such attention has cultural implications in and of itself, construing women as more “bodily”—that is, more mired in physicality, hence less rational, cultural, or transcendent—than men. Constructed as irredeemably corporeal, women become both “legitimately” excluded from central arenas of culture and the targets of perpetual attempts to “enculture” their unruly, vulnerable, dangerous bodies.

Much of the discourse concerning women's bodies in Israel is mythic in nature, referring back to key metaphors and images within the Jewish cultural repertoire—Eve, the mother of humankind who is both vulnerable to the snake's enticements and dangerous to Adam; Dinah, sister to the founders of the twelve tribes, who “went out into the land” where she was subsequently raped and whose brothers went to war to defend her honor; and the suspected adulteress (*sotah*), whose innocence or guilt is established in the biblical ritual of the bitter waters in which her body and hair are uncovered and scrutinized. These mythic images resonate with, infiltrate into, and help shape and energize contemporary Israeli discourse.⁶

In Israeli culture, the scrutiny of women's bodies—with the possible exception of outright pornography—tends to be presented as a means to legitimate and even noble ends. For the advertising and fashion industries (as elsewhere in the Western world), displaying women's bodies energizes the economy, provides jobs, and expands Israel's visibility in the global marketplace.⁷ In Orthodox ritual discourse, the most commonly specified ends are modesty and purity—attributes that are considered particularly important, yet terribly precarious, in women. Women, it seems, are defined as intrinsically immodest, a state that can be corrected only partially and temporarily through strict dress codes, ongoing supervision, and confinement to the domestic sphere. Given the perceived unreliability of women's modesty, there is frequent “slippage,” which results in new demands and ongoing friction.

Despite the deep ethnic, religious, and political cleavages found in so many areas of Israeli society, the theme of women's vulnerability and danger constitutes a commonality that can be seen as an Israeli metanarrative of gender. Public discourse reiterating and dramatizing the vulnerability and danger inherent in women's bodies legitimates surveillance and control of women, a process that puts out tentacles into various secular and religious situations. As will be shown, the interests of global capitalism, the secular state, and the religious establishment converge in legitimizing the intense and invasive focus on women's bodies.⁸

Although much of this essay examines recently accelerating attempts on the part of ultra-Orthodox men to control women's bodies, it must be emphasized that such attempts are far from a uniquely ultra-Orthodox endeavor. On the contrary, the secular scrutiny of women's bodies in the context of advertisements, entertainment, porno-

graphy, diet programs, and the like is sufficiently well known not to require much elaboration here.

Contemporary Israeli society encompasses an often uneasy mixture of secular and religious institutions.⁹ Although in most ways Israel resembles other Western democracies, Orthodox Judaism in Israel is institutionalized through a system of state-run religious schools, state-funded synagogues and religious services, municipal religious councils, Orthodox rabbinical control of weddings and divorces, and municipal and national chief rabbinate whose members' public stature and legal rulings carry a great deal of cultural weight. Although they have never constituted more than a minority, Orthodox political parties have representatives in the Knesset and have been part of almost all government coalitions since the founding of the state.

The privileged place of Orthodox Judaism in Israeli society has a number of implications for Israeli Jewish men and women.¹⁰ Women especially, even if they are not Orthodox, are to varying extents forced to comply with traditional Jewish conceptualizations of gender. According to the Orthodox Jewish worldview, men and women are essentially different, with different natures and spiritual paths as well as a differing legal status. Women are seen primarily as domestic beings, whereas all public and official leadership roles (rabbis, cantors, judges, circumcisers, and ritual slaughterers) are in the province of men.¹¹ Perhaps most important, certain traditional Jewish approaches to gender have expanded beyond Orthodox circles to become part of the national or so-called secular script. For instance, the traditional Jewish view of women as child producers and nurturers receives institutionalized reinforcement in Israel's candidly pronatal culture. With the highest birthrate in the West, Israel offers a postpartum monetary grant to mothers, child allowances, and frank exhortations to produce children for the sake of Jewish demography.

The Meaning of Modesty

The series of incidents and controversies presented below have been gleaned from mainstream Israeli newspapers in recent years.¹² Although almost all of the incidents concern ultra-Orthodox individuals, groups, or leaders, they have become part of a much wider Israeli discourse, either because the issue at hand initially concerned the bodies of secular women, or because the secular press chose to channel the story from the ultra-Orthodox community into the larger secular society. In either case, by entering into dialogues over the proper presentation of women's bodies, secular as well as ultra-Orthodox Israelis can be understood as reading from the broad cultural script of female corporeality.

Over the past few years, several local municipalities and national government offices have instituted "modest" dress codes for women workers. For example, in Hadera, women employees at city hall were instructed to come to work with "modest clothing" following complaints by ultra-Orthodox city councilors. The Kiryat Malakhi local council made a similar demand on its female workers in response to complaints by men that they were being served by women in "revealing" clothing. In a like manner, several supermarkets around the country have instituted dress codes for women. Typically, these require women to wear skirts and long-sleeved blouses

or shirts, or "modest" dresses. A few stores even keep a supply of skirts in the entrance so that women entering in slacks can cover themselves "properly."¹³

In order to ensure that all women comply with intensified demands for body coverings, "modesty scarves" were mandated recently for women who enter the courtyard *next to* the main plaza of the Western Wall.¹⁴ Consequently, even women who are merely crossing through the plaza on the way to the Old City of Jerusalem must now cover their legs and shoulders. And in the town of Beit Shean, a member of the religious council, Reuven Deri, commissioned silk "modesty capes" for "immodestly" dressed brides.¹⁵

In August 1996, when Eliyahu Suissa, a Knesset member from one of the ultra-Orthodox parties, became the minister of religious affairs, women employees at the ministry began to come to work in skirts and long-sleeved blouses even though, according to the ministry, "they were not ordered to do so." Assuming that the ministry's claim is true—there may well have been subtle pressure exerted on the women—this anecdote indicates how quickly women may come to take the corporeal demands of patriarchy for granted (particularly when their jobs are at stake!). Whereas calls for additional covering of women's bodies are sometimes met with consternation on the part of secular women, there is seldom any significant public protest. While these sorts of demands are in a certain sense new (or at least escalating), they in fact are consistent with the culturally recognizable metamythic language of women's corporeality that is already familiar to—and deemed legitimate by—many Israeli men and women.

The only group that has consistently protested "modesty" regulations for women is the feminist Israel Women's Network. However, sporadic conflict has erupted in response to some of the more flagrant and zealous attempts to patrol women's bodies. One well-publicized incident occurred during the planning stages of President Ezer Weizman's swearing-in ceremony at the Knesset in May 1998. Women, along with men soldiers, were scheduled to sing. Certain ultra-Orthodox Knesset members objected to the presence of women in the choir, however, and after several days of heated public discussion, the president asked that the entire performance be canceled.¹⁶ A year earlier, newspaper headlines had been filled with reports that women had been banned from singing at a memorial event for two officers killed in the line of duty. According to the *Jerusalem Post*, rabbis had "attempted to keep women from singing, and even appearing at the event."¹⁷ In this case, the Defense Ministry's decision to prevent the women from singing was ultimately rescinded.

With unusual insight, a headline in the *Jerusalem Post* on August 9, 1996 described various incidents of violence against women as part of a broader power struggle: "The Ultra-Orthodox Attempt to Control Jerusalem is Being Waged Over the Bodies of Local Women." The text of the article reported a series of attacks, involving verbal abuse, spitting, and rock-throwing, on more than 30 women employees of the Ministry of Education, which is located on the seam between downtown Jerusalem and the ultra-Orthodox Meah Shearim neighborhood. (The attacks described in the article had taken place over a six-week period, during which time ministry workers had staged at least one protest demonstration.) Again, women's clothing was the ostensible issue.

The men of Meah Shearim framed their objection to the "immodest" clothing of the women in culturally resonant terms: "They pollute [*metamot*] the eyes of our

children.”¹⁸ This short sentence attributes cosmic—or at least symbolic—danger to women’s bodies, which are, it seems, especially threatening to children. Put somewhat differently, women’s bodies in their “natural” (uncovered) state imperil the collectivity’s future. Interestingly, over the weeks of the conflict, newspapers reported that many of the women who had been attacked had actually been dressed in clothes that even most ultra-Orthodox groups find acceptable (long-sleeved blouses and calf-length skirts).

A number of ultra-Orthodox neighborhoods have signs posted at their outer borders, which warn that “passing through [this neighborhood] in immodest clothing is absolutely forbidden. We are not responsible for damage caused to those who disobey. You have been warned.” This not-so-covert threat of violence is part of a spiraling conflict. The assertion that “we are not responsible for damage” implies, of course, that “immodestly” dressed women bring violence upon themselves—akin to the old claim that men are driven to rape by the seductive clothing of their victims.

Demands that secular women wear modest clothing are merely lukewarm versions of the escalating demands made by ultra-Orthodox men on their “own” women. Other signs located deeper within ultra-Orthodox neighborhoods proclaim that “a woman who wears immodest clothing causes the Divine Presence to depart and leads many to sin. Leading someone to sin is worse than killing him.” The message, presumably aimed at ultra-Orthodox women, seems twofold. First, women need to be admonished to dress modestly because they are more likely than men to be seduced by the whims of fashion; in other words, they are more morally vulnerable. Second, women, when improperly clad or improperly socialized, are inherently dangerous to men.

The secular press has been particularly fascinated by controversies in the ultra-Orthodox community regarding women’s hair coverings. *Maariv*, for example, featured a headline on September 28, 1997 that read: “Rabbi Ovadyah [Yosef]: A Woman Who Wears a Wig—Will Burn in Hell.” According to the article, during the course of a sermon at his synagogue, the former chief Sephardic rabbi announced that any woman who enters a synagogue wearing a wig (rather than the more “modest” hat or scarf) will be sentenced, together with her husband, to ostracism from the Jewish community. In the publicity given to this sermon, we note a dual scrutiny of women’s bodies (the ultra-Orthodox surveillance is replicated by that of the secular press), interwoven with the theme of women as endangering others. In his sermon, according to *Maariv*, Yosef went on to explain that “if a woman wants righteous children, she should take off her wig [and wear a hat or scarf]. If not, her children will be uncouth.” In other words, women endanger not only men (since husbands, too, will be punished for their wives’ impropriety) but also their children and, by projection, the future of the Jewish people.

Yosef’s condemnation of wigs must be seen in the context of his challenge to Ashkenazic control of Israel’s religious establishment. By declaring wigs insufficiently modest, this leader of the Sephardic ultra-Orthodox community directed that “his” women be visually distinguished from ultra-Orthodox Ashkenazic women. Moreover, he found a potent symbolic means of trumpeting the victory of the Sephardic political party, Shas, over the Ashkenazic Agudat Israel party. The bodies of “his” women wear the sign of his victory; no longer “primitive” and in need of Ashkenazic guidance, they set the truly modest and pious example.

Having been publicized in the secular press, this incident became a more central and legitimate part of the normative Israeli metadiscourse than would otherwise have been the case. Given Yosef's status as former chief rabbi, as spiritual head of the Shas party, and as informal leader of the Israeli Sephardic population, all of his comments are imbued with cultural authority and significance.

In a different development, a number of articles in the secular press, beginning in December 1997, reported that several ultra-Orthodox women had begun working as fashion models or as models in commercials, "modestly dressed and with faces obscured."¹⁹ Apparently, while certain rabbis approved the appearance of such models, this permission was contested by others (yet a third group gave their approval on condition that the advertisements be published only in magazines aimed at female readers). Incidents such as this illustrate the triple patriarchal gaze directed at women's bodies. First, capitalist market forces elicit visual attention to women's bodies in order to sell goods and services. Second, ultra-Orthodox men "debate" whether it is appropriate for women to model, and if so, exactly how much and what parts of their bodies can be exposed. Finally, the secular press describes the matter in detail, complete with photos of alluring women with faces purposely blurred (presumably to disguise their identity), wearing ostensibly modest but subtly provocative clothing.

The next incident to be described in this context highlights the legitimization of voyeurism in both secular and religious "investigations" of women's bodies. Secular newspapers from early December 1996 carried headlines on the order of the following (from *Maariv*): "Rabbi Catches Married Ultra-Orthodox Woman Alone with a Building Renovator." This headline draws the reader's attention to the *profession* of the man and to the *religious status* of the women. The first line of the article reveals that the building contractor was an Arab—on the face of it, a fact that surely should have merited at least a subhead. But this detail, even in Israel's highly ethnically polarized society, was apparently regarded as substantially less newsworthy than the woman's religious background.

The second paragraph of the article offers other crucial details to the (secular) reader: "Until she fell in love, the woman made a point of dressing modestly: long dresses and sleeves that hid every inch of her body, with a scarf covering her hair." Yet once she entered into her love affair, "during the hours in which her husband was busy at prayer, she changed her outward appearance to the point at which she was unrecognizable. A miniskirt and black stockings instead of her old clothes." In contrast to the detailed attention to the woman's clothes and appearance is the absence of any physical description of her male lover or her husband.

The climax of the story is, of course, the moment that the woman is found out. Apparently, her husband's brother saw her dressed in her "brazen clothing" and told his rabbi, at which point,

in a deserted place, at the exit from the city, the naked truth [*haemet ha'erumah*] was revealed: the rabbi peeked through the window of the . . . truck and discovered the pious woman and her lover engaged in intimacy that left no room for the imagination.

After a police chase (the police thought the Arab had abducted the woman) and some clarifications at the police station, the contractor "was allowed to return home in

peace. Her return was different. Her husband left the house and announced that he would see her at the rabbinate [for divorce proceedings]."²⁰

Dominant in this story is the theme of a woman's body as dangerous in its vulnerability. Even her long dresses and hair coverings could not keep the woman from romantic involvement with an Arab building contractor. In this case, the danger was twofold. First, she brought peril upon her lover, who wound up being chased and interrogated by the police, a situation of real and recognizable danger for Arab men in Israel. Second, as an ultra-Orthodox woman—that is, one whose body is especially inscribed as a faithful vehicle of the patriarchal collectivity—the wife, by engaging in clandestine extramarital relations with a man whose identity placed him outside the Jewish collectivity, endangered the “purity” of the collective future in a newsworthy fashion. Having betrayed the patriarchal trust, the woman in this story became a legitimate object of public scrutiny both at the hands of the rabbis and by the secular press. Note that even *Maariv* does not comment on the voyeurism of the rabbi.

To a large extent, modesty among ultra-Orthodox women has become an especially controversial issue because powerful fashion and advertising industries within the capitalist economy have penetrated even the most religiously homogenous social enclaves. Among other things, accelerated attention to women's dress in the ultra-Orthodox community gives ritual expression to a sense of embattlement in the face of the global economy. Religious authorities obsessively monitor women's clothing because capitalism construes women's bodies as a site for spending money, whereas ultra-Orthodox Judaism construes them as a site for genetic continuity. Thus, the spate of burnings of bus-station shelters (which featured billboard advertising) in Jerusalem by ultra-Orthodox men a few years ago reflected their fury at the public display of *pictures* of women that were introduced by representatives of the capitalist economy. Their willingness to resort to violence even against pictorial representations of women suggests the extent to which the female body has been turned into a battlefield.

A key symbolic expression of female gendering in Jewish culture is *nidah*, or menstrual impurity. Traced back to biblical law (Lev. 15–19), Jewish tradition has developed a complex set of rules controlling the behavior of menstruating and postpartum women. According to Jewish law, women are impure during menstruation and for seven subsequent days, following which married women ceremonially immerse in a ritual bath (*mikveh*) before resuming sexual relations with their husbands. A bride just before her wedding, following the same rules, also undergoes ritual immersion.

The notion of purity is, in Clifford Geertz's terms, a “thick” concept in Jewish culture. Before the destruction of the Temple in Jerusalem in the year 70 CE, the laws of *nidah* and *mikveh* were part of a complex of purity laws having to do primarily with the Temple cult. With the destruction of the Temple, most of these laws became irrelevant. Alone among the purity laws, those concerned with menstruation and childbirth remained in practice. It can be argued that some of the ritual and legal attention that had formerly been focused upon the Temple was transferred to women's bodies, which became, in a sense, a symbol of the Temple.²¹ Intense concern with women's menstrual purity became a hallmark of Jewish identity and religiosity.

As with the discourse around women's attire and public presence, the *mikveh* ritual sequence presents women as simultaneously dangerous and endangered. Counselors for brides at Israeli *mikvehs* often describe menstruation as a wound in the

womb that takes seven days to heal (coinciding with the seven postmenstrual days during which women are required to check internally for signs of blood). Inbal Cicurel has found that the counselors, at least in Beersheba, make a point of warning of the dangers of uterine cancer and “tell the women that their husbands would not be able to carry the burden of a wife with cancer and thus by not keeping [the laws of *nidah*], they may lose [their husbands] as well”—an argument that plays upon women’s biological “inferiority” as well as their social vulnerability.²² Similarly, according to Cicurel, the women who regularly go to the mikveh tell stories to illustrate how infringement of the *nidah* laws can endanger others. Negligence in these matters is reported to have caused accidents, in some cases fatal, to husbands and children. Conversely, proper (supervised) use of the mikveh can save lives. Ayelet Kaveh heard women at a mikveh in Ramat Gan tell stories of a soldier miraculously saved in battle because his mother immersed in the mikveh, and of a young girl unharmed in a fall from a tall building for the same reason.²³ The pamphlets available to women at the ritual baths emphasize that women’s bodies in their “natural” (that is, nonpurified) state endanger men and the future of the collectivity, whereas purity protects them.

The significance of women’s bodies for the collectivity is underscored by the obligatory immersion of brides prior to the wedding ceremony. Current Israeli law does not recognize civil marriages (unless performed abroad), and religious ceremonies are conducted only by religious officials selected and supervised by the state. All Jews who wish to be legally married in Israel are required to participate in a range of ritual practices, even if many couples find some or all of them meaningless or even offensive. Perhaps the most contentious ritual demand is for brides to bring a note from the mikveh attendant to the officiating rabbi attesting to their ritual purity. Through this practice, the religious establishment, empowered by the state, expresses interest in and control over their bodies.²⁴

Many modern brides are made uncomfortable by the mikveh attendant who, before supervising her immersion in the mikveh, asks her numerous questions regarding the date of her last menstrual period; whether she has performed the twice-daily internal self-checks for any sign of blood during the seven days starting from the end of her period; and whether she has thoroughly cleaned her body (including eyes, ears, nose, teeth, navel, and hair) during the preimmersion bath.

Here is how one secular woman describes her prenuptial mikveh encounter:

It was the most humiliating experience of my life. I felt like a baboon—when the attendant picked hair off my back [hair on the body constitutes an impediment to full immersion]—I felt as though I was in a concentration camp. I felt like a baboon in a concentration camp.

This informant, I believe, did not use the words “concentration camp” lightly—such words are not used lightly in Israeli discourse. Rather, she was expressing her sense of the ritual as particularly coercive and abusive.

In addition to state involvement, among certain ethnic groups (primarily North African) a traditional prenuptial gathering at the mikveh provides an opportunity for the mother of the groom (as the representative of her husband’s lineage) to check the bride—making sure that she is physically normal, reasonably attractive, and capable

of providing healthy offspring for the groom's family. As one elderly Moroccan rabbi put it:

It is written in the Mishnah [Ketubot 7:8] that they bring the relatives of the groom to check the bride, to see that she doesn't have any defect. . . . They want to know and check the merchandise [*sekhora*]. We are not fools. Sometimes there is an argument. But if people understand the halakhah, they take it in the correct spirit. . . . The bride shouldn't get angry, it is written in the Mishnah to check the bride.

Young secular Israeli women are inclined to believe that control over one's body should be vested in the individual rather than in the kin group, and many therefore find the mother-in-law's presence during the ritual immersion intrusive and embarrassing. It is not uncommon to hear brides crying, sulking, or even yelling at the mother-in-law at the mikveh. Similarly, although most of the secular brides who attend the mikveh have opted for a wedding under state auspices, and are thus cognizant that the state has certain requirements not to their personal taste, many still find the obligatory immersion to be especially disturbing. Stories circulate of brides who trick or lie to the mikveh attendant or rabbi, although open rebellion is most rare.

In this discussion of the ritual immersion of brides, we see two powerful social institutions—the state-supported religious establishment and the kin group—intruding upon women's bodies. Perhaps not surprisingly, these institutions regularly come into conflict at the ritual bath. During the course of fieldwork that I carried out in Jerusalem in 1995–1997, I witnessed (and also heard second- and third-hand accounts of) numerous confrontations between mikveh attendants and mothers-in-law. Typically, the attendants endeavored to remove the mother-in-law from the scene of scrutiny. Although in this case the aims of the two institutions seeking to control women's bodies seem quite compatible (both are concerned with the women as bearers of "pure" future generations), their understandings of what constitutes, and who adjudicates, purity do not always coincide.

Abortion Committees: Approval Subject to Examination

The issue of abortion brings to the ritualized control of women's bodies an additional layer of legalized institutionalization. Israel's current abortion law is the product of controversy and compromise between secular and religious political parties, and its many clauses and ambiguities allow—even demand—a detailed and ongoing scrutiny of women's bodies. Unlike American law, which focuses on the status of the fetus as the determinant in allowing or forbidding the termination of a pregnancy, the Israeli legislation focuses upon which women will be permitted to terminate their pregnancies, and under what circumstances. Although conflict concerning women's right to abortion has been more low-key in Israel than in the U.S., the question of whether the state has a legitimate vested interest in women's bodies is ritually reenacted at every inquisitory meeting of the committees that are empowered to grant or deny abortions in Israel.

Abortion is allowed in cases in which the pregnant woman is under 17 or over 40 years of age; when the pregnancy results from relations forbidden under criminal law

(for instance, rape or incest) or from relations out of wedlock; when the continuation of pregnancy is hazardous to the woman's physical or mental health; and finally (the one clause relating directly to the fetus), if the child is likely to be born physically or mentally handicapped. A committee comprised of two doctors and a social worker must decide upon each request for an abortion. One of the committee members must be a woman; in most cases, she is the social worker, and thus has the lowest status of the three.

My discussion here draws upon research carried out from 1986 to 1988 by Delila Amir and Orly Biniamin, who interviewed 29 social workers serving on 13 of the 19 abortion approval committees active at the time of their study. According to Amir and Biniamin, although it is not required by law, women requesting abortions are routinely required to meet with a social worker prior to appearing before the committee. They are also told to fill out a detailed questionnaire covering many aspects of their lives and reproductive histories. According to the researchers, "nearly half the social workers reported that they found it important to *examine* the details of the abortion candidate's life, the circumstances of the specific pregnancy and the reasons that it is unwanted."²⁵ In the case of 11 out of the 13 committees, all abortion candidates were required to appear personally before the committee, even though the law demands only that the committee meet with women for whom the requested abortion is not approved.

Although the law neither requires nor even mentions it, women appearing before the committee are asked questions and are then "educated" about the use of contraception: "In this forum, intimate details of her life are again *exposed* and she has to repeat her description of the circumstances of her pregnancy and the reasons for its being defined as 'unwanted.'"²⁶ One social worker explained that "she [the candidate] must also undergo a gynecological *examination* because it is her pregnancy, and she must take responsibility for it."²⁷ In Amir and Biniamin's description of the approval process, the word "examine" is used repeatedly: "The social worker *examines* the extent of the woman's determination to forgo the pregnancy," and "she *examines* the candidate's eligibility."²⁸ Moreover, "the *probing for information* usually focuses on the circumstances under which the pregnancy developed."²⁹ And as one of the social workers noted, "if the woman doesn't cooperate, I explain to her that for her own good, it is best that she tell the whole picture."³⁰

In line with Michel Foucault's analysis of power and knowledge, Amir and Biniamin see the approval procedure as a control mechanism: "This is a clear case of 'discourses concerning sex . . . as the exercise of power itself. . . .'"³¹ The ritual aspect of the approval process becomes even clearer when we understand that almost all requests for abortions are granted. As Amir and Biniamin explain, "the low rate of refusals underscores [that] . . . it is the right to choose, and not the right to an abortion, which is taken away from the Israeli woman."³² In fact, social workers explain that they almost always encourage the committees to grant first requests. Subsequent requests, in contrast, may be denied as a punishment for disregarding the committee's advice on the proper use of contraception.³³ In other words, the "bad" woman is one who exercises agency (albeit the not very useful agency of rejecting contraceptive devices) and thus resists her construction as an object of state-defined sexual hygiene. (In fact, one suspects that in this case the real competition is not *with* the woman but

over the woman: between the patriarchal state that demands compliance with its notions of appropriate sexuality and the patriarchal husband who demands unrestricted access to his wife's body.)

In short, not only is Israel's abortion law framed in such a way as to demand a certain degree of scrutiny of women who request abortions, but the actual implementation of the law involves further elaboration of detailed and ritualized examination of women's bodies, motives, and souls. As in other examples discussed in this essay, the near negligible protest regarding the intrusive (and physically invasive) scrutiny of women's bodies suggests that this sort of procedure is in some way experienced as "fitting" a broadly consensual metadiscourse. While sustained comparison is outside the scope of this essay, I would emphasize that patriarchal control takes different forms in other cultures. In the United States, for example, the structuring of the abortion law is fundamentally different than in Israel (less attention is given to the status of the pregnant woman), yet firebombings of abortion clinics, harassment of women seeking abortions, and even shootings of abortion providers have become commonplace events.

The Women of the Wall

In the case of the Women of the Wall, women emerge strongly both as actors in the conflict and as the battlefield on which conflict is enacted. Perhaps even more clearly than in the previous cases, in the discourse surrounding the Women of the Wall, it is almost impossible to distinguish between the demonization of women's bodies as an end in itself, and demonization as a means of accomplishing other aims—in this instance, the ultra-Orthodox control of a national holy site.

The Western Wall, a remnant of the Jerusalem Temple complex that was destroyed almost 2,000 years ago, is commonly believed by Jews to be the holiest site on earth. Before the destruction of the Temple, the priestly cult was centered in that area. To this day, written petitions to God are placed between the cracks of the stone wall, presumably implying that God is in some way especially present there. In contemporary Israel, the Wall is not only a religious but a national symbol. Film footage of the recapture of the Wall during the Six-Day War is often shown on television, for instance, and each year newly trained IDF paratroopers are sworn in at dramatic ceremonies held at the Wall.

The paved area in front of the Wall is divided by a barrier that separates the men's section from the women's section, as is customary in Orthodox synagogues. On the men's side, one commonly finds individual men praying, alongside *minyanim*, or prayer quorums comprised of ten adult men. On the women's side, one sees only individual women praying, in keeping with the traditional Jewish notion that men constitute the public community, whereas women remain private individuals.

The story of the Women of the Wall began on December 2, 1988, when a group of approximately 100 women participants in the First International Jewish Feminist Conference in Jerusalem held a prayer service at the Western Wall. American-born women for the most part, they were accustomed to the more egalitarian religious practices that characterize American Judaism. They went to the Wall holding a Torah scroll

(traditionally read only by men), with several of the women wearing *talitot* (prayer shawls) and many wearing *kipot* (skullcaps). The group entered the women's section and proceeded to conduct a communal prayer service. This provoked a violent verbal and physical response on both sides of the divider. Following the attack, the women announced their intention of returning to the Wall on the first day of each new month (Rosh Hodesh).³⁴ There followed a series of incidents in which the women were subject to attack, after which they sought a court order demanding, among other things, police protection. The case is still pending, having been in and out of Israeli courts and government committees for more than a decade.

The main combatants in this episode have been the Women of the Wall and the religious establishment (including the Ministry of Religious Affairs, the rabbi with jurisdiction over the Wall, and the two chief rabbis). Still, secular newspaper reporters, editors, and other public figures have also had their say. Interestingly, their stance has not been overly sympathetic to the Women of the Wall, whose perceived attempt to appropriate a state symbol—an ancient wall that bolsters the authenticity not only of religious but also of national identity—has alienated Israelis of almost all political persuasions.

I have traced the story of the Women of the Wall elsewhere.³⁵ What is of interest here is the rhetoric that has been used by those who oppose the women's presence at the Wall. This multifarious rhetoric has included a reiterated theme of corporeality and frequent reference to subthemes of purity and pollution, modesty and immodesty. The very presence of the Women at the Wall, it seems, is polluting and immodest.

Indeed, among the insults hurled at the women were the terms “pigs,” “polluted,” “prostitutes,” and “Gentiles” (*goyot*). The *New York Times* of February 12, 1988, quoted Yehudah Meir Getz (the late, state-appointed rabbi in charge of the Wall) as saying that “a woman carrying a Torah is like a pig at the Western Wall.” This kind of comment is not lightly made: pigs in the Jewish cultural imagination are not merely nonkosher, they symbolize all that is polluted and non-Jewish. According to an article in *Yedioth Ahronoth*, ultra-Orthodox women screamed, “Nazis, go to monasteries and have Christian babies there!”³⁶ And when Yael Dayan toured the site of the Wall along with two other women Knesset members, ultra-Orthodox Jews hurled the epithet “Arafat's prostitute” at her.³⁷

On a number of occasions, ultra-Orthodox women have torn off the hair coverings worn by some of the Women of the Wall. This is a significant act of exposing a woman in a manner reminiscent of the biblical *sotah* ceremony in which women accused of adultery were uncovered and “tested” by means of the bitter waters (see the epigraph).³⁸

The central place of bodily discourse in the conflict at the Wall is brought home in the headline of an opinion piece by Yisrael Eichler, an unofficial spokesman of the ultra-Orthodox community in Jerusalem, in *Yedioth Ahronoth* of November 17, 1996: “No One Prevents Anyone Else From Praying at the Wall in His Own Fashion. But the Wall is the Last Place to Carry Out a Battle for the Right of a Woman to Wear a Tallit, Read from the Torah, Wear a Kipah, and Grow a Beard.” Eichler's assertion points to the underlying corporeality of the dispute by “naturalizing” gender roles via reference to the body. Significantly, the text of the piece begins with a discussion of the struggle of the Jewish people to gain control over the Wall, amid the continuing Arab threat to Jewish sovereignty. “Despite [this threat],” Eichler writes, “several

women are of the opinion that this is the place and time to declare a subculture war for the desecration of the holiness of the Western Wall." For Eichler, the Women of the Wall are both "unnatural" (beard-growing) and dangerous to Jewish sovereignty over the most sacred place on earth—two accusations that repeatedly intertwine in Israeli gendered discourse.³⁹

The conflict in the case of the Women of the Wall can be understood in part as affirming cultural conceptualizations of women (especially those seeking to redefine gender roles) as irredeemably corporeal and dangerous. During the sometimes violent confrontations at the Wall, solid citizens (not criminals) castigated women's "betrayal" of the state in often sexual terms, implying that their sexuality was somehow tied into the common good, and as such was a legitimate subject for scrutiny and debate.

Women in Combat Positions: Endangered and Dangerous

The final situation to which I turn moves away from both religious and ritual settings. As such, it demonstrates the extent to which the metadiscourse revealed in this essay reaches into even the most unexpected—and secular—corners of Israeli culture.

The issue of women serving in combat positions in the IDF has long been a matter of controversy, at times even entering into the judicial arena.⁴⁰ As in the case of the Women of the Wall, the issue is less one of institutional competition (although the ultra-Orthodox political parties have opposed women's serving in the IDF even in noncombat positions), and more one of conflicting perceptions: Are women primarily *agents* involved in the process of defining and defending the state, or are they primarily *objects* to be defined and defended by the state?

Arguments advanced against women serving in combat positions are consistently corporeal in nature. The discursive repertoire includes the claims that women are not physically strong enough; that their behavior or skills are erratic because of their menstrual cycle; and that it is not worth investing in women's training because they marry, become pregnant, or leave military service earlier than men (a condition that is institutionalized via the shorter length of compulsory service for women). Yet another claim that has been made more recently is that allowing women to train together with men may lead to romantic involvements, to the detriment of the group as a whole.⁴¹

None of these arguments, however, carries the cultural weight of an issue that is rarely mentioned explicitly: the fear that women in combat, if captured by enemy soldiers, could be raped and impregnated by the enemy. Moreover, were women to be captured, males forces would have to be sent in to rescue the women, risking their own lives in the process.

It is significant that the validity of this particular argument is almost never debated, and the issue itself is never mentioned in official government documents. Instead, it is hinted at in most discussions of women in the army. According to Anne R. Bloom, "the prevailing explanation of the IDF's decision to keep women out of actual combat is fear of their being taken prisoner and of possible mistreatment and torture at the hands of the enemy. Yet documentation regarding such incidents is difficult to find."⁴² Orna Sasson-Levy, an expert on gender and the Israeli military, explains that "the fear

that women soldiers will be raped in prison, or even worse, will become pregnant by the enemy, is a very strong theme in the public discourse. I hear it again and again when I lecture about these issues, and in my interviews with soldiers.”⁴³ In an interview with the *Jerusalem Post* on the question of women becoming fighter pilots, Lt. Yael Rom-Finkelstein declared that “we have to prove that women can [fly combat missions], but you have to weigh the cost.” This, according to the newspaper, was a “veiled reference to the high ransom price for women taken captive and other dangers for women in combat”⁴⁴—even the newspaper refrained from using the term “rape.”

The theme of the capture and rape of women echoes one of the mythic themes introduced in the epigraph to this essay: Dinah went out into the land, not only bringing rape upon herself and endangering her menfolk, but also forcing them to stoop to the “unmanly” behavior of “unmanning” (that is, circumcising) the enemy before killing them and thus avenging their honor. One wonders whether the absence of official documentation for this widespread explanation for keeping women out of combat positions reflects a reluctance to bring to light the metamythic discourse of women’s bodies as both vulnerable and dangerous, especially since public discussion could spark further legal challenges on the part of feminist organizations.

A complementary discourse regarding women’s corporeality in the IDF has been analyzed by Edna Levy-Schreiber, who focuses on the pictorial representation of women soldiers in the press. Levy-Schreiber notes that women soldiers are generally pictured in attractive poses, “neatly dressed, well coiffed, often wearing makeup and almost always smiling”⁴⁵—in other words, groomed for the scrutiny of the Israeli public. It can be added, moreover, that such photos often portray women under the explicit ritual scrutiny of male officers (at graduation ceremonies, military parades, and the like), which calls to mind the double scrutiny of the bodies of ultra-Orthodox women depicted earlier in this essay. Levy-Schreiber also notes that the IDF spokesman’s office has a “history of directing photographers to photo opportunities of women soldiers in scantily-clad pseudo-porn poses.”⁴⁶ The public construction of women soldiers as “sexy” and beautiful objects undoubtedly bolsters collective fears regarding the danger of capture and rape. Juxtaposing rape with feminine beauty or sexuality contributes to the deceptive patriarchal claim that women in some way elicit their own rape.

Conclusion

The situations and incidents outlined in this essay reveal a culture deeply concerned both with the (im)purity, (im)modesty, vulnerability, sexuality, and danger inherent in women’s corporeality, and with techniques for channeling women’s corporeality to serve the various (often contradictory and competing) interests of assorted patriarchal institutions. The two “secular” examples—the rituals of the abortion committees and the debates over women in combat roles—are especially revealing. In these instances, stripped of the distracting trappings of mythic time, ritual space, and religious rhetoric that cloud the other examples, we find scrutiny of women’s bodies in its most direct form. The egregious “examination” of women by the abortion committees is

part of an Israeli cultural metascript in which such scrutiny is regarded as entirely legitimate. Although the state grants almost all abortion requests, this happens only after the woman is firmly reminded that she does not have rights over her own body. In the controversies surrounding women's service in combat units, the most explicit statement of the patriarchal metadiscourse of women's bodies is sounded: words such as "modest" and "pure" are replaced with the more explicit "our"—"our" women should only be impregnated with "our" sperm.

In what is perhaps an apocryphal story, in the wake of a series of rapes in Tel-Aviv, a proposal was once made in the Knesset to place a curfew on women. Golda Meir—the only woman in Israel's history to reach the top of the political pyramid—is said to have countered with a suggestion that men be placed under curfew. Golda's counterproposal can be seen as a fleeting (and perhaps impulsive) attempt to problematize the scrutiny and control of women's bodies that, in most cases, is simply taken for granted. One wonders what Golda Meir, with a few decades of feminist education, might have to say today about "modesty scarves," "bearded" women at the Wall, and the delicate sensitivities of Ministry of Transportation driving testers.

Notes

A more detailed discussion of the issues raised in this essay can be found in my recent book, *What Makes Women Sick: Maternity, Modesty, and Militarism in Israeli Society*. (Hanover, N.H.: 2000). Research for this essay benefited from the active help and encouragement of the Israel Women's Network and the use of the Network's library and archives. My sincerest thanks to Anat Hoffman for making her archives on the Women of the Wall available to me. I also wish to thank Judith Lorber, Ilsa Glazer, Bonna Haberman and Eyal Ben-Ari for their reading and comments on various drafts.

1. See Judith Butler, *Bodies that Matter: On the Discursive Limits of Sex* (New York: 1993).

2. See Mary Daly, *Gyn/Ecology: The Metaethics of Radical Feminism* (Boston: 1978).

3. Bruce Lincoln, *Discourse and the Construction of Society: Comparative Studies of Myth, Ritual, and Classification* (New York: 1989).

4. Much of the discussion in this essay reflects Michel Foucault's understanding of the relationship between sexuality and power. See especially his *Power/Knowledge: Selected Interviews and Other Writings, 1972–1977*, trans. Colin Gordon (New York: 1978); idem, *History of Sexuality*, vol. 2, trans. Robert Hurley (New York: 1978).

5. See Nira Yuval-Davis, *Gender and Nation* (London: 1997), 39.

6. This essay is part of a larger project in which I develop more fully the mythic themes interwoven with contemporary Israeli discourses concerning gender.

7. Exploitation of women's bodies to sell products is a characteristic of 20th-century capitalism worldwide. The particular Israeli twist is to regard such advertising as contributing to the Israeli economy. The Gottex bathing suit company, known for its borderline pornographic poses of bikini-clad models, is often held up as an example of a successful Israeli company that brings revenue and tax dollars into the national economy.

8. I thank Ilsa Glazer for helping me tighten up this argument.

9. See Zvi Sobel and Benjamin Beit-Halahmi (eds.), *Tradition, Conflict, Innovation: Jewishness and Judaism in Contemporary Israel* (Albany: 1981).

10. For an overview of the issues, see Barbara Swirski and Marilyn P. Safir, "Living in a Jewish State: National, Ethnic and Religious Implications," in *Calling the Equality Bluff: Women in Israel*, ed. Barbara Swirski and Marilyn P. Safir (New York: 1993), 7–17.

11. See Suzannah Heschel (ed.), *On Being a Jewish Feminist* (New York: 1983).

12. In order to avoid making this paper unwieldy, I have not cited multiple newspaper references to the same issue; interested readers can consult other newspapers of the same day or week to get somewhat different accounts.

13. See, for example, *Maariv*, 22 Sept. 1996.

14. Previously, women were given such scarves only at the entrance to the plaza immediately adjacent to the Wall.

15. The anecdotes cited in this section are a small sample of dozens of similar modesty demands reported in the press over the past few years.

16. See *Maariv*, 13 May 1998.

17. *Jerusalem Post*, 13 June 1997.

18. *Maariv*, 30 Sept. 1996, emphasis added.

19. *Yedioth Ahronoth*, 18 Dec. 1997.

20. *Maariv*, 1 Dec. 1996.

21. For a fuller discussion of this idea, see Tirzah Meacham, "Critical Edition of Mishnah Masechet Niddah with Commentaries upon Nusach and Chapters on the Development of the Halacha and on Realia" (Ph.D. diss., The Hebrew University, 1989).

22. See Inbal Cicurel, *The Rabbinate versus Jewish Women: The Mikvah as a Contested Domain* (unpublished ms.).

23. See Ayelet Kaveh, *Keeping the Laws of Family Purity* (unpublished ms.), 10.

24. I suspect that the state—at least in the form of members of the Knesset—actually has little or no knowledge of what goes on at the mikvehs. The coercive nature of the prenuptial mikveh immersion is a "minor" byproduct of the law that gives religious authorities (Jewish, Christian, and Muslim) a monopoly over marriage and divorce in Israel. This law is a carry-over from the period before the establishment of the state.

25. Delila Amir and Orly Beniamin, "Abortion Approval as a Ritual of Symbolic Control," in *The Criminalization of a Woman's Body*, ed. Clarice Feinman (New York: 1992), 14, emphasis added.

26. *Ibid.*, emphasis added.

27. *Ibid.*, 15, emphasis added.

28. *Ibid.*, emphasis added.

29. *Ibid.*, emphasis added.

30. *Ibid.*, 16.

31. Michel Foucault, *The History of Sexuality* (New York: 1979), quoted in *ibid.*, 17.

32. *Ibid.*, 20–21.

33. *Ibid.*, 19.

34. Of course, only those women living in Israel could actually return to the Wall each month. These women, however, receive ongoing support from their American counterparts.

35. See Susan Sered, "Women and Religious Change in Israel: Rebellion or Revolution?" *Sociology of Religion* 58, no. 1 (1997), 1–24.

36. *Yedioth Ahronoth*, 21 March 1989.

37. *Maariv*, 11 Nov. 1996.

38. The spectacle of ultra-Orthodox women tearing off the clothes of "immodest" secular women has also become a recurrent theme in recent years; see *Maariv*, 18 May 1997.

39. Bonna Haberman, a member of Women of the Wall who has written and spoken fairly extensively about the case, noted in private conversation a development in the responses to the Women of the Wall over the years. In the beginning, she told me, the women were subjected to some rather nasty curses (for example, "You should never have children!"). Later responses, however, have been more subtle and intellectually engaged.

40. For detailed discussion of this issue, see "Eyal Ben-Ari and Edna Levy-Schreiber, "Body-building, Character-building, and Nation-building: Gender and Military Service in Israel," on pp. 171–190 in this volume. As noted there, a December 1999 amendment to the National Service Law modified the law to grant women equal access to most combat positions. While the results of this amendment are not yet apparent, feminist organizations and activists have expressed some doubt regarding the amendment's potential to truly reorganize gender relations in the IDF.

41. See the article by Avirama Golan in *Ha'aretz*, 27 Feb. 1997.
42. Anne R. Bloom, "Women in the Defense Forces," in Swirski and Safir (eds.), *Calling the Equality Bluff*, 137.
43. Correspondence with Anne R. Bloom, June 1998.
44. *Jerusalem Post*, 26 June 1998.
45. See Edna Levy-Schreiber, "Heroes and Helpmates: Militarism, Gender, and National Belonging in Israel" (Ph.D. diss, University of California, Irvine, 1998), 182.
46. *Ibid.*, 213.

Jewish Women in Transition: A Comparative Sociodemographic Perspective

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Over recent decades, extraordinary changes have occurred worldwide with respect to women's role in society. This is true concerning actual transformations in demographic, socioeconomic, and cultural trends; and probably even truer regarding the nature of public discourse. The key issue at stake in the assessment of gender in society concerns the amount of equity, if not equality, achieved by women in comparison with men. In this regard, innovative and sometimes provocative feminist ideas, claims, and strategies that assertively stressed the issue of equality—which were once barely at the margins of acceptance—have become part of mainstream discourse.¹ There is, for example, the establishment of academic programs of women's studies, an intriguing symptom of this legitimacy, as it indicates that the position of women in society can be conceptually equated with that of regional cultures or minorities.

Though inconsistent with the fact that women in all modern societies constitute the majority of the total population,² acknowledging the specific character of women as a “minority” with regard to history, social structure, and subculture may be analytically helpful in the process of monitoring their path toward socioeconomic parity with the pacesetter “majority”—men. Since demographic, socioeconomic, and cultural patterns may evolve differently among specific groups relative to the majority, and among single individuals relative to the average of their reference group, the concept of *transition* may best apply to the social study of women. A transition is the often prolonged process of passage from an initial and rather stable situation to a different one (which may also become stabilized in the long run). From this perspective, assessing the position of women in society requires, among other things, a judgment on whether observed sociodemographic differences are better characterized as *lags of variable magnitude* over time in the framework of a general process of convergence, or as *insurmountable diversity* that is bound to persist or even increase.

To the extent that epochal changes are revolutionizing the status of women in the more developed societies, their impact on world Jewry can hardly be more dramatic. Moreover, the analysis of such transitions may have an added urgency in the Jewish context. This is because the debate about the status of Jewish women also involves consideration of their normative role in the transmission of group identity. Since traditional Judaism demarcates different developmental paths for women and men, any

evaluation of the way that Jewish women participate in the household, in the marketplace, and in the formation of collective culture and awareness must take into account both the more traditional and the broader contemporary Jewish contexts.

A growing body of scholarly literature in recent years has examined the status and role of Jewish women. There have been broad sociohistorical evaluations of the challenges facing those who attempt to achieve a synthesis between the preservation of a distinctively Jewish lifestyle and full participation in contemporary society;³ detailed analyses of life-cycle, socioeconomic, and cultural experiences in different contexts, with special attention to the situation in the United States and in Israel;⁴ reviews of women's organizations and the part that they play within and outside the Jewish community;⁵ and attempts to evaluate how the organized Jewish community might cope with various emerging challenges.⁶

This article more modestly endeavors to review what has actually happened in recent years—"recent" being defined as the span of the last generation or, more broadly, the 40 years between the late 1950s to the late 1990s—regarding the presence and role of women in several critical processes that have affected world Jewish populations and communities. The following is an obviously selective review of trends in the areas of educational attainment and employment, marriage and fertility, and Jewish identification. It provides a series of empirically measured indicators as background to the more focused essays appearing earlier in this symposium. The emphasis here is on data comparisons by gender and on gender-specific indicators of achievement. Reported observations relate to major Jewish communities in the diaspora; to the Jewish component of Israeli society; and to developments within the Jewish population as compared with more general trends in their different countries. Although most of this article deals with indicators at the individual level, one section attempts to provide a more global perspective of the context within which contemporary Jewish women live.⁷

Training, Jobs, and "Invisible Work"

Educational Attainment

Probably the most impressive change in the status of women has occurred in the area of education, where women have almost entirely closed the once wide gender gap, in some instances even surpassing men's educational attainments. Changes among the Jewish populations in the United States and Israel over the last 30 to 40 years are most illustrative in this respect. In the U.S. in 1957, among the Jewish population aged 25 and over, 23 percent of women had studied for at least some time in college, and 10 percent had studied in college for four years or more, versus 13 and 6 percent, respectively, for all U.S. women. The figures for Jewish men were 38 percent with some college studies, and 26 percent with four years or more of college.⁸ In 1990, focusing on the group aged 30–39, 85 percent of Jewish women had some college studies and 63 percent had a college degree, while 29 percent had gone on to study on the graduate level.⁹ Among white women generally, 46 percent had studied at all in college, and 24 percent had a college degree. Among Jewish men in the same age group,

87 percent had been to college and 69 percent had a college degree (37 percent had studied at the graduate level); the comparable figures for white men as a whole were 52 percent (some college) and 31 percent with a college degree. Hence, over the last 30 years, Jewish women not only maintained their edge in comparison with white American women generally, but very significantly surpassed the average educational attainment of white American men. Relative to Jewish men, the conspicuous educational gap of 1957 had virtually disappeared by 1990 in terms of a college education, although the accomplishment of Jewish women at the level of graduate studies still lagged behind that of Jewish men by about one fifth. The high proportion of Jewish graduates in the U.S. is most exceptional and, *inter alia*, indicates a high degree of professional specialization, which in turn underlies significant developments in the occupational domain (see below).¹⁰

In examining the evolution of educational attainment in Israel, it is worth recalling that heterogeneous waves of immigration, especially since 1948, brought to the country a large number of individuals with little or no formal education.¹¹ Consequently, in 1961, Israel's Jewish population had an education lag not only relative to the Jewish population in the U.S., but also relative to the total U.S. population. Among Israeli Jewish women aged 30 and over in 1961, 7 percent had completed at least 13 years of study (the equivalent of some college), and 2 percent had studied 16 years or more (implying the attainment of a university degree). Among Jewish men, the respective figures were 14 and 6 percent.¹² In 1997, once again narrowing the analysis to the younger and better educated segment of the Jewish adult population—in this case, those aged 25 to 34—54 percent of Jewish women had attained at least 13 years of study, and 24 percent had 16 years of study or more; among men, the respective figures were 50 and 24 percent.¹³

Table 1. Jews with Higher Education in the U.S. and Israel, ca. 1960 and 1990 (percent)

Educational attainment	ca. 1960			ca. 1990		
	Women	Men	Women % difference ^a	Women	Men	Women % difference ^a
U.S. ^b						
Studied in college	23	38	−41	85	87	−2
College completed	10	26	−62	63	69	−9
Graduate studies				29	37	−21
Israel ^c						
Studied 13 + years	7	14	−49	54	50	+9
Studied 16 + years	2	6	−67	24	24	+2

^aRelative difference (in percent) between figures for women and men in the two previous columns is computed from percentages not rounded to the unit as in previous columns.

^bFor the years 1957 and 1990, respectively. For 1957, figures are for those aged 25 and over; "college completed" refers to persons who have completed four or more years of college. For 1990, figures are for individuals aged 30–39.

^cFor the years 1961 and 1997, respectively. For 1961, figures are for individuals aged 30 and over; for 1997, those aged 25–34.

Sources: Goldstein, "Socioeconomic Differentials among Religious Groups in the United States"; idem, "Profile of American Jewry"; Central Bureau of Statistics, *Language, Literacy and Educational Attainment*, part 1, *Population and Housing Census 1961*, vol. 15; idem, *Statistical Abstract of Israel*, vol. 49.

Jews in Israel had therefore achieved educational levels quite similar to the white population in the United States, though still distant from the unique educational achievements of U.S. Jews. Moreover, the large gender gap in education that had existed in 1961 not only had disappeared by 1997, but younger adult women had achieved greater exposure to higher education than males in the comparable age cohort. The significant improvement in Jewish women's educational achievements during the 30 years since around 1960 are summarized in Table 1 (although one must keep in mind the different age definition of the data at the two points in time). The total of individuals with at least some college education increased by 370 percent in the U.S., and by 730 percent (from a much lower starting point) in Israel; the number with advanced college studies increased by 630 percent in the U.S., and by an overwhelming 1,150 percent in Israel. To what extent this achievement was translated into other aspects of status equalization is examined below.

Participation in the Labor Force and Occupational Composition

Between the late 1950s/early 1960s and the 1990s, the weight of Jewish women in the labor force—as of women generally in most of the Western world—increased substantially, as did their specific contribution to various branches of the economy. The following analysis does not address individual occupational mobility but rather compares the same populations at two points in time (of course, very substantial, if not nearly complete, substitution of individuals in the labor force had occurred over time). These changes are best illustrated with regard to the two largest Jewish concentrations in the world, those of the United States and Israel.

In the U.S., the participation of Jewish women in the labor force increased from 31 percent in 1957 (versus 35 percent for the total female population) to 58 percent in 1990 (versus 57 percent for white women generally).¹⁴ In Israel, the number of working women increased from 27 percent in 1960 to 51 percent in 1997. In contrast, the respective figures for Jewish males decreased slightly from 82 to 76 percent in the U.S., and from 78 to 61 percent in Israel. Focusing on peak ages of working activity (which were different in the two countries), 82 percent of Jewish women aged 45–49 in the U.S. were in the labor force in 1990; while for Israel, the figure was 76 percent of those aged 35–44 in 1997.¹⁵

Table 2 reports occupational distributions for men and women in the United States and in Israel over a 40-year period.¹⁶ A significant restructuring of the Jewish labor force occurred as part of more general trends in the labor market of the respective countries—namely, a relative reduction in the share of agriculture and industry, and a large expansion in business, community, and professional services. To better understand the trends in the female labor force, changes among men will be assessed first, since women often tended to replace men in certain spheres while joining them (comparatively later) in other occupational branches, particularly in professional and managerial occupations.

In the U.S. by the end of the 1950s, more than half of all employed Jewish men had attained a comparatively high occupational status as either professionals or as managers and proprietors—more than twice the average share among whites as a whole (55 versus 23 percent, respectively). By 1990, the concentration of Jewish men in the

Table 2. Labor-force Characteristics of Jewish and Total Population, U.S. and Israel, 1957–1997 (percent)

Occupational category	U.S., aged 18+				Israel, aged 15+	
	1957		1990		1961	1997
	Jewish	Total	Jewish	Total	Jewish	Jewish
Women						
Total	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0
Total upper	24.4	17.7	49.1	31.2	24.9	35.5
Professional	15.5	12.2	36.1	15.2	23.1	32.6
Managers and proprietors	8.9	5.5	13.0	16.0	1.8	2.9
Total intermediate	62.9	50.3	47.3	57.8	51.1	50.7
Clerical	43.9	30.3	41.1	41.3	18.9	30.0
Sales	14.4	6.9	^a	^a	8.6	20.7
Service workers	4.6	13.1	6.2	16.5	23.6	^b
Total lower	12.6	32.0	3.6	10.9	24.0	14.0
Crafts, operatives, and unskilled	12.4	28.3	3.6	10.0	15.5	13.4
Agriculture	0.2	3.7	0.0	0.9	8.5	0.6
Men						
Total	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0
Total upper	55.4	23.2	55.7	30.1	16.9	33.3
Professional	20.3	9.9	39.0	15.8	9.7	24.0
Managers and proprietors	35.1	13.3	16.7	14.3	7.2	9.3
Total intermediate	24.4	18.4	29.4	26.4	27.6	24.4
Clerical	8.0	6.9	24.4	17.5	11.6	9.2
Sales	14.1	5.4	^a	^a	8.6	15.2
Service workers	2.3	6.1	5.0	8.9	7.4	^b
Total lower	20.0	58.4	14.9	43.6	55.5	42.4
Crafts, operatives and unskilled	19.8	48.6	14.9	39.4	42.1	39.6
Agriculture	0.2	9.8	0.0	4.2	13.4	2.8
Women % difference^c						
Total upper	–56	–24	–12	+4	+47	+7
Professional	–24	+23	–7	–4	+138	+36
Managers and proprietors	–75	–59	–22	+12	–75	–69
Total intermediate	+158	+173	+61	+119	+85	+108
Total lower	–37	–45	–76	–75	–57	–67

^aIncluded in “clerical.”

^bIncluded in “sales.”

^cRelative difference in percent between figures for women and men in the two upper panels.

Sources: Sidney Goldstein, “Socioeconomic Differentials among Religious Groups in the United States”; idem, “Profile of American Jewry”; Central Bureau of Statistics, *Labour Force*, part 1, *Population and Housing Census 1961*, vol. 9; idem, *Statistical Abstract of Israel*, vol. 49.

upper range of the labor force had not changed, their share continuing to be substantially higher than that of the male population generally (56 versus 30 percent), but a significant transfer had occurred among Jews from managerial to professional occupations (20 percent in the latter category in 1957, versus 39 percent in 1990). At the intermediate occupational level (clerical, sales, and service workers), the share of Jews increased moderately (from 24 to 29 percent), alongside a more significant increase among total whites (from 18 to 26 percent). In contrast, the comparatively low share of Jewish males at the lower echelons of the labor force (crafts, technical jobs, unskilled labor, and agriculture) further declined (from 20 percent in 1957 to 15 percent in 1990), while declines also occurred among the total white population (from 58 to 44 percent).

Changes in the female labor force were even more significant. The share of American Jewish women employed as professionals or as managers and proprietors increased from 24 percent in 1957 to 49 percent in 1990. Jewish concentration in these more prestigious occupational categories significantly strengthened in comparison to the total share of white women, which stood in 1957 at 18 percent and in 1990 at 31 percent. More specifically, the share of Jewish woman professionals (by definition, having academic training) increased from 16 percent in 1957 to 36 percent in 1990, as against a modest rise from 12 to 15 percent, respectively, among total white women. The Jewish presence among total U.S. professionals, much above their share in the total labor force, is therefore even more remarkable among women than among men. Notably, the share of professional Jewish women is much higher than the Jewish share among white professionals in the U.S. In contrast to the trend among Jewish men, the professionalization of women did not occur at the expense of their presence in managerial jobs, which also grew (though much less than among total white women). The proportion of Jewish women employed at the intermediate occupational levels declined from 63 percent in 1957 to 47 percent in 1990, while among all white working women it increased from 50 to 58 percent. At the same time, women tended to be generally less represented as craftspeople, operatives, unskilled workers, or as agricultural workers, their share declining from 13 to 4 percent among Jewish women and from 32 to 11 percent among the total population of white working women.

Trends in Israel were similar, after making due allowance for the significant structural differences that existed between the Jewish labor forces in the two countries at the beginning of the period under consideration. In Israel, the proportion of Jewish managers and proprietors was much lower than in the United States, and the proportion of craftspeople, operatives, and unskilled workers was much higher. Of course, different economic structural characteristics must be expected of a Jewish population constituting a majority in Israel and a minority everywhere else.

In Israel, more women than men continued to be represented in professional occupations, although their edge diminished (23 percent of women versus 10 percent of men in 1961, and 33 versus 24 percent in 1997). Underrepresentation of Jewish women managers and proprietors, however, was striking in Israel: 3 percent in 1997, versus 9 percent of men—as against 13 and 14 percent, respectively, in the U.S. in 1990. The proportion of Israeli Jewish women employed at intermediate occupational levels remained constant between 1961 and 1997 (51 percent), versus a moderate decline among men (from 28 to 24 percent). At the lower occupational levels, the share

Table 3. Women as Percent of Total Employed Jewish Population in Each Occupational Category, U.S. and Israel, ca. 1960 and 1990s

Occupational category	U.S.		Israel	
	1957	1990	1961	1997
Total employed	29	45	26	47
Total upper	15	42	35	48
Professional	24	43	46	54
Managers and proprietors	9	39	8	21
Total intermediate	51	57	40	65
Total lower	20	17	13	22

Source: Computed from Table 2.

of employed women declined from 24 percent in 1961 to 14 percent in 1997, while among men it declined from 56 to 42 percent. These figures attest to the modernization of the Jewish labor force and, more generally, to the declining share in the Israeli economy of agriculture, manufacturing, construction, and transport—against a growing orientation toward high-tech industry and professional services.

In Table 3, the share of women employed is shown as a percent of the total Jewish labor force in the United States and in Israel over a period of more than 30 years. The increased incidence of women in the marketplace followed parallel paths in the two countries as the women's share of the total Jewish labor force increased from 26/29 percent around 1960 to 45/47 percent around 1990. The greatest change occurred at the professional and managerial level. In the U.S., the share of women increased from 24 to 43 percent of all Jewish professionals, and from 9 to 39 percent of all Jewish managers and proprietors. Women strengthened their already dominant share at the intermediate occupational levels (clerical, trade, and services) from 51 to 57 percent of the total, and experienced a moderate decline in their relative share of the lower occupational levels (crafts, technical jobs, unskilled labor, and agriculture) from 20 to 17 percent.

Over a similar 30-year span, the women's share among the professionals in Israel increased from an already high 46 percent to a 54 percent majority; among the managers and proprietors, from 8 to 21 percent; among the intermediate occupational strata, from 40 to 65 percent; and among the lower occupational strata, from 13 to 22 percent. The disproportionate increases at the upper level call for special attention, signifying as they do the massive entry and definitive presence of women at the more educated and decision-empowered end of the labor force. At the same time, women maintain their preponderant role at the functionally important level of clerical and other white-collar auxiliary occupations. Still, due in part to women's later entry and hence lesser seniority in those positions, and in part to the greater frequency of women's part-time employment, their actual income continued to lag behind that of men of comparable background and skills.

It clearly emerges from these analyses that gender gaps in occupational distributions closed considerably during the 30–40 year period under consideration. The actual patterns of change, however, were quite different in the U.S. (which may be con-

Table 4. Indexes of Dissimilarity between Occupational Distributions, U.S. and Israel (men and women, 1957–1997)

Populations compared		Year	Dissimilarity index ^a	% change
U.S., Jewish women	U.S., Jewish men	1957	0.385	
U.S., Jewish women	U.S., Jewish men	1990	0.179	–54
U.S., Total women	U.S., Total men	1957	0.342	
U.S., Total women	U.S., Total men	1990	0.332	–3
Israel, Jewish women	Israel, Jewish men	1961	0.369	
Israel, Jewish women	Israel, Jewish men	1997	0.349	–5
U.S., Jewish women	U.S., Total women	1957	0.194	
U.S., Jewish women	U.S., Total women	1990	0.209	+8
Israel, Jewish women	U.S., Jewish women	ca. 1960	0.190	
Israel, Jewish women	U.S., Jewish women	ca. 1997	0.137	–28
Israel, Jewish women	U.S., Total women	ca. 1960	0.117	
Israel, Jewish women	U.S., Total women	ca. 1990	0.204	+74

^aComputed from four main occupational categories in Table 2: professional; managers and proprietors; total intermediate; total lower.

sidered a trendsetter for smaller Jewish communities in the diaspora) and in Israel (see the lower section of Table 2). In the U.S., Jewish women achieved labor-force characteristics very similar to those of Jewish men by massively moving toward the upper categories of distribution from intermediate and lower categories. In Israel, the advancement of women at the upper professional levels was comparatively slower than among men. Movement away from lower occupational categories was significant, but there was a much greater tendency to stay at the intermediate levels.

The same trends can be expressed by means of dissimilarity indexes that synthetically quantify the difference existing between two populations (see Table 4).¹⁷ Between 1957 and 1990, U.S. Jewish women reduced the occupational gap that separated them from their male peers by 54 percent. In comparison, the reduction of the gender gap in the white labor force as a whole in the U.S. was only 3 percent. Initially, in 1957, gender occupational dissimilarity was greater among Jews than among whites, but in 1990 it was much smaller. U.S. Jewish women also moderately increased their occupational gap as against all working (white) women. The trend toward closing the gender gap evolved quite differently in Israel, where the overall amount of gender occupational dissimilarity in 1961 was quite similar to that found in the United States. By 1997, however, it had decreased by a mere 5 percent. Israeli women thus moved significantly closer to the occupational distribution of total white women in the U.S. At the same time, their occupational dissimilarity vis-à-vis U.S. Jewish women had increased significantly.

Visible and Invisible Work

Although informative, data on labor-force characteristics do not provide a picture of all the different kinds of work that people do. Activities that are not economically rewarded are not usually documented by standard socioeconomic sources. Interesting

Table 5. Time Spent on Major Types of Activity, Jewish Population Aged 14 and Over, Israel 1991–1992

Major types of activity	Women	Men	Women % difference ^a
Total minutes (daily average)	1,440	1,440	
Total %	100.0	100.0	=
Sleeping and personal care	44.7	42.4	+5
Work, total	26.6	26.5	+0
Paid work	8.4	19.4	–57
Unpaid work ^b	18.2	7.1	+155
Leisure ^c	23.2	22.8	+2
Education	4.3	5.2	–17
Religious activity	0.5	2.0	–76
Residual	0.7	1.1	–33

^aRelative difference (in percent) between figures for women and men in the two previous columns.

^bDomestic work, shopping, services, errands, child-care, “helping and volunteering.”

^cEntertainment, socializing, hobbies and sports, television, video and other forms of media and communication, other leisure.

Source: Adapted from Central Bureau of Statistics, *Time Use in Israel, Time Budget Survey, 1991/92*, Table 16.

insights on the whole complex of economically visible and invisible work can, however, be obtained through a series of national surveys of time budgets undertaken around 1990 in Israel and in several other countries.¹⁸ Detailed documentation of the use of time, 24 hours a day, provides important information on the economic and sociocultural habits of the population. Thus, for example, Table 5 presents the distribution of time allocated daily to major types of activities by Jewish women and men in Israel in 1991/1992. The data refer to an average seven-day week measured in daily minutes.

Overall, the greatest amount of time was devoted to sleep and personal care, followed by work, leisure, education, and religious activity. The main gender-related difference concerns the time spent on paid work activity (19.4 percent of average total time for men, versus 8.4 percent for women). This appears to be fully compensated by the time allocated to unpaid work—defined as domestic work, shopping, services, errands, child-care, helping, and volunteering—which accounts for 18.2 percent of total daily time on the average for women, as against 7.1 percent for men. When the two figures for paid and unpaid work are added, the difference between the genders practically disappears: an average of 384 daily minutes of work obtain for women, versus 382 for men. These findings help to clarify the internal articulation of one of the main factors of gender inequality in society—the convention by which certain types of work (mostly performed outside the household) receive monetary compensation, while others (mostly performed inside the household) do not. Other interesting, though not particularly large, differences between the genders in the allocation of time concern the slightly higher share of time devoted by Jewish women in Israel to sleep, personal care, and leisure, in contrast to the greater amount of time devoted by the men to education and religious activity.

By international comparisons, the total paid and unpaid workload of Jewish women

in Israel does not appear to be particularly heavy or skewed to their disadvantage.¹⁹ In the United States (1985), an average of 453 minutes of work time per day were computed for women, versus 428 for men; in Canada (1992), the respective figures were 429 and 430; in the United Kingdom (1985), 413 and 411; in France (1985/1986), 429 and 388; and in Australia (1992), 443 for both sexes. (For more international comparisons of indicators of gender status see below.)

Whereas gender differences with regard to Jewish identification will be discussed below, a question of interest here is whether traditional religious lifestyles are related to significant gender differences in the allocation of time, specifically, in the amount of work. The time budgets of Israeli Jews with regard to paid, unpaid, and total work were compared for four groups of households that were classified according to their self-assessed degree of religiosity as religious (including haredi), traditional-religious, traditional—not so religious, not religious (see Table 6). The same typical relationship between work and gender appeared in each of the groups, namely, women’s predominance in unpaid work and men’s predominance in paid work. It emerged, however, that women’s participation in paid work was more strongly—and negatively—related to their religiosity than that of men. The more religious women, in other words, devoted more time to unpaid work, mainly to child-care (a fact that accords with their larger than average families). When paid and unpaid work time is combined, it appears that the more religious women spent more time working than did the more religious men—377 minutes a day for women, versus 337 for men; and 418 versus 369 minutes, respectively, among those defined as “traditional-religious.” A gender

Table 6. Time Spent Working, by Measure of Religiosity and Gender, Israeli Jewish Population Aged 14 and Over, 1991–1992 (daily average minutes)^a

Measure of religiosity and work status	Women	Men	Women % difference ^b
Religious			
Work, total	377	337	+12
Paid work	82	231	–65
Unpaid work ^c	295	106	+178
Traditional, religious			
Work, total	418	369	+13
Paid work	92	250	–63
Unpaid work ^c	326	119	+174
Traditional, not so religious			
Work, total	392	401	–2
Paid work	109	299	–63
Unpaid work ^c	283	102	+177
Not religious			
Work, total	372	397	–6
Paid work	157	294	–47
Unpaid work ^c	215	103	+109

^aOut of a total of 1,440 minutes per day.

^bRelative difference (in percent) between figures for women and men in the two previous columns.

^cDomestic work, shopping, services, errands, child-care, “helping and volunteering.”

Source: Adapted from Central Bureau of Statistics, *Time Use in Israel, Time Budget Survey 1991/92*, Table 16.

comparison of the less traditional sectors of Israeli society showed an opposite picture—392 minutes of work daily for women, versus 401 for men among those defined as “traditional-not so religious,” and 372 versus 397 minutes, respectively, among the nonreligious. Overall, the substitution of unpaid for paid work shows up much more clearly among women than among men. A comparison of time budgets therefore indicates that, whether or not the result of conscious choice, a more traditional environment appears to lead to less economic equality between the sexes and to a greater relative workload for Jewish women—in Israel, and conceivably elsewhere as well.

Marriage and Child-bearing

Although caution is warranted in drawing inferences about the direction of causation, it is undeniable that changes in women’s labor-force participation, (and, more generally, in their position in the socioeconomic system) have been accompanied by changes in the timing and frequency of certain life-cycle events, particularly marriage and child-bearing. An unprecedented erosion in the conventional roles of marriage and child-bearing has developed alongside the growing involvement of women in the labor force in the economically more developed societies. The following section summarizes recently observed changes among Jewish women in different countries regarding marriage propensities, the choice of partners, and fertility levels.

Changing Patterns of Marriage

While the family has long functioned as the cornerstone of Jewish society, Jews historically anticipated many other social, religious, and ethnic groups in completing the transition from lower to higher ages of marriage, and from higher to lower (controlled) fertility.²⁰ Changing family patterns among the general population today include delayed marriages (alongside increasingly high rates of ethnoreligious intermarriage), higher rates of permanent nonmarriage, more frequent cohabitation, growing rates of divorce, low birthrates, growing proportions of births out of marriage (the latter still uncommon among Jews), and increasing numbers of one-parent households, mostly headed by women. Moreover, young adults increasingly leave home in the course of their educational training. In the U.S., ethnic background plays a strong role in the propensity to leave home. Young American Jews, more than members of other groups, are likely to leave home and form “nonfamily” living arrangements. Jewish women, interestingly, are almost as likely as Jewish men to leave home, in contrast to women of other ethnoreligious backgrounds.²¹

The declining Jewish propensity to marry—at least during the earlier part of adulthood—is clearly documented in Table 7, which compares the proportions of “ever-married” individuals among Jewish women and men of various ages in the U.S. and in Israel around 1970 and 1990.²² In both the U.S. and in Israel after the Second World War, marriage was virtually universal among Jews by the age of 35. Yet a trend to postpone first marriages is evident in the more recent data regarding those aged 25–29 and 30–34. This tendency is more apparent among U.S. Jews (a drop from 85 per-

Table 7. Jews Ever-married at Selected Ages, U.S. and Israel, ca. 1970 and 1990 (percent)

Age	1970			1990		
	Women	Men	Women % difference ^a	Women	Men	Women % difference ^a
U.S.						
25–29	85	75	+13	61	35	+74
30–34	95	93	+2	76	66	+15
35–39	98	96	+2	89	83	+7
40–44	99	96	+3	88	85	+4
45–49	98	98	=	92	93	–1
Israel ^b						
25–29	88	73	+21	73	50	+46
30–34	96	93	+3	89	78	+14
35–39	98	97	+1	93	90	+3
40–44	98	97	+1	94	95	–1
45–49	98	97	+1	95	97	–2

^aRelative difference (in percent) between figures for women and men in the two previous columns.

^bData refer to the years 1969 and 1995, respectively.

Sources: Schmelz and DellaPergola, “The Demographic Consequences of U.S. Jewish Population Trends”; Chiswick, “The Economics of Contemporary Jewish Family Life”; Central Bureau of Statistics, *Statistical Abstract of Israel*, vol. 22; *ibid.*, vol. 49.

cent of women and 75 percent of men ever-married at age 25–29 in 1970, to 61 and 35 percent, respectively, in 1990) but it can also be seen in Israel (a decline from 88 percent of women and 73 percent of men ever-married at age 25–29 in 1969, to 73 and 50 percent, respectively, in 1995). Interestingly, the comparison of Jews with U.S. whites in general shows a reversal of patterns in the framework of a common trend. In 1970, among those aged 35–44, only 2 percent of Jewish women and 4 percent of Jewish men had never married, versus 5 and 7 percent, respectively, of all whites. By 1990, however, the corresponding proportions of “never-married” had increased to 11 percent of Jewish women and 17 percent of Jewish men, versus 7 and 12 percent, respectively, of the entire white population. Marriage postponement appears to be more significant among men than among women; if continued indefinitely, this trend will result in significant numbers of Jewish adults who have never married. Indeed, if current patterns hold, the eventual proportion of such Jews who have reached the age of 50 might well be 20–25 percent; if the trend accelerates, figures could run as high as 40–50 percent.

Such figures do not necessarily indicate a change in the widespread positive orientation toward family values among younger Jewish adults. Rather, a significant factor hampering marriage is the imbalance in age-sex composition that has emerged in many Jewish populations since the Second World War, not only as a consequence of the dramatic decline of the Jewish birthrate in Europe as a result of the Holocaust, but also (and more significantly for the U.S. Jewish population) as an outcome of the sequence of *baby boom* and *baby bust* years during the 1950s, 1960s, and 1970s. As grooms are usually somewhat older than brides, the sequence of larger and scantier birth cohorts has caused alternating and significant shortages in the number of mar-

riage candidates of one sex as against the number of candidates of the opposite sex.²³ The problem has been made more acute by the growing tendency of young Jewish adults to find marital partners outside the Jewish community (see below). Possible additional factors are the high cost of housing and, more significantly, the growing perceived conflict between the demands of a career and those of a household. To some extent, improved educational attainment and increased participation in the labor force have come to interfere with more traditional family roles, especially for women.

Fitting into this general pattern is the increased incidence of divorce. Among the total population of leading Western countries, about 35–45 percent of those who married in recent years are expected eventually to divorce (in the U.S., the projected figure is more than 50 percent). In the past, there was a lower (albeit increasing) tendency among Jews to divorce. However, retrospective survey data shows that the gap has practically closed. Of all ever-married Jews aged 35–54 in the U.S. in 1970, 11 percent of women and 13 percent of men had been divorced at least once, although the large majority of them had since remarried.²⁴ The frequency of divorce among the general white population in the U.S. at that time was roughly twice as high. By 1990, 15 percent of ever-married Jewish women and 12 percent of ever-married Jewish men aged 35–64 were *currently* divorced or separated (a figure that does not account for those who had remarried).²⁵ Among whites in general, there were nearly identical levels of currently divorced.²⁶ Adding those who remarried, the level of “ever-divorced” among the general U.S. population reached 43 percent for women and 38 percent for men.²⁷

In contrast, the more traditional Jewish community of Mexico showed a lower frequency of divorce in 1991, with only 8 percent of ever-married Jewish women and 6 percent of Jewish men aged 35–64 being currently divorced.²⁸ Divorce among Israeli Jews, meanwhile, has remained at relatively moderate levels, although it, too, is rising significantly. Of all marriages performed around 1970, 15–18 percent had ended in divorce by 1995, while the percentage of currently divorced stood at 13 percent for women and 8 percent for men. In view of the increasing trend toward divorce, it can be estimated that 19–23 percent of the marriages performed among Israeli Jews around 1990 will eventually end in divorce.²⁹ Remarriage, it should be noted, has become less common; when occurring at all, it is more often the divorced man who remarries.

Mixed Marriage

The growing frequency of mixed marriage also plays a central role in determining the new configuration of Jewish gender, family, and population trends. A large body of literature has discussed the general significance of this phenomenon.³⁰ What follows is a focus on gender comparisons.

Debate about mixed marriage and its demographic consequences was greatly stimulated in the wake of the 1990 National Jewish Population Survey (NJPS), which estimated that 52 percent of all marriages involving Jews between 1985 and 1990 were mixed marriages (this figure counted as “Jewish” those marriages in which a non-Jewish partner had converted).³¹ The NJPS pointed to a rapid increase in Jewish out-marriage during the 1960s, 1970s, and 1980s. When the data are separately analyzed

for the more recent marriage cohorts, as determined by generation of residence in the U.S., the current level of mixed marriage comes closer to 70 percent among members of the fourth generation (that is, people whose grandparents were born in the U.S.).³² Based on documented evidence, the continuing trend toward assimilation in the U.S., as in most other large diaspora communities, has reached unprecedented heights.

Similar current frequencies of mixed marriage around or above 50 percent have been estimated for Jewish communities in several other West European and Latin American communities, as well as in Ukraine; mixed-marriage frequencies are even higher in the Russian Republic and in the smaller communities of Eastern Europe.³³ In England, the trend has been more gradual, but recent data indicate that the increased frequency of mixed marriage follows a path already charted in the U.S. Mixed marriage frequencies are somewhat lower in Canada and Australia, and notably lower in Mexico, where the rate barely reached 10 percent around 1990.³⁴ Perhaps the major demographic divide between Jews in Israel and those in the diaspora concerns the choice of spouse and the frequency of marriage with non-Jewish partners. Mixed marriage virtually does not exist in Israel because of the predominantly Jewish context of Israeli society. However, increasing numbers of outmarried families have been migrating to Israel in recent years, especially from the former Soviet Union.

Table 8 shows the frequency of mixed marriages in three different countries: the U.S., France, and the Russian Republic. Since the 1920s, all three countries have experienced a constant increase in mixed marriage over time, although the actual levels have differed. In Russia, for example, a sharp increase appeared during the late 1920s and 1930s;³⁵ in France, in the 1950s;³⁶ and in the United States since the late 1960s. In the United Kingdom (not shown on the table), a major shift has occurred since the 1980s—approximately 44 percent of young Jewish male adults who married at the beginning of the 1990s and about 30 percent of females chose a non-Jewish partner.³⁷

In the past, the frequency of intermarriage generally tended to be lower among women, a fact that can be explained by Jewish women's lower levels of schooling and participation in the labor force. More recently, however, the level of mixed marriage among Jewish women has grown faster than among men. The reduction in gender-related educational and occupational gaps has evidently resulted in women's increased access to an expanded pool of marriage candidates. Another significant factor is the Jews' changing socioeconomic profile. In the very early stages of acculturation in America, there were rare cases in which Jewish women would be "coopted" by marriage into a higher-rated group. Today, the Jewish population constitutes one of the highest ranking socioeconomic groups in the U.S. and thus provides more attractive candidates for marriage.³⁸

The propensity of the non-Jewish spouses (still mostly women) to convert to Judaism has been declining relative to the total number of outmarriages. But more important when it comes to the consequences of mixed marriage for the Jewish family is the question of the religious identification assigned by the parents to their children.³⁹ Past research consistently indicated that the majority of children born to interfaith couples were identified with the non-Jewish parent, or else were assigned dual or no religious identification by the parents. A detailed reanalysis of the original 1990 NJPS data shows that the distribution of children of mixed marriages was 18 percent

Table 8. Jewish-born Married with Currently Non-Jewish Spouse, by Year of Marriage, U.S., France and Russian Republic, 1920s–1990s (percent)

Country and year of marriage	Women	Men	Women % difference ^a
U.S.			
Total, 1990 ^b	28	28	=
Total, 1970–1971 ^c	5	9	–42
By year of marriage:			
1981–1990 ^b	47	45	+7
1971–1980 ^b	34	36	–6
1961–1970 ^b	17	24	–29
1960–1971 ^c	10	20	–51
1950–1959 ^c	3	7	–63
1940–1949 ^c	7	5	+48
1930–1939 ^c	2	4	–61
Before 1930 ^c	2	2	+47
France ^d			
Total, 1975	7	15	–56
By year of marriage:			
1966–1975	28	31	–10
1956–1965	8	25	–68
1946–1955	2	9	–80
1936–1945	1	7	–85
Before 1936	2	6	–70
French-born	15	23	–34
By year of marriage:			
1966–1975	44	41	+8
1956–1965	10	20	–49
1946–1955	3	21	–84
1936–1945	5	17	–72
Before 1936	—	7	–100
Russian Republic			
Total, 1994	44	63	–30
Total, 1989	40	58	–31
Total, 1979	33	51	–35
By year of marriage:			
1988	63	73	–14
1978	43	59	–27
1936	37	42	–13
1926	17	25	–34
1924	9	18	–50

^aRelative difference (in percent) between figures for women and men in the two previous columns is computed from percentages not rounded to the unit as in previous columns.

^bSource: National Jewish Population Survey (1990), adapted from DellaPergola, “New Data on Demography and Identification among U.S. Jews.”

^cSource: NJPS 1970–1971, adapted from Schmelz and DellaPergola, “The Demographic Consequences of U.S. Jewish Population Trends.”

^dSource: French Jewish Population Study, adapted from Bensimon and DellaPergola, *La population juive de France*.

^eSource: vital statistics, adapted from Altshuler, *Soviet Jewry on the Eve of the Holocaust*; Tolts, “Demographic Trends among the Jews in the Three Slavic Republics of the Former USSR.”

“Jewish only,” 25 percent “dual Jewish and Christian,” 33 percent “Christian only,” and 24 percent “no religion.”⁴⁰ Typically, those children whose identificational options are postponed tend to socialize in the environment of the majority rather than of the minority. The religious identification of the children of mixed marriage tends to be affected by the mother, at least in English-speaking countries. Some past evidence of a prevailing paternal influence on children’s identification in Latin societies should be corroborated by more recent data.

In the U.S. and in England, the most important factor associated with the frequency of mixed marriage is the cultural environment provided in the parental home during childhood. The level of Jewishness of the parental home exerts stronger and more lasting effects on adult identification than does the type and amount of formal Jewish education received,⁴¹ although the latter has also definitely been shown to strengthen Jewish identification.⁴² Some circular correlation was found between divorce, remarriage, and mixed marriage.⁴³ Outmarriages tend to terminate in divorce more often than inmarriages, but remarriages after divorce often tend to be outmarriages. Interestingly, the relationship between socioeconomic status and mixed marriage now appears to be moving from direct to inverse. Recent data indeed point to higher levels of outmarriage among Jews with less formal education and lower occupational status.⁴⁴ This finding hints at the greater difficulty households with a lower social status and income may have in keeping in touch with the organized Jewish community and its often costly social and educational activities.

Fertility

Another fundamental demographic divide between Jewish women in Israel and in the diaspora concerns fertility levels and family size. Figure 1 provides a synoptic portrayal of Jewish fertility over the last 60 years, its upward and downward fluctuations over time, and its patterns of convergence and divergence across geographical, social, and cultural settings. The data refer to the number of children ever born to women who have reached the end of their child-bearing years.

Jewish fertility levels in Israel have been relatively stable—and unusually high—when compared with other developed countries.⁴⁵ In 1996, current fertility as measured through the Total Fertility Rate (TFR)⁴⁶ was 2.6 children, more than enough to support continuing population growth. Women immigrants from countries in Asia and Africa had an average of about six children during the 1950s but, once in Israel, underwent a widespread process of modernization. Completed fertility declined to a level of between three and four children among the generation of mothers born during the 1940s. In contrast, Jewish women of European origin in Israel had already undergone the demographic transition to lower fertility levels before migrating to Israel. In Israel, as if to conform to the predominant notion of the “fusion of the diasporas,” their family size tended to converge toward the higher (but falling) fertility level of Jewish women from Asia and Africa. The family size of Jewish women born in Israel—themselves the product, to a growing extent, of the intermarriages of immigrants from different continents—consistently fell somewhere between the polarities characteristic of the various immigrant groups.

Jewish fertility levels outside Israel provide insights on the Jewish experience,

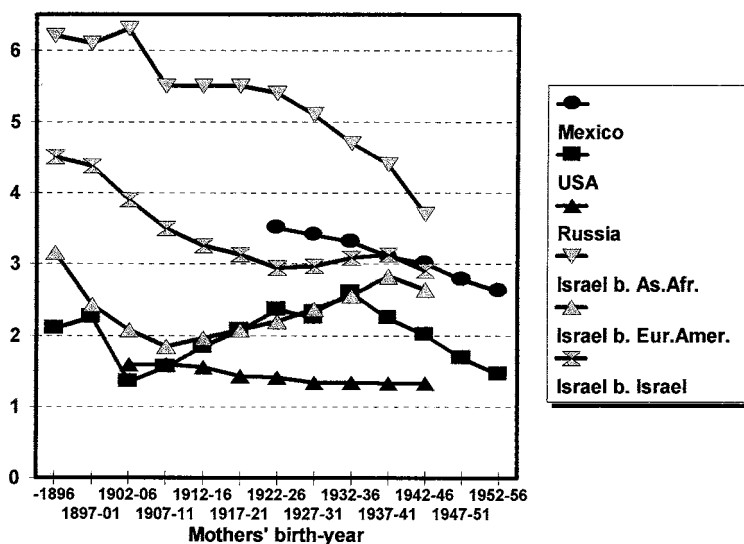


Fig. 1 Total children born to Jewish women in selected countries, by year of birth of mothers

whose interest extends beyond the specific theme of reproduction. In the United States, the number of children born fluctuated significantly over the years in accordance with the time when women reached prime child-bearing ages. The economic depression of the 1930s determined sharp declines in U.S. fertility in general and among Jews in particular. Economic recovery during the Second World War and the postwar period of prosperity, optimism, and upward mobility brought about a baby boom that peaked during the late 1950s. The transformations in American society since the late 1960s, epitomized by the increased emphasis on rising economic expectations, individual achievement, and more complex roles for women, have been associated with a renewed decline of fertility. The Jewish pattern did not so much follow as anticipate that trend: it was systematically lower than the national average of U.S. whites and tended to respond more quickly to periodic changes, as appropriate to a better-educated population more in control of reproductive processes.⁴⁷ Jewish attitudes toward reproduction continued to be fairly traditional and child-oriented, but a follow-up of young adult generations over the 1970s and 1980s shows that actual reproductive behaviors fell short of declared intentions.⁴⁸ (Larger-than-average families among the Orthodox community were the exception, but these had only a minor impact on the overall fertility of American Jewry.) The fact that U.S. national and Jewish fertility trends have tended to run in parallel demonstrates the dependency of Jewish demography on the fluctuations in the economic, social, and cultural development of society at large.

In Soviet Russia prior to the Second World War, Jewish mothers born at the beginning of the century were already having an average of 1.5 children or less.⁴⁹ What is completely missing in the Soviet case is any sense of a postwar demographic re-

covery. Jewish fertility levels there appear to have been the product of what was felt to be a situation of permanent, unrelieved economic depression prevailing over the 73 years of Communist rule. Yet no matter how distant the U.S. and Soviet social systems once were, in the end, Jewish fertility levels in these respective countries have tended in the end to converge. In most other Jewish communities during the past 20 to 30 years, Jewish fertility levels stood far below the minimum for generational replacement. This was true, for example, for the communities of Canada, Argentina, Australia, and even France, where there was a significant intake of immigrants from North Africa. In all these countries, after accounting for children of Jewish parentage who were not raised as Jews, the low levels of *effectively Jewish* fertility pointed to a net reduction in the size of generations, a narrowing at the younger end of the age structure, and a progressive aging of the population. One interesting exception, again, was the Jewish community of Mexico, which by the early 1990s continued to display a moderate margin of demographic growth. It is likely that a combination of factors, including the still comparatively segregated position of the Jewish community and its low rates of intermarriage; the mix of Sephardic and Ashkenazic Jewish subethnic communities in Mexico; and the favorable economic situation enjoyed by a majority of the community (which allows more time for family-related activities on the part of Jewish women and easy availability of household help) are responsible for this situation.⁵⁰ If the uniqueness of the Mexican Jewish experience is merely the expression of socioeconomic advantage, however, the situation may change—given the experience of the similarly prosperous Jewish community of South Africa.⁵¹

Even at the height of the baby boom, the maximum level of completed Jewish fertility in the U.S. reached approximately 2.5 children—a level just below the minimal level ever experienced in Israel. Indeed, allowing for the rapid modernization of the traditional immigrant groups, and keeping in mind the high proportion of married Jewish women in the labor force, the Israeli fertility experience can be defined as a 50-year-long baby boom. Although there is no definitive proof that the same women would have borne a different number of children had they lived elsewhere, more than anecdotal evidence indicates that this is indeed the case. Jewish communities, or even families split by international migration, display different demographic patterns from those of Israel,⁵² and compositional differences such as the higher proportion of religious families in Israel⁵³ or the comparatively higher educational level in the diaspora do not provide a sufficiently persuasive explanation of Israel-diaspora fertility differentials.

The uniqueness of Israeli Jewish fertility is further illustrated in Figure 2, which compares total fertility rates (TFRs) for European-born Israeli Jewish women with the corresponding data for all women in four European countries (Ireland, Italy, France, and the Russian Republic), and with all white women in the U.S. between 1960 and 1997. In 1960, the number of children born to European-born Jewish women in Israel was at the lower end as compared with their non-Jewish peers in Europe and North America. But whereas earlier (as among U.S. whites) or later (as in Catholic Ireland) fertility subsequently declined below the level of 2.1 children required for generational replacement, the fertility of European-born women in Israel was uniquely stable and generally remained above the 2.1 threshold. Especially since the mid-1970s, fertility in Europe has dropped as a result of economic erosion, new and more effi-

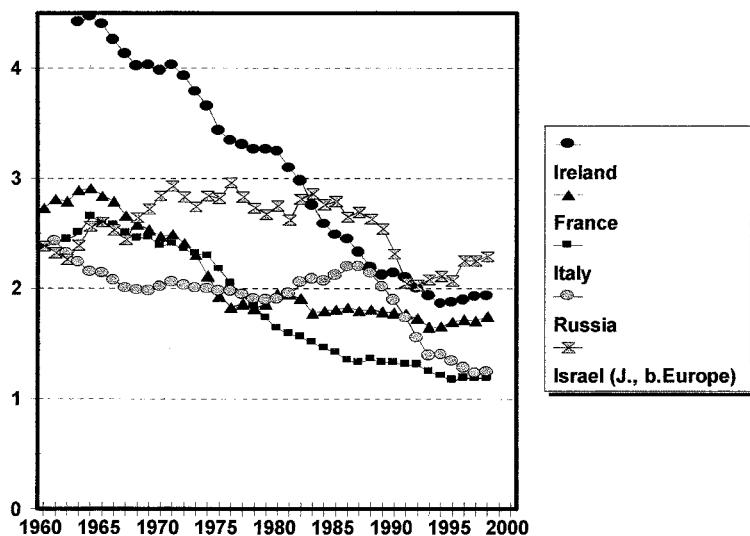


Fig. 2 Total fertility rates for selected countries, 1960–1998

cient contraception, and more widespread secular and/or hedonistic norms.⁵⁴ Large-scale immigration from the former Soviet Union did lower Israeli fertility during the early 1990s but, as noted, new immigrant women rapidly caught up with the higher fertility level of their more veteran peers. The resilience of Israeli Jewish fertility—Israel is the sole developed country currently above demographic replacement⁵⁵—is the more remarkable considering the already noted general improvement in educational levels; large-scale entrance into the labor force of Jewish women since the early 1960s; and the much improved standards of contraception.

It is also worth noting that about one-fourth to one-third of all births in the leading Western countries now occur out of marriage. In England and Wales as well as in France, the proportion of births in this category approaches one third; in Sweden and Denmark, it is closer to 50 percent. Among Jewish women, births out of wedlock have not become fashionable. Children born to single mothers constitute about 1 percent of the Jewish birthrate in Israel;⁵⁶ paradoxically, the near absence of such births contributes to the lowering of Jewish fertility in the diaspora.

In the now predominant context of widespread and efficient family-size control, the fundamental determinant shaping family size is the interplay between the normative value of children; the cost of child rearing; and the economic resources available to the household.⁵⁷ On the whole, Jewish families in the diaspora have at their disposal more personal economic resources than do Jews in Israel, which would seem to be conducive to larger families. A feeling of insecurity, possibly associated with minority status, has been suggested as a significant determinant of lower fertility among minorities in general and diaspora Jews in particular.⁵⁸ In this case, however, the growing feeling of adaptation to the general environment experienced by contemporary Jewish communities would be expected to lead to a decline in such insecurity

and, consequently, to higher fertility—an expectation that is not supported by recent data.⁵⁹

At the same time, evidence is accumulating that the different meaning of, and commitment to, Jewish continuity (and to community bonds in a broader sense) stands at the core of the larger Jewish family size in Israel as compared both with the rest of world Jewry and with non-Jewish populations in the developed world.⁶⁰ An additional factor, inherently related to the former and carrying significant effects of its own, is that Israel, as a Jewish-oriented state, has encouraged the establishment of child-care facilities and woman-oriented social security benefits that render child-rearing more feasible than in many other countries of similar economic level. One relevant argument in the policy debate about fertility relates to the need, beyond the creation of the necessary logistical infrastructure, for societies to develop a more gender-balanced orientation toward child-rearing.⁶¹ Population policies in Scandinavian countries that encourage socioeconomic benefits for mothers and the greater involvement of fathers in the child-rearing process have been associated with significantly higher birthrates than in countries lacking the same provisions.⁶²

On a purely demographic plane, the Jewish fertility level in Israel of 2.6 Jewish children on the average per woman (regardless of marital status), as opposed to 1.5 or less in other Jewish communities worldwide (with a few exceptions) corresponds to a ratio of nearly 2:1 children “ever born” in Israel versus the diaspora. This dramatic contrast has obvious implications for Israel–diaspora relations in the coming decades.

Jewish Identification and Levels of Observance

It is reasonable to expect that, under the impact of socioeconomic and demographic change, gender attitudes toward Jewish identification should also undergo transformation. The following section reviews gender differences in Jewish education and knowledge, religious observance, and various forms of involvement with the Jewish community in major Western communities and in Israel. Given some differences in the format of available data, the findings are first examined by country, followed by an overall evaluation.

The United States

The level of involvement of men and women in a variety of Jewish observances and other forms of Jewish communal activity are compared in Table 9 for the years 1970/1971 and 1990.⁶³ Over the 20 years under consideration, different indicators of Jewishness evolved along quite different paths. Measures of religious observance and synagogue attendance remained rather stable; the level of membership in Jewish religious and lay organizations, of philanthropic activity, and of the “Jewishness” of informal social networks generally declined; and connections with non-Jewish organizations as well as visits to Israel became more widespread.⁶⁴ A composite index of observance of Jewish traditional precepts (fasting on the Day of Atonement, not eat-

Table 9. Selected Indicators of Jewishness, Jewish Population Aged 18 and Over, U.S., 1970–1971 and 1990 (percent)

Measure of Jewishness	1970/71			1990		
	Women	Men	Women % difference ^b	Women	Men	Women % difference ^b
Religious observance index						
High	23	25	–8	31	24	+28
Medium	59	61	–4	55	57	–4
Synagogue visit						
>1 per month	22	24	–8	21	22	–7
Ever	71	73	–3	75	74	+2
Fasts on Day of Atonement	48	50	–2	52	48	+7
Attends Passover seder	78	79	–2	65	58	+11
Celebrates Hanukah	73	73	=	75	70	+7
Keeps separate dairy/meat dishes	21	21	+1	14	13	+12
Prefers a denomination ^c	83	83	=	78	72	+8
Member of synagogue	47	50	–6	34	31	+11
Member of Jewish organization	45	40	+14	32	24	+31
Member of non-Jewish organization	36	49	–27	50	52	–5
Contributes to Jewish philanthropy	42	40	+4	36	31	+18
Ever visited Israel	14	15	–1	28	27	+4
Lives in Jewish neighborhood	69	68	+1	41	36	+16
Most friends are Jewish	76	75	+1	41	36	+12

^aFor each indicator, adding a negative or lower option brings the total to 100 percent.

^bRelative difference (in percent) between figures for women and men in the two previous columns is computed from percentages not rounded to the unit as in previous columns.

^cOrthodox, Conservative, and Reform.

Source: Adapted from Rebhun, “Geographic Mobility and Religiogethnic Identification among American Jews 1970–1990.”

ing leavened products on Passover, observing laws of kashruth, and Sabbath observance) was reported to be slightly lower among women than among men in 1970, but had become higher for women by 1990. A similar reversal of gender patterns appears for the frequency of synagogue attendance and membership. On all other measures of Jewishness, women reported frequencies similar or slightly higher than those of men in 1970 and, by 1990, they had substantially strengthened their edge (the frequency of Jewish women’s membership in *non-Jewish* organizations, which had lagged significantly behind men in 1970, had also grown by 1990). On all accounts, then, Jewish women in the U.S. in 1990 were more involved in Jewish activities than were men, a situation that in most spheres was the reverse of what had been noted 20 years earlier.

France

Data on the Jewish profile of French Jewry are available for the 1970s, a decade after the mass influx of Jewish immigrants from North Africa (see Table 10).⁶⁵ Jewish

Table 10. Selected Indicators of Jewishness, Jewish Population Aged 18 and Over, France, 1970s (percent)

Measure of Jewishness	Women	Men	Women % difference ^b
Mode of attachment to Judaism			
Religion	39	31	+26
Family tradition	15	13	+11
Community	5	13	-66
Historical tradition	5	9	-48
A reality, no religious content	34	29	-18
Synagogue visit			
Regular	6	11	-39
Ever	64	58	+10
Fasts on Day of Atonement	67	63	+8
Does not eat leavened products on Passover	60	55	+9
Observes kashruth	37	35	+6
Observes Sabbath	39	35	+12
Member of Jewish organization	39	46	-16
Participated in youth movement	23	32	-26
Ever visited Israel	50	46	+10
Regularly reads on Jewish matters	22	28	-22
Knowledge of Jewish languages			
Hebrew, can read	19	48	-60
Hebrew, can translate	14	29	-51
Hebrew, can speak	14	23	-40
Yiddish	14	16	-15
Judeo-Arabic	12	13	-8
Judeo-Spanish	3	3	+17

^aFor each indicator, adding a negative or lower option brings the total to 100 percent.

^bRelative difference (in percent) between figures for women and men in the two previous columns is computed from percentages not rounded to the unit as in previous columns.

Source: Adapted from Bensimon and DellaPergola, *La population juive de France*.

women then reported more often than did men that their mode of attachment to Judaism was through religion and family traditions. Their adherence to traditional practices such as fasting on the Day of Atonement, not eating leavened products on Passover, and observing the laws of kashruth and of the Sabbath were also higher than that of the men. In addition, women were more likely to have visited Israel. At the same time, they reported less frequent synagogue attendance, a lower level of membership in Jewish organizations, less regular reading of Jewish books and newspapers, and less knowledge of Hebrew and Yiddish. Such weaker activity at this, the more public level, may be related to women's lesser educational attainment at the time of the survey. Overall, Jewish women displayed a more traditional orientation (this may also explain the persistence among women of a knowledge of Judeo-Arabic and Judeo-Spanish languages). Interestingly, the highly secular mode of attachment to Judaism as "a reality without religious content" was also more frequently reported by women.

Israel

The behavior of Jewish women in Israel during the early 1990s displayed an apparent contradiction with regard to certain aspects of religiosity and Jewish tradition (see Table 11).⁶⁶ On the one hand, the frequency of their synagogue attendance, the amount of time devoted to religious activity, and their self-identification at the more religious end of the Jewish continuum were all low on average when compared with the practice of men. On the other hand, Jewish women were more concentrated at moderately high levels of self-assessed religiosity, and they reported a higher level of observance in areas such as fasting on the Day of Atonement, not eating leavened products on Passover, and abiding by the Sabbath regulations.

Jewish Education

The internationally available (but, unfortunately, far from complete) data indicate that, in the past, there were significant gaps dividing boys from girls when it came to formal Jewish education.⁶⁷ Young males were more likely than females to receive some formal Jewish education, primarily because of their greater overall exposure to

Table 11. Selected Indicators of Jewishness, Jewish Population Aged 14 and Over, Israel, 1991–1992 (percent)

Measure of Jewishness	Women	Men	Women % difference ^b
Religiosity			
Religious	14	16	–10
Traditional, religious	12	10	+17
Traditional, not so religious	36	31	+18
Synagogue visit			
Almost every day	1	14	–95
On Sabbath eves and Sabbath	11	32	–66
Ever	61	69	–12
Fasts on Day of Atonement	77	75	+2
Does not eat leavened products on Passover	83	78	+7
Keeps separate dairy/meat dishes	50	45	+11
Does not listen to radio on the Sabbath	52	51	+2
Does not watch television on the Sabbath	39	39	+1
Does not travel on the Sabbath	30	27	+10
Average time spent per day on religious activity ^c			
Total population	7	29	–76
Participants only ^d	66	125	–47

^aFor each indicator, adding a negative or lower option brings the total to 100 percent.

^bRelative difference (in percent) between figures for women and men in the two previous columns is computed from percentages not rounded to the unit as in previous columns.

^cMinutes per day, out of a total 1,440, based on a seven-day weekly average.

^dRelates only to those who do spend time on religious activity.

Sources: Levy, Levinsohn, and Katz, *Beliefs, Observances and Social Interactions among Israeli Jews*; Central Bureau of Statistics, *Time Use in Israel*, Tables 1, 2, 50.

Table 12. Comparison of Exposure (Ever) of Jewish Women and Men to Formal Jewish Education in Selected Countries, by Type of Jewish School, 1960s–1990s^a

Country, year and type of school	Age at time of survey						
	Total	6–13	14–17	18–24	25–34	35–54	55+
U.S., 1990							
Total	–20	+0	–13	–19	–23	–23	–26
Day school	–38	–2	–14	–1	–14	–54	–81
Part-time	–15	+2	–12	–23	–24	–19	–14
U.S., 1970–1971							
Total	–22	–8	–13	–17	–30	–25	–27
Day school	–57	–17	–42	–58	–70	–50	–66
Part-time	–4	–7	–5	–6	–15	–13	+19
France, 1970s							
Total	–49	–22	–45	–51	–59	–50	–53
Day school	–43	–10	–32	–53	–44	–42	–50
Part-time	–56	–27	–54	–48	–71	–58	–61
South Africa, 1974							
Total	–33	–36	–28	–27	–28	–40	–31
Day school	–40	–22	–22	–45	–22	–25	–44
Part-time	–31	–45	–32	–14	–29	–41	–28
Italy, 1965							
Total	–13	–12	–2	–4	–19	–18	–19
Day school	–12	+2	+45	–12	–17	–15	–27
Part-time	–13	–33	–18	+72	–27	–24	–6

^aRelative difference (in percent) between percentages of exposure for women and for men.

Source: Adapted from DellaPergola and Genuth, *Jewish Education Attained in Diaspora Communities*, Table 5; NJPS (1990), as processed by the division of Jewish demography and statistics at the Avraham Harman Institute of Contemporary Jewry, The Hebrew University of Jerusalem. For groups aged 6–13 and 14–17 in 1990, “day schools” denotes five years or more of Jewish school studies; “part-time” denotes less than five years.

education, but also because it was considered more of a traditional duty to provide them with religious instruction. The bar mitzvah ceremony, for example, was considered mandatory for boys, whereas bat mitzvah ceremonies were not (until recently) a common custom. Survey data on the exposure (ever) to Jewish education in selected Western countries show that, from the 1960s, this educational gap gradually narrowed, although as of 1990 it had still not disappeared altogether (see Table 12). Thus, as the table demonstrates, the relative disadvantage of Jewish women of different ages regarding exposure to formal Jewish education diminished among the younger cohorts. The trend toward gender equalization was particularly evident in the area of Jewish day-school attendance. Data from the 1970 NJPS made it clear that the educational lag experienced by Jewish women aged 55 and over, when compared with that of the younger segment of the Jewish school-age population (aged 6–13 at that time), had declined from –66 to –17 percent. By 1990, the reversal had become even more pronounced, with the gap dropping from a lag of –81 percent among women aged 55 and over to a mere –1 percent among the 18–24 age group. Similarly, the gaps in Jewish day-school exposure of women declined from –50 to –10 percent in France,

from –44 to –22 percent in South Africa, and from –27 percent to a 2 percent female edge in Italy.

Gender gaps with respect to part-time Jewish education (*talmudei torah*, *ḥadarim*, Sunday and afternoon schools) were more variable, as these were related to the different characteristics and purposes of such programs in the various countries. In the U.S., where part-time education constituted (and still constitutes) by far the predominant channel of formal Jewish education, gender gaps were significantly smaller than in the case of day schools, albeit persisting over time. In France, gender gaps were generally greater and revealed a persisting male-oriented educational approach, which in part reflected the Jewish education that was actually received in the countries of origin (mostly North Africa) of the largely immigrant Jewish community. In South Africa and Italy, where day schools were by far the primary Jewish educational channel, gender gaps in part-time education displayed a less clear trend over time.

These data do not say much about the intensity of the Jewish educational experience, as measured in years of exposure, nor about the quality or content of study programs and the training of teachers. They do, however, clearly point to the gradual diffusion of increasingly similar norms regarding the Jewish education imparted to Jewish boys and girls.

Overview

Notwithstanding the significant differences in the national contexts examined here, quite consistent gender patterns emerge regarding the various indicators of Jewishness. Interpretation of the data should distinguish between patterns that are tied to the transitional status of women in the general processes of social mobility, as opposed to patterns that are more deeply ingrained in different gender roles and perceptions. Overall, Jewish women appeared more often at the stronger end of the Jewish identification continuum concerning traditional attitudes and behaviors, and they reported an attachment to Judaism that was more often tied to religious values.⁶⁸ Moreover, the level of traditional (primarily domestic) observance was consistently higher among women. In contrast, synagogue attendance (outside the United States) tended to be perceived as a predominantly male dimension of Jewishness, whether as distinctly religious behavior or as a more general public expression of Jewish identification. Consistent with the clear trend toward diminishing gender-related educational and socioeconomic lags, Jewish women have gradually become more equal or even dominant in areas such as the receipt of Jewish education, membership in Jewish organizations, the development of other types of Jewish social networks, and volunteer work for philanthropic causes.

A Global View of Gender Development

While relevant trends related to gender have so far been considered from the perspective of individuals in various places, it is appropriate to round out the picture with a more global evaluation. In recent years, the United Nations has proposed the use of several interesting new tools aimed at providing a comparative analysis of societal

trends.⁶⁹ Based on a systematic collection of appropriate quantitative indicators, countries of the world have been ranked from highest to lowest in accordance with their respective performances in various areas of concern. An overview of indicators concerning the position of women in societies with large Jewish populations may throw additional light on the issues under discussion here.

The following analysis focuses on a comparison of 17 societies. Of these, Israel is, of course, the only one with a Jewish majority (80 percent of the total population). Fourteen other countries comprise the largest Jewish communities in the diaspora; together with Israel, they account for more than 95 percent of the Jewish population worldwide.⁷⁰ In declining order of their Jewish populations, these countries are the United States, France, Canada, the Russian Republic, the United Kingdom, Argentina, Ukraine, Brazil, Australia, South Africa, Germany, Hungary, Mexico, and Belgium. Two other countries with smaller Jewish populations, Norway and Japan, are also included by way of comparison, since they were rated in 1997, together with Canada, the U.S., and Belgium, as having the world's highest standards of living. Table 13 presents the worldwide ranking of the 17 selected countries (out of a total of 174) in 1997, with regard to several social indicators. The numbers in parentheses show their internal ranking from 1 to 17. The data for Israel basically reflect the *actual* situation of Jewish women. Data for all other countries reflect the Jewish women's *contextual* situation.

A first measure considered for general reference, the Human Development Index (HDI), aims at providing a synthetic evaluation of the quality of life—physical, material, cultural, political—available to people who live in different parts of the world. The HDI is based on a weighted average of three variables: longevity, as measured by life expectancy at birth; educational attainment, as measured by adult literacy and the combined gross primary, secondary, and tertiary school enrollment ratio; and standard of living, as measured by the gross domestic product (GDP) per capita.⁷¹

In terms of HDI ranking, Israel ranked 23rd out of the 174 countries for which the index was computed—that is, at the top range of the second-highest decile. More specifically, it ranked 14th in terms of life expectancy, 58th for adult literacy, 28th for school enrollment,⁷² and 26th for real GDP per capita. The other countries selected for the present evaluation were ranked as follows: Canada (1); Norway (2); United States (3); Japan (4); Belgium (5); Australia (7); United Kingdom (10); France (11); Germany (14); Argentina (39); Hungary (47); Mexico (50); Russian Republic (71); Brazil (79); Ukraine (91); and South Africa (101). This ranking confirms the notion that major Jewish populations are located in an ample cross-section of countries, allowing for interesting international comparisons of the current context of Jewish life. Notwithstanding, it is also the case that the overwhelming majority of world Jewry live in countries found in the two top deciles of the most developed countries. During the last decades of the twentieth century, a growing concentration of Jews in the leading countries of the world came about as a result of a long process of international migration from less developed countries in Asia, Africa, Latin America, and Eastern Europe to more developed countries in North America, Western Europe, and Australasia, as well as to Israel. As the major recipient country of Jewish international migration, Israel was itself a society that rapidly changed its status from less to more developed.

Table 13. Indexes of Gender Development—Ranking for Selected Countries, 1997

Country ^a	HDI ^b	GDI ^c	GEM ^d	% women professional, technical workers	% women administrators and managers	% women in parliament	% women at ministerial level	Women real GDP (PPP\$) ^e as % of men
No. of countries	174	143	102	102	103	156	173	58
U.S.	3 (3)	3 (3)	8 (4)	27 (5)	4 (1)	52 (9)	31 (6)	7 (3)
Israel	23 (10)	23 (10)	37 (11)	24 (4)	50 (9)	100 (15)	36 (7)	22 (9)
France	11 (8)	10 (7)	36 (10)	60 (13)	76 (13)	80 (11)	29 (4)	11 (5)
Canada	1 (1)	1 (1)	4 (2)	33 (6)	6 (3)	16 (5)	18 (2)	14 (6)
Russia	71 (14)	61 (14)	f	f	f	100 (15)	123 (14)	f
U.K.	10 (7)	11 (8)	16 (6)	57 (12)	18 (4)	54 (10)	62 (10)	16 (7)
Argentina	39 (11)	37 (11)	f	f	f	17 (6)	126 (16)	49 (15)
Ukraine	91 (16)	f	f	f	f	96 (14)	126 (16)	f
Brazil	79 (15)	67 (15)	70 (14)	8 (1)	58 (12)	116 (17)	103 (13)	39 (13)
Australia	7 (6)	4 (4)	9 (5)	87 (14)	5 (2)	11 (4)	29 (4)	5 (2)
South Africa	101 (17)	84 (16)	18 (8)	46 (9)	57 (11)	8 (3)	125 (15)	32 (11)
Germany	14 (9)	15 (9)	5 (3)	39 (8)	31 (7)	6 (2)	46 (9)	9 (4)
Hungary	47 (12)	43 (12)	48 (13)	13 (2)	19 (5)	90 (13)	91 (12)	20 (8)
Mexico	50 (13)	48 (13)	33 (9)	49 (10)	48 (8)	35 (7)	23 (3)	46 (14)
Belgium	5 (5)	6 (5)	17 (7)	34 (7)	52 (10)	37 (8)	42 (8)	25 (10)
Norway	2 (2)	2 (2)	1 (1)	15 (3)	22 (6)	3 (1)	7 (1)	3 (1)
Japan	4 (4)	8 (6)	38 (12)	56 (11)	77 (14)	85 (12)	90 (11)	35 (12)

^aFifteen countries with largest Jewish populations plus Norway and Japan, ranked by size of Jewish population (see DellaPergola, "World Jewish Population, 1997"). Country positions in the world ranking are presented, followed (in parenthesis) by the internal ranking of the 17 countries displayed here.

^bHuman Development Index: longevity, educational attainment, and standard of living.

^cGender-related Development Index: gender differences in longevity, educational attainment, and standard of living.

^dGender Empowerment Measure: economic participation, professional decision-making power, and political decision-making power.

^eGross Domestic Product is corrected for Purchase Power Parity in U.S. dollars. Only countries with a male GDP (PPP\$) of \$9,000 or more were ranked.

^fNot available.

Source: Computed and adapted from United Nations, *Human Development Report 1999*, Tables 2, 3, 28.

More specifically relevant to our present analysis, the Gender-related Development Index (GDI) adjusts the Human Development Index by incorporating a measurement of existing gender inequality within the same three variables considered—longevity, education, and standard of living. The greater the gender inequality—typically, the disadvantage for women relative to men—the higher the penalty that is introduced into the original HDI scores. The evaluation and ranking of quality of life in different countries can thus undergo significant change after a consideration of the relative status of women in relevant areas. Australia, for example, is a country whose high quality of human development is further enhanced by a high degree of gender equality. In contrast, Japan's ranking falls significantly once the prevailing gender gaps are considered. Most Muslim countries, too, suffer a significant drop because of the inferior status of women. In terms of the GDI, Israel was ranked 23rd out of the 143 countries surveyed, thus holding the same international position as measured through the HDI. In other words, whatever the amount of gender-related inequality prevailing in Israel, it does not influence Israel's standing in terms of overall quality of life. Israel's ranking in terms of specific variables included in the gender-related development index was as follows: life expectancy (women:22, men:6);⁷³ school-enrollment ratio (women:30, men:32); real GDP per capita (women and men:25). For most countries shown in Table 13, the ranking of HDI and GDI were quite similar.

The Gender Empowerment Measure (GEM) is a further, more specific nation-by-nation measure of gender performance aimed at assessing the relative empowerment of women and men in *political* and *economic* spheres of activity. The GEM is a weighted average of three variables. The first two—women's share of total administrative and managerial positions, and their share of total professional and technical jobs—help to evaluate the level and quality of women's employment and professional decision-making power. The third variable, women's percentage share of parliamentary seats, reflects political participation and high-level influence. In terms of GEM, Israel ranked 37th out of 102 countries (according to available data in 1997)—that is, significantly below the level of the country's human development index. Results, however, are quite different regarding each of the three variables that comprise the gender empowerment measure. Israel's ranking is appropriate to its general HDI with regard to its share of women in professional and technical jobs (24th out of 102 countries). This is consistent with the previously noted relatively high level of women's educational attainment and school enrollment, both in absolute terms and relative to men.

However, Israel's rating worsens considerably when it comes to the share of women among administrators and managers (50th out of 103 countries). This finding points to a persistence of obstacles or lack of encouragement for women to enter the system of public administration; in the private sphere, it probably indicates lesser opportunities—or even expectations—for women to display initiative. Israel's international standing, moreover, falls considerably regarding the share of parliamentary seats held by women (it ranks 100th out of 156 countries). True, this ranking refers to data from 1996; in the Knesset elections of 1999, the proportion of parliamentary women increased from 7.5 to 12 percent, although the likelihood is that women's parliamentary standing in other countries was similarly augmented.

One further and more specific indicator not included in the GEM but reported in

Table 13 is women's share of ministerial-level posts (including elected heads of state, governors of central banks, and similar high-ranking positions). Such data provide a measure of the place attained by women in the leading elites of a society. Israel's ranking here (36th out of 173 countries) is consistent with its rating in terms of general women's empowerment (as measured by the GEM), which, as noted, is lower than its standing in terms of more general human development (HDI and GDI). The presence (in fact ceiling) of one or two women ministers in recent Israeli governments, though not especially poor in comparison with the leading group of more developed countries, demonstrates how limited a role Jewish women still play in major-league politics. Interestingly, it appears that where high policy considerations prevail (as in government formation), the space cleared for women is somewhat larger than when party politics are left to their unrestrained rules (as in the process of selection and ranking of the candidates to the Knesset).

In sum, Israel's ranking, while generally in line with that of other developed countries, was consistently weaker than that of the Western countries with the largest Jewish populations. In particular, the status of women in the United States and in Canada was rated higher than in Israel with regard to seven of the eight measures reported in Table 13 (the exception being the percentage of women among professional and technical workers). The UK and France were rated better than Israel in six of the eight measures considered.

Conclusion

The data presented here reveal a number of powerful trends that have affected the experience of Jewish women worldwide over the past few decades. The findings mostly point to a definite transition of women toward demographic, socioeconomic, and identificational positions more closely approximating those of men. However, while convergence has occurred in many significant respects, there still remain some conspicuous exceptions.

Nearly full convergence in educational attainment is now an established fact. Indeed, over time, Jewish women may end up with measurable advantages over men in terms of the length and quality of their academic and professional training. Women's participation in the labor force approaches one half of the total, specifically in the most sensitive sectors of the upper occupational ladder, though they still contribute less than an equal share in terms of paid working hours because many women work only part time.

The inherent conflict of interests between economic and career roles, on the one hand, and family roles, on the other, has probably influenced the postponement and weakening of Jewish marriage and family growth in the diaspora, as it has done among the general population of more developed countries. Along with the decline of marriage, the increase in divorce has contributed to making the conventional nuclear family only one of several normative alternatives currently available. And here it is the case that women, who head most single-parent families, have disproportionately carried the burden of family destabilization.

The Israeli case indicates that there need not to be an unbridgeable gap between

paid work and conventional household roles. Jewish women in Israel have attained highly impressive improvements in educational and occupational levels, approaching those of the total population of the U.S., without experiencing at the same time a visible decline in family size. Indeed, high fertility rates among Jewish women in Israel have significant implications for Jewish demography in the twenty-first century.

Jewish women also increasingly play the predominant role as the main guardian (and, presumably, conveyor) of Jewish orientations. The fact that women are the leading agent of Jewish socialization for the younger generation significantly adds to the cumulated evidence that in mixed marriages—at least in the English-speaking countries—the religioethnic socialization of the children tends to be matrilineal. Further corroboration of this trend comes from the growing visibility of women among the lay and religious leadership of Jewish communities locally and internationally—in general, but also more particularly through women's organizations. But a note of caution should be sounded: as a consequence of narrowing educational, occupational, and social gaps, Jewish women are being exposed as much as Jewish men to the effects of social interaction with members of other ethnoreligious groups and to the ensuing process of cultural assimilation. Thus, the Jewish identificational edge clearly documented here for Jewish women might at some future point decline or disappear. Nevertheless, its present existence is one central feature in the definition of contemporary Jewish population, community, and culture.

International comparisons clearly indicate that a more integrated role for women in economic and political life can be taken as one of the safest indications of a society's human and general development. In this broader context, the status of Israeli women does not deviate from the general standing expected of a country quite high in the ranking of nations with regard to the quality of life and human development. Israeli women have done much better as decision-makers and producers in the intellectual, scientific, and economic life than in the political-administrative arena. The inconsistency between these various measures of women's status can be summarized by saying that an Israeli woman is far more likely to be a physician carrying out a heart bypass than an administrator responsible for a city center traffic bypass.

In sum, Jewish women over the last decades have attained high levels of achievement in the socioeconomic sphere; and they also play a leading role in maintaining Jewish continuity. Yet such enormously augmented share of *responsibility* has not yet found full expression in the share of *power* exerted by women. This inherent conflict will either fade away through the normal completion of the transition toward equality, or else it will call for more active institutional intervention in order to reduce the societal tensions and imbalances that may otherwise ensue.

Notes

1. See, for example, Simone de Beauvoir, *Le Deuxième Sexe* (Paris: 1949); and Betty Friedan, *The Feminine Mystique* (New York: 1963).

2. As a consistent given of human biology, about 48.5 percent of all live births are of females and 51.5 percent are of males. In developed societies, the lower mortality and greater longevity of women eventually generate a definite surplus of women among older adults, and a small majority among the total population. Among the total Jewish population in Israel in

1997, for instance, 51 percent were females and 49 percent were males. The same percentages applied to the total population of the United States in 1995. See Central Bureau of Statistics, *Statistical Abstract of Israel*, no. 49 (Jerusalem: 1998); *World Population Prospects: The 1996 Revision* (New York: 1998).

3. See Sylvia Barack Fishman, *A Breath of Life: Feminism in the American Jewish Community* (Hanover, N.H.: 1993).

4. See Yael Azmon and Dafna N. Izraeli (eds.), *Women in Israel* (New Brunswick: 1993); Moshe Hartman and Harriet Hartman, *Gender Equality and American Jews* (Albany: 1996); Calvin Goldscheider, *Israel's Changing Society: Population, Ethnicity and Development* (Boulder: 1996), ch. 8, 147–165; Sylvia Barack Fishman, *American Jewish Lives in Cultural Context* (Albany: 1999). For a general review, see Karen Oppenheim Mason, *Gender and Demographic Change: What Do We Know?* (Liege: 1995).

5. See Nelly Lass, *Jewish Women in a Changing World: A History of the International Council of Jewish Women (ICJW) 1899–1995* (Jerusalem: 1996); Marlin Levin, *It Takes a Dream. . . : The Story of Hadassah* (Jerusalem: 1997).

6. See Marlena Schmol and Stephen Miller, *Women in the Jewish Community, Survey Report* (London: 1994); Judy Goodkin and Judith Citron, *Women in the Jewish Community: Review and Recommendations* (London: 1994); The National Commission for American Jewish Women, *Voices for Change: Future Directions for American Jewish Women* (Waltham: 1995); Bethamie Horowitz, Pearl Beck, and Charles Kadushin, *Power and Parity: The Role of Women and Men on the Boards of Major American Jewish Organizations* (New York: 1997); Rochelle Furstenberg, *The Women's Movement in Israel* (New York: 1994).

7. A more general overview of contemporary Jewish sociodemographic trends appears in Sergio DellaPergola, *World Jewry beyond 2000: The Demographic Prospects* (Oxford: 1999).

8. See Sidney Goldstein, "Socioeconomic Differentials among Religious Groups in the United States," *The American Journal of Sociology* 74, no. 6 (1969), 612–631.

9. Sidney Goldstein, "Profile of American Jewry: Insights from the 1990 National Jewish Population Survey," *American Jewish Year Book* 92 (1992), 77–173.

10. Of other Jewish communities worldwide, Jews in the Russian Republic are the ones who came closest to the high educational attainments of U.S. Jewry. In 1989, among Jews aged 30–39, 76 percent in Moscow, 72 percent in St. Petersburg, and 59 percent in the rest of Russia had received some higher education, with small gender differentials. See Mark Tolts, "The Inter-relationship between Emigration and the Socio-Demographic Profile of Russian Jewry," in *Russian Jews on Three Continents: Migration and Resettlement*, ed. Noah Levin-Epstein, Yaakov Ro'i, and Paul Ritterband (London: 1997), 147–176.

11. See U. O. Schmelz, Sergio DellaPergola and Uri Avner, "Ethnic Differences among Israeli Jews: A New Look," *American Jewish Year Book* 90 (1990), 3–204.

12. Central Bureau of Statistics, *Languages, Literacy and Educational Attainment*, part 1, *Population and Housing Census 1961*, vol. 15, table 27, (Jerusalem: 1963).

13. See Central Bureau of Statistics, *Statistical Abstract of Israel*, vol. 49 table 22.1. The educational advantage of women relative to men was more significant in current higher-education enrollment. See Haim Adler and Nahum Blas, "I shivyon behinukh beyisrael," in *Hakzaat mashabim lesherutim hevrativim* 1996, ed. Yakov Kop (Jerusalem: 1997), 121–155.

14. See Sidney Goldstein, "Socioeconomic Differentials Among Religious Groups in the United States"; Hartman and Hartman, *Gender Equality and American Jews*.

15. See Hartman and Hartman, *Gender Equality and American Jews*; Central Bureau of Statistics, *Statistical Abstract of Israel*, vol. 49, table 12.12.

16. See Goldstein, "Socioeconomic Differentials among Religious Groups in the United States"; idem, "Profile of American Jewry"; Central Bureau of Statistics, *Labour Force*, part 1, *Population and Housing Census 1961*, vol. 9 (Jerusalem: 1963), table 46; idem, *Statistical Abstract of Israel*, vol. 49, table 12.14. See also Barry Chiswick, "Working and Family Life: The Experiences of Jewish Women in America," in *Papers in Jewish Demography 1993 in Memory of U.O. Schmelz*, ed. Sergio DellaPergola and Judith Even (Jerusalem: 1997), 277–287.

17. The index of dissimilarity indicates, on a scale between 0 and 1, the proportion of peo-

ple belonging to one population whose characteristics would have to change in order for them to attain a distribution equal to that of another population.

18. See Central Bureau of Statistics, *Time Use in Israel: Time Budget Survey 1991/92*, Special series 996 (Jerusalem: 1995).

19. See United Nations Development Programme, *Human Development Report 1999* (New York: 1999).

20. See Paul Ritterband (ed.), *Modern Jewish Fertility* (Leyden: 1981).

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23. Schmelz and DellaPergola, "The Demographic Consequences of U.S. Jewish Population Trends"; Mark Tolts, "Jewish Marriages in the USSR: A Demographic Analysis," *East European Jewish Affairs* 22, no. 2 (1992), 3–19.

24. See Schmelz and DellaPergola, "The Demographic Consequences of U.S. Jewish Population Trends."

25. See Goldstein, "Profile of American Jewry."

26. See Sylvia Barack Fishman, *Jewish Life and American Culture* (Albany: 2000), 119 (table 5.2).

27. See Linda J. Waite, "The American Jewish Family: What We Know, What We Need to Know." Paper delivered at conference titled "Establishing a Research Agenda for the Jewish Community," New York, Oct. 1999.

28. See Sergio DellaPergola and Susana Lerner, *La población judía de México: Perfil demográfico, social y cultural* (Jerusalem: 1995).

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30. See, for example, the different opinions of Sergio DellaPergola and Uziel O. Schmelz, "Demographic Transformations of American Jewry: Marriage and Mixed Marriage in the 1980s," in *Studies in Contemporary Jewry*, vol. 5, *Israel: State and Society, 1948–1988* ed. Peter Y. Medding (New York: 1989), 169–200; Calvin Goldscheider, "American Jewish Marriages: Erosion or Transformation?" in *ibid.*, 201–208.

31. See Barry A. Kosmin, Sidney Goldstein, Joseph Waksberg, Nava Lerer, Ariella Keysar, and Jeff Scheckner, *Highlights of the Council of Jewish Federation's 1990 National Jewish Population Survey* (New York: 1991). After independently processing the NJPS file, this author obtained a 46 percent rate of mixed marriages among Jewish-born individuals who were married over the ten-year period 1981–1990. Given the increasing frequency of mixed marriage over time, this figure is consistent with the estimate in the original NJPS report, which refers to the five-year period before 1990. A 46 percent individual rate of mixed marriage corresponds to 61 percent of newly married couples. See Sergio DellaPergola, "New Data on Demography and Identification among U.S. Jews: Trends, Inconsistencies, Disagreements," *Contemporary Jewry* 12 (1991), 67–97.

32. See Bruce A. Phillips, *Re-examining Inter marriage: Trends, Textures, Strategies* (New York: 1997).

33. See Mark Tolts, "Demographic Trends among the Jews in the Three Slavic Republics of the Former USSR: A Comparative Analysis," in DellaPergola and Even (eds.), *Papers in Jewish Demography 1993 in Memory of U.O. Schmelz*, 147–175.

34. See DellaPergola and Lerner, *La población judía de México*.

35. See Mordechai Altshuler, *Soviet Jewry on the Eve of the Holocaust* (Jerusalem: 1998).

36. See Doris Bensimon and Sergio DellaPergola, *La population juive de France: sociodémographie et identité* (Paris: 1984).

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38. See Barry A. Kosmin and Seymour P. Lachman, *One Nation Under God: Religion in Contemporary American Society* (New York: 1993).

39. See Sergio DellaPergola, "Recent Trends in Jewish Marriage" in *World Jewish Population: Trends and Policies*, ed. Sergio DellaPergola and Leah Cohen (Jerusalem: 1992), 65–92; idem, "Marriage, Conversion, Children and Jewish Continuity: Some Demographic Aspects of 'Who is a Jew?,'" in *Survey of Jewish Affairs 1989*, ed. William Frankel (Oxford: 1989), 171–187.

40. See Phillips, *Re-examining Inter-marriage*.

41. See Uzi Rebhun and Sergio DellaPergola, "Heibetim soziyo-demografiyim vezehutiyim shel nesuim me'uravim bekerev yehudei arzot habrit" in *Eros, eirusin veisurim: miniyut umish-pahah behistoriyah*, ed. Israel Bartal and Isaiah Gafni (Tel-Aviv: 1998), 369–398; Peter Y. Medding, Gary A. Tobin, Sylvia Barack Fishman, and Mordechai Rimor, "Jewish Identity in Conversionary and Mixed Marriages," *American Jewish Year Book* 92 (pp. 3–76).

42. See Sylvia Barack Fishman and Alice Goldstein, *When They Are Grown They Will Not Depart: Jewish Education and the Jewish Behavior of American Adults* (Waltham: 1993); Mordechai Rimor and Elihu Katz, *Jewish Involvement of the Baby Boom Generation; Interrogating the 1990 National Jewish Population Survey* (Jerusalem: 1993).

43. See Barry A. Kosmin, Nava Lerer, and Egon Mayer, *Inter-marriage, Divorce and Remarriage among American Jews, 1982–87* (New York: 1989).

44. See Sergio DellaPergola, "New Data on Demography and Identification among U.S. Jews."

45. See Erik Peritz and Mario Baras (eds.), *Studies in the Fertility of Israel* (Jerusalem: 1992).

46. The TFR is a measure of the projected number of children expected, assuming unlimited continuation of the age-specific fertility levels observed at a given date. The TFR provides an average estimate for all women, regardless of marital status.

47. See Sergio DellaPergola, "Patterns of American Jewish Fertility," *Demography* 17, no. 3 (1980), 261–273.

48. See Frank L. Mott and Joyce C. Abma, "Contemporary Jewish Fertility: Does Religion Make A Difference?" *Contemporary Jewry* 13 (1992), 74–94.

49. See Leonid Darsky and Sergei Scherbov, "Parity Progression Fertility Tables for the Nationalities of the USSR," IIASA Working Paper, Laxenburg, 1990; Mark Tolts, "Demographic Trends among the Jews in the Three Slavic Republics of the Former USSR."

50. See DellaPergola and Lerner, *La población judía de México*.

51. See Sergio DellaPergola and Allie A. Dubb, "South African Jewry: A Sociodemographic Profile," *American Jewish Year Book* 88 (1988), 59–140.

52. See Bensimon and DellaPergola, *La population juive de France*.

53. See U. O. Schmelz, "Religiosity and Fertility among the Jews of Jerusalem," in *Papers in Jewish Demography, 1985*, ed. U.O. Schmelz and Sergio DellaPergola (Jerusalem: 1989), 157–185; Dov Friedlander and Carol Feldman, "The Modern Shift to Below-Replacement Fertility: Has Israel's Population Joined the Process?" *Population Studies* 47 (1993), 295–306; Israel Adler and Erik Peritz, "Religious Observance and Desired Fertility among Jewish Women in Israel" in DellaPergola and Even (eds.), *Papers in Jewish Demography 1993 in Memory of U.O.Schmelz*, 377–387.

54. See Ron Lesthaeghe and Guy Moors, "Is There a New Conservatism That Will Bring Back the Old Family? Ideational Trends and the Stages of Family Formation in Germany, France, Belgium and the Netherlands," in *Evolution and Revolution in European Population*, European Population Conference, vol. 1 (Milan: 1995), 225–266.

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56. See Sergio DellaPergola, "Demographic Changes in Israel in the Early 1990s," in Kop (ed.), *Israel Social Services, 1992–93*, 57–115.

57. An early specification of this hypothesis appears in Joseph J. Spengler, "Values and Fertility Analysis," *Demography* 3, no. 1 (1966), 109–130.

58. See Calvin Goldscheider and Peter R. Uhlenberg, "Minority Status and Fertility," *American Journal of Sociology* 76 (1969), 361–372.

59. See Calvin Goldscheider, *The American Jewish Community: Social Science Research and Policy Implications* (Atlanta: 1986).

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61. See Frances K. Goldscheider and Linda J. Waite, *New Families, No Families? The Transformation of the American Home* (Berkeley: 1991).

62. See Eva Bernhardt, "Working Parents in Sweden: An Example for Europe?" in European Community, Eurostat, *Human Resources in Europe at the Dawn of the 21st Century* (Luxembourg: 1991), 231–254.

63. Data adapted from Uzi Rebhun, "Geographic Mobility and Religioethnic Identification among American Jews 1970–1990," (Ph.D. diss., The Hebrew University of Jerusalem, 1997).

64. For an earlier assessment of gender differences among U.S. Jews, see Jay Brodbar-Nemzer, "Sex Differences in Attitudes of American Jews toward Israel," *Contemporary Jewry* 8 (1987), 47–58.

65. See Bensimon and DellaPergola, *La population juive de France*.

66. See Shlomit Levy, Hanna Levinsohn, and Elihu Katz, *Beliefs, Observances and Social Interactions among Israeli Jews* (Jerusalem: 1993).

67. See Sergio DellaPergola and Nitza Genuth, *Jewish Education Attained in Diaspora Communities: Data for 1970s* (Jerusalem: 1983).

68. Consistent with the other data reported here, a more marked traditionalism among Jewish women in the United Kingdom is underlined by the fact that 35 percent of all women, as opposed to 28 percent of men, define themselves as traditional. The difference is more marked in the cohort under age 30, where "traditionals" comprised 30 percent of women, compared with 20 percent of men. See Marlena Schmool and Frances Cohen, *A Profile of British Jewry: Patterns and Trends at the Turn of a Century* (London: 1998).

69. See United Nations, *Human Development Report 1999*.

70. Sergio DellaPergola, "World Jewish Population, 1997," *American Jewish Year Book* 99 (1999), 543–580.

71. The gross domestic product is the total output of goods and services for final use produced by an economy by both residents and nonresidents, regardless of the allocation to domestic and foreign claims. The per capita measure divides a country's total GDP by the number of its inhabitants. It does not include deductions for depreciation of physical capital or depletion and degradation of natural resources. It is customary to compare the performance of different countries by converting the results from their currencies into U.S. dollars using Purchasing Power Parity exchange rates (PPP\$), which allow a real comparison of price levels, since current exchange rates may over- or undervalue purchasing power.

72. The meaning and reliability of enrollment statistics may not be comparable internationally, as several less developed countries scored extremely high enrollment ratios.

73. The unusually strong ranking of men, rather than indicating a disadvantage for women, reflects uniquely low levels of Jewish male mortality that have appeared consistently in comparative demographic studies over the last century. See Sergio DellaPergola, *La trasformazione demografica della diaspora ebraica* (Turin: 1983).

Essays

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Bearing Witness to the “Differend”: Jean-François Lyotard, the Postmodern Intellectual, and “the jews”

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In the last 30 years, under the rubric of “postmodernism,” a widespread challenge has been launched against some of the central notions that are often held to have defined the modern world since the Enlightenment, condensed in the idea of the autonomous individual and the sovereign nation progressing together toward universal liberty and emancipation on the basis of science and knowledge. One significant strand running through the postmodern position concerns the Jewish experience of modernity and the influence of Jewish thought—and the thought about Jews and Judaism—on postmodern theory. The present essay focuses on this aspect of postmodernism, with specific reference to Jean-François Lyotard.

The Enlightenment, with France as one of its central crucibles, obviously had crucial implications for Jews and Judaism in the modern world, since it was the ideas and ideals of the Enlightenment that legitimated Jewish emancipation, first enacted into law during the French Revolution on September 27, 1791.¹ However, the emancipatory ideology of the Enlightenment and the Revolution was widely held to be grounded on an implicit social contract that demanded the *régénération* of Jews through their adopted adherence to *French* citizenship and the elimination of outward public Jewishness.² This resulted in immanent tensions and an inherent ambivalence between Frenchness and Jewishness—encapsulated in the catchphrase “la question juive.”³ Later, these conflicts would erupt in the paroxysm of antisemitism during the Dreyfus affair and in the Vichy collaboration with the Nazis. It is precisely the contradictions and paradoxes of the modern world, as demonstrated acutely in the French-Jewish experience, that are the target of postmodern critique.

By tracing the intellectual trajectory of Lyotard, whose work not only exemplifies the dominant themes of postmodernism⁴ but who was the first to give the term itself consequence as the designation for an elaborated theory of cultural critique, this essay seeks to show the pivotal connection between the history of Jews, Judaism, and the “Jewish Question,” on the one hand, and the postmodern position, on the other. In particular, I will concentrate on the role of the intellectual—an important theme in postmodern discourse. The essay thus focuses on that point in Lyotard’s oeuvre where

the role of the intellectual and the image of Jews and Judaism intersect. Such a focus enables an elucidation of Lyotard's understanding of the role of criticism in contemporary culture, the specific targets of the postmodern critique, the principles advocated by postmodern thinkers, and the broader implications of these issues for the politics of (Jewish) emancipation.

A number of scholars have shown that the role of the modern intellectual was defined in France in the midst of the Dreyfus affair, when the secular, Republican idea of the nation was under severe threat.⁵ What has received less attention is how the history of the intellectual overlapped with the history of the "Jewish Question."⁶ At mid-century, the term *intellectuel* was a neologism—a highly arcane, rarely used noun. It first gained limited currency only among the literary avant-garde in the 1880s.⁷ The modern concept of the intellectual emerged in public discourse during the polemics set in motion by the publication of Émile Zola's "J'Accuse!" and the antisemitic rejoinder from the anti-Dreyfusard Maurice Barrès to the so-called "Manifestes des intellectuels." The "manifesto of the intellectuals" was signed by *protestataires* aligning themselves with the Zola-Dreyfus cause the day after Zola's famous article appeared on January 13, 1898. In an editorial in *L'Aurore* on January 23, Georges Clemenceau spoke approvingly of the actions of these writers, professors, and students, noting that "intellectuals from all corners of the horizon" had "united around an idea."⁸

Barrès' response, entitled "La protestation des intellectuels!" and published in *Le Journal* on February 1, picked up on Clemenceau's use of the term and turned it against his opponents. Barrès characterized intellectuals as a decadent, avant-garde group on the margins of society who used the esoteric, urbane, universal language of philosophy, and were thus severed from the rootedness of the true French language and from the culture of *la patrie*. Since Barrès associated the intellectual with foreigners and outsiders, the decadent and degenerate, he attached many of the same associations to the image of the intellectual that he used to characterize Jews and Judaism.⁹ Barrès' rejoinder to the Dreyfusards has strongly determined the cultural image of the intellectual ever since, fusing the destiny of the universal intellectual to the image of Jews and Judaism.¹⁰

In addition to tracing the emergent image of the modern intellectual, scholars have also examined the specific social structure that underpinned the national role and function of the intellectual in modern France.¹¹ According to this analysis, the intellectual self-consciously acts in public with others identified as intellectuals. They see themselves as champions of the national conscience, representatives of the nation's values (*liberté, égalité, fraternité*, the universal rights of man), poised to speak in the name of truth against those perceived as blocking the achievement of justice. Their discourse tends toward the openly polemical—the political polemics of left versus right, the moral polemics of good versus evil, and the epistemological polemics of reality versus ideology. Finally, the intellectuals' collective identity is formed in networks of recruitment (for example, educational institutions and journals) and their opinions, disseminated via the mass media, frequently frame the national debate.

Intrinsic to the structure of the Dreyfusard intellectual is also a particular relationship between power and powerlessness. The intellectual speaks against dominant and

hierarchical authorities on behalf of the oppressed, the downtrodden, the marginalized other. Thus, the modern universal intellectual is defined in a definite time and space—late nineteenth-century France—in terms of a specific image, a unique national role and function, and a distinctive relationship to the Other. Crucial to the formation of this social actor was the specific relation to the Jew as the Other in whose defense the intellectuals spoke. It can be argued that this fact left its stamp on the way that French intellectuals saw themselves and were seen throughout the twentieth century.

Born in Versailles in 1924, from an early age Jean-François Lyotard was disposed toward an intellectual orientation in the classic French mold. He recalls that by the age of 11 or 12, he "wanted either to become a monk (especially a Dominican), a painter, or historian," and three years later he "actually began to write poems, essays, short stories, and later still, a novel."¹² Instead, Lyotard became a philosopher, teaching at first in secondary schools until 1959, beginning at a lycée in Constantine, the capital of the French department of East Algeria in 1950, and then as a professor at the University of Paris VIII (Saint-Denis), a post he held until his official retirement in 1989. He continued to teach at the Critical Theory Institute of the University of California, Irvine, among other international institutional positions, until his death on April 21, 1997, resulting from a second bout with cancer.

From 1956 to 1966, Lyotard was on the editorial committee of the journal *Socialisme ou barbarie* and then the newspaper *Pouvoir ouvrier*, both of them published by sectarian avant-garde theoretical groups on the left, involved in elaborating a Marxist critique of Stalinism.¹³ He agitated actively against French colonialism in Algeria and was later a participant in the huge demonstrations of May-June 1968 that almost toppled President Charles de Gaulle's government. His first published book, *La Phénoménologie* (1954), still constitutes a classic introduction to the subject.¹⁴

As he drifted away from Marxism, Lyotard was becoming more interested in psychoanalysis. He attended Jacques Lacan's seminars in the mid-1960s and, interested in Lacan's critique of ego-psychology and his remapping of the unconscious via structuralist linguistics, published works in the late 1960s and early 1970s that challenged the Freudian and Lacanian emphasis on the Oedipus complex. Like many of his contemporaries, Lyotard also contributed to the revival of Nietzsche in France.¹⁵ When he began to articulate his specifically postmodern critique in the late 1970s and early 1980s, he demonstrated a profound interest in the work of Emmanuel Levinas and more generally in Judaism as a source providing a critical perspective on the history of Western thought. Lyotard's own intellectual itinerary thus serves as the quintessential example of the aggregate of influences acting on postmodern thought.

Like that of Levinas, Lyotard's oeuvre constitutes a persistent critique of totalitarian or totalizing thought. From his earliest works, he sought to undermine any philosophical position or ideological system that claimed to encompass totality, whether Hegelian *Geist* or dogmatic Marxist dialectical materialism. He was similarly critical of the monistic or reductionist versions of the Freudian theory of the psyche. Lyotard articulates this critique of totality clearly in *The Postmodern Condition* (1979), the book that gave the term "postmodern" its philosophical currency. *The Postmodern Condition*, which, as Frederic Jameson describes it, is "at the crossroads of many

problems and books which intersect in the text,"¹⁶ and which remains the ur-text for the modern/postmodern divide, is as much a sociological analysis of knowledge production, science and technology, and a history of the present as it is a philosophical exercise. Lyotard argues there that the postmodern condition is constituted by a crisis of legitimation derived from "the incredulity toward metanarratives"¹⁷ in contemporary society. By metanarratives, Lyotard means "precisely narrations with a legitimating function,"¹⁸ especially those narratives at the basis of universalizing or totalizing systems of thought.

A component of Lyotard's critique, woven throughout his work, is a rejection of the *modern* intellectual as a cultural actor who constructs a universal master narrative about liberation and (national) self-realization, all the while legitimating his own intellectual authority. The political problem of the role and function of the modern intellectual is the problem of the author, more precisely the *authority* of the author to speak and write for the dispossessed, for those not *authorized* to speak for themselves. The issue for Lyotard concerns our debt and responsibility *to* the other, which undermines the intellectual authority to speak *for* the other. Instead of the universal intellectual, Lyotard advocates a minoritarian¹⁹ intellectual politics: a politics that self-reflexively questions *authority*, a politics of indeterminate judgment.

In offering a condensed account of Lyotard's critique of the universal intellectual, I will focus on his intervention in the debate on the "silence of the intellectuals," which erupted after the Socialist accession to power in France in May 1981.²⁰ The controversy over the "silence of the intellectuals," often cited by historians as evidence of a crisis in the role of the intelligentsia in French culture, ensued as a result of the muted response of left-wing intellectuals to François Mitterand's victory. Whereas the minister of culture, Jack Lang, spoke in the National Assembly in the autumn of 1981 of the mutual "gratitude" uniting the new Socialist government and the intellectuals, the *Nouvel Observateur* contrasted the intellectuals' enthusiastic response to the victory of the Popular Front in 1936 with "the reservation or the silence of the French haute intelligentsia" in May 1981.²¹

In *Le Monde* on July 26 1983, Max Gallo, spokesperson of the Socialist government and author of *Tombeau pour la Commune* (in which he indicted intellectuals as "a social group that floats outside of time and reality and that for more than two centuries has erected windmills, fought them, then never stopped singing about their courage")²² published an article entitled "Les intellectuels, la politique et la modernité."²³ Even as it called upon "the 'intellectuals' to open the debate on the 'transformation' that France requires in order to 'catch up' in economic and social matters,"²⁴ Gallo's article contained the emblematic question of the controversy: "Has the Left abandoned the battle of ideas?" In *Le Monde* the next day, an article appeared by Philippe Boggio on the "silence of the intellectuals of the Left." Gallo and Boggio thus started an affair that would persist throughout the summer.

Lyotard's intervention in the debate, entitled "Tombeau de l'intellectuel" ("Tomb of the Intellectual") appeared in *Le Monde* on October 8. He opened his response by first asking rhetorically what Gallo meant by "intellectuals" and then answered that Gallo was appealing to intellectuals "to take on administrative, economic, social, and

cultural responsibilities."²⁵ Lyotard then began to question the grounds that legitimated this conception of the intellectuals' role:

It seems to me that "intellectuals" . . . situate themselves in the position of man, humanity, the nation, the people, the proletariat . . . ; they . . . identify themselves with a subject endowed with a universal value so as to describe and analyze a situation or a condition from this point of view and to prescribe what ought to be done in order for this subject to realize itself, or at least in order for its realization to progress.²⁶

The intellectual, for Lyotard, "is inseparable from the (shared) idea of a universal subject. It alone can give Voltaire, Zola, Péguy, Sartre (to stay within the confines of France) the authority that has been accorded to them."²⁷ The function of intellectuals, therefore, was to provide the consciousness that would enable history to realize itself through this universal subject, and thus intellectuals championed causes such as social and economic equality. What Lyotard points out, however, is that their own role was dependent on having "victims" whose plight they could ameliorate. Lyotard is critical of the instrumentality constitutive of the intellectuals' role, of their prophetic stance, and especially of their assumption that universality is a necessary and legitimate requirement for the resolution of political questions. For Lyotard, "it is precisely this totalizing unity, this universality, that thought has lacked since at least the middle of the twentieth century."²⁸

Lyotard proceeds succinctly and acutely to reimagine a critical intellectual project by refashioning the role of the thinker. He insists that thinkers, writers, philosophers, and artists should not be "intellectuals."²⁹ To be a critical theorist and to be an intellectual are mutually exclusive roles. The responsibility of cultural critics is not to determine solutions, but to raise questions, specifically questions about the criteria of legitimacy and judgment in thought, writing, philosophy, and art. Lyotard thus insists:

There ought no longer be "intellectuals," and if there are any, it is because they are blind to this new fact in Western history . . . there is no universal subject-victim. . . . I am not saying that there is no need to get involved in the fate of the most disadvantaged: ethical and civic responsibility demand that one should. But this point of view only allows defensive and local interventions.³⁰

Thus the call for a shift from the "universal" to the "specific" intellectual is ethical and political, focusing on responsibility and representation, and is related to Lyotard's claim about the death of the universal "subject-victim" together with the death of the author.³¹ Lyotard advocates a postuniversal, post-totalizing perspective that accepts a multiplicity of heterogeneous actions and responses to cultural, civic, and ethical issues. Modern intellectuals represent an obstacle to this stance because they fail to self-reflexively examine how they themselves participate in hegemonic power. Lyotard thus stresses in *Instructions paiënnes* (an earlier work) that "the intellectual left's critique of power is vitiated by the fact that 'in the pragmatics of their narrations one finds an exemplary machinery of domination in miniature.'"³² In another short article that addressed the relation between intellectuals and the Socialist victory in 1981, entitled "The Differend," Lyotard argued that intellectuals are themselves part of the system that undergirds the government and governance.³³

Instead of the universal intellectual, Lyotard proposes a paradigm shift. "I believe," he writes, "that activities of thought have another vocation: that of bearing witness to differends."³⁴ In "A Svelte Appendix to the Postmodern Question," he clearly connects his more sociological analysis in *The Postmodern Condition* to the project of his philosophical magnum opus published in 1983, *The Differend: Phrases in Dispute*:

In speaking of the idea of postmodernity, I situate myself in this context. And in this context I say that our role as thinkers is to deepen what language there is, to critique the shallow notion of information, to reveal an irremediable opacity within language itself. Language is not an "instrument of communication," it is a highly complex archipelago formed of domains of phrases, phrases from such different regimes that one cannot translate a phrase from one regime (a descriptive, for example) into a phrase from another (an evaluative, a prescriptive).³⁵

Thus, what postmodern thinking must effect is the "discovery of the incommensurability of phrase regimes."³⁶ Lyotard's somewhat opaque statement suggests both an epistemological critique and a conception of language that undergirds that critique.

Lyotard's argument can be summarized as follows. First, critics cannot abstract themselves from the object of their critique—their own subjectivity is revealed in any claim to objectivity and any claim to know is situated within overlapping discourses and practices that significantly structure claims to truth. Hence, writers and historians can only produce situated knowledge, and they should self-reflexively explore what its implications are within the social relations of power. This epistemological critique gives a very different value to Francis Bacon's claim that "knowledge is power."

Second and more fundamentally, Lyotard insists that the language of criticism be rethought in light of what has been termed the "linguistic turn,"³⁷ which at a minimum demands that thinkers and writers attend to the inherent complexity of language. Language, for Lyotard, is not merely a tool for communication or a means to transmit information. Following the lead taken by Ferdinand de Saussure's structuralist linguistics and Ludwig Wittgenstein's philosophy of language, Lyotard argues that language is neither a mirror of the world, nor is it a unified totality. Rather, it is made up of "discursive regimes," each an island with its own rules and distinct ends. The task of thought is to discover the rules that govern these discursive regimes, to discern what permits the links between discrete discourses and, most significantly, to apprehend the irreconcilable differences between them. Lyotard uses the term "the differend" to describe the differences between such "discursive regimes."

In opposition to the universalizing, totalizing metanarratives that, according to the postmodern view, underpin modern historiography, politics, art, society, ethics, language, and the role of the modern intellectual, *Le Différend* calls for an approach that opposes "the politics of 'intellectuals' and of politicians" by "bearing witness to the differend."³⁸ "As distinguished from a litigation," Lyotard writes,

a differend would be a case of conflict, between (at least) two parties, that cannot be equitably resolved for lack of a rule of judgement applicable to both arguments. One side's legitimacy does not imply the other's lack of legitimacy. . . . The title of this book suggests (through the generic value of the definite article) that a universal rule of judgment between heterogeneous genres is lacking in general.³⁹

A differend arises because different "language games" or "phrase regimes"⁴⁰ have different rules of formation that are linked to form different *genres* of discourse (that is, the rules for linking phrase regimes), which come into conflict in different contexts (historical, political, ethical, aesthetic, philosophical, social). For Lyotard, conflict over difference(s) are inevitable, and the postmodern condition is such that there is no universal discourse that can provide a final arbitration of disputes.⁴¹

Lyotard's clearest elucidation of his notion of the differend is in his essay "A Memorial for Marxism," in which he explains his own complex relationship to Marxist thought, which, he argues, had itself become "a screen of words thrown over real differends."⁴² Lyotard begins by indicating that his dissenting position within Marxism in particular, and the notion of the differend in general, is crucial to an understanding of the present; that is, it constitutes an integral aspect of the postmodern condition.⁴³ According to Lyotard, his conception of the differend follows in the tradition of what Marxism called "praxis."⁴⁴ Further, he insists that what is silenced in the dominant rules of legitimation and validation—the differend as a pivotal difference in the context of a dispute—is no mere contradiction that can be overcome through a dialogue aimed at compromise or consensus.⁴⁵

To recognize the differend, Lyotard continues, is to face up to the anxiety at the heart of an irremediable clash of values—in this case, his own trauma as a radical Marxist trying to articulate his differences with Marxism. The immanent challenge of the differend, Lyotard maintains, is to determine in which idiom or genre of discourse the conflict can be expressed. Bearing witness to this problem, moreover, demands recognition of the fact that there can hardly be a symmetrical relation of power in the context that initially provokes the differend. One begins "bearing witness to a differend" by noting, by describing, and by meditating on the issues in the dispute.⁴⁶ Moreover, even acknowledging the differend means modifying the rules of the language games that underpin the dispute.

Within the development of Lyotard's thought, the increasing importance that he accords to the conception and significance of the differend is concomitant with his ever more frequent references to Jews and Judaism "after Auschwitz." However, themes related to the "Jewish Question" have a long history in Lyotard's work, starting with his first published text, a review of Karl Jasper's *Die Schuldfrage*, published just after the Second World War; through his essays in the 1960s and 1970s on psychoanalysis in general and *Moses and Monotheism* in particular, via *Le Différend* and its thread of questions related to the Shoah; up to *Heidegger and "the jews,"* published in 1988, and beyond.⁴⁷

Linking problems in psychoanalysis and philosophy, Lyotard draws a parallel between the unconscious in psychoanalysis and the figure of "the Jew" as incomprehensible and unidentifiable, the imperative alterity⁴⁸ that the European tradition in general and Western metaphysics in particular has consistently excluded, repressed, and "forgotten." From an early stage, Lyotard's work thus exposes the problem of antisemitism at its most general structural level, incorporating a critique of the whole Greco-Roman-Christian-Enlightenment tradition of the West in his attempt to "work through" the history of "the Jew" in order to demonstrate how the West has failed in

its debt to, and responsibility for, the Other. By the 1980s—and in his specifically post-modern phase—“Auschwitz” functions metonymically to indicate a series of philosophical questions about history and reference, ethics and politics that mark the break between modernity and the postmodern. “‘Auschwitz’ can be taken as a paradigmatic name for the tragic ‘incompletion’ of modernity. . . . It is the crime opening post-modernity. . . . How could the grand narratives of legitimization still have credibility in these circumstances?”⁴⁹

In order to illustrate the way in which Lyotard engages with Jews, Judaism, and the “Jewish Question,” I will focus on his intervention in the affair of the desecrated Jewish tombs in the cemetery of Carpentras in May 1990. The damage to the tombs at Carpentras was discovered on the morning of May 10. More than 30 graves were defiled, but what was most ghoulish about the incident was that “the corpse of an eight-year-old buried two weeks earlier was removed from his grave and abused: as well as an attempted impalement, someone had laid a Star of David and a slab inscribed ‘a souvenir from the neighbors,’ taken from other graves, on the body.”⁵⁰

For a full comprehension of its significance, this incident should be situated within its broader context: a slew of “copycat attacks” in France that followed the Carpentras events;⁵¹ the media sensation created by the event, especially the way in which the press linked the Carpentras incident to the rising popularity of Jean-Marie Le Pen’s National Front Party;⁵² that party’s flirtation with Holocaust denial;⁵³ the racist anti-immigration discourse of the extreme Right; and anti-racism as perhaps the unifying theme for intellectuals on the Left since at least the municipal elections in Dreux in 1983 (that is, during the same summer of the “silence of the intellectuals.”)⁵⁴ All of these issues should likewise be correlated with what Henry Rousso has called “the Vichy syndrome” in its multiple manifestations;⁵⁵ with the Franco-Israeli relationship following the Six-Day War of 1967;⁵⁶ with the response to the massacre of Jewish athletes in Munich in 1972; with the attacks on the kosher student restaurant in the Latin Quarter in March 1978, on the synagogue in rue Copernic in October 1980, and on Jo Goldenberg’s deli in the “Jewish Quarter” (Marais) in August 1982;⁵⁷ and with the “Heidegger affair” that erupted in 1987.⁵⁸ It was against this background that Lyotard intervened in the Carpentras episode. His article, entitled “Europe, the Jews and the Book,” was published in *Libération* on May 15, 1990.⁵⁹

In this article, Lyotard situates the violation of the tombs in Carpentras within the largest possible framework: the differend dividing Europe from Jews and Judaism. For Lyotard, Carpentras is an example of a repetitive and compulsive syndrome embedded in Western culture that was now manifesting itself in the tendency to erase Jewish memory even “after Auschwitz”:

The profanation of the tombs and the displaying of a corpse torn out of its coffin on a stake in the Jewish cemetery of Carpentras say something specific: after the *Shoah* the Jews have no right to their dead or to the memory of their dead. There is a long tradition of the profanation of Jewish cemeteries in Europe. The “final solution” martyred and killed millions of Jews for no political reason, but it also made them disappear, and it tried to erase all trace of the annihilation.⁶⁰

Lyotard metonymically represents this differend through the image of the Jews as “the ‘People of the Book.’”⁶¹ It is the quintessentially philosemitic motif of the Jews as

the "People of the Book," so crucial to the postmodern fascination with "the Jew," that I shall now seek to problematize.

For Lyotard, the opposition to the "People of the Book," and to books and to readers more generally, is what animates the desecration of the tombs: "Do people have something against books, against their book, against the readers of this book that would lead them to the point of violating Jews' tombs to kill their dead? . . . In fact, yes."⁶² Why does Lyotard make the link between the profanation of tombs and texts? Because texts are regarded by Lyotard as a potential provocation, beyond instrumentality or utility: "Nothing is as slow, difficult and unprofitable as learning to read, which is an endless activity. In a society avid for performance, profit and speed, it is an exercise that has lost its value, along with the institution that trains people for it."⁶³ For Lyotard, the modern (it)self is organized around gaining time, and reading⁶⁴ is therefore a subversion of the instrumental rationality that undergirds the modern.

In "Europe, the Jews and the Book," Lyotard distills some of the key themes from his articles of the late 1960s, specifically "Figure Foreclosed" and "Jewish Oedipus."⁶⁵ He argues that the Jews as the "People of the Book" constitute "the base of Europe's whole culture" but remain within "that culture as excluded from it."⁶⁶ Lyotard thus repeats, albeit with a difference, the analysis of *Moses and Monotheism*: the Book (the Jewish Bible) that is at the base of Europe's entire culture remains within that culture only as what is denied—as with Moses, who was murdered by his own people, who then, repressing the guilty memory of the murder, resurrected him (figuratively) as Moses the Midianite. This is also the narrative structure of Freud's *Totem and Taboo*, where the father is murdered and devoured, engendering a guilt that solidifies tribal fraternity and thus initiates the symbolic or the totemic reality, which for Freud underlies the neurosis of religion. Hence, the Jews (as the "People of the Book") constitute a figure of the European unconscious, as Lyotard, after Freud, concludes:

Thus the annihilation of what the book of the Jews says continues in the unconscious of a permissive Europe. Thus continues the annihilation of the message that the law does not belong to us and that our reconciliation with it remains pending. This is the constitutive anti-Semitism of a Europe that has, in one way or another, always thought the opposite of this message, has always thought its self-constitution.⁶⁷

Therefore, what is at stake at Carpentras is a differend between Jews and Europe, focused on "the symbolic," on issues of the law and of death.⁶⁸

In "Europe, the Jews and the Book," Lyotard contends that the differend dividing Judaism from the West is itself an old story, one that he later analyzed at much greater length in his work of 1993, *Un trait d'union (The Hyphen)*. The hyphen examined here by Lyotard is that found in the phrase "Judeo-Christian tradition." The *trait d'union*, he argues, is the mark of a differend involving the issues of time, memory, and history; election, revelation, and redemption; justice, ethics, knowledge, and language—in short, the letter versus the spirit.⁶⁹ Lyotard locates the origin of the differend in the Epistles of Saint Paul, in which the book of the Jews was designated as the "Old" Testament in order for the new work to be defined as a "New" Testament. With this began the temporal cleavage that ushered in the modern.⁷⁰

As in *Un trait d'union*, in "Europe, the Jews and the Book," Lyotard argues that Paul's Epistles represented a "revolution": it is "the beginning of modernity" and the

genesis of Jewish exclusion. Lyotard also stresses the differend dividing the Torah, where “no one ever gains access to His [God’s] visible presence” and where “the law of justice and peace does not become incarnate” from Paul’s insistence that in Jesus “the Voice was made manifest. It said clearly: love each other like brothers.”⁷¹ Lyotard thus emphasizes an irreducible theological and historical difference between the God of Judaism and Christian theology based on presence and incarnation.⁷²

In “Europe, the Jews and the Book,” Lyotard also refers to the tensions immanent within freedom and emancipation—a subject that he articulates at greater length in his article of 1990, “Mainmise” (“Grip”), which discloses the continuities between the ancient story of Paul’s Epistles and the modern story of the Enlightenment, stressing how both stories repress, exclude, and forget Jewish difference. Lyotard’s central point in “Mainmise,” whose “grip” is an image of knowledge in the West, is that emancipation and Enlightenment in the West were both rooted in the ideal of independence and autonomy.⁷³ He argues that emancipation was therefore conceived as a liberation from anxiety and conscience. Freedom now meant freedom from the Other, who was externalized and “gripped.” Consequently, knowledge in the West, especially since Bacon and Descartes, is determined by the desire for mastery, incorporation, appropriation, and the assimilation of difference.

Lyotard stresses a differend dividing the Greco-Roman-Christian model of emancipation, figured in the sacrifice of Jesus and later transfigured in the Enlightenment, and the Jewish model⁷⁴ of emancipation, depicted in the sacrifice of Isaac, where

God will provide for emancipation. But God is not foreseeable. He has promised. How the promise will be kept, no one knows. We must scrutinize the [letter] of the book. Scrutinizing the letter of the book does not just mean observing the rites to the letter, as Paul meanly suggests. Jewish emancipation lies in the pursuit of writing, writing about writing, and writing on the occasion of the event.⁷⁵

In “Europe, the Jews and the Book,” Lyotard recapitulates this argument by picking up on the theme of fraternity:

The Christians announce to us that finally, we are all reconciled brothers. The Jews remind us that we are always sons, blessed but insubmissive. . . . The Christian churches had introduced the motif of fraternity. The French Revolution extended it, by turning it on its head. We are brothers, not as sons of God but as free and equal citizens. It is not an Other who gives us the law. It is our civic community that does, that obliges, prohibits, permits. That is called emancipation from the Other, and autonomy. Our law opens citizenship to every individual, conditional on respect for republican principles. The Jews are allowed in like anyone else. That is called assimilation.⁷⁶

However, this metanarrative of the West’s continual dismissals, rejections, and introductions of Jewish difference confronts its own limits at the gates of Auschwitz:

In the European unconscious, it is recognized that his [the Jew’s] debt to the Other will prevail over his duties to the others, to the national community. And that he is bound to be a potential traitor. Unless he forgets himself as Jew. This is the great temptation for the “assimilated” themselves. The “final solution” will come as a monstrous reminder to them that they are always, even *despite themselves*, witnesses to something about which Europe wants to know nothing.⁷⁷

Lyotard here echoes the Sartrean thesis in *Réflexions sur la question juive* that the gaze of Gentile society will always serve as a barrier to Jewish integration.⁷⁸ For Sartre, in seeking to forget the gaze of Gentile society, "the Jew" risks inauthenticity. In Lyotardian terms, the assimilated Jew is "the Jew" who forgets that he is the forgotten. Auschwitz thus marks the ultimate unassimilability of "the Jew," evident in Lyotard's own rhetorical question: "How could someone who professes *heteronomy* be transformed into one who exercises *autonomy*?"⁷⁹

Lyotard's own metanarrative about Jewish exclusion, repression, and victimization by the West is given its most sustained elaboration in his commentary on the Heidegger affair, in the section on "the jews" in his *Heidegger and "the jews"* (1988). In "Europe, the Jews and the Book," Lyotard invokes a passage that paraphrases the opening of his earlier essay on Heidegger:

The whole social, political, religious, and speculative history of Christian Europe bears witness to a permanent undertaking, using various means (inquisition, conversion, expulsion, censorship) to neutralize the Jewish message and banish the community of unbelievers.⁸⁰

Lyotard's central problem in *Heidegger and "the jews"* was to demonstrate how the limits of thought are repetitively forgotten in the history of the West; and specifically how Heidegger's philosophy, which was crucially concerned with the forgetfulness of the West (in its failure to think Being) itself forgets, as evident in Heidegger's silence on the Shoah. Heidegger's role in the Nazi party and, more perniciously for Lyotard, his silence about the Holocaust implicated him in the Nazi "Final Solution"—the effort to eliminate European Jewry without trace or memory.

In "Europe, the Jews and the Book," as already noted, Lyotard reads Carpentras as symptomatic of a long history: the West's desire to forget the European tradition of forgetting the Jews:

My claim is that the Jews represent *something that Europe does not want to or cannot know anything about*. Even when they are dead, it abolishes their memory and refuses them burial in its land. All of this takes place in the unconscious and has no right to speak. When the deed is done in full daylight, Europe is seized for an instant by the horror and the terror of *confronting its own desire*.⁸¹

Heidegger's complicity with the Nazis was therefore part of a long-term effort within Western thought to try to liquidate the unrepresentable, (it)self "represented" by "the jews," who are a figure in Lyotard for what is always already forgotten in philosophy, writing, literature, and art. "The jews" in Lyotard's text occupy the threshold between what the West cannot think and what it cannot not think—the nonrepresentable, the unassimilable ("jewish") Other.

The first lines of *Heidegger and "the jews"* indicate that, by using a lower case and plural formulation bracketed by quotation marks, Lyotard's "jews" are a structural, figurative construct:

I write "the jews" this way neither out of prudence nor lack of something better. I use [the] lower case to indicate that I am not thinking of a nation. I make it plural to signify that it is neither a figure nor a political (Zionism), religious (Judaism), or philosophical

(Jewish philosophy) subject that I put forward under this name. I use quotation marks to avoid confusing these “jews” with real Jews. What is most real about real Jews is that Europe, in any case, does not know what to do with them: Christians demand their conversion; monarchs expel them; republics assimilate them; Nazis exterminate them. “The jews” are the object of a dismissal with which Jews, in particular, are afflicted in reality.⁸²

“Europe, the Jews and the Book” thus makes evident what Geoffrey Bennington has called the “terrible ambiguity”⁸³ between this image of “the jews” and “real” Jews, since Lyotard, in this later article, names “Jews” with a capital “J” while ascribing to them the same markers as “the jews.” “The Jews,” writes Lyotard, “are not a nation. They do not speak a language of their own. They have no roots in a *nature*, like the European nations. They claim to have their roots in a book.”⁸⁴

This conflation in Lyotard’s work between what he seeks to characterize as a structure of obligation and responsibility—the debt of the West to its (“jewish”) Other—and “real” Jews is made evident in his own reiteration of the argument of *Heidegger and “the jews”* on the occasion of a conference in Vienna by the same name:

The Jews cannot manage to find their place in the systems by which thought is represented in the politics and social practices of the European West. They cannot form a “nation” in the medieval sense, nor a people in the modern sense. The Law forbids them to acquire the communitarian status of an ethnic group. . . . Their relation to the event of the Covenant and the Promise is a relation of dependence, not a relation to a land and history but a relation to the letter of a book and to a paradoxical temporality. The book is not the object of a hermeneutic reading that might expose and accumulate its meaning, but of a talmudic reading that tries to get at that meaning through the screens of previous interpretations.⁸⁵

Lyotard thus systematically correlates “the Jews” as an unconscious affect, an unrepresentable alterity and an ethical category signifying debt, obligation, and responsibility, primarily because of the priority accorded to the Jewish relation to the text. Consider Lyotard’s article “Time Today” (1988), in which he connects the structural position of the Jews and the writer:

Thought and writing are isolated and placed in the ghetto, in the sense in which the work of Kafka deploys that theme. But this term “ghetto” is not here simply a metaphor. The Jews of Warsaw were not only doomed to death, they also had to pay for the “protection measures” taken against them, starting with the wall that the Nazis decided to erect against the supposed threat of a typhoid epidemic. The same goes for writers and thinkers: if they resist the predominant use of time today, they are not only predestined to disappear, but they must also contribute to the making of a “sanitary cordon” isolating them.⁸⁶

This correlation of “the jews,” of writing and the writer, and the Jewish relation to texts and to textuality that I have traced through Lyotard’s works is reiterated in *Heidegger and “the jews”*: the “theme of silence” (already noted with reference to the “silence of the intellectuals” and to Heidegger) is “an ‘aesthetic’ theme . . . which is not only that of the so-called avant-gardes but also that of ‘the jews.’”⁸⁷ His emphasis on the parallel between writers and the Jews as the “people of the book” shows how his own intervention on behalf of Jews and his valorization of the Jews as a critical category have to be understood against the background of his critical attitude to-

ward the modern intellectual— ultimately, "the jews" serve to legitimate his own position as postmodern thinker and writer.

The image of the "people of the book" condenses a hypothesized, historically abstracted, aestheticized, and allegorical depiction of the Jews in Lyotard's texts. Lyotard's "jews" have at best an ambiguous relation to the Jews as a community or nation, to Judaism as a set of discourses/practices or even to Jewishness as a specifically Jewish way of being in the world. Lyotard's denial of Jewish nationhood simply erases the complex history of Zionism and the state of Israel; his liquidation of Jewish communal traditions eliminates the memory of Jewish peoplehood and its representation in traditional Jewish narratives.⁸⁸ The denial of a unique Jewish language undermines the historical reality of Hebrew, as well as Yiddish. The signifier of "the Jew" in Lyotard's thought carries with it the idea of absolute heterogeneity, the *unheimlich* in the *Heimat*, and it is essentially depicted as a tradition with "exodus as its beginning."⁸⁹

Lyotard's valorization of "the Jew" as nomadic, rootless, and diasporic repeats images of "the Jew" that have been so pivotal to their exclusion. Several commentators have pointed to problems with the tropes Lyotard uses to depict "the jews." Michael Weingrad has suggested that, even as Lyotard prophetically proclaims the end of grand narratives, he reinscribes "the very old narrative of the Wandering Jew."⁹⁰ Dominick LaCapra has argued that Lyotard rebaptizes "the jews"

with a hyperbolic "anaesthetics" of the sublime and his own "postmodern" understanding of its analogues or accompaniments: trauma, *écriture*, alterity, nomadism, the un(re)presentable, *Nachträglichkeit*, not-forgetting-that-there-is-the-Forgotten, and so forth.⁹¹

As Elizabeth Bellamy contends, these tropes turn "the Jews" from "the sublime object of ideology" in Slavoi Žižek's terms, into "a kind of ideological object of the sublime."⁹² Max Silverman maintains that in "employing an ethnic allegory to characterize the tension between order and disorder, reason and resistance to reason, the self-constituted self and the heterogeneous self, Europe and its other(s), this postmodern theory would appear to overlap uncomfortably with the ethnic allegory employed frequently in the age of modernity."⁹³ These commentators thus point to the way in which Lyotard's depiction of "the jews" undermines core elements of his own project to "work through" the image of "the Jew" in order to destabilize the logic of the exclusion and the repression of the Other in the history of the West.

To these criticisms I would add the suggestion that Lyotard, whose work most emphatically seeks to unwork the speculative, totalizing, universalizing, and quintessentially modern philosophy of Hegel, even ends up reiterating significant elements of the Hegelian image of "the Jew."⁹⁴ Hegel's *Early Theological Writings* stress the heterogeneity in Judaism of man and God and the self-alienation of the Jews in their conception of the Law. This position is reiterated in *The Phenomenology of Spirit*, where "the Jew" is depicted as the failure of the dialectic, as a remnant that cannot be assimilated, and as the ruin of reconciliation.⁹⁵ In *Die Religionen der geistigen Individualität*, the Jewish God is cast in the position of "sublimity" (*Erhabenheit*) and Judaism depicted as the "Religion of Sublimity."⁹⁶ Thus, whereas Hegel denigrates Jews and Judaism as essentially nondialectical, the antithesis of his union of opposites, it is precisely as such that Lyotard valorizes Judaism. Like Hegel, Lyotard's

views depend upon what Gillian Rose has problematized as the “diremption”⁹⁷ (that is, the forced separation) of the Hellenic and Hebraic; her own argument is that Athens and Jerusalem have historically been more intertwined than Lyotard’s typologies (of both traditions) lead us to believe. Jonathan and Daniel Boyarin have put this critique within a larger frame, arguing that Lyotard’s work reiterates the Pauline allegorization of “the Jews” and the spiritualization of history.⁹⁸

Therefore, what Lyotard’s own work “refuses to forget” is not the Jews, but the crimes against humanity committed by Christian and modern Europe.⁹⁹ At the same time, Lyotard demonstrates a tendency to forget the antisemitic motifs of Jewish marginalization, repression, and exclusion. The repeated reference to the Jews as the “people of the book” in Lyotard’s work is a static and abstract image of “the Jew” that denies Jewish history and forgets Jewish tradition, which results in a frozen portrait of “the Jew” as an abstracted essence that serves not only a philosophical function in Lyotard’s thought, but also a sociocultural function in legitimizing his role as the (postmodern) intellectual.

In sum, while Lyotard clearly indicts the model of the modern, universal intellectual in his work, his own specific interventions actually repeat, albeit with some differences, the image, the structure, and the relation to the Other of the modern French intellectual. Jews and Judaism function in Lyotard’s postmodern position in ways directly parallel to his critique of the universal intellectual; Lyotard assimilates the Jewish Other in order to legitimate his own postmodern intellectual authority. His abstracted appropriation of “the jews” to depict the sublime Other to the West reinscribes Jews as marginalized outcasts in European civilization and forgets the concrete relations of the Jewish religious tradition and of Jewish history to what Lyotard calls “the Law.” In short, what Lyotard’s critique forgets is the concrete *history* of Jews, Judaism, and “the Jewish Question.”

However, one should not conclude from this critique of Lyotard that postmodern approaches should simply be dismissed as “irrationalism, neoconservatism, intellectual terrorism, simple minded liberalism, nihilism and cynicism”¹⁰⁰ that have nothing of substance to offer beneath their jargon-laden language. On the contrary, this paper is itself the articulation of a debt, since it is only through criticism that one can express a fidelity to Lyotard’s texts. Lyotard’s work demonstrates how the basic *rules* of formation underpinning the discipline of history in general and the history of the Jews and Judaism in particular require reevaluation, given awareness of the problems of reading, temporality, memory, and language. In addition, Lyotard helps to reassess the *stakes* of Jewish history by his reflections on (Jewish) emancipation and the problem of (Jewish) identity. The point, therefore, of reading Lyotard’s postmodern critique is that it can sensitize us to inscribe anamnesis and the immemorial¹⁰¹ in history, even when Lyotard himself forgets that this is ultimately what is at stake in his work.

Notes

An earlier version of this article was presented at the American Historical Association, January 1999, where I benefited from the general discussion, as well as from the specific comments of

Matt Matsuda, John Westbrook, and Bud Burkhardt, my co-panelists. I also profited from conversations with Ezra Mendelsohn, Michel Ben-Naftali, and Louise Shabat Bethlehem at the Hebrew University, and with Torbjörn Wandel and Thomas Cochran. The research and writing of this essay were generously supported by the Rosenzweig Center for German-Jewish Literature and Cultural History and by the Vidal Sassoon International Center for the Study of Antisemitism.

1. The classic reference for discussions of the French Enlightenment and the Jews in English is Arthur Hertzberg, *The French Enlightenment and the Jews* (New York: 1968). For Lynn Hunt's very sharp critique of Hertzberg, see *The French Revolution and Human Rights* (Boston: 1996), 31 (n. 9). For an alternative interpretation to Hertzberg, see Gary Kates, "Jews into Frenchmen: Nationality and Representation in Revolutionary France," *Social Research* 56 (1989), 213–232. See also Francis Malino, "Attitudes Towards Jewish Communal Autonomy in Pre-Revolutionary France," in *Essays in Modern Jewish History*, ed. Francis Malino and Phyllis Cohen Albert (London: 1982), 95–120; Bernard Blumenkranz and Albert Soboul (eds.), *Les Juifs et la révolution française* (Toulouse: 1976). For critical readings of the Enlightenment's relation to the Jews, see Léon Poliakov, *The History of Antisemitism*, vol. 3, *From Voltaire to Wagner*, trans. Miriam Kochan (London: 1975); George Mosse, *Toward the Final Solution: A History of European Racism* (Madison: 1985); and Berel Lang, "Genocide and Kant's Enlightenment" in his *Act and Idea in the Nazi Genocide* (Chicago: 1990).

2. See Jay R. Berkowitz, *The Shaping of Jewish Identity in Nineteenth Century France* (Detroit: 1989). See also the essays by Shmuel Trigano, Stanley Hoffman, and David S. Landes under the title "Emancipation Reexamined" in *The Jews in Modern France*, eds. Francis Malino and Bernard Wasserstein (Hanover: 1985), 245–309; Hannah Arendt, *The Origins of Totalitarianism* (San Diego: 1973), 11–28, 54–88; Annie Kriegel, *Les Juifs et le monde moderne: Essai sur les logiques d'émancipation* (Paris: 1976); David Feuerwerker, *L'Emancipation des juifs en France: De L'Ancien Régime à la fin du Second Empire* (Paris: 1976). For a general discussion of the problem of Jewish emancipation in modern Jewish historiography, see David Weinberg, "Jewish Emancipation" in *The Modern Jewish Experience*, ed. Jack Wertheimer (New York: 1993), 95–101.

3. "The Jewish Question" refers to the series of shifting but interrelated historical, religious, cultural, economic, social, and political issues that arose in debates concerning "Jewish emancipation"; more generally, it covers the troubled conjunction between Judaism and modernity. The literature on the issue is extensive, but for the history of the concept itself, see Jacob Toury, "'The Jewish Question': A Semantic Approach," *Leo Baeck Institute Year Book* 11 (1966), 85–107.

4. In no way do I wish to suggest that all thinkers identified with postmodernism are "the same": sameness, homogeneity, and normalization are vigorously critiqued by postmodern thinkers, and there are important differences between the various positions of Jacques Derrida, Michel Foucault, Gilles Deleuze, Julia Kristeva, Luce Irigaray, and other French poststructuralists often monolithically grouped together under the label postmodernism. Therefore, Lyotard's work does not stand for this group of thinkers as a whole. However, treating Lyotard in isolation does permit a more general understanding of the postmodern position, especially in relation to "the Jewish Question," both because he is the sole figure in this group to have elaborated a theory of the postmodern and because his work includes the most extensive treatment of Jews and Judaism.

5. As Christophe Charle in *Naissance des "intellectuels": 1880–1900* (Paris: 1990) has shown, the intellectual consolidates the role of the secular "cleric" (*le clerc*) of the seventeenth century, the Enlightenment *philosophe*, the Romantic prophet, and the *savant* of the late nineteenth century. On the origins of the intellectual, see also Louis Bodin, *Les Intellectuels* (Paris: 1962); Victor Brombert, *The Intellectual Hero: Studies in the French Novel, 1880–1955* (Philadelphia: 1960); René Rémond, "Les intellectuels et la politique," *Revue Française de Science Politique* 9 (1959); Pascal Ory and Jean-François Sirinelli, *Les Intellectuels en France: De l'affaire Dreyfus à nos jours* (Paris: 1986); Jean-François Sirinelli, *Intellectuels et passions françaises: Manifestes et pétitions au XXème siècle* (Paris: 1990); Venita Datta, *Birth of a National Icon: The Literary Avant Garde and the Origins of the Intellectual in France* (Albany:

1999); Régis Debray, *Teachers, Writers, Celebrities: The Intellectuals of Modern France*, trans. David Macey (Manchester: 1979); Michel Winock, "Les intellectuels dans le siècle," *Vingtième Siècle* 2 (April–June 1984); and idem, *Le Siècle des intellectuels* (Paris: 1997). See also the introduction by Jacques Julliard and Michel Winock in *Dictionnaire des intellectuels français: Les personnes, les lieux, les moments*, ed. Jacques Julliard and Michel Winock (Paris: 1996).

6. See Venita Datta, "The Jew as Intellectual, the Intellectual as Jew" in her *Birth of a National Icon*; Jonathan Judaken, "Jean-Paul Sartre and 'the Jewish Question': The Politics of Engagement and the Image of 'the Jew' in Sartre's Thought" (Ph.D. diss., University of California, Irvine, 1997).

7. For the genealogy of this term, see the introduction in Julliard and Winock (eds.), *Dictionnaire des intellectuels français*; Genevieve Idt, "L'Intellectuel' avant l'affaire Dreyfus," *Cahiers de lexicologie*, no. 15 (1969), 35–46; William Johnston, "The Origin of the Term 'Intellectuals' in French Novels and Essays of the 1890s," *Journal of European Studies*, no. 4 (1974), 43–56; Trevor Field, "Vers une nouvelle datation du substantif 'intellectuel,'" *Travaux de linguistique et de littérature*, no. 14 (1976), 159–167.

8. See Venita Datta and Willa Silverman, "Introduction: New Approaches to Intellectuals and the Dreyfus Affair," *Historical Reflections/Réflexions historiques*, 24, no. 1 (Spring 1998), 2.

9. On these connections in Barrès, see David Carroll, *French Literary Fascism: Nationalism, Anti-Semitism and the Ideology of Culture* (Princeton: 1995), 27–30. See also Richard Griffiths, "Maurice Barrès, Intelligence and 'the Intellectuals'" in *Les intellectuels face à l'affaire Dreyfus alors et aujourd'hui* (Paris: 1998), 209–221.

10. Lucien Herr, the librarian of the École Normale Supérieure, would soon respond to Barrès, proudly reclaiming the term intellectuel. See "A M. Maurice Barrès," in *La Revue blanche*, no. 15 (15 Feb. 1898).

11. See Ory and Sirinelli, *Les Intellectuels en France*, and Christophe Charle, *Naissance des "intellectuels."*

12. Jean-François Lyotard, *Peregrinations: Law, Form, Event* (New York: 1988).

13. On *Socialisme ou barbarie*, see Mark Poster, *Existential Marxism in Postwar France* (Princeton: 1976), 202–205 and Sandrine Treiner, "Socialisme ou barbarie," in Winock and Julliard (eds.), *Dictionnaire des intellectuels français*, 1067–1068.

14. Jean-François Lyotard, *La phénoménologie* (Paris: 1954); an English version, translated by Brian Beakley, was published as *Phenomenology* (New York: 1991).

15. See Alan Schrift, *Nietzsche's French Legacy: A Genealogy of Poststructuralism* (London: 1995) and Vincent Descombes, *Modern French Philosophy*, trans. L. Scott-Fox and J.M. Harding (London: 1980).

16. Fredric Jameson, "Foreword," in Jean-François Lyotard, *The Postmodern Condition: A Report on Knowledge*, trans. Geoff Bennington and Brian Massumi (Minneapolis: 1984), vii.

17. Jean-François Lyotard, *La Condition postmoderne: rapport sur le savoir* (Paris: 1979); for English quote, see Lyotard, *Postmodern Condition*, xxiv.

18. Jean-François Lyotard, *Le Postmoderne expliqué aux enfants* (Paris: 1988); idem, "Apostil on Narratives" (1984), in *The Postmodern Explained: Correspondence 1982–1985*, trans. Julian Pefanis and Morgan Thomas (Minneapolis: 1992), 19.

19. Clearly alluding to Deleuze and Guattari's work, *Kafka: Pour une littérature mineure*, this term is used by Bill Readings—see his foreword in Jean-François Lyotard, *Political Writings*, trans. Bill Readings and Kevin Paul (Minneapolis: 1993), xvi.

20. John Westbrook, "The Silences of the Intellectual," presented at the Midwest Modern Languages Association, Chicago, November 1977, is the best article on the topic, but it remains unpublished.

21. *Nouvel Observateur*, 10 May 1981, 42. Quoted in Sirinelli, *Intellectuels et passions françaises*, 485.

22. *Ibid.*, 509.

23. Max Gallo, "Les intellectuels, la politique et la modernité," *Le Monde*, 26 July 1983 (p. 7).

24. Jean-François Lyotard, "Tombeau de l'intellectuel," reprinted both in *Tombeau de l'in-*

tellectuel et autres papiers (Paris: 1984) and in *Political Writings*, where this quote appears on p. 3.

25. *Ibid.*, 3.

26. *Ibid.*

27. *Ibid.*

28. *Ibid.*, 6.

29. *Ibid.*, 5.

30. *Ibid.*, 6–7.

31. On this theme, see especially Roland Barthes, "The Death of the Author," in his *Image/Music/Text*, trans. Stephen Heath (New York: 1977) and Michel Foucault, "What is an Author?" in his *Language, Counter-Memory, Practice*, ed. Donald F. Bouchard, trans. Donald F. Bouchard and Sherry Simon (Ithaca: 1977).

32. Jean-François Lyotard, *Instructions pâinnes* (Paris: 1977), 16; quoted in Bill Reading, *Introducing Lyotard: Art and Politics* (London and New York: 1991), xxii.

33. Jean-François Lyotard notes in "The Differend" that "the intelligentsia is not sparing with its support, its advice, its participation in the new power" (in Lyotard, *Political Writings*, 10).

34. *Ibid.*

35. Lyotard, *Tombeau de l'intellectuel et autres papiers*; idem, "A Svelte Appendix to the Postmodern Question," in *Political Writings*, 27.

36. *Ibid.*, 28.

37. See John E. Toews, "Intellectual History after the Linguistic Turn: The Autonomy of Meaning and the Irreducibility of Experience," *The American Historical Review* (Oct. 1987), 879–907 and the essays in *Modern European Intellectual History: Reappraisals and New Perspectives*, ed. Dominick LaCapra and Steven L. Kaplan (Ithaca: 1982). Lyotard's thinking with regard to the linguistic turn is complex—see his "Wittgenstein 'After'" in *Political Writings*, 19–22.

38. Jean-François Lyotard, *Le Différend* (Paris: 1983), appearing in English as *The Differend: Phrases in Dispute*, trans. Georges Van Den Abbeele (Minneapolis: 1988), xiii.

39. Lyotard, *The Differend*, xi. Once Lyotard's conception of the "differend" has been defined, it is important to note that, for Lyotard, the differend should not be reduced to a concept, since concepts are connected to a (modern) *logos* in which meaning is fixed. Readers should rather be attentive to the minute differences in the many uses of this (non)concept. In addition, one should seek the differends within the deployment of the differend—which is precisely the point of this article.

40. In "Wittgenstein 'After,'" a highly condensed elucidation of Wittgenstein's philosophy of language, Lyotard brilliantly explains why he has adopted the concept of "regimes of phrases" in order to go beyond the "humanism" of Wittgenstein's notion of language games. According to Lyotard, "there is no unity to language; there are islands of language, each of them ruled by a different regime, untranslatable into the others" (p. 20). In short, within language there is a multiplicity of games, each of which have their own *stakes* and their own *rules*.

41. *The Differend*, xiii.

42. Jean-François Lyotard, "Pierre Souyri: Le Marxisme qui n'a pas fini," in *Esprit* 61, no. 1 (Jan. 1982); reprinted in *Peregrinations* as "A Memorial For Marxism," 63.

43. *Ibid.*, 49.

44. *Ibid.*, 61. Praxis is concisely defined by Gajo Petrovic as the "creative and self-creative activity through which man creates (makes, produces) and changes (shapes) his historical, human world and himself; an activity specific to man through which he is basically differentiated from all other beings. In this sense man can be regarded as a being of praxis, 'praxis' as the central concept of Marxism, and Marxism as the 'philosophy' (or better: 'thinking') of 'praxis.'" See "Praxis" in *A Dictionary of Marxist Thought*, ed. Tom Bottomore (Cambridge, Mass.: 1983), 384.

45. *Ibid.*, 52.

46. *Ibid.*, 54.

47. See Geoffrey Bennington, "Lyotard and 'the Jews'" in *Modernity, Culture and "the Jew"*, ed. Bryan Cheyette and Laura Marcus (Cambridge: 1998), 188–196.

48. "Alterity" is a widely used term for a central theme in postmodern discourse. The word literally means the state of being other or different and is a synonym for diversity or "otherness." Allan Megill has summarized the thematic of alterity in Levinas' work, and the same description can be applied to Lyotard's project (as well as those of other poststructuralists). See Megill's *Prophets of Extremity: Nietzsche, Heidegger, Foucault, Derrida* (Berkeley: 1985), 307–308.

49. Jean-François Lyotard, "Apostil on Narratives," in *The Postmodern Explained: Correspondence 1982–1985*, trans. and ed. Julian Pefanis and Morgan Thomas (Minneapolis: 1992), 19.

50. Nelly Hansson, "France: The Carpentras Syndrome and Beyond," *Patterns of Prejudice*, 25, no. 1 (1991), 32.

51. Ibid.

52. Ibid. See also Olivier Roy, "Après Carpentras: Le Front National ne perdra pas ses voix" in *Esprit* 162 (June 1990), 72–75. On the National Front more generally, see Pascal Perrineau, "Le Front national: 1972–1992," in *Histoire de l'extrême droite en France*, ed. Michel Winock (Paris: 1993).

53. The classic account of Holocaust denial in France is Pierre Vidal-Nacquet's *Assassins of Memory: Essays on the Denial of the Holocaust*, trans. Jeffrey Mehlman (New York: 1992). See also Alain Finkielkraut, *The Future of a Negation: Reflections on the Question of Genocide*, trans. Mary Byrd Kelly (Lincoln: 1998).

54. On the municipal elections, see Sirinelli, *Intellectuels et passions françaises*, 513.

55. Henry Rousso, *The Vichy Syndrome: History and Memory in France since 1944*, trans. Arthur Goldhamer (Cambridge, Mass.: 1991).

56. On the Franco-Israeli relationship, see Henry Weinberg, *The Myth of the Jew in France: 1967–1982* (Oakville, Ont.: 1987); Robert Wistrich, "The Myth of the Jew in Contemporary France" in his *Between Redemption and Perdition: Modern Antisemitism and Jewish Identity* (London: 1990); Raymond Aron, *De Gaulle, Israël et les Juifs* (Paris: 1968).

57. On these attacks, see Yaïr Auron, "Le procès de Leningrad (1970), le massacre de Munich (1972), l'attentat de la rue Copernic (1980): La réaction des radicaux juifs aux manifestations antisémites," in *Les Juifs d'extrême gauche de Mai '68: Une génération révolutionnaire marquée par la Shoah*, trans. Katherine Werchowski (Paris: 1998); Judith Friedlander, "Antisemitism in France, 1978–1992: Questions and Debates" in *Auschwitz and After*, ed. Lawrence Kritzman (New York and London: 1995); Michael Marrus, "Are the French Antisemitic? Evidence in the 1980s" in Malino and Wasserstein (eds.), *The Jews in Modern France*, 224–242.

58. The "Heidegger affair" represented the most heated stage of the postwar discussion concerning the relationship between Heidegger's politics, specifically his National Socialism, and his thought. The issue was debated in France in 1946 and 1947 in *Les Temps modernes* and more diffusely from 1948 to 1987. It became an affair in France in the immediate aftermath of the publication of Victor Farias' dossier *Heidegger et le nazisme* in 1987. Responses to Farias' text appeared between October 1987 and May 1988 with the publication of books on the topic by Lyotard, Luc Ferry and Alain Renaut, François Fédier, Derrida, and Phillipe Lacoue-Labarthe, and with the flurry of subsequent radio and television programs, as well as magazine and journal articles, in France and abroad. Among the many discussions, see David Carroll's foreword to Jean-François Lyotard, *Heidegger and "the jews,"* trans. Andreas Michel and Mark Roberts (Minneapolis: 1990); Dominick La Capra, *Representing the Holocaust* (Ithaca: 1994); Richard Wolin, "The French Heidegger Debate," *New German Critique*, no. 45 (Fall 1988), 135–161; Thomas Sheehan, "Heidegger and the Nazis," *The New York Review of Books* 35, no. 10 (16 June 1988); Tom Rockmore, "On Heidegger and Contemporary French Philosophy," in *Heidegger and French Philosophy: Humanism, Antihumanism and Being* (London and New York: 1995).

59. Jean-François Lyotard, "Europe, the Jews and the Book," in *Political Writings*, 159–162.

60. Ibid., 159.

61. Ibid., 160.

62. Ibid.

63. Ibid.

64. Lyotard contrasts "reading" with both interpretation and theory. As Bill Readings explains in *Introducing Lyotard*, reading "shares a temporality and a positioning with aesthetic and ethical judgment. Reading is neither on the inside (interpretation) nor the outside (theory) of a text" (xix). Thus, whereas theory aims at a timeless account of events, and *hermeneutic* interpretation aims in time to extract the meaning of a text or event, Lyotard grants priority to reading, which, as we shall see, he regards as *talmudic*, that is, not aiming at totality, but rather at an infinite process of the interpretation of interpretation.

65. Lyotard's work in the 1960s and 1970s is acutely summarized in the title of his *Dérive à partir de Marx et Freud*. Lyotard, in his drift from Freud and from Lacan, challenges the latter by insisting that the Lacanian conception of the unconscious as structured like a language erases the difference between consciousness and the unconscious. Like Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari, Lyotard challenges the Freudian and Lacanian emphasis on the Oedipus complex by characterizing the unconscious as an unrepresentable, uncodifiable economy of libidinal energy that remains Other to consciousness. On these points, see Martin Jay, "The Ethics of Blindness and the Postmodern Sublime: Levinas and Lyotard" in his *Downcast Eyes: The Denigration of Vision in Twentieth-Century French Thought* (Berkeley: 1993).

66. Lyotard, "Europe, the Jews and the Book," 160.

67. Ibid., 162.

68. Ibid., 161.

69. Jean-François Lyotard, *Un Traité d'union* (Quebec: 1993).

70. There is a long tradition of defining the modern as the break with the past—which is constituted as "old"—in the name of the "new." On this gesture as the signature of the modern, see Jürgen Habermas, *The Philosophical Discourse of Modernity: Twelve Lectures* (Cambridge, Mass.: 1987).

71. Lyotard, "Europe, the Jews and the Book," 160.

72. On this point, see Michael Weingrad, "Jews (in Theory): Representation of Judaism, Anti-Semitism, and the Holocaust in Postmodern French Thought," *Judaism* 45, no. 1 (Winter 1996), 79–98, esp. 85.

73. Lyotard is indebted to Emmanuel Levinas on these points. See for example, Levinas, "The Temptation of Temptation" in *Nine Talmudic Readings*, trans. Annette Aronowicz (Indianapolis: 1990). Levinas' influence on Lyotard is significant in many regards, but Lyotard's reading of Levinas would take us too far astray from the focus of this argument. For a discussion of Levinas' influence on Lyotard, see Jay, "Ethics of Blindness and the Postmodern Sublime" and Elizabeth Bellamy, *Affective Genealogies: Psychoanalysis, Postmodernism, and the "Jewish Question" after Auschwitz* (Lincoln: 1997), 109–110.

74. On Lyotard's distinction between an "example" and a "model," see "Discussions, or Phrasing 'after Auschwitz'" in Jean-François Lyotard, *The Lyotard Reader*, ed. Andrew Jackson (Oxford: 1989), 360–392, esp. 363.

75. Jean-François Lyotard, "Mainmise" in *Political Writings*, 157.

76. Lyotard, "Europe, the Jews and the Book," 161.

77. Ibid.

78. Jean-Paul Sartre, *Réflexions sur la question juive* (Paris: 1954); idem, *Anti-Semite and Jew*, trans. George Becker (New York: 1948).

79. Lyotard, "Europe, the Jews and the Book," 161. While I have emphasized the similarities between Sartre's and Lyotard's image of "the Jew," I should note that there are significant differences not only with regard to the particular figures of "the Jew" in their thought, but also regarding the relationship between these figures and their larger philosophical projects. For a comparison on precisely the themes addressed in this article, specifically the relationship between Sartre's image of "the Jew" and his intellectual politics, see Judaken, "Jean-Paul Sartre and 'the Jewish Question.'"

80. Lyotard, "Europe and the Jews," 160.

81. Ibid., 159.

82. Lyotard is perhaps even clearer in the paper written for the conference on Heidegger and

"the jews," where he clearly indicates that "the jews" refer to a structure of obligation/responsibility: "To put it another way, the expression 'the jews' refers to all those who, wherever they are, seek to remember and to bear witness to something that is constitutively *forgotten*, not only in each individual mind, but in the very thought of the West. And it refers to all those who assume this anamnesis and this witnessing as an obligation, a responsibility, or a debt, not only toward thought, but toward justice" (Jean-François Lyotard, "*Heidegger and 'the jews'*": A Conference in Vienna and Freiburg" in *Political Writings*, 141).

83. Bennington, "Lyotard and 'the Jews,'" 192.

84. Lyotard, "Europe, the Jews and the Book," 159.

85. Lyotard, "*Heidegger and 'the Jews'*": A Conference," 143.

86. Jean-François Lyotard, *L'Inhumain: causeries sur le temps* (Paris: 1988), 88; quoted in Bennington, "Lyotard and 'the Jews,'" 193.

87. Lyotard, *Heidegger and "the jews,"* 22.

88. On the latter point, see La Capra, *Representing the Holocaust*, 98.

89. Lyotard, *Heidegger and "the jews,"* 22.

90. Weingrad, "Jews (in Theory)," 86.

91. La Capra, *Representing the Holocaust*, 97.

92. Bellamy, *Affective Genealogies*, 145.

93. Max Silverman, "Re-Figuring 'the Jew' in France" in Cheyette and Marcus (eds.), *Modernity, Culture and the Jew*, 199.

94. On Lyotard's opposition to Hegel, see Descombes, *Modern French Philosophy*, 180–186.

95. See Bellamy, *Affective Genealogies*, 147. The Jew in the *Phenomenology* is depicted as "the insurmountable cleft [*Kluft*] between the being of God and the being of men" and the Jewish experience is that of the "unhappy consciousness," an (un)consciousness which is "inwardly divided in two, disunited consciousness."

96. Nathan Rotenstreich, "Hegel's Image of Judaism," *Jewish Social Studies* 15 (1953), 33–52, esp. 43, 47. See also Yirmiyahu Yovel, *Dark Riddle: Hegel, Nietzsche, and the Jews* (Cambridge: 1998).

97. Gillian Rose makes these points about Leo Strauss and Emmanuel Levinas in her *Judaism and Modernity: Philosophical Essays* (Oxford: 1993). Max Silverman extends the point to other postmodern thinkers, including Lyotard, in "Re-Figuring 'the Jew' in France."

98. Daniel Boyarin and Jonathan Boyarin, "Diaspora: Generation and the Ground of Jewish Identity," *Critical Inquiry* 19 (Summer 1993), 693–725, esp. 701.

99. *Ibid.*, 700.

100. This collection of cavalier dismissals is taken from the editors' note to *Le Postmoderne expliqué aux enfants*, where they explain that the text was published in the hopes that it might clear Lyotard of these accusations. Lyotard was skeptical, since he suggested that these attributions were the result of ad hominem attacks that were generated in the place of actual reading. See "Preface to the French Edition" in *The Postmodern Explained*.

101. Bill Reading's "Glossary" in *Introducing Lyotard* clearly defines what Lyotard means by anamnesis and the immemorial:

That which can neither be remembered (represented to consciousness) nor forgotten (consigned to oblivion). It is that which returns, uncannily. As such, the immemorial acts as a kind of *figure* for consciousness and its attempts at representing itself historically. The prime example is Auschwitz. . . . The task of not forgetting, of anamnesis, is the task of the avant-garde, which struggles to keep events from sinking in the oblivion of either representation (voice) or silence.

David Carroll explains that by the "avant-garde," Lyotard refers to thinkers committed to putting into question what we think we already know by producing forms and constructs that force us to ask whether we shall ever know what we think we know. Postmodern knowledge is thus *postponed*, deferred, an ongoing interpretive process. See David Carroll, *Paraesthetics: Foucault, Lyotard, Derrida* (New York: 1989), 155–156.

As Families Remember: Holocaust Memoirs and Their Transmission

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That a future generation might know—children yet to be born—and in turn tell their children.—Ps. 78:6

Since the end of the Second World War, Holocaust survivors have written of their experiences. Some of their stories have appeared in *yizker bikher* as part of a joint attempt to capture life in their communities before the war and to bear witness to the destruction of the community by the Nazis.¹ Other survivors have imparted their personal experiences in literary works, some biographical, others fictional.² The past two decades have witnessed the rise of oral testimonies in which survivors have revealed details of both their personal past and that of their communities.³ In addition, memoirs written by survivors have proliferated. While some of these memoirs have been published, others remain in the family and are not intended for outsiders.

Each of these literary genres embodies different representations of the memory of the Holocaust. The representations vary according to the audience for whom the works were written, the author's age during the war and when writing, and the purpose of the piece that was written. This paper will focus on unpublished personal memoirs, specifically, those written by survivors for their families over the past 25 years—a category on which little has been written, but which has been growing more and more rapidly.⁴ The 24 memoirs to be described here are not completely private, since they were all sent to the archives at Yad Vashem in Jerusalem, but none had been published for mass marketing and all were written expressly in order to recount experiences for the survivor's family.⁵ The memoirs were written in English, Hebrew, and French by 16 women and eight men who originated in different parts of Europe and who now live in Israel, North America, and Europe.⁶

The war experiences of the writers vary—two thirds of them were in different camps during the war, while the rest survived in hiding. Some lived under Nazi rule for five or six years, others for only a year or two. The memoirs were all written, at least in their final form, three to four decades after the war's end. Portraying the ways in which the survivors have chosen to represent their past, they do not necessarily present an accurate account of this past. I will not discuss their accuracy, but will rather concentrate on what the survivors remember and how these memories are presented.⁷

As Maurice Halbwachs, a pioneer in the study of memory, has shown, the content of memory is determined by the present situation of the individual who is remembering. Every social group, moreover, has its own “memory” with its own characteristics.⁸ Roger Bastide, who studied black communities in Latin America, has analyzed such collective memories on two levels: structure and content.⁹ Bastide demonstrated the complex relationship between the framework in which memories are recalled and the actual content of the memories, showing the relative importance of these factors in instances when one narrative prevails over another.

In the following discussion, I will use Bastide’s distinction between these two levels to describe and analyze the transmission of the memory of the Holocaust within the family framework. First, I will examine the memoirs themselves, illuminating the ways in which survivors have chosen to tell their stories—how the organization of memory in their written works provides some clues regarding the way they themselves remember and reconstruct their past, and how they wish to communicate with their children and grandchildren. I will distinguish between the structure and the content of the memories and then attempt to show the connections between the two.

The next part of the essay will focus on the audience for whom these memoirs were written, mainly the grandchildren of the survivors. As part of this project, interviews were conducted with 21 descendants of the authors. With the exception of two families, all of those interviewed were descendants of Israeli authors. While this lack of diversity is a limitation, the sample is large enough to provide insight into the nature of the transmission of memory both orally (contact with the grandparent) and in writing (the memoir).

Structure and Organization

Before turning to an analysis of the memoirs’ internal structure, a few words are in order concerning two exterior features: length and appearance. The memoirs vary in length from thirty to several hundred pages. The earlier memoirs, written in the 1970s, are handwritten; those written later are almost always typed. Moreover, the memoirs written by Israeli authors tend to be more sophisticated in exterior format, resembling memorial books that are commonly published in honor of fallen Israeli soldiers. The other memoirs, in contrast, are simply bound, looking more like school projects than published books.

All of the authors, however, are alike in that they explicitly state their reasons for choosing to write a memoir. While for some the act of writing is a natural outgrowth of previous oral accounts, others are telling their stories for the first time, sometimes after many years of urging by their children. Some point to a single event that led to the decision to write: an incident with a neighbor,¹⁰ a movie such as Claude Lanzmann’s *Shoah*,¹¹ a visit to their hometown in Europe after many years.¹² Others are impelled by a significant life-cycle event such as the death of a spouse or retirement.¹³ Some authors tell of their search for inner peace and their hope that, once the memoir is written, a burden will be lifted from their soul.¹⁴

Although there is a great variety in the incentives to write—some authors note

more than one factor in their decision—there are a few characteristics common to all the memoirs. All of them were written at least three decades after the war and were a first attempt by the writers to put down their story in an organized fashion.¹⁵ All of the authors, most of whom are retired, are comfortably settled in their postwar homes and financially stable. As they themselves explain, their families are now the main focal point of their lives, and as retirees they are trying to account for their past.¹⁶ Many emphasize the birth of their grandchildren as a moment of realization that they must tell their stories to those they may not live to see as adults.¹⁷

Some give their books a title: “As I Remember” (Pauline Buchenholz), “For the Generation that Knew Not” (Hulda Campaniano), “A Stifled Cry” (Motti Stern), “An Uprooted Tree” (Shoshanah Gottdank-Gomerov), to mention a few. Such titles clearly reflect part of the message the writer would like to convey, pointing to the connections between the authors and the family members who are their intended audience, as well as to links between personal stories and the larger context of the Second World War and the Holocaust. These links are illustrated by the pictures and the documents chosen to accompany some of the stories.

Common characteristics are also apparent in the structural organization of these memoirs.¹⁸ They all focus on the same period of time; as opposed to autobiographies, their express purpose is to tell of experiences mainly during the years of the Holocaust. Yet as James Young has shown, although the period of the Second World War is a given fact, every group defines this period according to its specific needs and memory.¹⁹ Indeed, while three points in time are central to all the memoirs—the beginning of the war, the end of the war (liberation) and the postwar years—two patterns can be noted for the opening time frame.

Some start from the beginning of the war. Sara Buchman, for instance, begins her account in this way: “We were on vacation, 20 kilometers from the city where I was born. Warsaw. The war broke out.”²⁰ Most of the writers, however, begin further back in time, at the time of their birth or even earlier. Hedva Gil begins with her parents’ history:

I’ll start with my mother. My mother had two or maybe three names. For my grandmother and aunt her name was Golda, Golda Pearl. In official documents she was registered as Eugenia, and my father called her Genia. And of course for some people she was Mrs. Laizerovitch. In a photo from her youth she looks skinny, gentle, with dark hair and light eyes, a slightly long nose. She had tiny hands and small feet.²¹

This initial description of family history preceding the author’s birth can be as long as ten pages.

Regardless of the actual starting point, all of the writers make a clear distinction between the period prior to and that during the Holocaust—one of the writers, Motti Stern, refers to this break in time by specifying all the dates he mentions as either BC or AC—Before or After Crematoria.²² The story proper begins with the outbreak of the Second World War in 1939 (even for writers who lived in places like Hungary, which was invaded in 1944). Although it is doubtful that a nine-year-old, say, had complete understanding of a war in Poland when living in Hungary or France, this is now his or her point of departure.

The war period is the longest part of the story, with events recounted in great detail.²³ All of the writers tell their stories chronologically, organizing their narrative around major changes that occurred during the war. For some, the changes are geographical—moving from ghetto to camp or from camp to camp. For others, the stages have to do with parting from different family members and friends. In most of the books, though, both of these markers appear. Dates do not play a major role in the division of the memories unless they tie in to major historical events, such as September 1, 1939, the day that Poland was invaded. When talking of personal events, the writers rarely mention dates.

The third distinct period in all the memoirs is liberation and its immediate aftermath. As opposed to the first two time periods (before and after the war), there is no set pattern for the description of liberation and what followed thereafter. All of the writers begin a new chapter in their books at the end of the war, but the events of liberation usually lack the detailed attention given to the war. Some authors finish off their account with a passage in which they write briefly about the fact that they were liberated and emigrated to a specific country, and then conclude by giving their children's names. Others offer a somewhat fuller description and close their accounts with the story of their marriage or the birth of their children. Some skip from the liberation to the birth of children without filling in the details of the intervening events. All of the writers recount the pain and grief they felt upon discovering that their family and friends had been killed and that nothing remained of their homes. The Israeli writers tell of their arrival in Israel, in contrast to most of those who live in North America and Europe, who skip such details. Two of the writers finish their accounts with the story of a visit to their hometowns some forty years later.²⁴

A deeper understanding of the point in time at which the authors choose to end their stories can be attained by considering the purpose of the memoirs. Written for members of their families, the author wants his or her grandchildren to close the book with an understanding of where their grandparent fits into all they know about the Holocaust, and how this piece of the past fits into the present they know.²⁵ All of the writers choose endings to which their readers can relate—whether it is marriage, the birth of children, or immigration to the country where the family now lives. Some writers do this in an even more explicit way and end their memoirs with an epilogue in which they raise questions and share thoughts about the meaning of the Holocaust.

In addition to organizing their memoirs in three time periods, the authors structure their stories around two axes: the connection between their stories and other Holocaust stories; and the presence of organizing themes or morals. In relation to other Holocaust stories, the writers refer to four spheres. First is the most immediate and personal framework, which is followed by the history of the community, the history of European Jewry, and finally, Jewish history in general. All of the authors touch on these four spheres to different degrees.

Annie Schwergold, who survived the war in hiding together with her husband and daughter, concentrates on the story of her immediate family. She does not discuss the fate of other family members in detail and only at the end of her memoirs does she write: "With great sorrow we learned that most of my husband's family had been deported: two brothers, uncles, aunts, cousins and other relatives. These memories will

never—cannot be forgotten, as long as I live.”²⁶ Annie does not mention other family members, and her story seems disconnected from all other worldly events. Yet she provides a clear indicator of the connection between her story and another famous war story—that of Anne Frank, which points her readers to the broader framework within which she is writing.

Hulda Campaniano’s story is an example of a much broader perspective. Hulda recounts her family’s saga, and her story is that of two families—her immediate family (husband and two children) and her brother’s family (sister-in-law and four children). Yet although her memoir enumerates what happened to them in great detail, it is often hard to differentiate between her immediate story and that of the Jewish community in Florence during the war. She tells her story in the plural; sometimes “we” means herself and her family, sometimes all the Jews in Italy, and sometimes the Jewish people.²⁷ All of the writers place their stories in wider contexts by referring to famous figures such as Anne Frank, or to books such as Elie Wiesel’s novels or to films such as Claude Lanzmann’s *Shoah*. Others quote from their communities’ *yizker bikher* in order to give their statements greater credibility.²⁸

The second axis around which the books are organized is the presence of themes or morals that the authors view as significant. By following the authors’ story lines, the reader uncovers their implicit—and sometimes unconscious—messages. To some extent, each memoir is constructed as a narrative with a theme, and that theme constitutes the core of the message. Peretz Witzling’s story is that of success: he made the right decisions at the right time. Although he attributes his success partly to luck, he also stresses that he had foresight and was able to persuade others to listen and to help him and his family.²⁹

Sara Buchman tries throughout her story to tell her son about the better side of the world. She starts her book by saying: “I will try to tell you of the joys, the sorrow, the art of living, and of love.” Although Sara describes hardships in the pages that follow, she emphasizes love affairs in the ghetto and even in Auschwitz, the beauty of nature, and philosophical discussions that took place under the most trying circumstances. She tells the story of her imprisonment in Auschwitz by relating to different figures who were central in her life. And she ends her memoir as she began: “Despite all these tragic experiences and all of the difficulties that I encountered, now, free again, I say all the same: Life is not a bad affair [*une mauvaise affaire*]. One must strive to find in life that which is best and most beautiful.”³⁰

Motti Stern has a very different theme. His memoir opens with the passage from the Ethics of the Fathers that is recited at funerals: “Know whence you came and where you are going and before whom you will have to give account and reckoning,”³¹ and he tells his story in three chapters. The first deals with the period before the war, the second with the war period, and the third with the time after liberation. His story is that of a God-fearing Jew who tries to preserve the memory and the spiritual legacy of his father, but who is, at the same time, very acerbic about his past. His formal relationship with the father who never showed him very much affection is emphasized in each of the narrative’s main sections. Only when they reach Auschwitz in the summer of 1944 is there a change in his father’s behavior, which Motti describes with his underlying sarcasm:

My father put his arm around me and said, “Mordechai, I want you to know that I am proud of the fine, grown-up man you’ve turned into. I have confidence in you, that if by reasons beyond our control we get separated, you will use your good sense and take care of yourself.” . . . My father had finally shown warm approval of me, without being scared I would get too full of myself. I got a whiff of paradise, right at the gates of hell.³²

Motti’s story can be described as a continuous testimony of his attempt to fulfill his father’s expectations. He tells of observing mitzvot despite all the hardships, of beginning to say kaddish as soon as he learned of his parents’ deaths, and his narrative is full of biblical verses and images that convey the same message. Yet at the same time his story is one of the most bitter accounts I came across. Here is how he describes his Passover seder in Auschwitz:

It thus came to be that in a dark corner of G-d’s earth, some naked, half starved skeletons held a slice of bread in their palms and with tears streaming from their eyes recited: “Blessed art thou, O L-rd our G-d, that has chosen us from all people. Thou hast redeemed us from slavery in Egypt, to freedom.” Somewhere in there, one ought to be able to find an explanation to the baffling mystery of the survival of the Jews.³³

Content

As is already apparent, the memoirs’ different modes of organization also reflect the content of the authors’ memories. The survivors themselves clearly state that they see their memoirs as a book of guidance for the next generation. One may ask what, aside from enabling the family to know more about the survivor’s past, does the author hope the memoir will contribute.

Many of the survivors address these questions at different points in their work. Hayim Lefkowitz, for example, opens his memoir by asking:

For whom am I writing? Is anyone interested in these stories? Is this only [a] story that is sad or interesting to read, or is it also a contemporary story with a lesson that is still of value, that one should and must read and learn like all other stories and literature about the Holocaust, so as to know which path to choose today?³⁴

Elisheva Baril writes:

I must state at the outset that I am not a member of any political party, although I follow contemporary events with great interest. Unfortunately, I have borne witness to the fact that our sons are not that interested in the hard circumstances in which we live; perhaps they think that there is no way to change the situation? . . . I would like to shake them out of their indifference, because it is their task to prepare their children’s future. We also buried our heads in the sand, and when we fully understood our situation, it was too late. *I want you to survive.*³⁵

These two examples show that both practical and moral lessons are central to these memoirs, relating to such issues as the justification of actions during the Holocaust, the generation gap between parents and children, and the state of Israel. Although each memoir has its own special characteristics, there are several common themes that give shape to the memories.

The Writer as Hero

In each memoir, the author is naturally the most central figure,³⁶ but at the same time, each author argues that his or her story is representative of other narratives, those of people who did not survive. The main characteristic that all the writers stress about themselves is that they remained human beings, despite their harrowing and often dehumanizing experiences. Those who spent parts of the war in labor or concentration camps go to great lengths to explain that they tried to act morally, mainly by accentuating the difference between themselves and their fellow inmates. Pauline Buchenholz, who shared all that she had with her friend Regina from the moment she arrived in Auschwitz, recalls the transformation Regina underwent when she sold a gold coin she had smuggled into the camp:

She did not tell me when the transaction took place, but I learned of it in an odd way. I usually brought the coffee for us and this time I handed her the tin bucket. I stood on the floor and she was still in bed. But this time she didn't take the coffee, only said, "Drink, Linezcko, drink." I took only two gulps, couldn't drink more it was so bitter—and gave her the bucket. From where I stood I could not see what she was doing but heard how she dipped a spoon into some sugar and poured it into the coffee, mixed it with a spoon, and bending her head backward, drank the whole content to the last drop. I watched her with great dismay, understood her avarice, and didn't say anything. From then on when we ate our suppers in our bed, I turned away from her, so she could enjoy her food. . . . her greed was repulsive to me. My friendship with her cooled off.³⁷

The final split between the two friends occurred when Pauline returned to her barrack after a bout of typhus and Regina refused to allow her back in their bed.³⁸

Ruth Bindefeld-Nezay, for her part, states that she never pushed or shoved on line for bread but rather escaped to the bathroom to wash herself; whereas Sara Buchman tells of philosophical discussions she conducted every Sunday in Auschwitz.³⁹ These and other authors stress the fact that they remained true to their humanity despite the hellish circumstances.

A common theme in literature and oral testimonies that is not to be found in the memoirs is that of transformation, of becoming a different person.⁴⁰ In describing their behavior in the camps, the authors emphasize how they tried to remain the people they were before the war. This stance seems to be connected to their audience. When writing for the family and trying to stress the continuity of the family, the writer does not want to be seen as alien.

Morality is the main concern of the authors who were in the camps, whereas the ability to overcome obstacles is characteristic of those who were in hiding or who pretended to be Aryans. The latter tend to accentuate their ability to think quickly and their persuasiveness in difficult situations. As opposed to camp survivors, who usually attribute their survival to luck, support from friends, or divine intervention, the others stress their own special abilities.

The writers do not conceal their hardships from the reader. They all mention the lice, the dysentery, the cramped conditions, and the hunger they experienced during the war. Most of them also recount moments of despair that they managed to overcome thanks to friends and family. However, they do not often write of moments of deep personal shame. For example, the women tell of the humiliation they felt during the admissions

process to Auschwitz, but this is still a collective moment—all of the women being processed at the camp went through the ordeal together. The authors do not describe at length any moments of great personal pain or embarrassment such as being beaten by a kapo or stealing food (no one admits to the latter). Even when a beating or a wound is mentioned, no details about feelings or thoughts are added.⁴¹ The survivors may mention mistakes they made, but these have to do mainly with family and friends whom they feel they mistreated. Thus, for example, Clara Cana'ani reprimands herself for not helping her parents more over the years, and Hela Kleinman-Markfield blames herself for giving bad advice to her brother, which led to his capture.⁴²

Images of Family

The importance of speaking to and for the family that was lost, in order to present this family to future generations and thus preserve their memory, is apparent in the often idealized descriptions provided in these memoirs. Most of the authors emphasize the warmth and love they felt as children. Hela writes:

My mother Zissel ("sweet" in Yiddish) was an intelligent and educated woman. She had completely mastered Polish, Yiddish, German, and she knew some Russian. She was the head of the parents' association at the high school I attended. Mother had a warm, loving heart and I was very attached to her. She helped run the family business and her wisdom always yielded financial success. My father was a traditional religious man, and was educated as these things went in those days. He knew Yiddish, Hebrew with an Ashkenazic accent, Russian, and some German.⁴³

Even authors who devote little space to the description of their family present an ideal picture of their homes before the war. Ruth Biener writes:

I was born in Poland in Boroslaw on 1.6.1930, the eldest daughter of Jacob and Rosia Tilman. My brother Max, two years my junior, and myself were brought up in a warm home, protected and well taken care of by our parents, grandparents, and many aunts and uncles—our life was pure joy.⁴⁴

Not only is the lost family presented as ideal, but even when unpleasant memories such as poverty, cramped quarters, and hunger are recounted, most of the descriptions are very positive. Thus Miriam Eisenstadt, who grew up in a one-room basement apartment in Lublin, narrates her story with humor, describing how every guest had a place to sleep, and how although the family was poor she always had bread to eat.⁴⁵ Shoshanah Gottdank-Gomerov, whose father died before the war, recounts the hardships after his death:

My mother wept a great deal. I was 17 years old and everything was on my shoulders. We could no longer work the land ourselves and we had to get a peasant. He took half the crop in exchange for his work. Then when my younger brother got married, his wife asked why he didn't take his inheritance. He knew he couldn't do that since he still had a mother and sisters; however, she didn't leave him alone.⁴⁶

Even in this case, when Shoshanah describes her misfortunes, she blames her brother's wife rather than her brother. Similarly, at the end of her narrative, when Noah—the only one of her six children to survive—decides to marry and remain in Russia rather

than join his mother in emigrating to Israel, she blames his wife rather than presenting her son in an unfavorable light.⁴⁷

Only two of the memoirs offer unpleasant memories of the family. Hedva Gil writes of the bad relationship between her mother and her grandmother after the latter's remarriage, although the adverse depiction of her grandmother highlights the devotion of her parents. The other case of an unhappy family is that of Yosef Wiener, who remembers terrible poverty and constant fighting and bickering between his parents. Even so, he describes his mother very tenderly; only his father is the target of criticism. Yosef describes himself as loving his brothers and his mother to such an extent that he wouldn't leave home when he was old enough to do so, as he didn't want them to be left alone with his father.⁴⁸

The authors generally present an idealized portrayal of the family during the war as well. All of the authors mention not only the hardships of parting from family members but also the support they received from members of their family who remained with them. Dina Fried-Budenstein tells of her aunt, Nehamah, who returned to the ghetto to be with the family instead of remaining in hiding on the Aryan side of Vilna. She quotes her aunt: "'As there is no safe haven from the Nazis for any Jew, we must concentrate on being together as much as possible. Only with the family can we find any kind of solace for our tribulations.'" ⁴⁹ Other writers pass on the same message in their stories. Whether in hiding or in the camps, everything was more difficult in the absence of family.

Explanations of the Past

One of the central elements of research on memory concerns the explanations people give for their past when recounting their stories. How do the writers explain the terrible events that they, along with all the other Jews in Europe, witnessed? Although no one offers an ultimate explanation for the suffering, all suggest some partial rationale. The authors present the understanding they have evolved in order to help them accept the events, as well as passing on the moral lessons that they find meaningful to the reader. In so doing, they have clearly been influenced by a number of factors, such as where they lived before the war, the nature and degree of their religious observance before and after the war, and their actual experiences. All agree, for example, that traditional antisemitism was a central factor underlying the war and that antisemitism was always present, even if only below the surface, in their own lives (although there is a substantial difference in the degree to which it was felt; those originating from Eastern, as opposed to Western Europe, emphasize it to a greater degree).

Although none of the authors directly address the spiritual aspects of the Holocaust, one who reads between the lines can detect some theological reflections. Hulda Campaniano, for example, encapsulates a religious view of the Holocaust in the quote she chooses for the dedication page of her book: "For My plans are not your plans, nor are My ways your ways, declares the Lord" (Is. 55:8). Other writers reach the opposite conclusion: Sara Buchman states that she lost her faith in God. Still others, as noted, offer caustic comments.⁵⁰

All of the writers affirm their connection to the ordeal of the Jewish people as a whole, viewing their story as a small part of this collective. Clara Cana'ani tells of

meeting many women from all of Europe in Auschwitz: "One did not understand the other's language, yet they were all Jewish and all shared the same fate."⁵¹ Other authors indicate that this understanding of a common fate is one they reached only after the war; nonetheless, it is a lesson they wish to emphasize to their children. Hedva Gil, the daughter of assimilated Polish Jews who survived the war by working for the Germans in the guise of a Christian, explains that her Jewish and Israeli identities today are the result of the war:

My childhood and my adulthood involve three nations: Jews, Germans, and Poles. My family was very assimilated and we lived among Poles; this assimilation was an ideology that I abandoned during the war, and I could not become Polish again after the war after having denied my Jewishness for two years and once I had seen how different my fate was from that of my Polish friends. As a child, Poland was my beloved homeland—I saw myself as a Pole even if I did not deny the fact that I was Jewish. I loved the Polish language, literature, folk songs. All my good friends were Polish and my friend Mila never severed her contact with me. The Palma family helped me escape from the ghetto. I was born a Jew but I can also say that I chose Judaism. After the war, I could have remained Alfreda Kuta, returned to Poland and become part of the Polish country rebuilding itself. I could have also remained Alfreda Laizerovitch if I had wanted to. But I chose to return to the Jews. And I did this with great enthusiasm. . . . All these years I have studied more and more about the history of the Jewish people. The Jews are my people and Israel is my country, as banal as this sentence may sound. For better and for worse.⁵²

Not surprisingly, Germans are portrayed as evil, especially when the German people as a whole are described. This feeling is expressed mainly in the epithets used to describe the Germans: "monsters," "Amalek," and the like. But the situation is more complicated when the authors describe individual Germans with whom they came into contact. Those who were in hiding viewed the Germans as a less serious threat than were Christian neighbors who could betray hiding places. For those in the camps, even though their direct contact was usually a non-German kapo, the Germans were perceived as the greatest enemy.

Hedva Gil, who, as noted, worked for a German family in the guise of a Polish Christian, writes:

I lived with a German family, I knew many Germans and I saw that they were ordinary people: among them there are wise and foolish people, some are pleasant, others more irritable, young and old. And despite this, that nation made up of these ordinary people committed the most horrible catastrophe. Can we separate our attitudes toward nations and people? What is a nation if not a large group of individuals? I do not know how to resolve this contradiction.⁵³

Most of the other writers do not formulate this question as clearly as does Hedva. Some resolve the issue by giving a definitive answer. Israel Goldman says: "All this was done by Germany. I never heard the term Nazis. They were Germans."⁵⁴

Yet sometimes individual Germans were the Jews' saviors. Motti Stern, who was almost killed by a fellow Jewish inmate, was saved by a German officer on a later occasion. This officer, who was to supervise the killing of the inmates in the infirmary, asked Motti why he was hospitalized, since he looked healthy. After Motti replied that he had trouble with his knee, the officer arranged for him to return to work. Moments before the victims were led off to be killed, Motti was taken by the officer to a new

barrack. He tried to persuade the officer to let his friend join him, to no avail. Motti writes: "My guardian angel has some warped sense of humor. First he almost lets me get killed by a Jew, then he sent a Wehrmacht officer to snatch me from the dragon's teeth."⁵⁵

Liberation

As previously discussed, all of the authors mention liberation and the Holocaust's aftermath. Those who spent the war in hiding talk of great joy during the first days of liberation, followed by the harsh reality of the mostly futile search for friends and relatives. In contrast, those who were liberated from the camps discuss the great physical weakness they had to overcome, and their exhaustion and inability to feel joy. Many of these writers emphasize that liberation for them was not a happy time—they know that their children and grandchildren must imagine liberation as a time of relief, whereas it was actually a moment of great difficulty. Those who were liberated by the Russian army, especially the women, speak of the additional hardships they faced because of the soldiers' brutality, often telling of running from Russian soldiers who were trying to rape them.⁵⁶

Perhaps because of all the pain and hardship connected with this ostensibly joyous occasion, most of the writers do not choose to end their stories with liberation. Pauline Buchenholz adds an account of finding her husband after the war.⁵⁷ Ruth Bindefeld tells of her meeting with her parents and sister, who had survived in hiding, in post-war Paris.⁵⁸ Most of the survivors who failed to find relatives alive tell of joining groups of fellow Jews. Those who emigrated to Palestine (or later, Israel) describe their group leaders and the tribulations they faced on the way. Some of them include accounts of their unpleasant encounters with fellow Jews during their first weeks in the new country. Clara Cana'ani gives an especially detailed account of her difficult absorption, writing that even when Israel declared its independence, this news meant little to her. In explanation, she tells of an encounter she had on a bus on Dizengoff Street in Tel-Aviv, where a woman who saw the number on her arm said loudly, "We all know how girls like you survived."⁵⁹

Yet Clara tries to excuse such behavior. She explains that as she was one of the first to reach Palestine, the Jewish community was not yet organized to help the survivors. Young people were busy building a new state and had no time to think of them. Clara ends her book by stating: "But we did not pity ourselves. After a few months I met my future husband, who had not experienced the horrors of the Holocaust. I married him in 1947. I formed my family and gave birth to a daughter—Chana, and a son—Ehud."⁶⁰

Clara's critical account of her reception is mild compared to that of others. Some of the survivors speak bitterly not only of their first years in Israel but of the stereotypes they were forced to counter. The common accusation that the Jews "went like lambs to the slaughter" was especially infuriating, and some of the authors devote several pages to a response. Zvi Zangeri, for instance, added an appendix to his memoir:

About the criticism that has been brought up against the behavior of the victims and the survivors of the Holocaust. Why they didn't rebel, why they didn't resist, went "like lambs to the slaughter," etc. etc. This criticism is voiced by those who were not part of

the Holocaust. I deny this criticism . . . it is more than sheer impertinence. But I wish to add that every survivor is a hero . . . every Jew who managed to stay alive defied Hitler and his master plan, no less than Tito's partisans. I can testify that we were sustained by the will not to surrender to death, to show Hitler that he would not win. On the plains of the Ukraine, when the temperature was 40 degrees below zero, we stated a few times a day, "Neither Hitler nor the Russian winter will hurt us!"⁶¹

Hayim Lefkowitz devotes 12 pages of his memoir to this issue. First, he says, people who make the accusation are not sufficiently aware of the fact that it was not only Jews who did not resist Hitler—no one in similar circumstances did. Second, he argues, if not for the courage of Holocaust survivors, Israel would not have become a state. He emphasizes the central role they played not only in making possible the passage of the UN partition plan of November 1947, but also in the War of Independence. He gives numerous examples of courage: the man who stopped the Syrian tank at Deganiyah was a survivor, as were many of the underground fighters.⁶²

Such arguments show the extent to which both Zangeri and Lefkowitz have internalized Israeli values. In their memoirs, they try to show how they too were fighters. This ethos also stands out in some of the narratives concerning life in the camps. A good example is Clara Cana'ani's account of a hanging in Auschwitz:

Two out of the four were hanged in the day shift, the two others in the night shift. When they stepped up to be hanged, one cry alone was in their mouths—Revenge!! As I watched the hanging, I had but one thought: the brave deeds of these Jewish girls, of simple stock, will never be known in the world and it will not be remembered that amid this terrible suffering their spirits were not broken and they rebelled against the murderers. Our hearts were filled with pride for their actions.⁶³

Another issue that emerges in the Israeli memoirs is the distinction that was often made between those who survived the camps and those who "merely" spent the war in hiding. Elisheva Baril explains that although she wasn't in Auschwitz, she feels as though she had been there; it appears as though she is apologizing for not suffering enough and is trying to justify defining herself as a survivor.⁶⁴ These two themes—the accusation of Jews' going "like lambs to the slaughter" and the different status accorded to different categories of survivors—do not appear in any of the memoirs written outside Israel. All of the authors in North America and Europe see themselves as survivors even if they had not been sent to the camps.

Despite the criticism they voice concerning their first experiences in the country, the Israeli authors all emphasize the importance of the state of Israel and of Zionist ideology, emphasizing their present sense of belonging in Israel and their perception of the country as a haven. A good example is the conclusion of Hela Kleinman-Markfield's book:

I have written all this although writing was very difficult for me. It has opened up old painful wounds. I did this because I wanted to pass on, while telling the story of my family, the terrible lesson for the generations to come. I thought that my children and grandchildren who were born in our free homeland should know in greater detail what happened to my family and myself in the past.⁶⁵

The Israeli authors also share an acceptance of the Zionist understanding of the contribution of the Holocaust to the birth of the state of Israel. Many emphasize with pride

that their children and/or grandchildren were born in Israel. These authors also make a point of urging their children and grandchildren to be more involved in the country, so that Israel will remain strong and thus insure that there will never be another Holocaust.⁶⁶ Writers living in North America and France do not put any special emphasis on the state of Israel, although the fact that they sent copies of their memoirs to Yad Vashem is a clear statement of their sense of Israel's importance. Then again, the North American and European authors also devote very little attention to their new homes, paying little homage to their adopted countries. Such differences in focus indicate the extent to which their memoirs are products of their present place and time.

The Next Generations

In his discussion of Holocaust monuments, James E. Young notes that "the memorial operation remains self contained and detached from our daily lives. Under the illusion that our memorial edifices will always be there to remind us, we take leave of them and return only at our convenience."⁶⁷ This statement can be applied as well to the survivors' memoirs. The authors have provided their families with a document that is meant to be both a point of reference for the future and a link to the past. Yet how does this memoir affect the next generation's memory of the Holocaust? How does it shape preexisting conceptions of the war and of the family experience? Does it enable younger family members to better "remember" the Holocaust, or are they more apt to let go of the past if it is written down? Some authors may have written their memoirs because their families did not want to listen to their stories.⁶⁸ Will the memoir have a place in the next generation's shaping of memory?

With these questions in mind, I interviewed 21 members of seven families, five of which are currently based in Israel.⁶⁹ The families were chosen based on their geographical accessibility and on their willingness to be interviewed. Following the methodology suggested by Dan Bar-On and Gabriella Rosenthal in their research on life stories, I was interested in finding out what the grandchildren knew about the survivor's story and experiences, and how their own memories were organized.⁷⁰ The first part of the interview focused on their grandparent's story, both before and after the war. I did not ask them to tell the story of the memoir but rather the story as they knew it, so that I could see how the memoir influenced their structure of memory. Although some of the grandchildren who were interviewed were not only grandchildren of survivors but also children of survivors, all of them chose to tell only their grandparent's (the author's) story, explaining that their parents were too young to have narratives of their own. Some were able to add details beyond what appeared in the memoirs, while others recalled only the outline of the story⁷¹ or even less—brief incidents only, without much detail and without any chronological order.⁷²

Such differences can be related to the processes that David Middleton and Derek Andrews have discussed in their article on "conversational remembering." They suggest that there are three levels of remembering: verbatim recall, in which all details of a specific episode or story are remembered; gist—the general outline of the story; and "repisodic" memory—the ability to remember only occasional incidents. When unstructured discussions take place, people tend to remember specific events carry-

ing emotional overtones.⁷³ And indeed, all the interviewees did recount in greatest detail the most intense experiences described in the memoirs, such as births witnessed in Auschwitz or separation from family members, as well as certain events with a humorous slant.⁷⁴

A different way to approach the issue of patterns of memory is to examine how these memories are evoked. As studies on memory have shown, ceremonies and body language play a large role in the transmission of memory.⁷⁵ For this reason, I asked each person being interviewed about official and unofficial ceremonies, or even daily events, that somehow evoke the Holocaust in their own lives.

Some of the interviewees could not think of a single moment apart from Holocaust Memorial Day during which the family regularly devotes attention to the Holocaust. Although almost all of the survivors mention a day on which they have a *yortsayt* for their beloved, these days are generally not known to the grandchildren. Zvi Zangeri's nephew, Shmuelik, was an exception. On Shavuot, which marks the day his grandfather's family was taken to Auschwitz, he told me, candles are lit in his home and his whole family walks to the Western Wall. Three days later there is a community memorial service in which all of the survivors meet in a synagogue and say kaddish. Shmuelik's cousins Shirli and Biranit were unaware of these events, but Biranit did bring up a personal ceremony of memory. She told me that her grandmother lights a tray of candles every Friday night, each candle being not only a Sabbath candle but a memorial candle. Biranit explained to me that although she lights only two candles, her grandmother's tray comes to mind every week.

All of those interviewed mentioned Holocaust Memorial Day, not only because of their family experiences but because of the general public mourning. In the Kalderon family, all the children come to the house with their families, go to their moshav's collective ceremony and then eat and watch commemorative television programs together. In this way, the family has created an act of remembrance that fits into the public ethos of memory. The Zangeri grandchildren, in contrast, talked of deliberately turning off the television and not taking part in the general public mourning. Shirli explained that it was too emotionally difficult to watch the programs, while Biranit claimed that, for their family, Holocaust Day was a day like any other. She drew an analogy between survivor families and bereaved Israeli families, some of whom shun the official Memorial Day commemorative ceremonies.

Some mentioned one-time events. For example, Zvi Zangeri's twin daughters, Liah and Yehudit—themselves survivors of Auschwitz, who had refused to tell their stories over the years—agreed to be interviewed for a television program broadcast in the 1980s that dealt with Josef Mengele's experiments. As part of the program, all of the surviving twins were asked to be photographed with their families. The Campanianos mentioned several events, such as visits to Israel of different people from various families who had kept the survivors hidden during the war, and their own visits to Italy to see these rescuers. They spoke of a ceremony that took place when their father helped to bring a Torah scroll from Alessandria, his former community, to Israel. They also remembered speeches that connected the Holocaust with Israel's rebirth, which were given at a celebratory dinner marking the 45th anniversary of the family's arrival in Israel.

All of the people I spoke with also mentioned small moments in which the Holo-

caust came up. Generally speaking, such moments had to do with food. I was told of grandparents who always finished the food on their plates and who scolded their grandchildren when they did not follow suit. All of these grandchildren had heard stories about the scarcity of food during the war. Although such moments may sound trivial, they are actually of some significance, since they are recalled by all the grandchildren, even those who express no particular interest in the family story.⁷⁶

Batya, Hayim Lefkowitz's daughter, recalled that each time her mother bought her a school notebook, she would explain that learning was of the utmost importance and express her sorrow that her own education and that of Batya's father had been curtailed by the war. Batya recalled few details of her father's experiences, but she spoke at some length about her father's frustration with his life. While other children and grandchildren could not pinpoint a specific incident connected with learning, they all agreed that their families had placed a special emphasis on education and felt that this emphasis was related to the Holocaust experience.

Another focus of everyday memory were objects that remained from the war, such as photographs or albums, newspapers or yellow stars. All of the grandchildren were able to describe an object of this sort in great detail. The Witzlings, for example, showed me a clock that had been kept in hiding, as well as a blue and white arm band. The Campanianos recalled how a non-Jewish housekeeper had saved their grandparents' *ketubah*.

And Zvi Zangeri's nephew, Shmuelik, pulled out his wallet and took out a small piece of colored cloth, saying, "Here, this is the Holocaust I carry around." He explained that this piece of cloth was part of his grandmother's *tikhl* (head covering), which she gave to her daughter (Rosia Zangeri) on the train to Auschwitz. Shmuelik was given the swatch of fabric by his father when he began basic training in the Israeli army, but refused to accept it out of fear that it would be lost. Only after he finished his army service did he start carrying the cloth with him, as a kind of good luck charm.

Finally, the grandchildren mentioned physical marks the Holocaust had left on the survivors. Some of the survivors, of course, have numbers on their arms, which all of their grandchildren mentioned. Reuben Campaniano has a scar on his face from the period in hiding, and both of his daughters talked of this scar as the first piece of the family story with which they had become familiar.⁷⁷

Personal and Collective Understandings

As part of the interview, each child or grandchild was asked to provide his or her own interpretation of the meaning of the war. All of the Israelis emphasized the importance of the state of Israel in light of the Holocaust. In this they echoed not only their grandparents but also themes that are common to Israeli society, although they were able to buttress their remarks with examples based on the family story. For example, the Campanianos spoke of Hannah, Hulda Campaniano's sister-in-law, who survived Auschwitz but was killed shortly thereafter in Jerusalem when a convoy traveling to Mt. Scopus was attacked. For them, Hannah's story embodies the direct relationship between the Holocaust and the state of Israel.

The Israeli grandchildren did not refer to their grandparents' first hard years in

Israel (only Batya, the daughter of survivors, mentioned this period). What they did mention as significant was the declaration of the state of Israel in May 1948 and/or the dates of their grandparents' arrival. Moreover, as opposed to the survivors, who drew a clear distinction between war and liberation and for whom coming to Israel was part of the liberation stage, the grandchildren distinguished between what preceded their grandparents' arrival and what came afterwards.⁷⁸

Like the authors, most of the Israeli grandchildren accepted the myth of heroism common in Israeli discourse. They all expressed anger at the expectation that the victims should have rebelled, yet went to great lengths to explain how their own grandparent had been a hero in his or her own way. There were only two partial exceptions to this rule. Na'ama Campaniano views the Holocaust as the story of her grandmother's experience of being a young woman alone with five small children. Na'ama told me that when she was active in her youth movement, and later on in the army, she could not identify with anything but "her Holocaust." To some extent, Yoni, whose grandmother, Annie Schwergold, survived in hiding in Belgium, also saw his grandmother's story as different from the collective experience. He viewed the collective story as the norm and his family's experience as a "deluxe Holocaust."

Some of the grandchildren talked of a religious message gleaned from the memoir, and all of them pointed to the family Holocaust experiences as influencing their own religious beliefs.⁷⁹ Although it is impossible to generalize about the direction of the impact of the survivors' experiences on their grandchildren's religious position, the existence of some impact seems clear: the interviewees chose to discuss this subject on their own initiative.

The Holocaust has also had a clear effect on family and career-related issues. Some of those interviewed spoke of the importance of having family get-togethers. Women who were already mothers talked about influences on their career choices. Hayim Lefkowitz's daughter, Batya, explained that she works only part-time because of the family Holocaust experience. "Can you imagine what it means not to have a single relative?" she said. "We were such a small family, a father, a mother, and two children." As a result, she feels that it is very important to spend time at home with her children. Zvi Zangeri's granddaughter, Biranit, reacted differently to a similar situation: her mother did not work, but she felt the need to do so. True, these are decisions faced by every modern parent. What is unusual is that in these two instances, the decision was connected to the Holocaust experience. The younger, mostly unmarried grandchildren, it should be noted, did not voice a similar expectation that the Holocaust would influence their later career or family choices.

I was also interested in determining how their family story may have influenced the children and grandchildren in a social context. Specifically, I asked them if they had ever chosen to share their family stories. Na'ama Campaniano told the story to her group in the youth movement. Devorah Sivan, a teacher, read parts of her mother's book aloud to her students on Holocaust Memorial Day. Gary Witzling has spoken on several occasions to groups of colleagues and to the members of his community. His wife, Claudia, works as a volunteer in local schools in New Jersey, presenting the family story to different classes with the aid of a poster prepared by her son Mark as part of a family roots project. Claudia also shows students the clock that the family

had in hiding and the diaries that were written in Yiddish. She emphasizes the fact that the family's story is true and that the diaries are evidence of the Holocaust. According to Claudia, a main lesson of the Holocaust is the importance of fighting "unreasoning discrimination, hatred, and abuse of power in our own time."⁸⁰

If we compare Claudia's emphasis to that of the Israelis who were interviewed, significant differences emerge. The state of Israel is not central to her story. Indeed, Claudia's approach brings to mind the underlying theme of many U.S.-based Holocaust memorials and museums. In her words, one can hear echoes of the pressing need to contend with Holocaust deniers. Claudia uses her husband's family story as an educational tool.

As previously discussed, such differences in emphasis may well be the result of a cultural divergence between Israel and the United States. It will be recalled that the non-Israel based authors do not draw the same distinction between survivors of the camps and those who survived in hiding. Letters and essays written by some of Claudia's students bear out these points. Her students discuss Auschwitz and hiding in the same breath, and they point as well to lessons to be learned about democracy, racism, and bigotry—subjects not addressed by the Israelis.

Use of the Memoirs

The last question I asked in the interviews had to do with the memoir as a locus of memory. Some of the interviewees have read the family memoir many times, others only once; for some, this reading is a ritual, while for others it was a one-time school assignment. Yet all of them have turned the memoir into an authoritative text. All who have told the story in public forums have used the memoir, reading parts of it aloud or showing it to the listeners. Gary Witzling, for example, began one presentation, after a brief introduction, with these words:

After his retirement, my father transcribed the diary from its faded pages to typed Yiddish, a copy of which is in Yad Vashem. Later, with my mother's help, it was translated into English. I'm going to let Pop's own words describe to you some of that black period.

Gary then went on to describe the war as the great divide:

My parents, like many others, lived two different lives: one before the war and one after the war. The war itself was a black period separating the two. My father's life first began in 1900 in Ukraine . . .⁸¹

This structuring echoes that of the memoirs; it is noteworthy that Gary is actually a survivor himself, having been a young child at the end of the war, which is why he may have made the same sort of distinction as do the authors. For the third generation, as noted, emigration marks the divide. On a different structural point, however, the grandchildren echo their grandparents when they draw comparisons between the family story and those of more famous figures. The Israeli grandchildren, for instance, often made comparisons between their grandparents and ghetto resistance fighters such as Abba Kovner and Mordechai Anilewicz, whose names are well known in Israel.

Conclusion

This essay has pointed to the ways in which survivors, writing for their families about their past, have chosen to shape their memoirs; and the ways in which the ideas and structures they have offered to their offspring have become rooted in the latter's memories. Writing their story, the authors, knowingly or not, are influencing the shape of memory. They want their story to be known to their families alongside other literature written on the Holocaust. Yet as we have seen, the authors' own understanding of the past has been shaped by the present. Ideals that were not necessarily part of the writers' lives before the war have become part of the way they explain the past. The next generation then reshapes these memories in the context of their own lives. Names from the family past, for example, become merged with the names of other figures that are familiar from school, books, and movies.

Of no lesser consequence are those memories that do not find a place either within the memoirs—humiliating moments, for example—or within the reader's frame of reference. An example of the latter is the way in which the harsh descriptions of emigration and the first years in Israel as described in various memoirs are filtered out by the grandchildren, who tend to emphasize only the most poignant incidents in the memoirs, placing the personal narratives in the context of what they have learned about the history of the period.

Based on the interviews conducted with the grandchildren, it seems that the transmission of memory does not take place through adoption of the narrative structure of the memoir, but mainly through small, mundane details and rituals that constitute the *lieux de mémoire* of the grandchildren's generation. The differences between personal and collective memory are fading, and the personal experiences of the grandparents are gradually being woven into the collective memory. It is only to be expected that the sense of a personal link will disappear in time; perhaps family stories woven into seder celebrations have more of a chance of surviving than do small moments at the supper table. Yet the memoirs, existing as accessible books, may well influence future memories. Each time the grandchildren or their children read the memoir, they may come away with new meanings, which the author did not necessarily intend, and which in some cases may even run counter to the author's intentions. The memories of each generation will be influenced by different ideologies and understandings, but the fact that the memoirs exist will at least permit the authors' descendants to return to the story.

Notes

This article is a revised version of an essay written under the supervision of Emmanuel Sivan. I wish to thank him for his guidance and encouragement. I also wish to thank my teachers and friends, Richard I. Cohen, Rachel Greenblatt, and Guy Miron, who read and commented on the essay at different stages, and members of the families who participated in this study.

1. See Jack Kugelmass and Jonathan Boyarin (eds.), *From a Ruined Garden: The Memorial Books of Polish Jewry*, 2nd ed. (New York: 1998); Annette Wieviorka and Itzhok Noborski, *Les livres du souvenir: Mémoires juifs de Pologne* (Paris: 1983); Nathan Wachtel, "Remember and Never Forget," *History and Anthropology* 2 (1986), 307–335.

2. On literary works, see James E. Young, *Writing and Rewriting the Holocaust: Narrative*

and the Consequences of Interpretation (Bloomington: 1988); Sidra DeKoven Ezrahi, *By Words Alone: The Holocaust in Literature* (Chicago and London: 1980); David Roskies, *The Literature of Destruction: Jewish Responses to Catastrophe* (Philadelphia: 1988).

3. For analysis of these testimonies, see Lawrence L. Langer, *Holocaust Testimonies: The Ruins of Memory* (New Haven: 1991).

4. In a recent article in the Yad Vashem newsletter, the phenomenon of survivors who write personal memoirs was described by Robert Rozett. His piece focused on published memoirs written by survivors, one of whose main purposes in writing was to set down memories for the sake of their children and grandchildren. Rozett reported a huge increase in the number of such published memoirs. See his “’Et hazikaron,” *Yedion Yad Vashem* 10 (Summer 1998), 10–11.

5. The memoirs were written by the following people:

Elisheva Baril (Budapest—Israel) 033/1783
 Amelia Margie Berko (Khust [Transylvania]—United States), 033/2697
 Ruth Biener (Borislav [Poland]—Beersheva), 033/2516
 Ruth Binfeld-Nezay (Paris —Toronto), 033/2163
 Pauline Buchenholz (Cracow—United States), 033/2090
 Sara Buchman (Warsaw—Paris), 033/2267
 Hulda Campaniano (Florence—Kevuzat Yavneh), 033/1690
 Clara Cana’ani (Magdeburg [Germany]—Kfar Warburg), 033/2317
 Miriam Eisenstadt (Belzec [Poland]—Tel-Aviv), 033/3240
 Dina Fried-Bodenstein (Vilna—Israel), 033/2396
 Hedva Gil (Poland—Hod Hasharon), 033/3294
 Israel Goldman (Pinczow [Poland]—Israel), 033/3238
 Shoshanah Gott Dank-Gomerov (Vilna—Israel), 033/2591
 William Good (Vilna—California), 033/2598
 Simha Gita Allegra Kalderon (Bitula [Macedonia]—Kfar Syrkin), 033/3389
 Hela Kleinman-Markfield (Tomaszow [Poland]—Israel), 033/2505
 Hayim Lefkowitz (Poland—Haifa), 033/2311
 Leah Miller (Lodz—Kibbutz Hulata), 033/2599
 Israel Orzech (Ksiadz Welki [Poland]—Haifa), 033/2368
 Annie Schweggold (Antwerp—New York) (no call number)
 Motti Stern (Des [Transylvania]—U.S.), 033/1788
 Joseph Wiener (Yorkov [Poland]—Holon), 033/2619
 Peretz Witzling (Horodenka [Galicia]—New Jersey) (no call number)
 Zvi Zangeri (Hungary—Tel-Aviv), 033/3435.

After completing the project, I was informed that Hulda Campaniano’s memoir had been published commercially by the family. I worked with the original version that had been deposited in Yad Vashem.

6. I have not included memoirs in Yiddish. Most memoirs written for family purposes are not written in Yiddish, since relatively few younger members of the family know the language. Some of the memoirs, however (those of Elisheva Baril, Shoshanah Gott Dank-Gomerov, Hayim Lefkowitz, and Sara Buchman), were translated from an original version that had been written in Yiddish.

7. Many studies have focused on the accuracy and veracity of testimonies and accounts recorded long after the war. See, for example, Langer, *Holocaust Testimonies* and *idem*, “Fictional Facts and Factual Fictions: History in Holocaust and Literature,” in *Reflections of the Holocaust in Art and Literature*, ed. Randolph L. Braham (Boulder: 1980), 117–129.

8. See Maurice Halbwachs, *The Collective Memory*, trans. Francis J. Ditter, Jr. and Vida Yazdi Ditter (New York: 1980), 63–78. The memoirs discussed in the present article are unique in that they were written for family members, all of whom—often without being aware of the fact—absorbed and internalized part of the family memories. See *ibid.*, 55–56, 81–83.

9. See Roger Bastide, “Mémoire collective et sociologie du bricolage,” *L’Année sociologique* 30 (1970), 78–97. For further developments of this methodology, see Emmanuel Sivan, *Dor hatashah: mitus, diyukan vezikaron* (Tel-Aviv: 1991).

10. See memoir of Ruth Biener, 1.
11. See memoir of Emilia Berko, 1.
12. See the memoirs of William Good and Joseph Wiener.
13. See, for example, the memoirs of Leah Miller and Annie Schwergold.
14. See the memoirs of Israel Orzach, 1–2; Motti Stern, introduction; and Ruth Biener, introduction.
15. Two of the writers, Peretz Witzling and Hayim Lefkowitz, mention previous drafts, but in these cases the memoirs were translated and reorganized in order to compile the memoir that is here discussed.
16. See, for example, the memoir of Hedva Gil, 1.
17. See, for example, the memoirs of Elisheva Baril, 1; Hulda Campaniano, dedication; and Hela Kleiman-Markfeld, 1.
18. Previous research has pointed to patterns of organization of life stories. Lucette Valensi and Nathan Wachtel, who interviewed Polish and North African Jews in France, suggested a common organization of “Jewish memories” around the biblical theme of exile and return. See their *Jewish Memories*, trans. Barbara Harshav (Berkeley: 1991), 349. Also see Guy Miron, “Autobiographies as Sources in Social History: Germany Jewry in Palestine/Israel as a Test Case,” *Historiyah* 2 (1998), esp. the English summary. This point will not be developed here, since the memoirs do not deal with life stories per se but rather with one period and the events preceding and following it.
19. See Young, *Writing and Rewriting the Holocaust*, 7.
20. Memoir of Sara Buchman, 2.
21. Memoir of Hedva Gil, 1–2.
22. Cf. Valensi and Wachtel, *Jewish Memories*, in which a similar division of time is presented.
23. See Dan Bar-On, *Bein pahaḏ letikvah* (Lohamei Hagetaot: 1994), 36; Gabriella Rosenthal (ed.), *The Holocaust in Three Generations* (London: 1998). As with the works mentioned in n. 18, these works differ from the memoirs in that the latter are not meant to be life stories.
24. Although many patterns can be discerned, common denominators can be found in the logic behind the author’s organization. Cf. Valensi and Wachtel, *Jewish Memories*, 291.
25. For a discussion of this issue, see Murray Baumgarten, “Expectations and Endings: Observations on Holocaust Literature,” *Working Papers on Holocaust Studies* 3 (1989), 4.
26. Memoir of Annie Schwergold, 35.
27. Memoir of Hulda Campaniano; see, for example, 44.
28. Many of the writers were active in the preparation of the community books: Israel Goldman in *Sefer zikaron Pinzcow*, ed. Mordechai Shin’ar (Tel-Aviv: 1970), 447–448; Peretz Witzling, in *Sefer Horodenka*, ed. Shimshon Melzer (Tel-Aviv: 1964); Zvi Zangeri in *Meah shanah lihudei Dobrezin*, ed. Moshe Gunda (Tel-Aviv: 1989) and *Salaj-Szilagy megye zsidóságának emlékkönyve*, ed. David Giladi (Tel-Aviv: 1989), 171–173, 215, 230–235, 273.
29. See, for example, his account of the Soviet occupation. Memoir of Peretz Witzling, 8–32.
30. Memoir of Sara Buchman, 1, 100.
31. Pirkei avot 3:1.
32. Memoir of Motti Stern, 10–11.
33. *Ibid.*, 30–31.
34. Memoir of Hayim Lefkowitz, 1–2.
35. Memoir of Elisheva Baril, 4.
36. A surprising instance of this principle occurs in the story of Zvi Zangeri. Zvi, the father, calls his book *Our Hagadah: A Supplement or Replacement of the Hagadah*, which recounts his survival in various forced labor camps in Hungary throughout the war. While he was in these camps, his wife and twin daughters, also survivors, were in Auschwitz, where the girls were subjected to the infamous medical experiments conducted by Josef Mengele. Although Zvi is familiar with the women’s stories, the book centers on his own experiences.
37. Memoir of Pauline Buchenholz, 38.
38. *Ibid.* See also the memoir of Motti Stern, 17–18.

39. Memoir of Ruth Bindefeld, 33; memoir of Sara Buchman, 45–46.
40. On this theme, see Terrence Des Pres, *The Survivor* (New York: 1977), who writes of three types: the hero, the victim, and the survivor. See also Ezrahi, *By Words Alone*, 68–69; and Marlene E. Heinemann, *Gender and Destiny: Women Writers and the Holocaust* (New York: 1986), 8–10.
41. See, for example, the memoir of Ruth Bindefeld, 18. Ruth mentions only briefly a beating she received, and immediately turns to the subject of the suffering of others.
42. See memoir of Clara Cana'ani, 9–10; memoir of Hela Kleinman-Markfield, 17.
43. Memoir of Hela Kleinman-Markfield, 3.
44. Memoir of Ruth Biener, 1.
45. Memoir of Miriam Eisenstadt, 6–7.
46. Memoir of Shoshanah Gottdank-Gomerov, 6–7.
47. *Ibid.*, 38.
48. See memoir of Hedva Gil, 2–3; memoir of Yosef Wiener, 2–3.
49. Memoir of Dina Freid-Budenstein, 30.
50. See memoir of Sara Buchman, 18.
51. Memoir of Clara Cana'ani, 66.
52. Memoir of Hedva Gil, 53–54.
53. *Ibid.*, 54.
54. Memoir of Israel Goldman, 17.
55. Memoir of Motti Stern, 21.
56. See memoir of Elisheva Baril, 28–29, who apologizes in a postscript for sounding so hateful toward the Russians.
57. See memoir of Pauline Buchenholz, conclusion.
58. See memoir of Ruth Bindefeld, conclusion.
59. Memoir of Clara Cana'ani, 109–111.
60. *Ibid.*, 111.
61. Memoir of Zvi Zangeri, 83.
62. See memoir of Hayim Lefkowitz, 9–11.
63. Memoir of Clara Cana'ani, 76.
64. See memoir of Elisheva Baril, 50. On this issue, also see James Young, *The Texture of Memory: Holocaust Memorials and Meaning* (New Haven: 1993), 235.
65. Memoir of Hela Kleinman-Markfield, 27.
66. See, for example, the memoirs of Hulda Campaniano and Elisheva Baril, dedications; and memoir of Hayim Lefkowitz, 4–5.
67. See Young, *Texture of Memory*, 5.
68. On this issue, see Annette Wieviorka, "On Testimony," in *Holocaust Remembrances: The Shapes of Memory*, ed. Geoffrey Hartmann (Cambridge, Mass.: 1994), 27.
69. I met or spoke with the following people:
 From the family of Miriam Eisenstadt: Devorah (daughter); Avi, No'a, and Michal (grandchildren); Ariella (sister; telephone conversation).
 From the family of Hulda Campaniano: Na'ama, Nurit, and Efrat (granddaughters).
 From the family of Zvi Zangeri: Shmuelik (nephew), and Biranit and Shirli (grandchildren); Yehudit (daughter; telephone conversation).
 From the family of Peretz Witzling: Gary and Claudia (son and daughter-in-law); Mark (grandson).
 From the family of Hayim Lefkowitz: Batya (daughter).
 From the family of Simha Gita Allegra Kalderon: Simha (author of memoir); Michal, Shirit, Yael (granddaughters).
 From the family of Annie Schwergold: Annie (author of memoir); Yoni and Aliza (grandson and wife).
70. As opposed to Rosenthal and Bar-On, I was not interested in life stories. Like them, I do not claim that these interviews are representative; rather that, taken together, the stories demonstrate the complexity of the transmission of memory from generation to generation.
71. This was the case, for example, with regard to Hayim Lefkowitz's daughter, Batya.

72. Another point that became clear in the interviews was the significance of the relationship between grandparent and grandchild. The grandchild's attitude toward the grandparent often affected the way in which the memoir was perceived and recalled.

73. David Middleton and Derek Andrews "Conversational Remembering: A Social Psychological Approach," in *Collective Remembering*, ed. David Middleton and Derek Andrews (London: 1990), 23–45.

74. I also discovered that familiarity with the story often did not correspond to the interviewee's perception of how well he or she knew the story. Many of the interviewees told me in our initial telephone conversation that they knew the story down to the last detail. During the interview, it became apparent that this was not the case.

75. See Paul Connerton, *How Societies Remember* (Cambridge: 1989); Bastide, "Mémoire collective et sociologie du bricolage"; Bar-On, *Bein paḥad letikvah*, 242.

76. On this point, see Bar-On, *Bein paḥad letikvah*, 66–67.

77. In a private communication with Reuben Campaniano, he denied any significance to the scar on his forehead. In my eyes, this is a good example of how something that one generation sees as unimportant becomes more so—because tangible and visible—to a different generation.

78. Cf. Valensi and Wachtel, *Jewish Memories*, 291.

79. See, for example, the article written by Nurit, Hulda Campaniano's granddaughter, in the kibbutz newsletter *Mibayit*, Kevuzat Yavneh, Nisan 5750/March 1990.

80. Letter from Claudia Witzling, 2 March 1994.

81. Excerpt from a speech given by Gary Witzling on Holocaust Memorial Day, 1992.

Review Essays

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Postmodernism and the Jewish Question

Elizabeth Bellamy, *Affective Genealogies: Psychoanalysis, Postmodernism, and the "Jewish Question" after Auschwitz*. Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1997. 214 pp.

Dominick LaCapra, *History and Memory after Auschwitz*. Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1998. 214 pp.

Dominick LaCapra, *Representing the Holocaust: History, Theory, Trauma*. Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1994. 230 pp.

It should be no surprise to Jewish scholars and to scholars of Jewish history that Auschwitz has come to constitute an important subject within much contemporary thinking about history, philosophy, and culture—Jewish and non-Jewish alike. But what may be something of a revelation to those outside the field of current literary theory and postmodernist philosophy is just how central Auschwitz really is. Auschwitz, or more precisely “after Auschwitz”—that is, Auschwitz represented (significantly, as we shall see) in quotation marks—may no less than define postmodernism itself. Even more surprising and troubling is how, in this self-definition around and through the concept of “after Auschwitz,” the Jew continues to function in ways uncannily similar to the ways in which the Jew functioned in premodernist and modernist thinking. It is this thinking about the Jew that, according to postmodernism’s own account, may well have produced Auschwitz in the first place. The implied subtext in all three of these books is the continued repression of the Jew in postmodernism, which, despite its powerful investment in coming to terms with “after Auschwitz,” seems incapable of properly mourning and thereby genuinely working through Auschwitz. In the psychohistory narrated by Dominick LaCapra and Elizabeth Bellamy, the Jew emerges as nothing less than the unconscious of Western culture itself. LaCapra, who is a historian, and Bellamy, who is a literary critic, come at their shared subject through different types of disciplinary expertise and with somewhat different academic agendas. But their projects converge in sharing the assumption that, as LaCapra puts it in *Representing the Holocaust*, “much recent debate in critical theory and historiography is recast if the Holocaust is perceived as at least one more or less repressed divider or traumatic point of rupture between modernism and postmodernism. In this light, the postmodern and the post-Holocaust become mutually intertwined issues that are best addressed in relation to each other” (p. 188).

The “debate” to which LaCapra refers, and which is taken up both by him and by Bellamy, centers largely on the philosophy of deconstruction as articulated by Jacques Derrida and others. Deconstruction, briefly, constitutes a critique of traditional West-

ern metaphysics with its emphasis on presence and “truth.” Meaning, according to Derrida and others, is never immanent and essential. It is always produced by the *difference* between one thing and another. As such, it is always indeterminate, decentered, more the evocation of what has been lost to consciousness than a representation of what can be thought or felt. For this reason, deconstruction embodies a radical skepticism concerning what can either be known or represented. Insofar as it is a move to resist the tendencies toward ideological or political overdeterminism—which tendencies we might well think of as having culminated in fascism and antisemitism—it functions for philosophers such as Derrida as nothing less than an ethical structure.

The question that both LaCapra and Bellamy raise concerning such postmodern modes of thought is, what does such thinking itself evade or repress? Central to both these scholars’ thinking about deconstruction is a psychoanalytic approach to culture and writing, which informs not only their own writing, but, in their view, deconstruction and much other postmodernist thought as well. In arguing, like LaCapra, for the Holocaust as a “more or less repressed divider or traumatic point of rupture between modernism and postmodernism,” Bellamy adds the following crucial claim, which LaCapra shares with her: that the

much-debated “slash” between modernism and postmodernism demarcates, among other things, an obscure psychic threshold of repression, disavowal, denegation, or foreclosure of an unresolved modernism—all the psychic defenses against the violence of the divide between modernism and postmodernism, for which a melancholic strain within postmodernism has become the most observable aftereffect. . . . [T]his unacknowledged melancholia in turn serves as the ironic backdrop for postmodernism’s often contradictory engagement with psychoanalysis as a modernist “grand narrative” that it seeks both to appropriate and to reject. . . . After all, postmodernism can be summarized as, among other things, a kind of melancholic reaction to the loss of modernity’s narratives of coherence (pp. 1–2).

Several elements conspire to produce Bellamy’s and LaCapra’s picture of a postmodernist unconscious in which the Jew is as much its repressed trauma as it was Germany’s beforehand. First, they both proceed psychoanalytically by placing mourning—in particular, mourning the loss of narrative coherence—at the center of postmodernist consciousness. Second, they put at the center of that loss the Holocaust, which can be understood, according to both of them, as an acting out on the part of German and, perhaps, also French and European culture, of unacknowledged psychic impulses concerning the Jew. And third, they understand the psychoanalysis that is itself so central in postmodernist thought as encrypting within itself the Jew, both in the figure of Freud and in the general association of psychoanalysis with Jews, such that to think psychoanalytically (that is, to psychoanalyze European culture) is already both to be thinking about the Jew and repressing that fact. Thus the postmodernist response to “after Auschwitz” becomes, in their view, its own form of acting out rather than working through. This accounts for the dominant note of melancholia that informs contemporary culture. “One lesson of Freud’s ‘Mourning and Melancholia,’” writes Bellamy, “is that melancholia is a kind of perversion or distortion of memory—a refusal of a salutary remembrance of loss, a refusal to mourn, that condemns the subject to a futile ‘acting out’” (p. 3).

For both Bellamy and LaCapra, a fundamental problem in writing about the Holo-

caust is the old problem signaled to us in the title of the earlier work by LaCapra, *Representing the Holocaust*. How does one represent such an inherently unrepresentable event as the Holocaust without distorting or minimalizing it, or, even more discomfoting, appropriating it for the uses or gains of aesthetic or intellectual pleasure? One response of postmodernism, especially as literary theorists were galvanized into print following the shock of the disclosures concerning Paul de Man (this influential and charismatic exponent of deconstruction had written for a Nazi publication in wartime Belgium), has been a privileging of “silence” as the only decorous way of speaking about the unspeakable.

But as LaCapra points out in *Representing the Holocaust*, even if “there is a sense in which silence may indeed be the only way to confront a traumatic past, . . . this contention does not justify a specific silence concerning something that can be said or with respect to the problem of attempting to say what can be said in the face of the risk that language may break down in a more or less telling manner” (pp. 122–123). The “after Auschwitz” that is at the center of much postmodernist thinking—Auschwitz in quotation marks so as to indicate that it is not *merely* the literal Auschwitz of which we speak—turns out to be a refusal to say that literal word *Auschwitz*. This turns out to be a refusal to say the word *Jew* as well.

“The Holocaust,” LaCapra continues, “has often tended to be repressed or encrypted as a specific series of events and to be displaced onto such general questions as language, nomadism, unrepresentability, silence, and so forth.” There is a “tendency to trope away from specificity and to reprocess problems in terms of reading technologies that function as discursive ‘cuisanarts.’ Such reactions inhibit processes of working-through and learning from the past” (pp. 209–210). Or as Bellamy puts it,

From Sartre to Jabés to Finkelkraut, the ongoing process of “imagining the Jew” in postwar France is a paradoxical process of not just rejecting but also *introjecting* the anti-Semitic trope of the Jew as the strange and uncanny “other.” Consequently, the postwar Jewish imaginary in France has become an extended meditation on the themes of *l’altérité*, *déracinement*, *l’étrangeté*—stereotypes left over from an earlier, modernist anti-Semitism, but which have experienced complex psychic metamorphoses in the post-Holocaust (pp. 17–18).

“Real Jews,” she goes on, “have tended to be transformed into tropes or signifiers for the decentered, destabilized post-modern subject in a theoretical system that persists in defining (or ‘fetishizing’) them from without” (p. 31). The phrase “after Auschwitz”—Auschwitz in quotation marks—serves in Bellamy’s text as a shorthand for this “troping away” of the concrete, material fact of Auschwitz and of the individual Jewish human beings who lost their lives there.

For LaCapra the lesson to be learned from the relationship between Auschwitz and “after Auschwitz” is that

working-through requires the recognition that we are involved in transference relations to the past in ways that vary according to the subject-positions we find ourselves in, rework, and invent. It also involves the attempt to counteract the projective reprocessing of the past through which we deny certain of its features and act out our own desires for self-confirming or identity-forming meaning. By contrast, working-through is bound up with the role of the problematic but significant distinctions, including that between accurate reconstructions of the past and committed exchange with it. These distinctions should be

neither reified into binary oppositions and separate spheres nor collapsed into an indiscriminate will to rewrite the past. In addition, working-through relies on a certain use of memory and judgment—a use that involves the critique of ideology, prominently including the critique of the scapegoat “mechanism” that had a historically specific and not simply arbitrary or abstract role in the Nazi treatment of the Jews. What is not confronted critically does not disappear; it tends to return as the repressed (pp. 64–65).

Or as LaCapra puts it in *History and Memory*, “transference is inevitable to the extent that an issue is not dead, provokes an emotional and evaluative response, and entails the meeting of history with memory. When confronting live issues, one becomes affectively implicated” (p. 40). The term “affective” in Bellamy’s title is indeed intended to signal the necessity for such “affect,” which, in her view, is often absent in postmodernism’s anxious silence around the subject of Auschwitz.

Of the three books, Bellamy’s is by far the most difficult to read. She writes in the style of Derridean deconstruction, which is also the subject of her critique; it is difficult at times to determine whether she is affirming or disavowing the positions she articulates. It is hard, therefore, not to wonder whether her own postmodernist agenda does not replicate some of the problems she so skillfully brings into view in the writings of Derrida, de Man, Jacques Lacan, Philippe Lacoue-Labarthe, Jean-François Lyotard, Jean-Luc Nancy, and Slavoj Žižek—all of whom she discusses in her book. For example, in brilliantly exposing the postmodernist stake in reading Freud’s *Moses and Monotheism* as a text concerning the lack of cultural origins or origination (the “founding” of the Jews, in this interpretation, occurs in their retrospective claim of an origin that never existed and that only comes into being with their declaration of it), Bellamy performs considerable acrobatics of her own to reclaim this as a consummately Jewish text.

In her view, *Moses and Monotheism* does nothing less than bespeak Freud’s Jewish identity. The father of this text is not Freud but Freud’s father. It is this father who gives Freud the Hebrew Bible that “founds” both Freud’s Jewish identity and this text; and it is this father who, in a circumvention of the Oedipal process (which turns out to be a Judaic as opposed to a Greek form of the Oedipus complex) specifically does *not* get killed off. “Freud’s denial of the Jewish origins of Moses,” Bellamy argues, is not a denial of Jewishness but, rather, “a kind of ‘sacrificial’ move seeking to guarantee the centrality of repression . . . within cultural history” (p. 127). In this repression, it is the Jew who plays the central role, the Jew who thus, and irrevocably, becomes the defining trauma through which Western culture enacts itself. It is this fact of Jewish presence that Freud would ensure through his text.

By claiming *Hamlet*, in which the father-murder is refused, as Freud’s preferred enactment of the Oedipus complex (in this way, *Hamlet* emerges as a Judaic text), and by emphasizing the importance to Freud of the Egyptian origins of the original Moses, Bellamy reads *Moses and Monotheism* as Freud’s attempt to subvert German culture’s identification of itself with the Greeks and with the tradition of father-murder that in *Oedipus Rex* is actually accomplished. (Bellamy might have noted, in this context, that a major structural difference between Judaism and Christianity is that in Judaism the son-murder on which Christianity founds itself is also averted.) But to mount this spectacular reclamation of Freud’s text, Bellamy has to actively resist the “offense

against the Jews” perpetrated by that text, an offense that Freud, in his own account, fully recognized and opted for (cf. p. 129).

Given the moment of the text’s appearance on the stage of world culture—as Freud himself was fleeing the Nazis who would destroy most of European Jewry—does the text’s barely legible reinscription of the Jew as an abiding presence within Western culture, which only the linguistic sleight of hand of a postmodernist reader like Bellamy can bring into view, constitute any lesser an offense or “sacrifice” of the Jew than the postmodernist readings of the essays that Bellamy implicates as once again repressing, offending, and sacrificing the Jew? Ordinary people going to their ordinary deaths at (and not “after”) Auschwitz read Freud in ordinary ways. If *Moses and Monotheism* was bound to offend many of them, then this offense is not to be so easily troped away.

Perhaps because he is less interested in negotiating the complex language of the postmodernist texts he reads and more concerned with restoring history to our considerations of the issues raised by these texts, LaCapra writes a more straightforward prose and gets himself entangled in fewer reenactments of the problems he exposes. In *Representing the Holocaust*, he provides extremely valuable discussions of such pivotal events as the *Historikerstreit* (the German historians’ debate of 1986), Holocaust revisionism and denial, the de Man affair, and the Heideggerianism of recent philosophical thought. In *History and Memory after Auschwitz*, which usefully summarizes and extends his theory of the transferential relationship between the historian and the historical past, he discusses, alongside historical texts, more purely literary and artistic works such as Albert Camus’ *The Fall*, Claude Lanzmann’s *Shoah*, and Art Spiegelman’s *Maus*.

All three of these books are profoundly thoughtful and humane reflections on a subject of utmost importance, not only to Jews and Jewish culture, but to Western culture itself.

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Beyond Heroism and Victimhood: Gender and Holocaust Scholarship

- Rachel Feldhay Brenner, *Writing As Resistance: Four Women Confronting the Holocaust: Edith Stein, Simone Weil, Anne Frank, Etty Hillesum*. University Park: Pennsylvania State University Press, 1997. 216 pp.
- Marianne Hirsch, *Family Frames: Photography, Narrative, and Postmemory*. Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1997. 304 pp.
- Donald L. Niewyk (ed.), *Fresh Wounds: Early Narratives of Holocaust Survival*. Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1998. 432 pp.
- Dalia Ofer and Leonore J. Weitzman (eds.), *Women in the Holocaust*. New Haven: Yale University Press, 1998. 402 pp.

The study of the Holocaust poses several problems that are central to the agenda of contemporary gender theory. How can feminist scholarship describe the experiences of women victims of the Nazi genocide yet avoid reinscribing old stereotypes about female passivity? How were the experiences of women who were targeted for being Jews different from those of other women who were killed by the Nazis, such as political prisoners and Gypsies—and how far do these differences shed light on the ways in which gender functions in combination with race? How can a study of women perpetrators in the concentration camps help us understand why women commit acts of evil and illumine the ways in which the social construction of femininity influences women in such actions?

Although the field of gender studies has been burgeoning in the United States and Europe for several decades, it is just beginning to touch the historiography of the Holocaust. In part, this may be because the Holocaust seems too grim to be subjected to anything other than traditional methods, the sober recovery of archival materials and the reconstruction of public political events. Just as women's concerns have often been regarded as frivolous, so too women's studies is sometimes accused of a similar frivolity that makes its application to the Holocaust seem inappropriate. For example, the new collection of essays, *Women in the Holocaust*, edited by Dalia Ofer and Leonore Weitzman, recently elicited harsh denunciations (primarily from right-wing American Jews) on the grounds that the book trivializes the Holocaust by examining it through the lens of gender.¹ Feminist scholarship can even be subtly linked to Holocaust deniers; Cynthia Ozick is cited in the collection as arguing that to concentrate on gender in this context is morally wrong because the effect is to eradicate the Jews—and with them, the Holocaust—from history.

Within the larger scholarly community of feminist historians and literary theorists, in contrast, questions concerning the Holocaust are of serious and profound significance. Gender, they recognize, has long played a crucial role in nationalism, fascism, war, and genocide. Its significance in relation to the issues of antisemitism and Jewish resistance has not been as thoroughly explored, though, making these new books examining gender and the Holocaust of particular interest. The four books under review both confirm the importance of feminist analysis of the Holocaust and, in some cases, disappoint those looking for new theoretical insights. While the study of the Holocaust from the perspective of gender will provide new information about women's experience, hopefully it will also enable a deeper understanding of the nature of the evil that was perpetrated and suggest ways in which the analysis of the Holocaust might fruitfully contribute to the shaping of feminist theory.

Although two important books on women in Nazi Germany were published in the 1970s, feminist scholarship on the topic began in earnest with the publication of Claudia Koonz's important book, *Mothers in the Fatherland*, in 1988. A broad study of both Nazi women leaders and the anonymous German hausfrau under National Socialism, Koonz drew harsh and strong conclusions. She argued that German women were, by and large, active and ardent Nazis, and that the "Kinder, Küche, Kirche" slogan of the Nazis did not remove women from the political scene, but rather transformed the home into a site of collaboration that enabled the regime to carry out its work more effectively.

Koonz's work was well received in the United States but aroused enormous controversy and enmity in Germany, where feminist studies of National Socialism were just emerging in the late 1980s. Under the influence of the emergent German feminist movement that presented women as victims of social and political oppression, most of the feminist scholarship emphasized German women's status as victims of National Socialism rather than as perpetrators. The most significant German feminist study of Nazism was by Gisela Bock, *Zwangsterilisation im Nationalsozialismus: Studien zur Rassenpolitik und Frauenpolitik*, published in 1986. In her analysis of Nazi sterilization policies, Bock noted that women were more likely to die from the procedure than men, and that sterilization exerted a different impact on the lives of women than men. She argued that the death of approximately 4,500 German women who underwent forced sterilization was a form of "planned and deliberate mass murder" that differed only in degree, not in kind, from the genocide of the Jews.² In Bock's analysis, some women were perpetrators, but most were followers, bystanders, or victims. Indeed, Bock argued, had the Nazis succeeded in all of their goals, women, too, would have been their targets of murder.

Bock's conclusions, along with her stinging critique of Koonz's book, aroused a major debate among European and American feminist scholars regarding the interpretation of German women's roles under National Socialism, and of Nazi policy toward women. Apart from Koonz, however, little was written about German women as perpetrators of Nazi atrocities, nor about Jewish women, nor about German antisemitism. Indeed, the noted German psychoanalyst Margarete Mitscherlich published a book in 1985 in which she argued that antisemitism is solely a male phenomenon.³ In 1987, the German feminist theologian Christa Mulack claimed that the obedience

to orders demanded of Nazis was analogous to Judaism's ethic of obedience to divine commandments.⁴

Such "grace endowed by female birth," as Karin Windaus-Walser has called it, permitted certain German feminists to present German women as helpless victims who had played absolutely no role in the murder of Jews.⁵ It was only in the late 1980s that some German feminist Protestant theologians finally began to publish studies of Christian anti-Judaism and its role in Nazi antisemitism; in the 1990s, some feminist historians gradually began to publish critical studies of women perpetrators. By now, a substantial body of research by German feminists describes the activity of women in war- and Holocaust-related employment, including working for the SS at concentration camps and carrying out atrocities.⁶

Debate still continues on how to interpret the role of women as perpetrators. One of the major gaps in feminist theory is its relative lack of attention to the problems of genocide and evil and how such issues match the social constructions of gender. Male peer pressure is generally thought to increase the likelihood of criminality by encouraging displays of intense masculine behavior (*machismo*), but nothing comparable among women has been suggested. Christopher Browning's study of the police battalions that killed Jews in Poland, *Ordinary Men* (1992), mentions that killers who showed reluctance to take part were pressured by their comrades to show that they were "real men." However, Browning fails to analyze the role that conceptions of masculinity may have played in this form of peer pressure. For example, could his book have been retitled "Ordinary Women" to tell a similar story about female perpetrators, and could those actions then be attributed to a comparable type of group pressure that would exhort displays of women's solidarity through acts of evil? Bock argues that women guards at concentration camps were attempting to enter a male arena, leaving behind the traditional domestic female sphere, and therein lay their guilt. Yet this presents the women guards as "male-imitative," as if evil resides exclusively or primarily in the domains controlled by men. Some feminist theologians and philosophers have even suggested that an intensification of maleness will elide into cruelty, whereas an intensification of femaleness leads to empathy and kindness.⁷ Here again is the implicit belief that female birth endows "grace."

Even though the vast majority of killers were men, attention to gender would also require analysis of the moral accountability of the women in their lives, particularly their wives, mothers, and girlfriends. The actual murders of Jews belonged to the public arena, leading some to argue that a strengthening of domesticity could serve as a counterweight to politics, exerting a positive moral influence. Such sentimental notions about the family and the role of women fail to recognize that evil can reside just as much in the private as in the public sphere. Gitta Sereny's study of Franz Stangl, commandant of Treblinka, has made clear the culpability of his wife, who knew of his work yet failed even to attempt to stop it.⁸ Further studies might implicate additional wives as silent bystanders who could possibly have halted their husbands' atrocities.

Only a few feminist scholars to date have been attentive to Jewish women as victims of the Holocaust. The feminist study of the Shoah was launched with the brilliant and controversial articles of Joan Ringelheim, who advanced several important observations. She noted, for example, that Jewish women were killed at a much higher

rate in the death camps than men, in large measure because anyone who arrived holding a child was immediately put to death. She also exposed the tendency of the *Judenräte* to send more women than men to their deaths—hoping thereby to appease the Nazis by retaining a greater number of male laborers. Finally, Ringelheim raised the question of the forced abortions of Jewish women in the ghettos.

Her work has generated its own intense controversies. Some have accused her of a lack of sympathy for the situation of the ghetto Jews, others with raising issues that distract from the fundamental evil at the heart of Nazi policy: the determination to murder all the Jews. Still, Ringelheim has been praised for pointing out that although all Jews were targets of the Nazis, female Jews suffered distinct and particular forms of victimization. The application of gender to the study of the Holocaust does not diminish the ferocity of Nazi antisemitism, but, as Ringelheim has demonstrated, it reveals that women's chances for survival were often simply not the same as those of men. Although antisemitism may have been the basic motivating drive of the Nazis, sexism, as operative both among Jews and Germans, added another dimension.

The editors of *Women in the Holocaust* claim that their book, based on a conference held in 1995, "represents cutting-edge scholarship in an emerging field" (p. 2). Yet the field is not new and the articles are not cutting-edge. The first conference on "Women Surviving the Holocaust" was held in 1983 at Stern College, and this anthology repeats some of the discussions that were held there more than 15 years ago. Most of the contributors recapitulate work they have already published elsewhere. Only one article, by Bock, pays attention to women perpetrators; that attention is brief, summarizing the argument that she put forward in 1986. Much is said about Jewish women before and during the war, but they are presented entirely as victims, without attention to collaborators. The articles generally do not investigate questions of feminist theory or arrive at new insights into the Holocaust based on the consideration of gender.

As the editors rightly point out, the patriarchal structures and the disabilities these structures bring to women's lives were maintained in Jewish society under the Nazi conquest until that society was finally destroyed. The overarching narrative of the volume is that women's victimization by the Nazis (worse than that of men) was met with women's heroism (based primarily on classic female traits of empathy, house-keeping skills, and so forth). In demonstrating women's victimization, contributors to the book note that men tended to emigrate and leave women behind; that the Germans assigned leadership roles to men, and paid forced women laborers far less than what men were paid for the same work; and that a higher percentage of women were killed than men. Both because of inaccessible medical care and because German policies involved compulsory abortion or the murder of pregnant women, pregnancy could be life-threatening. Finally, rape and sexual harassment affected Jewish women far more than Jewish men. As Lawrence Langer notes in his article, the Nazis inverted birth into death, so that childbirth became a death warrant for the mother and child. Ringelheim adds the observation that the Holocaust is one of the first events in history that did not treat the conquered female population as spoils of war.

The articles cover a broad range of issues, ranging from the lives of Jewish women in prewar Europe to life in the ghettos, in hiding, in resistance, in concentration

camps, and as presented in postwar memoirs. Given the little that has been published on Jewish women in prewar Poland, Gershon Bacon's article raises several pertinent questions that deserve further analysis by historians: "Did the differences in the ways women and men adjusted to Polish culture and language enhance women's likelihood of survival beyond the obvious advantage that they lacked bodily signs of Jewishness? . . . If the erosion of traditional values was stronger among certain sectors of educated women, how did this affect their attitudes and behavior during the war?" (p. 65). Once confined to the ghettos, young women aged 20–40 were deported to their death in numbers double and sometimes more than triple those of men, reports Michal Unger (p. 126). At the same time, women's diaries and memoirs give the impression that they "adjusted better than men to ghetto conditions and coped better with the hunger and the harsh and changing circumstances" (p. 125), although men, it should be noted, often faced much harsher physical labor.

Judging from what happened in France, the complex story of the role played by Jewish women in the resistance may have become partly concealed, reports Renée Poznanski; the involvement of women in the French underground was rendered all but invisible after the war. Women were omitted from official histories of the French resistance and from the collective memories in France. "Women themselves," she notes, "seem to have undervalued and even concealed their participation in the Resistance in the immediate postwar years" (p. 235). Active primarily in the infrastructure of the Resistance, women duplicated their roles as helpmeets in society. Similarly, women were not active in postwar Jewish political society, either in Europe or in the United States. Poznanski's historical reconstruction deserves further attention, given the failure in postwar France to recognize its role during the Holocaust, and the Jewish misperception that Jews had failed to defend themselves against the Nazis. Additional studies of Jewish anti-Nazi activity, alongside a broader conception of resistance, should revise the tendency to view women's efforts as private acts rather than as part of the heroic struggle.

The patriarchal nature of European Jewish society impeded women's leadership. Although war conditions occasionally created opportunities for women, primarily in the underground resistance, official Jewish communal leadership still remained in the hands of men. An exception was Gisi Fleischmann, a member of the Judenrat in Slovakia. Yehuda Bauer describes her initially successful negotiations with the Nazis to save Jewish lives and praises her remarkable effectiveness in the early war years. He concludes, "I don't know of any other woman who did something similar during the Holocaust, or indeed even before that. . . . She was the stuff heroines are made of" (p. 263). Yet is joining an organization whose actions are so morally questionable in fact an accomplishment for women? While rejoicing that Fleischmann succeeded in overcoming social obstacles to become a leading member of the Judenrat, Bauer glosses over the ethical questions raised by her cooperation with the Nazis in the fall of 1944, noting that "we were not in their place, and we don't know how we would have acted" (p. 262).

According to the essay by Leonore Weitzman, among the 10 percent of Jews who attempted to "pass" as Aryan in Poland, men were more likely to live independently, while women were more often aided by non-Jews. Contributors to the volume insist, over and over again, that women survived within the concentration camps, too, by es-

tablishing personal relationships. Myrna Goldenberg notes that the Nazis treated Jewish men and women differently, and that women responded by expressing strong concern for one another and depending upon those friendships to withstand the barbarities of the camps. Uniting all the women was their physical vulnerability and fear of rape, as well as their ability to adapt “homemaking skills” to maintain some modicum of cleanliness and their strategy of distracting themselves from their hunger by discussing recipes. Langer, hostile to the gender analysis, insists in his article that there is little evidence that mothers behaved or survived better than fathers, or that mutual support between sisters prevailed more than between brothers. Still, one survivor of Theresienstadt, Ruth Bondy, writes movingly in her essay about young mothers who gave up chances of survival in order to go with their children to their death.

In the volume’s concluding essay, perhaps the most perceptive in the collection, Sara Horowitz discusses the different patterns of experience and reflection contained in women’s Holocaust testimonies. “Women may remember differently from men—or they may remember different things.” In many male narratives, women, she writes, are generally “portrayed as peripheral, helpless, and fragile; as morally deficient; or as erotic in their victimization” (p. 367). In some accounts, women are ignored as though there are no gender differences; while in others, women’s experiences are presented almost exclusively in terms of sexuality, thus reinforcing the marginalization of women by assuming, for example, that all women are mothers.

Horowitz makes the important observation that there are two distinct forms of male-authored Holocaust narratives regarding women: those stressing atrocity and those focusing on heroism. Women’s own writings, she claims, mesh the two, but her observation applies to historical studies as well. The general tone of the anthology’s articles is to emphasize the atrocities committed against women as Jews, while valorizing the heroism displayed by Jews as women. Most of the contributors interpret women’s survival abilities based on the strength they drew from their traditional female roles—not, strikingly, from their religious faith. While it is true that Jewish women were generally not as well-educated in traditional Jewish texts as were men, it is nonetheless odd to read a 400-page collection of essays without one mention of a woman drawing upon the Bible, prayer, or religious thought as sustenance.

Horowitz is clear that narratives about the Holocaust are distinct from the actual events. However much the narratives may stress gender, the fact remains that the genocidal policies sought to rob Jews of their identity and humanity, regardless of masculine or feminine. She concludes that “the Nazi genocide destabilized the boundaries of the self, unmaking the gendered self” (p. 376).

The question of the genocidal goals and practices, unfortunately, is given little attention in the volume. One puzzling question is why the editors included a contribution from Bock and none from Koonz. Bock’s article offers a brief description of the various ways National Socialism affected women, including those who were perpetrators, victims, followers, and bystanders. Although she mentions that about 10 percent of the camp guards were women, and that these women were equal in their brutality to male guards, Bock generally emphasizes a more passive role for German women. Reiterating her argument against Koonz, she writes that “most German Gentile women complied with Nazi rule, for all or most of its duration, as bystanders or, less passively, as followers. . . . Female perpetrators were perpetrators not so much

because they were female but because they believed themselves to be ordinary Germans, like the men" (p. 94). In other words, women are not to be blamed, per se, as examples of feminine behavior, but rather simply as members of the German nation.

Ultimately, the volume disappoints, for two reasons. First, Jewish women (and the book only studies Jewish women, despite its title) are presented exclusively as victims, painting a very traditional, sentimental portrait of their feminine survival skills. Their female victimizers, and the nature of their femininity, are neglected. A much richer and more diverse collection of articles on women and the Holocaust was edited by Carol Rittner and John Roth in 1993; it includes some fascinating material not only about victims but also about perpetrators, including the wives of Franz Stangl and Rudolf Hoess, as well as theological and literary responses.⁹

A second reason for disappointment is that the contributors pay no attention to theory, whether in history, literature, or gender. Theoretical approaches might have assisted them in raising larger questions regarding the significance of their research. Does the study of women simply provide new data, or does it offer new insight into the meaning of the Holocaust? As an example of such discussion, I would call attention to Ann Taylor Allen's recent work, which argues that the study of gender leads to a reconsideration of the relationship between the Holocaust and modernity put forward by, among others, Zygmunt Bauman. Drawing on feminist theory and on the role played by women perpetrators, Allen critically interrogates the distinction between normative and instrumental rationality as formulated by Theodor Adorno and Max Horkheimer, and Bauman's turn to the work of Emmanuel Levinas to overcome that distinction.¹⁰ In her view, the conclusion reached by Bauman and others, that the instrumental rationality of modernity is partially responsible for the dehumanization associated with the Holocaust, dovetails with feminist criticism of modernity's valorization of public (male) activity and denigration of the interpersonal relationships central to women's lives.

Among the books under review, the most theoretically sophisticated study is Marianne Hirsch's *Family Frames*, which examines the complex question of the role of photography in the construction of Holocaust memory. Attentive to theoretical debates regarding both the nature of the photographic experience and the shaping of cultural memory, Hirsch develops the concept of a Holocaust "postmemory." She examines how the Holocaust lingers in the lives of children of survivors, becoming part of the reality of their lives—but a reality created entirely by family memory as transmitted orally and through photographs. Postmemory, as she describes it, is a kind of ghost memory, a sense of being haunted by events that occurred before one's lifetime, yet which hang in the air as if they are occurring at this very moment. Hirsch writes: "Postmemory characterizes the experience of those who grow up dominated by narratives that preceded their birth, whose own belated stories are evacuated by the stories of the previous generation shaped by traumatic events that can be neither understood nor recreated" (p. 22). She captures an experience that pervades many of the second-generation novels, particularly those from Israel, ranging from Hanokh Bartov's *Whose Little Boy Are You?* (1970) to David Grossman's *See Under: Love* (1986). Particularly striking is Hirsch's negotiation of the problem of history for postmodern thought and her efforts to develop new historiographical concepts and mine new kinds of sources, such as autobiography and family photographs, to replace the

more rigid traditional definitions of historical experience. For Jewish historians, in particular, her work is to be welcomed for the tools it provides to describe what is a central Jewish phenomenon: the tendency to read contemporary events in terms of exodus and redemption, Judaism's grand narrative.

In sharp contrast to Hirsch's highly sophisticated presentation, Rachel Brenner's study, *Writing as Resistance*, is less theoretically informed. This work presents and discusses the writings of four unusual Jewish women who wrote during the Holocaust: Simone Weil, Edith Stein, Etty Hillesum, and Anne Frank. Unfortunately, Brenner does not retell their biographies—the most compelling aspect of their lives—but instead limits herself to a study of their writings. Brenner's stated goal is not only to bring these women's words to our attention, itself a valuable undertaking, but also to examine their work as four Jews at the margins of Judaism who "saw Gentile society as their natural environment" (p. 8). Despite Nazi persecution that ultimately took their lives, all four clung to what Brenner identifies as Enlightenment values but which most of the women themselves tended to identify with Christianity—"the religion of universal humanistic rebirth" (p. 9).

Brenner's chapters on Weil and Stein are the most interesting. Their attraction to Christianity is placed by Brenner in the context of post-Emancipation European Jewish assimilation, ignorance of Judaism, and even self-hatred. The internalized antisemitism of Weil was much more extreme than that of Stein. Weil considered Jews a threat to the authentic Christian spirituality of France and suggested that, after the war, they would have to be removed either through conversion or through other "protective measures" (p. 61). Stein, by contrast, is reported by her fellow nuns to have expressed pain and anger over Jewish persecution (p. 60), and she wanted, Brenner writes, "to bear the Cross for the Jewish people" (p. 73). Neither sought to shape a Christian theology that would overcome traditional anti-Judaism; on the contrary, Weil called for a return of Christian faith "to its own truth," which meant for her "the excision of its Jewish roots" (p. 67). There is little sign of resistance to the Nazis in all this.

While Brenner's book is useful as an introduction to the writings of these four women, it is less convincing in the conclusions it draws about their significance. Although she explores their Jewish and Christian identities at length, Brenner says relatively little about their identities as women and pays no attention to the gender constructs prevalent during their lifetimes, even though she claims that they made a specifically female contribution to transforming the world, each in her own way. Their autobiographies and diaries, Brenner argues, were "self-portrayals uttered at a time when the world decreed that they be silent" (p. 121). Their work constituted "writing as resistance," giving voice and thereby creating selfhood through language. Regrettably, Brenner does not engage gender theorists, particularly French feminists, who claim that women's relationship to language, and the role of language in shaping the female self, is far more complex than she assumes.

The overriding goal of Brenner's book is to create heroes out of these women by demonstrating that they wrote as an act of spiritual resistance to Nazism. Going further, she presents their work, including their theological discussions, as interpretive reflections on the Jewish persecution occurring around them. Yet the term "resistance" has become highly complex in relation to the Holocaust. While Raul Hilberg

has long insisted upon the equation of resistance with physical combat, Brenner wants to find resistance in activities open to women, such as writing. However, if autobiographical writing is identified as resistance, why would not any and all engagement in the life of the mind and the imagination qualify as resistance, whether it is the mathematical techniques developed by Jakow Trachtenberg in Auschwitz or the art painted by Charlotte Salomon in France? And, when seen so broadly, can we identify anyone opposed to Nazism who was not “resisting”? In that case, what is left to designate those who gave up their lives by blowing up Nazi installations or killing Nazi officials, such as the women who destroyed the crematorium at Birkenau? Can all who survived be construed as resisting?

How the survivors understood their own experiences is very difficult for historians to determine. Of immense value, then, are the tape-recordings and transcripts of interviews with survivors undertaken in the summer of 1946 and published in *Fresh Wounds*. Donald Niewyk has retranslated and edited 36 of the 109 interviews, conducted by the Russian-born American psychologist David Boder, with survivors in displaced person camps just a year after the war ended. Boder, who was fluent in German and Yiddish, traveled to Europe with a primitive tape recorder and spent two months interviewing those survivors who were still unable to return home. He looked for typical rather than unique experiences and tried not to interfere with the oral narrative, in order to generate spontaneous recollections. Boder sat behind the person and did not allow the use of any prepared notes. Regrettably, his collection was of no interest to publishers in the late 1950s, and his work languished at the Library of Congress until now.

Niewyk’s edition, limited to the Jewish survivors interviewed by Boder, revises what he says are Boder’s too-literal translations. The results are astonishing. There is an extraordinary power to these narratives, which are at times shattering. Unlike the many memoirs that have been written since the war, these accounts have a penetrating power, most likely because of their oral recounting and the freshness of the experiences described.

Several taboo topics emerge immediately, such as Jews killing other Jews, and Jews helping Germans during the Warsaw ghetto uprising. Israel U. describes the murder in the Lodz ghetto of a girl and her mother by another Jew who wanted their bread ration. Abraham K. describes the cruel beatings of Jews by other Jews at a labor camp. Many describe the antisemitism they encountered from civilians during and after the war. One survivor, an orphaned girl, describes being beaten by Poles at the end of the war, causing her to leave for France. A Polish rabbi, Solomon H., describes being attacked in the streets of Warsaw after the war and being afraid to take the streetcar. Remarkably, we learn that some arrivals at Birkenau in its last month were unaware of its function.

The 14 women interviewed by Boder who are included in Niewyk’s edition add significant data regarding women both as victims and as perpetrators. Boder notes that women were less likely to survive, as demonstrated by the two-to-one ratio of men to women in the DP camps. Rape by SS guards is described by Roma T., who survived Majdanek and says that, although officially prohibited, rape occurred and was followed by the murder of the woman. She also describes the terrible conditions at Ravensbruck, including a vicious beating with a horse whip that she received from

a female SS guard. A Gentile woman from France who was deported to Birkenau for hiding Jews gives a horrifying account of conditions there during the summer of 1944, when the Hungarian Jews arrived. She describes Maria Mandel, an SS guard at Auschwitz who led children to the gas chamber, and Mala Zimetbaum, a political prisoner who was caught escaping and sent to the crematorium to be burned alive, but was mercifully shot by a prisoner. Only rarely do these survivors describe their own acts of heroism, or the inner resources that helped them survive. Nor is the stereotype of women's special survival skills especially evident. These are stories of horror with an eerie sense of immediacy.

Running throughout the interviews is an emphasis on the Nazis' psychological as well as physical cruelty, on humiliation as well as bodily degradation. Interesting distortions are also present in the interviews, such as an exaggeration of the Birkenau revolt, most likely the result, Niewyk points out, of a psychological mechanism to boost courage. Speaking so soon after the war's end, the survivors have still not found their way to a new life after the Holocaust, a position from which to look back, organize, and interpret their experiences. If anything, *Fresh Wounds* makes later memoirs seem artificially crafted.

Each of the four books under review offers additional information concerning women and the Holocaust. What is left for future scholars to clarify is what difference it ultimately makes to our understanding of the Holocaust to know what women suffered and what were the details of women's actions as perpetrators. The study of gender and the Holocaust should not simply place women within the historical narrative, but should change the nature of the narrative as well. That task cannot begin merely with an examination of women's roles; new categories must also be developed to allow a more sophisticated analysis of the results. A conceptual apparatus, such as that provided by Marianne Hirsch's concept of "postmemory," allows us to think more deeply about the obvious. Donald Niewyk's collection of interviews gives us a point of reference in 1946 by which to judge subsequent memoirs.

Regrettably mired in the heuristic parameters of victimization and heroism that are rooted in old stereotypes regarding women, much of the scholarship reviewed in this essay tends to project these stereotypes onto the study of gender and the Holocaust, rather than using the perspective of the Holocaust to question those stereotypes. Hopefully, it will not be too much longer before feminist scholars begin to tackle the larger and more profound implications of the study of gender for the Holocaust, and of the study of the Holocaust for gender.

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Notes

1. See Gabriel Schoenfeld, "Auschwitz and the Professors," *Commentary* 105, no. 6 (June 1998); also see the numerous letters written in response, in *ibid.*, vol. 106, no. 2. (Aug. 1998).

2. Cited by Karin Windaus-Walser, "Gnade der weiblichen Geburt? Zum Umgang der Frauenforschung mit Nationalsozialismus und Antisemitismus," *Feministische Studien* 6 (Nov. 1988), 106; in Gesela Bock, *Zwangsterilisation im Nationalsozialismus. Studien zur Rassenpolitik und Frauenpolitik* (Opladen: 1986), 380.
3. See Margarete Mitscherlich, *Die friedfertige Frau* (Frankfurt: 1985).
4. See Christa Mulack, *Jesus: der Gesalbte der Frauen* (Stuttgart: 1987).
5. See Karin Windaus-Walser, "Gnade der weiblichen Geburt?," 102–115.
6. See Adelheid von Saldern, "Victims or Perpetrators? Controversies about the Role of Women in the Nazi State," in *Nazism and German Society: 1933–1945*, ed. David F. Crew (London: 1994), 141–165; Claus Fullberg-Stolberg, Martina Jung, Renate Riebe, and Martina Scheitenberger (eds.), *Frauen in Konzentrationslagern: Bergen-Belsen, Ravensbruck* (Bremen: 1994); Renate Deuter, Martina Jung, and Martina Scheitenberger, *Bergen-Belsen: Frauen im Konzentrationslager*, with texts by Renate Riebe and Bodo Dringenberg (Hannover: 1994).
7. Nel Noddings, *Women and Evil* (Berkeley: 1989).
8. See Gitta Sereny, *Into That Darkness: An Examination of Conscience* (New York: 1974); see also Gudrun Schwarz, *Eine Frau an seiner Seite: Ehefrauen in der "SS-Sippengemeinschaft"* (Frankfurt: 1990).
9. See Carol Rittner and John K. Roth (eds.), *Different Voices: Women and the Holocaust* (New York: 1993).
10. See Ann Taylor Allen, "The Holocaust and the Modernization of Gender: A Historiographical Essay," *Central European History* 30, no. 3 (1997), 349–364.

People of the Image

Catherine Soussloff (ed.), *Jewish Identity in Modern Art History*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1999. 239 pp.

The appearance of this book is yet another indication of the rapidly growing interest in “Jewish art” or, to be more accurate, in the more general subject of “Jews and art.” In America, at least, this phenomenon is obviously connected to the proliferation within the academy of both cultural studies and Jewish studies programs. The results are everywhere to be seen. In 1990, the annual in which this review appears featured a symposium entitled *Art and Its Uses: The Visual Image and Modern Jewish Society*. The assumption shared by all participants in that volume was that certain images created by artists of Jewish origin should be read in a specifically Jewish cultural and historical context, and that images created by both Jews and non-Jews can provide important insights into many aspects of modern Jewish history. In 1998, Richard Cohen, the guest editor of *Art and Its Uses*, published an impressive volume that reflects much of the recent scholarship on “Jewish art” and sets an agenda for future research.¹ Also important is the flourishing of Jewish museums which, though not a new phenomenon, are now sprouting up just about everywhere. These institutions are in the business of celebrating and preserving “Jewish memory,” and one way to do so is to display “Jewish art,” however defined. In Jerusalem, the Center for Jewish Art is extremely active and has been publishing for some years a fine journal now called *Jewish Art*. Several years ago, a scholarly group devoted to the study of Jews and the visual arts was formed at the Institute for Advanced Studies in Jerusalem, and this year a group working on more or less the same subject has been convened at the Center for Advanced Judaic Studies associated with the University of Pennsylvania in Philadelphia.

The past 15 years or so have witnessed a number of important exhibitions on this theme. In 1985, the Jewish Museum in New York sponsored a show on the Jewish artists of interwar Paris.² In 1991, the same institution—the oldest and most distinguished of its kind in the United States—organized a very successful exhibition called “Painting a Place in America: Jewish Artists in New York 1900–1945.”³ It has also recently mounted a fascinating exhibition devoted to Russian Jewish artists, starting with the generation of Mark Antokolsky and Isaak Levitan and concluding with contemporary post-Soviet painters.⁴

Artists who are perceived as having produced “Jewish art,” among them Marc Chagall, Ben Shahn, R.B. Kitaj, Ephraim Moses Lilien, and Maurycy Gottlieb, have all been given important exhibitions during the last decade. “Jewish art” fetches high

prices at auctions.⁵ It is avidly collected, and not only by Jews.⁶ Much attention, too, is being paid to the subject of what might be called “Jewish architecture.” Books on synagogue architecture and its ideological significance are being published,⁷ and only last year an interesting if not entirely convincing study appeared (in Swedish!) on the subject of the Jewish impact on urban architecture in modern times.⁸

The rather awkwardly named *Jewish Identity in Modern Art History* is a collection of ten essays, grouped into three distinct categories: “Theories, Laws, and Disciplines,” “Artists and Collectors,” and “Art Historians and Critics.” In the editor’s introduction, Catherine Soussloff, like many other contributors, calls our attention to the “ambivalent structural situation of Jews in art history” (p. 1) and claims that the subject of Jews and art has traditionally been ignored by the academy. According to Soussloff, the avoidance of the Jewish theme by art historians created an “*aporia* at the very heart of the project of art history, a space of doubt brought about by the suppression of the history of the discipline and its effects on discourse” (p. 2). This suppression is attributed to the impact of antisemitism and assimilation. The aim of this volume, it appears, is to right this wrong and to emphasize the vital importance of what might be called the Jewish factor in the modern history of art.

This is a worthy aim, though one might suggest that such neglect has for some time been a thing of the past. One might also find Soussloff’s jargon-ridden style rather tiresome—every other word is “discourse,” and what is one to make of the following: “Many of the essays in this volume gesture to the biographical” (p. 4) or “The essays in this volume take soundings of what lies behind and within discourse to probe the meaning of Jewish identity for that discourse” (p. 4)? Moreover, I am not certain that the failure to take up the Jewish ethnic dimension in art history should be attributed to open or latent antisemitism, nor can I really agree that “lacking a nation, Jewish art lacked an identity” (p. 5). Could this be said of Chagall’s art? Of Hirszenberg’s? I suppose it all depends on what is meant by “identity.”

Margaret Olin is the author of the first article in the collection, entitled (also rather strangely, I must say) “From Bezalel to Max Liebermann.” What in the world connects the Jewish national school of art established in Palestine in 1906 with the celebrated German impressionist who, although a Jew and an occasional victim of antisemitism, never painted explicitly “Jewish” subjects? We never really find out. Olin, like Soussloff, is concerned with the great question as to whether such a thing as “Jewish art” can exist in light of the Second Commandment. She notes that ancient Jewish art was discussed in nineteenth-century German art history as a species of “oriental art,” thus marking and stigmatizing the Jews as an “oriental” people. She also notes that some German historians denied that the Jews had ever created original art even in the ancient period (she might have mentioned Ernest Renan in this context, but she discusses only German historians). Not only were the Jews a people that could not create original art, they also despised art (according to Hegel), and therefore their influence on the high culture of Europe was necessarily negative, as Wagner claimed in his famous tract on Judaism in music. This is the context in which Liebermann is introduced, for he too was criticized as being neither a true German artist nor an original artist (no mention is made here, by the way, of Irit Rogoff’s article on Liebermann

in the collection of articles in the above-mentioned vol. 6 of *Studies in Contemporary Jewry*).⁹

This is an interesting but rather slight piece. Much more serious and impressive is Kalman Bland's "Anti-Semitism and Aniconism." Bland is also concerned with the origins of what he sees as the nefarious and incorrect idea that the Jews are a people without art, or even a people against art. He will not buy the argument that the Second Commandment has in any way either inhibited Jewish artistic expression or turned the Jews into a people that rejects art. Thus he writes that this ancient taboo, which at any rate was never really taken seriously by all Jews, "cannot explain why the idea of Jewish aniconism has persisted throughout the 20th century, despite the apparent evidence to the contrary amassed by a host of archaeologists, ethnographers, archivists and art historians" (p. 41).

I am not so sure that the importance of the biblical precept should be completely dismissed. In 1860, a minor scandal developed in the Jewish art world over the desire of the congregation of New Orleans to erect a statue in the courtyard of the synagogue in honor of the great philanthropist Judah Touro.¹⁰ Many rabbinical authorities were asked their opinion on this subject, and their views were by no means unequivocal. Some Jewish artists in the nineteenth century were troubled by the question of the relationship between art and Judaism.¹¹ And a recent decision to set up a bust of the Gaon of Vilna in Vilnius has come in for criticism from certain Jews who believe that making a sculpture of this great rabbinical authority is a sacrilege.

Notwithstanding, this problem troubled neither the vast majority of European and American Jewry in the modern age nor the vast majority of Jewish artists. What, then, is the reason for the perseverance of the idea of the Jews as "aniconic"? Bland lays the blame not only on Christian, in particular Protestant, thinkers, but also (and here resides his special contribution) on certain Jewish circles, in particular those associated with Reform Judaism. He begins with Kant, who praises Jews for their adherence to the Second Commandment, and with Hegel, who also thought that the Jews had set their collective face against artistic beauty but who definitely did not praise them for doing so. Acculturated German Jews of the nineteenth century were influenced by these great philosophers: "When they finished their work, Judaism became fundamentally aniconic, preeminently spiritual, coterminous with ethics, and quintessentially universal" (p. 43).

Heinrich Heine took part in this campaign, as did Hermann Cohen and Franz Rosenzweig. They and other, lesser, lights saw the Jews as poets of morality, as a people whose genius lay in the sphere of religion, not in art (Cohen made an exception in the case of religious architecture). Interestingly, Bland associates their praise of the presumed Jewish aversion to images with their reaction to German antisemitism. It is fascinating to discover that the great historian Heinrich Graetz also claimed that the Jews were historically predisposed against images; he too contrasted Hellenic beauty with Hebrew truth, and he went on record as rejecting the "sensual colors of flesh" employed by Vienna's most famous artist in the 1870s, Hans Makart (p. 50). Another great German-speaking Jew who joined in this chorus was Sigmund Freud, in particular in his famous treatise *Moses and Monotheism*.

Together, these distinguished Jews managed to transform "an apparent ethnic de-

ficiency into a virtue" (p. 54). It remained for the Zionist Martin Buber, who was extremely interested in art, to explain that while ancient taboos had indeed prejudiced the Jews against art, in the new national era, and on national soil, they would surely prove their mettle in this area as well.

This is a fine piece of research, definitely the most interesting article in the collection. Still, I wonder if Bland's accusations directed against German Jewish intellectuals who "constructed" Jewish aniconism are not too sweeping. He fails to mention, for example, the work of David Kaufmann, the great Jewish scholar based in Budapest, who wrote a great deal about Jewish art and who went out of his way to attack the notion that Jews were incapable of producing great art.

Like the first two articles, Lisa Saltzman's "To Figure or Not to Figure" is concerned with the impact of the prohibition on making images, which, she claims, was considered of great significance by such important figures in the world of German and Jewish culture as Theodor Adorno and Paul Celan. Saltzman is the first of our authors to discuss specific paintings, in particular those of the contemporary German artist Anselm Kiefer. His celebrated works "Aaron," "Bilderstreit," and "Sulamith" are explicated in light of Adorno's remarks concerning the necessity of silence after Auschwitz, which are in turn linked to the legacy of the Second Commandment. Saltzman asks: "Does Kiefer avoid representing the human figure in *Sulamith* because to represent, to create aesthetically, is, taking Adorno to the letter, not so much impossible as barbaric?" (p. 77). There is no simple answer, but the question is interesting and the interpretation of Kiefer's oeuvre in this context is compelling.

We now come to the work of the American art historian Larry Silver on Maurycy Gottlieb (referred to on the jacket as "Morris" Gottlieb), the Polish Jewish pioneer of "Jewish art." Here I must register a particular interest, since I am preparing a monograph on this remarkable figure. I found Silver's article, which concentrates on Gottlieb's path to "Jewish art," to be intelligent and persuasive. He is obviously right to emphasize the influences of Carl von Piloty and Makart (so disliked, as we recall, by Graetz), and especially Jan Matejko. Silver is an expert on Rembrandt, and one may assume that Gottlieb appeals to him in part because of his Rembrandtian qualities. I cannot, however, agree with the author when he writes that "previous scholars have not pursued the importance of Rembrandt in Gottlieb's artistic identity" (p. 90). The fact is that practically everyone who has written about Gottlieb has emphasized the impact of the Dutch master. In an Israeli film based on Gottlieb's life the painter is actually referred to, with some exaggeration, as "the Jewish Rembrandt."¹² Much of the biographical and critical literature on Gottlieb is in the Polish and Hebrew languages, which Silver apparently does not read (he says of one book in Hebrew—not by Bezalel Narkiss, as he writes, but rather edited by Mordechai Narkiss—that it was "not available" to him [p. 111, n. 36]). As for the idea that Rembrandt's etchings may have served as a model for Gottlieb's painting of "Christ Preaching at Capernaum," I myself made this suggestion in a Hebrew-language article published in *Zion* in 1997, not mentioned by Silver.¹³

Some of Silver's remarks do not inspire confidence in his expertise with regard to the Polish and Polish Jewish contexts in which Gottlieb's life and work must be understood. He mentions the importance of Matejko's painting on the arrival of the Jews in Poland (made in 1889, long after Gottlieb's death) but calls it, incorrectly, "The

Welcome of the Jews in 1096 by King Casimir" (p. 89). In fact King Casimir (Kazimierz) lived in the fourteenth century and therefore does not appear in Matejko's canvas, which portrays the Jews, led by none other than Benjamin of Tudela (!), arriving at the court of Wladyslaw Herman in Plock. Moreover, had Silver looked carefully at this painting, he would have noted its obvious anti-Jewish message, which is confirmed in Matejko's explication of its meaning.¹⁴ It is true that Gottlieb discovered Matejko while studying in Vienna, but Silver fails to mention the name of the painting that made such a great impression on the young Jew (it was "Rejtan"). He says that Gottlieb's rendition of Shylock and Jessica is to be found at the Jewish museum in Cracow, whereas in fact, according to all authorities, the painting is lost (it was reproduced in the Polish press in the late 1870s). Silver claims that in Gottlieb's time there was no Polish nation (I suppose he means state), and speaks misleadingly, in my opinion, of the "oppressive" Austrian regime (p. 105); the truth is that the Poles enjoyed full autonomy in Galicia and played a major role in the Austro-Hungarian state.

Finally, Silver writes that Gottlieb's unique vision of a Polish-Jewish union could not survive beyond his time (he died in 1879) because of the pogroms in Russia in the early 1880s and the rise of antisemitism in Central Europe: "A hybrid Jewish-Polish existence was no longer tenable" (p. 106). In fact, long after Gottlieb's time many Polish Jews attempted to maintain such an existence and to embrace this ideal. *Izraelita*, the important Warsaw weekly that promoted Jewish-Polish reconciliation based on mutual respect, continued to be published until the eve of the First World War, and even in the interwar period the idea that a Jew could be both a Polish patriot and a proud Jew remained current in some circles. Indeed, those who held this view looked to Gottlieb, as well as to the ideas of the national Polish poet Adam Mickiewicz and to the example of the Jewish soldier and Polish patriot Berek Joselewicz, as proof that there was hope that such a position could eventually be accepted by Polish society. This was a theme of the triumphant exhibition of Gottlieb's work held in Cracow in 1932, which was attended both by Jewish nationalists and by high Polish officials and intellectuals.

Gottlieb's all-too-brief career (he died at the age of 23) was made possible by the interest taken in him and in his work by Jewish collectors and patrons, who in the 1870s were still a fairly new phenomenon, at least in Eastern Europe. In this regard, Robin Reisenfeld contributes an interesting piece on Jewish collectors of German expressionist art. The author explains that these collectors viewed their activities as demonstrating "a sense of belonging" to German society (p. 117). The fact that German expressionism was denounced by the Nazis as decadent art added to their conviction that they were serving true German culture and true German values. There is interesting material here on the collectors' promotion of the new German art in the United States, and also on the portraits made by some of the German artists (Otto Dix and Ernst Ludwig Kirschner) of their Jewish art dealers, which do not entirely avoid the usual visual stereotyping of the Jew. In short, this is a highly interesting piece on the nexus between collecting and ethnic identity.

The last article in this section is Lisa Bloom's "Ethnic Notions and Feminist Strategies of the 1970's," which discusses the work of Judy Chicago and Eleanor Antin and reveals the links between feminist and Jewish agendas. Bloom wishes to highlight the Jewish "ethnic markers" in the work of these two feminist artists. It turns

out that Chicago's real name was Gerowitz (she is, of course, not the first Jewish artist to abandon her "Jewish name"—Phillip Guston was born Goldstein). One of her works, shown here, displays her as a boxer in the ring, while another portrays (on a plate) the black heroine Sojourner Truth. Bloom notes Chicago's obvious sympathy and even identification with African Americans and their struggle for rights in an all-too-racist America. This is a theme that has attracted numerous Jewish artists, from Ben Shahn to Art Spiegelman, a fact that Bloom really should have mentioned.

Antin's art is discussed within the context of assimilation—in particular her work "Carving: a Traditional Sculpture," which "forces us to consider what it means to be both an embodied female and a member of an ethnic minority" (p. 149). Antin also is interested in blacks; in one of her works she presents herself in the guise of the black ballerina "Eleanora Antinova." According to Bloom, "presenting herself as 'black' . . . Antin seems to suggest how unimaginable it is that Jews like herself, who have assimilated to the point that they now appear indistinguishable from dominant white Americans, could have had parents or grandparents who were arbitrarily distinguished by race" (p. 158). Even if this is speculative it is suggestive, and I think that the author has justified her assumption that an awareness of the Jewish context can help to throw light on the often enigmatic works by these two artists of Jewish origin.

The last section of the book contains four articles on art historians of Jewish origin. Karen Michel's "Art History, German Jewish Identity, and the Emigration of Iconology" raises the issue of why there were so many Jewish art historians in Germany (of course, there were also many Jewish physicists and Jewish musicians). She emphasizes, plausibly enough, the connection between this choice of profession and the desire on the part of educated Jews to assimilate into high European culture. It is no accident, she thinks, that many specialized in the Renaissance, a high point in the history of universalist European culture and the precursor of the Enlightenment, which among other things paved the way for Jewish emancipation. Nor was it an accident that they avoided any contact with explicitly Jewish subjects, since such an interest would invariably clash with their assimilationist inclinations. Moreover, those who made it to America after the rise of Hitler did not change their attitude toward their Jewishness: "Their relationship to Judaism remained ambivalent and was frequently marked by a certain distance" (p. 170).

This is a useful survey, if not too surprising or exciting. It is followed by Louis Kaplan's "Reframing the Self-Criticism," which concentrates on the criticism of Clement Greenberg. Unlike most of the German Jewish art historians, Greenberg was neither ignorant of things Jewish nor alienated from the Jewish world. He knew Yiddish and was long associated with *Commentary*, published by the American Jewish Committee. In his art criticism he did not refer to Jewish themes, but our author makes a valiant effort to relate his criticism to his Jewishness. The argument in the essay is not easy to follow, especially when Kaplan quotes Jean-François Lyotard on the "occurrence of a thought as the unthought that remains to be thought" (p. 184). Kaplan discusses Greenberg's understanding of Jewish humor and his reading of Kafka, coming to the conclusion that Greenberg's blatant failure to link his Jewish concerns to his appreciation of the New York school of abstract art, of which he was a great champion, indicates that his work was directly connected with his desire to

assimilate totally. His was an “adventure in aesthetic assimilation,” which allowed “the possibility of forgetting or even falsifying what was happening to him as a Jew in this world . . .” (p. 195).

Donald Kuspit’s “Meyer Schapiro’s Jewishness Unconscious” makes a similar effort with regard to another famous American art historian and critic. Kuspit begins with a rather strange assumption, namely that the anxiety concerning Jewish identity after the Second World War explains “why many Jews became artists then. Art allowed them to work through their ambivalence about being Jews” (p. 200). This is a remarkable statement—after all, Jews had been flocking to the world of art long before this time, though it is true that in America they rose to new heights of success thanks to the triumphs of abstract expressionism, to which a number of Jewish artists made important contributions. Schapiro, who was born in Lithuania, never denied his Jewishness, which is particularly evident in his critique of another famous art historian of Jewish origin, Bernard Berenson.

We are told that Schapiro believed that Jews were innovative by nature, and that innovation was only possible from a “Jewish position” in society (p. 202). This is the explanation for their pioneering role in the new art of postwar America. “For Schapiro all authentically creative art—which is not every art—is subliminally Jewish, not in a doctrinaire sense but in attitude” (p. 204). This is surely rather difficult to prove. Kuspit speculates as to the connection between otherness, Jewishness, and being in the opposition. Such a connection, he argues, enables us to understand how Schapiro subverted traditional art history and transformed it into a “Jewish science,” a science of paradoxes—thus his support for the modern art of the 1950s, since it was in opposition to the establishment. It is worthwhile remembering, in this context, that many Jewish artists bitterly opposed abstract expressionism, regarding it as a total fake, and continued to hold up the banner of traditional figurative art (I am thinking of the Soyers, Chaim Gross, Ben Shahn, and William Gropper).

It is amusing to read here that Schapiro wrote practically nothing about the Renaissance, thus proving his status as a nontraditional, antiestablishment art historian. As we recall, another essay in this volume claimed that interest in the Renaissance was a hallmark of art historians of Jewish origin, and that this was no accident. Soussloff apparently did not notice this interesting and revealing contradiction.

The last essay in *Jewish Identity and Modern Art History* deals with the fascinating figure of Aby Warburg. Charlotte Schoell-Glass notes that Gombrich’s well-known biography of this great art historian makes nothing of Warburg’s Jewish upbringing, a probably significant omission. She also calls our attention to the fact that the famous library he collected included numerous works and articles related to anti-semitism and racism in general, which surely indicates that he wanted to understand the reasons for these phenomena. Further, she connects Warburg’s interest in art to his search (ultimately rooted in his Jewishness) for a universalist medium that transcends national hatreds and passions, and she links his humanism to his rejection of any coherent Jewish identity (p. 227). This is all quite thought provoking, though it is surprising that Schoell ignores Michael Steinberg’s important essay on Warburg’s fieldwork among the Pueblo Indians of North America, which illuminates the historian’s complex and ambivalent attitudes toward Judaism.¹⁵

We close this collection of essays with mixed feelings. It is good to know that the

“Jewish dimension” of various aspects of art—collecting, image-making, historical writing, and the like—is coming under scrutiny by a new generation of cultural historians. At the same time, one sometimes has the feeling that the efforts to make this connection are rather strained. The fact is that, aside from obvious cases such as that of Maurycy Gottlieb, whose artistic agenda was clearly to create “Jewish art” just as Matejko created “Polish art,” the relationship between Jewishness and the arts remains extremely difficult to pin down. Nonetheless, Soussloff’s book, even if its essays do not always convince, is a creative and stimulating contribution to the burgeoning field of Jewish cultural studies.

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Notes

1. See Richard I. Cohen, *Jewish Icons: Art and Society in Modern Europe* (Berkeley: 1998).
2. See Kenneth E. Silver and Romy Golan, *The Circle of Montparnasse: Jewish Artists in Paris 1905–1945* (New York: 1985).
3. See Norman Kleeblatt and Susan Chevlowe, *Painting a Place in America: Jewish Artists in New York 1900–1945* (New York: 1991).
4. See Susan Tumarkin Goodman (ed.), *Russian Jewish Artists in a Century of Change 1890–1990* (New York: 1996).
5. For example, a rather mediocre painting by Maurycy Gottlieb was sold at auction in Warsaw by Agra-Art in October 1999 for nearly \$200,000, an extraordinarily high price for a Polish artist.
6. Thus the Polish businessman and former star tennis player Wojciech Fibak has assembled a remarkable collection of works by Jewish artists belonging to the École de Paris. See *École de Paris. Artyści Żydowsy z Polski w kolekcji Wojciecha Fibaka* (Cracow: 1998).
7. See, for example, Carol Herselle Krinsky, *Synagogues of Europe: Architecture, History, Meaning* (Mineola, N.Y.: 1985).
8. Fredric Bedoire, *Ett judiskt Europa. Kring uppkomsten av en modern arkitektur 1830–1930* (Stockholm: 1998).
9. Irit Rogoff, “Max Libermann and the Painting of the Public Sphere,” in *Studies in Contemporary Jewry*, vol. 6, *Art and Its Uses: The Visual Image and Modern Jewish Society*, ed. Richard I. Cohen and Ezra Mendelsohn (New York: 1990), 91–110.
10. For the details, see I.J. Benjamin (known as Benjamin the Second), *Three Years in America 1859–1862*, vol. 1 (Philadelphia: 1956), 320–333.
11. For example, the Danish artist (active in Sweden), Geskil Saloman. See Bedoire, *Ett judiskt Europa*, 431.
12. The film, made by the Israeli film service and directed by David Greenberg, is entitled *Diokano shel oman—Maurycy Gottlieb*.
13. Ezra Mendelsohn, “Art and Jewish History: Maurycy Gottlieb’s ‘Christ Preaching at Capernaum,’” *Zion* 62, no. 2 (1997), 173–192. There is an English summary.
14. There are two versions of this painting, one belonging to the national museum in Warsaw, the other in Lublin. For Matejko’s remarks, see *Wystawa cyklu obrazów Jana Matejki. Szkice do dziejów cywilizacji w Polsce* (Warsaw: 1910), 7–8.
15. Aby Warburg, *Images from the Region of the Pueblo Indians of North America*, trans. with an interpretive essay by Michael P. Steinberg (Ithaca: 1995). This fascinating book is reviewed by Kalman Bland in *Studies in Contemporary Jewry*, vol. 14, *Coping with Life and Death: Jewish Families in the Twentieth Century*, ed. Peter Y. Medding (New York: 1998), 323–324.

On the Brink of Peace? More Israeli Memoirs

Eitan Bentsur, *Haderekh leshalom 'overet beMadrid (The Road to Peace Crosses Madrid)*. Tel-Aviv: Yedioth Ahronoth, 1997. 303 pp.

Itamar Rabinovich, *The Brink of Peace: The Israeli-Syrian Negotiations*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1998. xv + 283 pp.

Uri Savir, *The Process: 1,100 Days that Changed the Middle East*. New York: Random House, 1998. xi + 336 pp.

The Madrid conference, held in October 1991, came at a time of unique optimism in the world, and in the Middle East in particular. The Cold War was over, the Soviet Union was on the edge of disintegration; while a coalition led by the United States and including Egypt, Syria, and Saudi Arabia had just defeated and destroyed much of the Iraqi army. President George Bush's proclivity to exaggeration notwithstanding, it seemed that a "new world order" under the umbrella of a Pax Americana was indeed possible.

For the U.S., the first order of business after the war's abrupt end was to jump-start peace talks among the Arabs and the Israelis. For three years, the Bush administration had tried to find a formula according to which the leaders of all the states involved in the Arab-Israeli conflict, as well as the Palestinian representatives, could gather for negotiations. While declaring that they did not have maps or a specific settlement in mind, the Americans believed that, once the ice had been broken, Arabs and Israelis would find a workable solution.

Before 1991, the U.S. efforts had been unsuccessful, as each of the parties to the dispute did little more than jockey for position. Following the Gulf War, however, the situation changed radically. Having embraced Saddam Hussein, the PLO emerged in a weakened position. In Israel, the government headed by Yitzhak Shamir realized that it would have to compromise in order to avoid incurring the wrath of the Americans. In Damascus, meanwhile, Hafez al-Assad continued to hide his cards, lecturing U.S. officials on his version of Middle East history while considering the costs and benefits of participation in the planned conference.

In retrospect, the Madrid conference was the pivotal event that gave life to a sputtering but persistent Middle East peace process. Like a political big bang, its terms of reference would guide subsequent negotiations. Once precedents were set—as with the compromise that created the joint Palestinian-Jordanian delegation, which eventually legitimized the PLO—they would not readily be altered. Events moved relatively slowly at first, but the pace changed after the election of Yitzhak Rabin as Israeli prime minister in 1992. The Oslo Declaration of Principles was signed in 1993, fol-

lowed the next year by the Israeli-Jordanian peace treaty. Israel and Syria also began serious talks, which at the time were expected to lead to an agreement.

Substantively, the Madrid conference can be seen either as a masterful triumph of (mainly American) diplomacy or as the first step on the road to collapse. For those in Israel who view the Oslo process as a disaster, and an agreement with Syria based on withdrawal from the Golan Heights as catastrophic, Shamir's decision to go to Madrid was a huge error. In contrast, for enthusiasts of the peace process, the reluctance with which Israel agreed to participate, and the conditions that were attached, prevented a quick and historic breakthrough.

Eitan Bentsur looks at these issues from a unique perspective. As deputy director-general of the Israel Ministry of Foreign Affairs at the time, he was one of Israel's most senior professional diplomats. Like John Foster Dulles in his day, he was "present at the creation." As he notes, before Madrid (or rather, before the events unleashed by the Iraqi invasion of Kuwait in August 1990), even the greatest optimists focused on a narrow Israeli-Palestinian agreement, with no hopes of involving Syria. The Madrid formula, combining a series of parallel bilateral negotiations with five multilateral working groups, changed all that.

As can be seen in Bentsur's discussion, the intense negotiations that preceded the conference were more important than the words exchanged during the formal and brief gathering in Madrid. Despite U.S. hegemony, it took nine visits to the region over a span of several months for Secretary of State James Baker to nail down the details; some members of the team, such as Dennis Ross, made the trek even more often and stayed longer. During this time, the cosponsors (primarily the Americans) painstakingly negotiated the letters of invitation and individual missives sent to each of the major participants. Years later, Assad still clung to every nuance and punctuation mark in these documents, convinced that he had made all of the concessions necessary for recovering the Golan Heights—and, more importantly, for qualifying for massive U.S. economic and military aid—back in 1991.

Bentsur's detailed description of the road to Madrid provides important insights into the constant jockeying for position between the bureaucrats and diplomats in the Israeli Foreign Ministry, on the one hand, and the political leadership, headed by Shamir and his top advisers, on the other. Shamir, for example, appears to have allowed his chief adviser, Yossi Ben-Aharon, free rein in blocking U.S. initiatives and in neutralizing the Foreign Ministry. Like so many other politicians, Shamir encouraged face-offs within his own government as a means of balancing between different perspectives, sources of power, and interests. The Americans found this very frustrating, but for Shamir, this was the only way to both slow down and influence the process.

In Bentsur's narrative, the Foreign Ministry emerges as the major facilitator and promoter of the Madrid concept in Israel. As the process developed, Bentsur and his colleagues slowly brought a skeptical government to recognize that, rather than tilting at the windmills powered by Baker and Bush, Israeli interests would be better served by a strategy designed to gain the best possible terms for the (inevitable) conference.

Notwithstanding, the build-up to Madrid was far from smooth. Despite Israel's un-

characteristic restraint in the wake of Scud missile attacks during the Gulf War, relations between Jerusalem and Washington were strained. Shamir feared that Israel would be pressured by the U.S. into making dangerous concessions at Madrid; Assad's "enthusiasm," far from allaying his concern, was seen as evidence of a U.S.-laid trap. In attempting to persuade Shamir to consider some degree of cooperation, members of the Israeli team, including Bentsur, sought to minimize the participation of malignant "outsiders"—Europe, the United Nations, and Russia. At least the Americans, they argued—even the cold and WASPish Baker and Bush—understood Israel's security requirements. Eventually, Israel obtained an agreement to limit the full conference to a largely ceremonial event, with all substantive negotiations to take place in the bilateral frameworks.

Shamir's forebodings regarding the outcome of the Madrid conference turned out to be accurate, at least from his ideological perspective and in light of his political career. Although the opening remarks (including a particularly aggressive speech by the Syrian foreign minister, Farouk al-Shara) did not constitute an auspicious beginning, the die had been cast. In the months that followed, lack of progress in the talks led to increasing concern among those Israelis who believed that a willingness to make concessions might lead to breakthroughs both with the Palestinians and with Syria. Although not the central factor, this concern undoubtedly contributed to Yitzhak Rabin's victory in the elections of June 1992.

Although Rabin, known as "Mr. Security," shared some of Shamir's skepticism, he was even more pessimistic about the long-term impact of a continued standoff. In his view, shared by Ehud Barak, then chief of staff of the Israel Defense Forces, a peace agreement with Syria was the key to ending the cycle of war that had plagued Israel since 1948.

In selecting a chief negotiator, Rabin went outside the Foreign Ministry (like Shamir and Barak, he viewed it as overly bureaucratized, insufficiently professional, and undisciplined) to appoint Itamar Rabinovich, then a professor at Tel Aviv University. Rabinovich had written extensively and knowledgeably about earlier efforts to reach a treaty with Syria. Moreover, he was both close and loyal to Rabin, in contrast to many other academics who were linked with Foreign Minister Shimon Peres. Later, Rabinovich was also appointed Israeli ambassador to the U.S. His Syrian counterpart, Ambassador Walid Mu'allim, headed his country's negotiating team. The fact that the two chief negotiators served simultaneously as ambassadors was a reflection of U.S. involvement in the talks.

As Rabinovich notes in the memoir under review,¹ Rabin wasted no time. The effort to draft a declaration of principles began in August 1992, but it moved very slowly. At every session, the Syrians pressed Israel to accept full withdrawal as a precondition to Syria's making any public gestures or embarking on confidence-building measures. (Rabinovich's detailed description of the meetings, and his analysis of each of the participants on the Syrian team are, in themselves, important contributions to understanding the process.) In the absence of a response from Damascus, Rabin transferred the focus to the Palestinians and to the Oslo track, putting the Syrians on hold in order to avoid overloading the domestic political circuits.

The Syrians bargained from inflexible ideological positions rather than in defense of more pliant interests. Ideology, in turn, was reinforced by Assad's ultrarigid negotiating style. Attempts to probe the depths of the Syrian president's views failed, as did efforts to develop informal back-channels. According to Rabinovich, even before a first meeting in August 1992, "we knew . . . that Assad gave nothing without getting something in return" (p. 58).

In August 1993, as the Oslo negotiations were in their final phase, Rabin made one more effort to reach an agreement with Syria. Shuttling between Damascus and Jerusalem, U.S. Secretary of State Warren Christopher carried questions and answers between Rabin to Assad on the details of a possible agreement. As Rabinovich notes, "August 1993 was a crucial watershed. . . . Rabin then took an initiative, and authorized Secretary Christopher to explore in a hypothetical way Syria's readiness for a comprehensive agreement with Israel in which the possibility of withdrawal . . . was put on the agenda" (p. 13). Indeed, the Syrians claimed that Rabin had agreed to full withdrawal from the Golan Heights, whereas Israel and the Americans viewed these discussions as part of a theoretical and nonbinding exercise. In any case, "President Assad did not quite pick up the glove" (ibid.). Christopher reported that the Syrians "had difficulties with the very term 'normalization'" (p. 106).

With no change in Assad's very negative public diplomacy, it was clear that, despite the numerous meetings and shuttle trips, real progress was not in sight. Nonetheless, Assad was surprised when the Oslo agreement was suddenly revealed, and he felt betrayed by Arafat. (Similarly, in 1996, the Syrians were not prepared when Peres lost the elections to Netanyahu.)

As a description and an analysis of the events from July 1993 to May 1996, the title of Rabinovich's memoirs, *The Brink of Peace*, may be misleading. Although the direct meetings and exchanges went farther than ever before, these talks stopped far short of agreement. At critical times, Assad dropped the ball. Although he later insisted that Rabin had told Christopher that Israel would withdraw from the entire Golan Heights, Assad did not grab the supposed opportunity. Instead, he continued to play the Arab leadership card, supporting Hezbollah in Lebanon, providing a safe haven for terrorists in Damascus, and continuing the propaganda war against Israel.

When substantive talks resumed in mid-1994—following the opening of the less formal "ambassadors' channel"—Rabin proposed a three-phase process. The first phase would consist of an Israeli withdrawal from the Druze villages near Mt. Hermon within nine months after signing an accord, accompanied by Syrian steps toward normalization. The second phase would include further Israeli pullbacks over 18 months; full withdrawal in the third phase would take place within four-and-a-half years (p. 140). Assad responded by demanding full withdrawal in 12 months (up from an initial three months) and also insisted on a return to the "June 4, 1967" lines (as distinct from the international border). At this point, Rabin decided once again that Assad was not seriously engaged in the peace effort (p. 149).

In parallel, talks were held focusing on Israeli and Syrian security demands. At the end of 1994, the chiefs of staffs of the Israeli and Syrian armies met at the Wye Plantation outside Washington. Here, too, the gaps, both perceptual and substantive, remained wide. Although both sides agreed to keep the meetings secret, the Syrians deliberately leaked their version of what had been discussed. Rabinovich notes that

“this was a bad omen. By publicizing his rejection of these Israeli demands Assad was deliberately tying his own hands” (p. 175). Ten weeks of intense American pressure and shuttle diplomacy led to the negotiation of a brief and very general “Non-paper on the Aims and Principles of the Security Arrangements,” followed by a second round at Wye in June 1995. Again, the meetings did not go well. According to Rabinovich, “General Shihabi was determined not to share a meal or even a cup of coffee with his Israeli interlocutors” (p. 181).

By this point, Rabin needed all the political strength he could gather in the face of a wave of Palestinian suicide bombings. When the Syrians continued to support the attacks, he broke off the talks. Following Rabin’s assassination, Peres was ready and even eager to reach an agreement with Assad before the May 1996 elections. But he, too, was left empty-handed. Although Assad had complained that Rabin was too slow and cautious, he now protested that Peres was moving too fast.

Were Israel and Syria really on the brink of peace at any point during this period? Rabinovich himself provides plenty of evidence to the contrary, arguing convincingly that Syria was primarily interested in ties with the U.S., not peace with Israel. Assad expected the Americans to “deliver” the Rabin government (pp. 136, 144). Indeed, an eager President Bill Clinton sought to oblige, trying “several times to extract from [Rabin] whether he would be willing to accept full withdrawal as part of a settlement with Syria” (p. 92).

Syria, however, did not give the Americans anything in return, and when the U.S. urged Assad to open a secret channel, he refused. (Rabinovich does reveal that two individuals passed messages between Jerusalem and Damascus, but provides no information on the content or identities involved [p. 138].) In January 1994, Assad shared center stage with Clinton during a rare summit meeting in Geneva. Instead of using this platform to alter Syria’s image as a spoiler, Assad once again took a negative tack (pp. 128–130). A repeat performance during Clinton’s visit to Damascus in October 1994 further alienated the Americans.

This is a masterfully written diplomatic history, the epitome of scholarly detachment, without heroes or villains. Rabin and Assad held their cards very tightly, both of them closely approximating the “unitary rational actor model” of international politics. They planned their moves with great care, like chess grand masters moving their pieces slowly across the board, looking out for traps and deeply hidden opportunities. As a result, progress, if any, was glacial.

While Rabinovich was attempting to reach a breakthrough with Syria, Shimon Peres, Yossi Beilin, and Uri Savir were busy negotiating with the Palestinians. Of the three, Savir was clearly the junior partner, and the last to put his version of the Oslo process into print. For Savir, this was a personal journey, in contrast both to Bentsur, whose account focuses on the institutions (particularly the Foreign Ministry), and to Rabinovich, who emphasizes the competing interests of the major players. Enthralled by the visions of Shimon Peres, who took the junior diplomat from the New York consulate and made him director-general of the Foreign Ministry, Savir was also convinced that his Palestinian counterparts shared the same objectives. If there were differences, they were merely based on tactics and nuances.

Those who view the Oslo process as a well-intentioned but ultimately naive effort

will find ample evidence supporting their stance in *The Process: 1,100 Days that Changed the Middle East*.² After the gravitas of Rabinovich's analysis, Savir's book appears light-headed. Instead of clashing national interests and a historic struggle for survival, Savir presents a simplistic and clichéd analysis of events.

The intense ideologists, generals, diplomats, and terrorists of traditional Middle Eastern history are replaced by the sentimental tales of a father and daughter dreaming wistfully of peace. At the beginning of this tale, the reader is told that Savir's daughter had accompanied her parents to peace demonstrations since the age of four. As he left for the first meeting, "I wanted her to sense that one of our dreams was about to come true" (p. 7). Resistance to concessions and risks is attributed to "a kind of psychological jet lag as long-standing perceptions resist the impact of new ideas and realities." In contrast, "Peacemaking tries to reset perceptual clocks" (p. ix).

For Savir, personalities and perceptions are the critical factors. In his world, there is no room for conflicting national interests and ideologies. Rather, the coin of the diplomatic realm is based on personal relationships and trust between interlocutors. Instead of confronting real problems, Savir, like Beilin and Peres, relied on the analyses and promises of officials such as Abu Ala (Ahmed Queri), Abu Mazen (Mahmoud Abbas), Hassan Asfour, Sa'eb Erekat, and, at times, even Yasir Arafat.

In a chapter called, ironically, "Planning Security," Savir focuses on the terrorism that not only continued, but increased after the Palestinian Authority took control in Gaza and Jericho. As "it became clear to us that Arafat and his men were not using their new power base to dismantle Hamas," Rabin "demanded that the Palestinians do a better job of countering them." Hassan Asfour explained that "Arafat has a different strategy, and it will succeed. Trust him; strengthen him, and you'll see. We're negotiating with Hamas, and many of their people are coming over to our side." Abu Ala revealed details of an "evolving agreement between Hamas and Fatah . . . that included an end to violence and the acceptance of a central authority that would legitimize political pluralism" (p. 147).

These personal assurances from trusted partners came a few weeks before the kidnapping of Nahshon Wachsmann (on the day that Nobel prizes for Rabin, Peres, and Arafat were announced) and the suicide blast on a Tel-Aviv bus that killed 22 people and wounded many more. As demonstrations against "the murderous peace process" mounted, Savir reports that "Arafat still failed to grasp the extent of the menace posed by terrorism" (p. 151).

While frustrated by the terrorism and by the failure of their "partners" to act against it, Savir, like Peres and Beilin (and perhaps Rabin, although we will never know), was so committed to the Oslo process that, as this book shows, he never questioned the validity of his initial assumptions. For Savir, the path was set on the first of the 1,100 days that the Rabin/Peres government held office, and he never looked back. However, amid the waves of suicide bombers, the Israeli public demanded more evidence that the process would indeed bring peace. In the elections of May 1996, Peres and Labor were voted out of office, and Savir's role in the negotiations ended.

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Notes

1. *The Brink of Peace* also appears in a Hebrew version as *Saf hashalom: yisrael vesuriyah 1992–1996* (Tel-Aviv: 1998).
2. *The Process* also appears in a Hebrew version, as *Hatahalikh: maahorei hakelayim shel hakhra'ah historit* (Tel-Aviv: 1998).

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Book Reviews

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Antisemitism, Holocaust and Genocide

Werner Bergmann and Rainer Erb, *Antisemitism in Germany: The Post-Nazi Epoch since 1945*. New Brunswick: Transaction Press, 1996. 385 pp.

Hermann Kurthen, Werner Bergmann, and Rainer Erb (eds.), *Antisemitism and Xenophobia in Germany after Unification*. New York: Oxford University Press, 1997. xv + 318 pp.

The wave of xenophobic violence and antisemitic incidents that erupted in Germany between 1991 and 1994 focused an uncomfortable spotlight on that country, souring the euphoria that followed the sudden fall of the Berlin Wall and the seemingly smooth unification of East and West Germany. With alarmists sounding warnings, survey researchers combed the country and returned with gratifying data. Contrary to expectations, “Ossis” proved less antisemitic than their “Wessi” counterparts (one 1990 survey found 4 to 6 percent hard-core antisemites in the east as compared to 12 to 16 percent in the west). At the same time, easterners were more uncomfortable with the 1 percent of the population who were foreigners in the GDR than were West Germans with the 10 percent of foreigners in their midst. Moreover, many easterners resented the transition from an ethnically homogeneous to a more diverse society, and the rate of xenophobia was 15 percent higher in the east than in the west. Thus, the edited volume of Kurthen, Bergmann, and Erb contains both troubling and reassuring views, with tables galore surveying public opinion, and a chilling appendix chronicling right-wing violence between 1989 and 1994.

Antisemitism and Xenophobia in Germany after Unification is divided into four chapters devoted to survey analysis; four chapters on the roots and motives of the violence; and three on foreign and Jewish reactions. The editors, who contribute five of the 13 chapters, conclude that “the violence represented a situational escalation rather than a reversal of the trend toward a more liberal, tolerant and open-minded society” (p. 9). Five years after this wave of street terror, arson, and vandalism subsided, one may grant them their optimism, even if the replacement of the stereotypical Jew as “Christ killer” with “accuser of the Germans” could present problems in the future.

Problematic, too, is the inadvertent or unconscious conflation of xenophobia and antisemitism. As the authors themselves make clear, xenophobia is excited by fears about the future integration of immigrant subcultures, whereas antisemitism is increasingly driven by ghosts of the past. The German Jewish community of some 50,000 as of 1989 was not much larger than the 35,900 persons estimated by the Federal Office for the Protection of the Constitution to have been members of extremist right-wing organizations in that same year. The absence of a sizable German Jewish community

obviates any meaningful dialogue between Germans and Jews, or between German Jews and Turks, Kurds, or other minorities. The tension or dialogue between the 7,000,000 immigrants and the citizens of the republic stands outside the German-Jewish question. Hence, both works argue for the inapplicability of American social science research, which deals with Jews as one ethnicity interacting with other groups within a larger context of racism and/or interest group politics. Aside from the hostility they elicit from the approximately 15 percent of the population who are hardcore antisemites, German Jews do relatively well in the pecking order of outgroups: they were preferred to Gypsies, political extremists, homosexuals, and Muslims. The stereotype of the Jewish capitalist lost most of its vitriol in the decades of the *Wirtschaftswunder*, when Germans started flaunting their own business acumen.

The formula "antisemitism without Jews" also does not take full account of Jewish ghosts haunting the German present, for it is precisely the watchful eye of "world Jewry" that troubles Germany today. An ambivalent picture emerges: on the one hand, antisemitism in Germany is becoming "normal," that is, similar to that in other Western countries in likewise tapering off among the most educated and, so it seems, diminishing generally. This is a noteworthy shift from the official antisemitic culture of Nazi Germany. With antisemitism a foundation stone of Nazi state ideology, the educated class became its theoretical exponents and college youth were among its most stubborn adherents. The Hitler Youth generation remained stubbornly antisemitic in the immediate postwar years but shifted in the 1950s and 1960s, although older members of the Hitler generation were less malleable.

In the wake of the debate during the 1980s over the singularity of the Holocaust, Werner Bergmann and Rainer Erb have argued for the singularity of post-Auschwitz antisemitism in Germany (and implicitly Austria), which they call "secondary antisemitism." This is an antisemitism generated by resentment at being reminded of the Holocaust; it is not so much a continuation of the ideology of the Third Reich as a problem of "dealing with it." The stereotypical Jew has become "unforgiving, irreconcilable." Apologies for Nazism are constructed in order to counter the accusations of the victims; these express the desire for a *Schlussstrich*, an end to the discussion of an unacceptable and unassimilable past. This new antisemitism has "a constant sense of confrontation with moral accusations of guilt, which [are] then parried with counter-accusations and attempts to relativize the past" (p. 38). In short, "secondary antisemitism" is an expression of the syndrome often formulated as "the Germans will never forgive the Jews for Auschwitz."

The definition of this new "secondary antisemitism" grows out of the dissatisfaction with the authoritarian personality thesis of the Frankfurt School that held sway in the postwar decades. Neo-Marxist social theory integrated psychoanalysis in its explanation of the antisemite as dependent on authority and crippled by a weak ego. Damaging childhood experiences due to an authoritarian upbringing became one part of the equation, with the recurring crises within capitalism itself constituting the other part. As Bergmann and Erb point out, however, this does not help explain post-Auschwitz German antisemitism, which flares up in conflicts involving Nazi history rather than during economic crises. Moreover, antisemitism is now treated as an antisocial phenomenon and not as an expression of obedience.

The strength of the second book under review here (authored by Bergmann and

Erb) is its comprehensive historical sweep. The authors' opening and concluding chapters present overviews of post-1945 German attitudes; the intervening ten chapters explore a variety of subjects (for instance, emotional rejection, social distance, subjective deprivation, and latent antisemitism). An inordinate amount of space, perhaps rightly so, is devoted to analyzing how social scientists have taken the German public pulse over the decades. Eighty-seven tables and four appendixes serve to alert the reader to questionable techniques and skewed questions. To take one example: 8 percent of respondents to a survey said they would consider marriage to a Jewish partner in 1949; in 1961, 4 percent of respondents answered favorably. But in 1954, 72 percent said yes. The difference lay in how the latter question was formulated: "Two young people are in love; one is Jewish. Do you believe they can have a happy marriage?" (p. 135).

Bergmann and Erb analyze antisemitism in terms of Germans' relations with Jews and Germany's relations with Israel. Not acknowledged but clearly operating in these equations as well is the American perception of Germany and Germans, the relationship of the victor toward the vanquished. One need not speak of the Americanization of the Holocaust to recognize that American triumphalism and German defeatism are joined at the hip. The initial question asked by postwar pollsters was whether "Hitler would have been one of Germany's greatest statesmen if it hadn't been for the war." When U.S. Commissioner John McCloy declared in 1949 that German attitudes toward Jews represented the touchstone for German democracy, antisemitism became a weathervane of its democratic culture. Konrad Adenauer drew the logical conclusion by defying German public opinion and embracing reparations and support for Israel. But it was not until the 1960s that the genocide and the war were placed together in the standard polling question. During the incident involving U.S. President Ronald Reagan's visit to a military cemetery at Bitburg, and during the Gulf War, the interrelated threads of German nationalism, anti-Americanism, and antisemitism became manifest.

Recent trends such as the lionizing of Daniel J. Goldhagen in 1996, and the response to the traveling Wehrmacht exhibition detailing military complicity in the Holocaust, seem to confirm Bergmann and Erb's reassuring view of a decline in old-style antisemitism. But as "the Jew" becomes ever more an abstract figure in the German present, the archives are disgorging a flood of new statistics and other facts related to the Holocaust in Eastern Europe. The result, unfortunately, may be a reinforcing of the new, secondary form of antisemitism.

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Peter Gay, *My Jewish Question: Growing Up in Nazi Berlin*. New Haven: Yale University Press, 1998. xii + 208 pp.

This memoir of growing up in Berlin when it was capital of the Third Reich, written by the distinguished Yale historian Peter Gay, tells the story of how one Jewish refugee from Hitler gradually came to terms with his unabashed hatred for Germany

and Germans. It also attempts to set the record straight concerning why so many German Jews waited until the last possible moment to emigrate, or else put off making a decision to leave until it was too late. Told with wit and style, Gay's story deserves to be read alongside Saul Friedländer's superb *Nazi Germany and the Jews*.

As was true of a significant minority of German Jews who were more or less fully assimilated "non-Jewish Jews," Gay's family held on to little more than a few Yiddish phrases and traditional practices, including circumcision. In all other respects, Jewishness was imposed upon them in 1933 by the racial state. Assimilation had taught the Gays how to "pass" in Gentile society and hence to cope with some aspects of life under Hitler, but it also denied them the aid of Jewish communal institutions and the comforts of Judaism or Zionism. In Gay's trenchant words, even under these extreme conditions "we could not make ourselves believe what we did not believe" (p. 110).

The antisemitic indignities that followed the Nazi seizure of power quite naturally aroused antipathies in the victims that at the time could be expressed in only the most circumspect ways—in Gay's case, by supporting foreign teams at sports events and whispering anti-Nazi jokes. Kristallnacht in particular engendered lasting bitterness. Exorcising this poison after emigrating in 1939 was painfully difficult. Today Gay believes his first book, *The Dilemma of Democratic Socialism: Eduard Bernstein's Challenge to Marx* (1952), began the healing process, and that it was carried on in subsequent books in which he touched on German history. The process was enhanced by Gay's postwar contacts with German scholars and his positive (albeit long delayed) visits to his former homeland. But it was never completed. There is ample evidence in this volume of continuing rage over past abuses, and Gay freely admits that he is likely to take some of it with him to the grave.

Equally intense is Gay's contempt for those who denounce the German Jews for their alleged delusions, blindness, and passivity in the face of Nazi persecution. He and his parents, far from engaging in denial, kept themselves as well informed as anyone could be at the time by regularly listening to uncensored news from Radio Strasbourg. Nor were they oblivious to their hostile environment. Gay attributes his family's reluctance to emigrate in part to the mixed signals emanating from the regime. At the very moment that legal discrimination against the Jews was intensifying, young Peter was being admitted to a first-rate public high school where he experienced neither ridicule nor harassment and was rewarded for his academic achievements by being urged to study Latin rather than English. His father's wholesale dinnerware business actually thrived during the early years of the dictatorship, enabling the family to move to a better apartment in 1936.

Gentile friends stayed true to the Gays, and the memoir is generous in its praise for these representatives of the "other Germany" even as it recognizes that they unwittingly did the Jews a disservice by making life in Germany more bearable. Additionally, until the very end there were ways of escaping the increasingly dreary atmosphere of persecution. For Gay, these included watching soccer, stamp collecting, listening to forbidden jazz recordings, ice skating, and, of course, his family. Students of German Jewish survival strategies during the 1930s will read this memoir with profit. Under the circumstances, Gay concludes, it would have required almost su-

perhuman powers of foresight to anticipate the nature of the approaching catastrophe and the speed with which it would overtake the victims.

Gay also points out the dangers of underestimating the obstacles to Jewish emigration from Nazi Germany, noting that his father possessed neither foreign languages nor marketable skills that might have made him a good prospect for acceptance by a country of refuge. Then there was the virtually confiscatory German emigration tax, about which Gay says little, perhaps because the family records are incomplete. American immigration quotas, rightly condemned in much of the historical literature, get no friendlier treatment here. Rigid enforcement of the quotas by American officials obliged the Gays to buy their way into Cuba, where they waited two more years for permission to enter the United States. Some of their relatives, along with thousands of other German Jews, never escaped at all.

It is perhaps natural that Gay should revile the quotas and express abiding rage at what he describes as the callousness of the world to the Jews' plight, and yet he does so in such sweeping terms as to oversimplify extremely sensitive and complex political issues. Indeed, the author of this memoir brings to the prewar rescue problem little of the nuanced understanding that he invites his readers to show for the situation of the Jews and other anti-Nazi Germans under Hitler. A work intended in part to promote the author's self-understanding and emotional catharsis, this slim volume demonstrates once again that some painful memories can never fully yield to detached historical analysis.

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Zvi Gitelman (ed.), *Bitter Legacy: Confronting the Holocaust in the USSR*. Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1997. viii + 332 pp.

This book deals with the history, historiography, and historical memory of the Shoah as it transpired on the territory of the former Soviet Union, primarily in the Baltic republics and in Belarus and Ukraine.

The volume consists of 14 interpretive chapters contributed by 12 different authors and another six chapters composed of document selections. The editor notes that six of the interpretive chapters were published previously (I found a seventh: M.I. Koval's contribution had already been published in *Ukrains'kyi istorychnyi zhurnal* in 1992). All of the documentary chapters are taken from two previously published documentary collections and from a document published in 1993 in the journal *Jews in Eastern Europe*. About 40 percent of the book is new material; some of the previously published items are here translated into English for the first time.

The volume makes surprisingly little use of the documentary material available since the opening of the Soviet archives, even though other scholars, such as Dieter Pohl, have been successfully integrating these important sources into their work. One also wishes that the selection of contributors was more balanced. Much of the book concerns the differences in historical memory and historiography regarding the

Holocaust among Jews, on the one hand, and Russians, Belarusians, Ukrainians, Lithuanians, Latvians, and Estonians, on the other. Yet the second perspective is represented by a single contribution, that of the Ukrainian historian M.I. Koval.

Unfortunately, a number of the contributions display questionable judgments and procedures. For example, in Daniel Romanovsky's ruminations on why the Russians were so cruel to the Jews, he makes some generalizations that are rarely found anywhere in scholarship: "It was a general ethical backwardness, a lack of cultivation of the spirit. . . . In the Russian popular consciousness, the notion of the intrinsic value of human life was absent. For an average Russian, there was nothing extraordinary about the act of murder" (p. 241). In explaining why more Jews did not flee from the Germans, he mentions "the traditional Jewish attitude toward family, children, and parents"; Jews capable of fleeing were unwilling to leave their families "helpless in a hostile world." The Belarusians, he notes (although this has nothing to do with the point he is elaborating), were not like that: "In general, families of partisans were the first mass victims from among the Belorussian people in 1941–1942. A Belorussian might find it easier than a Jew to 'get over it'" (p. 246). Romanovsky does not offer concrete evidence in support of these generalizations: his whole study has three footnotes. As he himself says, "this chapter uses no archival documents and almost no published data," only eyewitness accounts that he collected in the mid-1980s (p. 231).

Or take the article by Shalom Cholawski, which discusses the Holocaust as it appears in both Soviet belles-lettres and Belarusian émigré historical/memoir writing. It ends with an 11-point conclusion intended to demolish the Belarusian émigré perspective. These 11 points are said to be formulated "on the basis of Jewish, Belorussian and German documentary sources," but there are no footnotes to this section of his article. Nor is there consistency of argument. Point 8 states that there is no reason to discount Soviet evidence against war criminals, since it was not politically motivated. Yet in Point 10 we are instructed to disregard what Hirsh Smolar wrote about Belarusians who rescued Jews, because "his book was written in Moscow in 1945, based on the official Communist Party line and under its supervision. It cannot in any way be considered an objective evaluation . . ." (pp. 227–228).

According to another contributor, Yosef Litvak, "the Jews were assigned a very important job in plans for controlling Poland and making it into a Soviet colony." Moreover, "Stalin had assigned them a role in the process of transforming Poland into a 'people's republic' and a Soviet satellite" (pp. 138, 148). Litvak neither documents nor presents arguments in favor of this assertion, which I do not believe represents the prevalent view, at least in academia.

In spite of these and less substantial problems (no list of abbreviations, few umlauts in the German), the book makes interesting reading and is crammed with useful material. It does not always, however, live up to the editor's intention of "shedding the light of scholarship" on these issues, which is unfortunate. The topic of the bystander/perpetrator in the occupied territories of the Soviet Union is both important and high on the agenda of contemporary Holocaust scholarship. As the title of the book under review notes, this portion of history has left a bitter legacy. It deserves more serious and sensitive scholarly treatment.

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Paul Marcus, *Autonomy in the Extreme Situation: Bruno Bettelheim, the Nazi Concentration Camps, and the Mass Society*. Westport: Praeger, 1999. xiv + 212 pp.

This book, dedicated to the memory of Bruno Bettelheim, “a brilliant, bold, and painfully flawed survivor,” is a new attempt to rescue Bettelheim from his critics. As such, it is another link in the chain of disputation about his theories regarding the behavior and struggle for survival of concentration camp inmates.

Bettelheim, whose well-known work on the concentration camps was published between 1943 and 1990, formulated his ideas within the framework of orthodox psychoanalytic theory. As has been usually understood, it was Bettelheim’s position that the inmates of the camps regressed to infant behavior, thus lowering their chances of survival. Furthermore, he offered certain characterological distinctions between those who survived and those who did not. While his contributions are regarded by some as the most valuable and influential explanation of how inmates behaved in the Nazi concentration camps, others view them as judgmental and even slanderous, intimating that the best died and the worst remained alive. Moreover, critics claim that Bettelheim’s personal experiences—the empirical basis for his study—encompassed “only” the prewar concentration camp, to be distinguished from the wartime death camps designed for the Final Solution; and that, even though he thought otherwise, his psychoanalytic approach is completely inapplicable to the death camps.

Paul Marcus undertakes in this book to reassess Bettelheim’s work and to prove that most of the above is based on misunderstanding. Thus, Marcus quotes Bettelheim to insist that his work indeed referred to the concentration camps, and not to the terminal death camps (yet he accepts the critical claim that, throughout his work, Bettelheim often talked about “camps” in general, without precisely stating which kind of camp he related to). But the major thrust of this book is theoretical. In this, Marcus—also a practicing psychoanalyst—strongly relies on Bettelheim’s early essay, “Individual and Mass Behavior in Extreme Situations” (1943), and his later book *The Informed Heart: Autonomy in a Mass Age* (1960).

Marcus presents the central thesis that, for Bettelheim, the inmates’ struggle and conduct in the concentration camps represented in extreme form the dilemmas facing most modern citizens, namely how to preserve our autonomy, individuality, and humanity in a mass state. According to Bettelheim’s interpretation, the German concentration camps were designed to bring about a profound personality change in the inmates and thus produce more useful, conforming subjects for the total state. Learning about survival in the concentration camps may teach us how to preserve our own freedom, how to resist and fight back against the assaults on our individuality.

Looking at Bettelheim’s work half a century later, Marcus comes to the conclusion that while Bettelheim’s basic arguments are sound, his limitations emanate from the conceptual language he used, namely that of pure classical psychoanalysis, which lacks an adequate sociological or social-psychological perspective. Marcus’ endeavor in this book is, therefore, to “retell” this basic narrative in a new, more fruitful language set in the conceptual framework of Michel Foucault’s theory of knowledge. To my great disappointment, however, I found that situating Bettelheim in a Foucauldian “historical” context frequently serves to obscure, rather than to clarify, the former’s original contributions.

In many ways, this book enters the by-now familiar tangle of dilemmas that intertwine language, narrative, and history. Can we change the story but preserve history? Are we dealing with facts or with interpretations? According to Marcus, whereas Bettelheim's observations are probably valid, they are attributed to the wrong factors. For example, the tendency of inmates to seek anonymity in the group is a "true fact." However, such behavior can be interpreted as infantile, defensive, or regressive—or, on the contrary, as an act of agency, a technique for self-preservation and coping in an extreme situation.

The basic and most important question raised by Marcus' retelling concerns what can be learned from Bettelheim about personality integration, interpersonal relations, values, and beliefs that may be relevant to people who want to maintain their autonomy, to "remain human" in mass society rather than seeking "survival at any price." Following Emmanuel Levinas, Marcus reads Bettelheim to say that to embrace responsibility for the other is the existential mode that may guarantee our humanity. In my reading, however, Bettelheim's famous claim that the major warranty for remaining human is the individual's autonomy—namely, his or her inner ability to govern him- or herself—is not much more than begging the question. In other words, it remains to be answered just who is the individual who manages to remain autonomous in the repressive mass state, and if indeed there can be such an individual.

The same is true regarding Marcus' related claim representing Bettelheim—that having a strong, consistent set of transcending moral values, or reference to something outside the inmate's own self-interest, is what leads to maximal resistance against dehumanizing forces. This idea is supported by many survivors, and undoubtedly it may provide a sane narrative for their own tragic life stories, but obviously we have no way of listening to the voices of those who were exterminated and comparing their accounts to those of survivors.

In the final analysis, it seems to me that the inmates' actions and choices in concentration camps, as well as the lifelong struggles of those who survived—among them, Bettelheim, of course—should be treated with utmost compassion. Essentially, their life and death can be understood and judged only within the context of that extreme and inhuman environment of the Nazi camps, so that drawing conclusions from such a study to modern states is highly problematic.

AMIA LIEBLICH
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Dan Michman, *Hashoah vehikrah: hamsagah, minuah, vesugiyot yesod (The Holocaust and Holocaust Research: Conceptualization, Terminology and Basic Issues)*. Tel-Aviv: Moreshet, 1998. 288 pp.

Trying to review this insightful and challenging book in a few paragraphs is frustrating, for two reasons. First, it consists of a group of disparate essays that, although linked by a unifying theme, can be discussed seriously only one by one. Second, each essay presents complex arguments that invite sustained reflection: to attempt to sum-

marize all these arguments in a short space, let alone engage them critically, is not possible.

Michman's purpose is to scrutinize some of the fundamental concepts underlying the way in which the history of the Holocaust is usually discussed, with a mind to refining their use or replacing them with new analytical frameworks. Among these concepts are Nazism, fascism, leadership, rescue, predictability, resistance, survivors, religious life, collaboration, the Jewish people, and even "Holocaust" itself. According to Michman, "most historians . . . are only dimly aware of the central necessity of clarifying" the meaning of the concepts and words that they use routinely to explain historical phenomena, even though "the source of many [historiographical] debates lies in a difference in the understanding and definition of concepts . . . and in the changing meaning of concepts over time" (p. 4). The essays in the volume are thus intended to constitute a set of "methodological introductions to fundamental issues" in Holocaust research (p. 5).

Michman employs three strategies in this exercise. First, he studies empirically how various terms central to the discussion of the Holocaust have been employed, whether by participants in the events or by later scholars. Second, where certain general concepts that have been employed in Holocaust research have also been the object of abstract theoretical treatment, he explores the value of such theories. Finally, he embarks upon his own attempts to define some of the terms that have provoked the most debate.

Not all of the strategies are pursued in each essay. In the opening analysis, following the first strategy, he examines how seven historians usually regarded as having written general histories of the Holocaust have all assigned their subject rather different chronological, spatial, and thematic dimensions—a situation that leads Michman to ask, "If so, then what is 'the Holocaust' anyway?" (p. 34).

The second strategy governs the discussion of official or representative bodies imposed upon Jewish communities under Nazi rule (pp. 107–121). Michman argues that whereas students of the Holocaust have tended to treat all such bodies within the single analytical framework of "leadership," sociological literature since the 1930s has distinguished between a leader who derives his authority to govern from within the community of the governed, and "headship," in which authority is derived from some extracommunal force. This theoretical distinction is important, according to Michman, because it permits students to see a fundamental difference between two types of governing bodies imposed on the Jews, each with its own relationship to the Germans and to the Jewish population—the one represented by the *Judenräte* of the Generalgouvernement and the eastern territories, which acted more as "heads" of their communities than as "leaders," the other by "Jewish associations" such as the Association des Juifs en Belgique, in which characteristics of leadership were to the fore.

An example of the third strategy can be found in the essay titled "Clarifying the Concept of 'Rescue during the Holocaust'" (pp. 125–146), in which Michman, in opposition to several scholars, insists upon a restrictive definition of the term "rescue" (*haṣalah*), in order to maintain what he regards as an essential distinction between that term and "assistance" (*'ezrah*). Not that Michman is consistently a strict con-

structionist of terms: in his essay on the concept of “resistance” (pp. 159–189), he argues for a relatively broad definition that does not see the phenomenon exclusively as a form of active warfare against the occupiers, but that rather incorporates most actions taken in opposition to the perceived goals of the occupiers.

Michman appears to believe that the work of clarifying concepts can lead to the crystallization of a far greater interpretive consensus among scholars of the Holocaust than prevails today. I doubt that this is so: in the final analysis, there is nothing in nature that can compel a scholar (or anyone else) to conceptualize reality in one way rather than another. If disagreement over the meanings of terms inhibits consensus, and if consensus is a desirable end, then perhaps the goal could be more fruitfully pursued by creating a scholarly discourse that is as term-free as possible. Space limitations prevent me from elaborating this idea here, but even if Michman’s hope is not realized, these welcome essays will stimulate serious, disciplined thinking about some of the most difficult intellectual problems facing scholars of the Holocaust.

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Katherine Morris (ed.), *Odyssey of Exile: Jewish Women Flee the Nazis for Brazil*. Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 1996. 262 pp.

No testimony can adequately describe the horrors and humiliations endured by Jews and other victims of the Nazis, nor should any testimony, however slight, be ignored or silenced. Each individual trauma is itself worthy of being salvaged; each is integral to the weaving of the frightful tapestry of twentieth-century history. This said, where publication is concerned, it is legitimate to ask how much any particular new compendium of testimonies adds to our understanding of what is already known. Katherine Morris’ *Odyssey of Exile: Jewish Women Flee the Nazis for Brazil* makes only a modest contribution to that understanding.

The book consists of 13 short autobiographical essays written by ten women who survived the Nazi period. The essays are bracketed by brief editorial notes that set the described events in their historical context. The book is divided into four sections of unequal length, “Persecution and Exile,” “Concentration Camps,” “Transfer to Brazil,” and “Restitution” (the last consisting of only one fragment). No mention is made of how or when the essays were collected, or of how representative they might be. They were translated from German by various people, some of them named in the book.

Morris refrains from scrutinizing the testimonies themselves. She did not edit the essays, which were written for the most part by women who merely wanted to record their experiences for their children and grandchildren. In such a case, one looks to the editor to add dimension and meaning to the text. But here, unfortunately, we are disappointed. We can only guess at the traumatic memories that underlie the rosy gloss these essayists superimposed upon their accounts. Even if the writers were too conventional or too traumatized to analyze their own personal dramas, their truthful evocations of experience are worthy of an editor’s effort and attention. Instead of analysis, however, Morris offers brief summaries that, rather than add insight or interpretation,

are flat, banal restatements of the obvious. For example, her gloss on the essay by a woman who waited a lifetime before feeling able to describe her life and near-death in Auschwitz and Bergen-Belsen reads, "Hertha Gruber was young and innocent, and the atrocities she witnessed were unforgettable" (p. 104).

Morris does venture several generalizations, but she neither scrutinizes nor defends any of them. For example, she contends that, while all Jews suffered abominably in the camps, women suffered more than, or at least differently from, men. She offers one witness in support of this statement, but fails to remark on evidence that would seem to contradict this observation. The possible gender differential in the Holocaust experience is now a hotly contested issue among historians, but Morris does not lead us to the relevant literature or discuss its themes. Her statement about "different survival strategies . . . the most important being a woman's ability to bond with other women" (p. 105) is interesting, but it goes unsupported by serious analysis or comparison with accounts of male bonding that may also have occurred in the camps.

A salient feature of the testaments is the alienation of all but one of these women from the Jewish people. This alienation preceded their persecution and flight, and it continued after their arrival in Brazil. The book contains scarcely any mention of a Jewish consciousness. Not Judaism, but German culture is the loss these refugees mourn. As one writer put it, "I know that if I should live to an old age like my mother and should lose my short-term memory, I will only remember the German language" (p. 28). Surely the question of Jewish identity is relevant to a book about women persecuted for being Jewish; but it goes unexplored. The snobbery that provides the subtext of these memoirs likewise goes unremarked by the editor. For example, a mother who fled with three children in quite desperate circumstances writes, "I am certain [my children] were awed with the exemplary attitudes of the Czartoryski family, especially with the 80-year-old niece of Kaiser Franz Josef of Austria. . . . They were probably impressed, too, by the adroit way the young countesses scrubbed the rooms and stairs. I'm sure they remember the exciting story about the camp visit of the young countess's fiancé . . ." (pp. 46–47). After the war, Hilde Wiedemann, writing from her refuge in Brazil, says, "In addition to the sadness about what had been lost forever in cultural treasures, came the shock about the horrors to which our people *had let themselves* be degraded" (emphasis added) (p. 143).

The section on Brazil offers a limited view into one of the lesser known countries of refuge. Descriptions of the way in which highly educated Europeans fitted themselves for survival on a farm in Parana or in the urban sprawl of Rio help us to draw parameters around the human capacity for adaptation. Although most of the memoirists remain distant observers of an exotic scene, Renée-Marie Croose Parry writes with intense awareness, demonstrating the emotional and intellectual maturity forged by her experience as a prisoner—not of the Germans, but of the Brazilians.

In her introduction to one of the Brazilian essays, Morris cites copiously from Jeff Lesser's monograph on Jewish immigration to that country,¹ but seriously misunderstands what he wrote (p. 164). She footnotes Lesser for her description of foreign minister Oswaldo Aranha as a philosemite, overlooking Lesser's identification of Aranha (on the first page of his book) as a major obstacle to the entry of Jewish refugees into Brazil. In the same paragraph, Morris misconstrues Lesser's analysis of the way in which Jewish organizations manipulated antisemitic stereotypes in order to wrest

visas for Jews from the Brazilian government. These are serious lapses in a book that purports to be about Brazil.

Overall, the book's title offers more than it can deliver. The "odyssey" is unfortunately very well known already; these "Jewish" women diarists would be German today were it not for the twisted mentality of National Socialism; well-developed tools for feminist history are not deployed; and Brazil figures in the text only marginally. What is missing here is a guiding theme to pull together these disparate essays and tell us something we did not know before about the times these women lived through.

Some of these memoirs have already been published in extenso elsewhere. Most exist only as manuscripts in "private collections," presumably held by the families for whom they were written. One hopes they may one day be deposited in an archive dedicated to the preservation of Jewish history, perhaps the Instituto Cultural Judaico Marc Chagall in Porto Alegre, which makes available for researchers its noteworthy collection of memoirs and oral interviews of Jewish Brazilian women and men.

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Note

1. See Jeff Lesser, *Welcoming the Undesirables: Brazil and the Jewish Question* (Los Angeles: 1995).

Alan S. Rosenbaum (ed.), *Is the Holocaust Unique? Perspectives on Comparative Genocide*. Boulder: Westview Press, 1996. xv + 209 pp.

Never has the Holocaust been more popular and more unpopular. A long queue of people is demanding inclusion as "Holocaust victims," while there are furious assaults on limiting the term to designate the fate of European Jews. The high profile awarded to the Jewish tragedy irks members or descendants of groups that endured similar horrors in different eras and places. But is there indeed a serious argument against restricting the Holocaust to the Jewish experience?

The essays by Richard L. Rubenstein and Steven T. Katz in this provocative collection edited by Alan S. Rosenbaum set out the widely accepted view that the Holocaust, meaning a specifically Jewish event, was unique. They maintain that it evolved from a peculiar, centuries-long antagonism between Christianity and Judaism, and that never before or since has a state intentionally turned its resources to the annihilation of every member of a demarcated group. Critics of this perspective point to the sameness of other genocides and denigrate the alleged singularities of the Jewish fate.

Two cases that have jostled for the assignment of parallel status—the Atlantic slave trade and the engineered famine in the Ukraine in 1932–1933—get short shrift here

from, respectively, Seymour Drescher and Barbara Green. Other instances prove more equivocal. While Robert F. Melson sees the Armenian genocide as a prototype of the Holocaust that was sufficiently different in territorial scope and thoroughness to merely foreshadow the latter, Vahakn N. Dadrian insists on the parallels. In so doing, however, he seriously misconstrues certain aspects of the Jewish fate.

Ian Hancock argues that Nazi treatment of the Sinti and the Roma (Gypsies) was analogous to their actions against the Jews. They, too, were victims of an ancient hatred that led to negative stereotyping, legal harassment, and even periodic massacres. Those caught by the Germans endured the same hell as did the Jews. Hancock cites documentation suggesting that the Nazis intended the total annihilation of the Romani people on racial grounds. Sadly, he damages a useful thesis by going to extremes in order to accentuate the plight of the Romani people while downplaying the Jews' fate.

The *Protocols of the Elders of Zion* crystallized the notion of a world Jewish conspiracy, not a Gypsy one; anti-Romani beliefs never acquired the cosmic, manichean character of antisemitism. Some Jews may have been allowed to escape the Nazi imperium or managed to survive within it, but this evasion occurred at the margins of the genocide. As Hitler's political testament proved, ideally he would not have spared a single Jew. Hancock is tragically awry when he states that the Final Solution ended in November 1944 with the halt of gassings at Auschwitz. One guesses that political considerations drove him to suppress mention of the death marches or of the murderous conditions in Belsen that claimed tens of thousands of Jewish lives.

Political considerations are also what seem to have propelled David E. Stannard beyond some valid cautionary points into a counterproductive tirade against several noted Holocaust scholars. Stannard is rightly angry at the neglect of the fate of Native Americans by comparison with the focus on the genocide against Europe's Jews. He wonders why the speed, technology, and totality of the Holocaust is so critical in defining its uniqueness. Does the long agony of the Amerindians mitigate their suffering? Does it make a difference that nearly a million Rwandan Tutsis were massacred in a few weeks, but with machetes? Since in many places *no* indigenous people survived European colonization, shouldn't their destruction qualify for consideration as genocide?

All of these are valid points. However, Stannard's identification of double standards elides into an ahistorical series of comparisons and some unworthy efforts to diminish the scope and nature of the Final Solution. He operates with a low figure of 5.1 million Jewish victims of Nazi policy and, in reply to the argument that most Native Americans died of disease and hence did not undergo an intentional genocide, attributes 2.4 million Jewish deaths to ill health and malnutrition. Perhaps so, but where were the priests trying to convert the Jews en masse to Christianity, before setting them to work? Most dubiously, Stannard contests the intentionality of the Final Solution and argues that the Wannsee Protocol was not about mass murder.

Stannard tries to "explain" the insistence on the uniqueness of the Holocaust by depicting its advocates as purveyors of Zionist propaganda. True, individual politicians and historians may make cheap capital out of the Holocaust; but this is no justification for impugning academics who put forward a responsible intellectual argument. To accuse them of denying the existence of other genocides and abetting mass mur-

der is outrageous. Stannard, like Hancock, jeopardizes a good case by his intemperate prose. The editor must bear some responsibility for this, alas. It is even more regrettable because a genuine issue is at stake.

Racial-biological ideology drove Nazi politics. It had an impact on all sections of German and, later, European society. However, it operated on different tracks, policy by policy, and with varying degrees of ferocity. With time it is conceivable that the Nazis would have annihilated all Gypsies and the handicapped, but the fact is that Jewish policy was radicalized more quickly and pursued for a longer time, with more destructive consequences.

For any analysis to hold water, it must observe historical specificities. No responsible historian handling any other subject would casually juxtapose events separated by centuries and continents: why the Holocaust? Nor, like Stannard, can one dismiss the specific element of intent as mere "sophistry." If native people died in vast numbers without an intent to wipe them out, this is a contingent rather than a deliberate genocide. The distinction is as important as that between manslaughter and murder.

Perhaps the fuss is semantic in one respect. As Hancock notes, the term "Holocaust" has become distended. To curtail the ugly disputes exemplified in this nevertheless stimulating book, it might be preferable to give each discreet set of Nazi racial-biological politics a separate label, and encourage each group to seek redress and memorialization under its own banner.

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Milton Shain, *Antisemitism*. London: Bowerdean Publishing Co., 1998. 124 pp.

The Bowerdean Briefings series publishes short books on contemporary complex subjects written by experts for nonspecialists. Such concision of complexity is always difficult. In this case, the task is formidable indeed: in 124 pages, describe and explain the evolution of hostility to Jews from antiquity to the present, in postcolonial countries as well as in the European setting; describe and comment on the historiographical disagreements that have arisen; and provide a 12-page bibliography of works on the subject in English. Milton Shain has responded to the exigencies of that daunting demand in exemplary fashion.

Understandably, Shain's discussion is heavily based on reading in the secondary works, and he sometimes slips because of his reliance on other scholars. For example, because of his use of Edward Flannery's somewhat dated and unreliable survey, he misdates the first ritual accusation that Jews crucified Christian children (p. 37). Other scholars will doubtless notice other minor slips, but what is most striking is the generally high accuracy and sanity of the discussion.

A different issue is the fact that the book is "based essentially on secondary sources published in English" (p. 2) and that the bibliography at the end only includes items published in English—even though some in the putative nonspecialist audience

might be able to read other languages. Partly as a result, there are no references to the contributions of some major scholars—for example, Bernhard Blumenkranz, Gilbert Dahan, Ian Kershaw, Guido Kisch, Solomon Grayzel, Michael Marrus, Attilio Milano, Cecil Roth, and Kenneth Stow. Nonetheless, the bibliography is good and up-to-date and would be very useful for those unfamiliar with the field.

In Chapter 1, Shain discusses briefly the major psychological, socioeconomic, political, and cultural-historical theories about the causes of anti-Jewish hostility, distinguishing antisemitism from other forms of hostility against Jews by defining it as “unprovoked and irrational hostility towards Jews” (p. 5). But rather than focusing on theoretical issues, his approach is primarily historical or historiographic, concentrating on the changing “construction and representation of ‘the Jew’” over the centuries (p. 3). Proceeding chronologically, he emphasizes the variations in the nature and substance of anti-Jewish hostility over time and in different regional or national contexts.

Shain describes these changes in three very well-written and remarkably nuanced (considering the limitation of space) chapters. With admirable concision yet without sounding rushed, he manages to round up all the usual suspects, to mention almost all the major events and developments, and to discuss some of the major current historiographical debates, supporting his points by plentiful quotations and citations from a wide variety of recent scholars.

Chapter 2, “Anti-Judaism,” describes the hostility in pagan antiquity, the rise of the Christian Church and its anti-Judaic theological doctrine, the emergence of antisemitism in the Middle Ages, the increase of hostility in Europe up to 1655, and medieval Muslim attitudes. Chapter 3, “Antisemitism,” moves from the Reformation to the Holocaust, with sections on the sixteenth century, the Enlightenment, Romanticism, modern racist antisemitism, and Nazism. In this chapter and the next, there are also serious discussions of anti-Jewish hostility in the post-Enlightenment societies of the United States, Canada, and South Africa—a praiseworthy comparative feature partly explained by the author’s professorship at the University of Capetown and his excellent earlier work, *The Roots of Antisemitism in South Africa* (1994). Chapter 4, “Antisemitism Since the Holocaust,” deals with antisemitism in Western Europe and in Soviet and post-Soviet Eastern Europe, anti-Zionism, Arab-Israeli hostility, the changes in the attitude of the Christian churches, and Holocaust denial.

While the book is mostly descriptive and does not pursue a thesis, Shain does take sides in some of the historiographic debates he describes. He holds that anti-Jewish hostility in antiquity was anti-Judaic, not antisemitic (p. 16), that serious hostility to Jews only began in the Roman period, 500 years after the start of the diaspora (p. 20), that this hostility was largely due to the Jews’ refusal to assimilate, and that the ancient world was not permeated by anti-Jewish sentiment, since it varied greatly by region and class (pp. 19–20).

He maintains that the basic cause of Christian anti-Judaism in the Roman period was theological conflict, not the prior pagan hostility. And he accepts that antisemitism first appeared in the Middle Ages, and that “religious doubt . . . underpinned the demonization of the Jews” (p. 41). On the issue of whether the Spanish doctrine of “purity of the blood” and Luther’s attitude toward converts from Judaism were a continuation of medieval anti-Judaism or the beginning of a new “racial” attitude,

Shain recognizes that there was the beginning of a secularization of attitudes but emphasizes that the religious perspective was still very prominent (p. 51). He agrees fully, however, with Jacob Katz and Arthur Hertzberg that Voltaire's attitudes were full of racist implications (pp. 54–55).

In his section on the Enlightenment and emancipation, he emphasizes the extent to which the typical Enlightenment attitudes toward Jews that used appeals to secularism and universality to justify policies designed to eliminate Jewish particularism, the "emancipation contract," introduced racist preconceptions about Jews (p. 56). He holds that "race" or racial ideology is the core of modern antisemitism (p. 60), disagreeing explicitly both with Albert S. Lindemann's and Colin Holmes' explanations that blame the victim (pp. 73–75) and with Zygmunt Bauman's emphasis on the impact of modernity per se rather than the influence of specific types of ideology (pp. 85–86).

Shain has done a remarkably good job. It would be difficult for any nonspecialist to find a better brief introduction to the entirety of this vast and complicated subject.

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Efraim Sicher (ed.), *Breaking Crystal: Writing and Memory after Auschwitz*. Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 1998. 378 pp.

Breaking Crystal contains 12 essays by different authors who are intended to represent Israeli and diaspora views on "Writing and Memory after Auschwitz." The volume ends with an astute afterword by historian Saul Friedlander, whose willingness to accept the insuperable contradictions of the Holocaust contrasts with the determined efforts of several other contributors to find useful historical, social, psychological, religious, or literary meanings in the event. The focus is on the post-Holocaust generation of writers, though two of the essays, by Ilan Avisar and Stephen Feinstein, offer useful detailed surveys of achievements in the fields of film and the visual arts.

The introductory essay by editor Efraim Sicher could have profited much from condensation. By trying to be comprehensive, Sicher allows his commentary to grow diffuse. His habit of crowding in as many names and titles as possible is unfortunate, because he is extremely well-informed on his subject and might have provided the reader with a more helpful framework for the diverse concerns in the subsequent essays.

For example, Sicher could have stressed the need for a more critical scrutiny of concepts such as "survivor syndrome" and "second generation survivor" that certain of his contributors accept as unquestionably valid premises. Although he reminds us that the evidence for a shared pathology among Holocaust survivors is not at all conclusive, a few pages later he paradoxically cites without dispute the view that the survivors "had been severely traumatized, and their identities, both human and Jewish, had been crippled or destroyed" (p. 29). I know dozens of survivors who do not fit this description, who indeed would be amused if not offended by it. In other essays

we hear much about “survivor guilt,” although the late psychoanalyst Leo Eitinger, himself a survivor of Auschwitz, impugned the legitimacy of this idea. Most of the authors in this collection simply avoid the issue of how representative those preoccupied with their “second generation” status might be. Few seem willing to confront the question of exactly what a technical expression such as “transgenerational transfer of trauma” really signifies, or how we test for its existence.

The weakest essays in the volume practice what we might call descriptive criticism, making few distinctions between major and minor works and offering summaries of plot and action as a substitute for interpretation. Choosing the Holocaust as a theme does not automatically qualify one as an important writer or visual or cinematic artist. There is a reason why so many contributors return—to the point of overlap, one finally feels—to David Grossman’s *See Under: Love* and Art Spiegelman’s *Maus* books. As the number of Holocaust works continues to surge, readers need to find ways of distinguishing between enduring artistic creations such as Grossman’s and Spiegelman’s and the more ephemeral fictions that consume much critical space in some of these essays.

The strongest articles in *Breaking Crystal* reflect their authors’ awareness of this problem. In “Auto/Biography and Fiction after Auschwitz: Probing the Boundaries of Second-Generation Aesthetics,” Sara R. Horowitz refuses to be ambushed by the temptations of descriptive criticism. Instead, she offers acute critical analyses of structural strategies in *Maus* and Louis Begley’s *Wartime Lies*, arguing cogently that “Holocaust fiction claims the space of what remains unuttered in other modes of narrative” (p. 290). She comments insightfully on the complex tension between truth and invention in the reimagined world of Holocaust literature, noting Spiegelman’s insistence that his work is not fiction but arguing that the subtle manipulation of form invests some memoirs with an architectural richness that transforms even literal testimony into vibrant art.

Equally incisive, if lamentably brief, is Leon Yudkin’s critical assessment of the Hebrew fiction of David Grossman and Savyon Liebrecht. Like Horowitz, Yudkin examines the intersection of history and invention in Holocaust literature. But he explores in greater depth the problem of how the event invades the consciousness of those who did not experience it directly. Not everyone will be satisfied with his easy acceptance that acquired experience can be genetically transferred, but he deserves credit for insisting that the Holocaust prompts us to dispute the Freudian position that the human personality is formed in infancy.

In his introduction Sicher finds it “remarkable how no cultural or political discourse can proceed in Israel without reference to the Holocaust” (p. 9), though a careful reading of the essays in this volume reveals that this may be more true for Israel than for the diaspora. Readers will find instructive how often writers from the Israeli side allow the political and social tensions prompted by Holocaust memory to infiltrate their discussion of the literature. American contributors seem to feel no such pressure, so their approach is more strictly literary. Whether all discourse, including Holocaust discourse, “functions within a political realm from which it can almost never free itself,” (p. 334) as Emily Miller Budick contends in her thoughtful concluding essay, or whether it operates within a psychological realm whose swirling

horrors are simply too terrible for most human creatures to face, remains an open question. Her essay is called "Acknowledging the Holocaust," and how and whether we meet the challenge implicit in that title remains the strenuous summons of Holocaust memory and representation at the beginning of a new millennium.

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History and the Social Sciences

Alina Cala, *The Image of the Jew in Polish Folk Culture*. Jerusalem: Magnes Press, 1995. 234 pp.

Since the appearance of Aleksander Hertz's pioneering study of 1961, *The Jews in Polish Culture*, enormous strides have been made in the field of Polish Jewish studies in general, and in the history of Polish-Jewish relations in particular. In addition to scholarly works on various aspects of Jewish life on Polish lands, increasing attention is being paid to mutual contacts, and in particular to Polish perceptions and stereotypes of Jews. The last 15 years alone have seen the appearance of scholarly monographs on such themes as the Jew in Polish literature, the depiction of Jews and Jewish culture in Polish painting, the Jewish question in Polish political life, and the role of the Jews in the Polish economic life, as well as the attitude of the Polish Catholic Church toward Jews, Jewish culture, and Judaism. In contrast to these studies, which have focused on the Polish educated elite, very little has appeared on the image of the Jew in Polish popular opinion, both because of a lack of interest in such subjects during the Communist period and because of the labor-intensive nature of the research required for such a study.

The appearance of Alina Cala's work on the Jews in Polish folk culture constitutes one of the first serious attempts to fill the gap left by the elite-centered literature on Polish perceptions of the Jews. The monograph, published originally in 1987 in Polish, is a sociological inquiry into the beliefs held about Jews in Polish villages and small towns; into the stereotypes there prevalent; and into the question of how popular perceptions influenced Polish behavior toward Jews, particularly during the Holocaust and in the immediate postwar period. Cala addresses this delicate subject in a professional and scholarly manner, and her conclusions derive directly from the research findings. The bulk of the study is based on 184 interviews conducted in the villages and small towns of southeastern Poland between 1975 and 1984, but it also draws upon nineteenth- and twentieth-century ethnographic studies of Polish folk culture, including collections of Polish proverbs and Polish folk tales, while standard Western works on the nature of prejudice and interethnic conflict are used as a point of departure for analyzing Polish attitudes.

Cala begins her study with a survey of the Jews' place in the social hierarchy of eighteenth- and nineteenth-century Polish society. She reminds the reader that Jews were only one of several minorities perceived as alien. But particularly in the villages and small towns, the image of strangeness, Cala argues, had its roots in religion, therefore giving special meaning to the conflict with Jews and Judaism. The legacy of me-

dieval Christian perceptions, including the charge of deicide and Jewish ritual murder, also influenced Polish attitudes. These traditional factors had the indirect effect of making Jews the central figures in many myths. The result was that Jews “were not perceived as one of innumerable minorities but somehow came to symbolize them” (p. 17). This unique character of the Jewish minority on Polish lands was combined with the peasant’s traditional contempt for intermediate nonagricultural occupations, which were largely in Jewish hands in provincial Poland.

Following the theoretical and historical introduction, Cala examines the respondents’ general attitude toward Jews. These initial responses reveal that contact with Jews was largely confined to the economic sphere—and since the Jews were above all identified with the occupation of the merchant, traditionally negative views on trade and commerce applied. The Jews were idle, lazy, crafty, dishonest, deceitful, and greedy. Cala demonstrates, however, that the same respondents who presented a decidedly negative image of the Jews’ professional activities often characterized their Jewish neighbors in a very positive light: they were polite, kindhearted, friendly, intelligent, wise, diligent, and pious. According to Cala, the respondents’ initial answers reflected what was perceived to be proper traditional relations between Poles and Jews: while criticizing the Jews for their role in trade and for their lack of military inclination, they still praised them for their piety, family solidarity, and good neighborliness.

But the social reality was quite different, Cala argues. One of the author’s most disturbing findings is the persistent belief in the blood libel among her subjects. What is astonishing is the “popularity, durability and cultural deep-rootedness of this superstition” (p. 188). According to Cala, 53 respondents believed in the blood libel, with 11 reporting that they had witnessed such a crime. Others were not sure; but only 12 argued that the blood libel was definitely false (pp. 128–130). Among the interviews conducted in 1984, one 46-year-old villager claimed that

Everybody said this, I am an eye-witness. They caught one young lady. They pricked her so that blood would ooze out. They baked matzoth with this blood. The rabbi baked this matzoth, and it was baked in the Jewish kahal. Later every Jewish family got a piece (p. 109).

Others claimed that newborn Jewish babies had to have Christian blood smeared over their eyes (p. 130).

As part of her study, Cala asked her respondents to reflect on the causes of anti-semitism. In general, the blame was put on the Jews themselves, Cala found. Jews were held to have invited hostility by their separateness, their wealth, their domination of trade and industry, and their political orientation. Moreover, most believed that hatred for Jews and their dispersion across the world represented their punishment for deicide (p. 115). Many respondents expressed the belief that the Holocaust was a punishment from God (p. 63), while only one respondent, a female history teacher, pointed to racism as the root cause of the Final Solution (pp. 190–191).

Cala concludes her study with an examination of Polish attitudes toward the fate of Jews during the Second World War and in postwar Poland. Her findings confirm a growing consensus among scholars. According to the data collected in her interviews, taking an active stance—whether to aid Jews or to betray them—was a marginal phenomenon. The majority of Poles in the villages and small towns were indifferent

(p. 212). This indifference, she argues, derived from a combination of prewar and wartime antisemitic propaganda, on the one hand, and the persistence of Christian anti-Judaism, on the other.

On a critical note, it has to be pointed out that this important study is unfortunately not accompanied by a standard academic apparatus. The lack of both index and bibliography is particularly disappointing in a pioneering work of this nature. Second, the author's principle source—oral responses to questionnaires—is employed in a manner that at times calls into question the author's conclusions. Whereas the 184 interviews were gathered over three periods (67 in 1975–1976, 27 in 1978, and 90 in 1984), Cala draws general conclusions that appear to be based on individual sets of interviews rather than on their sum total. Moreover, only some of the interviews are accompanied by a date.

This confusing use of the data base becomes most problematic in the final chapter, where we first read that “most respondents (33 people)” declared their compassion for Jewish victims during the war (p. 204), and then, a few pages later, are told that “most were indifferent (30 people)” (p. 211). The interviews used in the final chapter are drawn primarily from the survey of 1984, and it is not at all clear how the (contradictory) responses of 30 or 33 out of 90 subjects can be construed to constitute a majority opinion. Similarly, we learn that 53 people (out of 90? of 184?) “expressed the opinion that the Jews used human blood in their mysterious rites” (p. 128), yet 72 respondents believed that it was a Jewish custom to smear Christian blood over the eyes of their newborn (p. 130).

Despite a few such problems, Cala's study is a highly original contribution to the growing body of literature on Polish perceptions of Jews. In addition to the generously quoted interviews with rural and small-town Poles, Cala draws upon rare secondary sources in Polish often inaccessible to an English readership, and she offers a sophisticated and subtle analysis.

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Nancy L. Green (ed.), *Jewish Workers in the Modern Diaspora*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1998. vii + 256 pp.

This volume is a highly original compilation that is likely to be of use in undergraduate courses on modern Jewish history. It is made up, in large part, of translations into English of primary-source materials related to Jewish workers in Amsterdam, Buenos Aires, Germany, London, Paris, and New York. The sources published in this volume, many of which were found in rare periodicals or archival collections, were selected by a team of scholars—Patrick Altman, Edgardo Bilsky, David Cesarani, David Feldman, Ludger Heid, Selma Leydesdorff, Daniel Soyer, and Jack Wertheimer—and are arranged by topic. Daily life, organizations, politics, and culture are among the major subjects included. Each topic is briefly introduced in a manner that will make this work easily accessible to students and nonspecialists. Moreover, both the introductions and the translations are generally accurate.

I have only a few—very minor—quibbles. The section focused on the organizational lives of Jewish workers contains material spanning the period from the 1880s to the 1930s. The introduction to this section distinguishes between the lives of Jewish workers in Germany and the lives of those in such cities as New York or London, and it notes in passing that “there were practically no Yiddish periodicals and no Yiddish theater in Germany before World War I” (p. 71). True enough. But it strikes me that because this section of her work covers the 1920s and 1930s, the editor ought to have added that during and after the First World War, the situation changed to some extent. There were not only Bundist and Labor Zionist periodicals published in Yiddish in Germany during the Weimar years (one of which is referred to at another point in this volume), but also a number of other Yiddish-language periodicals. There were also Yiddish-language theatrical performances in Germany in the early 1920s. Indeed, “for a few years, from 1920 until 1925,” as Leo and Renate Fuks noted in an article published in the *Leo Baeck Institute Year Book* in 1988, “Berlin became the centre of a short-lived but throbbing Yiddish cultural microcosmos which soon radiated to and influenced most of the Yiddish-speaking world.”¹

In one passage in the volume under review, the editor indicates that “the leading organization of the Eastern European Jewish workers’ cultural movement in Germany was the social-democratic Zionist workers’ party Po’alei Zion” (p. 107). Evidence, however, indicates that this was not the case. East European Jews living in Berlin during the First World War established a literary association devoted to education (the Perets Farayn), which attracted approximately 700 members. Bundists dominated this association, ensuring, for example, that all the resolutions adopted at the association’s first semiannual general membership meeting were consistent with the Bundist spirit. Three Bundist candidates and two Labor Zionists were initially elected to the governing body of the association. During the next election, five Bundists, three Labor Zionists, and one “neutral” candidate were victorious. Max Eschelbacher reported in *Der Jude* at the end of the First World War that most of the East European Jewish workers in Germany were Bundists, and that many subscribed to the Bundist organ *Lebensfragen*.

Finally: to the best of my knowledge, SKIF was the acronym not only in Poland but also in Paris for the Sotsialistisher Kinder-farband (the index of this volume and the reference on p. 92 notwithstanding).

Points of this kind, however, do not detract from the work as a whole. I am impressed by Green’s volume and expect that it will—as intended—facilitate the comparative study of Jewish worker history. This is a path-breaking book.

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Note

1. Leo and Renate Fuks, “Yiddish Publishing Activities in the Weimar Republic, 1920–1933,” in *Leo Baeck Institute Year Book* 33 (1988), 421.

Paula E. Hyman, *The Jews of Modern France*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1998. 282 pp.

Paula Hyman is without doubt one of the leading specialists in contemporary French Jewish history. Her earlier books, such as *From Dreyfus to Vichy* (1979) and *The Emancipation of the Jews of Alsace* (1991), are among the very best on the subject, the first offering a picture of Jewry at the turn of the century, the second focusing on the Jews of Alsace during the early nineteenth century. In *The Jews of Modern France*, Hyman covers the long distance from the Ancien Régime to the end of the twentieth century. This meticulously documented book, founded on a thorough knowledge of sources related to every phase in the evolution of French Jewry, offers the first superior analysis of the subject available to English readers. *The Jews of Modern France* sheds light on the unusual nature of Jewish history in a French society with its own highly specific historical features. Hyman avoids the German paradigm that too often dominates contemporary historiography and restores the authentic characteristics of the French context—characteristics that make the case of France an essential model with regard to the emancipation of the Jews. Her rigorous study consistently takes into account such factors as culture and art, values, and the role of politics.

Hyman begins by surveying Jewish life in the years leading up to the French Revolution. She emphasizes the influence of the Haskalah on a community that nevertheless continued to live “on the margins of French society and culture” (p. 15). For the first time in history, Jews were transformed into citizens endowed with full rights who were able, from this point on, to fully enter the public domain. Yet Hyman conveys the ambiguity of this kind of emancipation, along with the doubts and tensions that arose in the Jewish world in response to a revolution that rejected pluralism. The chapter about Napoleon is particularly interesting (all the more so since Hyman’s research into French Jewry began with this subject). In it, she shows that the Assembly of Notables, under Napoleon’s influence, “split the religious and ethnic elements subsumed within traditional Jewish identity” (p. 43). Later, she adds: “Napoleon’s Jewish program laid the ideological and institutional foundation for the project of assimilation that would occupy French Jewry, one might argue, until World War II” (p. 51).

It is not possible to mention here each of the stages involved in the improvement of the Jews’ social status, their assimilation, and their increasing urbanization. To offer one of many edifying examples, Hyman analyzes the textbooks used in Jewish schools, identifying an underlying message that favored Jewish modernization and integration. She describes the evolution of the Consistory, as well as the changes affecting a Jewish working population whose ranks swelled at the turn of the century with the mass immigration from Eastern Europe. In the Pletzel (the Jewish sector of Paris), the newcomers joined an array of socialist groups, supported political causes, became unionized, and occasionally even heeded the call of Zionism—coming into conflict, more than once, with the assimilated “Israélite” population of France, which viewed this sudden Jewish visibility in the public sphere with no small measure of anxiety. Their fears were not unfounded, since antisemitism remained as virulent in the interwar period as it had been during the Dreyfus affair. Here, Hyman makes use of the recent work by Vicki Caron, among other studies, examining the shifts in

French policy regarding Jewish refugees and presenting a detailed picture of the Jewish establishment's reactions to this involuntary "return to the ghetto." The pages describing the Vichy period paint a precise and compelling portrait of these momentous years.

Hyman concludes with a long and fascinating chapter about "a renewed community." She follows the revival of communal life in contemporary France in the wake of the immigration of North African Jews; describes the "zionization of French Jewry," whereby Israel has assumed a central position in French Jewish consciousness; and comments on the important role played by Jewish intellectuals in France today. In conclusion, she stresses that "the right to be different now coexists with the revolutionary tradition of the right to be the same" (p. 214).

We are left with a few minor objections and one main question. Paula Hyman is thoroughly familiar with the literature, but in spite of her lengthy bibliography, she does not cite a number of recent works: Philippe Landau's dissertation on Jews in the French Army; the (highly controversial) book by Ivan Strenski on Durkheim and the Jews; Béatrice Philippe's work on the Third Republic; Ilan Greilsammer's book on Léon Blum; or Anne Grynberg's study of the Vichy camps. These oversights can be redressed when a new edition comes out.

More important, however, is the following question: Can one maintain, as Hyman does in her closing sentence, that "as France becomes increasingly multicultural and multiethnic at the beginning of the twenty-first century, the history of French Jewry moves from the margins to the center" (p. 218)? Is the reverse not equally possible—might not a dominant multiculturalism increasingly marginalize the Jews, who will become "an ethnicity among others"? The issues involved could be the subject of an intriguing debate—a fact that underscores once again the valuable contribution made by this highly recommended book.

PIERRE BIRNBAUM
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Isabelle Maynard, *China Dreams: Growing Up Jewish in Tientsin*. Iowa City: University of Iowa Press, 1996. 166 pp.

Isabelle Maynard was born in Tianjin (Tientsin), where she spent the first 19 years of her life. She left the port city on China's northern coast in 1948. Her book consists of a series of vignettes depicting people and events. There are the silent and often nameless Chinese servants—the amah, cooks, rickshaw pullers; a teacher of French whose mental deterioration the young girl watches; there is the Russian piano teacher who demands rigid discipline on the part of her pupil; the upstairs neighbor, an English woman, who seems on the verge of "going native"; there is the unequal friendship with an American schoolmate; and an obviously disturbed German refugee who moves in with the family. And there is the family, the loving parents, who try to protect their growing daughter from real and imaginary dangers. Her father is an intellectual piano-playing dreamer and her mother, an energetic, practical manager of daily affairs. The turbulent events in China in the 1930s and 1940s did not play a large role in the girl's

life, and the outbreak of the Sino-Japanese War in July 1937 wrought no changes in the pattern of the family's routine. The outbreak of the Pacific War in December 1941, however, led to shortages and inconveniences, and the Japanese military presence became more threatening when the Foreign Concessions whose countries were now at war with Japan came under Japanese control.

Maynard is a skillful and evocative writer. In her remembered Tianjin childhood and adolescence are the sounds, smells, and tastes of those long-ago days; the clothes she and others wore, the foods they ate, the streets they walked. She deftly conveys the unbearably humid heat of summer and the frigid cold of winter. The adolescent's uncertainties and her doubts about how to come to terms with the puzzling world of adults are portrayed sensitively and with a sure hand. But there is more to Isabelle's story than merely growing up during two turbulent decades of China's history. Without disrupting the delicate web of her narrative, the author subtly indicates the larger scene: the still largely unexplored history of the Russian Jewish community in China.

Since the mid-nineteenth century, three distinct Jewish communities took shape. The first was that of the Baghdadi Jews, coming via India; next came Russian Jews, moving into China via Siberia; and last came the Central European refugees, victims of Nazi persecution. The largest influx of Russian Jews occurred during and after the Bolshevik revolution. Like Isabelle's mother, most went first to Harbin in Heilongjiang province, moving from there south to Tianjin and to Shanghai. By the end of the 1930s, the largest Russian Jewish community was therefore in Shanghai, with Harbin next; Tianjin was the smallest, numbering probably no more than 2,500 people. Neither in Shanghai nor in Tianjin did the Russian Jews interact much with Jews from other parts of the world. Nor did they have significant contacts with the fairly large Russian community of expatriates, who had also fled to China as a consequence of the Bolshevik revolution. And, of course, the Chinese world, whether of the rich or of the poor, was neither of interest nor of importance to them.

Although they lived and made their living among foreigners in Tianjin's Foreign Concessions, the Russian Jews' lives revolved in a small, strictly circumscribed world. This was true not only of the first but also of the second generation. Whenever Isabelle ventured beyond its confines, she was bound to encounter antisemitic undercurrents. At the Russian Orthodox Easter celebration, where she went with her Russian friend, the adults had drunk enough vodka to start telling anti-Jewish jokes. Her friend Shirley, the American "embassy" child, repeated her mother's verdict that "all Jewish people are supersensitive." Her aunt Mary outraged the family by marrying a Russian, who, insanely drunk on their first wedding anniversary, yelled "Down with the Yids."

Sequestered in her small world, Isabelle learned early on not to be curious about the world around her, to reject it in the way that she herself and her family were, or thought themselves to be, rejected. To the attempts of her British neighbor to introduce Isabelle to Chinese poetry, she responded unenthusiastically, indeed unwillingly. Neither she nor her parents were able to bridge the gulf that separated the beggars, coolies, cooks, and amahs of their surroundings from the rich literary, philosophical, and artistic tradition that was also China. About Tsui, their rickshaw boy, she writes, "I don't remember ever having had a conversation with him, other than to tell him

where to take me.” But then, Isabelle never learned Chinese. Yet it was Tsui who helped Isabelle’s father to leave Tianjin at the approach of the Communist armies, ferrying him from one destination to another until he finally boarded the ship that took him to America. This sensitive, story-telling father also never knew the China of art and poetry, or the sources of Tsui’s human decency.

For many, if not for most Russian Jews who came to China either because it was a land of opportunity or because they sought a refuge, China was a way station. They did not intend to remain. Their sights were set on “the promised land” of America. The author remembers overhearing her parents’ quarrels: her father wants to leave, her mother thinks China is not such a bad place. But Isabelle wants to stay forever. “This is my land,” thinks the child. Yet it is a land about which she knows nearly nothing.

The three attitudes that the parents and the child express may be considered characteristic of the Russian Jewish community, whether in Tianjin or in Shanghai. To Russia they could not, and most did not want to, return. Except for the fortunate few, America was closed to them because of visa restrictions. Where Baghdadi Jews had found their more or less comfortable place in Shanghai’s colonial society, the Russian Jews lived on its fringes both in Shanghai and in Tianjin. They did not identify with the colonial Westerners, as the adolescent Isabelle defiantly told her British neighbor. But neither did they identify with fellow Jews not of Russian Jewish origin, and, of course, not with the Chinese. (Among Tianjin Jews, apparently only Israel Epstein was the exception, returning to China in 1949.) Neither anchored in their surroundings nor entirely strangers, the Russian Jews had only each other, and bits and pieces of their Russian past.

Many of these Russian Jews look back nostalgically to their Chinese youth, knowing now that it was unique. Maynard remarks perceptively that the fragile and transitory roots of their Chinese past continue to haunt them so many years after leaving China. But her slim volume is not a nostalgic backward look, and her book is aptly titled *China Dreams*. For yesterday’s China has vanished as irretrievably as the author’s childhood. Isabelle Maynard’s book is a rich and welcome contribution to a growing shelf of China memoirs.

IRENE EBER
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Jack Salzman and Cornel West (eds.), *Struggles in the Promised Land: Toward a History of Black-Jewish Relations in the United States*. New York: Oxford University Press, 1997. 438 pp.

The subject of black-Jewish relations in the United States has proved endlessly fascinating, at least for Jewish American intellectuals. This is so despite the fact that at the group level African and Jewish Americans have had relatively little to do with each other, except in very particular settings and among select segments of the American population (notably in the labor unions of the 1930s and 1940s and the civil rights movement of the 1950s and early 1960s). Equally worth noting is the other anomaly: despite the interest of a few African American intellectuals (most famously,

James Baldwin, Ralph Ellison, Henry Louis Gates, Jr., and Cornel West—who is coeditor of the collection under review and one of its contributors), the overwhelming concern with the topic has been expressed by Jews. From the 1960s on there has been a profusion of Jewish-authored texts (at least 15 book-length studies and many, many dozens of articles, in particular in the journal *Commentary*) dealing with black-Jewish relations, in particular the collapse of the black-Jewish alliance. Yet, as Michael Walzer is almost alone in noting in his contribution to the volume,

there was never anything like a real alliance, for neither the Black nor the Jewish community is sufficiently united for alliance politics; nor were there ever any negotiations on the terms of an alliance among any group of people that I know about, or any terms informally agreed upon. Individuals and organizations have cooperated in all sorts of ways on all sorts of projects. But what really happened is much more simply described: a lot of Jews went to work in the civil rights movement (p. 401; cf. the essays by Hasia Diner and Deborah Dash Moore).

Like many of the works preceding it, *Struggles in the Promised Land* laments the collapse of an alliance that may have existed more in the imagination of Jewish Americans than in any sociopolitical or historical reality. Indeed, so committed is the book to the premise of alliance that most of the essays, whatever their specific subject, are motivated by the desire to discover the existence of earlier tensions in black-Jewish interactions so to better account for the current state of confrontational relations. These recent events include certain antisemitic statements by prominent members of the black community and increasing urban violence between blacks and Jews, though as Patricia Williams aptly points out in her essay, it is not even clear whether what is actually being talked about is black-Jewish confrontation in communities like Crown Heights, which are populated by atypical populations of ultra-Orthodox Jews and black Caribbean Christians. So powerful is this desire to explain the present that even the volume's fascinating opening essays concerning rabbinic Judaism and images of blacks and Jews in the Middle Ages (by David Goldenberg and William Chester Jordan, respectively) are glances backward to account for contemporary issues.

What makes *Struggles in the Promised Land* unique and extremely useful is that, as a collection of essays, it explores in depth and from different perspectives (both black and Jewish) events, issues, and debates when Jews and blacks did, indeed, either come together or oppose one another, whether or not their interaction can be said to constitute anything approaching an alliance or even an on-going relationship. There are certain facts and motifs that run through many of the essays, which are lucidly summarized by Jack Salzman in the introduction to the volume.

On the one side, there is the undeniable cooperation between blacks and Jews in the Communist, socialist, and civil rights movements, despite the problems of Jewish power and black dependency that by the mid-1960s made such cooperation untenable (the focus of essays by Nancy Weiss, Cheryl Greenberg, and Paul Buhle and Robin D.G. Kelley). On the other, there are the equally indisputable areas of confrontation. These include: the uneasy coexistence of the two groups in the urban centers to which both populations migrated in the years preceding the Second World War and in which Jews began to attain greater and greater economic success (see, for example, Jonathan Kaufman's article); the widening gap between group interests, which

came to the fore in the Ocean Hill-Brownsville school conflict of 1968, produced the ideology of Black Power and separatism, and led to disagreement over affirmative action, which blacks mostly supported and Jews mostly opposed (the subject of essays by Earl Lewis, Jerome Chanes, and Theodore Shaw); and finally, and most recently, the anti-Zionist, sometimes antisemitic, stance assumed by black groups such as the Nation of Islam, which produced the charge that Jews had controlled the slave trade (see the essays by David Brion Davis, Jason Silverman, Waldo E. Martin, and Gary Rubin).

Individually, the essays develop one or another of these topics. Collectively and sequentially, they construct a fascinating narrative of what might best be designated as the conflict between identity politics and assimilation (cf. the article by Clayborne Carson). A major difference between blacks and Jews over the last 50 years of American history, it seems to me, is that, while the latter have negotiated their assimilation into American life so successfully that many Jewish leaders today wonder whether Jews in America will continue to constitute an identifiable group, blacks have more and more clearly and powerfully defined their distinctiveness as a cultural entity. It may well be the case, therefore, that if in the 1950s, blacks had something to learn from Jews about competing for the goods in American culture, Jews now have a much greater lesson to learn from blacks concerning group solidarity and the ethnic component of American identity. Though *Struggles in the Promised Land* defines itself as a step *Toward a History of Black-Jewish Relations in the United States*, it is as a documentation of the separate, often antithetical decisions made by these two ethnic communities that the book promises to make its most important contribution to our understanding of blacks, Jews, and the ethnic construction of American culture. As such, the book will interest not only Americanists of all ethnic dispositions but also those who are specifically interested in Jewish history, in particular the role of Jewish political activism and cultural assimilation in America.

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Stuart Svonkin, *Jews against Prejudice: American Jews and the Fight for Civil Liberties*. New York: Columbia University Press, 1997. xi + 364 pp.

There is no scarcity of prisms through which the recent American Jewish experience can be viewed. There have been fruitful studies of its political culture, its Zionism, even its trifurcated religious development. The study under review focuses on what may be the most problematic prism of all, the communal struggle for acceptance as waged by its defense agencies, later dubbed "community relations" organizations: the American Jewish Committee, the Anti-Defamation League, and the American Jewish Congress. Predictably, the exercise is not without pitfalls, but on balance this well-researched and well-written study yields many insights that students of the American Jewish experience should not ignore.

Stuart Svonkin's research traces the changing assumptions and strategies used to define and counteract what was loosely referred to as prejudice but that in reality

meant much more. Focusing on the years between the beginning of the Second World War and the late 1960s, his approach to the challenge is inevitably triplicated, since each agency developed its own strategy. The assumption they shared at the outset—that antisemitism was merely another form of prejudice rooted in ignorance about Jews—was erroneous. Not even the systematic destruction of European Jewry could fully dissipate the nomothetic notion that antisemitism was a group hatred to be classified as a form of American nativism. In other words, if the public were to be educated about Jews, the problem would solve itself.

The American Jewish Committee set out to study antisemitism in the 1940s and predictably discovered identifiable, abnormal “pre-fascist” characteristics. The Committee’s commissioned studies on prejudice did not stand the test of time, but by classifying prejudice as abnormal, as in Theodor Adorno’s *Authoritarian Personality* (1950), they produced an unforeseen benefit. In a culture where appearing abnormal was dreaded, antisemitism was pushed back into latency, where it could do far less harm. By applying supposedly scientific methods to the study of antisemitism, men such as John Slawson, the executive director of the American Jewish Committee, became convinced that attitudes could be changed through education in the schools and through the media. If Goebbels could teach antisemitism, the AJC could teach tolerance and understanding.

The practical approaches to the problem varied from agency to agency. The American Jewish Committee placed great faith in education through the school curricula and media marketing, while the less affluent and more social action-oriented American Jewish Congress went to the courts and to the streets to impose restrictions on discrimination.

During the Cold War, the inherent weakness of this broad approach came to the surface. The problem for the liberal anti-Communist agencies was how to maintain the delicate balance between hard-won civil liberties and the insidious threat of subversion by totalitarian-minded elements who claimed protection from the very democratic society they sought to undermine. Jewish Communists did not hesitate to use the protective mantle of the communal faith, which they had in fact abandoned for loyalty to the party line as dictated from Moscow. The conviction of Ethel and Julius Rosenberg for spying and the ensuing death penalty were touted as a form of antisemitism, with Judge Irving Kaufman castigated as the Eisenhower administration’s “shabbes goy.” It was difficult to unravel truth from fiction. The death penalty for the Rosenbergs indeed seemed excessive, and under New York State’s Fineberg law, the overwhelming number of teachers dismissed because of suspected Communist sympathies were in fact of Jewish origin. Such actions gave the charge of antisemitism a worrying ring of truth.

The accusations that the American Jewish Congress was targeted by the Communist party for infiltration was difficult to prove, especially as many of its most militant social activists and defenders of civil liberties, especially on matters of race, were indeed party members. It took several years, and a struggle that almost tore the Congress apart, until the “front” organizations such as the American Jewish Labor Council, the Jewish People’s Fraternal Order, and the Yiddish Kultur Farband were barred from membership.

The struggle against prejudice did not always go smoothly. During the McCarthy

period, it appeared that it would be overwhelmed by the exigencies of the Cold War as demagogically exploited by the right wing of the Republican party. What organizations such as the John Birch Society really wanted was to lower the hard-won threshold of social tolerance in the name of national security. For a while it looked as though they would be successful. A left to right shift began even among traditionally liberal Jews.

Most fascinating about Svonkin's work is the fact that it gives us a glimpse of how extraordinarily effective the marketing strategy to sell tolerance and civil liberties became. We see the same techniques used in the later struggle to extend civil rights across racial and gender lines. Of course Jews were not alone in fighting against prejudice, but based on the assumption that in the area of civil rights Jewish and American values were confluent, the Jewish organizations played a major role. The impact on the national mindset was palpable. Deep-seated stereotypical thinking notwithstanding, the Jewish community relations organizations proved that tolerance was marketable.

During the Second World War, when the nation had to stand against the racism advocated by a murderous foe even as it faced threatening class, ethnic, and racial tensions, the strategies they developed proved to be particularly useful. True, there were bloody race riots in Harlem and Detroit in 1942, and antisemitism only reached its apogee in 1944. But on the racial front, A. Philip Randolph's successful threat to "march on Washington" in July 1941 gained the administration's promise of better things to come. (Oddly enough, Randolph was incubated in the Jewish labor movement, whose role does not fall within the scope of this study.) After 1944, antisemitism, still nervously monitored by the ADL, virtually disappeared from the charts, and ultimately a permanent change in attitude—or at least in acceptable political rhetoric—was established. Paradoxically, this is what Jesse Jackson, representing black America, which had replaced American Jewry as the nation's most liberal constituency, discovered when he used the term "Hymietown" more than a decade ago.

From a survivalist perspective, there is an irony in the effectiveness of the campaign of the defense agencies against prejudice. The strategy they used was a universalist one. It said that all men, including Jews, are brothers. But from being a brother it was but a short jump to being a husband. The protective mantle that was in place when Jews were not accepted was weakened. Now they could be loved even unto group extinction. That is what the rising intermarriage rate was taken to mean. Once Jews were incorporated into the mainstream of America, the balance between a demanding Judaism and a seductive American culture proved difficult to maintain. It is primarily this reality that accounts for Jews' reversion to group particularism and the weakening of secular universalist liberalism. One of the losses caused by that shift has been that the three organizations Svonkin has researched have yet to find a new mission. Especially when compared to the Holocaust industry, they appear as mere shadows of what they once were.

There is a risk in reading the American Jewish experience through the prism of the defense organizations. It is like reading history through the eyes of a battlefield tank commander—where the Jewish experience is depicted mostly as beleaguered. During the years under scrutiny, there was in fact a great deal to defend against but, especially in the postwar years, antisemitism was not at the center of gravity in American

Jewish life. For most Jews, the postwar years were a period of hope buoyed by a sense that everything was accessible and possible.

To his credit, Svonkin never stakes a claim of primacy for his subject. He correctly locates the struggle in the sphere of intercommunal relations, where it was an important but not all-consuming interest of the Jewish public. We learn what occurred behind the scenes in American Jewry's easy passage from the periphery to the mainstream. This is an intriguing story that allows even those skeptical of the role played by community relations organizations to understand how they did well for Jews, as this study does well for them.

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Language, Literature and the Arts

Bernhard Böschenstein and Sigrid Weigel (eds.), *Ingeborg Bachmann und Paul Celan. Poetische Korrespondenzen*. Frankfurt: Suhrkamp, 1997. 269 pp.

Little is known about what most scholars now believe to have been a love affair between two central figures in twentieth-century poetry written in the German language: Ingeborg Bachmann and Paul Celan. Or rather, little of what is known has been made public. The Austrian poet Christine Koschel, a close friend of Bachmann's, writes about the matter in the above collection of Bachmann-Celan comparative studies, but she is laconic and discreet, obviously hampered by the refusal of the Bachmann estate to grant access to relevant documents, notably Celan's letters to Bachmann. Her article is nonetheless a significant contribution to our knowledge of, or speculations about, the relationship between the two.

Their mutual admiration was always known, but Koschel here discloses for the first time that 23 poems in a copy of Celan's *Mohn und Gedächtnis* that he gave to Bachmann (a few months before her death, Bachmann gave the book to Koschel) were accompanied by a handwritten notation "f.D.," that is, "für Dich," for you—a 23-fold dedication of poems, some very central, by Celan to Bachmann.

Koschel, as well as others in the present volume and prior to it (notably Werner Wögerbauer, in a pioneering article in 1991, in which he takes it for granted that the two were lovers), view Bachmann's novel *Malina* (1971), an "imaginary autobiography" in her own words, as partly based on this affair. This is particularly the case with a fairy tale that the female narrator of the novel composes and inserts into her narrative, "The Secrets of the Princess of Kagra," which reverberates with allusions to poems by Celan and includes the figure of a mysterious, black-clad "Stranger" who claims to belong to a people "older than all the peoples of the world" and "scattered to all winds." The reference to Celan and his Jewishness seems obvious.

Was the Jewish Celan looking to the Gentile Bachmann for support similar to that which Franz Kafka sought in Milena Jesenska? In a posthumous fragment, "Das Gedicht an den Leser," quoted and interpreted by Peter Horst Neumann in another article in this collection, Bachmann tells her reader: "Du kamst ja so vertraulich [. . .] getrost wolltest du sein, und ich wusste keinen Trost für dich [. . .] Ich bin [. . .] nicht vom Stoff, der deine Nacktheit bedecken konnte [. . .] Ich weiss nicht, was du willst von mir [. . .]" ("For you came so full of trust [. . .] you wanted to be comforted, but I had no comfort for you [. . .] I am [. . .] not of such stuff that could cover your nakedness [. . .] I don't know what you want from me [. . .]"). To Neumann, it is an abstract poetic "I," alienated and unable to provide lyrical "comfort," which is here address-

ing an abstract reader who yearns for that comfort. This, says Neumann, is why this posthumous poem-in-prose is related both to Bachmann's own second lecture on poetry, delivered in Frankfurt in November of 1959 (a text to which several contributors to this volume refer), and to Celan's *Sprachgitter* of the same year. All three texts center on a rejection of mellifluous symbolism and a belief in a new, post-Auschwitz poetics—bare, nonrhetorical, abstaining from elusive metaphors and winged words, strongly insisting on the subordination of word to world.

Beyond this, however, I feel that Bachmann's "Reader" is Celan himself. This would certainly contradict the above interpretation, according to which "Leser" is the old-time, pre-Auschwitz, sentimental reader. But aren't we used to irreconcilable meanings in Celan himself and—as we now learn from Dagmar Kann-Coomann's double-edged interpretation of Bachmann's story "Undine geht"—in Bachmann, too? If so, if two irreconcilable meanings can coexist in Bachmann, the "Leser," I propose, can be also Celan himself, and his need for comfort—Celan's own literal need.

The situation implied is analogous to the Kafka-Milena situation. In both cases, a profoundly troubled man is seeking support in a strong woman (though Bachmann seems to have been basically quiet and shy, unlike the vivid-spirited Milena); in both cases, the man is Jewish and the woman is not; in both, the writing is German but the scene of writing is not Germany; and in the later pair, both man and woman are exiles (Celan in Paris, Bachmann in Rome).

I do not know to what extent this analogy can be really fruitful. Milena was a gifted journalist and a brilliant translator but not an important writer, and there is no significant literary dialogue between her own and Kafka's writings. Celan and Bachmann, in contrast, as this book makes amply clear, often refer and react to each other's work on an equal footing, even though Bachmann, in the last analysis, remains the lesser poet, or at least the less radical one (see Thomas Sparr's article on their use of metaphor). If, however, we focus on the two men, the way in which these two great Jewish writers cope with the Gentile world via a highly sympathetic female representative of that world seems worth studying.

I have noted that both men were seeking support. Kafka made this clear in his letters to Milena ("Your life-giving strength, Mother Milena"), as did Milena—in what she told Brod. In Celan's case, the letters of Bachmann that may or may not prove this interpretation are, as mentioned, unavailable for the time being. The literary dialogue, however, is accessible and proves to be, on the basis of the present volume, rather asymmetrical. For the way Celan inspires Bachmann definitely outweighs the way she inspires him. Practically, she seems to have been the more active of the two and to have helped Celan on several occasions, as when she made the Gruppe 47 invite him to read poems at its Niendorf conference in 1952 (Klaus Briegleb's contribution, by the way, sardonically, even furiously, deconstructs the virtuous self-image of the Gruppe, and describes both Celan and Bachmann as "internal outsiders" within it), or when she was instrumental in arranging the meeting with Nelly Sachs at the Zum Storchen hotel in Zurich (see Birgit R. Erdle's article).

But when it comes to the literary dialogue itself, there is hardly a single reference in this book to a Bachmann text that influenced Celan. Thus, Christine Koschel and others speak about the dedicated *Mohn und Gedächtnis* poems as integrated in Bachmann's *Malina*; Holger Gehle regards the poetics of Bachmann's second Frank-

furt lecture—and Peter Horst Neumann, the poetics of her above-mentioned “Das Gedicht an der Leser”—as based on Celan’s *Sprachgitter* poems; Corina Caduff shows how two Paris poems by Bachmann owe a great deal to Celan’s “Erinnerung an Frankreich”; and Stéphane Mosès, in a splendid intertextual study of two mythological motifs that run from Goethe down to Celan and Bachmann, though doing full justice to Bachmann’s originality, shows how her poem “Paris” responds to Celan’s “Das Gastmahl,” not the other way round. The last section of the book, which deals with the influence of Celan’s “Meridian” speech on Bachmann’s poetics, I found (except for Dagmar Kann-Cooman on Bachmann’s “Undine geht”) largely vague and unconvincing, perhaps because if intertextual connections between the poems remain concrete, the intertextuality of ideas, let alone the highly open-ended and ethereal ideas of the “Meridian,” often leads to impossible (and alas, so very German) hyper-abstractions.

Celan, thus, to come back to my point, did not need literary support. What he needed was something else that had to do with his Jewishness and the Holocaust, and which may also have been behind his marriage with the Catholic Gisèle Lestrangé. This is referred to in many of the contributions to this volume, but particularly in its second section, entitled “Der Ort Bachmanns und Celans in der Nachgeschichte des Nationalsozialismus.” The issues, of course, are highly sensitive, particularly since the present collection came out in Germany and is edited and written by German scholars who, naturally enough, tend to lean over backwards in their treatment of German-Jewish issues.

Thus, a review of *Sprachgitter* that described Celan’s German as enjoying a special kind of freedom because of the poet’s “origin” (“Herkunft”), is here branded as antisemitic, while a similar argument concerning Conrad’s or Nabokov’s English would, I suppose, be perfectly acceptable. But of course, the contamination of language—and thought—by the Nazis is a fact that cannot be overlooked, and the way this volume refuses to ignore the post-Nazi “passion de ignorance,” as Jacques Lacan put it, is one of its merits. Particularly praiseworthy in this context is Birgit R. Erdle’s essay, “Bachmann und Celan treffen Nelly Sachs.” Starting from this famous meeting (Bachmann, who was not present at the second, important encounter at the hotel Zum Storchen, soon disappears from the essay), Erdle contrasts Sachs’ susceptibility to being integrated in a rhetoric of “Wiedergutmachung” with Celan’s refusal to let language heal what was too deep for healing. She then juxtaposes—which is the main gist of her essay—the Deridian insistence on date and concreteness (his well-known “Schibboleth” essay) with the ahistorical, aestheticizing metaphysics of Holocaust-denying critics, including Claire Goll’s notorious attack on Celan as a “plagiarist,” which to Erdle is another attempt to reject the authenticity of his Holocaust testimony, or Holthusen’s concept of Celan the Surrealist, which, Erdle argues, is likewise an attempt at de-realizing Celan.

But Celan, who was not a plagiarist, *was* a Surrealist, entirely so in his beginnings and partly so up to the end. As in the case of his “origin,” his Surrealism too has been rendered unmentionable by Nazi associations. To retrieve the truth from behind such unmentionables is one task of future Celan research.

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Bryan Cheyette (ed.), *Between "Race" and Culture: Representations of "the Jew" in English and American Literature*. Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1996. xiv + 222 pp.

In his introduction, Bryan Cheyette aligns this collection of essays with current work on images of Others in Western culture. Cheyette praises his contributors for examining "constructions of Semitic 'difference'" (p. 14) in the works under consideration without leveling accusations of antisemitism at the authors. Such constructions of Jewish Otherness, he argues, are always "shaped by the gender, aesthetics, and politics of a given writer" (p. 3), and as such offer important keys to understanding the psyches of particular writers or to mapping broader cultural trends. Indeed, the collection divides almost evenly between essays that view images of Jews as signs of personal psychodramas, and those that read images of Jews as rhetorical or literary interventions in ongoing social conflicts. (The only exception, William Galperin's essay on romanticism, addresses the general issue of antisemitism in the work of romantic writers, with only glancing reference to William Wordsworth and Heinrich Heine.)

One of the more bizarre psychodramas played itself out in the mind of Ezra Pound, according to Maud Ellman, who has sifted through Pound's propagandistic radio broadcasts for Mussolini as well as his poems. As I understand her, Pound not only believed the antisemitic cliché that an international conspiracy of Jewish bankers impeded the free flow of capital throughout the world, but also persuaded himself that they impeded the free flow of poetic language vital to those literary artists who nourished healthy organic societies. As Ellman observes, T.S. Eliot, too, longed for an "organic" society—English, monarchic, Catholic—into which cosmopolitan or tribe-bound Jews could or would never assimilate. By contrast, Eliot's own otherness as an American-bred, former Unitarian might pass unnoticed. Ellman contrasts Pound's "obsessive vitriol" with Eliot's "scattered and equivocal discourtesies" (p. 84), a quaint phrase in the light of Anthony Julius' *T.S. Eliot, Anti-Semitism, and Literary Form* (1995), evidently published after Ellman wrote her essay.

Similarly, Jonathan Freedman argues that Henry James wished to defend himself from current notions that artists were socially and culturally degenerate—tending toward neurasthenia and aberrant sexuality—by projecting those qualities onto Jews, whose inbreeding magnified them. Self-consciously steering a course between accusation and exculpation, Freedman tries to show how James—a bachelor if not closet homosexual, a man of refined and delicate sensibilities, and an experimental artist—made Jews the receptacle of his own self-doubts. As James worked through some of these problems, Freedman argues, he felt less of a need to scapegoat Jews (although it is hard to see real evidence of that "psychic loosening" [p. 82], in James' *The American Scene*, which Freedman had earlier used to demonstrate the author's antisemitism).

Andrea Loewenstein outlines a similar trajectory in the work of George Orwell. A typical product of English "public" school culture, Orwell perceived himself as failing to live up to its code of manliness, a failure attributable to powerful female figures whom he desired, feared, and loathed. Loewenstein argues that Jewish charac-

ters in Orwell's work frequently substitute for women and as such often figure in sadistic and masochistic fantasies. Given Orwell's predisposition to take the side of the political underdog, he also expressed compassion (most of the time) toward Jewish victims of Nazi persecution, but as he could never confront, let alone come to terms with, the deeper sources of his attitudes toward women, he was never able to work through his feelings toward Jews as surrogate-females.

Similarly, Phyllis Lassner finds ambivalence in Virginia Woolf, whose early drafts of some stories evince the kind of "genteel antisemitism" that the writer struggled to overcome. Lassner also notes that her compassion for Jewish victims of the Nazis had to compete with her sympathy with women the world over as the primary victims of what she believed was an even more basic form of fascism, the patriarchal family. As Jacqueline Rose observes, feminism also complicates the representation of Jews in Dorothy Richardson's *Pilgrimage*, a 13-volume saga written over several decades, whose female protagonist decides not to marry her Jewish lover, lest the marriage require subservience to the Jewish people as a wife and mother, and thus threaten her autonomy as a free individual.

Marilyn Reizbaum's essay, in contrast, ignores any role Jews might have played in a writer's mental economy. Instead, she registers the shift in Joyce's attitudes from *Dubliners*, where he represents Jews as exotic outsiders, to *Ulysses*, where Bloom is the target of the same narrowminded Irish nationalism that produced much public antisemitic rhetoric and fomented a boycott of the handful of Jewish businesses in Limerick in 1904. Similarly, in the essay already mentioned, Lassner contrasts the ambivalence toward Jews in some of Woolf's earlier works with Stevie Smith's two novels of the late 1930s, which she reads as dramatizing the process whereby the heroine overcomes her ambivalence toward Jews as she comes to understand the historical processes that have made them scapegoats. Murray Baumgarten focuses not on the psychic pressures that led Dickens to create Fagin in *Oliver Twist*, as well as Riah in *Our Mutual Friend*, but instead argues that presenting them as isolated individuals, devoid of family or community, inevitably tilts them toward stereotype, unlike Jewish characters in George Eliot and Trollope, who exist within these social frameworks and hence retain sufficient humanness to avoid becoming caricatured Others.

A pioneer and a pillar in the study of Otherness, Sander Gilman is cited by nearly every contributor. His essay on Mark Twain, like Reizbaum's on Joyce, contrasts early and late phases of a writer's work vis-à-vis Jews. Whereas Twain attacked European antisemitism in his essay "Concerning the Jews" (published in 1898), in his account of his travels of 1867, *Innocents Abroad*, he depicted the indigenous population of the Holy Land as ridden with disease, particularly ailments of the eyes. Gilman finds a common thread in the two works, that of inherent Jewish racial difference, linking the "blindness" of the disease-ridden race of the travelogue with their superior "cunning," which aroused envy and enmity in the later piece. The link strikes me as tenuous, partly because these markers of racial difference are so dissimilar and also because Gilman admits that Twain himself knew the miserable inhabitants of the land of Jesus to be primarily Palestinian Arabs rather than Jews.

Eric Homberger's essay is the only one to address the special problem of representations of Jews by Jewish writers. They, like other minority writers, are accused of "self-hatred" when their work is satiric or critical. As Baumgarten reads Eliot and

Trollope, so Homberger sees in Michael Gold's *Jews Without Money* (1930) a richly textured collage of Jewish family and community life on the Lower East Side in the early part of the century. In working out his own ambivalence toward Jews and Judaism, Homberger argues, Gold includes a number of stock figures—for instance, money-grubbing businessmen, embittered victims of the capitalist system, impotent rabbis and pietists—but also introduces a few courageous idealists and strikebreakers. To my mind, though, the collective texture is skewed because Gold exaggerates the political helplessness of the latter in order to herald the messianic advent of Communism.

Cheyette has assembled a splendid collection of essays, in which the contributors employ a variety of interpretive approaches toward a common theme and yet retain their distinctive critical voices.

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Robert Fleisher, *Twenty Israeli Composers: Voices of a Culture*. Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 1997. 380 pp.

Even the best educated Israeli may fail to recognize what are the contributions of individuals such as Hanoch Jacobi or Daniel Galay to their national culture. Israelis' knowledge of their local "serious" or "classical" music lags well behind their familiarity with Hebrew art, literature, or even Israeli plastic arts. For this reason, any contribution to this field, such as the present book by Robert Fleisher, is most welcome.

Twenty Israeli Composers is based on a series of intensive interviews that the author conducted in 1986. It includes a general introduction treating the key concepts pertaining to the subject of the book (such as nationalism and music, Jewish music, and Israeli music), a transcription of the 20 interviews (presented as monologues) preceded by short introductions and followed by an update, as well as a short, general conclusion. Thus, the book clearly belongs to a genre in the music literature that became especially popular in the 1980s, one that may be termed "composer talk."

Fleisher's questions guided the composers into a more or less fixed sequence of presentation. Broadly, this sequence consists of three parts: autobiography, a discussion of the composer's works, and general opinions about Israeli identity in music. The interviews are clustered into three sections according to a chronological periodization: "The First Generation: Roots and Branches"; "The Second Generation: Immigrants and Sabras"; and "The Third Generation: Independence and Integration."

Fleisher emphasizes the main issues surrounding Israeli composers: the uniqueness of the Middle Eastern or East Mediterranean environment, the urgency to participate in the creation of a new national culture, the deep awareness of the East-West dichotomy, the mobilization of musicians on behalf of an ideal national culture during the formative years of the state and, finally, the pluralism evident in contemporary Israeli society once the ethos of the homogeneous culture (the Israeli version of the "melting pot") had failed to attain its goals.

One obvious shortcoming of any book of this kind is the necessity to limit the num-

ber of individuals who are interviewed. Certainly the composers included in this book, both men and women, represent a wide range of origins, education, age, styles, and ideologies. However, any such selection is bound to be partial, as Fleisher himself admits. Although he never explicitly defines the criteria that determined his choice, he does include a list of distinguished composers who were not included in the project (p. 32).

Fleisher escapes rather elegantly from one of the most difficult issues related to the topic of the book: the relevance of art music to "Israeli culture." As his introductory discussion on the concept of "Israeli music" shows, this is a very complex issue. However, the perceptive observer is likely to reach the sad conclusion that the relevance of Israeli art music to the wider Israeli society is—to put it mildly—very limited. As Fleisher notes in his conclusion: "For the Israeli composer, the environment has been somewhat less than propitious, and the contemporary art music of Israel has yet to find a place within its own society" (p. 302).

The heavy reliance on governmental patronage by those connected with Israeli art music, alongside the failure to engage the private sector and the public at large to support such music, can be explained by a number of factors. On the social level, contemporary Western art music is simply irrelevant to large segments of the Israeli society whose musical culture is non-European. Moreover, the relatively limited public for Western art music is also very conservative, tending to scorn contemporary music in general, and still more, that composed in Israel (p. 302). This social reality is reflected in the constant political friction created by the issue of the "disproportionate" budgets allotted by government agencies to such institutions as the Israel Philharmonic Orchestra or the New Israeli Opera.

In the early days of the state, it was widely assumed that Israeli high culture, supported by the state, would develop in a European mold. It was clear from the outset, however, that art culture in Israel was actually being fostered via a complex negotiation between groups and individuals of the most diverse ethnic origins and ideologies. Israel had no preexisting tradition of art music, as had most European societies even before they were transformed into modern nation states. In other words, there is a basic lack of "pedigree" in Israeli art music. The challenges posed by this lack are overheard in many of the interviews.

Because of this problematic status of Israeli art music, Fleisher is inevitably forced into apologetic statements such as "works by Israeli composers . . . deserve a much wider audience" (p. 22)—as if audiences are created by pure aesthetic judgment rather than by interest groups within the society who try to promote their views of "art." If Israeli art music does not yet have a wide audience, it is not because it lacks an intrinsic value, but because it has failed to generate, for an array of reasons, a substantial social movement to support it.

Considering this situation, one wonders to which "culture" the title of this book refers. There is good reason to believe that if a true national music culture does exist in Israel, it is to be found in other layers of musical creativity, such as so-called Israeli "folk" song or, more recently, Israeli "pop" music. The art music should be appreciated not as the expression of a national culture, but rather as that of each artist with his or her own individual reactions to the very peculiar social environment that modern Israel provides. In this sense, the views expressed by these 20 Israeli composers

add up to an interesting document—one that provides insight not so much into the developing Israeli national culture, but rather into an elite of individual artists who are conducting a deep dialogue with that culture.

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Religion, Thought and Education

Edward Alexander, *Irving Howe: Socialist, Critic, Jew*. Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1998. 284 pp.

The career of Irving Howe (1920–1993), socialist, literary critic, and editor of *Dissent* magazine, raises many stimulating issues for consideration by students of mid-twentieth-century Jewish American culture. The most challenging is the meaning of political “commitment” for the Jewish intellectual in the wrenching decades that spanned fascism, Stalinism, lynch law, the Holocaust, the establishment of the state of Israel, the revolt of colonies against their European masters, and the rise of the New Left of the 1960s.

The premises underlying Edward Alexander’s approach to “commitment” are very different from those held by Howe, who referred to Alexander as his “favorite reactionary” (p. xii), and they sometimes appear to be the polar opposite of my own. Still, the virtue of his “biography of Howe’s mind” (p. xi) is that it recognizes the centrality of this basic issue in Howe’s life and work, paying tribute to its ongoing relevance for all those who seek to negotiate the conflict between a life of action and that of the literary imagination.

Alexander’s project is also compelling in his observation that Howe’s mind was a “complex unity” running along “three tracks: socialist, Jewish, and literary” (pp. ix–x). Such a tripartite division in a biography invokes the danger of schematism; yet if one allows for overlapping and entanglements, the categories constitute a plausible division of the central—and most vexing—components of Howe’s oeuvre.

Thus Alexander begins his critical survey of Howe’s thought with a summary of Howe’s youth in the East Bronx, including his attraction first to the Socialist party’s youth group and then to Trotskyism. Chapter 2 treats Howe during the 1940s, when he edited and wrote for Trotskyist newspapers, and held the mistaken view that fascism could not be defeated prior to a socialist revolution in the West. Subsequent chapters trace his initial forays into the pages of *Partisan Review* and *Commentary*, his break from the Trotskyist movement, his early writings about secular Jewishness (which he distinguished from Judaism), his intervention in the debate over the award of the Bollingen prize in 1949 to the antisemitic poet Ezra Pound, and his initial inattentiveness to the founding of Israel.

The last four chapters review Howe’s successful career in literature, his editing and translation of Yiddish texts, his launching of *Dissent*, his response to Hannah Arendt’s *Eichmann in Jerusalem* (1963), his debate with the African American writer Ralph Ellison, his conflicts with the New Left, his jousting with the Jewish American nov-

elist Philip Roth, his success with *World of Our Fathers* (1976), and his sharp criticisms of the Likud-led government of Israel. The book ends with a celebration of Howe's opposition to the rise of poststructuralist and deconstructionist criticism in literary studies and his apparent decision to throw himself "completely behind" the conservative philosopher Sidney Hook "in defense of the traditional university curriculum" (p. 241).

Alexander's survey is of uneven quality. While the plot summaries of Howe's books and the frequent quotations may serve as a useful introduction to his life and writings, the greater part of the narrative will be all too familiar to anyone who has read Howe's autobiographical writings as well as the numerous memoirs and scholarly books about the "New York Intellectuals." Even more problematic is the effect of Alexander's heavy-handed, relentlessly polemical approach to each of Howe's "tracks." This reduces one's sense of the man and his work, not to mention one's appreciation of the broader trajectory of the similarly left-wing Jewish intelligentsia navigating the dangerous waters of politics and culture in our time.

It is quickly evident that Alexander is out to use a neoconservative yardstick to judge Howe a hypocrite, if not irresponsible, for his socialist politics. Howe's consistent anti-Stalinism, increasing adoption of Democratic party liberalism, and gradual de-Marxianization turn out to be insufficient for salvation. Howe's Jewishness is judged more kindly but censured nevertheless. Alexander is dissatisfied not only because Howe was late in directly affirming his Jewish identity, but also because he drew back from Judeocentrism and never explicitly embraced Zionism. Fortunately, Howe does receive the highest honors in literature from Alexander. The credit thus granted is partly due to Howe's resistance to the post-New Left turn to "theory" and partly to his spending his last days justifying the literary canon.

Of course, the narrowness of this study may stem in part from a factor beyond Alexander's control. He asserts with forceful restraint that he was shunned by all of Howe's family members, denied access to many archival materials, and forbidden to quote from any unpublished writings. Nevertheless, the book primarily suffers from being excessively thesis-driven—a somewhat ironic feature, since one of the joys of writing about a complex figure such as Howe (and certain others among his cohort of "New York Intellectuals") is the discovery of unanticipated, subtle aspects of their work and thought. Alexander writes, however, as if he knew in advance what he wanted to argue in each "track" and undertook research in select areas mainly to locate the evidence he thought would prove the case.

Moreover, when he has a piece of what he regards as damning evidence, he repeats his indictments ad infinitum, slanting the issues in the crudest manner. Thus Howe is pounded relentlessly for his change of name from "Horenstein," and Alexander attributes invidious motives to other name-changers. (In the *New Republic* of July 6, 1998, Robert Alter exclaimed in exasperation that the name issue was raised "perhaps twenty times in the book, before I stopped counting.") In reference to the Second World War, Howe is always said to have opposed "The War Against Hitler," when in fact that was the war he wanted to support but saw the Allies as betraying. Similarly, Howe's criticisms of the Likud are characterized as "anti-Israel," which is allegedly the key to "many an American-Jewish 'identity,'" derived from "secular Jewishness" (p. 212).

If Howe states that Communist intellectuals in the 1930s abased themselves before the working class, Alexander jumps forward to the contemporary “culture wars” to parenthetically insert that this abasement was exactly what “their spiritual inheritors would feel in the presence of members of minority groups fifty years later” (p. 7). In order to commend the quality of some of *Dissent*’s writing, Alexander feels it necessary to take a swipe at the *Nation* by adding that the latter was “sinking into what William Buckley called ‘the cesspool of opinion journalism’” (p. 97). It is not enough to indict Howe for criticizing Israeli state policy at a conference sponsored by the journal *Tikkun*—Alexander also has to insert a reference to the editor Michael Lerner as “the buffoonish apostle of ‘the politics of meaning’” (p. 212). The object of this crude strategy of insult and defamation, furthered by any means necessary, is not even Howe so much as the entire Left (defined as supporters of racial justice and affirmative action, the Israeli Peace Now movement, and literary multiculturalists).

Nevertheless, it is somewhat fitting that the first book-length study of Howe should start an argument. Howe’s legacy includes an impressive record of “positions,” and he was not shy about punching others hard in print when assuming the mantle of righteous indignation. Still, subsequent scholars, less agenda-ridden than Alexander, and with access to a more substantial research base, are likely to discover additional virtues in Howe’s approach to Jewish identity and his refusal to relinquish the dream of a democratic vision of socialism.

Some may also be saddened, as I was, to see the degree to which Howe’s early identification with cultural “cosmopolitanism” proved to be so shallow in the long run. Alexander’s interpretation of Howe’s letters to Hook and of his last essays suggest that the one-time internationalist and defender of the “Third Camp” of the disenfranchised ended up in a bloc with the partisans of the entrenched elite; on the other side were the young Irving Howes seeking to extend the legacy of the United States civil rights movement through the democratization of literary culture. Although many of Howe’s arguments were based on misunderstandings, this was surely the wrong side of the cultural barricade for any scholar so passionately devoted to the reclamation of Yiddish American and Jewish American writers.

ALAN WALD
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Bernard J. Bergen, *The Banality of Evil: Hannah Arendt and “The Final Solution.”*
Lanham: Rowman and Littlefield, 1998. xviii + 165 pp.

If anything unites those who still argue over Hannah Arendt’s *Eichmann in Jerusalem* (1963), it is the accusation of willfulness that the pro- and anti- camps direct against each other. For her enemies, Arendt willfully insulted leaders of the *Judenräte* by implying that they were complicit in arranging for millions of Jews to be sent to their deaths; European Jewry for failing to revolt; the Israeli government for having staged what amounted to a “show trial” in 1961; and the common sense of the entire matter by coining the phrase “banality of evil” to refer to Eichmann himself.

Arendt’s defenders, in contrast, accuse her opponents of deliberately misreading

the Eichmann book and thus failing to think through the issues she was raising. She was obviously critical of the Judenräte but did not expect or demand heroic action from the Jewish people of Eastern Europe. (Why should she, as she said, when no other Europeans had a better record of resistance?) She did criticize aspects of the trial as staged for obvious propaganda purposes, but also defended Israel's right to place Eichmann on trial. Finally, the phrase "banality of evil" was not intended to diminish the horror of what the Nazis had wrought, but rather to stress the disparity between Eichmann's manner, on the one hand, and the moral enormity of the process he was so instrumental in facilitating, on the other.

Bernard Bergen's strategy in *The Banality of Evil* is to sidestep most of these controversial issues. In some ways, it is a welcome choice, though his book does all but dehistoricize the Eichmann trial. Bergen's focus is on the way in which Arendt uses her careful observations of how Eichmann presented himself at the trial to explore the nature of individuality. According to Bergen, Arendt was most struck by the fact that Eichmann "had nothing new to say about himself fifteen years after the horrendous crimes" (p. xii). This in turn led her to the conviction that personal identity was not the "end point but the starting point for understanding" who someone like Eichmann thought he was. What this attempt at understanding—not explaining—Eichmann revealed was Eichmann's startling "inability to think" (p. xii).

Yet, as Bergen rightly concludes, it is a mistake to see this conclusion as reflecting Arendt's desire to equate morality and rationality, conscience and consciousness. Her point was not that, had Eichmann assessed the situation rationally (that is, dispassionately, according to some universal principle), he would have refused to participate, or that 15 years later he would have repented his actions. Rather, Arendt was referring to Eichmann's failure of moral imagination, his "inability to think, namely to think from the standpoint of somebody else" (p. 51).

At this point Bergen launches into an exploration of Arendt's concept of individuality, using Eichmann as a kind of negative ideal type. Bergen suggests that Arendt's notion of thinking, developed most fully in the posthumously published (and unfinished) *The Life of the Mind* (1978), assumes an internal process of dialogue between the self and itself. From this point of view, the (absent) "somebody else" in the dialogue Eichmann did (not) hold was, first of all, himself. For Arendt, and Bergen, such one-dimensionality indicates not a unified self in a positive sense, but rather a failure to achieve individuality. Arendt's view, claims Bergen, is that "identity is always carrying the burden of doubt" and that "being an individual emerges" only with the possibility of incoherence, even dissolution, of the self (pp. 56, 57). In sum, thinking dissolves the solidity of the self but also opens it to new ways of judging things.

Overall, then, for Eichmann (and those like him in Germany), the "delirium of loyalty," which no inner doubts could penetrate and no irony or ambiguity could breach, was a "substitute for thinking" and thus made the Final Solution possible (p. 34). Without thinking, the capacity for willing leads to rigidity and judging is perverted into blind loyalty. In other words, unless "we" can think, will, and judge, and have a world that allows individual actions to emerge, a disastrous kind of selflessness may replace individuality; action will be replaced by automatic behavior, and there will be a general "loss of common sense" (p. 148) and the inability to deal with experience.

Though this is only a schematic account of Bergen's analysis of Arendt's idea of

individuality, it should suffice to convey his concerns. As suggested, Bergen's decision to use Arendt on Eichmann to explore the nature of individuality is a welcome relief from the usual crossfire of polemics when Eichmann is at issue. And yet there are problems. First, though Bergen denies that he is presenting us with Arendt, the existentialist philosopher of subjectivity, the Arendt he presents is relatively unconcerned with "the world" and with the "in between" of human existence. Bergen rightly notes Arendt's suspicion of a binding sense of "we"; yet it is hard to find much space here for Arendt, the theorist of political participation.

Indeed, in Bergen's hands, politics "is rather the definition of a livable world" (p. 79); it thereby loses its special status in Arendt's thought. With this, the important tension—so central to Arendt's thought—between the public and the private, and between politics and intimacy, is dissipated. Bergen makes her sound like a theorist of subjectivity and an advocate of the private self as ontologically prior to the public actor.

A major reason for this situation is that Bergen tends to read Arendt backwards. After engaging with Eichmann and the Holocaust, he refers most often to *The Life of the Mind*, working from there back through to the *Origins of Totalitarianism* (1951). But this implies something highly problematic—that the full range and implication of Arendt's thought was present from the beginning: in her end was her beginning. This is a claim that must be argued rather than merely assumed.

Overall, *The Banality of Evil* is an elusive but often interesting exploration of Arendt's thought. At times hard to follow, it still is a new path through (and beyond) *Eichmann in Jerusalem*. For that reason, among others, it is worth considering seriously.

RICHARD H. KING
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Arnold M. Eisen, *Rethinking Modern Judaism: Ritual, Commandment, Community*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1998. 339 pp.

In recent decades, the distinction between theory and practice has begun to influence the way we think about religion. For too long, religious scholarship focused on the texts of high religious culture. In the case of Judaism, this included the Bible, the Talmud, and related medieval and modern rabbinic literature. While this body of writings is essential to an understanding of the faith and culture of the Jewish people, it is not enough, because it tells us little—and that only indirectly—about the reality of Jewish life. The culture reflected in rabbinic literature is that of an elite. The vast majority of Jews were (and are) not rabbinic scholars or philosophers. How did they interpret their Judaism? How did they conduct themselves? Which of the *mitzvot* did they practice and which did they neglect? Was their level of practice driven by their beliefs or by other factors? These are some of the questions that Arnold M. Eisen raises in relation to the modern period in this penetrating study.

Eisen's focus is on practice of the *mitzvot*. Of the three terms in his subtitle, two are in the realm of practice: ritual and commandment. He understands that Judaism without practice is *Hamlet* without the prince. Nowhere is this more clear than in the

case of Martin Buber. In a chapter devoted to the Buber-Rosenzweig controversy about the law, Buber emerges the loser. As Eisen sees it, Buber's problem was that he saw observance as "an all or nothing proposition" (p. 188). One either believed that the commandments are divine in origin or one abandoned them. Since Buber believed that revelation is never legislation, the law cannot be of divine origin but is necessarily a human interpretation of the true encounter with God that can never be encapsulated in the paragraphs of the law. Observing the commandments, particularly the ritual commandments, under these circumstances is to abandon the living God for the I-It world of legal reasoning. For Buber, as read by Eisen, there is almost a religious prohibition against a life of halakhic obedience.

"Understanding Buber's resolve to abandon observance," writes Eisen (p. 189), "enables us to better comprehend the sources of the power and appeal of observance for the many Jews in this century who, like Rosenzweig, have performed the commandments *in good faith without the belief in Torah from Sinai upon which Buber insisted*" (emphasis added). The rest of the book is a sustained examination and celebration of Torah observance without the faith of Sinai. The vast majority of Jews, Eisen claims, do not believe that the Torah with all its commandments was given to Moses at Sinai, and yet many of them continue in varying degrees to observe the commandments. Why is this so?

The answer comes under the following headings: politics, symbolism, nostalgia, authority, and tradition, to each of which Eisen devotes a chapter. A ritual will be observed to the degree to which it serves the political function of maintaining Jewish identity while also including Jews in the wider American consensus. Rituals are given symbolic interpretations—for example, Passover celebrates freedom—that are in harmony with the values of most American Jews. Rituals evoke nostalgic memories of parents and grandparents and are also rooted in a more or less vague understanding of transcendence that the postmodern can tolerate more comfortably than the modern mind. Finally, a respect for tradition also plays a role, particularly when tradition does not mandate strict observance but only partial or intermittent practice.

Needless to say, a non-Sinaitic Judaism has been and continues to be in far greater flux than the Sinaitic version. Since the beginning of the nineteenth century, liberal Judaism has demonstrated a talent for change that is observable in our day in feminist Judaism. Instead of leaving the house of Israel as incurably patriarchal, Jewish feminists refuse to accept Judaism as an unchanging essence. Instead, like Mordecai Kaplan, they read Judaism as an evolving civilization that can be modified, and that is precisely what they propose to do. The silences about the role of women in the Jewish experience are filled in, and rituals are created to express newly acquired sensibilities. Instead of just abandoning old mitzvot, new ones are established that are rooted not so much in a divine lawgiver as in the sense of belonging to a family tradition that unites the Jewish people. Non-Sinaitic Jews leave the synagogue or the seder table in a glow of fellowship made up of all the components Eisen identifies so accurately. It is good to belong to such an extended family, and if the price is the keeping of commandments that cannot be fully justified rationally—for instance, circumcision—this is not too great a price to pay for the benefits obtained.

The question, of course, is: Will non-Sinaitic Judaism survive? In spite of the immense nostalgic value of Yiddish, it seems quite clear that Yiddishist Judaism was not

a viable program for Jewish survival. Toward the end of his life, Irving Howe understood this clearly, a recognition that did not enhance his mood. But the failure of Yiddish may be the result of its distinctly secular bent. America respects and preserves religious commitments and institutions, whereas ethnic organizations are not meant to outlive the first few generations in the New World. Non-Sinaitic interpretations of Judaism that understand themselves as religious—even if they radically redefine old religious terms—have a much better chance of long-term survival. While Sinaitic Judaism will probably not look at the new entrants into the Jewish religious marketplace with much enthusiasm, any form of Judaism that makes Jewish practice possible for those who do not believe in a commanding God is a vital, life-saving measure. The all-or-nothing approach may be intellectually more attractive, but it does not contribute to maintaining or increasing the number of practicing Jews in the world.

MICHAEL WYSCHOGROD
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Emil L. Fackenheim, *Jewish Philosophers and Jewish Philosophy*, ed. Michael L. Morgan. Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1996. 270 pp.

This useful collection takes Jewish philosophy to be the subset of Jewish thought “that involves a disciplined, systematic encounter between the Jewish heritage and relevant philosophy” (p. xv). It gathers those essays by Emil Fackenheim that focus on the works of major Jewish philosophers such as Hermann Cohen and Franz Rosenzweig; on the troubled relation between Jewish and “general” philosophy; and on philosophy’s need, in Fackenheim’s view, to come to terms—in a way it has not yet done, and perhaps cannot do—with the Holocaust. The volume serves as a companion (though there is some overlap) to Morgan’s earlier collection, *The Jewish Thought of Emil Fackenheim* (1987). Even more than the latter, it provokes (and helps to answer) the question of why Fackenheim has for several decades been a major but hardly commanding presence in the world of contemporary Jewish thought. The answer, it seems, has to do with the status of Jewish philosophy among philosophers, the status of general philosophy among Jews, and the status of both, in Fackenheim’s eyes, “after Auschwitz.”

In part, as Fackenheim himself demonstrates in an essay analyzing the not widely read Jewish Hegelian philosopher Samuel Hirsch, and another on the very widely read Jewish “sage” and sometime philosopher Martin Buber, the gap between modern philosophy’s attack on the possibility of revelation, and Judaism’s insistence that there is and must be revelation, has proven to be unbridgeable. Fackenheim’s clearheaded analyses of Hirsch and Buber pronounce his frustration at the inability of both thinkers to square the circle. This does not in his view doom the enterprise of religious philosophy to inevitable failure, and it certainly does not make it unworthy of careful study. Quite the opposite: Fackenheim argues that academic philosophy departments are motivated by sheer prejudice (and not just by a reasonable suspicion of revelation-based theology) when they refuse to admit Jewish philosophers into the canon of respectability. Fackenheim also seems disappointed by the widespread dis-

interest in the discipline of philosophy among Jews, liberal and Orthodox alike, who have apparently determined that truth will not be located in philosophy's precincts or through its methods, and so have little use for it.

Fackenheim himself, about three decades ago, abandoned the attempt to bring religion and philosophy together, concluding that Jewish philosophy in our day had a far more important task than this. The "focus of the agenda" had changed after the Holocaust. One could not assess "Hermann Cohen—After Fifty Years," as he sought to do in a 1969 address included here, without beginning from the realization that "we are on one side, the event to be commemorated is on the other, and between us yawns an abyss without equal in the annals of history" (p. 41). Fackenheim's work took a decisive turn when he came to, and acted upon, this realization. He wrote perhaps his best-known book, *God's Presence in History* (1970), ending it with the idea for which he is perhaps best known—that the "commanding voice of Auschwitz" had issued the Jews a "614th commandment": not to "hand Hitler posthumous" victories by giving up on God, the Jewish people, or humanity.

Morgan notes that the phrase "614th commandment" virtually dropped out of Fackenheim's vocabulary immediately thereafter, but it is unclear from the two-page reflection on the subject from 1993 included in this anthology whether or not Fackenheim has actually renounced it. Moreover, it is clear from many pieces in the volume that the question of Jewish meaning after the Holocaust has utterly dominated the latter portion of Fackenheim's career. He relates in a touching recent "Retrospective of My Thought," published here for the first time, that he realized after three months of internment by the Nazis in Sachsenhausen that one dare not "ask how God can let this happen to you—to you personally," for one will "end up feeling sorry for yourself; and once you give in to self-pity in Sachsenhausen—to say nothing of Auschwitz—you are finished" (p. 215). But this has not stopped him from urging on philosophy, and on Jews, and especially on Jewish philosophy, the question of how Jews and Judaism must change now that God (at least as conceived until now) has "let this happen."

Buber is faulted, among others, for his failure to confront radical evil; philosophy as a discipline is faulted for failing to confront Auschwitz; Israel is lauded, almost always uncritically, as the necessary response to Auschwitz (a "tikkun," it is called in Fackenheim's major work from 1982, *To Mend the World*). Time and again one runs across frustration that Jewish thought still proceeds as if the Holocaust had not demanded its radical revision, while at the same time one finds Fackenheim praising "amcha" (the mass of ordinary Jews) for their unreflective commitment to survival.

The paradox is not unintended. Fackenheim admiringly tells the story of a Jew in Riga who told him in 1977 that he wished to study Jewish philosophy because "our whole group knows that we must remain Jews. Jewish philosophy will tell us why" (p. 185). Fackenheim also confesses in the "Retrospective" that he brought to the study of Judaism from the outset, and still brings, the "precarious" conviction that the answer to "what I was looking for . . . was to be found in the sources and resources of Judaism" (p. 215). But this conviction came at some point to coincide, and still does, with another conviction: that Judaism must be different after the Holocaust, because precariousness attaches henceforth to Jewish survival, and also to Judaism.

This is not the place for a sustained critique of Fackenheim's oeuvre, which might well center on the contradictions set loose in these brief statements, and on Fackenheim's

heim's inability thus far to tell us *how* Judaism must be different. The time, as he suggests, may not yet be ripe. Morgan's collection will perhaps help readers to understand and evaluate Fackenheim's conviction that the revival of Jewish philosophy is a truly urgent task, as well as to gauge the difficulties involved in carrying it out.

ARNOLD EISEN
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Judith Hauptman, *Rereading the Rabbis: A Woman's Voice*. Boulder: Westview Press, 1998. 285 pp.

Although Judith Hauptman is one of the leading feminists today writing on topics of Jewish content, she may well irritate or even infuriate other feminists who read this book. Although she is certainly aware of the patriarchal society of talmudic times, her thesis is that the rabbis were not all that bad; in fact, one can discern a constant improvement of the status of women not only from biblical times to the talmudic era but from the time of the Mishnah until the time of the Gemarah. Where other writers see the Talmud as a document bordering on misogyny, Hauptman shows that the *amoraim* constantly improved the lot of women as compared to their earlier compatriots, the mishnaic *tanaim*.

The difference between Hauptman and some other feminists who write on the talmudic period is that Hauptman is first and foremost a talmudic scholar and only afterwards a feminist. Reading other feminists who also write on Jewish law and thought, one sometimes gets the impression that they have an axe to grind: what seems foremost in their way of thinking and writing is to put the pieces together so that they can prove their preconceived notions. This is anathema to Hauptman.

Her methodology is clearly set out in her introduction, and her feminism in the context of her work displays itself by the texts she chooses to discuss and by the questions she asks. Reading from a woman's perspective, Hauptman attempts to determine how the Talmud treats women. She is aware of the fact that her study is not all-encompassing and she does not treat every subject concerning women. For example, levirate marriage is not discussed at all. Hauptman deals with ten topics and admits that although they are analyzed in detail, she does not claim to have made an exhaustive study of them. Each of these areas is scrutinized from the Bible through the Talmud to see if the rabbis made any significant changes—not only juxtaposing Bible and Talmud, but within the layers of the talmudic literature itself. The main texts are the Mishnah, the Tosefta and the Gemarah. Hauptman limits herself to halakhic texts and ignores the *agadah*. The reason for doing so is that she is interested in the development of the law *per se*—not of attitudes. She is correct when she writes that one can find very praiseworthy statements about women alongside comments that are tainted with misogyny. She consciously writes as a jurist and not as a historian and is very wary about deducing social realities from the texts. "What I am interested in," she states, "is a history of the law, not a history of people" (p. 6). Her methodology is convincing, and she is a meticulous talmudic scholar. Hauptman's conclusions are well founded and even eye-opening.

The ten topics about which Hauptman writes are undoubtedly the major ones of interest to anyone concerned with the status of women in Jewish law in the talmudic period. They are: *sotah* (the wayward wife); relations between the sexes; marriage; rape and seduction; divorce; procreation; *nidah* (female ritual impurity); inheritance; testimony; and ritual. Hauptman convincingly shows that in nine of these ten areas the development of the law throughout the talmudic period was in the direction of improving the status and role of women. Only in the context of *nidah* do we find a less progressive development. She amasses and analyzes the literature with the tools of a talmudic scholar, demonstrating that the same patterns of development are found in almost all of the topics discussed. This is a signal accomplishment. This is especially so taking into account the many articles and books written in the last decade that tend to lead one to different conclusions.

Another of Hauptman's important conclusions is that the legal disabilities under which women lived in talmudic times were not founded in misogyny but were rather imbedded in their social status as part of a patriarchal society. As second class citizens—which women were—they could not become equal partners in the system. This is especially apparent, for example, with regard to the question of women's place in ritual and women's testimony. Although women were subordinate to men, their lot was constantly being improved through a "benevolent patriarchy." But, of course, as long as the society remained patriarchal, there was a limit as to how far they could go even in their comparatively empathetic but male-dominated society.

One must read the book itself to fully comprehend the changes for the better that were made in the context of women's status. Even if one can occasionally disagree with the author's upbeat interpretation of an advancement of women's position in talmudic times, the overwhelming wealth of material brought together and scrutinized by Hauptman is very convincing with regard to her general thesis. The following are just some examples. Marriage, which in biblical times was a type of purchase from the bride's father, became something very different in the Talmud, a form of "social contract" between the couple about to wed. Divorce, which in the Bible was a prerogative of men, did not change in talmudic times. However, the voice of women was not only heard but also, under certain circumstances, could help coerce a husband into granting a bill of divorce on the wife's request. The laws concerning the wayward wife were explained away to a point where it was impossible to implement them. Women's exemption from time-bound positive commandments gradually gave way to selective obligation.

Another important aspect of this book is the way in which it shows how notions of gender influenced the development of the law. For example, contrary to what many laypeople and scholars think, women were not portrayed as seducers; rather, men feared they might not be able to control their sexual drives in the presence of women. It was this fear of one's own base instincts—a sort of male inferiority complex—that led to specific legislation that might seem to be misogynous.

One could fill many pages just summarizing and pointing out novel explanations of passages and topics that pervade the book. I will mention just one example that typifies the author's insightful reading of the texts.

Hauptman asks a question that has been asked for generations: Why are women exempt from positive time-bound commandments? First she brings (and refutes) some

of the explanations that have been given in the past. She then proposes her own solutions to the question, which are not only interesting and novel but also convincing. Hauptman bases her explanations on the context of the placement of relevant texts in the Mishnah. The following is one of her two explanations.

The rules about women and commandments appear in a mishnah of the tractate Kiddushin—marriage—right after the mishnah that discusses the rules of acquiring a wife. This juxtaposition leads her to conclude that the two texts are connected. The link between the two is that once a woman is “acquired” (the phrase used in the first mishnah) by a man, she is under his domination and cannot act independently or be obligated independently to perform the time-bound commandments. In a patriarchal society she is dominated by her husband and owes him her time. As Hauptman points out, this explanation is in accord with the explanation of the Tosefta as to why a woman is exempt from caring for her parents—a rule that is found in the first half of the same mishnah. The reason given is that others control the married life of women. As a possible corollary to the above, Hauptman also brings the view of R. Joshua ben-Levi, who says that if a slave dons tefillin (phylacteries) he is a free man. Hauptman adds: “Were a woman to don tefillin, she would be proclaiming to all that she is no longer subordinate to her husband. The rabbis could not permit her to take such a step” (p. 226).

Rereading the Rabbis: A Woman's Voice is just what the title says it is. Texts that have been studied for well over a millennium are reread with emphasis on questions that were never asked in the past; in these new queries and the answers given to them a woman's voice is heard. What makes the book so outstanding is not the idea behind it, which has been in vogue for a number of years, but the execution of the idea. It is the work, first and foremost, of a talmudic scholar of stature and only secondarily of a woman who is sensitive to the issues of gender. As a scholar, Hauptman's conclusions are those that stem from a meticulous reading of the texts and from their placement in correct chronological order.

Her conclusions, in short, are those of the scholar even though her questions are those of the feminist. As I noted in my opening remarks, Hauptman may be jeopardizing her standing in some feminist circles. That may be so because she consciously abides by the command of the Torah: “Fear no man, for judgment is God's” (Deut. 1:17). To extrapolate for our purposes: “man” includes woman—even feminists—and the scholar's honest judgment is next to godliness.

SHMUEL SHILO
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Harvey Warren Meirovich, *A Vindication of Judaism: The Polemics of the Hertz Pentateuch*. New York: The Jewish Theological Seminary of America, 1998.
xiv + 304 pp.

For about half a century, bar mitzvah boys (and probably bat mitzvah girls as well) have received among their gifts a bulky volume annotated by Joseph H. Hertz, *The Pentateuch and Haftorahs*. Known everywhere as the “Hertz *humash*,” this work is

placed alongside the prayer book at the entrance to many modern Orthodox and Conservative synagogues. Thus, the Hertz *humash* is functionally not very different from the King James Bible for Protestant worshippers. Its author, Joseph Herman Hertz (1872–1946), born in Slovakia and brought to America as a young child, served as the chief rabbi of Great Britain and the British Empire (later Commonwealth) from 1913 until his death in 1946. He was also the first graduate, in 1894, of the Jewish Theological Seminary in New York, then a small institution in existence for eight years.

Hertz was a highly combative person who feared God but no man. Jewish communal potentates, “grand dukes” as he derisively called them, repeatedly suffered his wrath. The greatest of them was Sir Robert Waley Cohen, the managing director of Shell Oil, who also ruled the chief rabbi’s United Synagogue. Hertz’s furious arguments with his lay head were famous, because Sir Robert gave as good as he got. Hertz, a master of florid invective, showed his mettle shortly after assuming office. Not satisfied with merely offering clerical greetings to an international conference against prostitution that Russian delegates also attended, he followed the Anglican archbishop’s and Catholic cardinal’s polite remarks with an assault on the Russian regime for its policy of requiring young Jewish women to accept the prostitute’s yellow card if they wished to study outside the Pale of Settlement. The *Jewish Chronicle* commended him on that occasion, but it frequently did not.

Chief Rabbi Hertz’s combative character is apparent in his *humash*, which teems with polemics. Harvey Meirovich’s close study shows clearly that the book’s purpose was, as his title puts it, “the vindication of Judaism”—which meant counterattacking opponents. Hertz held that the most dangerous of these opponents were the “higher critics” of the Bible. Only on the surface was the issue one of scholarship: in Hertz’s view, the erudition employed by philologists and allied anthropologists was undermining the integrity of Judaism.

Meirovich provides a detailed account of higher criticism as it stood in Hertz’s time. Solomon Schechter, whom Hertz admired and quoted, branded much of the higher criticism “the higher anti-Semitism” (although he accepted some of it, particularly as it related to the prophetic books). For Hertz, however, negating the higher criticism was not only a matter of scholarship or theology, important as they were. What particularly disturbed him was the higher critics’ denial of Moses’ authorship of the Pentateuch, which led them to date the so-called “priestly code,” the latest component of the Pentateuch, to the time of Ezra. The supposed postexilic date of this code, which concentrated on law and ritual, showed the direction into which Judaism was developing—or, as the higher critics had it, degenerating.

For all their textual heresy, the higher critics were at one with Christian tradition in maintaining that Judaism by the time of Jesus had sunk into the lifeless legalism of Pharisaic “rabbinism” as expressed in the despised Talmud. The spiritual heritage of the Bible, in this view, had been taken over by Christianity, leaving Judaism an empty shell, a fossil. Hertz, for his part, was convinced that in order to uphold the spiritual integrity of Judaism, the higher criticism had to be vanquished and the Pentateuch’s Mosaic authorship upheld. Thus his *humash* frequently attacked the higher criticism’s foremost exponent, the brilliant German Julius Wellhausen, together with Wellhausen’s leading English follower, W. Robertson Smith. At the same time, the

greatest English Bible scholar, Samuel R. Driver, although also a higher critic, was treated more gently and quoted quite frequently in Hertz's commentary. The Scottish scholar, George Adam Smith, famous as the author of *The Historical Geography of the Holy Land*, was also handled respectfully. (A street in Jerusalem is named after him.)

A Hertz opponent closer to home was Claude G. Montefiore, the blue-blooded, independently wealthy scholar and philanthropist. As the foremost intellectual of Liberal Judaism, Montefiore embraced the higher criticism. In a series of fluent and scholarly books written for a wide audience, Montefiore dismissed the legal aspects of Judaism in favor of the spiritual. Hertz respected him personally but could not abide what he considered to be Montefiore's distortion of Judaism. It also angered Hertz that the Liberal Jewish leader sought a positive appreciation of Jesus and reconciliation with Christianity, despite the bitter heritage of strife between the two religions. Hertz stood severely aloof from such efforts.

As Meirovich shows effectively, the fundamental adversary was neither Montefiore nor the higher criticism, but Christianity itself. Hertz pointed repeatedly to the pagan, Hellenistic heritage that Christianity had absorbed. Here he had the scholarly support of R. Travers Herford and W. R. Inge, the dean of St. Paul's Cathedral (famous in his time as the "gloomy dean"). What was good in Christianity, the chief rabbi argued, derived from Judaism, whose ethical teaching was far superior.

Meirovich observes that, to the greatest possible extent, Hertz validated his views from the writings of non-Jewish scholars. The eminent American scholar George Foot Moore, who moved from biblical scholarship to becoming an admiring authority on rabbinic Judaism, received respectful attention in the Hertz *Pentateuch*, as did scholars who dissented from higher criticism. Needless to say, the great Jewish exegetes, such as Rashi and Ibn Ezra, were also brought in, but it did not serve Hertz's central purpose to quote them very frequently, indispensable though they were. Hertz's aim was to vindicate Judaism in accordance with modern taste, and to do this he needed to cite modern authors—although he sometimes cut corners by omitting passages in their writings that were less favorable to Judaism. Hertz, in fact, went beyond vindication; his portrayal is of a perfect and infallible Judaism.

A Vindication of Judaism originated as a dissertation at the Jewish Theological Seminary, Hertz's alma mater. Meirovich demonstrates his scholarly credentials as he tracks down long-forgotten articles of the higher critics and skillfully analyzes scholarly viewpoints. Also worthy of mention are the volume's remarkable indexes. There is an "Index of Biblical and Rabbinic Citations" by Gerard Weinberg, M.D., and Dr. Bella H. Weinberg. The latter's meticulous "Index of Names and Subjects" takes up 41 pages in a book whose text, notes, and bibliography (also indexed) comprise only 254 pages.

Meirovich connects *The Pentateuch and Haftorahs* with Hertz's discipleship of two mentors at the Seminary, Sabato Morais and Alexander Kohut. Hertz admired Solomon Schechter and had a soft spot for the institution, and Meirovich consequently makes a claim for the chief rabbi as a product of Conservative Judaism. This seems questionable. There has been a running debate for many years, some of it inspired by Moshe Davis' argument that nineteenth-century historical Judaism, the

founding ideology of the Seminary in 1886, was Conservative Judaism (a term that came into use only later). On this basis, Hertz is claimed for Conservative Judaism. An additional line of argument is that Hertz took a cautiously developmental view of Judaism and Jewish law, which ahistorical Orthodox rabbinic authorities denied.

Actually, Morais and Kohut, and Hertz after them, trod in the area between Orthodoxy and Conservatism, as those terms were used in the twentieth century. Schechter and the Conservatives after him veered toward the left. Hertz, however, moved rightwards, striving with some success to draw the mass of Orthodox immigrants into the Anglo-Jewish Orthodox establishment. One measure was to fortify the orthodoxy of his Beth Din by appointing the renowned Rabbi Yehezkel Abramsky as senior *dayan*. Obviously, by the time he became chief rabbi, Hertz had left any Conservative associations far behind. None, moreover, would maintain that he would have identified with the movement as it exists today.

Apart from this rather superfluous ideological freight, Meirovich has produced a study of great merit. In addition to its detailed textual study, the book does much to clarify the Jewish spiritual needs to which the *Hertz Pentateuch* ministered, and to show just how the stormy, devoted chief rabbi of Great Britain labored to meet them.

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Jack Wertheimer (ed.), *Tradition Renewed: A History of the Jewish Theological Seminary of America*. New York: Jewish Theological Seminary of America, 1997. Vol. 1: xxv + 854 pp.; vol. 2: 872 pp.

These two large volumes represent a truly monumental achievement. Lavishly produced and attractively illustrated, they are physically imposing. No less impressive are the contents. Forty authors, some from inside, others from outside the institution, have written 36 essays covering nearly every conceivable subject related to the Jewish Theological Seminary (JTS). With only two or three exceptions, they have done so with impartiality and critical acumen. The contributors have drawn on a wide variety of sources, especially archival materials only recently made available through the Ratner Center at the Seminary. They have successfully contextualized the Seminary within American society and American Judaism. Although there is necessarily some overlap among the essays, it is considerably less than one would anticipate in a work of this size. The editor, Jack Wertheimer, himself also one of the contributors, deserves the appreciation of the scholarly community for a remarkable accomplishment.

Tradition Renewed consists of three types of articles. The first group of five, chronologically arranged, deals with the administrations of the first five heads of the Seminary: Sabato Morais, Solomon Schechter, Cyrus Adler, Louis Finkelstein, and Gerson Cohen. The second type of essay is devoted to particular institutions associated with JTS, such as the Teachers Institute, the Cantors Institute, the library, the University of Judaism in Los Angeles, and the Jewish Museum. The third cluster views the Seminary in a broader perspective, comparing it, for example, with the Hebrew

Union College and with Christian seminaries; or focusing on a particular issue, such as forms of scholarship, personalities, the Seminary's relationship to Zionism, women's ordination, and relationships among faculty and students.

The Jewish Theological Seminary was the first institution to play a role in what became Conservative Judaism, and its role has consistently been dominant. The preferred term for this relationship, recurring with frequency in these volumes, is "fountainhead." In its initial phase under Morais, however, JTS was a weak institution. Only when Schechter took over in 1902, following what is here described as a "coup d'état," did the Seminary begin to mold a distinctively new form of American Judaism, modern in outlook but privileging central elements of Jewish tradition. The Adler years (1915–1940) proved burdensome for the Seminary, not only because its president (who was not himself a rabbi) continued to live in Philadelphia and carried out his duties at the Seminary part-time, but also because of Adler's imperious style and his distance on Jewish issues from faculty and students. Louis Finkelstein was a man of considerably greater vision, concerned to expand the influence of the Seminary grandiosely into the larger American culture at the same time that its academic life remained focused on rabbinic literature. One author refers to him as "a man with a messianic complex" (vol. 1, p. 541). Where he failed was in relating the Seminary closely to the Conservative movement and its particular needs. Although a few of the essays continue into the current chancellorship of Ismar Schorsch, the initial set of chronological chapters ends with Gerson Cohen. As chancellor from 1972 to 1986, Cohen's principal concern was to broaden and strengthen JTS as an academic institution, though his tenure is best remembered for the divisive struggle over the ordination of women, an issue on which Cohen himself completely reversed his opinion.

Among the topical essays, that of Harvey Goldberg, who observes the Seminary faculty at mid-century from a probing anthropological perspective, is especially valuable. Goldberg presents a fascinating picture of the "symbiosis" between Finkelstein and Saul Lieberman, the Seminary's premier talmudic scholar. Lieberman's dominance, not only over Chancellor Finkelstein but within the institution generally, served to inhibit free expression by other faculty and students, created bitter conflict with the very differently oriented Abraham Joshua Heschel ("Heschel is interested in 'prayer'; not in *mincha*" [vol. 1, p. 384]), and exacerbated the rift in those years between JTS faculty and the often deprecated Conservative rabbinate, whom Lieberman referred to as "nursemaids." Likewise of particular interest is Eli Lederhendler's discussion of the relationship between the Seminary and the state of Israel. As a diaspora institution, it looked to Israel for help in its own work but could not accept a view that placed Israel at the center and JTS on the periphery. It saw itself as tied more to Israel's spiritual and intellectual creativity than to its political institutions and fancied its own role as that of a modern-day Yavneh. In keeping with a general trend, by the early 1980s, rabbinical students were turning away from an emphasis on ethnic Jewish identity and toward a more exclusive focus on individual religiosity, while the Seminary's institutions in Israel obtained only meager support.

A work of this type and scope, with all of its notable virtues, necessarily lacks a unified narrative. To understand the Finkelstein years, for example, one must read here and there in a dozen or more of the essays. A single integrated presentation of that period and of the others in all their complexity is absent. Missing also is a concluding

essay to sum up the broad importance of JTS, as well as essays that would deal analytically and comparatively with faculty contributions according to their various areas of scholarship. The 1986 platform of the Conservative movement, in which the Seminary played the dominant role, should have received more than passing attention.

The image of the Seminary that emerges for the faithful reader after close to 2,000 pages is without question that of a central and significant institution in American Judaism. But one is also struck by the prevalence of “ambivalence,” a word that occurs in a number of the essays. This ambivalence clearly manifested itself in the area of Zionism, beginning with Schechter, who could not abide the secularity of the movement; continuing with Adler, who leaned the furthest away from Zionism; and then with Finkelstein, who, against the mood of the Conservative (and Reform) rabbinate at the time, strongly opposed the creation of a Jewish state. As Wertheimer stresses in his own essay, ambivalence was also manifested toward the Conservative movement, which was viewed as hierarchically beneath the loftier concerns of the Seminary and its faculty, even though the Seminary depended on the movement’s support. There was also ambivalence—and even contempt—directed toward the Reconstructionist movement, created by a member of its own faculty, Mordecai Kaplan, yet theologically and ideologically foreign to the spirit that reigned within the institution. Finally, there was ambivalence as to whether the Seminary should look inward or outward, preserving its ivory-tower atmosphere as a modernized yeshiva of rabbinic learning or facing the issues of the day—whether they be political (such as civil rights or the Vietnam War) or cultural—which would require the Seminary to broaden its sense of mission. It is indeed the virtue of these volumes that one emerges not only with a better understanding of the important role played by the Seminary in American Jewish life for more than a century, but also of the stresses and strains that accompanied that role.

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Zionism, Israel and the Middle East

Louise Fischer (ed.), *Chaim Weizmann, hanasi harishon: mivhar igerot uneumim* (*Chaim Weizmann: Selected Letters and Speeches*). Jerusalem: Israel State Archives, 1995. 451 pp.

This book is the first of a series under the overall editorship of Yemima Rosenthal that is dedicated to the successive presidents and prime ministers of the state of Israel. This collection contains 148 documents portraying the life and activities of Chaim Weizmann, spanning 77 years from his childhood in Motele, a townlet in the Pale of Settlement, to his last days in Rehovot. The book is beautifully produced, interspersed with contemporary photographs and accompanied by illuminating editorial notes. It will serve as a valuable sourcebook for the next generation of Israelis who are not sufficiently familiar with the legacy of Chaim Weizmann or other founding fathers.

The policy of the editorial board was not to present Weizmann through a halo, but rather as a symbol of the best of Jewish aspirations and its ambassador extraordinary. He is shown here as a normal human being with all of his failings, a person subject to passionate feelings, formulating his opinions on events and people on the basis of temporary impulse and driven by an irresistible ambition always to be at the center of affairs. Yet no one reading his correspondence will fail to detect Weizmann's outstanding virtues which, forged and tested with the passage of time, made possible his rise from a dark and forlorn corner of the Pale of Settlement to the high command of the world Zionist movement and to the stature of a world statesman.

Most outstanding among these virtues was Weizmann's boundless dedication to Zionism. "For me, outside this enterprise, which is bound up with my honour and my life, with my best desires and dreams," he wrote to Vera Khatzmann (his future wife), "there exists absolutely nothing."¹ Weizmann's mind, like Herzl's, was tormented by the historical misfortune of his people, "a suffering people . . . unjustly persecuted, a people brutally rejected by its own sons, and yet a giant people, concealing . . . a great and wonderful creative power. . . ." Israel, he firmly believed, "is awaiting its children—and they are . . . returning."²

Nothing in the Zionist enterprise was straightforward, as Weizmann learned the hard way. But his faith never faltered, for Zionism was an organic part of his make-up. His Jewishness and his Zionism were so interwoven that opposition to the second was for him synonymous with rejection of the first.

Hard-hitting in polemics though he was, Weizmann shied away from dogma and ideological wrangling. The fate of Zionism, he was convinced, hinged not on what its antagonists would say but on what its adherents would do. For Weizmann was pri-

marily a man of action. This was in keeping with his dynamic energy, ebullient temperament, and down-to-earth realism.

Weizmann's attitude toward Herzl was ambivalent, ranging from genuinely deep admiration to a stance of ready combat whenever he thought (quite wrongly—as in the case of the Uganda controversy) that Herzl was at fault. Yet despite the clash of temperaments, there was no disagreement on objectives. Herzl's mantle could have fallen on no more adequate shoulders than those of Weizmann. Eclectic in his approach, he could accommodate both Herzl's vision of Jewish statehood and the spiritual Zionism of Ahad Ha'am, his mentor.

Weizmann's time came during the First World War, when he emerged as the central figure in the struggle for the Balfour Declaration. He had no hand in its drafting, but it was he who was largely responsible for bringing British statesmen, public men, and officials to adopt a favorable attitude toward Zionism. His success sprang from the lucidity of his exposition and his ability to put his message across. He was particularly adept at reading the British mind. He found a ready ear because he was able to show that he could influence Jewish opinion and that Zionism was advantageous to Britain. The letters produced in the book under review do not reflect the range of his arguments and the excellence of his techniques. Sir Charles Webster, drawing on his personal experience in British Intelligence during the First World War, wrote: "Dr. Weizmann's work was largely done in intimate interviews. . . . He once told me that 2,000 interviews had gone into the making of the Balfour Declaration. With unerring skill he adapted his arguments to the special circumstances of each statesman. . . . By the time the Peace Conference had begun, his cause had become much a part of British policy."³

Yet the Balfour Declaration was only the beginning. The real challenge was its implementation. Throughout the period of the Mandate, Weizmann had to contend with an obstructive British administration and mounting opposition from the Palestinian Arabs.

He encountered the latter problem soon after his arrival in Palestine in April 1918 as head of the Zionist Commission. After initial contacts, he confessed to Major Ormsby-Gore, who accompanied the commission, that he had found among some Palestinian leaders "a state of mind which seems . . . to make useful negotiations impossible," and he was soon able to detect an anti-British stance that ran parallel to anti-Zionist sentiment.⁴ Ormsby-Gore concurred, and wondered whether it was worthwhile for Weizmann "to continue going to Canossa at the feet of the Arabs. The Effendis of Palestine," he wrote, "will never be an asset to the British Empire. . . ." Like Weizmann, he concluded that "anti-Jewish feeling on the part of the Arabs is equally, if not more, anti-British."⁵

The atmosphere in Aqaba, where Weizmann met Emir Feisal in June 1918, was totally different. Weizmann declared that close cooperation between the Jews and Arabs in Palestine and elsewhere was essential for the progress of both nations: "a Jewish Palestine would assist in the development of an Arab Kingdom and [it] would receive Jewish support." The Zionists, Weizmann argued, would develop the country without encroaching on the legitimate interests of the local inhabitants; there was no intention of ousting anybody; there was enough room in the country for everybody. Feisal, for his part, admitted to being quite sympathetic to Jewish national aspirations. He accepted Jewish claims to Palestine and emphasized "the absolute necessity of an

intimate collaboration between the Jews and the Arabs for their mutual benefit.”⁶ Weizmann’s friendship with Feisal flourished and led to the famous agreement concluded on January 3, 1919, during the Paris Peace Conference. The agreement, however, proved abortive. On his return to Damascus, Feisal was swayed by Palestinian nationalists and, as a result, changed his tune. Disappointed, Weizmann referred to him as a “broken reed.” Consequently, throughout the period of the British Mandate, Weizmann had to face a profoundly hostile Palestinian leadership.

Weizmann also had to wrestle with critics in the Zionist movement. Zeev Jabotinsky, for example, accused him of forfeiting Transjordan, which the Zionists had expected to be incorporated into the Jewish national home. In fact, this charge was groundless. On March 1, 1921, Weizmann had made a passionate appeal to Winston Churchill, the colonial secretary, to retain a strip of land east of the Jordan River, arguing that “the taking from Palestine of a few thousand square miles, scarcely inhabited and long derelict, would be scant satisfaction to Arab nationalism, while it would go far to frustrate the entire policy of His Majesty’s Government regarding the Jewish National Home.”⁷ Churchill, though a convinced Zionist, listened instead to his advisors on the Middle East; Herbert Samuel, then high commissioner, was ultimately responsible for demarcating the boundary that separated Transjordan from Palestine along the Jordan River.

Another serious charge leveled against Weizmann (and, for that matter, also against David Ben-Gurion) was that he had accepted the partition plan of the Palestine Royal Commission (the Peel Commission) of 1937. However, very few were familiar with Weizmann’s deeper motives. His confidential letter to Stephen Wise is illuminating: “Partition is not my project; it has never been and never will be . . . it contains in it germs of a great future, but also grave dangers. . . . We felt that it would be wrong to let the things go by default by simply saying ‘No,’ because the Mandate had been discredited anyhow and the Zionists might fall ‘between two stools.’” And, as a far-sighted statesman, he declared:

It is our destiny to get Palestine, and this destiny will be fulfilled someday, somehow. Our present task is to get a fulcrum on which to place a lever, and, if we are capable, within the area allotted to us to bring in 50,000 to 60,000 Jews a year for the next twenty years or so . . . then our job is to make the best of such an opportunity on our own . . . small sovereign state, leaving the problems of expansion and extension to future generations.⁸

The partition plan did not materialize. In 1939, the British Government announced its White Paper policy. For Weizmann, and the Zionists in general, it was a shattering blow. Weizmann, in particular, felt betrayed. But worse was still to come.

During the deliberations at the UN general assembly in 1947, Britain adopted a negative, if not hostile, stance toward the Zionist enterprise and terminated the Mandate in a way that did not bring it much honor. “The Arabs were told and encouraged to believe,” Weizmann wrote to his old friend Leopold Amery on October 28, 1948, “that as soon as the British go they can sweep down on the Jews and throw them into the sea . . . [but they] were greatly surprised when they saw the resistance of the Jews . . . which has completely upset all [their] calculations. . . .” He went on:

The policy of the Foreign Office is fatal. I cannot describe to you in detail the chicanery to which we have been subjected here. They left Palestine in a completely chaotic con-

dition . . . but in a fortnight everything was put in order . . . and the [infant] State of Israel is running quite smoothly in spite of the war both in the North and in the South of it. . . . I have no doubt in my mind that the British intended to sweep us into the sea with the help of the Arabs. If it did not happen, it is only because the Arabs proved a broken reed.

They could have had the State of Israel as a bulwark of friendship for the British, based on a long tradition and in community of interests. Instead of doing that they have chosen to build on the quicksands of Arab loyalty.⁹

In May 1917, Weizmann proclaimed that, under British protection and, “while not interfering with the legitimate interests of the non-Jewish population,” the Zionists would be able to carry out their scheme and gradually create a Jewish commonwealth. This was their “final ideal.”¹⁰ Weizmann’s proclamation was in line with the intention of the sponsors of the Balfour Declaration. However, it did not turn out this way. If eventually the state of Israel came into being, it was in spite of British opposition, not because of its benevolent support.

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Notes

1. Chaim Weizmann to Vera Khatzman (Rostov), Geneva, 6 July 1901, in *The Letters and Papers of Chaim Weizmann*, Series A, vol. 1, ed. Leonard Stein (London: 1968), 154.
2. *Ibid.*, 26 Aug. 1901 (pp. 178–179).
3. See Charles Kingsley Webster, *The Art and Practice of Diplomacy* (London: 1961), 5–6.
4. Quoted in Isaiah Friedman, *Palestine: A Twice Promised Land? The Creation of a Historical Myth* (Rutgers: 2000), vol. 1 (p. 179).
5. *Ibid.*, 182.
6. *Ibid.*, 184–185.
7. Chaim Weizmann to Winston Churchill, London, 1 March 1921, *Letters and Papers of Chaim Weizmann*, Series A, vol. 10, ed. Bernard Wasserstein (Jerusalem: 1977), 159–162.
8. Chaim Weizmann to Stephen Wise, 29 June 1937, *ibid.*, vol. 17, ed. Barnet Litvinoff (Jerusalem: 1979), 131–136.
9. Chaim Weizmann to Leopold Amery, 28 Oct. 1948, *ibid.*, vol. 23, ed. Aaron Klieman (Jerusalem: 1980), 214–217.
10. Quoted in Isaiah Friedman, *The Question of Palestine: British-Jewish-Arab Relations: 1914–1918* (New Brunswick: 1992), 250.

Reuven Kaminer, *The Politics of Protest: The Israeli Peace Movement and the Palestinian Intifada*. Brighton: Sussex Academic Press, 1996. 248 pp.

Although “politics” is the first substantive word in its title, this is not a political science book, nor is it written by a political scientist. From this stems the work’s greatest weakness. *The Politics of Protest* is authored by a lawyer intimately connected with the subject matter, lending the work a distinct aura of involvement—what

Israelis call *ikhpatiyut*. Depending on the reader's temperament and perhaps political inclination, this characteristic can be considered either an asset or a drawback. It certainly means that the account is not balanced, and also not very scholarly.

The book essentially covers the period from 1977 (Anwar Sadat in Jerusalem) until the initial Oslo accords (1993), with a very short detour into Jewish and Zionist history. Kaminer provides a relatively straightforward historical account: chapters discussing the emergence of the peace movement as a whole and its several groups—Peace Now, Yesh Gevul, Dai Lekibush, Women in Black, The Twenty-first Year, B'tselem, and several other lesser-known peace factions.

The overall analysis runs along two parallel planes: first, the political context (Israeli and international) in which the peace movement operated; and second, the internal divisions within several of the groups, as well as tactical disagreements between different groups. The former level is coherently presented, ensuring that the nonprofessional reader will understand in broad terms what was going on in the Middle East (and in Washington, D.C.) at various periods of time.

It is the latter (and occasionally, strategic) discussions that are problematic—not so much for what is said (the positions of each of the peace groups and subgroups are presented fairly and cogently) but regarding what is not mentioned. The vacuum can be summed up in two phrases: there is virtually no mention of right-wing protest groups; and there is very little use of the large corpus of research literature to be found on extraparliamentary activity around the world in general and on Israeli protest in particular.

For every force there exists a counterforce. This book ignores the other side of the coin. This is not to suggest that Kaminer should have offered “equal time” to the opposing camp, but his book does leave a very unbalanced picture. One example should suffice: in his review of the protest against the Lebanon War during the summer of 1982, we are told of several gigantic peace demonstrations (culminating in the famous Tel-Aviv rally of the “400,000” in September to protest against the massacre at Sabra and Shatilla), with nary a word about the 200,000 demonstrators who gathered in Tel-Aviv on a different night in a massive show of *support* for the war.

To my mind, the lack of adequate theoretical grounding is an even more serious defect. There is no mention whatsoever of the important research and publications of Gadi Wolfsfeld, Ehud Sprinzak, and me—all of whom have written at least one book and many articles on the subject of Israeli protest. Again, an example of what this means can be seen in Kaminer's afterword, titled “Measuring Success and Failure.” To begin with, it is a mere three pages long. Second, it makes no use of the broad range of serious research done overseas (and in Israel) regarding the question of “successful” protest. True, Kaminer tries to sound judicious and balanced, noting that “even when it is most successful, the peace movement is only one of many forces operative in the political arena.” However, his bottom line is clear: “Looking back over a quarter of a century, the peace movement in Israel lists several clear and unequivocal successes over the years” (p. 216). Unfortunately, there is no methodology or systematic analysis to back up such a conclusion.

The impression is that at times the author's heart takes precedence over his head, a danger that Kaminer himself seems aware of: “Despite this involvement [in the demonstrations], I sincerely believe that I have presented a fair and accurate account . . .”

(p. xiii). I have already noted the problem of accuracy—Kaminer’s presenting only half the picture. But “fair”? Let the reader be the judge of how fair the following citations are (emphasis is added):

- Regarding the Six Day War, he writes, “as a result of the war which had been, *according to the official version, forced on it*, Israel conquered large stretches . . .” (p. 7). Setting aside the Syrian and Egyptian “versions,” it is rare to find anyone denying that the war was forced on Israel.
- “. . . there was a growing willingness to admit that the vicissitudes of the conflict and the *nefarious policies of the government* after the victory in the Six Day War, were creating a neo-colonialist reality . . .” (p. 11). According to the dictionary, “nefarious” means extremely wicked and abominable. It is a descriptive word for Nazi actions, but is it fair to describe Israeli policies in this manner?
- “Bar-Ilan University, *known as a stronghold of the ultra-nationalist Gush Emunim* . . .” (p. 146). Most Gush Emunim activists never went to any university; half of Bar-Ilan’s student body is secular; the university has always stood for moderation and for serving as a bridge between camps.
- “The Zionist left, almost without exception, accepted *the United States version of the [pre-Gulf War crisis]* and readily accepted *the official Israeli view that Saddam Hussein was also a dangerous threat to the security of Israel*” (p. 189). Had these words been written before the war itself, one could argue that the author couldn’t read the writing on the wall; but to sneer at the “official version” after the Scuds fell on Tel-Aviv—as if there is any other way of looking at the matter—constitutes tendentiousness, plain and simple.

Given my academic affiliation, it might be said against me that I am out to get the author for his political beliefs. In fact, I have never made a secret of my “leftist” leaning on the peace and security issue. The issue is not the author’s politics, but rather his book’s lack of serious political analysis.

Having said all this, I do recommend *The Politics of Protest* to anyone who needs a detailed survey of the peace movement, especially of the actors and tactics involved. As a resource book for the specific topic, it serves a purpose. For anything beyond that, we shall have to wait for something much more substantial.

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Zach Levey, *Israel and the Western Powers 1952–1960*. Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1997. 203 pp.

The first vintage of academic research on recent history normally appears in publication only some 35 to 40 years after the events: it takes about three decades before documentation becomes available and another ten years or so for historians to digest all of the details. Accordingly, quite a bit of good research concerning the Arab-Israeli conflict during the early 1950s was published only in the late 1980s and early 1990s. Zach Levey presents one of the first works that covers as well the period after the

Suez War up until the end of the Eisenhower presidency in 1960. Following in the footsteps of Uri Bialer's *Between East and West: Israel's Foreign Policy Orientation 1948–1956* (1990), Levey seeks out the basic aspirations propelling Israel's foreign policy. Justifiably, he looks at the main directions of Israel's diplomatic activities during the entire decade, although his major contribution is found in the later parts of his work, which cover the period since 1957.

Levey weaves his narrative around one central theme: "The principal goal of Israel's foreign policy was the creation of a strategic relationship with the United States, the leader of the free world, a goal that . . . Israel did not achieve" (p. 1). Since it could not realize this prime goal, Israel turned to Europe in order to acquire the modern military equipment it urgently needed to offset the flow of Soviet weapons to key Arab regimes. But this was only a "second best" choice that was never considered a "viable alternative to the achievement of a close strategic relationship with the United States" (p. 117). The warm relations Israel developed with France, starting in 1955, were always considered to be temporary and tenuous. Although Great Britain supplied Israel with a modest amount of weapons early on, the first coveted Centurion tanks were released only after the fall of the Hashemite regime in Baghdad in July 1958, and a reversal of long-standing strategic relations was never seriously considered in London. Finally, the relationship with Germany was always a source of internal strife in Israel. Germany, moreover, was not sufficiently involved in Middle Eastern affairs to be considered a significant factor in Israel's security policy.

Levey's story is well narrated and convincingly documented. Nevertheless, his thesis seems to be overstated at some points. It was obvious that Israel's policymakers would prefer to obtain the much desired strategic support from the United States, especially after 1953, when the Soviets began to cast their lot with the Arabs. The Israelis were quite aware of the new realities of the post-1945 world well before the Suez debacle exposed them for everyone to see. In a bi-polar world, they realized, only the U.S. could properly counterbalance the Soviet penetration of the Middle East.

But in this period, such a desire was doomed from the outset. Despite the strong pro-Israeli sentiments that prevailed among the American public, and despite a not insignificant leverage wielded by the Jewish community on U.S. politicians, the Cold War fear of "losing" the entire Arab camp, as well as important segments of the Third World at large, consistently restricted the U.S.-Israeli relationship. As Levey demonstrates, while the U.S. State Department was ready, albeit parsimoniously, to offer Israel financial and technical help, it never considered giving any significant assistance in the field of security.

Further, as Levey well describes, Israel's leadership nurtured some agonizing doubts about the form such cooperation should take. Everyone, of course, agreed that the procurement of military hardware from Washington would be a great boon, but various proposals for security guarantees and mutually binding treaties were regarded as controversial. Most were rejected before ever being put to the Americans; those few proposals that were presented were rebuffed. Indeed, most of the indefatigable efforts invested by Israeli diplomats in Washington look rather pathetic in Levey's story and are justly defined by him as an utter failure.

Nevertheless, Israel's foreign policy during the 1950s in general cannot be summarized as unsuccessful, despite the fact that its primary goal was not achieved. The test of wise policy is its ability to attain goals by circumventing obstacles, albeit often by way of temporary solutions that do not fully meet the original objectives. Overstressing Israel's failure to overcome objective obstacles tends to minimize its success in finding alternative solutions.

Levey's analysis of Israel's relations with France provides a good case in point. He documents well the constant doubts of Israeli policymakers about the wisdom of putting all of their country's eggs into a single French basket. In the long run, as they well knew, French dependence on Arab oil, and other regional and global considerations (for instance, the fact that an overwhelming majority of French colonial subjects were Muslim), were likely to push France away from too close an embrace of the Jewish state. That the Quai d'Orsay tirelessly sought to put spokes in the wheels of any Franco-Israeli cooperation was a constant reminder of this danger. Nonetheless, the fact remains that for more than a decade—not so brief a time in the volatile diplomatic arena—Israel managed to receive most of the arms it needed from France, enough for it to win two wars and develop a nuclear capability. These were no small achievements.

Moreover, although the Jewish community in France had a very limited capacity or desire to influence French policies vis-à-vis Israel, there existed strong sympathy for the Jewish state among the public at large, and there were vested economic and military interests that had a specific stake in a pro-Israel policy during the 1950s and 1960s. Support for Israel was thus much wider and more significant than Levey allows. It was no accident that the constant efforts of the pro-Arab lobby at the Quai d'Orsay to stem policies friendly to Israel were frustrated time and again, even after Charles de Gaulle became president. It seems that heavy reliance on diplomatic correspondence makes Levey somewhat overdependent on the perceptions of Israeli Foreign Ministry officials and diplomats. The justifiably positive assessment of Israeli-French ties made by the Israeli defense establishment is almost lost in his story, and his conclusion that "Israelis viewed France's Middle East policies as ultimately incompatible with their own" (p. 56) is too sweeping a generalization.

Levey's thorough investigation of diplomatic documents in Israel, England, and the U.S. enables him to correct some prior conclusions drawn by a number of historians who lacked access to much of the documentation. (The paucity of French documentation is acknowledged by Levey himself and may not be entirely his fault, given the general reluctance of French authorities to release classified documents.) For example, he refutes convincingly the allegations that there was a division in the Israeli ruling elite "between those who called for close ties with the United States and the guardians of a pro-French orientation" (p. 130). Similarly, he seems to be correct in revising Michael Oren's conclusion that, in 1958, David Ben-Gurion wanted to extract a "strategic alliance" from the U.S. in exchange for allowing U.S. and British cargo planes to enter Israeli air space on the way to Jordan during the crisis of July-August 1958 when King Hussein's throne was under attack. Oren claims that such extortion was to be based on "brinkmanship." In fact, Ben-Gurion's motives in granting air passage were both genuine and farsighted. He fully identified with the Anglo-

American attempt to save the Hashemite regime in Jordan, and he was ready to forgo any short-term gain in order to “mitigate the Anglo-American view that Israel was a strategic impediment to the West” (p. 134).

Levey’s heavy reliance on diplomatic correspondence, however, leads him into a trap common to many young historians: he hesitates to interpret any processes that are not explicitly substantiated by written documentation, while at times overstating the importance of what is to be found in the archives. As historians grow older, they learn to appreciate the fact that not every speech made by a third-rate politician in the Central Committee of Mapai (pp. 87–88); not every comment made by an obscure French diplomat (p. 69); and not every argument crudely concocted by some Israeli diplomat (p. 82) signifies a matter of serious historical import.

This said, and despite my taking issue with some secondary points in Levey’s analysis, this book should be considered the best on its subject matter so far available. The further opening of relevant archival material, especially that belonging to Israel’s security establishment, may help to provide an even more nuanced picture. Until then, Levey has made the best of what was available to him.

MORDECHAI BAR-ON
Yad Yitzhak Ben Zvi

Yaakov Markovitzky, *Gahelet lohemet: giyus huz laarez bemilhemet ha’azmaut* (*Fighting Ember: Gahal Forces in the War of Independence*). Tel-Aviv: Israel Ministry of Defense, 1995. 256 pp.

The marriage of military and social history, common enough in Western historiography, has now belatedly reached the study of Israel’s War of Independence. Yaakov Markovitzky’s work discusses the fate of those Jews, their lives in Europe disrupted by the Second World War, who reached the new state of Israel directly from DP camps or via the British detention camps in Cyprus, there to be recruited into the army as soldiers in the War of Independence. The initial organization and training of Jews in DP camps was for self-defense against the threat of antisemitic violence and for purposes of internal policing. By the time the war in Palestine broke out, the fighting potential of these young Jews (some 20,000 in Europe during the period of January–July 1948) was soon grasped by Israel’s political and military leadership. As early as February 1948, it was decided that healthy, single, displaced Jews of military-service age should be given priority in immigrating to Palestine.

These young men, known as Gahal, an acronym for “giyus huz laarez” (“overseas recruitment”), were registered in their camps in Europe and Cyprus. There they were provided with their initial military training, including physical fitness classes and the use of small arms and machine guns (where available), as well as with Hebrew lessons, songs, and folk dances. Gahal recruits began to reach Israel in substantial numbers during the first truce in June 1948; and their presence in Israeli units became noticeable almost at once. Although by the end of 1948 they still constituted no more than some 18 percent of the army’s manpower, they made an important and timely contribution to the army’s capability, since the Yishuv was rapidly exhausting its ef-

fective human fighting potential. The new immigrants, often motivated by their fresh memories of the Holocaust, provided crucial reinforcements to front-line units, which, decimated in the early struggle with the Palestinian Arabs, had then to face the invasion of the regular Arab armies in May 1948. Although the Gahal thus served in significant numbers only from the summer of 1948, their losses—18.9 percent of the total casualties suffered by Israeli forces—were slightly higher than their ratio in the army.

Leaders of the Yishuv, and David Ben-Gurion in particular, perceived the army as the new nation's melting pot. By arranging for most of the new immigrants to serve in the same units as older immigrants and native Israelis, they facilitated the integration of the Gahal soldiers into Israeli society. Contrary to the popular "Latrun myth," they were not sent to die in place of native Israelis but rather fought and fell with them, side by side—in the process disproving popular prejudice about their lack of fighting spirit and earning a place in Israel's evolving society.

Markovitzky's book is not without some flaws. It is based on a doctoral thesis jointly supervised by a military historian and a sociologist, and the need to satisfy both disciplines has resulted in an uneven narrative. (The demand for a comparative perspective is probably responsible for the unhelpful references to the Nisei and black soldiers in the U.S. army during the Second World War.) Moreover, contrary to the common notion, not contradicted by Markovitzky, the Palmach strike forces consisted not only of native-born Israelis (sabras) but also included a considerable proportion of immigrants. From 1944, about half of the Palmach was drawn from the *hakhsharot*—groups of young men and women who were preparing to establish new, or reinforce existing, kibbutzim. A large number of such *hakhsharot* were formed by new immigrants. In fact, one of the first *hakhsharot* to join the Palmach consisted of a group of the "Teheran children" who had escaped Europe for Palestine via Persia during the world war. Hence, there is no reason for surprise at the relative ease and efficiency with which the Palmach absorbed new immigrants in 1948. Overall, however, Markovitzky's book is too important to allow such relatively minor qualifications to detract from its value in providing a serious scholarly study of a significant chapter in the early history of Israel and its armed forces.

ALON KADISH
The Hebrew University

Henry Near, *The Kibbutz Movement: A History*, vol. 2, *Crisis and Achievement 1939–1995*. London: The Littman Library of Jewish Civilization, 1997. 418 pp.

This voluminous book (succeeding an equally comprehensive volume 1) covers the history of the kibbutz movement from the Second World War to the 1990s. It first investigates the movement's involvement in the war, the impact of the Holocaust on it, and its development during the war years. It then offers an analysis of the critical prestate period and the War of Independence, with special emphasis given to the kibbutz's disproportionate contribution to the organized paramilitary forces—the Palmach and the Haganah—and later, to the Israel Defense Forces (IDF).

The first years of the state marked the apogee of the kibbutz's impact on Israeli society. During the following years, it lost much of its privileged status as many of its pioneering functions, such as immigrant absorption, were taken over by alternative structures. A political crisis centered around leadership issues also divided the kibbutz movement during this period, followed by ideological crises caused successively by the Soviet bloc's virulent anti-Zionist stand of the early 1950s and Nikita Khrushchev's ongoing de-Stalinization campaign. All of this caused disarray within wide sectors of the kibbutz movement, although the kibbutz economic enterprise continued to flourish. From the late 1950s to the late 1970s, the kibbutz was marked by a remarkable organizational stability, the development of cultural patterns that became a national reference point, and the building of an efficient and progressive educational system.

Near examines this chain of achievements and crises by recalling the movement's hesitations, debates, uncertainties, and innovations. He shows how the movement underwent *embourgeoisement* beginning in the late 1950s and how this led to a sense of moral discomfort, as many members felt that the kibbutz was neglecting its original sense of mission. In Near's view, however, the stability that prevailed in most kibbutzim over the years indicated confidence in an increasingly successful undertaking. The kibbutz's major problem, Near argues, was a chronic shortage of manpower. As a voluntary and selective society, the kibbutz was (and is) unable to control its demographic growth; when instability occurs, it causes demoralization and anxiety regarding the future. Members who face personal discomfort are able to leave the kibbutz without difficulties. At the same time, the kibbutz cannot escape corrosive influences from the outside world, as the Israeli public becomes more and more alienated from socialist ideals.

Near began this work many years ago. Ironically, just as he was getting close to its completion, a long-standing crisis affecting the kibbutz movement reached unprecedented heights. In 1977, a political upheaval brought to power the right-wing Likud, ending the labor regime that had prevailed uninterruptedly over a period of decades. Whereas the labor movement had always granted the kibbutz movement status, power, and financial backing, the new regime dislodged it from various preeminent positions and blocked its access to resources. Several years later, the economic crisis of 1983–1985 bore out the most pessimistic forecasts: without government support, many kibbutzim experienced grave financial difficulties, and the existence of some was directly jeopardized.

Near does not analyze the crisis itself and the drastic internal transformation that the kibbutz movement has undergone ever since. However, it is in the context of this crisis that he wrote his last chapter and proposed various scenarios for the future. The prospect of an end to the kibbutz venture can no longer be excluded, he writes, nor the possibility that kibbutzim will become "regular" (that is, noncommunal) villages. He suggests, however, that the most plausible course of events is that the kibbutz movement will undergo pluralization and develop a variety of models according to degrees of communalism. Yet,

even if the apocalyptic scenario turns out to be closest to the truth, the kibbutz movement will still have been the most successful of its kind, rich in social, cultural and moral achievement . . . [and it will] continue to stand out as a unique example of the way men

and women can live together in close community, creativity and dedication to an ideal (p. 361).

This book, together with the first, has the great merit of organizing into a coherent narrative our historical knowledge of the kibbutz movement from its origins until the present. The text is attractively written and always analytical, providing the reader with a comprehensive understanding of a movement that was at the same time an outstanding example of pioneering; an attempt to make utopia reality; a concretization of a revolutionary program; a national organization mobilized for the sake of the creation and development of a state; and, last but not least, an entrepreneurial enterprise. Near, moreover, avoids the trap of transforming this material into a mere heroic saga. He brings to the material a critical mind, and in many places he throws doubt on the moral validity of various decisions made by the kibbutzim.

Notwithstanding, Near's approach is somewhat tainted with what can be called "kibbutz-centrism," that is, a tendency to neglect the impact of decisions taken by the kibbutz on its environment. For instance, he discusses the problem of hired labor from the viewpoint of the kibbutz's values and economic interests, without considering the matter from the workers' point of view. Whereas the kibbutz as employer presents itself as belonging to the same social class as its workers, it behaves in the real world as a capitalist—able at times to be as harsh as any other. Even worse, this capitalist enterprise sees in its workers an "ideological problem" and looks forward to any opportunity it has to be rid of them.

Near, moreover, does not expand on the resulting ill relations that often exist between the kibbutzim and neighboring development towns. Similarly, while discussing how the kibbutzim have failed to integrate immigrants in large numbers since the late 1940s, he does not analyze in depth the short and long-term significance of this fact: the kibbutz movement essentially refused to recognize the transformation of Israeli society, and thus doomed itself to growing isolation from an increasingly substantial part of the society. A related issue that comes to mind is the movement's attempt, during the 1970s, to avoid accepting underprivileged students from the surrounding area into its secondary school system—at a time when the integration of children from different social strata had become national educational policy.

Overall, Near's work is an important contribution to kibbutz history and a valuable resource for students and scholars. It is to be regretted that, regarding a number of issues, it has not gone beyond "kibbutz-centrism" to deliver a fuller picture of the kibbutz's relationship with the broader Israeli society.

ELIEZER BEN-RAFAEL
Tel Aviv University

Zaki Shalom, *David Ben-Gurion: medinat yisrael vеха'olam ha'aravi, 1949–1956* (*David Ben-Gurion: The State of Israel and the Arab World, 1949–1956*). Beersheva: Ben-Gurion University of the Negev Press, 1995. 298 pp.

This book is devoted to a historical examination of David Ben-Gurion's political and strategic conceptualization of the Arab-Israeli conflict in the first half of the 1950s.

This subject has become a bone of contention between new and old historians. The new history, as it is called nowadays, is characterized by sharp moral and political criticism of Ben-Gurion's thought, policy, and personality. Iconoclastic in nature, it seeks to undermine the historical image of Israel's founder and first prime minister. In a nutshell, one can say that the critical school of thought views Ben-Gurion as an intransigent, inflexible, and narrow-minded statesman who missed opportunities for peace and silenced voices, such as that of Moshe Sharett, that offered more reasonable and peaceful alternatives. The debate continues in Israel, where quite a few recent works continue to present a reverential portrait of Ben-Gurion with very little criticism and a considerable measure of nostalgia.

Zaki Shalom seeks to distance himself from the heat of the debate by adopting a neutral stance vis-à-vis Ben-Gurion's conceptual world. He differentiates for this purpose between the sphere of ideal and abstract goals, on the one hand, and practical politics and attainable objectives, on the other. He chooses to focus on the former plane, in a way writing the first chapter in a history of Israeli political thought, with Ben-Gurion in the starring role.

According to Shalom's analysis, Ben-Gurion's political thought was the product mainly of images and perceptions of the "other"—the Arab—side. Overall, as it emerges from Shalom's description, Ben-Gurion's assessment of the Arab world (an assessment not necessarily shared by Shalom) was negative and hostile. Adopting the lofty and patronizing view common to many theoreticians of modernization back in the 1950s, Ben-Gurion viewed that world as being at one and the same time terra incognita and an open book: a corrupt region inhabited by primitive tribes, ruled by tyrants indifferent to the value of human life, and totally in thrall to such concepts as shame and honor. Ben-Gurion's self-image of Jewish society was diametrically opposite, and as Shalom points out rightly, his pessimistic view of the possibility of making peace stemmed in large part from this perception of two cultures, the Arab and Israeli, so profoundly divided. Shalom notes Ben-Gurion's assertion that only when there is similarity in the cultural level of two given societies is there hope for a genuine peace. It would be intriguing to research the implications of such an approach with regard to Ben-Gurion's perception of those Jews who came from the "underdeveloped" Middle Eastern and North African cultures.

The second component of Ben-Gurion's political thought concerned the place of Israel in the world at large. Here Ben-Gurion was preoccupied with the need to show that Israel was an integral part of the West. His difficulty was that there were Western, particularly American, voices in the 1950s declaring that Israel was an obstacle to the westernization of the Middle East. In other words, he had to convince the West that the absence of an Arab-Israeli peace was not to be seen as a stumbling block to close relations between the West and Israel. In pursuit of this goal, Ben-Gurion was greatly helped by the deepening of the Cold War and by his own decision (backed by the governments that he led) to identify Israel with the anti-Communist side.

A central thesis in this book stands in contradiction to a claim made by both new and old historians. Shalom rejects the existence of a serious clash over strategic issues between Ben-Gurion and Sharett (the foreign minister and, from January 1954 until November 1955, the prime minister). Both the old and new historiographies depict Sharett as the dove ready for compromise and Ben-Gurion as the inflexible hawk,

but in the view of the author, there were no fundamental differences of opinion between the two politicians. Shalom thinks that their disagreement involved issues of tactics alone.

I am not sure that the evidence mustered in this book confirms such a view. Even in Shalom's analysis, Sharett emerges as someone who sought affinity with the Arab world, who viewed its culture with empathy, and who understood peace not as the construction of a "Fortress Israel" but rather as integration within the Middle Eastern world. Surely this means that, in his eyes, there was no unbridgeable abyss dividing the Israeli and Arab worlds, and no cultural superiority on the Israeli side. His was a much more sophisticated view of the Middle East and of the major processes developing in the Arab world. However, he was a poor tactician in the infighting of domestic politics, hence his marginal impact on Israeli policy in general.

Shalom quite often succeeds in maintaining a neutral discourse, but when it comes to the Sharett–Ben-Gurion debate on Israel's policy of retaliation against the acts of Palestinian infiltration during the early 1950s, he appears too much as Ben-Gurion's mouthpiece. He intervenes in the debate and concludes that Sharett knew too little about military affairs to be able to provide a suitable answer to the infiltration problem. In reality, what was involved here was a Palestinian struggle that marked the reshaping of the modern Palestinian national movement and its war of liberation. Coping with infiltrations, which in essence began as an attempt by the Palestinian refugees to reclaim their land and property lost in the 1948 war and then developed into anti-Israeli guerrilla warfare, did not require only a military mind. To have someone with an understanding of the nature of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict was more important, and that someone was Sharett, not Ben-Gurion—who, alas, won the day and contributed to the perpetuation of the conflict.

Shalom records Ben-Gurion's dissatisfaction with the borders of Israel as they had been shaped in the 1948 war and concludes that, although he wished to see those borders changed, he did not support the use of force to attain that end. The historical evidence does not support this claim. Ben-Gurion's enthusiastic drive for a war in 1956 was motivated not only by his desire to occupy the Sinai, but also by the hope that the West Bank could be taken by force.

This is a very informative book, the result of erudite and thorough research. Its weakness lies in its pretense of neutrality, on the one hand, and its exaggerated respect for Ben-Gurion's point of view, on the other. Nonetheless, it is an important contribution to the ongoing debate in Israel concerning that nation's past—a debate that is of course about the present and future as much as it is about history.

ILAN PAPPÉ
University of Haifa

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Letter to the Editor

I have just received Charles Liebman's review of my book, *The Masada Myth*, which was published in Volume 14 of *Studies in Contemporary Jewry* (1998). There are four points in this review that I would like to clarify and respond to.

The most disturbing aspect of this review is its lack of fair professionalism, which has a number of expressions.

First, while Liebman uses his review to tell us what he thinks he knows about Masada and history, in this way indirectly exposing his ideological biases (for example, "destroying myths may be quite useful in establishing scholarly reputations"—factually a very questionable claim), he fails completely to provide us with the most basic information about the book he was supposedly reviewing. For example, what is its central argument, its logic of presentation and analysis, its theory or methodology? Simply put, reading this "review" is actually reading about Liebman's own and biased views (which, I gladly admit, he is entitled to), which reveal almost nothing about the book itself. In other words, this "review" is focused on Liebman and not on the book.

Second, Liebman accuses me of "careless reading of texts" but provides absolutely no proof of this rather serious accusation. The only item in his review that may be indirectly linked to this factually wrong statement is his accusation that I ignored three pages about Masada written by Yisrael Levine in 1984, which he states that I "inaccurately attribute[d] to Menachem Stern." The fact is that the reference to Stern's work of 1984 is completely accurate as to year, name of book, and publisher. Moreover, the context in which I present this work (table 8.3, p. 173) identifies the sources by the main names of texts. That particular volume was indeed edited by Stern and has two main pieces in it, one of which is by Levine. All references, of course, identify volumes by the names of their editors. Moreover, even if—just for the sake of argument—Levine had been identified together with Stern, does this substantiate an accusation of "careless reading"? At most, it may suggest a different form of referencing. Furthermore, does finding one reference that Liebman was not too happy with out of a book consisting of 401 pages (of which 24 pages alone constitute the bibliography) justify such an overgeneralized and wild accusation? (And, by the way, even Yael Zerubavel's book—which he seems to like so much—does not mention this particular item.)

Third, Liebman fails to tell us that my book implies a critical view of his (and Don-Yehiya's) rather strange book of 1983, *Civil Religion in Israel*. This must have created a conflict of interest, which a decent professional reviewer would have been careful to avoid.

In summary, Liebman's review fails to note any substantive and/or direct flaws in

the theory, methodology, data, or—for that matter—any factually based aspect of the book, which would warrant the superficial and negative impression it projects.

NACHMAN BEN-YEHUDA
The Hebrew University of Jerusalem

Charles Liebman responds:

I will respond to Nachman Ben-Yehuda's points in the order raised.

1. The central point of Ben-Yehuda's book is "exposing" the story of Masada as a myth that lacks historical foundation but which was useful as a weapon in the hands of the Zionist fathers for purposes of nation-building. What my review stressed was that the kind of mythologizing in which the Zionist fathers engaged was hardly unique to the Zionist enterprise but rather characterized all new nations. The demythologizing in which Ben-Yehuda engages characterizes a "second" generation, in Israel as well as elsewhere. Ben-Yehuda's treatment, however, was unnecessarily cruel and insensitive. I suspect the author may have been extracting his own revenge for his surprise—a surprise that he acknowledges—at learning, fairly late in his life, that the myth of Masada did not conform to reality. Demythologizing, when undertaken by academics, has been helpful in establishing academic reputations, and this may have led some of them to exaggerate their own claims. Evidence of this is to be found in the work of some "new historians" who have, at a later date, revised their own original formulations.

2. Readers can decide for themselves if attributing statements made by Yisrael Levine to Menachem Stern because Stern was the editor of the volume in which Levine's article appeared is or is not "careless reading." However, Ben-Yehuda's second point in that same paragraph is well taken. In charging him with "careless reading of texts," I should have provided further substantiation.

3. When I read Ben-Yehuda's book I noticed the reference to a book of mine, co-authored with Eliezer Don-Yehiya, titled *Civil Religion in Israel*. At the risk of being accused of a "careless reading of texts," I wasn't even aware of the fact that Ben-Yehuda was being critical of what we wrote, much less that he considered the book "strange."

4. What I wrote about the Ben-Yehuda book was not, in my opinion, biased. It is not a good book. What it has to say of substance has already been said by others, historians as well as social scientists. I could have made the same point in a kinder tone, although I did acknowledge that the book had "added important details to our understanding of the process" of how the Masada myth served the purpose of nation-building. The temper of my review was, I felt, a repayment in kind for the callous and contemptuous manner in which the author treated those about whom he was writing.

STUDIES IN CONTEMPORARY JEWRY

XVII

Edited by Eli Lederhendler

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Steven M. Cohen, *Religiosity and Ethnicity: Jewish Identity Trends in the United States*

Eliezer Don-Yehiya, *The Transformation of Jewish Israeli Political Culture*

David Ellenson, “*Judaic Values*” and the Public Religious Agenda

Sylvia Barack Fishman, *Jewish Women, Jewish Learning, and Jewish Spirituality*

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