The Routledge Handbook of Contemporary Jewish Cultures

Edited by Laurence Roth and Nadia Valman

THE ROUTLEDGE HANDBOOK OF CONTEMPORARY JEWISH CULTURES

The Routledge Handbook of Contemporary Jewish Cultures explores the diversity of Jewish cultures and ways of investigating them, presenting the different methodologies, arguments, and challenges within the discipline.

Divided into themed sections, this book considers in turn:

- How the individual terms "Jewish" and "culture" are defined, looking at perspectives from Anthropology, Music, Literary Studies, Sociology, Religious Studies, History, Art History, and Film, Television, and New Media Studies.
- How Jewish cultures are theorized, looking at key themes regarding power, textuality, religion/secularity, memory, bodies, space and place, and networks.
- Case studies in contemporary Jewish cultures.

With essays by leading scholars in Jewish culture, this handbook offers a clear overview of the field and offers exciting new directions for the future.

Laurence Roth is Professor of English and Jewish Studies at Susquehanna University, USA.

Nadia Valman is Senior Lecturer in English at Queen Mary, University of London, UK.

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LIST OF CONTRIBUTORS

Nathan Abrams is a Professor of Film Studies at Bangor University of Wales. He is Editor-in-Chief of *Jewish Film & New Media: An International Journal* and author of *The New Jew in Film: Exploring Jewishness and Judaism in Contemporary Cinema* (2012).

Samantha Baskind is Professor of Art History at Cleveland State University. She is the author or editor of several books, most recently *Jewish Artists and the Bible in Twentieth-Century America* (2014) and *Jewish Art: A Modern History* (2011, co-authored with Larry Silver). *The Jewish Graphic Novel: Critical Approaches*, co-edited with Ranen Omer-Sherman, was published in 2008. She served as editor for US art for the 26-volume revised edition of the *Encyclopaedia Judaica* (2006).

Devorah Baum is a Lecturer in English Literature and Critical Theory at the University of Southampton. She is also affiliated to Southampton University's Parkes Institute for the study of Jewish/Non-Jewish Relations. Her research interests include the religious and the secular, the rhetorical functions of knowledge, psychoanalysis, Jewish literature and philosophy, hermeneutics, critical theory (especially Jacques Derrida), and post-war American literature.

Marcy Brink-Danan is a cultural anthropologist and author of *Jewish Life in 21st Century Turkey: The Other Side of Tolerance* (2011). Her work has appeared in *American Anthropologist*, *Anthropological Quarterly*, *Language and Communication*, *Political and Legal Anthropology Review*, *Religion Compass*, and *Visual Anthropology Review*. She is currently Senior Lecturer in Sociology and Anthropology at The Hebrew University of Jerusalem.

Marc Caplan is a native of Louisiana and a graduate of Yale University. In 2003 he received his Ph.D. in comparative literature from New York University. Since then he has held positions at Indiana University, the University of Pennsylvania, Harvard University, and Johns Hopkins University. His book comparing Yiddish literature with African literature in English and French, *How Strange the Change: Language, Temporality, and Narrative Form in Peripheral Modernisms*, was published by Stanford University Press in 2011.

Judah M. Cohen is the Lou and Sybil Mervis Professor of Jewish Culture and Associate Professor of Folklore and Ethnomusicology at Indiana University. He has authored *Through the Sands of*

Time: A History of the Jewish Community of St. Thomas, USVI (2004), *The Making of a Reform Jewish Cantor: Musical Authority, Cultural Investment* (2009), and *Sounding Jewish Culture: The Music of Central Synagogue* (2011). He has also co-edited, with Gregory Barz, *The Culture of AIDS in Africa: Hope and Healing Through Music and the Arts* (2011).

Yulia Egorova is Senior Lecturer in Anthropology at Durham University. Her research interests include Judaizing movements and the socio-cultural significance of genetic research. She is the author of *Jews and India: Perceptions and Image* (2006), a co-author (with Tudor Parfitt) of *Genetics, Mass Media and Identity* (2006), and a co-author (with Shahid Perwez) of *The Jews of Andhra Pradesh: Contesting Caste and Religion in South India* (2013).

Ayala Fader is Associate Professor of Anthropology at Fordham University. She is the author of the award-winning ethnography, *Mitzvah Girls: Bringing Up the Next Generation of Hasidic Jews in Brooklyn* (2009). Currently, she is researching and writing her next book, *Moral Panic in Brooklyn: Heretics, Skeptics and the Internet*.

Rachel Garfield is an artist who teaches at the University of Reading. She has exhibited in the UK, US, India, Italy, and Canary Islands. Recent published work includes "A Particular Incoherence: Some Films of Vivienne Dick," in Treasa O'Brien, Maeve Connolly, Rachel Garfield, Beverley Zalcock, and Vivienne Dick, eds., *Between Truth and Fiction: The Films of Vivienne Dick* (2009), and "Questioning Perceptions of Jewish Identity in the work of Ary Stillman," in James Wechsler, ed., *Ary Stillman: From Impressionism to Abstract Expressionism* (2008).

Ben Gidley is a Senior Researcher at the Centre on Migration, Policy and Society at Oxford University. He has researched both the sociology and history of Anglo-Jewry, as well as anti-Semitism and Islamophobia. He is the co-author, with Keith Kahn-Harris, of *Turbulent Times: The British Jewish Community Today* (2010).

Amelia Glaser is an Associate Professor of Russian and Comparative Literature at the University of California—San Diego. Her work lies at the intersection of Slavic and Jewish literary history. She is the author of *Jews and Ukrainians: From the Shtetl Fair to the Petersburg Bookshop* (2012), and the translator of *Proletpen: America's Rebel Yiddish Poets* (2005).

Klaus Hödl is a historian at the Center for Jewish Studies at the University of Graz, Austria. He has published widely on Central and Eastern European Jews, the Jewish body, and Jewish identity. He has taught at various universities in Europe and at the Hebrew University of Jerusalem. His most recent book is *Kultur und Gedächtnis* (2012).

Barbara Kirshenblatt-Gimblett is University Professor of Performance Studies and Affiliated Professor of Hebrew and Judaic Studies at New York University. Her books include (with Mayer Kirshenblatt) *They Called Me Mayer July: Painted Memories of a Jewish Childhood in Poland before the Holocaust* (2007) and *The Art of Being Jewish in Modern Times* (2008). She currently leads the exhibition development team for the Museum of the History of Polish Jews in Warsaw.

Misha Klein is Associate Professor of Anthropology at the University of Oklahoma, where she is also affiliated with Judaic Studies, International and Area Studies, and Women's and Gender Studies. Based on ethnographic fieldwork in Brazil, her book, *Kosher Feijoada and Other*

Paradoxes of Jewish Life in São Paulo (2012) examines the relationship between ethnic and national identity among the tiny minority of Brazilian Jews in the world's largest Catholic country.

David J. Leonard is Chair and Associate Professor in the Department of Critical Culture, Gender, and Race Studies at Washington State University. He is the author of *After Artest: The NBA and the Assault on Blackness* (2012) and *Screens Fade to Black: Contemporary African American Cinema* (2006), and co-editor of *Criminalized and Commodified: New Racism and African Americans in Contemporary Sports* (2011).

Andrea Lieber is Associate Professor of Religion at Dickinson College, where she holds the Sophia Ava Asbell Chair of Judaic studies. She is the author of *The Essential Guide to Jewish Prayer and Practices* (2012), co-editor of *Heavenly Tablets: Interpretation, Identity and Tradition in Ancient Judaism* (2007), and has published numerous articles in the area of ancient Jewish and Christian mysticism.

Sarah Lightman is an award-winning artist and curator currently researching a Ph.D. at the University of Glasgow in "The Drawn Wound: Hurting and Healing in Autobiographical Comics." She is the co-curator with Michael Kaminer of *Graphic Details: Confessional Comics by Jewish Women* (forthcoming) and has published in *Trauma Narratives and Herstory* (2013), *Studies in Comics*, and *Expressions of the Unspeakable: Narratives of Trauma* (2013).

Barbara E. Mann is Associate Professor of Hebrew Literature at the Jewish Theological Seminary in New York. She is the author of *Space and Place in Jewish Studies* (2012), *A Place in History: Modernism, Tel Aviv, and the Creation of Jewish Urban Space* (2006), and co-editor in-chief of *Prooftexts: A Journal of Jewish Literary History*.

Jonathan S. Marion is Assistant Professor of Anthropology at the University of Arkansas, Fayetteville. His research explores various issues of performance, embodiment, aesthetics, gender, globalization, translocality, ritualized activity, and activity-based communities. He also writes on visual ethics, theory, and method in social research, and is the author of *Ballroom: Culture and Costume in Competitive Dance* (2008), and *Visual Research: A Concise Introduction to Thinking Visually* (with Jerome Crowder, 2013).

Nils Roemer is the Stan and Barbara Rabin Professor at University of Texas at Dallas. He is the author of *Jewish Scholarship and Culture in Nineteenth-Century Germany: Between History and Faith* (2005), *German City—Jewish Memory: The Story of Worms* (2010), numerous articles, and several co-edited volumes.

Laurence Roth is Professor of English and Jewish Studies at Susquehanna University and editor of *Modern Language Studies*, the scholarly journal of the Northeast Modern Language Association. He is the author of *Inspecting Jews: American Jewish Detective Stories* (2004) and numerous essays on American Jewish popular literature, as well as essays on Jewish bookselling and on scholarly publishing.

Michael Rothberg is Professor of English and Conrad Humanities Scholar at the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign, where he is also Director of the Holocaust, Genocide, and Memory Studies Initiative. His latest book is *Multidirectional Memory: Remembering the*

Holocaust in the Age of Decolonization (2009), and he is also the author of *Traumatic Realism: The Demands of Holocaust Representation* (2000). He is co-editor of *The Holocaust: Theoretical Readings* (2003) and *Cary Nelson and the Struggle for the University: Poetry, Politics, and the Profession* (2009).

S. I. Salamensky is an associate professor in the School of Theater, Film and Television at the University of California, Los Angeles. A scholar, editor, and writer working across the fields of literature, performing arts, film, and culture, she is the author of *The Modern Art of Influence and the Spectacle of Oscar Wilde* (2012)*, Talk Talk Talk: The Cultural Life of Everyday Conversation* (2001), and the forthcoming *Diaspora Disneys*.

Naomi Seidman is Koret Professor of Jewish Culture and Director of the Richard S. Dinner Center for Jewish Studies at the Graduate Theological Union in Berkeley. Her first book, *A Marriage Made in Heaven: The Sexual Politics of Hebrew and Yiddish*, appeared in 1997; her second, *Faithful Renderings: Jewish-Christian Difference and the Politics of Translation*, in 2006.

Larry Silver is Farquhar Professor of History of Art at the University of Pennsylvania. He is the author of *Jewish Art: A Modern History* (2011, co-authored with Samantha Baskind), *Rembrandt's Faith: Church and Temple in the Dutch Golden Age* (2009, co-authored with Shelley Perlove), and *Marketing Maximilian: The Visual Ideology of a Holy Roman Emperor* (2008).

Sherry Simon teaches in the Département d'études françaises at Concordia University. Among her recent publications are *Translating Montreal: Episodes in the Life of a Divided City* (2006) and *Cities in Translation: Intersections of Language and Memory* (2011). She is a member of the Royal Society of Canada and of the Académie des lettres du Québec.

Jon Stratton is Professor of Cultural Studies at Curtin University, Perth, Western Australia. He has published widely in Jewish cultural studies, popular music studies, and studies in race and ethnicity. His recent books include *Jewish Identity in Western Pop Culture: The Holocaust and Trauma through Modernity* (2008), *Jews, Race and Popular Music* (2009) and *Uncertain Lives: Culture, Race and Neoliberalism in Australia* (2011).

Ted Swedenburg is Professor of Anthropology at the University of Arkansas, Fayetteville. He is the author of *Memories of Revolt: The 1936–1939 Rebellion and the Palestinian National Past* (2003) and co-edited *Palestine, Israel, and the Politics of Popular Culture* (2005) with Rebecca L. Stein, and *Displacement, Diaspora, and Geographies of Identity* (1996) with Smadar Lavie.

Nadia Valman is Senior Lecturer in the School of English and Drama, Queen Mary, University of London. She is the author of *The Jewess in Nineteenth-Century British Literary Culture* (2007) and co-editor of six books on Jews, literature and popular culture from the nineteenth century to the present day. She is currently researching the Jewish literature of London.

Abigail Wood lectures in music at the University of Haifa, Israel. She has written widely on contemporary Jewish musics including a recent monograph, *And We're All Brothers: Singing in Yiddish in Contemporary North America* (2013). Her current research focuses on sounds and music in the public sphere in Jerusalem's Old City.

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INTRODUCTION

Laurence Roth and Nadia Valman

A young man in black trousers and an untucked white dress shirt paces in front of his three-piece band crowded onto a small stage in a darkened nightclub, waiting for them to tune up. Not an unusual scene in music venues around the world, except that hanging from four corners around his waist are *tzitzit*, ritual fringes, and on his head is an oversize white knit *kippah* topped with a pom pom and the Hebrew words "Na Nach Nachma Nachman Meuman" woven around the edge. A full beard and sidelocks frame his face as he holds the microphone close to his mouth. "This world is nothing," he shouts, "There's only Hashem, people. Wake up!!" Meet Yishai Romanoff of the Jewish punk band Moshiach Oi!, one of the stars of the documentary *Punk Jews*, directed by Jesse Zook Mann and produced by Evan Kleinman with the help of Saul Sudin. Yishai grew up in an Orthodox home in Long Island, went astray in his teens, and returned to Judaism on a mission, making a name for himself in the New York club circuit playing songs influenced musically by the Dead Kennedys, Bad Brains, The Germs, Circle Jerks, and the like, but with words borrowed from the songs and writings of the Bratslav Hasidim, followers of the charismatic nineteenth-century Hasidic mystic, Nachman of Bratslav. On YouTube you can see Yishai regaling audiences with his mash up of the Ramones' "Blitzkrieg Bop" and the Bratslaver song embroidered on his *kippah*. He calls it "Blitzkrieg Nach."

But this is no musical shtick. True, Yishai exhibits the sly wit common to many punk per-formers; he knows he seems like an oddity even as he yells at, cajoles, and then jokes easily with the crowd. Still, as he told a French Canadian television interviewer, he believes his brand of music and Judaism is consistent with Judaism's foundational, "alternative" sensibility, Abraham rebelling against the status quo. Hasidism, too, was punk in its initial appearance because it was for illiterate Jews who wanted to express themselves spiritually by trusting in their own capabilities and knowledge, cleaving to God outside the formal constraints of that age's normative Judaism. For Yishai, music is an authentic expression of human longing for spiritual sustenance, of delight in God's creation, and a way to hasten the coming of the Messiah, a view promulgated by Bratslavers the world over, though not quite in the same fashion. Like Y-Love (Yitz Jordan), The Sukkos Mob, the Amazing Amy Yoga Yenta, Bulletproof Stockings, Shaindel Antelis, and other performers featured in and caught up in the press for *Punk Jews*—a term that refers not so much to a musical style as to the DIY ("do it yourself") aesthetic associated with punk—Yishai comes across as absolutely serious about his Judaism and clearly having *fun*. He seems ecstatic in

both the usual and mystical senses of the word. There is a joy in his performance devoid of irony or self-awareness; he never winks at the audience with his influences. This is a contemporary Jewish culture as performed in New York, a happily serious affair unconcerned with *what* it is, or what others accuse it of being, and more interested in *where* it is—in nightclubs, in quasi-underground gatherings in the heart of Orthodox Williamsburg, or literally on the streets of Brooklyn. It is not so much a *community* as it is a *network* of young and not so young Jews with shared interests and attitudes about how to make Jewish music in the twenty-first century.

Overburdened by the past, profoundly ambiguous, and highly self-conscious about the politics of Jewish identity, *And Europe Will Be Stunned* (2007–11), a trilogy of short films by the Israeli-born artist Yael Bartana, could not be more different from the music of Yishai Romanoff. The films document three events in the history of the Jewish Renaissance Movement in Poland (JRMiP). In the first, a young Polish JRMiP leader stands in a derelict sports stadium, passionately urging the return of three million Jews to their historic homeland of Poland. The second film, made in the style of 1930s political propaganda, depicts a band of young pioneers building a kibbutz on the site of the former Warsaw ghetto. In the third film, the leader has been assassinated and the movement convenes to mourn his martyrdom and pledge to spread his message and realize his vision.

Bartana's narratives take place in an imaginary time zone that resembles the present, anticipates the future, but simultaneously looks backwards. Their style parodies the visual and aural rhetoric of early twentieth-century nationalist movements: the modernist logo, upturned youthful faces, and stirring anthems most obviously reference Zionism, but also socialism and fascism. These symbols are so familiar and so tainted with associations of atrocity that they are impossible to read except as kitsch. And yet they are employed here not in the service of an ideology of racial purity, but as a moving fantasy of multicultural harmony and the redemption of a traumatized European past. Bartana's irony registers the impossibility of utopian politics today and at the same time, beyond irony, she also evokes nostalgia and longing for collective idealism.

The films confuse the viewer in other ways, blurring the borders of fictionality. Carefully attuned to the theatricality of nationalism, each is a small, carefully staged melodrama. Yet the "actors" are in fact real people playing themselves, including the Polish politician Slawomir Sierakowski. A further dimension of Bartana's project involved the actual creation of the Jewish Renaissance Movement in Poland that she imagines in her films. Her work gives form to a concept so audacious and counter-intuitive that it is virtually unthinkable—reverse Zionism—and then asks the viewer: what if this were real?

Bartana's trilogy speaks to a specifically Jewish history of dispossession and nation-building but, as she says, "This is a very universal story … These are mechanisms and situations which can be observed anywhere in the world" (Bartana 2011). The imagery of the second film, *Wall and Tower*, for example, recall for some viewers the structures built by early Jewish settlers in Mandate Palestine. For others they may resemble concentration camps. These images and the music soundtrack flow seamlessly between the histories of Poland and Palestine, Poles, Jews, and Arabs. Meanwhile the artist belongs to no single country: she lives in Tel-Aviv and Berlin, and (with the JRMiP) she represented Poland in the 2011 Venice Biennale.

And Europe Will Be Stunned is a critically acclaimed work that has been exhibited internationally. Moshiach Oi!, on the other hand, represents a subculture unique to particular neighborhoods of New York City. Yet, replete with paradoxes, both are examples of contemporary Jewish culture that pose the kinds of new questions that this book aims to showcase. These questions are born of the same curiosity and fascination that journalists and audiences exhibit when they discover such productions. But for the scholars gathered in this volume that excitement is also

informed by a sense that these cultural performances reflect new improvisations on the ever-shifting modes of modern hybrid identity, on the current global circulation of commodities, fashions, peoples, and knowledges, on the fast developing technologies of information dispersal, on artists' blurring of distinctions between high, middlebrow, and popular culture, on the complex relationships between people and material objects, and on the uses of religion to order and filter human experience. To explain how and why Jewish studies scholars have come to interpret contemporary cultural phenomena and activities in light of these issues, and what is at stake in doing so, we must first survey recent history in theory and cultural studies and trace how both have shaped present understandings of Jewish culture.

Jews in theory

In the last 30 years, critical theory has proved to be transformative for Jewish studies, bringing new perspectives to the analysis of both ancient texts and contemporary life. Psychoanalysis, deconstruction, postcolonial, and queer theory have been used in numerous creative ways to examine the interpretation and self-interpretation of Jews and Judaism in and through culture. The application of critical theory to Jewish cultural production, however, has its roots in discussions of Jews and Judaism in the work of European poststructuralist thinkers in the 1980s and 1990s. Preoccupied with the question of anti-Semitism, the psychoanalytic philosophers Julia Kristeva and Jean-François Lyotard aimed to theorize ancient and modern responses to Jews; the ideas they formulated were to shape critical discourse on Jews and Judaism lastingly.

In *Powers of Horror: An Essay on Abjection* (1982), Kristeva argues that Judaism is distinguished from pagan religions by its particular means of "purifying the abject" (Kristeva 1982: 17). The abject—the alien, bodily, maternal aspect of the self incompletely repressed by the subject—is controlled in Judaism through a "series of separations" (Kristeva 1982: 94). This logic—as seen, for example, in the dietary laws of the Hebrew Bible, which distinguish clean from unclean (the unclean pointing to "admixture and confusion")—replaces the violence of pagan sacrifice (Kristeva 1982: 98). For Kristeva, anti-Semitism can be understood as the repeated eruption of rage against the Law, the repression of the pagan and the feminine (Kristeva 1982: 180). For Lyotard, in *Heidegger and "the jews"* (1990), on the other hand, it is anti-Semitism, rather than Judaism, that constitutes part of the psychic apparatus of repression. The replacement of pagan/Christian sacrifice by obligation towards an implacable Law means that

> "the jews" are the irremissible in the West's movement of remission and pardon. They are what cannot be domesticated in the obsession to dominate, in the compulsion to control domain, in the passion for empire, recurrent ever since Hellenistic Greece and Christian Rome. "The jews," never at home wherever they are, cannot be integrated, converted, or expelled. They are also always away from home when they are at home, in their so-called own tradition, because it includes exodus as its beginning, excision, impropriety, and respect for the forgotten.
>
> (Lyotard 1990: 22)

As Geoffrey Bennington argues, "just as Jahweh in Judaism and the unconscious in psychoanalysis occupy, according to Lyotard, a position of incomprehensible and unidentifiable but imperative alterity, so Judaism … occupies *just that position* in Lyotard's own work" (Bennington 1998: 190). In this position of radical alterity, and especially in their obligatedness, "the jews" are a reminder of what Western thought has systematically forgotten and cannot represent.

The version of this argument most influential in cultural studies came from the sociologist Zygmunt Bauman. In *Modernity and the Holocaust* (1989) Bauman insists that we must understand responses to the Jews in terms of an "ambivalence" first established in pre-modern Christendom, where the notion of the "Jew," detached from real Jewish men and women, functioned as "the battle ground on which the never-ending struggle for the self-identity of the Church, for the clarity of its temporal and spatial boundaries, was fought" (Bauman 1989: 39). The "Jews" were the ancestors of Christianity yet persisted into the present; they were neither heathens nor believers in the true faith. Continuing into the modern age of nations, the "conceptual Jew," cast as the embodiment of disorder, continued to perform "a function of prime importance; he visualized the horrifying consequences of boundary-transgression, of not remaining fully in the fold, of any conduct short of unconditional loyalty and unambiguous choice; he was the prototype and arch-pattern of all nonconformity, heterodoxy, anomaly and aberration" (Bauman 1989: 39) – what Kristeva describes as the abject. For Bauman, however, it is not Jewish theology that is the origin of the Jews' alterity but rather their social function as guarantors of the stable identity of Church or nation.

The work of these thinkers, concerned with the psychic or social dynamics of anti-Semitism, focuses on "conceptual Jews," and provided the stimulus and theoretical grounding for a rising tide during the 1990s of new research in cultural history on the figure of the "Jew," across a broad range of texts from race theory to high literature to painting to film and television (Gilman 1991; Cheyette 1993; Cheyette 1996; Cheyette and Marcus 1998; Nochlin and Garb 1995; Stratton 2000; Freedman 2000). Nonetheless, the abstract notion of the "Jew" that underlies much of this analysis of Jews in culture has also been subjected to critique. For Max Silverman, the Jews figure in poststructuralist thought as "an ethnic allegory to characterize the tension between order and disorder, reason and the resistance to reason, the self-constituted self and the heterogeneous self, Europe and its other(s)" (Silverman 1998: 198–99) or, as Elizabeth Bellamy puts it, "tropes or signifiers for the decentred, destabilized postmodern subject in a theoretical system that persists in defining (or 'fetishizing') them from without" (Bellamy 1997: 78). Indeed, Jewish difference in the form of specific religious and cultural practices was conspicuously absent from both theoretical and historical work (Boyarin and Boyarin 1993; Weingrad 1996). It was in this context that the first generation of Jewish cultural studies scholars turned to Jewish history. Armed with the toolkit of contemporary critical theory they aimed to overturn, rather than explain, deeply ingrained pejorative notions that had been associated with Jews.

One of the earliest and most striking works in this vein, *Unheroic Conduct: The Rise of Heterosexuality and the Invention of the Jewish Man* (1997) by the Talmud scholar Daniel Boyarin, re-read classical Jewish texts through the lens of gender theory. As George Mosse and Sander Gilman had influentially argued, in the process of instituting modern masculinity as muscular and militaristic, European culture had established a derogatory association between Jewish men and effeminacy (Mosse 1985; Gilman 1991). But, Boyarin argued, early Jewish texts, composed when Jews were subject to Roman rule, evidence a different set of values, in which humility and scholarliness are held in the highest esteem as markers of masculinity. "The vector of my theoretical-political work," Boyarin declared, " … is not to deny as anti-Semitic fantasy but to reclaim the nineteenth-century notion of the feminized Jewish male, to argue for his reality as one Jewish ideal going back to the Babylonian Talmud." Such work constitutes a "project of reclamation of Jewish culture from the depradations of the civilizing, colonializing onslaught to which it has been subject" and also "may help us precisely today in our attempts to construct an alternative masculine subjectivity" (Boyarin 1997: xiv, xviii). Thus for Boyarin, postmodern theory can open up ancient Jewish texts to uncover the oppositional potential of Jewish culture in both its original and modern contexts.

The binary structures that organize the interpretation of Jewishness were challenged in other ways by new theoretical work in Jewish cultural studies. If modern European culture established the racial categories of "Jew" and "Aryan," and the advent of the state of Israel produced the opposition of "Jew" and "Arab," scholars of Middle Eastern culture have argued for different models of identity, uncovered from the texts of the past. Gil Anidjar looks to the Enlightenment category of the "Semite," which, in constituting modern conceptions of religion and race, brought together the Jew and the Arab (Anidjar 2008). For Ammiel Alcalay, too, relocating Jewish culture within the Arab world of the Levant "problematizes many of the prevalent divisions and suppositions regarding the study and categorization of 'Jewish' texts" (Alcalay 1993: 23). The fissure in the contemporary world between Jews and Arabs, especially brutal in the context of Israel/Palestine, "makes the need to stake claims on a past that offers possibility instead of closure both urgent and necessary" (Alcalay 1993: 33). For these scholars, studying literary texts and the complex, multilingual environments of cultural exchange that engendered them, enables us to remember and imagine alternative identities in the present.

The work of Boyarin, Anidjar, and Alcalay aimed to undo assumptions about the relationship between Jews and gender, nation and race. Another freighted term in interpretations of Jewish experience—diaspora—underwent re-evaluation by Daniel and Jonathan Boyarin in their influential article "Diaspora: Generation and the Ground of Jewish Identity" (1993). The ancient loss of political sovereignty and the experience of unrootedness, they argue, far from a tragedy, was in fact constitutive of rabbinic Judaism and centuries of Jewish life. The idea of a Jewish state, therefore, "represents the substitution of a European, Western cultural-political formation for a traditional Jewish one that has been based on a sharing, at best, of political power with others and that takes on entirely other meanings when combined with political hegemony" (Boyarin and Boyarin 1993: 712). The Boyarins look to rabbinic Judaism and the prophetic scriptural texts to reclaim the notion of Diaspora as "a theoretical and historical model to replace national self-determination," in which identity can be based on both attachment to "ethnic, cultural specificity but in a context of deeply felt and enacted human solidarity" (ibid.: 711, 720). The Jewish Diaspora, they argue, offers a universal lesson for our own times, that "peoples and lands are not naturally and organically connected"; moreover that "cultures are not preserved by being protected from 'mixing' but probably can only continue to exist as a product of such mixing. Cultures, as well as identities, are constantly being remade" (ibid.: 723, 721).

For queer theorists too, studying Jews has liberatory potential. A number of queer theorists have been interested in the figure of the assimilated Jew, especially at the moment, in late nineteenth-century Europe, of the simultaneous emergence of the sciences of sexology and race (Boyarin et al. 2003). After emancipation, when Jewish identity might not be overtly visible in form or predictable in content, it could read as coded or closeted. In this context, Janet R. Jakobsen argues, the analogy between Jewish and queer enables us "to recognize, and then resist, the constitution of their relation within a negative discourse" (Jakobsen 2003: 73). However, she then turns to contemporary culture to pose the question: "Must we think … of Jews as the stable ground for an identity? Is Jewishness something that we are? Or, could it, like queer, be something we do?" (ibid.: 82). Drawing on Judith Butler's theory that bodies are not physical facts but are produced by an iteration of performed, recognizable norms, Jakobsen pursues a discussion of the public self-fashioning of Barbra Streisand. In particular, she reads Streisand's nose "not simply as a physical characteristic but as an action—a refusal, in fact—a refusal to get it 'fixed'." Thus, in Jakobsen's argument, "Streisand's Jewishness is related not to her heritage per se but to her actions" (Jakobsen 2003: 83). This approach enables us to consider the Jewish body, once the denigrated object of racial theory, as an aspect of Jewish cultural practice.

Yet while the image of Barbra Streisand has proved remarkably amenable to theoretical analysis, it is something of an exceptional case. Indeed we might note the more common *disjunctions* between theorists and practitioners of modern Jewish culture: writers and artists working in the late twentieth century were more concerned with reconstructing identities than with deconstructing them. One key feature of Jewish art and literature, for example, has been the persistent challenge it has posed to a heritage of assimilation and its erasure of Jewish difference. Recent British Jewish writers, for example, according to Bryan Cheyette, deliberately subvert the values of upward social mobility and staunch patriotism that characterized the immigrant generation (Cheyette 1998). In the American art world, meanwhile, argues Norman Kleeblatt, the complex nature of Jewish identity has only been voiced since the 1990s, emerging from a period when assimilated Jewish artists and critics were highly visible while Jewish particularism remained marginalized. American artists began to address Jewishness through irony, paradox, and humor; they confronted normative physical and aesthetic values through parodic reworkings of ethnic stereotypes in popular culture, they commented on the commodification of Judaism through the visual rhetoric of pop art, they produced witty feminist reworkings of traditional ritual (Kleeblatt 1996). On the entry wall to the New York Jewish Museum's exhibition *Too Jewish? Challenging Traditional Identities* (1996) were inscribed the questions: "Who represents us? How are we represented? How do we represent ourselves?" (Boris 2007: 21). Rather than drawing on a Jewish identity conceived in terms of alterity or indeterminacy, these writers and artists articulated their critique of the dominant culture through self-assertion—through being "too Jewish."

As the twenty-first century began, however, theorists and cultural producers began to have more and more to say to each other. The curatorial principles informing *The New Authentics: Artists of the Post-Jewish Generation* (2007) at the Spertus Museum in Chicago were underpinned by some new assumptions: that all identities are constructed, that they are multiple, hybrid, and uncertain, that Jewish communities are plural and dynamic. Following similar developments in the curation of black and ethnic minority artists, artists were no longer required to speak exclusively to their identities as Jews. Their work might draw partially or obliquely on Jewish heritage and memory, but could also respond individually to both personal circumstances and social forces. The legacy of the Holocaust, for example, often appears indirectly, its imagery used, the curator Staci Boris explains, "as source material in the service of raising broader issues, from universal humanitarian concerns to aesthetic challenges. For these artists the Holocaust has global implications as well as personal meaning and becomes part of a larger discourse on the ways in which history and identity are transmitted, constructed and interwoven" (Boris 2007: 24). The work of Orthodox-raised painter Shoshana Dentz, for example, explores the imagery of the keffiyeh design, creating "an undulating optical abstract pattern that conjures myriad politically laced references: a shrouded body, a rolling landscape, or a seemingly endless chain link fence, like one that might surround a refugee camp or define a border" (Nelson 2007: 73). Later work constructed around the form of barbed wire pursues the symbolism of enclosure, containment, and power derived from and alluding to multiple sites: the concentration camp, abandoned non-spaces in US inner cities, the Israeli security fence. In Dentz's repeated manipulation of perspective, Sarah Giller Nelson insightfully notes, "'What side of the fence are you on?' takes on literal, political and moral dimensions" (Nelson 2007: 77); yet neither the artist's nor the viewer's own identity can provide easy answers.

Perhaps most challenging of all manifestations of contemporary Jewish culture is the development of what Ruth Ellen Gruber has called the "Jewish-style" restaurant, entertainment, and souvenir industry in post-Communist eastern Europe. The branding and marketing of a set of signifiers associated with Hasidic Jewry (beards, black hats, earlocks) in Krakow, Kiev, and

Prague has facilitated a successful tourist economy and local economic regeneration. However, these kitsch, and often crass, forms of nostalgia for the lost world of east European Hasidic Jewry frequently draw on the use of racial stereotypes with little regard for the historical weight they carry. This commercial appropriation of "Virtual Judaism" in places where Jewish populations were decimated has attracted considerable critique. Yet, as Gruber shows, the same souvenir object (the widely available, mildly caricatural "Jew" figurine) is understood differently by different Jewish and non-Jewish purchasers: as an example of traditional folk art, an ironic reflection on stereotyping, or a representation of Jewish authenticity. The social picture, moreover, is also growing more complex, with the recent involvement of Jews in these enterprises, the revival of Jewish religious and secular lives in these locations, and the new forms of Jewish cultural life that are now emerging, more integrated with the contemporary non-Jewish environment than oriented towards an imagined past (Gruber 2011). Rather than reading representations of Jews entirely in terms of the historical associations they evoke, analysts of contemporary Jewish culture must also consider its multiple sites of consumption and interpretation.

New work on contemporary, rather than historical Jewish cultures has also resulted in a rethinking of the theoretical terms in which Jews are discussed. In their study of Jews in western urban centers, for example, Caryn Aviv and David Shneer point out that the notion of diaspora, so central in recent years to an understanding of the particularity of the Jewish historical experience, now appears redundant in the context of the increasing affluence of the Jews on the one hand and increasing global mobility on the other. Jews no longer understand themselves in terms of their affiliation either to nation-states or to Jewish nationalism, but instead identify with local sites of belonging that they themselves have created. Aviv and Shneer assert: "Jews today craft identities, not as diasporic, homeless, or exilic subjects but as people rooted in and tied to particular places" (Aviv and Shneer 2005: 19).

It is crucial to bear in mind, however, that there is no more consensus in the contemporary world than there ever has been about who is a Jew. While Jews in Moscow or New York display a confident rootedness, and require authorization by neither nation-state nor Zionism, others remain outside the pale. The Lemba tribe of Southern Africa, for example, or the Igbo of Nigeria, who have longstanding traditions of Judaic cultural practice, are not regarded as halakhically Jewish. It is these marginalized Jews who are the subject of the newest subfield of Jewish studies, genetic anthropology; in a strange irony, discussion of Jewish origins and Jewish identity has, most recently, returned once again to the Jew's body. As the twenty-first century gets underway, then, this appeal to biology joins the array of divergent directions for theorizing contemporary Jews. While many critics continue to explore Jewishness as a site of radical ambiguity, others now consider the specific ways that it is produced, reproduced, and consumed in everyday life.

Jews in contemporary cultures

Many of these new directions exploring the various constitutions and representations of Jewish identity and cultural diversity were anticipated and illustrated by the groundbreaking 1997 critical anthology, *Jews and Other Differences: The New Jewish Cultural Studies*, edited by Jonathan and Daniel Boyarin. Essays on memory and self-fashioning, the rhetorical and political uses of discourses about Jews, and on the ways that bodies, languages, and material goods articulate and construct Jewish identities reflected the adoption and hegemony of poststructuralist and postcolonial theory and criticism among researchers in the social sciences and the humanities. As we have shown, those critical perspectives transformed the ways in which scholars questioned the

making and meaning of cultures and they greatly expanded the topics and subject matters they addressed. They also reflected the ways that attention to race, class, gender, and sexuality had transformed the landscape of the modern university. The Boyarins pointed to the formation of British cultural studies in the 1970s "when the dismantling of the British empire was beginning to force a reshaping and rethinking of the British university system" (Boyarin and Boyarin 1997: vii), but readers in the US would also have recognized that the impact of British cultural studies on the American academy coincided with changes in the US university system in the aftermath of the civil rights movement of the 1960s, which both expanded and remade the departments in which faculty taught and the canons that students encountered.

The Boyarins' introduction explained what the new Jewish cultural studies looked like in practice toward the end of the millennium, and what issues and concerns connected and distinguished it from cultural studies in general and US ethnic studies in particular. Perhaps it is too personal a note to say how refreshing it was to read, finally, an acknowledgment of the friction between an older model of Jewish studies in the academy, which seemed self-referential and overly text-centered, and "programs such as Latino, African American, or gay and lesbian studies—those 'particulars' where the most exciting work in cultural studies often gets argued through and articulated" (Boyarin and Boyarin 1997: ix). It was inspiring, as well, to read that "one of our main goals is to move toward recognition of Jewish culture as part of the world of differences to be valued and enhanced by research in the university, together with the differences of other groups hanging onto cultural resources similarly at risk of being consumed by a liberal universalist ethos," and that such work "will have political and social effects" (ibid.: xi). The new Jewish cultural studies thus promised young scholars and a new generation of students not only new intellectual work to engage, but also a meaningful place at the university table and a renewed significance amidst programs and researchers at the cutting edge of work exploring the heterogeneity of cultures and identities.

Almost two decades later the Boyarins' volume remains a prescient documentation of where Jewish studies was headed as it entered the twenty-first century. In addition, its emphasis on modernist and contemporary phenomena suggested that contemporary changes in Jews' social, cultural, and political arrangements in the US, UK, Europe, and Israel—especially evident in popular and mass culture—were ripe for scholarly investigation. To be sure, the Boyarins and the contributors to their volume were not the only ones in Jewish studies who intuited these portents, who engaged research projects that considered race, class, gender, and sexuality, or who militated for Jewish representation and inclusivity in university curricula and faculty. But the volume gave prominent voice to a shift in Jewish studies that took place over the latter half of the twentieth century and whose outcome is evident in the title of David Biale's *Cultures of the Jews: A New History* (2002): the emphasis is on *cultures* in the plural, with "culture" very broadly defined as not "just the literary or aesthetic products of a society," but also "the practice of everyday life. It is what people do, what they *say* about what they do, and, finally, how they understand both of these activities" (Biale 2002: xvii). As Ra'anan Boustan, Oren Kosansky, and Marina Rustow argue in their introduction to *Jewish Studies at the Crossroads of Anthropology and History: Authority, Diaspora, Tradition* (2011) this "pluralist trend," now dominant in Jewish studies, is characterized by scholars' examination of a wider range of texts, their interest also in other modes of cultural expression, and their inclusion of previously neglected social groups and geographical regions (Boustan et al. 2011: 2). This *Handbook,* then, offers a look at where this pluralist trend has led in terms of scholarly research into contemporary Jewish cultures as well as at the material and phenomena inciting such work and revealed by it.

In that light, the most important development this *Handbook* reflects is that the earlier emphasis in Jewish studies on cultural identity has given way to an emphasis on cultural

dynamism. The Boyarins' book focused—not surprisingly given their historical moment—primarily on identity and on identity politics. The motivating questions their contributors asked were meant to interrogate and unmoor intellectual certainties about defining Jews, Jewishness, Jewish discourses, or a unitary Jewish culture and to expand the social and political meanings of a Jewish identity. As the Boyarins say right at the start of their introduction, the new Jewish cultural studies seeks, first, "to discover ways to make Jewish literature, culture, and history work better to enhance Jewish possibilities for living richly; and second by uncovering the contributions that Jewish culture still has to make to *tikkun olam*, the "repair of the world" (Boyarin and Boyarin 1997: vii). While that elevating and redemptive stance is of a piece with the Boyarins' intellectual project at the time, their mission for Jewish cultural studies no longer speaks to a new generation of students and scholars, who are less interested in reclaiming the meaning and purposes of a Jewish identity than in tracking the varieties and import of contemporary Jewishness and Jewish cultural productions. The vexing questions now are not about—or at least not simply about—selfhood, difference, and the politics of inclusion and representation in higher education. They are about trying to grasp the fast moving shape and dynamics of contemporary Jewish cultures as they are produced and experienced by people in real time within specific material locations and while enmeshed by the fluctuating, interconnected influences of human social and political relations.

Such questions about cultural dynamism owe their formulation to a number of new perspectives in the humanities and social sciences, one of the most important being the "new materialism." This critical perspective is attuned to the uses and meanings of matter when interpreting contingent and fluid social and cultural formations or the production, circulation, and consumption of both the canonical and the popular arts. It responds to what its practitioners believe was an over-emphasis on language and textuality in late twentieth-century critical theory that limited attention to the social, cultural, and political implications arising from the inter-relation of bodies, objects, and ideas. That oversight resulted, Diana Coole and Samantha Frost argue, in the dominance within the academy of "idealist assumptions" about human reality that focused on subjectivity—which is to say on the vagaries of human consciousness and self-understanding—and so privileged thinking about, and investigations of, "idealities fundamentally different from matter and valorized as superior to the baser desires of biological material or the inertia of physical stuff" (Coole and Frost 2010: 2). Their call for a new materialism, one no longer under the shadow of older approaches indebted to phenomenology or Marxism, resonates in many ways with the ambitions of the scholars gathered in this volume, and reflects a renewed attention to the quotidian and performative aspects of contemporary human activity and experience:

> This means returning to the most fundamental questions about the nature of matter and the place of embodied humans within a material world; it means taking heed of developments in the natural sciences as well as attending to transformations in the ways we currently produce, reproduce, and consume our material environment. It entails sensitivity to contemporary shifts in the bio- and eco-spheres, as well as to changes in global economic structures and technologies. It also demands detailed analyses of our daily interactions with material objects and the natural environment.
>
> (Coole and Frost 2010: 3–4)

Scholarship in this mode is thus prepared to acknowledge and take seriously a very wide range of contemporary cultures and cultural productions, and to analyze them in creatively cross-disciplinary and interdisciplinary frameworks. Its ethos is also conducive to pragmatic views about

the dynamism of social and cultural power, what Anna Lowenhaupt Tsing calls the "friction" inherent in the shared places, spaces, and networks of human activity and experience. For Tsing and others it is crucial now for scholars to acknowledge "the awkward, unequal, unstable, and creative qualities of interconnection across difference" that characterize today's unpredictable global flows of "goods, ideas, money, and people" because they so aptly illustrate "that het-erogeneous and unequal encounters can lead to new arrangements of culture and power" (Tsing 2005: 4–5).

In Jewish studies this turn toward questions about cultural dynamism has fueled a new surge of investigations into the flux and surprising combinatory shapes of contemporary Jewish cultural practices, performances, negotiations, translations, discourses, and artistries. Jonathan Freedman, who works in the intersection between American studies and Jewish studies, has perhaps best expressed the excitement and intellectual purpose scholars find in examining contemporary Jewish cultures from "multiple conceptual contexts" that acknowledge the quicksilver nature of these cultures: "It is, I have come to believe, in the dynamic interplay between individual and collective imaginations, new technologies and the social and cultural institutions they spawned, and the enlarging but reshaping reading, listening, and viewing publics that new configurations of social life are scouted out, tested, and shaped well before they enter into political con-sciousness" (Freedman 2008: 16). The goal for scholars who share Freedman's outlook is not so much fixing the distinctiveness or singularity of these new configurations, but rather trying to understand their construction and dissemination as well as their implications for future social and political relationships and cultural arrangements.

In order to showcase the diversity of phenomena and research that this new focus on cultural dynamism brings into view, we commissioned essays, and opted to reprint a few landmarks of current scholarship, that provide as broad a survey as possible of new work, and that link par-ticular case studies to a wide range of scholarly issues and concerns. The volume begins by surveying how various disciplines define "Jewish" and "culture," two very slippery terms. While interdisciplinarity is one of the key features of contemporary Jewish cultural studies—an acknowledgment of the overlap in research interests among scholars as well as their openness to borrowing methodologies as they see fit—disciplinary perspectives help clarify the distinctive tools and analytics that may be employed in defining and examining something called "Jewish culture" and in gaining purchase on the cultural implications, social challenges, and intellectual stakes involved in such phenomena. The eight disciplinary perspectives included in this *Hand-book* allow readers to consider the gamut of approaches to cultural activities that generally have multiple aesthetic effects and interpretive audiences. They underline that scholars have numer-ous methodological choices and combinations available to them. Disciplinary perspectives thus provide scholars and students with questions and terms of reference to which they might otherwise not have access from outside their own discipline. They also suggest the ways that traditional disciplines themselves have been challenged and expanded by studying Jewish culture. In short, new patterns of research into Jewish cultures have broken down *and* reinvigorated disciplinary boundaries, a development we wanted this *Handbook* to acknowledge and reflect.

This critical refiguring and re-inscription of the arenas in which Jewish studies research is taking place is reflected as well in the section that follows introducing new theorizing about contemporary Jewish cultures. Instead of commissioning reports from specific theoretical per-spectives (i.e. psychoanalysis, Marxism, postcolonial theory, queer theory, etc.), we divided this section by theoretical themes. These better capture and present the scholarly approaches—all operating at the interface between Jewish and non-Jewish literatures and cultures, all employing insights from a variety of theoretical schools and movements—that insert Jews and Judaism into broader debates in contemporary critical theory. Importantly, it is not just the practice of Jewish

cultures but also their study and theorization that is hybrid and in dynamic relation to non-Jewish contexts and environments. These themes thus help to illustrate those relations and to sort out different modes of understanding contemporary cultural dynamism, especially as those modes are brought to bear on particular aspects of literary and artistic expression and on everyday life among Jews around the globe. Some, like "textuality" and "religion/secularity," illustrate continuing concern with and speculation about Jewish identity, albeit as a *process* marked by polyvocalism and negotiation, and one always informed by changing aesthetic, historical, and political contexts. Others, like "power" and "memory," stress how Jewish cultures are continually subject to social and political forces from both within and without that ultimately privilege certain cultural formations and practices over others, but that are also mustered in service of cultural reflection and introspection that can lead to new configurations of Jewish social and cultural life. And "bodies," "space and place," and "networks" introduce new scholarly idioms for the various ways that modern and contemporary Jewish subjectivities are mutually constituted with matter, as well as for the mobile, hybrid, and contingent nature of Jewish materialisms, cultural geography, and social/cultural interconnections in the digital era.

It is precisely in the interest of bringing matter to bear on the abstractions of scholarly research and theorizing that we close this *Handbook* with "Case Studies." These illustrate the numerous ways that scholars investigating contemporary Jewish cultures deploy the disciplinary, interdisciplinary, theoretical, and thematic perspectives mapped out in the first two sections. But they also exemplify the focus and rationale of this *Handbook* in that they are grouped in mini-clusters that speak to specific topics related to the dynamism of contemporary Jewish cultures. The section begins with three essays on Jewish identity performances by both Jews and non-Jews in Europe, Central Asia, Australia, the UK, and Israel that explore memory and memorialization, the performativity of ethnicity/race/gender/sexuality/nationalism, and discursive history. These make clear the sweep, scale, and diverse locales of contemporary Jewish cultures, and their relay through global media and social networks by performers and audiences. An essay considering the place of non-Jewish audiences for a Turkish–Jewish cultural production and two essays on Yiddish, globalization, and urban space—both of which reflect on the inter-relations between the local and the global in North America—comprise the next mini-cluster. These explore media production and minority representation, cultural intercommunication and the politics of translation, and spatial mediation; they indicate why language is in many ways the issue of the moment in Jewish studies because it is quintessentially mobile and contingent, embodied and mortal. Two essays on Orthodox Jewish cultures and their public, material presentations make up a mini-cluster that interrogates gendered spaces, self-identification, religious consumer culture, and the significances of bodies (and their voices) for cultural negotiation and presentation. Both underscore the dynamic nature and cultural diversity of contemporary Orthodox Judaism, which is still too often viewed by journalists and the general public as a homogenous cultural entity and a kind of recrudescent "fundamentalism" that is unaffected by or at best unconcerned with contemporary cultural changes and trends. Two essays on Jewish subjectivity in art and an essay on Jewish identity in sports return attention to the ways that Jewish identity politics are bound up with shifting historical and ideological contexts, as well as the ways that gender, power, and privilege affect constructions of contemporary Jewish memory, Jewish agency, and Jewish subject positions. The section ends with a mini-cluster on two important new developments in contemporary Jewish cultures that speak directly to the scholarly concerns of the new materialism: the rise of a "Jewish genetics" and the overwhelming prevalence of philanthropic venture capital in stoking new Jewish cultures and religiosity.

Any conclusions this volume might offer about contemporary Jewish cultures and their study will by necessity be in the details each section and every essay brings to light. We trust that the

cultural patterns those details suggest, and the future social and cultural arrangements they augur, will be evident through the ways that our readers make connections between the case studies, new theorizing, and disciplinary perspectives. As the contributors to this volume will show, there is no one approach to interpreting the two cultural productions that began this introduction, and no one answer to the questions they raise about film and music, contemporary European, Israeli, and US Jewish cultures, and the quick changing spaces and places of vernacular and imaginative Jewish performances. But we do believe the approaches and questions presented in this volume are the most persuasive and productive, that they better equip us to recognize and appreciate the next innovative filmmaker or the next unorthodox musician who even now is stepping in front of a crowd somewhere, ready for a show.

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PART I

Defining terms

Disciplinary perspectives

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1
ANTHROPOLOGY

Misha Klein

Roots

Like other fields defined by a geographical area or cultural group, Jewish Studies has developed primarily through the disciplines of history and literature, with contributions from sociology and demography. With a few notable exceptions, anthropological perspectives have been largely absent from the discussion. This lacuna is in part an effect of the way that area studies emerged within the academy, and partly it is a reflection of the interests and materials available within the field of Jewish Studies in particular. It is also an index of the way in which anthropology has developed. The history of anthropology, especially as it has developed in the United States, has long been entangled with Jews and the study of Jewishness and Jewish cultures. However, it is only at the turn of the twenty-first century that anthropology has directly embraced the study of Jews and with full recognition of the contributions that the study of Jewishness can make to a variety of subfields within anthropology. The resulting theoretical developments also have insights to offer the interdisciplinary field of Jewish Studies.

The foundations for this mutually beneficial relationship between anthropology and Jewish Studies were laid as anthropology emerged in the United States, and in the singular persona of Franz Boas. There is little doubt that Boas became attuned to the social consequences of cultural difference though his experiences as a Jew in his native Germany. Trained in physics, Boas came to anthropology by way of questions that eventually came to be known as "cultural relativism," which in its broadest sense means that cultures need to be understood on their own terms, and not through the lens of another culture. The significance of this often misunderstood concept for the understanding of Jews really only came to full fruition in the later part of the twentieth century, as anthropologists undertook research on Jewish cultures around the world; prior to this time, Jews were not considered a fully legitimate object of study, partly because the historical legacy of anthropology meant that scholars tended to study primarily foraging and tribal peoples and those who had come to the attention of core nations through colonial and expansionist initiatives. While often accused of conducting "salvage anthropology" in order to create a record of rapidly disappearing cultures, Boas' research agenda was far more complex than a frantic attempt to catalogue cultural variation. As a methodological stance, cultural relativism insists that there are worldviews that are not fully knowable from the outside, and that they consist of more than a set of distinctive practices and knowledge of local flora and fauna. Boas'

approach encompassed broader questions about the human mind and the nature of humanity. As such, the anthropological study of Jews and Jewishness must be understood as an endeavor to comprehend the full range of human experience within which individual research projects do not simply represent one more chapter in the catalogue of human variation, but shed light on larger questions about humanity as a whole.

As anthropology expanded in the post–war period, scholars took it upon themselves increasingly to research industrialized and familiar people. With the political upheavals in the U.S. and worldwide during the 1960s and 1970s, anthropologists began to study urban peoples, ethnic groups, and those who could read and respond to what they had written. This forced greater accountability on the part of anthropologists, both in terms of the substance of what they wrote, and also in terms of the significance of their research questions and the outcomes for the study population. Changes in anthropology also required that anthropologists justify their research vis-à-vis the contributions to be made to our collective knowledge about humanity as a whole, a fundamentally comparative project. As such, the increasing emphasis on the study of Jews in anthropology is rooted in the recognition that these scattered populations who consider themselves to be related genetically, historically, culturally, and religiously, offer us a rich example of the tremendous adaptability of humans, as well as the power of ideology.

Who is a Jew?

Franz Boas conducted research and trained students in all four of the major subfields of anthropology – physical, archaeological, linguistic, and cultural – an approach that distinguished the development of anthropology in the US, in contrast to other national scholarly traditions. Boas and his students made use of these varied approaches in considering "the Jewish question."

Physical anthropology, or the study of humans as a species through the framework of evolution and adaptation, gave Boas and several of his best-known students a platform from which to rebut the prevailing eugenicist ideas that enjoyed popularity in the U.S., Europe and elsewhere, and which also drew on physical anthropology. A significant goal of the anthropological project over the last 100 years has been to debunk the notion that the human species can be divided into "races," or biologically distinct groupings. This project began with Boas and several of his students, who used the example of Jews to build a case against the existence of biological races. The perennial question of "who is a Jew?" led several of these scholars to begin to dismantle the concept of race, first by considering the interaction of culture and biology. Boas (1912) began with a consideration of immigrants in the U.S., using anthropometric analyses to demonstrate that the children of immigrants were demonstrably different from their parents – making clear that the environment (nutritional, hygienic, and cultural) has immediate and significant effects on how humans respond to their genetic potential. While the eugenicists argued that biology determined culture, and that cultural differences were therefore biologically encoded, Boas dismissed biological determinism, instead emphasizing that cultural differences "depend upon outer conditions that sway the fate of the people, upon its history, upon powerful individuals that arise from time to time, upon foreign influences" (Boas 1939: 13). For Boas, culture was something dynamic and responsive, not something rigid and predetermined. In the lead article in the inaugural issue of the journal *Jewish Social Studies*, Boas considered the relationship between "heredity and environment," and cautioned that "the existence of a cultural personality embracing a whole 'race' is at best a poetic and dangerous fiction" (Boas 1939: 14). By "cultural personality" he meant a set of behavioral and attitudinal characteristics attached to a particular group, and called the idea "poetic" because of the tenacious desire to embrace so-called positive stereotypes as if they were inherent rather than learned, and to fail to see that they are

merely the flip side of bigotry and violence. It is also worth noting Boas' prophetic use of quotation marks around the word "race" because of how that concept was employed in his native Germany to distinguish Jews and other groups, laying the groundwork for the holocaust to come.

Some of Boas' best-known students, including Alfred Kroeber (1917) and Melville Herskovits (1927, 1960 [1949]), used the example of Jews to think about the concept of "race." For Herskovits the question of "race" in regards to Jews was compelling precisely because attempts to define Jews have included such varied and slippery concepts as "race, people, nation, religion, cultural entity, historic group, [and] linguistic unit" (Herskovits 1960 [1949]: 1491).

Recent developments in genetics have reinvigorated the "poetic and dangerous fiction" of race because of fundamental misunderstandings of genetic science on the part of the lay public (including some scholars and rabbis). The fantasy that Jews exist as a distinctive and biologically identifiable entity, in spite of what has been clearly documented historically and culturally, allows people to easily latch onto ideas such as the "Kohen" gene (Kahn 2010), and imagine that it is possible to trace ancestry back to a specific priestly population in Ancient Israel – in spite of the fact that non-Jews also carry this gene, and that the gene is only transmitted along the male line, while Jewish ancestry is matrilineal. The desire to identify a biological source for perceived Jewish exceptionalism entirely ignores a century of scholarship that unequivocally points to environment – cultural practices and access to resources – as accounting for the accomplishments of groups of people.

Given these many considerations, when anthropologists undertake to study a Jewish group, they are not arbiters of identity. Their role is not to evaluate the truth-value of claims to Jewishness, whether by descent, desire, or feeling. Rather than determine the objective validity of Jewish identity by descent, anthropologists look at meaning, belief, and practice. There is no firm answer to the question "who is a Jew?" beyond the eminently social and flexible definition offered by Melville Herskovits nearly a century ago: "*A Jew is a person who calls himself a Jew, or is called Jewish by others*" (Herskovits 1927: 117, original emphasis).

Communities

Franz Boas and a good many of his students were themselves Jewish, including Herskovits and the linguist Edward Sapir (Goldberg 2005). In his obituary for Sapir, David Mandelbaum suggested that Sapir's work emanated from his Jewishness: "Jews are, in a sense, born ethnologists. By virtue of their dual participation in two cultural spheres, that of Judaism and that of their environing society, they are often made sensitive to differences in the forms of culture" (Mandelbaum 1941: 740). Similarly, drawing on W. E. B. DuBois, Gelya Frank explains that like other marginalized minorities, Jews developed a "double consciousness" (Frank 1997: 738), which Jonathan Boyarin explains as "an elaborately inscribed identity constructed in the awareness of difference" (Frank 1992: 66). While some among this early generation of anthropologists in the U.S. came from religious families, they positioned themselves primarily as secular humanists and avoided drawing attention to their own heritage. Nevertheless, it takes little imagination to see how their Jewish backgrounds, experiences of prejudice, and views from the social margins influenced their research interests (Frank 1997; Boyarin 1992). In the few instances in which these scholars directly mentioned Jews, it was in the service of answering larger questions. Indeed, Barbara Kirshenblatt-Gimblett has suggested that this may have been an unintended consequence of Boas' approach to combating anti-Semitism through dismantling the concept of race: "[i]f Jews did not exist as such, how could ethnographers describe their culture?" (Kirshenblatt-Gimblett 1995: x).

Until the latter part of the twentieth century, many of the studies undertaken by cultural anthropologists were defined by the communities where scholars conducted their research,

usually villages or bands, that is, groups that were geographically or socially bounded (or at least were treated as such for the purposes of study). The resulting ethnographic accounts described social structures, ways of life, and worldviews of particular communities of people. Significant Jewish migration to the U.S. from Eastern Europe in the first half of the twentieth century meant that the view of Jewish culture that took hold in the North American imagination was in fact one of Ashkenazi culture, for which the *shtetl* was the basis for an "authentically" Jewish life – a life that was impoverished and marginalized, and brought to an end by the pogroms and world wars. Under the guidance of two of Boas' students, Ruth Benedict and Margaret Mead, Mark Zborowski and Elizabeth Herzog (Zborowski and Herzog 1995 [1952]) wrote a postmortem ethnography of the *shtetl*, an idealized account based on the memories of pre-Holocaust immigrants and Holocaust survivors, a document that can be studied as much for what it reveals about that "moment in American Jewish life" and anthropology, as it does about Eastern European Jewish culture (Kirshenblatt-Gimblett 1995). Selective and idealized, it portrays pre-war Jewish village life as spatially bounded and socially isolated. This notion gave the book textual coherence but ignored the well-documented mobility of Jews between socially diverse *shtetls* and even more socially diverse urban centers (Kirshenblatt-Gimblett 1995). As Kirshenblatt-Gimblett explains, *Life Is With People* stands as an example of a particular kind of literature in dialogue with a grand tradition of Yiddish stories, and as a post-Holocaust memorial document, but not as ethnography.

A groundbreaking but less well-known study of Jewish life and culture had been completed earlier by a second-generation Boasian. A student of Herskovits, David Mandelbaum studied caste in India. In the course of his research in the late 1930s, he came across a Jewish community, and wrote "The Jewish Way of Life in Cochin" (Mandelbaum 1939), which was "probably the first ethnographic account to appear in print about a Jewish community by an American anthropologist" (Frank 1997: 736). He found that Jews in India reproduced the ideology of the caste system in their own community, which was bifurcated into "white" and "black" (or "Malabar") historical caste-like divisions. After most Indian Jews had relocated to Israel, Mandelbaum found that new ideologies and factionalisms had taken over (Mandelbaum 1975). In both national situations, he found that Indian Jewish culture reflected the "legitimating ideology" (Mandelbaum 1975: 201) of the surrounding society, whether India or Israel, and he argued for the importance of studying Jews in relation to their larger cultural context. In other words, rather than considering the variety of Jewish cultures around the globe as manifestations of a singular Jewish culture, Mandelbaum insisted that these cultural groups could not be understood only as Jews. Instead, the particulars of their cultural practices had to be seen in the light of the societies in which they lived, since much of what was "Jewish" about them could also be found in beliefs and practices that they shared with their neighbors, most of whom were non-Jews.

Another pioneer in Jewish ethnography was Barbara Myerhoff, who (along with Peter Furst) became the first non-Huichol to participate in the peyote rituals in Northern Mexico; her book, *Peyote Hunt* (1974), was nominated for the National Book Award. Having established herself as both a risk-taker and a gifted writer, Myerhoff undertook a study of the elderly Jews of Venice Beach, California. In the resulting book (1978), she charted new territory in the anthropology of North America, cities, aging, and ethnicity, and paved the way for a contemporary anthropology of Jews. In the accompanying film, *Number Our Days*, as well as in her subsequent film *In Her Own Time*, about the Hasidic community in Los Angeles, Myerhoff also innovated in visual anthropology (Frank 1995). The first film garnered an Academy Award in 1976 for the Best Short Documentary, to date the only such award ever earned by an anthropologist. Following Myerhoff's forays into visual anthropology, other contemporary anthropologists have

also paired their ethnographic work with films, including Jack Kugelmass, whose ethnography of elderly Jews in a South Bronx congregation resulted in the book *The Miracle of Intervale Avenue* (Kugelmass 1996 [1986]) and a film of the same name, and Ruth Behar, whose film *Adio Kerida* gave further impetus to her ethnographic work on Cuba's Jewish community (Behar 2007, 2005), and represents one of the few ethnographic treatments of contemporary Latin American Jewish life.

Myerhoff began her study of elderly Jews after being redirected by Latinos in Los Angeles, who suggested that rather than studying them she should study her "own kind." In the early 1970s, U.S. minorities were gaining political and cultural ground in the aftermath of the Civil Rights movement, and Ethnic Studies programs were emerging in the U.S. academy. Anthropologists who studied their own cultures began to gain recognition as doing legitimate anthropology (this, even though Boas had trained native anthropologists because he well understood that they would enjoy access and acceptance in studying their own communities). However, even as Myerhoff stepped into this "new" idea of studying one's own (knowing that she would be a "little old Jewish lady one day" [Myerhoff 1978: 19]), she also exposed the fallacy of the contrast between insider and outsider anthropology: though she was Jewish by heritage, she was not a "little old Jewish lady" (and, sadly, never became one due to her early death), had not lived the *shtetl* life for which the elders were nostalgic nor suffered the privations and horrors of the Second World War as they had, nor was she impoverished and socially marginalized. When she turned her attention to the Hasidic community in *In Her Own Time*, it was not as an insider, but quite explicitly as an outsider to the beliefs and practices of this community. Myerhoff was both attracted to and alienated from them, across what she referred to as "vast and affectionate distances" – but she was also Jewish *enough* to be able to do the research, and Jewish *enough* for them to try to rekindle the Jewish spark within her as she fought for her life against lung cancer. In short, it is only possible to see her work as "insider" research if one ignores culture and presumes that Jewishness is in the blood, genes, or soul, these being more properly mystical ideas than scholarly ones.

Even though they did not study Jews who were like themselves, it is no accident that these two innovators of Jewish ethnography were themselves Jewish. Nor is it insignificant that these accomplished scholars disseminated their work about Jews through non-anthropological and even non-academic venues. Indeed, in spite of their successes and contributions to the field, Mandelbaum's and Myerhoff's works on Jews were exceptions rather than ice breakers. Other anthropologists who attempted to engage the discipline through the study of Jews (without first positioning themselves through research on more familiarly "exotic" topics) encountered impediments to publication and employment as late as the 1990s – an indication that the discipline did not yet consider Jews a legitimate object of study. Noting this pattern, Virginia Dominguez asked whether "assertively Jewish … " books were "too Jewish for anthropology" (Dominguez 1993: 618). Not surprisingly, this critique came from a non-Jew, one who had herself done ethnographic research on Jews. Indeed, Dominguez's 1989 ethnography set the stage theoretically and thematically for the critical ethnographies of ethnicity and national identity that followed.

Contemporary anthropologies of Jews and Jewishness

Although there are continuities with earlier work on Jews and Jewishness, recent ethnographies on Jewish topics have also innovated in ways that are consistent with theoretical and methodological developments in the field. Contemporary anthropology is more theoretically driven and ethnographic fieldwork is less spatially constrained, following not only people, but ideas and

commodities as well. While a given project might have a local focus, ethnographers also pursue regional and global interconnections, and make use of all forms of broadcast and communicative media. The new generation of anthropologists of Jews and Jewishness addresses broad questions of human experience, such as language, gender, race, and identity, through the lens of Jewish actors, and may be just as interested in the idea of Jewishness as in Jews, per se. Most of these anthropologists come to the study of Jews by way of anthropological questions that are interesting to consider through the example of Jews. The field of Jewish Studies has much to gain from engaging with the ethnographic perspective and the analyses offered by anthropologists. Ethnography reminds us not to take for granted, not to presume to know, and most importantly that humans continue to invent and reconfigure their lives in response to the changing world around them. Not only does this new ethnography consider the changing circumstances of Jews throughout the world, but it examines the meaning of being Jewish in the full range of contexts in which Jews live, how people make sense of their world, as well as the meaning of Jewishness, that is, what the idea of Jews and things Jewish have come to have for other people, including non-Jews – those who wish to become Jewish, those who wish to connect with their Jewish ancestry, and those who feel a meaningful connection to the former presence of Jews.

In the latter part of the twentieth century, those anthropologists who did address Jewish topics did so either in historical communities (Deshen 1989; Goldberg 1990) or in the U.S., Europe, and Israel where there are relatively larger Jewish populations. Landmark ethnographic volumes on Jews in the United States and elsewhere described great cultural diversity and asserted the relevance of anthropology to the analysis of Jews and Judaism (Boyarin 1991; Goldberg 1987; Kugelmass 1988; Zenner 1988). The interest in U.S. Jews has continued to develop along the lines of contemporary anthropology, critically exploring the socially and racially intersecting worlds in which Jews live (Goldschmidt 2006), and deconstructing racialized assumptions about Jewish identity (Azoulay 1997).

The new Jewish ethnography has gained momentum by looking at lesser-known Jewish communities, especially those in countries that are not world powers, such as Denmark (Buckser 2003), Turkey (Brink-Danan 2012), or Brazil (Klein 2012). In doing so, these ethnographers seek to understand the full gamut of Jewish experience. Further, these scholars seek to interpret the larger meanings operating within these contexts, where Jews provide an illuminating view from the margins.

Fieldwork and participant observation

Cultural anthropologists draw on philosophy, history, demography, sociology, and even literature to make sense of social worlds, but one of the unique contributions of anthropology has been the methodology of participant observation, in which the anthropologist engages in the activities of the community he is studying in order to gain an understanding of the everyday. As Matti Bunzl (2003) explains, "the anthropological commitment to fieldwork and the here and now can serve as a potent corrective" to the tendency within Jewish Studies to leave Jews in the past. Through participant observation anthropologists tease apart the layers of practice and meaning to get at the underlying logics of culture. Myerhoff's work anticipated the new wave of "reflexive Jewish ethnography" (Frank 1997: 737) (and reflexive ethnography in general), in which the ethnographer is an active participant and fully present in the work. This is a form of embodied knowledge, a phenomenology that integrates what we know in our heads with what we experience in our bodies and in our social interactions, what Fran Markowitz calls "full-bodied ethnography" (2006). In this view, "ethnographic research [is] embodied dialogical participation in the social process" (Markowitz 2006: 43), such that research comes out of social interactions.

This reflexive methodology draws on the presence of the ethnographer and her subject position; the anthropologist is her own research instrument, and it is her relationships and experiences that structure and mediate what she learns. As such, contemporary ethnography does not pretend to represent an entire social sphere, but each writing is a prism, a means by which to gain perspectival insight, but never a view of the whole, because culture is not homogenous and all knowledge is positional and partial.

In order to learn about the Hasidic world in Los Angeles, Myerhoff made use of her background, her presence, and her own ailing body. Similarly, Ruth Behar (2007) has drawn on her own background, her family ties to the Jewish community in Cuba, to turn her childhood memories of Havana into meditations on the relationship between the present and the past, the nature of memory and longing, the layers of exile, and to offer an oblique critique of religious and racial definitions of Jewishness that would exclude from Judaism many of those who remain and maintain a Jewish presence in that island nation. However, it is not only Jewish ethnographers who make use of their backgrounds when conducting ethnography among Jews. William Mitchell (1988) turned his ignorance, bodily awkwardness, and outsider status into a way to learn about Jewish social practice.

Among the social practices that anthropologists study are those associated with religion and religious ritual. Jewish religious rituals are interpreted through the anthropological literature on rites of passage, not as singular forms but as diverse cultural practices (Brink-Danan 2008; Goldberg 2003, 2001, 1998; Prell 1989). Fran Markowitz reminds us that "[r]ituals … encapsulate, demonstrate, and play with central symbols of a social system … " (2001: 123), making them especially rich ways to access meaning. For example, when Markowitz (2001) examines the bat mitzvahs of Russian Jewish immigrants to the United States, she analyzes this lifecycle ritual as a process through which Jewish identity is transformed from the negative identity that it was in the Soviet Union into a positive identity, as the community members celebrate and learn about that which was formerly inaccessible to them. In Markowitz's analysis, the religious ritual is appropriated and adapted so that these immigrants are able to powerfully validate their new social status as Jewish in distinctively Russian ways.

Another example of ritual providing key social insights is found in the work of Riv-Ellen Prell on the innovations of alternative Jewish worship groups, which reveals the ways in which the group reasserted social inequality along the lines of gender, expertise, and other forms of knowledge/power (1989). The use of humor in these contexts expressed the tensions and contradictions that were inherent in the entire enterprise (Prell 1988). The use of humor elsewhere among Jews, such as in the "dialect joke" (Brandes 1983), depends upon specialized knowledge in order to reinforce ethnic unity.

Other cultural practices may have historical continuities but are appropriated for different purposes in new contexts. Elly Teman (2008) traces the transformation of the use of the red string from biblical through contemporary times, from a metaphor of continuity to one of flowing blood, from fertility and protection of children in a liminal state to protection in situations of violence in which the meaning has been generalized to apply to the nation as a whole. Foodways also reflect and reproduce Jewish historical trajectories, as Jews have adopted and adapted the culinary practices of other cultures each time they have traveled and relocated and fled. What people eat, how it is prepared, and the meanings attached to certain foods at specific times of the year allow food to symbolically express values and ideas. It is not only observance of the dietary laws that make food "Jewish," but there are also ethnic foods (including "non-kosher Jewish foods") that are "emblematic of Jewish tradition," such as the deli foods so tied to New York Jewish life (Merwin 2008: 196; Kugelmass 1997). In considering the experiences of Danish Jews trying to reconcile the laws of *kashrut* with Danish culinary

practices, Andrew Buckser explains that "the ways that people eat signify not only that they are Jewish, but precisely what sort of Jews they are" (Buckser 1999: 198). For Danish Jews, the tension between their national identity and their religious identity is expressed along a sliding scale of *kashrut* observance in relation to the national cuisine and in a variety of social circumstances. Similarly, Brazilian Jews express what Buckser calls the "conflicting claims of national and ethnic affiliations" through a range of responses to the national dish of *feijoada* (a stew of black beans and salted meats, traditionally including pork) that include kosher versions of this symbolically powerful dish (Klein 2012).

Another aspect of identity that has received attention from anthropologists is sexuality. In this work, Jewishness is productively contrasted with other forms of difference, resulting in analytic studies exposing modern processes of identity formation, for example by looking at the intersection of Jews and queers in late twentieth-century Vienna (Bunzl 2004) or the tensions between tradition and invention in a gay synagogue in New York (Shokeid 1995).

Jewish orthodoxy has also provided fertile ground for anthropologists, primarily in the U.S., but also in Brazil (Topel 2008). Hasidic Jews in particular present a puzzle, a deliberately anachronistic group bearing all the signs of modernity, and integrated into racially complex urban communities (Belcove-Shalin 1995; Goldschmidt 2006). The world of ultra-Orthodox Jews, including *ba'alei teshuva* who have "returned" to deeper Jewish practice (Benor 2012), appear contradictory for scholars concerned with the relationship between tradition and modernity, and especially with the ways in which these old and new forms of orthodox Judaism shape the lives of women (Fader 2009, Jacobson 2006). Scholars interested in gender have also looked at the role of Jewish women in non-orthodox ritual life (Sered 1992, 1996).

Intersecting with this body of research on American Jews and Judaism are some key explorations of the strategic use of language to communicate identity and affiliation with others. Leonard Plotnicov and Myrna Silverman explain the use of "ethnic signals" to deliberately "advertise" ethnic identity to others (Plotnicov and Silverman 1978: 409). They found that Jews in multiethnic urban settings whose own Jewishness might not be evident to others, or who are unsure of the Jewishness of their interlocutors, make use of code switching, such as the use of Yiddish words or inflection to connect with others for social or instrumental purposes. No longer the language of the everyday, the use of Yiddish or other Jewish vernacular languages (such as Ladino or Djudezmo) may be used as signals precisely because they do not give clear signs to non-Jews, making them effectively linguistic winks to assert and affirm a minority ethnic identity. This is part of what Jeffrey Shandler (2008) means when he refers to Yiddish as a "post-vernacular language," one that is no longer the language of the everyday. Rather than being used for mundane communication, Yiddish may be deployed as an index of a whole freight of ethnic and cultural referents, both within and outside of Jewish social contexts, including in popular culture.

However, Yiddish has also enjoyed a re-vernacularization, as it were: redeployed as a language of the everyday through Hasidic adoption as the *mamaloshen* of a new generation of observant Jews (Benor 2012; Fader 2009). Ayala Fader's account of socialization through language among U.S.-born Hasidic Jews in Brooklyn, New York, describes social worlds differentiated by gender, where the use of Yiddish allows for the recreation of an ethnic enclave experience. In this densely multicultural urban setting, so different from the historical Jewish worlds of Eastern Europe from which Hasidism emerged, Fader describes the emergence of distinct forms of Yiddish, what she calls "Hasidic Yiddish" and "Hasidic English," in which Hebrew and Yiddish words are Anglicized, and English is inflected with Yiddish words and accent, transforming English into a "Jewish" language. These linguistic innovations delineate a social world where Hasidic Jews are not concerned with linguistic purity but deliberately use language to create and

reinforce their distinctive identity. For the Hasidic women and girls who are the main focus of Fader's ethnography, language use supports their experience within a modern world that is not secular, one in which they have agency. In this sense, Fader does not take their Jewishness for granted, nor do these women, who seek to become more observant than their forebears. Even among these most Jewish of Jews, their Jewishness is something that must be continually constructed and reinforced.

Deconstructing Jewishness

Perhaps this is the most significant difference between earlier anthropological work on Jews and the new Jewish ethnography: Jewishness is not presumed or entirely knowable, but something to be interrogated and examined for the symbolic meaning with which it is imbued. Similarly, in this new work, Jewish identity is not understood as determined by Jewish law or geneology, but as something experienced and practiced, contingent, syncretic, dynamic, and constructed – over time and across space. Most importantly, in this view there is no singular Jewish culture, nothing that can be taken for granted as inherently or obviously "Jewish."

Rather than having a presumptive, a priori meaning, then, "Jewishness is a cultural process whose very terms are in flux" (Feldman 2004: 115). More than a postmodern sleight of hand, the multiple and intersecting histories of global Jewish migrations and exiles offer both meta-phor and method for understanding the plurality of Jewish cultural expression, and insist that we cannot talk about the Jewish experience or Jewish culture in singular terms. The modern condition means that heretofore (apparently) coherent communities have fragmented such that the substance and very existence of Jewishness is called into question.

The roots for this thinking are found in Boasian anthropology, such as in the work of Ruth Landes, whose work on "Black Jews" in Harlem (Landes 1967 [1933]) can be seen as an early example of critical race theory. The "Black Hebrews" (as they are known today) claim no biological descent from the biblical Hebrews, but instead claim spiritual descent by virtue of their historical experience of slavery and suffering, and assert themselves as the rightful heirs as God's chosen people. In the context of contemporary Israel, Markowitz et al. (2003) describe the "soul citizenship" of Black Hebrews (formally the African Hebrew Israelite Community) who immigrated there following the Civil Rights movement in the United States, and today identify with the Jewish state using an African American idiom of "soul" to refer to both blackness and spiritual affinity (ibid.: 303), simultaneously desiring distinction and inclusion.

The emergence of multiple black or African groups either claiming Jewish descent, such as the Ethiopian Beta Israel (Anteby-Yemeni 2005; Salamon 1999; Seeman 2010) or the Lemba in South Africa (see Buijs 1998; Tamarkin 2011), or practicing as Jews and wishing to become incorporated into the Jewish world, such as the Abayudaya in Uganda, has forced uncomfortable discussions among mainstream Jews about the relationship between race, color, and Jewishness. These discussions about Jewish legitimacy stem from both a failure to account for the tre-mendous diversity of Jewish populations and a lack of historical perspective on the fluidity of racial categorization. Karen Brodkin (1998) offers a corrective, tracing the transformation of ethnic/racial categories in the U.S. in the twentieth century, and how social class has facilitated a process that has moved Jews and other "white" ethnics from immigrants into the professional classes and (nearly) full social membership.

In the South African context, Lemba claims to Jewish descent intensified in the context of extreme ethnic tensions and land struggles during colonial occupation of South Africa and racial segregation legally codified under the Apartheid regime (Buijs 1998). In the aftermath of international attention to the case of the Lemba whose claims of Jewish descent have been

substantiated by DNA evidence, Noah Tamarkin argues that casting the Lemba primarily as Jews ignores the South African context in which the idiom of race has been used to limit the rights of full citizenship on the basis of many forms of difference, and within which the Lemba have unsuccessfully sought recognition as a distinctive South African ethnic group (Tamarkin 2011). The twentieth-century categorization of Jews as "white" in multiple national contexts has resulted in what Tamarkin calls the "racialization of religion" and means that the Lemba are recast as "not exactly African and as only Jewish with qualification" (2011: 160), that is as *black* Jews, a categorization that has impeded their longstanding attempts to be recognized within the South African context.

In spite of historical events and research advances in the biological and social sciences, folk biological notions of race persist, including in relation to Jews, regardless of the enormous physiological and cultural diversity to be found among people(s) who identify or are identified as Jewish. This ideology makes use of folkloric concepts of race, for example, in Susan Kahn's study of assisted reproduction in Israel, when Israeli mothers select sperm for social and behavioral characteristics that are presumed to be genetic (Kahn 2000: 34). The state also perpetuates these folk beliefs. As a modern nation state Israel is interested in reproducing itself through the creation of new citizens, such that, in a socio-religious context in which identity is conferred through matrilineal descent, the state has a vested interest in motherhood. State structures make use of family structures and support systems to encourage unwed mothers to reproduce, while the state assumes the paternal role by sponsoring the uses of new reproductive technologies. Kahn asserts that state-sponsored assisted reproduction is subversive because it challenges notions of the family (ibid.: 71), and exposes marriage as a social construct and not a divine or natural institution (ibid.: 86). In interweaving the contradictions of secular and religious law, Kahn exposes the underlying logics (and fallacies) of bodily bases for Jewish identity. These logics are also revealed when we look at attempts by groups claiming primordial Jewishness through broken or obscured lines of descent, such as the "crypto-Jews" in New Mexico (Freedman 2010; Jacobs 2002), the Lemba in South Africa (Buijs 1998; Tamarkin 2011), and the "urban Marranos" in Portugal (Leite 2011). As if tracing Jewish identity along genetic lines were not problematic enough, Jewish law allows solutions to reproductive difficulties that turn the entire notion of genetic descent on its head. While Jewish law has always had provisions for how to graft those who have been adopted or converted onto the Jewish family tree, in response to developments in reproductive medicine rabbinical scholars have searched scripture to help them interpret what part of the mother is actually the source of Jewishness: her egg or her womb (Kahn 2000: 157).

New reproductive technologies in Israel are given additional treatment in Elly Teman's analysis of surrogate motherhood, in which not only Jewishness but motherhood is dissociated from gestation (Teman 2011). Unlike Kahn, Teman is more concerned with the kinship and feminist implications of new reproductive technologies in general, rather than their implications for Jewish identity in particular, and this may be an indication of the most interesting development in the new Jewish ethnography: even if the research is among Jews, the focus is not necessarily on Jewishness. In this moment in anthropology, Jews *qua* Jews may be less compelling than Jews as people engaged in complex subject formation. Studying Jews in the contexts of their cultural and national locations takes the Israeli context as one nation among many, the product of situated and historically constituted ideologies, and therefore not an exceptional case that must be set apart from all others. This is clearly an important contribution that anthropology can make to Jewish Studies: to find in global Jewish experience common humanity, Jews and non-Jews alike.

Another example of the importance of cultural context conferring meaning can be seen among the Portuguese "urban Marranos" (Leite 2011). In contrast to the better-known

Marranos (*anusim*), the descendants of forced converts who maintained secretive Jewish practices over generations in Portuguese mountain villages, these Marranos are often the only ones in their families to embrace their Jewish heritage, something that is more often revealed through feeling or affinity than by documentation or sustained practice. This construction of Jewishness draws on what Naomi Leite calls "the logic of genealogical causality," a particularly Portuguese understanding of genealogically embedded cultural characteristics. These traits do not necessarily pass from one generation to the next, but operate as potentialities to be ignited within individuals, oftentimes skipping generations. Within this logic, urban Marranos do not wish to be "converted" to a Judaism to which they believe they already belong, but rather to "return" to a Jewishness that is already in them, to be recognized for what they already are (2011: 94). Leite argues that in encounters with global Jewish tourists, these two groups talk past each other, each using different idioms of kinship, but nevertheless managing to forge meaningful kin-like connections. These claims to Jewish identity depend on a calculus that involves both social and folk biological notions, and they have been tremendously compelling for mainstream Judaism as well, especially in relation to the idea of a persistent Jewish "spark" that can remain lit across generations (Leite 2011).

While the normative international Jewish community celebrates cases of Jewish persistence against all odds, it is the murkier instances of attempted "return" that expose their underlying assumptions. Mainstream Judaism has powerful sympathies for those who were forced to convert, but is suspicious of those who seem to have opportunistically done so, as in the case of the Feres Mura, those descendants of Beta Israel (Ethiopian Jews) who now wish to rejoin the Jewish family and the Israeli nation (Seeman 2010).

Immigration, exile, diaspora, and transnationalism

In part, these new contexts have emerged because of a very old idea, that of diaspora. The trajectories of diasporic peoples are marked by multiple border crossings, layers of movement thickened through time, such that group identity incorporates and reflects this sense of displacement. Rather than a temporary status, this common condition of homelessness is what unites the members of diasporic groups as permanently displaced people. As the prototypical diasporic people, Jewish identity incorporates a deep sense of history and longing. However, not all subsequent dispersals represent further instances of diaspora, especially those in the modern era (Stratton 2000). Not only do more recent migrations lack historic depth, but more importantly the regulatory effects of the modern state and technological developments in transportation and communication that today undergird globalization mean that the contemporary experience of displacement is qualitatively different. Overlying a core identity as a diasporic people, today Jews are also citizens of nation states around the globe who are intimately connected with Jews who are citizens of other nation states. Their social relations cross multiple borders to create a transnational identity and set of social practices that are not bound to a single nation. In this conceptualization, modern Israel is not the nation of origin for most of the world's Jews, but one of many nations in which Jews reside. These Jews may see *Eretz Israel*, the Land of Israel, as the starting point of their trajectory, but they also conceive of their nations of birth and residence as "symbolic center[s]" (Levy 2001; see also Stratton 2000; Boyarin and Boyarin 1993), and as spaces for resisting Israeli cultural hegemony (Levy 2001).

Whereas an earlier generation of anthropologists was engaged with Israel as a new social experiment, especially in the form of the kibbutz (Spiro 1970 [1956]), recently some anthropologists have critiqued Israeli state power. For example, Stein examines the use of Jewish Israeli tourism to Arab cultural sites as a way that the state has redrawn "the dominant map of the

nation-state, historically predicated on forced Palestinian absence" such that "rural Palestinian communities … [are] reincorporate[ed] into a state-authorized national geography" (Stein 1998: 91–92). In making use of ethnic difference within its borders the state of Israel contests claims of Palestinian erasure, while reinforcing claims to cultural authenticity by ignoring the very unequal access to power of the various actors (Stein 1998). Bodies figure prominently in these analyses, problematized as eminently inscribable sites of cultural meaning (see Weiss 2002a and b). Even where research in Israel focuses on non-Jewish populations, such as Latino migrants, it still fits under the rubric of an anthropology of Jewishness because of the nation's symbolic and formal framing as a Jewish state (Kalir 2010: 32).

Within an anthropological perspective, Jewishness is a lens through which national ideologies are refracted. Because anthropologists are often attracted to views from the margins, the study of Jews becomes a means to think about how race, ethnicity, and nationality are understood in those countries that are home to small populations of Jews around the world. Each national context shifts the focus, as the historical and cultural particulars of each nation and Jewish community bring different concerns to the fore. In South Africa, Frankenthal (1999) notes the ethnic distinctions made within the formal Jewish community between South African Jews who are mostly "white" (in a majority black society) and Israeli Jews who are immigrants (from a majority Jewish society); Frankenthal calls this the "proximal host model" in which immigrants blend in with the ethnic group to which they are assigned in the host nation (ibid.: 159), which depends largely on the national ideologies of race and ethnicity. In contemporary Denmark, drawing on a long history of positive relations and a powerful story of rescue from Nazi capture, Buckser explores the experience and meaning of Jewish identity where the social exclusion that has characterized Jewish experience in so much of the world is absent (Buckser 2003). In this context, Jewish culture and Danish culture are mutually constitutive in ways that illuminate the persistence of ethnic difference without the forces of discrimination and assimilation. In Buck-ser's view, Jewishness is a "body of symbols," a "toolbox" with which people continually construct and reconstruct their identity in the face of massive global cultural change.

However, Jewishness is meaningful not only where Jews live today, but also where they used to reside, both for the citizens of that nation and for the tourists who visit in search of ancestral ties (Kosansky 2002; Lehrer 2013; Leite 2007 and 2011). In post-Holocaust and post-communist Poland, where little remains of what had been the world's largest Jewish population, Jewishness continues to be powerfully symbolized through memorials, museums, heritage tourism, and tourist art (Kugelmass 1992; Kugelmass and Orla-Bukowska 1998; Lehrer 2013); one form of the latter that has garnered attention is carved wooden figurines depicting stylized and stereotyped pre-war Hasidic Jews, which one shop owner called "an example of 'post-Jewish' culture" (Lehrer 2003: 347). Though such commercial representations of Jewishness can easily be read by some as examples of anti-semitism, Erica Lehrer suggests that they also serve as "a site of potentially positive memory-building," and "as a way of engaging with the Polish Jewish past and present" for both Jews and Poles (ibid.: 354). In Portugal, Naomi Leite considers the problem of touring what is no longer there, where objects and spaces, as well as tourists, become "surrogates" for a "Jewish Portugal" that "no longer physically exists" (Leite 2007). Spain has similarly engaged in the promotion of tourism, romanticizing its Jewish heritage and the "Golden Age" of religious harmony, a move that is both redemptive and lucrative. In all of these examples, tourism, spe-cifically heritage tourism, offers tourists more than recreational travel and gives toured sites the opportunity to "animate a phantom landscape" (Kirshenblatt-Gimblett 1998: 167). This is an anthropology of absence.

In most of these examples, Europe is constituted as the ancestral homeland to be visited, the site of key dispersals and disappearances. However, Israel is a much more popular site for

heritage tourism. Youth tours are promoted by the Israeli state throughout the mainstream Jewish world as a form of "embodied engagement with place," which can "temporarily collapse a geographic divide by establishing a physical copresence of diasporic bodies and homeland spaces" (Kelner 2010: 133; see also Feldman 2008 for an analysis of Israeli youth tours to Poland). Here, the interests of the state are entangled with embodied symbolic practices. These are uneasy equilibria, suspended between the rage of catastrophic loss and the delicate hope for redemption. Just as the nation can be revealed as "Jewish" through the recuperation of a shattered (and scattered) Jewish past, or expanded through celebration of its internal Jews, so too can these examples show "how symbolic, how iconographic (and thus – according to some – how 'un-Jewish') a lot of Jewishness is today" (Lehrer 2003). Perhaps what these messy, uncomfortable examples show us is that by holding too tightly to an essential notion of Jewishness we may squeeze the life out of it; on the other hand by gently embracing Jewishness around the edges we may yet be surprised by how vibrant it is in the contemporary world.

Contrasting with these examples of the reincorporation of historical Jewishness (if not actual Jews) into the body and idea of the nation, in other national contexts Jews may be set apart, or may provoke reconsiderations of national belonging. In contemporary Turkey, Marcy Brink-Danan describes how native-born Jews are reinscribed as foreigners, which they understand to be a reflection of contemporary cultural developments (Brink-Danan 2010). In Argentina, the 1994 bombing of the Argentine Jewish Mutual Aid Society not only killed nearly 100 people and destroyed over a century of communal archives, but also created a "crisis of belonging" for the Buenos Aires Jewish community (Zaretsky 2008). Natasha Zaretsky traces the responses of the community, especially those organizations that sought to transform the crisis into an opportunity for positive social change, casting the bombing as an attack not on Jews but on the Argentine plurality. In particular, she explores how in performing for non-Jewish publics a Yiddish chorus recasts Jewish suffering in light of Argentine suffering during the Dirty War to "allow a point of mutual identification – a moment of imagining a common 'we' – that is critical to the quest for memory and justice" (2008: 256). In the Brazilian context, with its utopic ideology of "racial democracy" and without a history of organized anti-semitism, Jews embrace their place within the nation as well as their own multicultural community by crediting "the Brazil effect" (Klein 2012). Jews make use of national projects to celebrate their place in the nation, and assert a Brazilian basis for the organization of their community, which forges common ground among Jews of culturally distinct backgrounds from over 60 countries of origin. For Jews in Brazil, it is their status as transnationals that places limits on the national belonging, making them vulnerable to transnational violence in spite of their acceptance in the Brazilian context.

In this generation of ethnography, we see anthropologists focusing on productive tensions between cosmopolitanism and patriotic citizenship (Brink-Danan 2012), between transnational practices and national belonging (Klein 2012), and between diasporic distinctiveness and ethnic connectedness (Cooper 2012). These ethnographies are all the product of a historical moment in which it is professionally possible for scholars to pursue anthropological questions through research on Jewish populations and Jewishness in the broadest sense. Anthropology's current theoretical concerns and privileging of the global periphery are what have given momentum to the cascade of new Jewish ethnography. In each of the contexts where ethnographers have examined Jewish identity they have found that Jews make use of the surrounding cultural idioms and reigning ideologies to make sense of their experience. As a result, who or what is considered Jewish in one context may not be recognized by other Jews elsewhere as such (Goldberg 2012). It is hardly surprising that anthropologists have found that Jewishness is a far more malleable and fluid construct than Jewish law allows, since law is rigid relative to lived

experience. The contributions of anthropology to Jewish Studies extend beyond colorful reporting on the rich variety of Jewish experience globally and a few culturally and politically dominant national and cultural groups. It is through the contextualized comparison of Jewish experience and the analysis of culturally constructed notions of Jewishness that the study of Jews has greatly enriched the anthropological record. This is also where anthropology can make its greatest contributions to Jewish Studies.

Essential reading

Behar, Ruth. 2007. *An Island Called Home: Returning to Jewish Cuba*. New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press. Part memoir, part ethnography, part photographic essay (by Humberto Mayol), Behar's melancholic exploration of the remnants of a once-vibrant Cuban Jewish population is an important contribution to the literature on Jewish Latin America, and an example of deeply reflexive anthropological writing.

Brink-Danan, Marcy. 2012. *Jewish Life in 21st-Century Turkey: The Other Side of Tolerance*. Bloomington: University of Indiana Press. Brink-Danan offers an analysis of a smaller Jewish community in a Muslim-majority society on the European periphery that amply demonstrates the theoretical contributions that can be made by ethnographically exploring the contradictions between the discourses that structure the lives of Jews with deep historical ties.

Cooper, Alanna E. 2012. *Bukharan Jews and the Dynamics of Global Judaism*. Bloomington: Indiana University Press. At the intersection of history and ethnography, Cooper's analysis of a Mizrahi community calls into question the way Jewish history is told, and the cultural implications of global interconnectedness.

Fader, Ayala. 2009. *Mitzvah Girls: Bringing up the Next Generation of Hasidic Jews in Brooklyn*. Princeton: Princeton University Press. Fader's detailed linguistic analysis describes the social processes by which Hasidic girls become Hasidic women, and the values that are instilled both explicitly and implicitly.

Goldberg, Harvey E. 2012. "Dynamic Jewish Identities: Insights from a Comparative View," in *Dynamic Belonging: Contemporary Jewish Collective Identities*, Harvey E. Goldberg, Steven M. Cohen, and Ezra Kopelowitz, eds. New York: Berghahn Books, pp. 1–27. Goldberg has traced the relationship between anthropology and the study of Jews and Judaism since the 1980s, and continues to offer fresh insight into the productive relationship between the two scholarly fields, and the contributions that anthropology's comparative perspective can make to Jewish Studies.

Kelner, Shaul. 2010. *Tours That Bind: Diaspora, Pilgrimage, and Israeli Birthright Tourism*. New York: New York University Press. An example of critical ethnography of heritage tourism, Kelner analyzes Birthright Israel and what it tells us about how tourism with a purpose can be an important part of forging transnational ties.

Klein, Misha. 2012. *Kosher Feijoada and Other Paradoxes of Jewish Life in São Paulo*. Gainesville: University Press of Florida. One of the first ethnographies of Jewish life in Latin America, Klein describes how Jews in the metropolis of São Paulo live comfortably with the contradictions of being Jewish in the world's largest Catholic country, while forging a multicultural community that reflects national ideologies of inclusion and tolerance.

Lehrer, Erica. 2013. *Jewish Poland Revisited: Heritage Tourism in Unquiet Places*. Bloomington: Indiana University Press. In contrast to the heritage tourism to Israel, Jewish tourists to Poland revisit places of loss, destruction, and absence, but also encounter non-Jewish attempts to redeem Jewishness for Poland. Lehrer offers an analysis of a historically refracted present.

Seeman, Don. 2010. *One People, One Blood: Ethiopian-Israelis and the Return to Judaism*. New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press. A critical part of the new ethnography of Israel's complex ethnic composition, Seeman examines the meaning of blood and identity for the Feres Mura, one of the more problematic Jewish minority groups because of the way that they point out contradictions in ideologies of race and religious belonging.

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2
MUSIC

Judah M. Cohen

Music, at its core, offers an intangible, amaterial, transient, and endlessly mutable form of expression. As complex patterns of pulses cast into motion, propelled through air or another medium, and ultimately given meaning through human intervention, music operates within the constraints of time and space. Music also appeals to a democratic ideal, particularly in this age of digital reproduction and portability: the ability to sense those pulses presents the only prerequisite for experiencing music. *Interpreting* music, however, is another matter. Anyone can do it, but everyone does it differently and for different reasons. A vast sea of writing and discussion has allowed people to promote ideas about the sounds around them: classifying music into numerous categories; linking specific sounds to one group of people or another; judging sounds as good or bad, harmonious or discordant, authentic or fake; and connecting sounds to places, events, ideas, emotions, or specific narratives. Even such measurable qualities as volume, pitch, rhythm, and timbre regularly receive subjective assessments. These attributes have made musical idioms deeply flexible forums for communicating ideas, values, and perspectives.

The potential music holds for inscribing value therefore makes it an ideal platform for understanding how people create meaning: how they define themselves, how they identify with others, and how they situate themselves within the world around them. Exploring sound's relationships with Judaism consequently offers endless possibilities: from investigating how people use synagogue chant to assert religious authority; to addressing how Jews use sound to draw borders between Jewish and "non-Jewish" expressions; to analyzing arguments over the kinds of music that most accurately reflect Judaism's core values; to understanding how Jews go about creating "new" Jewish music. Each of these approaches ties the production of sound to communal ideas about Jews and Judaism, while acknowledging the vast and complex diversity associated with Jewish expression, identity, and practice.

Studying sound in Jewish life, however, means negotiating several complex cultural landscapes. A variety of groups support scholarship on music and Judaism, including universities, seminaries, synagogues, Jewish music institutions, Jewish identity-based philanthropic organizations, and even national governments. While these groups all tend to promote academic methods as forms of authority, however, they often do so with different motivations. Seminaries and synagogues, for example, frequently value music scholarship for its ability to reinforce the work of religious movements and functionaries. Universities more often judge music scholarship by its ability to bring new ideas to a broader, nonsectarian audience. Jewish identity organizations such as

Reboot and the (now defunct) Foundation for Jewish Culture, meanwhile, tend to use scholarship to generate plans of action, allocate resources, promote particular Jewish service projects, and publicize their activities. People who engage with the subject, from knowledgeable enthusiasts to public intellectuals, seasoned musicians, clergy, musicologists, and ethnomusicologists, must consequently choose from a range of options and environments in order to communicate their intentions most effectively. Understanding how music relates to Judaism, then, also requires understanding the cultural dynamics involved in studying the music itself.

By the start of the twenty-first century, such dynamics had created what might be seen as two non-exclusive streams of thought in music scholarship. The first of these streams sought a prescriptive knowledge of the relationship between Judaism and sound, often addressed through the question "What is Jewish Music?" This classic and deceptively simple query, part of a larger scholarly project aimed at defining Jews on their own terms, helped generate the field of "Jewish music" in the nineteenth century, and shaped much of the conversation on the topic ever since. Abraham Z. Idelsohn (1882–1938), credited with consolidating the modern field of Jewish music scholarship, addressed this question by giving Jewish music a Middle Eastern origin, and devoted much of his career to distilling "authentic" Temple-period melody from centuries of diasporic accretion. Musicologist Curt Sachs reportedly opened a 1957 conference on Jewish music in Paris by offering a definition of Jewish music as music made "by Jews, for Jews, as Jews" (Bayer 2007). In 2006, John Baron and Emanuel Rubin broadened the definition to "music that serves Jewish purposes" (Baron and Rubin 2006: xxvi). These and other attempts hold at their core a perception of Judaism as historically unified, culturally conservative, and socially distinct. Within this framework, moreover, scholars have attempted to define specific combinations of tones (Cohon 1950), particular melodies (Gottlieb 2004), sounds (such as the cantorial "cry"), rhythmic sensibilities (Frygesi 1993), and personal musical output (Ringer 1990) as uniquely "Jewish."

Side by side with the question of what Jewish music "is" lay the more flexible idea of sound as a reflection of individual and group Jewish identities. This second approach, which Edwin Seroussi has called a "musicology of the Jewish" (Seroussi 2009), relied on the practices of individuals and communities rather than on defining a definitive "Jewish" history, religious practice, or musical system (Seroussi et al. 2001). Favored by many ethnomusicologists, historical musicologists, social scientists, and some cultural theorists, this population-based approach allowed researchers to ask how people used sound to situate themselves within their own perceptions of Jewish history and identity. Judaism consequently became the variable for addressing complex ideas of self-understanding that could cross over into broader scholarly discussions. Researchers, moreover, could approach the topic with greater creativity and insight, looking beyond ritual and synagogue into more diverse sites: including places of learning (Wolberger 1993), avant-garde music scenes (Barzel 2010), and communities with non-normative Jewish identities (such as Messianic Jews; see Weisbard 2001).

These two streams of scholarship, while in some ways contradictory, nonetheless maintained a symbiotic relationship. Music's status as a medium for performance and public exhibition made it an attractive option for the philanthropic promotion of Jewish identity and activity: synagogues, Jewish federations, and university-based Jewish studies programs among others have attempted to promote their activities and attract crowds through concerts and music lectures. Jewish communal leaders, additionally, looked to scholars of Jewish music (including scholars of Jewish music history, whose voluminous work largely falls outside of the topics addressed in this chapter) as consultants and presenters for Jewish "culture" initiatives. Scholars, meanwhile, recognizing the significant resources and interest put into these events, valued them as platforms for presenting their work; and they often looked to philanthropic music initiatives as important

sources for further research, publication, and readership. Music scholarship consequently developed into a complex and multi-faceted theoretical marketplace that negotiated the dynamic interaction of sound, community, and academic rigor.

The following sections introduce music scholarship and its relationship with contemporary Jewish communal life from four interrelated perspectives. Academic perspectives on researching Jews and sound present an appropriate entry point given the nature of this volume. A second perspective, the institutions that house or promote Jewish music research, has fostered a great deal of research on "Jewish music" in the service of specific Jewish religious or cultural agendas. Jewish philanthropic initiatives, the third perspective, have taken a significant role in commissioning studies of Jewish culture, and then incubating grass-roots artists to address the Jewish communal needs identified therein. Finally, I will address how scholarship and pragmatic ideas of "Jewish music" have combined to create a commercial genre, the fourth perspective, that speaks to the broader music industry while at the same time theoretically giving ideas about Jewish music greater exposure and prestige. Viewed together, these four perspectives provide a broader picture of both the nature of research in this field, and the way such research shapes and in turn *is shaped* by its interaction with Jewish communal and cultural activities.

Scholarship: beyond "Jewish music"

Since the 1980s, scholars' pursuit of sound in Jewish life has gained an increasing presence within academic circles. Although the higher education job market continued to vary—as both musicology and Jewish Studies typically saw Jewish music as peripheral to their central missions—scholars such as Kay Kaufman Shelemay, Mark Slobin, Philip Bohlman and Edwin Seroussi helped bring the field from the seminary to the university by the end of the twentieth century (Cohen 2008). Before this time, scholarship largely supported Jewish communal concerns of heritage and longevity (such as Werner 1976). Emerging scholarship, however, attempted to reassess the relationship between sound and Judaism in ways that related directly to the central issues of ethnomusicology, historical musicology, and cultural studies. At the same time, scholars aimed to demystify the concept of music in order to encourage scholarly dialogue with other disciplines.

The broad development of ethnomusicology in the United States during this period opened up spaces for including Jews in the discussion of musical dynamics: particularly with the emergence of urban ethnography and the acceptance of scholars studying their "own" ethnic groups. Ethnomusicologists focusing on Jewish topics consequently began to offer theoretical insights into the nature of affinity groups of all types, from performers, to small communities, to large movement-based populations. Sensitive studies of group affinity focused on how sound helped populations claim senses of identity, whether through the Syrian Jews who used Arabic musical modes in their prayer and paraliturgical songs (Shelemay 1998; Kligman 2009), Bukharian Jewish musicians in Queens, New York (Rapport 2006), the youth-regenerated sound world of Uganda's Abayudaya community (Sobol and Summit 2002; Summit 2003, 2008), the Orthodox Jewish popular music ecosystem (Kligman 2001: 99–115), or the spiritual basis of communal melodies (*nigunim*) among American members of the Hasidic Chabad Lubavitch sect (Koskoff 2001). By exploring how each community created its musical life, these scholars expanded the relationship between Jews and sound, while offering new insight into broader topics such as religious outlook, ethnic affinity, gender, history, and personal and group worldview.

These studies also challenged existing perceptions of community, particularly placing scrutiny on blanket definitions of Jewish musical "qualities" (and, consequently, on Jewish identity in itself). Tamar Barzel's work on the Downtown Manhattan "Radical Jewish Culture" movement, for

example, explored how a group of avant-garde musicians who happened to identify as Jews publicly strived to recast the nature of Jewish identity through their music (Barzel 2010). Others used sound to bring insight into the construction of "mainstream" Jewish identities in the United States, whether bounded geographically (Summit 2000) or by religious movement (Cohen 2009a). From the perspective of Jewish Studies, these works tended to view the communal notion of Jewish commonality as a discourse, continually evaluated and reevaluated, argued and counterargued by diverse populations, that defied a single definition. Sound, in each setting, helped people determine and justify their senses of history and identity in relation to persistent narratives of common Jewish lineage.

Perhaps the most cohesive body of scholarship created on music and Judaism, however, involved Yiddish culture and klezmer music (sometimes called "klezmerology" [Slobin 2003: 5]). Emerging out of the klezmer revival scene of the 1970s, klezmerology involved the reconstruction and documentation of a historical tradition on one hand, and an examination of how that reconstruction shaped both Jewish nostalgia and Jewish progressive identity on the other hand. Largely spearheaded through the work of Mark Slobin (1982, 2003; Slobin, ed. 2002; Slobin 1982b), and fostered by Slobin, Walter Zev Feldman (1994), and Barbara Kirshenblatt-Gimblett, the academic side of the Yiddish music scene became a key part of Yiddish revival gatherings (such as the YIVO-Bard Institute's Uriel Weinreich program in Yiddish Language, Literature and Culture, and Living Traditions' KlezKamp), and led to further academic investigations of klezmer (Slobin ed. 2002; Netsky 2004; Rubin 2001), Yiddish choruses (Jacobson 2006), and Yiddish music networks (Wood 2013) among other forms.

In contrast to the United States, the study of music and Judaism in Israel began as a self-appointed mission to reconstruct a unified Zionist culture from its diasporic pieces (Idelsohn 1924). By the 1970s, this approach had led to a geographically based taxonomy of world Jewry that classified Israeli populations by their lands of origin: "Iraqi Jews," "Moroccan Jews," "Yemenite Jews," and so forth. This schema, which paralleled the Israeli government's efforts to use social science to naturalize groups of Jewish immigrants into Israeli culture (Shokeid 2004), included the development of a Jewish folk song archive, and continued to set the agenda for contemporary Jewish music research well into the twenty-first century.

Exemplified by the Jewish Music Research Centre's recording series and *Yuval* periodical and monograph series, music research in Israel valued documented musical traditions as cultural products in and of themselves, exploring the ways they changed over time as they adapted to a new (Israeli) environment (Shiloah and Cohen 1983). Several of the resulting studies have offered detailed and rich descriptions of musical communities, with the best of them engaging broader scholarly conversations about gender, identity, history, and musical practice (Marks 2005, Spagnolo 2007). The Jewish Music Research Centre's development of an extensive online presence, including a "thesaurus" of Jewish music research material, has opened up this body of scholarship to an international audience for discussion and exchange.

A different trajectory has emerged in the study of Israeli popular music. Efforts by Edwin Seroussi and sociologist Motti Regev to develop a theoretical framework for Israeli popular music actively addressed Israeli nation-building agendas, particularly by relating "Songs of the Land of Israel," Israeli rock music, and the more recent *musika mizrahit* (Oriental popular music) phenomenon to national institutions such as the army, and evolving political debates (Regev and Seroussi 2004; see also Horowitz 2010). In addition, they have devoted particular attention to the socioeconomic pressures involved in establishing a small country's popular music industry. Israel's outsized place in global politics, moreover, has led certain artists to receive broader scholarly attention. Artists such as transgendered Eurovision winner Dana International (Swedenburg 1997; Maurey 2009), Yemenite singer and early "World Music" star Ofra Haza (Torskov 2005),

Mizrahi singer Zehava Ben (Horowitz 2005, 2008), and various hip-hop performers have become subjects for investigation along the lines of gender, power, and commercialization, as well as their abilities to negotiate Middle Eastern politics and stereotypes.

Outside of Israel, popular music has developed into a significant aspect of music research across the Anglophone Jewish world, from Jon Stratton (2009) in Australia, to Keith Kahn-Harris (1999, 2008) and Abigail Wood (2007, 2013) in England, to Judah Cohen (2006, 2009b) and Josh Kun (2005b, 2007) in the United States. These studies, in contrast with Israeli popular music scholarship, focused on the means by which artists asserted and constructed Jewish identity within a larger non-Jewish society. Highlighting Jews' involvement in hip-hop, klezmer, punk, and other "radically new" music scenes, these studies assessed the rhetorical space of music as a place to help younger Jews develop their own, often contrarian, generational voices.

The European continent, which had forged the intellectual groundwork for research on Jews and music through the 1930s, began to experience a significant resurgence in music research in the 1990s as a part of the larger, generally government-sponsored growth of Jewish studies. Much of the material generated by emerging scholars has involved historical explorations of German–Jewish music and Yiddish culture, and frequently accompanied the heritage-like staging of concerts by German–Jewish composers. The scarcity of university jobs and the need to "rebuild" Jewish studies using paradigms from abroad has led to a particularly large representation by artist-intellectuals in this field. Such established musical figures as Alan Bern, Joel Rubin, and Jascha Nemtsov enhanced their careers with doctorates, and capitalized on their extensive international performing experience to become significant builders of European discourses of Jewish identity. The organization "The Other Europeans" characterized this paradigm: headed by Alan Bern and funded by the European Commission, this group convened an international braintrust of musicians and intellectuals to promote "intercultural understanding" between Jews and Roma, aiming to hold performances illustrating these connections at major European Jewish culture festivals. Other organizations (including London's Jewish Music Institute and the Paris-based Institut Européen des Musiques Juives) frequently combined musical and intellectual pursuits to satisfy learned enthusiasts alongside much smaller groups of dedicated academics. As with projects in Israel and the United States, music research in Europe looked to public interest to maintain visibility, even as such support also often meant endorsing survivalist agendas during events and lectures.

Reinforcing boundaries: institutionalizing "Jewish music"

Scholarly explorations of the relationship between sound and Judaism have also flourished in institutions promoting a concept of "Jewish music"—and none more so than the increasing number of institutionalized cantorial training programs, which pair academic rigor with the practical skills of knowing and presenting synagogue music. The connections between scholarship and religious practice date back to central Europe in the mid-nineteenth century, when cantors developed their own scholarly vocabulary for explaining how musical modes worked within the synagogue service (Bohlman 2008). Figures such as Abraham Z. Idelsohn, who supplemented a traditional cantorial education with Western musical and ethnographic training, continued to solidify the relationship between Jewish scholarship and Jewish practice in a manner that appealed to Jewish lay-audiences and mainstream musicologists alike.

In the second half of the twentieth century, the development of cantorial programs in liberal and modern orthodox seminaries by cantor-scholars and other Jewish music experts continued this trend, eventually institutionalizing the cantor as a modern scholar and practitioner of Jewish music (Cohen 2008). In this capacity, cantors continued to use both personal example and

academic reasoning to distill and define the nature of Jewish musical tradition for synagogue goers and the public at large (Cohen 2009a). Their musical discussions, however, became imbued with several layers of religious expectation as a result: cantors canonized the nature of Jewish musical tradition, but also strived to keep Jewish musical practice from straying too far from the musical principles they had internalized. At the heart of this discussion lay a desire to ensure the future of Judaism. To cantors, musical tradition represented a longstanding sense of Jewish spirit; any deviation from that tradition had the potential to threaten the fabric of Jewish communal life.

Scholarship in cantorial schools thus took on the role of codifying, reinforcing, and debating the nature of "Jewish music" as a function (and extension) of religious practice. At the two oldest cantorial training institutions in the United States—the Hebrew Union College's Debbie Friedman School of Sacred Music and the H. L. Miller Cantorial School at the Jewish Theological Seminary, both in New York—a set curriculum required all students to research and write Master of Sacred Music theses to supplement their religious training. Many students worked with the schools' musicology faculty to accomplish this task, researching their topics using academic research and ethnographic methods; and they typically coupled their thesis work with public cantorial recitals designed to provide parallel musical presentations. Some used this process to reinforce cantorial canons by focusing on a major cantorial figure, region, concept, or composer. Others used music to address prominent movement-centered issues, such as ways to present a cantorial repertoire to young people. Still others explored major Jewish concepts, such as spirituality, or a series of performed works, in their projects. Theses could also become a vessel through which students could expand the cantorial (and consequently Jewish music) purview by introducing an overlooked composer or repertoire, championing a body of music-related archival material, or challenging particular attitudes regarding the boundaries of Jewish music. These efforts would allow cantorial students to establish themselves as Jewish music authorities in environments that valued both knowledge and musical aptitude.

A very few theses have appeared in modified form in non-peer-reviewed Jewish music publications—particularly *The Journal of Synagogue Music*, which, along with *The Journal of Jewish Music and Liturgy*, served as an important academic forum for the American cantorial community. Outside of this venue, however, cantorial theses almost never came into public view: rarely appearing in standard thesis databases, and sometimes requiring special permission to access in the seminaries themselves. Despite such scarcity, however, this form of scholarship held a major influence on American Jewish musical life. Cantors, whose numbers dwarfed those of university-trained music scholars, often continued to propagate their thesis work through synagogue officiation, communal administration, concert performance, and forays into academic publishing (e.g., Friedmann 2012), gaining reputations as local and national experts in Jewish musical practices. As public clergy/intellectuals, moreover, they frequently shaped the parameters of Jewish music discussion among lay populations, synagogues, religious movements, Jewish federations, and interested local music organizations.

Cantors, and the institutions that trained them, thus contributed significantly to "Jewish music" discourses through direct interaction with the Jewish communal world. With the (re) expansion of cantorial institutions to Tel Aviv, London, Berlin, and Buenos Aires starting in the 1980s, the cantorial approach to Jewish music continued to complement ethnographic and historical work in the academy while remaining distinct in its approach, scope, and purpose.

Commissioned studies: promoting Jewish identity through music

Scholarship on Jews and music has also figured in Jewish communal attempts to promote Jewish identity among young Jews. The 1990 National [American] Jewish Population Survey's finding

that approximately half of marriages involving Jews were to non-Jewish people, for example, led Jewish philanthropic efforts to ramp up funding for urban-based young people of marriageable, childbearing age (roughly 18–34, plus singles from 35–40+). These new initiatives, offered in the form of small start-up grants, larger sustaining funding, and artist development support, aimed to empower young people with the opportunity to contribute to a Jewish communal agenda. Many successful applicants gained attention by submitting projects that addressed the broad lens of "culture," including music in its many forms.

Philanthropic money helped fund such facilities as New York's Makor, which in its initial Upper West Side space (1999–2006) included a café space for music and theater acts; recording companies such as JDub Records (2002–11), which first introduced Matisyahu as a "Hasidic Reggae Superstar"; and international conferences such as Limmud, which became an important venue for promoting a "new" Jewish music scene. In 2005, meanwhile, Reboot, a function of the Charles and Andrea Bronfman Foundation that regularly assembled Jewish intellectuals, artists, and media people for brainstorming "retreats," opened its reissue label, Reboot Stereophonic (renamed the Idelsohn Society for Musical Preservation in 2011). These and other organizations, combined with a burgeoning downtown Jewish avant-garde music scene at the time (through venues such as The Knitting Factory and Satalla, and the Tzadik and Jewish Alternative Music record labels), created an environment conducive to the growth and development of innovative musical groups.

In order to maintain their funding cycles and reassess priorities, foundations and organizations commissioned studies intended to measure the impact of their work. These self-studies employed the field's top social scientists, and resulted in a considerable literature that employed academic frameworks to assess an organization's efforts at Jewish engagement and continuity. Projects such as Mark Kligman and Ayala Fader's study of New York's Congregation B'nai Jeshurun (Litt 2002, commissioned by Congregation B'nai Jeshurun and Synagogue 2000/3000 and sponsored by Steven Spielberg's Righteous Persons Foundation; see also Fader and Kligman 2009), specifically employed an ethnomusicologist (Kligman) to address the musical under-pinnings of a particularly successful congregational model. Even when ethnomusicologists did not specifically participate, however, music remained a key component of the discussion, sometimes alongside other forms of popular culture such as films and literature (Reboot 2005, 2006, self-funded; Cohen and Kelman 2006 [funded by the Jewish Federation of New York], 2007 [funded by the Andrea and Charles Bronfman Philanthropies]). These efforts typically mixed survey-based data with ethnographic observation and interviews in an effort to con-textualize the activities of Jewish young people in the early twenty-first century. While taking a broad view of Jewish culture, studies of this sort saw music in particular as "the most accessible and visible means of distinguishing generations. … used to mark events from worship services to concerts as belonging to one or another generation" (Cohen and Kelman 2007: 22). Philan-thropic foundations, consequently, found music attractive to include in their funding models due to its potential to motivate these young Jews to express themselves Jewishly.

The halo effect created by these highly publicized initiatives and studies, which almost always confirmed the activities of the commissioning organization, impacted scholarship as well. Jewish philanthropy-founded and/or-supported publications for Jewish intelligentsia devoted issues to recent musical phenomena (including *Zeek* [Fall 2007], *Guilt & Pleasure* [#6, Fall 2007], and *Heeb* [Issue #20; c. Spring 2009]). Several scholars of music and Judaism, meanwhile, became drawn to the events sponsored or promoted by these organizations, and consequently viewed them as phenomena that deserved further research (including the author of this chapter; see Cohen 2009b). In addition, Jewish identity-based organizations regularly called upon "Jewish music" scholars to consult on particular projects, attend or present at sponsored symposia, and in

some cases suggest and/or lead organizational initiatives. Such arrangements have led to rich and complex relationships between scholarship, performance, and philanthropy. Musician/scholar Galeet Dardashti, for example, conducted her independent dissertation fieldwork on a *piyyut* (devotional hymn)-singing phenomenon in Israel largely funded by the Avi Chai Foundation; later, in New York, Dardashti was chosen to the first cohort of the Six Points Fellows, a Jewish artist development project co-sponsored by JDub, the Foundation for Jewish Culture, and the New York Jewish Federation; and in 2011 her project Monajat was chosen as the first commission from the Foundation for Jewish Culture's New Jewish Culture Network. Media scholar Josh Kun's extensive interactions with Reboot, meanwhile, led to a dual trajectory of publications that on one hand supported the organization's cultural agenda (Bennett and Kun 2008, as well as the liner notes to the Reboot Stereophonic reissues), and on the other hand supported a more traditional trajectory of scholarly inquiry (Kun 2005a). Such situations characterized the intensely integrated nature of contemporary discourses on music and Jewish life, where communal and scholarly programs constantly intersected with, and relied upon, each other.

The study of marketing "Jewish music"

Scholarship on music and Judaism has further become an important aspect of the commercial Jewish music industry. Academics, for example, were regularly recruited for communal efforts to establish a "Jewish music" Grammy award category. Their contributions typically involved writing a letter to convince a prospective panel of music judges that Jewish music could be seen in terms of a genre; presumably, success on this front would lead to a renewed vigor (and perhaps self-sustainability) in establishing a mainstream-associated Jewish music industry.

While a Jewish Grammy campaign had not succeeded as of this writing, internally regulated philanthropic groups ended up creating their own equivalent awards. In 2005, the Michael Dorf-produced Jewish Music and Heritage Festival in New York City established its own Jewish Music Awards. The following year, *JVibe*, a Jewish teen-focused magazine sponsored by Jewish philanthropic foundation Jewish Family and Life (JFL), announced its own "Jammy" awards. Both clearly aimed to highlight (each in its own way) the commercial category of Jewish music as a collection of musical styles that emphasized youth (like rock, hip hop, and jazz), but selectively excluded most klezmer, Orthodox pop, and cantorial performers.

From a market-driven perspective, the idea of genre culture adds a level of relevance to the question "What is Jewish Music?" Josh Kun (2005b) and Barbara Kirshenblatt-Gimblett (2002) have brought up in their work the practical implications of defining and policing a Jewish music "scene" in the climate of the mid-twentieth century. In the wave identified with the start of the twenty-first century—for which scholars argue numerous different points of origin, from the creation of the Radical Jewish Culture movement in Berlin in 1992 (Barzel 2010) to the appearance of Adam Goldberg on the front cover of *Time Out New York* in December 2003 (Cohen 2009b)—numerous collaborations between organizations, artists, scholars, and critics have forged a scene that intentionally uses the dynamics of a mass-market economy, including the idea of genre, as a cultural survival device. The resulting synergy between scholarship, philanthropy, the music production scene, performance spaces, and media outlets contributed to a unique vision of Jewish music as a "genre culture" (Negus 1999: 14).

The example of Irving Fields's 1959 album *Bagels and Bongos* serves as a key illustration of the way industry, scholarship, and philanthropy worked together in this venture. Reissued in 2005 on the Reboot Stereophonic label, which aimed to offer a media-savvy, rupture-focused generation of young Jews a sonic lineage, *Bagels and Bongos* represented the off-beat, genre-bending, historically grounded image the label wished to project. At the same time, with a total project

budget of about $10,000, the reissue capitalized on academic pay scales in order to reap large benefits within the context of the commercial industry.

To create this reissue, Josh Kun in effect curated the album, revising the liner notes with a new framing preface that spoke to contemporary concerns. Around the same time, Reboot Stereophonic received label profiles in industry journals *Vibe* and *Billboard*. A barrage of North American mainstream press coverage highlighted the meaning of Jewish music as seen through the lens of project manager/Bronfman Foundation liaison Roger Bennett, Kun, and Reboot Stereophonic, including feature articles in the *New York Times* and National Public Radio's "Weekend America" show. The publicity led Irving Fields himself, over 90 years old but still performing locally in New York, to become a darling of young, hip Jewish events, including the Montreal-based KlezKanada and the New York-based, Michael Dorf-organized Oyhoo festival; and he started to appear alongside other "new" Jewish performers in the earlier-mentioned venues friendly to "new" Jewish music. Despite the major media exposure, however, the reissue of the 1959 album—which in Fields' estimate originally sold about two million copies—initially comprised just 4,000 CDs. This apparent paradox, only partly offset by the era's still-young digital download market, highlighted an important principle in integrating Reboot's non-profit, ethnic identity-based efforts into the mainstream recording industry. As the label's founders noted, the point in the reissue was perhaps not so much to sell albums as to spur conversations about Jewish culture among young people in the public sphere (Paoletta 2005)—thus tying together the project's intellectual underpinnings with its socializing agendas. The label's subsequent reissues, including compilations of anti-Jewish recordings written by Jews (*Jewface*, 2006) and recordings of African-Americans singing Jewish songs (*Black Sabbath*, 2010), reinforce this approach.

The new Jewish music scene thus appeared to serve as a gravitational force for young Jewish adults in the university, in journalism, in Jewish communal life, and in the artistic world—places that had the greatest reach for reclaiming Jews most seen to be at-risk for non-proliferation. The scholars, artists, and creators whose explorations helped comprise this particular outcropping of "Jewish music" appeared to benefit from the financial, media-based, and experience-granting boost the Jewish framework provided. To those philanthropies that made the genre viable, moreover, the "Jewish music" label became a place for exhibiting and manufacturing responses to anxieties about the Jewish future. Such efforts, in interaction with critical theory scholarship, allowed a typically unprofitable "new" Jewish music market to sustain its place as a viable commercial genre.

Conclusion

Studying the music of contemporary Jewish communities summons a rich, varied, and multi-layered scene. Scholars of music and Judaism, theoretically disinterested in promoting Jewish continuity, nonetheless have been called upon to fulfill the agendas of organizations concerned with the vitality of the Jewish people; and they have been hired in places where such vitality is key to the survival of Jewish institutions. In some ways, moreover, scholarship has supported the rise of an ecosystem that regularly strives to create new and broadly applicable ideas about the relationship of Jews with musical culture. As a product of the last 50 years of Jewish communalizing, as well as more recent attempts to use music as a foundational motive for enhancing Jewish life, the relation of sound to Jewish life has developed as a rich site for understanding the many uses of the academic method.

Of particular significance throughout this discussion, however, is the question of *who* connects certain sounds with Judaism. As described here, individuals—rather than an ambiguous

reference to "the Jewish people"—play a key factor in understanding how knowledge about music circulates throughout Jewish discursive spaces. The efforts of individuals have long been responsible for communal perceptions of music in Judaism; and they continue to act as important mediators for framing the way "Jewish music" is sensed, produced, and transmitted within society. Scholars have begun to show active theoretical interest in these issues, in the process engaging reflexively with their own role in Jewish communal activities. While seeking to go beyond the bounds of a genre definition within academic environments, then, students of music and Judaism also recognize their own complex investments in the rich yet contingent landscape of Jewish sonic identity.

Essential reading

Barzel, T. (2010) "An Interrogation of Language: 'Radical Jewish Culture' on New York City's Downtown Music Scene," *Journal of the Society for American Music* 4, 2: 215–50. Guided by musicians in the avant-garde music scene of the 1990s-early 2000s, Barzel presents a significant new paradigm for understanding the relationship between music, creativity, and Jewish identity.

Cohen, J. M. (2009) *The Making of a Reform Jewish Cantor: Musical Authority, Cultural Investment*, Bloomington: Indiana University Press. In a detailed study, Cohen explores how cantorial students negotiate the contemporary landscape of synagogue music in order to become Jewish musical authorities.

Horowitz, A. (2010) *Mediterranean Music and the Politics of the Aesthetic*, Detroit: Wayne State University Press. Horowitz's ethnographic study of the *Musika Mizrahit* phenomenon in Israel details its emergence, changes over time, and broader significance in the Israeli political scene.

Kligman, M. (2001). "Contemporary Jewish Music in America," *American Jewish Yearbook* 101: 88–144. A wonderful overview article on Jewish contemporary music, oriented around (but not exclusively about) music in the major American Jewish religious movements. Kligman followed this article up in 2005 with the article "Recent Trends in New American Jewish Music." In Dana Evan Kaplan (ed.) *The Cambridge Companion to American Judaism*. New York: Cambridge University Press: 363–380.

Seroussi, E. (2009) "Music: the 'Jew' of Jewish Studies," *Jewish Studies: Journal of the World Congress of Jewish Studies* 46: 3–84. Seroussi's article provides a comprehensive overview of the field of Jewish music research, addressing both historical and philosophical motivations that have shaped the field over nearly two centuries.

Wood, A. (2013) *And We're All Brothers: Singing in Yiddish in Contemporary North America*, Burlington: Ashgate. An ethnographic tour of the Yiddish music world, which includes klezmer but does not focus on it.

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3

LITERARY STUDIES

Marc Caplan

There is an early episode of *The Simpsons* in which Bart takes a job at a mafia hangout, the "Legitimate Businessmen's Social Club." One day while he tends bar there, Police Chief Wiggum visits the local mob boss, Fat Tony, to ask if he knows anything about a cigarette truck hijacked on route 401. "What's a truck?" Fat Tony cagily replies (www.snpp.com/episodes/ 8F03.html). By the same token, when considering the contemporary study of Jewish literature, one must first ask, "What is literature?" From a historical perspective, the study of literature as such begins with what was originally a Jewish text: the Hebrew Scriptures. As primarily (Christian) ecclesiastical institutions, the first European universities were dedicated in part to the study of Biblical Hebrew, and pioneering American colleges such as Harvard and Yale replicated these requirements. The modern institutionalization of Jewish Studies as an academic inquiry began with the 1819 establishment of the *Verein für Cultur und Wissenschaft des Judentums* (Society for Jewish Culture and Science) in Berlin. Though this was the first organization dedicated to the study of Jewish culture with a historicist focus, rather than a Christian or rabbinic one, it replicated previous presumptions and preoccupations by focusing primarily on classical Jewish texts such as Talmud and Midrash, and medieval Jewish thinkers such as Rashi and Maimonides, to the deliberate exclusion of contemporary Jewish culture conducted in vernacular languages such as Yiddish or Ladino (or German), along with non-rational strains within Jewish thought such as mysticism, messianism, or heresy.

In the American academy, the establishment of Jewish Studies departments and programs—distinct from general, often implicitly Christian, "religious studies" departments—dates mostly from the 1960s and 1970s, and constitutes a response to the lifting of quotas restricting Jewish enrollment and hiring, as well as the growth of ethnic consciousness among American minority groups; this parallels an analogous growth in Latino and African American Studies. American academic divisions in Jewish Studies during the 1960s and 1970s nonetheless often extended the legacy of *Wissenschaft des Judentums* by focusing on Jewish religious culture rather than the practice of everyday life, political ideology, or modern literary forms. In Israel, by comparison, the study of modern literature in Jewish languages such as Hebrew or Yiddish was an integral component of academic culture from the very outset, and the study of literature in modern Hebrew was as constitutive an act in the creation of a national culture as any more concrete exercise in nation-building (or nation-imagining). The function of literary study as an extension, or construction, of national culture tended until the late 1960s to focus on the ideological

functions of literature, its purported usefulness to the national project, rather than the aesthetic criteria being institutionalized contemporaneously in the academic cultures of other national literatures. Whether in Israel or the US, therefore, for much of the twentieth century the study of Jewish texts often effaced precisely their literariness.

A representative, and excellent, document illustrating the major trends in American Jewish Studies in this period is an anthology edited by Judah Goldin (1914–98), titled *The Jewish Expression* (Goldin 1970; 1976). As Goldin writes in a postscript to his own introduction for the volume, this collection began life as a course reader for a seminar he taught to ten under-graduate students at Yale University in the late 1960s, none of whom could read Hebrew. Elsewhere in the introduction he explains, "In the title of the volume and these introductory remarks I have used the word 'expression' as a kind of shorthand. It is intended to serve the purposes of what is generally called literature—in that event, we are discussing literary expression. … For the most part, it is true, the essays deal with aspects of literature (hence the direction taken also by the introductory comments); but not entirely" (Goldin 1970; 1976: xiii). What the collection consists of, in fact, are essays on historiography, *halakha* (ritual law), the Maccabean uprising, the concept of revelation among Jewish Hellenists, medieval liturgical poetry, classical Jewish mysticism, Spinoza's critique of religion, Martin Buber's reclamation of Hasidic thought and storytelling, and the culture of the Lithuanian yeshiva. The one contribution by a belletristic author, Sh. Y. Agnon (to date the only Hebrew writer to receive the Nobel Prize in literature) is a two-page meditation on the *Kaddish* prayer in the (then) new context of the State of Israel. Clearly, what Goldin and most of his contributors—few, if any, of whom were directly involved in the preparation of the volume—meant by the term "literature" is far different from the critical study of modern literary forms such as the novel, the autobiography, lyric poetry, or drama written in Jewish languages or from a professed Jewish perspective.

To make this observation is not to condemn Goldin or his contemporaries, but merely to identify them as products of their historical moment, when both the unlimited consideration of Jewish culture within the academy, and the unrestricted access of Jews to institutions of higher learning were still new and essentially untested. A number of events and trends have intervened since then that account for how the field of Jewish literary studies has gone from an endeavor that could be effectively summarized in a single well-chosen anthology to the current era of prolixity and perplexity.

Jewish literature and Jewish languages

One of the most obvious and urgent trends to develop in the wake of Jewish Studies' original disciplinary efflorescence has been the rise of modern literary studies focusing on Jewish languages. Prior to the 1970s, Hebrew had been studied in American and European universities primarily from a perspective of Biblical Studies, sometimes with no connection to the Jewishness of (the first half of) the Biblical canon and often with little reference to Hebrew as a modern, spoken language. The impact on diaspora Jewish consciousness of the 1967 Six-Day War—which radically intensified American and European Jewish identification with Israel and, for example, prompted many diaspora synagogues and religious pedagogy programs to adopt the cadence and pronunciation of modern Hebrew anachronistically for liturgical purposes—certainly influenced a change in this status. In institutional terms, a watershed moment toward the elevation of modern Hebrew literature was the 1975 publication of *Modern Hebrew Literature*, an anthology edited and translated by Robert Alter (Alter 1975). This volume offered a canon of modern Hebrew literature spanning from its origins with Mendele Mocher Sforim (Sh. Y. Abramovitsh, c. 1835–1917) and Y. L. Peretz (1852–1915) to contemporary Israelis such

as A. B. Yehoshua (b. 1936) and Amos Oz (b. 1939). Both as a public intellectual and as a university professor, Alter has provided for the past generation a blueprint for the study of modern Hebrew literature.

Around the same time the Israeli scholar Dan Miron published his first book in English, *A Traveler Disguised* (Miron 1973), devoted to the Yiddish writings of the bilingual (Yiddish and Hebrew) author Mendele Mocher Sforim. As a product of the Israeli academic system, and a (rebellious) student of the Israeli philologist Dov Sadan (1902–89), Miron took as a given the centrality of belletristic literature in Hebrew and Yiddish to modern Jewish culture. He broke, however, from his mentor by stressing the radical discontinuities between Yiddish and Hebrew in the modern era, their distinctive challenges to creating literature. Where Hebrew lacked the semantic resources to describe contemporary life, writers never doubted the aesthetic merit of using it as a literary language; though Yiddish was the natural vehicle for describing the everyday life of Ashkenazic Jews, its writers expressed profound anxiety, shame, and reluctance to use a despised *zhargon* for serious intellectual purposes. The natural consequence for the development of modern Jewish literature was to reserve Yiddish for satirical parodies, an aesthetic of the grotesque. Given this radical departure from Sadan's notion of a constructive interdependence between vernacular Yiddish and literary Hebrew, Miron's decision to publish a book—in English, in America—focusing on only half of Mendele's output was part of a larger strategy that resulted for the next three decades in Miron dividing his career between primarily Hebrew-language scholarship on Hebrew literature at the Hebrew University in Jerusalem, and primarily English-language scholarship on Yiddish at Columbia University in New York.

Thus, for both Alter and Miron, although the study of modern Hebrew and Yiddish literature, respectively, is but one aspect of a much larger intellectual project, they can each be credited as the originators of this field of study in the contemporary sense. Nonetheless, an instructive contrast can be drawn between these two scholars, with resonance for the whole field of modern Jewish literary studies, over the question of literary theory. At precisely the moment when these two professors were establishing themselves, the study of the humanities generally was in a process of re-defining itself under the influence of a new theoretical lexicon—identified in various iterations as post-structuralism, deconstruction, formalism, critical theory, or continental philosophy—derived primarily from French (and secondarily from German and Russian) sources. Although a conspicuous number of the leading figures in this diverse and fractious movement were Jews, at the outset almost none of them addressed explicitly Jewish topics in their writing. During that era, similarly, scholars of Jewish literature maintained an often-ambivalent relationship with this discourse.

Alter, for example, has almost completely disregarded this entire conceptual landscape. The consequence of this for his criticism can often result in little reference to the critical views of his contemporaries or a sense of how the literature he considers contributes to a larger historical or aesthetic project. For example, his brief, excellent book of lectures *Canon and Creativity* (2000) offers elegant readings of the Hebrew poet Haim Nahman Bialik (1873–1934), together with James Joyce and Franz Kafka, to illustrate the rather evident fact that the Bible has exerted a significant influence on twentieth-century literature. Miron, by contrast, came of age just as the Structuralism to which subsequent trends in literary theory have reacted took root in Israeli criticism, and his own writing has frequently employed a personal, even idiosyncratic take on psychoanalytical theory, to considerable effect. What began, therefore, as a resistance to the mythos of a unified Jewish culture that bolstered the teleology of Zionism has become an examination of the psychological, linguistic, and formal fault-lines that have contributed to the fractiousness and fragmentary character of modern Jewish ideologies as well as the aesthetics of Jewish-language modernism. Miron's career has thus been much more heavily engaged with

questions of literary theory than Alter's; his recent book, *From Continuity to Contiguity* (2010), is as much a history of Jewish-language literary criticism from the mid-nineteenth century to his own contemporaries, as it is a consideration of belletristic authors such as Mendele, Bialik, Kafka, Sholem Aleichem or the current state of Jewish, and particularly Hebrew, belles-lettres.

Literary theory and rabbinic hermeneutics

While the last three decades have seen the study of modern literature in Jewish languages established as an integral component in the Jewish Studies curriculum, the question of whether the study of Jewish literatures can be seen as fundamental or integral to the study of modern literature as such remains unresolved. One means of understanding this question, however, is to consider the ways in which a reciprocal relationship has emerged since the 1980s between the canonical body of Jewish texts (Rabbinics) and the contemporary practice of literary theory. The most important example of this phenomenon is Geoffrey Hartman and Sanford Budick's anthology *Midrash and Literature* (Hartman and Budick 1986). The starting premise of this collection was to recognize midrash not merely as a genre of rabbinic commentary, but also a hermeneutic method unto itself—one that, in a postmodern reading, first and foremost emphasizes intertextuality, but also rhetorical play, contingency and contiguity, analogical strategies over logical ones, and the constructive if radical juxtaposition of multiple languages and temporalities.

An example of how, and why, midrash functions is evident in the compendium *Bereshis rabbah*, the largest and most significant rabbinic commentary to the Book of Genesis. There the third-century sage Resh Lakish reads the second verse of the Hebrew Bible—"And the earth was without form, and void; and darkness was upon the face of the deep/And the Spirit of God moved upon the face of the waters" (Gen. I, 2)—as follows:

> **And the earth was without form** symbolizes Babylonia: *I beheld the earth, and lo it was waste* (Jer. IV, 23); **and void** symbolizes Media [Persia]: *they hastened to bring Haman* (Est.VI, 14).[1] **And darkness** symbolizes Greece, which darkened the eyes of Israel with its decrees, ordering Israel, "Write on the horn of an ox that you have no portion in the God of Israel." **Upon the face of the deep**—this wicked State [the Roman Empire under whose occupation the Jewish kingdom had fallen in 70 CE]: just as the great deep cannot be plumbed, so one cannot plumb [the iniquity] of this wicked State. **And the spirit of God moved**: this alludes to the spirit of the Messiah, as you read, *And the spirit of the Lord shall rest upon him* (Isa. XI, 2).
>
> *Midrash Rabbah* (Freedman 1938; 1983: 17)[2]

In such a reading, which is one of five competing, mutually exclusive interpretations of the verse contained in this particular volume, from Resh Lakish and his contemporaries, the intent is neither to establish a literal meaning of the Biblical text, nor to mandate a single hermeneutical strategy for applying it. Midrash is only parabolic in a contingent, provisional sense. It is allegorical precisely in Walter Benjamin's understanding—"Allegories are, in the realm of thoughts, what ruins are in the realm of things"—as representing the fallenness, rather than the authoritativeness, of language (Benjamin 1998: 178). It is "logocentric" only by default, because the revelation for which language substitutes is absent. Thus, the Biblical verse stands here in an intimate, reciprocally critical relationship with the rest of the Biblical canon, as well as with an understanding of Jewish history that, while culminating in messianic eschatology, nonetheless centers itself in the political crisis of its (reputed) author's specific circumstance.

As this brief example demonstrates, midrash, operating parallel to the Western philosophical tradition, quietly turns the methodological assumptions of Western thought on their head, and as such provided practitioners of deconstruction with a precursor or prooftext for their own theories. In Hartman and Budick's anthology, accordingly, scholars of rabbinic literature such as Judah Goldin, David Stern, Joseph Dan, and Moshe Idel appear alongside literary theorists such as Hartman, Budick, Frank Kermode, and Jacques Derrida, and the topics covered within its pages include historical and methodological descriptions of midrash in rabbinic practice, the interrelationship between midrash and Jewish mysticism (Kabala), the presence of midrash in John Milton's poetry, and quasi-midrashic readings of *Robinson Crusoe*, Jorge Luis Borges, Kafka, Agnon, and Paul Celan.

The intersection of midrash with postmodern theory proved to be mutually productive for ensuing scholarship in the field of Rabbinics and the subsequent fate of deconstruction. For Rabbinics, the encounter with literary theory continues to distinguish the most significant and sophisticated scholarship in the field, whether in the United States or Israel. For deconstruction, and specifically the later career of Jacques Derrida, the implicit acknowledgment of midrash as a critical practice presaged a larger turn in deconstructive theory from Western philosophy, toward questions of politics, religion, and a more explicitly subjective, even autobiographical perspective. One example of this shift is to be encountered in Derrida's essay *Monolingualism of the Other: or, the Prosthesis of Origin* (Derrida 1996; 1998), where the author considers the problems of language and particularly the postcolonial burdens of working in the French language from an explicitly North African and Jewish perspective. In effect, rather than offering an autobiographical narrative, Derrida constructs a midrash from his own life story, so that his experiences coming of age during World War II in Vichy-controlled Algeria become representative not only of specific instances of postcoloniality, national dislocation, or the Jewish encounter with modernity, but also of the philosophical fate of language—the placement of one language among others, the incorporation of multiple linguistic systems in a single language, and the inability of all languages to achieve signification.

Emerging literary histories

The shape of Jewish literary scholarship has also been influenced by historical events outside the academy, particularly the dissolution of the Soviet Union in 1991, which brought an influx of scholars educated in Eastern Europe to the West, and the end of the Cold War, which brought about a reappraisal of Soviet–Jewish culture among scholars of literature. Soviet-trained scholars of Yiddish literature brought a breadth of archival experience—as well as comfort in using Yiddish as a language of scholarship—that few Western-trained scholars could match (Estraikh 1999; Kerler 1999; Krutikov 2001). Since then, the work of younger, Western-trained scholars has likewise brought to light new information and a perspective on Jewish life in the Soviet Union formulated after, and independent of, the political conflicts of the Cold War (Veidlinger 2000; Shneer 2004; Shternshis 2006; Moss 2009). In addition to this academic "Détente," several scholars of Russian literature have turned to Yiddish, and in so doing their scholarship has reversed a characteristic trend of East European Jewish modernization by going from Russian to Yiddish, rather than the other way around (Safran 2010; Murav 2011; Glaser 2012). As a result of these efforts—whether from scholars actually trained in Soviet–Yiddish culture, younger Western-trained scholars, or Slavicists recognizing the relationship between Russian and Yiddish culture—one can come to recognize the complexity of Jewish life under communism: not just the pathos of oppression, repression, and suppression but also its creative potential, as well as the ambiguities of its efforts to accommodate the implacable demands of totalitarianism. By

re-examining Soviet–Yiddish culture, these scholars have reconstructed a vast empirical and conceptual record of Jewish modernity, and they have established as historical fact for students of the period an ideological premise that early Leninism had codified and later Stalinism had destroyed—the indelible status of Yiddish as a national language for early-Soviet Jews. Indeed, the focus on Yiddish literature is an explicit consequence of Soviet language policy toward Jews; in the twenty years following the October Revolution the state actively and vigorously promoted Yiddish-language institutions, and prohibited the use of Hebrew. Although the state closed its Yiddish institutions by the end of the 1930s, and the leading Yiddish writers were murdered in the early 1950s, the continued cultural memory of Yiddish remained much stronger in the Soviet Union than in the West (Shneer 2004; Moss 2009).

In addition to integrating Russian-trained and Slavicist-oriented scholars into the academic culture of contemporary Yiddish Studies, this development has unsettled the study of Yiddish literature from a conventional comparison—whether implicit, as in the case of Miron's English-language scholarship, or explicit, as in the practice of the journal *Prooftexts*—with modern Hebrew literature. It has moreover expanded the geography of Jewish literary studies to incorporate Russia and Eastern Europe in addition to the United States, Canada, and Israel.

At the same time as the rarefied study of modern Jewish literature received a new infusion of scholars, resources, and topics of consideration, a larger trend in the American academy—and in a somewhat different sense, Canada and Great Britain, as well—introduced a new set of debates about the politics of literary studies to an academic culture that had grown weary of the abstraction and arcana associated with deconstruction. "Multiculturalism" in the US and "Cultural Studies" in the UK included approaches such as Afrocentrism, critical race theory, gender studies, queer theory, and the new historicism, seeking to challenge what was seen as the hegemony of a literary culture over-dominated by a restrictive canon of masterworks via a focus of literary study around questions of performance, material culture, vernacularity, and historicity. The response to its challenge of reckoning has become the signal event in Jewish Studies of the last two decades.

As with critical theory, the role of Jews and Jewish culture in the "multiculturalism debates" was ambivalent. To the extent to which such debates concerned the establishment of diversity requirements in American academic curriculums, the question of whether Jews, or other primarily European immigrants to the United States, qualified as sufficiently "Other" to be "multicultural" spoke more to a lack of clarity in the new discourse than the historical status of Jews as an ethnicity. With respect to Jews, the new multiculturalist rhetoric appeared at its most complacent to reiterate the prejudice it sought to ameliorate: where Jews had once been excluded from academic life for being insufficiently European, now they risked exclusion ostensibly for having assimilated *too well* to European and white American society (Biale et al. 1998). Nonetheless, the curriculum of multiculturalism in the US inevitably influenced the growth of identity politics within Jewish Studies, including the reclamation of ethnic Jewish authors as candidates for inclusion in a revised American literary canon.

The term "multiculturalism" in the United States has been a misnomer primarily because the concept of a single nation possessing several independent cultures—the metaphor of "the salad bowl" seeking to replace the venerable image of "the melting pot"—never convincingly characterized American society. Most pressingly, the concept of multiculturalism as it has been employed in the United States has been with few exceptions a surprisingly monolingual affair, and therefore as much as it claimed to resist the homogenizing rhetoric of previous Americanist discourses, it only reiterated their practices with respect to language, and with respect to insisting on a binary opposition in American society between whites and people of color. In Canada, by contrast, because the society has been bilingual (English and French) historically, and its various

immigrant populations have on the whole arrived more recently, the multiculturalist movement has been much more linguistically diverse and ethnically distinct than in the US, less oriented around representing diversity in the public sphere than around maintaining the autonomy of ethnic communities. For these reasons, the study of Jewish literature can be seen as signifying a potential rupture or anomaly within American multiculturalist discourse, whereas it can be identified as a primary example, even a success story, of Canadian multiculturalism.

In the UK, meanwhile, the study of Jewish literature emerged in the context of postcolonial studies and cultural studies. Distinct from US "multiculturalism," postcolonial studies focused on communities—primarily African–Caribbean and Indian subcontinental—that shared a history of imperialism, diaspora, and intertwined immigration patterns. Their experience of immigration was much more recent, and their ongoing connection to sites of origin much more immediate than in North America. For this historical reason, as well as the theoretical affiliations of its founding scholars with specific strands of British Marxism and Gramscian analysis, this discourse maintained a much more internationalist perspective than its American or Canadian counterparts. Its most influential work in this respect is Paul Gilroy's *The Black Atlantic: Modernity and Modern Consciousness* (1993), which identifies the political fate and cultural practices of the African diaspora in the Caribbean, the United States, and Great Britain as constitutive phenomena to global modernity. Central to the argument of this work are the common cultural features, elective affinities, and instructive contrasts between the Jewish diaspora and the Black Atlantic.

In turn, the influence that various multiculturalist discourses have exerted on the study of Jewish culture over the past two decades has been in every respect inarguable. From the outset, the question of whether, and when, Jews were reckoned as part of the white American hegemony provoked a contentious scholarly debate, most deftly discussed in Eric Goldstein's book *The Price of Whiteness: Jews, Race, and American Identity* (2006). Meanwhile, within the field of Jewish Studies, there have been various moves toward diversity.

One important development over the past two decades has been the growth of gender studies in the field of Jewish literature. As the editors of *Gender and Text in Modern Hebrew and Yiddish Literature* (1992) note, the first inklings of a feminist approach to Jewish literary studies only began in the mid-1980s, no less than a decade after these strategies and ideologies had been integrated into mainstream literary studies (Sokoloff et al. 1992). Since then however, feminist literary criticism has recovered for the study of Jewish literature significant Yiddish and Hebrew writers such as Rahel (Bluwstein), Lea Goldberg, Shulamith Hareven, Dahlia Ravikovitch, Orly Castel-Bloom (all Hebrew writers), Esther Singer Kreitman—the sister of Isaac Bashevis Singer—Celia Dropkin, Rokhl Korn, Chava Rosenfarb, Malka Heifetz-Tussman (all, including Kreitman, Yiddish writers), and Dvora Baron (a bilingual writer). Moreover, scholars have made significant contributions to a gendered understanding of modern Jewish literary culture by examining meta-textual questions such as the role of women readers in shaping Jewish literature and the social semiotics of Hebrew and Yiddish in Ashkenazic culture (Parush 2001, 2004; Seidman 1997).

The beginnings of Sephardic Studies is another aspect of diversification within Jewish Studies. Although the rabbinical, philosophical, and belletristic culture of medieval Iberia (*al-Andalus*)—written exclusively in Hebrew, Aramaic, or Judeo-Arabic—has been a preoccupation in Jewish Studies since the era of *Wissenschaft des Judentums*, and the ideal of a Jewish–Muslim–Christian *convivencia* preceding the Spanish Inquisition animated liberal Jewish aspirations in Europe during the nineteenth century, the recognition of modern, post-expulsion Sephardic culture has lagged significantly behind the focus on Ashkenazic culture and its diaspora, and its literatures in Yiddish and Hebrew. However, new work in Sephardic studies now includes work on modern

religious writing in Ladino and rabbinic culture in the Ottoman Empire (Lehmann 2005), modern Ladino theatre, journalism and belles-lettres (Borovaya 2011), as well as the ground-breaking cross-cultural comparative study, *Making Jews Modern: the Yiddish and Ladino Press in the Russian and Ottoman Empires* (Stein 2004), and work that considers contemporary Ladino poetry comparatively with French, Hebrew, and Spanish models.

Although the study of Sephardic culture is a welcome and long overdue component of contemporary Jewish Studies, one should not seek a sense of parity between Ladino literature and the primary languages of Ashkenazic modernity, Hebrew and Yiddish. Where Jewish intellectuals in the Czarist or Austrian empires had a choice among three or four languages (Hebrew, Russian or German, Yiddish, and following the dissolution of these empires new national languages such as Polish, Czech, or Hungarian), the most prestigious and significant language of the modern Sephardic diaspora, particularly in the belletristic realm, was French. Rather than attempting to quantify linguistic and ethnic diversity within modern Jewish culture, the most sophisticated linguistic and philological models today stress a continuum in Jewish language use that allows scholars to understand the interconnectedness and variability among all the languages that Jews have spoken and written. As the linguist Benjamin Hary has argued, "This is why the idea of the Jewish linguistic spectrum is helpful. It allows us to place Jewish language varieties on a continuum stretching from those with a high concentration of the most prominent distinct linguistic characteristics that differentiate them linguistically and culturally from the surrounding 'dominant' language varieties (e.g. Yiddish) to those with only few and marginal traits (e.g. varieties of secular Jewish English). Other forms of Jewish linguistic practice are located somewhere between these two poles" (Hary 2011: 44).

Beyond Jewish languages

In this regard, one can recognize a significant intensification of interest in the Jewish character, whatever that may mean to individual scholars, of literature written by and about Jews in national vernaculars such as English, French, or German (for example, Reizbaum 1999; Samuels 2009; Suchoff 2011; Gilman and Zipes 1997). At perhaps the furthest extreme, the Israeli–American critic Michael Kramer has argued in a provocative essay—"Race, Literary History, and the 'Jewish' Question"—that *any* work of literature written by a Jewish person, regardless of its content or the author's affiliation, counts as "Jewish" literature (Kramer 2001). In a sense, this essay cuts the Gordian knot of Jewish literary criticism, and more broadly the question of Jewish identity, by declaring that Jewish literature is whatever Jewish people write, irrespective of Jewish cultural markers such as language, theme, or more debatably authorial intent. Beneath this cheeringly inclusive thesis, one can moreover detect an influence on Kramer's thought of the Zionistic embrace of every strand in Jewish culture, even its most unaffiliated aspects, as the consequence and constituents of an indivisible, if intangible, Jewishness; his championing of every Jewish-originated writer as a participant in "Jewish literature" calls to mind both the "ingathering of exiles" at the heart of Zionist and Jewish messianic thought, as well as the contemporary Israeli "law of return" granting citizenship to any person able to demonstrate Jewish origins seeking to settle in the Land of Israel. At the same time, his premise argues for a radically American democratization of Jewish literature, implicitly equating writers with essentially no affiliation or even sympathy for the Jewish religion or Jewish peoplehood with authors steeped, however critically, in Jewish learning, religious practice, and language.

According to the logic of this essay, Nathanael West, Boris Pasternak, or Clarice Lispector would count in equal measure to Mendele Mocher Sforim, Sh. Y. Agnon, or Abraham Cahan not merely as Jewish writers, but creators of Jewish literature. And yet, if a defining

characteristic of Jewish literature is the use of historically Jewish languages, then where or how might one locate authors such as the American–Arab–Israeli writer Anton Shammas, whose work includes poetry in Arabic, translations and a novel in Hebrew, and significant essays in English on the predicament of Arab (i.e., non-Jewish) culture in Israel? It is worth considering the challenge that Shammas's one novel (to date), *Arabeskot* ("Arabesques," 1986), poses to any notion of, variously, Jewish, Arab, or Israeli literature: written in Hebrew, depicting primarily Arabic-speaking characters, it tells two parallel stories—a family saga fictively retelling the author's own family history, and an ironic account of the author's pursuit of a phantom cousin while traveling to and participating in an international writer's conference in Iowa—that together split the difference between postcolonial and postmodern literary discourse (Shammas 1986).

The family saga, for example, is a privileged genre in postcolonial literature, particularly in Latin American fiction, since as a genre it serves to dramatize a dispossessed people's rootedness in a land and a history from which they have otherwise been effaced. However evident the appeal of this genre might be for an Arab–Israeli writer, who nonetheless resides today in the United States, the novel's play of identities, language, temporality, and genre indicate its contemporaneity with a cosmopolitan postmodernism, for which the encounter with global modernity, in contrast to the angst and crisis of literary modernism, provides the occasion for advertising the liberating possibilities offered by multiple nationalities, languages, and styles. If the encounter between tradition and modernity for Jewish modernists had resulted in a sense of loss and homelessness in the face of both of these power structures, the same encounter for postmodernists such as Shammas suggests the prospect of being at home in multiplicity. Shammas's fiction thus offers a profound parallel to Derrida's thesis in *Monolingualism of the Other*: just as Derrida describes his own relationship to French, *Arabesques* is written in a language that does not "belong" to its author. And yet, in its fluent mastery of Hebrew idiom as well as its richly allusive interplay between Hebrew and Arabic storytelling forms, Shammas's novel reveals in its own dislocation a familiarity with the Jewish textual tradition that is far more intimate and inextricable than the writing of most Jewish authors not working in a Jewish language.

Shammas's novel, in unwitting tandem with Kramer's essay, therefore poses the question of how Jewish literature might, and must, be defined beyond Jewish languages. Today, more than 60 percent of the people identifying as Jews in the world live outside of Israel, and therefore use non-Jewish languages in their daily life, while approximately 20 percent of the Israeli population is non-Jewish but nonetheless Hebrew-speaking. Ultimately, what is the meaning of "Jewish culture" or "Jewish identity" when the great majority of people identifying as Jews, whether in Israel or not, maintain modern lifestyles characterized neither by traditional religious observance nor intensive study of traditional texts? However radically Kramer has framed his solution to this quandary, the question his essay takes up is significant not just for the problems it poses for the definition of Jewish literature, but more broadly for the meaning of Jewishness as such. One might suggest, therefore, that just as Benjamin Hary has proposed a "Jewish linguistic spectrum," so too must one think today of a "Jewish literary spectrum," that can include the multiple affiliations, juxtapositions, and languages in which Jewish literature might be identified. For a writer like Anton Shammas, like many of his contemporaries in world literature, as well as his predecessors in the creation of Jewish literature, the pulse of identity in formulations such as American–Arab–Israeli, like Derrida's Franco–Maghrebian Jewishness, or Alexander Harkavy's 1928 *Yiddish-English-Hebrew Dictionary*, must be measured at the hyphens that bring these affiliations into uneasy relation.

Kramer is part of a coterie of American-born Israeli scholars, including most prominently Hana Wirth-Nesher and Emily Miller Budick, who have produced much of the most astute literary criticism on Anglophone Jewish–American literature of late. *Call It English* (Wirth–Nesher

2006), for example, is an insightful study of the linguistic tensions within ostensibly English-language fiction by Jewish writers, revealing to what extent echoes of Hebrew and Yiddish, among other languages, inform and undercut (intercut?) this literature. *Blacks and Jews in Literary Conversation* (Budick 1998) is one of the best treatments of precisely the multicultural question of how African Americans and Jewish Americans, as preeminent examples of ethnicity in the United States, engage in a common struggle with the meaning of American culture via a dia-logical, often agonistic encounter with one another. In complementary ways, these works demonstrate that American Jewish fiction can be neither distinguished nor essentialized as "American," or as "Jewish," but in its unsettled negotiation with both identifications must be read through a larger linguistic, historical, and cultural series of affiliations and ruptures.

High, low, and middlebrow

In contrast to this focus on a "canonical" definition of belletristic literature is a dynamic field of popular and mass cultural literary studies that has recovered a good number of neglected writers and writing from the nineteenth and twentieth centuries in Europe, Israel, and the Americas (Eshed 2002; Weinbaum 2005; Hess et al. 2013). Work in this field also contributes to thinking of a Jewish literary spectrum, with studies that pay particular attention to middlebrow fiction, subcultural writing, audience reception, and image-texts in addition to languages (Roth 2004; Ben-Ari 2008; Baskind and Omer-Sherman 2008; Finkelman 2011). New thinking has also emerged from cultural studies, using the techniques and assumptions of critical theory as they have developed in the study of philosophy, literature, history, and law in order to study topics in visual culture, popular culture, and the practice of everyday life. The work of Barbara Kir-shenblatt-Gimblett has been pioneering in opening up the fields of Jewish ethnography, visual culture, performance studies, museum studies, and tourism studies; although her research has been focused primarily on topics in Jewish culture, her influence extends to the theory and methodology in each of these fields, whether in a Jewish context or not.

Similarly influential is the work of the cultural historian Sander Gilman, primarily on German–Jewish culture. Among the topics that his research has shaped are included the rhetoric of Jewish self-hatred, the image of the Jewish body, myths of Jewish intelligence, and the intersection of Jewish culture with medical history. The greatest influence each of these scholars has exerted on the field of Jewish literature has not been to offer new definitions of literary study, or even new perspectives on Jewish authors—unless, in the case of Gilman, one considers Freud to be a belletristic writer—but rather to establish a reciprocity between literary and cultural studies so that one methodology informs the other. Such methodology is evident in Jeffrey Shandler's *Adventures in Yiddishland: Postvernacular Language and Culture* (2006), which examines the status of Yiddish following the Holocaust, and includes in its purview contemporary trans-lations both from and to Yiddish, the sociology of Yiddish language pedagogy, the use of Yiddish among non-native speakers, the popularity of Yiddish-language kitsch (*tschotschkes*), and the international popularity of contemporary *klezmer* music. Although the focus of this research pursues the cultural studies mandate of analyzing the practice of everyday life to an extraordinary degree, Shandler's influence on the whole field of contemporary Yiddish Studies has been pervasive and salutary, and in turn both the prominence of this new discourse as well as the centrality of cultural studies to Jewish Studies can be seen as reformulating essential methodological questions about what constitutes the study of literature, language, or culture.

What each of these developments demonstrates—from the beginning of Jewish Studies as an institutional discipline to the impact of critical theory to the proliferation of multiculturalism in all of its aspects—is a common structure in the recent history of Jewish literary study; from a

position of belatedness in the reception of a new discourse, scholars within the field of Jewish Studies have assimilated new methodologies and theories in a way that changes both the inherited discourse and the way in which Jewish culture has been defined and studied. At the heart of this process is a series of questions that has in fact constituted Jewish culture since the Biblical Abraham set his sights on the land of Canaan: to what extent is Jewish culture, however defined, a unique, autonomous, and independent phenomenon, and to what extent is it a creative amalgamation of its surrounding cultures with its past influences? How can the study of modern Jewish literature be a study of Jewish culture, and how can it be the study of modern literature, when it must inevitably be both?

Notes

1 The connection between "void" and "hastens" is an untranslatable, and somewhat forced, word play; *vohu*—void—and *va'yavhillu*, "they hastened."
2 The translation here differs negligibly from the published version. For a more contemporary midrash on this verse, see (or, rather, hear!) Bob Dylan, "Spirit on the Water" (Dylan 2006).

Essential reading

Derrida, Jacques (1998) *The Monolingualism of the Other: or, The Prostheis of Origin*, Trans. Patrick Mensah. Stanford: Stanford University Press. A stunningly lucid, elegant, brief inquiry into the meaning of language in creating and frustrating cultural identification, it illustrates the structures of political domination that determine linguistic and literary expression, while demonstrating the inevitability of writing to trespass and subvert these expectations. This is as good an example of how a Jewish experience of the world can shape and transform a consciousness of global modernity as it slouches toward the beginnings of the postmodern.

Hartman, Geoffrey H. and Sanford Budick (1986) *Midrash and Literature*, New Haven: Yale University Press. A pristine overview of what happened when rabbinic thought first made contact with postmodern theory.

Harshav, Benjamin and Harshav, Barbara (eds) (1986) *American Yiddish Poetry: A Bilingual Anthology*, Berkeley: University of California Press. The best case ever made for the significance of Yiddish poetry to an understanding of literary modernism, and an excellent introduction to modern Yiddish literature, including invaluable critical perspectives as well as significant historical documentation.

Miron, Dan (2010) *From Continuity to Contiguity: Toward a New Jewish Literary Thinking*, Stanford: Stanford University Press. The monumental and magisterial summation of views on the modern history of Jewish literature as well as the significance of literary criticism in Jewish languages from the single most important scholar of these subjects working in the contemporary era.

Shammas, Anton (2001) *Arabesques*, Trans. Vivian Eden. Berkeley: University of California Press. The best written and most culturally significant novel written during the 1980s in a Jewish language, Hebrew. The implications of this book's achievement for Israeli culture, Jewish culture, and Arab culture are still being felt and considered.

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4

SOCIOLOGY

Ben Gidley

Sociology explores social life: the relations and divisions between people, the relationship between individual agency and larger social structures. C. Wright Mills, a mid-twentieth-century American sociologist, has defined sociology's aim as translating between "private troubles" and "public issues." For example, one person losing a job or one child bullied for being Jewish would be "private troubles." These would relate to the "public issues" of unemployment or anti-semitism – but not always in a straightforward way. Sociology's task, therefore, is to understand how these two levels are related. In this sense, sociology contrasts to other social sciences: to economics, on the one hand, which more often examines a public issue like unemployment without reference to the diverse personal experiences of joblessness which lie beneath it, or to psychology, on the other hand, which explores personal experiences but not in relation to the larger social structures bearing down on them.

Sociologists, then, tend to understand culture as part of social life, looking at how it reflects, produces or is embedded in social distinctions and divisions. Sociologists are less interested in the aesthetic or creative dimensions of culture, and more interested in the social forces expressed through culture, or the way it gives meaning to social life. Sociologists tend to define culture as "the social process whereby people communicate meanings, make sense of their world, con-struct their identities, and define their beliefs and values" (Best 2007). For instance, Mills argued that culture always expresses the working of power. As sociology became institutionalized as an academic discipline in the twentieth century, it tended not to focus explicitly on culture, until a "cultural turn" of the 1980s placed it at the center of the discipline. However, the early architects of sociology were profoundly concerned with culture, and issues such as ethnicity and assimilation have been on its agenda throughout.

Sociologists have approached Jewishness in two main ways. Some sociologists have used the conceptual and methodological tools of sociology to examine Jewish life, including Judaism as a religion, either as an object of study in itself or to explore larger social questions. Other sociologists have instead sought to explain non-Jewish attitudes to Jews, including antisemitism, again either as an object of study in itself or because antisemitism might help tell us something about societies in which antisemitism flourishes.

These two approaches to Jewishness were already apparent in one of the first questions sociology addressed as it emerged as a discipline. Sociology was born in Europe at the historical moment when modern society was emerging from the *ancien regime* which preceded it. In

earlier historical periods, Jews had always interacted with wider Christian society, but had remained both excluded and autonomous from it. With the emergence of nation-states and of modern citizenship, European intellectuals engaged in a debate about the status of Jews within the new order, and the validity of the exclusions and privileges they had experienced. Should they be "emancipated": given the freedoms of Christian citizens? Should they – could they – be assimilated into wider society? This debate was known as "the Jewish question."

As the postcolonial scholar Aamir Mufti has argued (2007), this question has been one of the constitutive questions of Western modernity. Sociology, therefore, has always had an intimate and tense relationship with Jewishness. All three of the discipline's "founding fathers" – Karl Marx, Max Weber, and Emile Durkheim (two of whom, Marx and Durkheim, had Jewish forebears) – had a strong interest in, and ambivalent response to, the Jewish question. As we shall see in this chapter, the conceptions of "Jewish culture" with which sociology has worked have been defined by the terms of this question. Later, as we shall also see, alternative conceptions of Jewishness would arise within sociology (both in Eastern Europe and in North America), which saw Jews as an ethnic group.

In the shadow of enlightenment: sociology's Jewish question

Sociology is the attempt to understand formations of modernity, while at the same time it is a product of the modernity it seeks to understand. Marx's thought emerged in dialogue with a number of other thinkers who were reflecting on the Jewish situation at the moment of civil emancipation in Central Europe. Their debates over the Jewish question raised issues that would remain at the core of the sociological tradition: what constitutes bourgeois civil society, and what constitutes human emancipation? Later, Weber's sociology was profoundly marked by an engagement with the "scientific" study of "Oriental" societies, including that of and by Jews themselves. These disciplines were at the same time responses to the post-emancipation situation of Western Jewry, and specifically the challenge of assimilation. Key sociological ideas which emerged at this historical juncture relate closely to the ambivalences of assimilation. Finally, Durkheim's sociology had an intimate relationship with the French republican tradition which sought to emancipate Jews as individuals by dissolving their collective identities. By placing the Jewish question at the center of sociology, these thinkers have had a profound influence on the study of contemporary Jewish cultures. In the first part of this chapter, we will look at these ideas in turn.

Emancipation and civil society: Karl Marx and the radical critique of Judaism

Marx was the grandchild of two rabbis, but was the child of converts to Christianity and married a non-Jewish woman. At the time Marx began his writing career, the "Jewish question" was one of the main topics of debate in the European and especially German public sphere. The essence of the question was whether Jews should be emancipated, and, if so, on what terms. In one sense, this was simply a question of the various qualifications and proscriptions that barred practicing Jews from full participation in civil life. More fundamentally, however, as Mufti has suggested, the "Jewish question" is the question of the presence of – and production of – minorities within the space of the emerging European nation-state: of those "terrorized and terrifying figures of minority" who indicate the limits of liberal conceptions of nationhood, citizenship, and tolerance.

In 1844, the young Marx published his notorious essay "On the Jewish Question." The essay includes passages that are hard now not to read as antisemitic. Many of Marx's private letters,

throughout his life, include antisemitic slurs against various political enemies, most infamously his description of rival socialist leader Ferdinand Lasalle as a "Jew-nigger." However, "On the Jewish Question" is of a different order. This is one of the key passages:

> What is the secular basis of Judaism? Practical need, self-interest. What is the secular cult of the Jew? Haggling. What is his secular God? Money. Well then! Emancipation from haggling and from money, i.e. from practical, real Judaism, would be the same as the self-emancipation of our age. … The emancipation of the Jews is in the last analysis the emancipation of humankind from Judaism.
>
> (1992: 236–37)

These passages have attracted a massive body of analysis. Scholars have placed Marx in a left-wing antisemitic tradition (Carlebach 1978); written about the text as an expression of Marx's ambivalence about his own Jewish identity (Avineri 1964); argued that it is simply an artifact of the prejudices of the period (Draper 1977); or claimed that the antisemitism fell away as Marx developed a more mature critique of capitalism rather than money (Balibar 2010). Despite the racism of Marx's phrasing, his placing of an analysis of Jewishness within an analysis of modern capitalist society, rather than as a people apart, inaugurated sociology's distinct contribution to the study of Jewish cultures.

Gemeinschaft and Orientalism: Max Weber and Georg Simmel

In contrast to Marx – who had little interest in analyzing culture, and still less in Jewish culture – Weber's sociology was very much concerned with culture, and he was particularly interested in Jewishness. Weber's work showed how the radical break with traditional culture opened up by Protestantism created space for a money-based economy. The worldly asceticism of Protestantism – a "disciplined, vocational attitude to human activity" (Morris 1987: 65) – was one of the prerequisites for capitalism's rise. This work has significance for the Jewish question in breaking with the nineteenth-century German orthodoxy that capitalism was essentially a product of Jewry. Weber thus weakened the grounds for the radical antisemitism which we saw in Marx's work, and which also tainted Werner Sombart's view that the calculating spirit of the Jews gave rise to capitalism.

Weber also wrote at length about Jewish religion itself, as part of a larger project to develop sociological concepts and categories for understanding religion and its relationship to society. In his comparative analyses of different religions, Weber identified different social groups who act as the "primary carriers" or propagators of religions, and different structures of religious practice which proceed from this. Judaism, he thought, was carried by the wandering trader, and was typified by "ascetic activism," a form of asceticism which was not about withdrawal from the world but rather action *in* the world.

Weber's account drew heavily on the Orientalist scholarship of the late nineteenth century, including the work of Heinrich Graetz's *Wissenschaft des Judentums* school. However, in contrast to that school, Weber's central aim was not historical; rather, it was about understanding modernity. The prophetic tradition of the Hebrews was important for Weber because it was latent in Christianity, ultimately seeding the Protestant revolution, and thus capitalist modernity. As with Marx, Weber's contribution to our current understanding of Jewish culture was to explore it in relation to the larger social formations of Western modernity, rather than seeing it as part of an archaic or timeless Orient.

This reckoning with modernity's specificity characterized the work of other key German sociologists of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. For example, the influential Ferdinand Tönnies described the opposition between *Gemeinschaft* (community) and *Gesellschaft* (society). Community for Tönnies was defined by a natural common understanding between its members, who were in fundamental ways the same as each other, while *Gesellschaft*, emerging with modernity, was based on impersonal relations between strangers. Like Weber, Tönnies described a modern world in which all emotional, familial, and communal ties were dissolved into abstract rationality.

Georg Simmel took up many of these themes. Like Marx, Simmel came from a family of Jews converted to Protestantism; he advocated Jewish assimilation, and rarely described himself as Jewish. As in Marx's works, money played a major role in the modern new order Simmel described. Simmel argued that it was money as a universal measure of equivalence which mediated the impersonal relations of strangers. In this universalism, unmoored from the fixities of communal life, there was both a form of equality and freedom, and a kind of alienating anonymity – a trade-off exemplified by the emancipation of the Jews out of the ghetto and into assimilation.

This was an insight which can be found between the lines of Engels' *The Condition of the Working Class in England*, and which returns in the work of Simmel and later of Alfred Schütz. In the pre-modern order, Simmel argued, the stranger came today and left tomorrow; in modern society, the stranger came today, but *stayed* tomorrow (1950: 402).

The archetype of the stranger is the Jew; the classical sociologists' account of the stranger, as a way of understanding the essential contours of modernity, was essentially an account of the Jewish question as the constitutive question of modernity, at a moment when the Western world was becoming the urban world we know now and communities in the old sense were becoming scarcer. Tönnies, Simmel, and Weber were writing in what contemporary Polish-born sociologist Zygmunt Bauman describes as the time "of great dislocations" (2001: 28), and the sociology they brought into being was an attempt to reckon with this. And one of the most significant examples of this dislocation and uprooting was the dissolution of Jewish communal autonomy. Bauman writes that Jewish sociologists like Simmel, by virtue of their "enforced condition of social suspension," "saw through the modernity deception." For them, "the Jewish experience could be helpful in the understanding of some general issues, through the conditions in which the essential categories of modern culture were conceived of" (1992: 226). Their descriptions of urban life, its alienation, and the paradigmatic experience of the stranger within it, seems to be even more resonant in a postmodern moment, and their reflections on the Jewish experience of strangeness have as much relevance for thinking of culture now as they did then.

Simmel taught and became a close friend of the philosopher Martin Buber, and the alienation and anonymity he describes were echoed in Buber's more explicitly Jewish existential philosophy. The contrast between Simmel and his student Buber is instructive in showing the strengths and limits of the German sociological tradition. When Buber was appointed to the Hebrew University in 1941, the first course he developed was on general sociology, drawing heavily on Simmel's thinking. However, he increasingly turned away from social science and towards pre-modern Judaic texts and practices as antidotes to the alienation and anomie of modern *Gesellschaft*. Where Simmel's analysis of the stranger in modern society enabled him to see Jewish difference as socially constructed – in the eye of the beholder, and thus contingent and subject to change – Buber clung to a notion of essential Jewish racial identity. While Simmel advocated Jewish assimilation, Buber asserted Jewish nationalism. This debate remains central today in thinking about Jewish culture in a context when Buber's Zionism is no longer marginal but

hegemonic, but when postmodern culture encourages us to see all identities as increasingly contingent and subject to change.

Collective effervescence: Emile Durkheim and civil religion

If Simmel and Weber's work was inflected by a German tradition of assimilationism, Durkheim's was inflected by a particularly French tradition of republican (secularism) *laïcité*, for which the republic took on the character of a civic religion. The presumed universality of French secular culture was constituted in contrast to the "particularism" of both "primitive" and Jewish cultures, and Durkheim's reflections on the relationship between universal structures of life and particular social formations emerges from this.

Pierre Birnbaum, a contemporary French sociologist, has argued that the French Jewish path to modernity, particularly during the Third Republic (1870–1940) was characterized by social mobility through the institutions of the secular, republican state. Birnbaum (2000) uses the term "state Jews" to discuss this formation. Durkheim was, in some senses, an exemplary state Jew. He was born in 1858, the son of a rabbi. After a brief adolescent fervor for Catholicism, he became a confirmed atheist. Unlike many of his German contemporaries, Durkheim was open about his Jewish origins. He was a courageous defender of Dreyfus at the start of the twentieth century: Dreyfus, an army officer, was another "state Jew"; the victim of antisemitic allegations of treachery, many of his accusers were opponents of the Third Republic's secular state he served (Birnbaum 2000; Arendt 1951). Durkheim later headed a commission on the military service of Russian Jews in France during the Great War. Yet in private he expressed ambivalence about his Jewishness, even at times something verging on self-hatred (Birnbaum 2000: 92–96).

A central concern of Durkheim's sociology – as with the German sociological tradition of Tönnies, Simmel, Sombart, and Weber – was defining the essential features of modernity in contrast to tradition. For Durkheim, the distinction was grasped by the contrast between tradition's "mechanical" solidarity – communities bound by common values, identical beliefs, and repressive sanctions for transgression – and modernity's "organic" solidarity – the solidarity born of mutual interdependence in a heterogeneous society. His was an evolutionary schema, in which modern, secular, republican society is seen as a higher form of civilization.

Durkheim was heavily influenced by the work of the Victorian Scottish Presbyterian scholar, W. Robertson-Smith. Robertson-Smith, after visiting the Bedouin Arabs of the Sinai, postulated that the ancient Semitic peoples had been made up of matrilineal clans, each clan organized around a sacred animal or "totem." Totemic rituals – and especially sacrifice – bound each clan, with sacramental meals expressing and sustaining its unity and solidarity (Morris 1987: 112–14). Durkheim took a step further, and argued that an understanding of religions must focus on what they *do*: his analysis gives primacy to ritual over belief and to social function over individual salvation, setting the stage for an explanation of religion even more firmly rooted in social structure than is Weber's analysis. Durkheim argued that religion in general is not about Gods and spirits, but rather is about practices which unite a moral community That is, all religion is an elaboration of the totemic principle, all ritual an elaboration of the sacrificial meal, moments of "delirium" or "collective effervescence" which bind a community.

Durkheim took this understanding into his analysis of modern secular society, and developed the notion of the secular state's civil religion: in modern, secular society, Durkheim saw, the role of totemic rituals was given to the institutions, rituals, and symbols of the state; secularism, though un-Godly, functioned as religion. This understanding is deeply rooted in specifically French traditions of *laïcité*: it is France above all where the emancipation of the Jews took the

form Marx caricatured as emancipation from Judaism, a form of emancipation French *laïcité* has sought to enact on Muslims too, for example, in the recent ban on headscarves (Silverman 1992; Altglas 2010).

In Durkheim's evolutionary schema, Jews (as perhaps with Muslims in contemporary French *laïcité*) are not fully modern – a sharp contrast with the analysis of the German tradition, including Simmel, in which Jews are paradigmatic figures of modernity. In his classic 1897 text *Suicide*, Durkheim describes "the Jew" as combining the severe discipline of pre-modern small group life with "the intense culture enjoyed by our contemporary large-scale societies. He has the intelligence of the modern man without sharing his despair" (quoted Lukes 1985: 208).

Marx, Weber, Simmel, and Durkheim all, in different ways, opened up lines of investigation into Jewishness as socially constructed, its construction shaped by the contingencies of the time and place, whether those contingencies were understood in terms of modes of production or as historical epochs such as modernity: a form of analysis which is typical of sociology as a discipline. At the same time, Marx's acceptance of racist caricatures of Jews or Durkheim's evolutionary schema which framed "the Jew" in terms of his intelligence point towards a different understanding of Jewishness as race. How could sociology account for the contingency of Jewish identity and do justice to Jewish particularity without falling back on the biological determination of racial thinking?

The YIVO school: an alternative Jewish sociology?

Marx, Weber, and Durkheim were responding to specifically Western Jewish questions: questions arising in the context of Jewish emancipation into a modern, universalist order. In parallel, sociologists within Eastern European Jewry responded to related but different questions in a very different way. Eastern European Jews developed an intellectual culture as it shifted from rural communities into towns and cities from the late nineteenth century. The massive social and economic changes which forced Eastern Jews to confront modernity also led to the development of a lively Yiddish public and intellectual culture, with the proliferation of newspapers, journals, debating societies, reading rooms, political parties, and literary and cultural movements.

Thus both within the growing working class movement and in institutions developed by an emerging urban middle class, some of the same "Jewish questions" that vexed Western sociology were also addressed, and there was a turn to sociology for answers. These debates took place in Yiddish, and there was something of a development of a specific Yiddish tradition of sociology.

Many of the key figures in the Yiddish literary renaissance cultivated an ethnographic "art of description" (Back 2007); social movements in the Yiddish-speaking world combined a political commitment to the the "*folk*" – the Yiddish word carries both connotations of the English "people": ethnos (shared identity) and demos (the common) – with a scholarly commitment to describing *folk* life in its fullness. It was in these terms, as a folk (perhaps ethnicity being the closest contemporary term) by which the Yiddish sociologists understood Jewishness, and not as a racial or religious group. Many were secularists, and a definition of Jewishness not tied to Judaism was a central element in their approach. The sociological accounts developed in this tradition were conceived as critiques of what the historian Salo Baron (1928) called the "lachrymose conception" of Jewish history and culture prevalent in the West and associated by Baron with Graetz. The Yiddishists ethnographically represented Jewish popular life as neither fated to assimilation nor a sequence of tragedies.

Nonetheless, there was an awareness that this folk life was under threat, and the task of ethnographic inquiry was often carried out against a backdrop of violence. For example, Elias

Tcherikover, a labor Zionist and historian, documented the Ukraine pogroms of 1918–20; for him the scholarly task of understanding Yiddish social life was inseparable from the political task of sustaining diaspora Jewish life. Tcherikover was one of the founders of the Jewish Scientific Institute (Yidisher Visnshaftlekher Institut, commonly known as YIVO) in Vilna in 1925, dedicated to the scientific study of the Yiddish folk culture and society of Eastern and Central Europe. It had a social science section, headed by Jacob Lestchinsky and staffed by ethnographic and quantitative sociologists such as Ben-Adir, Liebman Hersch, and Moshe Shalit, while the historical section also included trained sociologists such as Jakub Berman and Raphael Mahler.

YIVO social scientists used statistical methods to explore Jewish demography, patterns of settlement and economic activities, and also ethnographic methods to record the granular detail of life in the Yiddish-speaking world. They researched persecution against Jews and the forms of exclusion and segregation. The YIVO social scientists focused on Jewish *practices*, religious but especially profane practices. They also focused on the *ordinary* – not on prophets and priests, but on artisans, touring musicians, urban tradesmen. And they focused on the *local*, specific locations, whether the *dorf* (village), *shtetl* (small town) or *shtot* (city), in different parts of the Yiddish-speaking world. In this, the work of the YIVO sociologists contrasted with the generalizations and ideal types associated with Jews for the classical sociologists.

With the Nazi occupation, YIVO re-located to New York, although not all of its scholars escaped; Shalit, for example, perished in the Ponary massacre in 1941. In the face of the Nazi destruction of Eastern European Jewry, their ethnographic project took on an ethical urgency, and their earlier concern to account for prejudice and persecution became even more imperative. Even in the midst of the destruction, the YIVO school remained committed to sociological rigor, as can been seen in Lestchinsky's book *Di yidishe kaṭasṭrofe. Di meṭodes fun ir forshung* (The Jewish Catastrophe: Methods of Research), published in 1944. Lestchinsky argued for systematic, objective recording of the granular detail of Jewish life as it was lived in the very teeth of the catastrophe, both as an ethically urgent task of testimony and as a scientific duty to account for and seek to understand the seemingly incomprehensible. After the war, he would continue this task with a series of surveys of surviving Jewish communities for the World Jewish Congress.

In America meanwhile, Salo Baron, a historian influenced by sociologists such as Weber and Sombart, was among those who worked in the Conference on Jewish Relations, later known as the Conference on Jewish Social Studies, which founded the journal *Jewish Social Studies* in 1939. The journal included both historical and sociological material, reflecting the YIVO school's orientation, and many of its authors were originally Yiddish language writers. The Conference, led by Baron along with the American Jewish Committee and other organizations, also established the Commission on European Jewish Cultural Reconstruction in 1945 to co-ordinate the restitution and salvage of Jewish cultural assets from the ruins of the Holocaust.

The Commission, which became Jewish Cultural Reconstruction in 1947, continued to develop the YIVO school of Jewish ethnography; YIVO writers like Lestchinsky published in English in *Jewish Social Studies*, and YIVO itself developed a lively output in English. Although open to the influences of wider sociological debates, the work of these scholars constitutes a distinct Yiddish sociological tradition, a tradition which translated, on American soil, into a Yiddish-inflected English-language idiom, and thus became a key source for contemporary understandings of Jewish culture in the English-speaking world.

Sociology in the ghetto: Eastern Jews in the West

The Western Jewish cultural formation that left its mark on social theory's founding figures and the Eastern Jewish cultural formation that developed a vibrant scholarly life in the

Yiddish-speaking world was paralleled by a third formation in the parts of the English-speaking world, especially urban America, where Eastern Jews were migrating on a mass scale and rapidly acculturating.

There is a small but significant early history of social research on British Jewry. The folklorist and historian Joseph Jacobs was based in Britain from the 1860s to 1900s and conducted research on Jewish folk practices and stories. He collaborated with the eugenicist and statistician Francis Galton to use composite photography of students at the Jews' Free School to document the Jewish "racial type" in the 1880s. Charles Booth's monumental study *The Life and Labour of the People of London*, conducted from the 1880s to the 1900s, included ethnographic studies of East End Jews by Beatrice Webb. H. S. Lewis, a social scientist who worked on Booth's project, co-wrote *The Jew in London: A Study of Racial Character and Present-Day Conditions* (Russell and Lewis 1901).

This body of work was part of the emergence of sociology as an empirical discipline in the English-speaking world, a late Victorian project to master the problem of the social, and particularly to know and understand the urban poor, who were then entering the consciousness of the middle classes. Imperialism provided observers with an epistemological framework through which to understand the social. The colonies, and the orient, were mapped onto the space of the Western city. Images drawn from empire (jungle, dark continent, etc.) were used to think about, to make visible, the denizens of London (Walkowitz 1992: 35). Jews, and the East End, the district of London they lived in, had a privileged place in this process. Booth's researchers lived among the natives in the East End as colonial anthropologists lived amongst tribes in Africa.

Although this context seems remote from contemporary contexts for thinking about Jewish culture, this early British empirical sociology had a profound influence on the emerging discipline in America, especially in the University of Chicago, which came to be the main home of English-speaking sociology for a half century from World War I and continues to shape the discipline's worldview. For the Chicago sociologists, such as Robert Park, Ernest Burgess, and Louis Wirth, their city functioned as a laboratory of social life, as the East End of London did for Booth and his colleagues. The Chicago sociologists, too, set about looking at the urban tribes that inhabited what they saw as the eco-system of the metropolis. However, unlike their British predecessors, they didn't understand Jewishness as biological race, but rather as a social system within the larger complex system of the city.

The Jewish immigrant quarter was a key fieldwork location, and the site of Louis Wirth's classic ethnography, *The Ghetto* (1928). Wirth, himself a German-born Jew, set out to show how the communal modes of living of Yiddish Europe were reproduced in modern America. His model, of an urban ghetto functioning as a social organism much like a shtetl or village community in the old country, has echoed through American sociology, and shaped the way the Chicago sociologists would later see the black ghetto. Wirth's colleague, Robert Park, was also interested in Jewish Americans, and he saw the city as sifting immigrants as they go through a process of assimilation out of the ghetto and into the suburban mainstream of American life.

Sociology in dark times: understanding the twentieth century

The destruction of the overwhelming majority of European Jewry in the Holocaust and the accelerated post-war assimilation of Western Jews into mainstream social life meant there was a decline in new sociological research on Jewish life. However, other elements of the Jewish question – specifically, the hatred of Jews that led to genocide – remained urgent in light of the Nazis' Final Solution. The Holocaust created a crisis in the categories of thought that had been developed by thinkers like Marx. This crisis was exemplified by the figure of Hannah Arendt.

Arendt, although primarily a political writer, had a close relationship with sociology. She was the research director of Baron's Conference on Jewish Relations in the mid-1940s and executive director of Jewish Cultural Reconstruction. Shortly after the end of the Shoah, Hannah Arendt wrote an important essay in *Jewish Social Studies* entitled "Social Science Techniques and the Study of Concentration Camps" (1950). In this essay, Arendt argues for the need and possibility of a sociological explanation of the Final Solution, while also signaling the disciplinary limitations of sociological explanation.

Arendt's challenge has been taken up by a number of Jewish sociologists, most notably Bauman in his influential *Modernity and the Holocaust* (1989), as well as by Jeffrey Alexander, who has written that "even the most calamitous and biological of social facts – the prototypical evil of genocidal mass murder – can be understood only inside of symbolic codes and narratives; [and] these frames change substantially depending on social circumstances" (2002: 5).

Bauman argues that the Shoah was not an exceptional, pathological event to be explained by some peculiarity of German character or by the monstrosity of its perpetrators. Rather, it must be placed within modernity in all its ordinariness. Modernity provided a machinery whereby ordinary people could do cruel things, in the pursuit of apparently rational goals; modernity imagined society as a garden which needed to be ridded of weeds, a body which needed to be freed from illness, and it developed forms of planning and problem-solving to make that possible.

Bauman also draws heavily on Simmel and his theme of the stranger. Of the stranger at the gate, Bauman describes (using language he takes from Levi-Strauss) modernity as having developed two strategies for dealing with them: *anthropophagic*, devouring them, that is assimilating them, and *anthropoemic*, vomiting them, that is expelling or exterminating them. The ghetto, the camp, and finally the gas chamber were means by which modernity kept its strangers away.

Sociology and the new Jewish cultural studies

With some exceptions, sociology has played a relatively small part in the emergence in the last decade or so of new and imaginative approaches to the study of Jewish culture. Perhaps, if the Jewish question was the constitutive question of modernity and sociology emerged as the study of modernity's social formation, the shift from the terrain of modernity to postmodernity has meant that sociological reflections on the Jewish question are now anachronistic. However, the persistent importance of its key themes in the postmodern social world might suggest otherwise. The play between biological "race" and cultural ethnicity, the tension between assimilation and cultural survival, the problem of the stranger who stays tomorrow, the loosening of the bonds of community and authority, alienation in a bureaucratic world, the reduction of human life to money relations, the forms of banal prejudice that erupt into genocide: these all remain core issues for Jews (and for other minorities) in the contemporary moment.

The centrality of race and ethnicity to postmodern society is underscored by the importance black sociologists have had for the new Jewish cultural studies. Particularly significant are Paul Gilroy, whose theorization of diaspora has been highly sensitive to Jewish parallels, and Stuart Hall, who developed a sophisticated account of the emergence of "new ethnicities." Their work has enabled us to think about race and identity beyond the categories provided by the earlier sociological writers.

As we have seen, earlier sociologists tended to see Jewishness in terms of religion (as with Weber's analysis of priesthood and prophethood) or in terms of race (as with Marx's racist stereotyping or Joseph Jacobs' eugenics), while the more strictly sociological accounts (such as Simmel's or Bauman's analysis of the stranger) understood the ways in which Jewishness is socially constructed, in the eye of the beholder. However, these kinds of constructionist

accounts, by focusing on boundaries, can miss the rich cultural content of Jewish practices, and the subtle interplay between this cultural content and social construction. The new ethnicities literature, on the other hand, is better able to capture this, arguing that identities – and ethnicities – are constructed or othered from outside, but also narrated and identified from within.

In recent years, and partly inspired by the new ethnicities turn in the wider sociology of culture, there has been an emergence of new sociological work on Jewish culture. For example, Sarah Abramson (2011) has conducted ethnographic research with Jewish youth movements to show how ideas of "authentic" Jewishness are both reproduced and contested within the margins of the community; Sarah Bunin Benor (2012) has shown how ultra-orthodox identities are not static remnants of an earlier Judaism but need to be learnt and reconstructed anew; while Shaul Kelner (2010) has emphasized the importance of spatial practices, such as birthright tourism and pilgrimage, which have been fundamental to constructing multiple Jewish identities, and Ben-Rafael and Ben-Chaim (2006) have argued that the multiplication of forms of modernity has led to the multiplication of forms of Jewishness. Other sociologists have attended to those at the margins of Jewish communities – as with Altglas' (2011) work on the Kabbalah Centre, which includes Jews and non-Jews – or have focused on Mizrahi Jews, a heterogeneous group previously neglected in the sociological literature (e.g. Shenhav 2006; Goldberg and Bram 2007).

In some ways, this body of work returns to some of the themes of the Yiddish tradition: the focus is on the ordinary folk, on the specificity of space and place, and on practice rather than text. And this return is appropriate, as the Jewish questions which haunted modernity remain urgent in the twenty-first century.

Essential reading

Arendt, H. (1951) *The Origins of Totalitarianism*, New York: Schocken. Arendt turns her method to the Nazi and Stalinist regimes.

Birnbaum, P. (2003) "The Cases of Emile Durkheim and Georg Simmel," in M. Brenner, V. Caron, U. R. Kaufmann, eds, *Jewish Emancipation Reconsidered: The French and German Models*, Tuebingen: Mohr Siebeck. Overview of two of the key Jewish sociologists.

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5

RELIGIOUS STUDIES

Andrea Lieber

Introduction

Religion cuts across every layer of human experience. Whether conceived as an expression of ultimate meaning, a binding social force, a physiological impulse, or a set of beliefs and practices, the study of religion engages multiple disciplinary lenses to reveal the variety and complexity of religious expression in human life. Indeed, religion is perhaps best described as an "inter-discipline," a field of study that relies on the complementarity of a wide array of methodologies.

In the words of Wendy Doniger, scholars of religion work with a rich "tool box" of methodological lenses. In her work on the study of myth, Doniger argued that religionists must carry "as wide a range of tools as possible, and reach for the right one at the right time … [and] take responsibility for choosing the 'right one' on each separate occasion, rather than choosing a single one, once and for all as a matter of principle" (Doniger 1980). When Doniger offered this metaphor in the 1980s, a religious studies toolbox might have included theology, history, sociology, or psychology, among other disciplinary lenses. Today, in response to an increasingly interdisciplinary and multicultural academy, that toolbox has expanded to include the diverse methods of literary or postcolonial theory, gender studies, cultural anthropology, queer theory or even neurobiology.

Consider, as an example, the possible approaches a religionist could take to the study of a Jewish wedding ceremony. One might focus on ceremonial ritual, or be concerned with the liturgy, its theology and its meaning. Still another approach might be to look at the way the ceremony reinforces or disrupts conventions of power, gender or other social hierarchies. The historical origins of the ceremony and its social and legal implications could also serve as a starting point for analysis. Or, one might analyze the repertoire of music performed, the style of dress, or the design of an illuminated marriage contract displayed under the wedding canopy.

Scholarship in the field of religion is diverse precisely because the phenomena we call "religion" are diverse and resist neat definitions. Although religionists tend to share a fascination with the varied ways in which religion creates meaning in human life, they rarely agree on what, exactly, we mean when we talk about, and theorize about religion. Jonathan Z. Smith, one of the foremost voices in the field, has argued persuasively that "religion" as a category does not even exist outside of the confines of the scholar's study. Smith writes, "It is the study of religion that created the category, it is the study of religion that invented 'religion'" (Smith and Lehrich 2013: 80).

As expansive as religious studies is as a discipline, it also has its limitations. Even as the field has grown to accommodate an expanding roster of critical lenses and subject areas, religious studies remains haunted by Christian paradigms and definitions that have become increasingly problematic in a multicultural academy, especially for the study of Jewish culture. Although it was the field of religious studies that, as early as the eighteenth century, introduced the study of Judaism to the academy (Kavka 2006; Greenspahn 2000; Ritterband and Wechsler 1994), today's Jewish studies does not find a fully comfortable home there. This tension has been productive in that newer scholarship focused on the study of Jewish culture has, over the past twenty years, helped to expose the fault lines of the discipline, and consequently expanded the range of methodologies available to scholars of religion.

At the same time, since work on Jewish culture is not defined by or limited to religious expressions of Judaism, the evolution of Jewish studies as a field has unseated religion as the defining category of Jewishness. In this respect, Jewish studies fulfills what Susannah Heschel has called its "radical impulse" to overthrow received categories and hierarchies of knowledge (Heschel 1998). By asking new questions, the growing field of Jewish studies has challenged and problematized those definitions of religion that emerged from the "scholar's study," to reshape the discipline and push the field in new directions.

The Protestant enlightenment understanding of religion that shaped religious studies drove a wedge between belief and practice, between faith and law. Contemporary scholarship in Jewish culture undoes some of those dichotomies and has helped scholars ask new critical questions. While academic work in any non-Christian religious tradition might be said to challenge the Christian origins of the discipline, the study of Judaism, with its particular history with and relationship to Christianity, has had a unique impact. Jewish studies challenges long held ideas about how Jewishness, Judaism, and Jewish culture, are defined. In this way, it has worked to expand received notions about what constitutes a legitimate object of academic study, and also about who can speak authoritatively about things Jewish.

In what follows, I suggest that a cultural approach to Jewish studies, exemplified by several influential works of the late twentieth century, has presented a challenge to the way Judaism is studied within the discipline of religion by questioning the Protestant assumptions that have shaped the field since the eighteenth century and challenging the idea that Judaism can be aptly described and understood as a "religion."

If religious studies has attempted to understand Judaism by looking at the way its elements conform to certain essential, defining characteristics of "religion," a cultural studies approach changes the conversation by asking a different set of questions. Cultural studies seeks to situate Judaism, Jewishness, and Jewish culture within history as a dynamic cultural tradition that changes, and has changed over time in response to its social, cultural, political, and geographical location. Scholars reading Jewish subjects through the lens of what has been termed "Jewish Cultural Studies" (Boyarin and Boyarin 1997; Bunzl 2000; Seidman 1994; Fonrobert 2005; Kirshenblatt-Gimblett 2005) explicitly critique the idea of an ossified, monolithic "Judaism" that emerged from the study of religion primarily as a backdrop for Christianity. Instead, Jewish cultural studies explores the way Judaism has at different moments been transformed by institutions and economics, and through discourses and practices related to issues of gender, race, and class.

In today's religious studies, Judaism and Jewish culture is a useful prism for breaking down the binary oppositions that have anchored the field (religious vs. secular, belief vs. practice, faith vs. law). The application of insights from postcolonial theory, diaspora studies, psychoanalysis and other critical lenses from outside the discipline have pushed scholars of religion to think in a more nuanced way about their subjects.

Judaism and religious studies

Religionswissenschaft, "the scientific study of religion" aimed to break down, classify, and compare religious traditions and analyze them from an impartial perspective. It is the deeply Protestant legacy of the field that brought Jewish studies into the academy as an antecedent to Christianity, to help seminary students better understand the social, political, and historical world of Jesus. Religion, when defined as a "faith" or a "belief," an encounter with "the sacred" or a "transcendent power," privileges an understanding that takes its cues from Protestant theology. With its emphasis on personal piety, Protestantism established the interior, private condition of "faith" as the primary arena for authentic religious experience. Protestant thought defined religion as a distinct sphere that could be separated from public life in a way that is quite alien to classical Jewish culture, but certainly did make sense to the early pioneers of Reform Judaism, both in Europe and the US, who were also influential in the emerging field of Judaic studies.

In the nineteenth century, leading theologians like Friedrich Schleiermacher and Søren Kierkegaard developed the Protestant notion of an inner life of faith into a theology of mysticism that came to be widely influential in Europe and the US. Pioneers of the modern study of religion like Max Muller, Rudolph Otto, Edward Tyler, and Mircea Eliade, were deeply influenced by this trend in Protestant theology, and it informed their understanding of how to study the sacred. This approach to the study of religion, both in Europe and America, continued into the twentieth century. This was due to the role Protestant seminaries had in the development of the field; faculty appointments in Departments of Religion were largely modeled after Divinity school curricula (Hebrew Bible, Church History, Philosophy of Religion), and many positions in religion were often shared with University Divinity schools. In many ways, the tensions that plagued the study of Judaism in Departments of Religion were those created by the self-imposed limitations of the discipline, which drew its lines in parallel with Protestant categories. To study Judaism meant to focus on sacred texts (biblical or rabbinic), or history, or theology (which, in the post-war era, often meant holocaust theology).

Take, for example, this excerpt from a 1929 meeting of the National Association of Bible Instructors (NABI), the professional organization that would eventually become the American Academy of Religion. Faced with a proposal to change its name to the National Association of Teachers of Religion, the Eastern region of the Association voted against the change, and defended its decision by referencing the prophetic nature of the association's work:

> … [t]he initials of our present name N A B I spell the word NABI, which is the common Hebrew word for Prophet. We do not know how this collection of letters came about, whether it was due to purpose, coincidence, or Providence, but it is nevertheless a striking fact. But we know that the Prophet, reaching his climax in Jesus, the Prophet of Nazareth, is the unique contribution of the Bible to universal religion. There is sublime meaning in that name; for the Prophet has given to civilization its highest social, ethical, and religious ideals.
>
> (Mould 1950: 13)

The study of Hebrew language was an important academic enterprise, precisely because it was a tool for better understanding the Old Testament and its prophecies, fulfilled in the New Testament, and not because it represented in any way the cultural heritage of the Jewish people.

Jewish culture might be studied as context for one of the key areas of study (history, theology, or bible), but questions of Jewish culture, per se, were not central. As Laura Levitt has noted, the resulting vision for the study of Judaism was very limiting within religious studies—it could

not accommodate secular Judaism on the one hand, because it was not "religious" enough, or Orthodox Judaism on the other, because it was too focused on law and practice, and not enough on "belief." Only a Judaism that looked like Protestantism, like a "faith tradition," could fit the established definitions (Levitt 2008).

That Judaism was brought into the academy under the analytic gaze of Protestant history is still apparent in the very structure through which religion departments in the US allocate academic positions using the traditions model. Each major religious tradition—Judaism, Hinduism, Buddhism, Islam, and so forth—has a scholar appointed to teach that tradition, with some expansion over the decades for other understandings of traditions, for instance, Native American traditions, African-American religions, Asian religions, Latin American religions, and others. The exception to this model has been Christianity, which is rarely taught as such. Few departments offer an "Introduction to Christianity" or an "Introduction to Christian Civilization," to use two usual examples of courses regularly taught about other traditions. Instead, Christian traditions are taught using the rubrics of Hebrew Bible/New Testament (or still in some places, Old Testament/New Testament) and courses on Jesus and Paul, Theology and Ethics, Modern Religious Thought, and Medieval Church History.

These structures are the simplest way to see the defining role that Protestant understandings of "religion" have played in shaping the field: every tradition has its scholars, but Christianity is both left unstudied in a critical sense, or studied only in parts; the practitioners of these various subfields often have little in common methodologically, with theologians and historians having little to say in a scholarly sense to those working with sacred texts.

Both the academic organization of where Jewish studies scholars do their work, as well as the methods of religious studies, are challenged by what constitutes today's study of Jewish culture, especially in the US but also and increasingly in the UK, Europe, and Israel. A 2008 survey of the Association for Jewish Studies found that only 8 percent of its membership was trained in religion as a primary field, but 16 percent hold positions housed in religion departments. Eighty-four percent of Jewish studies scholars do their work outside the discipline of religious studies (Cohen and Veinstein 2008). The uneasiness of the relationship of Jewish studies with and within religious studies has become even more pronounced as scholars from a diversity of disciplines have entered the field. While it was once the case that the majority of scholars were trained as experts in the classical sources of Judaism, primarily Bible and Talmud, with some focus on medieval sources, scholars today receive Ph.D.s from many disciplinary backgrounds, and focus their research on many different kinds of "texts." While it was once the case that the vast majority of scholars in (and students of) Jewish studies were themselves identified as Jewish, today, this cannot be assumed. As the content of Jewish studies has expanded, so has the set of critical lenses that scholars use to frame their work. Given this growth, it feels increasingly awkward to situate the study of Jewish culture in Departments of Religion. After all, is there anything necessarily religious about Jewish culture? Are the frameworks that are useful for studying religion, like the key categories of "religious," "secular," "myth," "symbol," or "ritual" even appropriate for the study of Judaism and Jewishness? It is Judaism's poor fit within these categories that has helped to reveal the limitations of the categories themselves.

Judaism and Jewish cultural studies

The scholarly trend that has come to be called "Jewish cultural studies" (Boyarin and Boyarin 1997; Bunzl 2000; Kirschenblatt-Gimblett 2005; Fonrobert 2005) emerged in the US in the mid-1990s, as scholars engaged in the study of Judaism began to explore literary and critical theory, and incorporate these theoretical approaches into their work. In her 1994 review essay, "Carnal

Knowledge: Sex and the Body in Jewish Studie's" Naomi Seidman called attention to a heightened interest in "the body" as an analytic category that had bubbled up in Jewish studies under the influence of Foucault. At the time, Foucault's theoretical work of unpacking discourses of power and sexuality was also having an impact on the broader field of religious studies through the work of scholars like Elaine Scarry (1985), Peter Brown (1988) and Carolyn Walker Bynum (1988; 1992). Seidman considered the near simultaneous publication of works like Howard Eilberg-Schwartz's *People of the Body* (1992), Daniel Boyarin's *Carnal Israel* (Boyarin 1993), and David Biale's *Eros and the Jews* (Biale 1992) a trend deserving attention. This trend combined discourse about Jewish carnality and embodiment with close readings of Jewish texts, and challenged directly the intellectualized "idea of the Jew" that was typical of religious studies.

Throughout the 1990s, many classically trained scholars of Judaism, following the lead of these works, began to employ social scientific methods from critical theory in the humanities in ways that opened up new avenues in the study of classical Jewish literatures. Some used ritual theory, borrowed from anthropology (Klawans 2000; Carol Meyers 1988), gender theory (Peskowitz 1997; Fonrobert 2000), literary theory (Boyarin 1994; Stern 1996) or sociological theory (Jay 1994) to stake out new readings of classical Jewish sources in ways that accounted for issues of cultural context and the forces of history that shaped the texts themselves. For example, Peskowitz argued that "early rabbis used fantasies about spinning and the spinning of fantasy to make gender into sense" (Peskowitz 1997: 24), demonstrating through her analyses that women, and the category of women, in the Mishnah and Talmud are rabbinic idealizations and cultural constructs rather than reflections of real life in Jewish antiquity. In doing so, Peskowitz and others helped shift discourse about Jewish "culture" to a more prominent position in Jewish religious studies, and this shift continues to influence scholarship today.

In 2005, a full decade after Seidman's essay appeared, Charlotte Fonrobert (2005) revisited the question of how the "bodily turn" that had been heralded in Seidman's 1995 review essay had come to influence the field ten years later. Citing her own work, and that of others like her who had been trained to read classical rabbinic texts through the lens of critical theory, Fonrobert concluded that just as "studying religion in general after Foucault … has become inseparable from thinking about questions of corporeality, Judaism—and rabbinic Judaism in particular—cannot adequately be understood otherwise. The body anchors discourses about religious practice and belief … " (Fonrobert 2005).

That same year, Barbara Kirshenblatt-Gimblet published the "The Corporeal Turn" in the *Jewish Quarterly Review* (reprinted as "Bodies", Chapter 13 in this volume), a manifesto in defense of Jewish cultural studies, which had come under scrutiny by more traditional voices in Jewish studies who felt that gender and postmodern rhetoric in recent scholarship was displacing "the text" as the center of Jewish scholarly practice (Halkin 1998; Roskies 2003; Seidman 2004). Trained as a cultural anthropologist, Kirshenblatt-Gimblett suggests that in fact, Jewish cultural studies never left the text behind, but rather brings concern about the body to the text, yielding new ways of thinking about those texts as representative of discourses that reinforce particular social structures. Turning her attention to the problematic binaries that have been operative in the study of Judaism, she asks, "If there is a 'mind/body problem in Jewish studies' is it the same as the 'text/body' problem?" She goes on to suggest that Jewish cultural studies can complicate such seeming binaries by showing how interconnected even classical rabbinic texts are with real, historicized bodies (Kirshenblatt-Gimblett 2005).

In some respects, this work echoed developments in the study of religion more broadly, following religion's anthropological turn in which the work of Clifford Geertz came to dominate the field in the 1990s, using ethnography, and "thick description" as tools that could be used to "read" cultural rituals and practices that were constructive of religious worldviews.

However, for the scholarship that eventually became Jewish cultural studies, religious studies and its anthropological shift was not the primary conversation partner. Indeed, much of the new Jewish cultural studies emerged from scholars working at major universities in which cultural studies and the expanded understanding of literary theory and comparative literature were being explored. The new Jewish cultural studies thus gave rise to prolific scholarship that forwarded "a critique of the systems of domination (national and ethnic, sexual and gendered, epistemological and disciplinary, subjective and unconscious) that have served to inscribe 'the Jew' on the margins of European culture" (Judaken 2001: 270), though much of this scholarly activity was generated by scholars in the US employing American models of cultural analysis.

Still, as the rest of this section will make clear, several important works engaged specifically with religious studies, and thus played a key role in rethinking the category of "religion" as it applies and does not apply to Judaism in its global contexts and to Jewish culture generally. Susannah Heschel's article, "Jewish Studies as Counter History," is particularly important for the way it illustrated how Jewish studies scholars trained in religion could use postcolonial theory to challenge the hegemonic structures that placed Judaism and Jewish culture in a problematic relationship to Christianity. By Heschel's account, Jewish studies' entry into the nineteenth-century academy came as a radical move that deliberately challenged many basic assumptions about Western, Christian history (Heschel 1998: 101). When the study of Judaism first entered the modern university, it was not Jewishness on its own terms that interested these early religious studies scholars, but Jewishness and Judaism as the familiar other. Judaism was the tradition that felt close because in their theological terms, Christianity had emerged from Judaism and then superseded it. Jewish studies was interesting because it helped to explain and illuminate early Christianity; this link was illustrated in the invention of the phrase "Judeo-Christian" to describe Judaism as appropriated by, as completed by Christianity. As Heschel stated the problem, "How does Judaism, the subaltern voice of Europe, speak back, so as to resist and disrupt the hegemony of the Christian West? Judaism's voice … began its resistance and disruption with the rise of Jewish studies in the nineteenth century, as it not only presented its own history but reconfigured the history and significance of Christianity by undermining its central claims" (Heschel 1998: 102).

Heschel asserted a parallel between the subversive role of Jewish studies in the nineteenth-century Christian academy and the role of multiculturalism in the American academy of the twentieth century. As multiculturalism entered academic discourse through ethnic studies, area studies, and postcolonial theory in particular, it challenged the dominant narratives of the West and redefined scholarly discourse so as to view it instead from multiple perspectives, thus "changing the configurations that mark the nature of that history—the values that govern it, the powers that shape it, the judgment of its significance" (Heschel 1998: 101). In the context of nineteenth-century Germany, reversing the critical gaze was a radical move. In the US, however, especially after World War II, when Jews and Judaism became the "kosher other," Heschel argued that academic Jewish studies had lost touch with its radical origins. In fact, Jews had become an ally in reinforcing the Christian hegemony in the study of religion by aligning Judaism with a dominant Western monotheism known as Judeo-Christianity.

In her essay, Heschel issued a challenge to the field of Jewish studies: that it reclaim what she saw as its radical roots and engage with multiculturalism (together with its critical partners feminism and postcolonialism). She writes, "The question today is whether Jewish studies as a field can revitalize the radicalism that inspired its early development in the nineteenth century. The recovery of its radicalism would enable Jewish studies to enter the multicultural academy, disrupt antagonistic claims about Jews and Judaism, and eventually develop a multiculturalism within the study of Judaism" (Heschel 1998: 104). This would mean that Jewish studies could

disrupt both the established Western canonical traditions and its problematic ideas about Jews and Judaism, and that it could challenge the way proponents of US multicultural theory often associated Judaism and Jewish identity with white privilege and cultural hegemony (Hacker 1992; Sollors 1996: 156; Rogin 1996; Brodkin 1998).

Heschel's article raised questions and possibilities for how the multiculturalism debates then sweeping the academy could change the way Judaism was to be studied. Predictably, because the multiculturalist critique took aim at the power of a "Judeo-Christian" lineage, some scholars like Hillel Halkin (1998) and David Roskies (2003) saw Jewish studies' alignment with a multicultural agenda as an anti-Jewish position, and hence antithetical to what Jewish studies should be doing. To them, Judaism was important precisely because it helped found the Christian West, and its study is legitimated by its placement within the Western canon. But multiculturalism was also a critical ledge from which scholars could begin to see the many forms and communities that comprise Judaism and Jewishness and so move away from describing or inscribing Judaism and Jewishness as a singular entity developing in synchrony with dominant Christian ideologies and Western cultural formations.

David Biale's *Cultures of the Jews* gave prominence to the study of multiple Jewish cultures—existing in dynamic relationships with the non-Jewish cultures in which Jews lived—and in doing so the volume brought questions about religion, and its limitations as an analytical construct, to the forefront. For example, in the book's opening essay, "Imagining the Birth of Ancient Israel," Ilana Pardes considers the narrative impact of the vast body of biblical literature that constitutes the first six books of the Hebrew Bible. Pardes takes these texts as a narrative whole, even though the particular stories contained within them are replete with ideological tensions and factual contradictions. While conventional biblical scholarship might be inclined to makes sense of the tensions—to iron out their contradictions by turning to redaction history and to theories of multiple authorship—Pardes instead asks why a nation would preserve such a flawed and complicated national history. From this perspective, she shows that "[b]iblical historiography points to the complexity of national imagination. It offers penetrating renditions of national ambivalence … [and] offers a daring representation of national formation, where conflicting views of the nation are placed side by side" (Pardes 2002: 37).

Similarly, Erich Gruen's essay on Hellenistic Judaism suggests that the "image of confrontation, tension, and antagonism between Judaism and Hellenism needs to be reassessed." After examining material evidence suggesting that the Jewish elite sometimes appropriated Greek architectural forms, he argues that "Jewish perspectives on the Greeks (or gentiles generally), in this era show variety, overlapping, and nuance, rather than the simplistic alternatives of sharp differentiation or a striving for accommodation" (Gruen 2002: 124). Other essays in the anthology on religion and visual culture seem to be in direct conversation with the work of Kalman Bland, whose book, *The Artless Jew*, challenged oversimplified readings of Judaism's second commandment, which prohibited graven images (Bland 2001). In short, the volume's essays expanded the breadth of what Jewish culture/religion can be and expanded the range of evidence one can bring to bear in studying Judaism, moving beyond sacred texts.

On the other hand, scholars like Daniel Boyarin aimed to refresh the study of Judaism by returning to sacred texts and analyzing them using contemporary critical perspectives. *Intertextuality and the Reading of Midrash* was among the first in religious studies to pair the study of classical texts with literary theory (Boyarin 1990). *Carnal Israel* continued his innovative work in Rabbinics by employing the methods of new historicism to his reading of Talmudic discourse. In *Jews and Other Differences: The New Jewish Cultural Studies*, co-edited together with Jonathan Boyarin in 1997, Boyarin brought together a diverse roster of scholars in a multidisciplinary volume that explored issues of race, gender, sexuality, and ethnicity (Boyarin and Boyarin

1997). And while Boyarin's work has been central in pushing forward the uses and methods of critical theory, in some ways his most striking contribution to the field of religious studies has been his application of these critical lenses to the study of Christian texts.

In his 1994 book, *A Radical Jew: Paul and the Politics of Identity*, Boyarin brought postcolonialism and gender studies to his analysis of the letters of Paul, revealing the striking ways in which Paul's Hellenistic context speaks to the key twenty-first-century issues of diaspora, cultural identity, and multiculturalism (Boyarin 1994). Boyarin reads Paul as caught between the particularism of rabbinic Judaism and a Hellenistic universalism that embraced ethnic diversity. In opening up the Judaic covenant to all of humanity, Paul found a way to bridge the tension. But, viewed through the lens of critical theory, the Christian universalism that Paul invents is precisely the element of Western culture that the postcolonial critique seeks to undo. Like the *Wissenschaft* scholars who in the nineteenth century read Paul through the lens of the Protestant reformation and were themselves influential in the development of reform Judaism, Boyarin's work opened up new ways of seeing Paul's Jewishness that led to a rethinking of how Jewish and Christian identities were defined both in antiquity and today. In his opening pages Boyarin writes, "First of all, I would like to reclaim Pauline studies as an important, even an integral part of the study of Judaism in the Roman period and late antiquity … Second, I would like to reclaim Paul as an important Jewish thinker" (Boyarin 1994: 2). The move to pull Paul from the Christian canon and assert both his Jewishness and his place as a Jewish thinker was indeed radical, and paved way for the important work of Amy-Jill Levine, who, in *The Misunderstood Jew*, offers readings of key New Testament texts that emphasize their (and Jesus') Jewishness (Levine 2006), a project she continues in the co-edited *The Jewish Annotated New Testament* (Levine and Brettler 2011).

In *Border Lines: The Partition of Judaeo-Christianity* (2004), Boyarin pushes his analysis of Christian and Rabbinic Jewish origins even further to explore the question of how the very categories of "Jewish" and "Christian" came to develop. Reading both early Christian and early rabbinic texts, Boyarin argues that Judaism and Christianity effectively construct one another through discourses of heresy and difference. Boyarin's work is directly in conversation with the discipline of religious studies, and takes up directly the problem of definitions begun at the outset of this essay. Boyarin writes, "While Christianity finally configures Judaism as a different religion, Judaism itself … refuses that call, so that seen from that perspective, the difference between Christianity and Judaism is not so much a difference between two religions as a difference between a religion and an entity that refuses to be one" (Boyarin 2004: 8). While Boyarin's contemporaries in cultural studies situated the invention of religion in the post-enlightenment age, Boyarin aims to show that this process is part and parcel of the development of Christiainity itself. Boyarin shows that the problem of "fit" for Judaism in the study of religion is as old as Judaism itself.

Contemporary directions: religious/secular

The study of Judaism has now moved from a position in which Judaism and Jewish texts were seen in the service of Christian narrative (first as an antecedent, then representing the foundations of a Judeo-Christian outlook), to one where Judaism is seen as a part of Jewish culture and thus analyzed with critical perspectives very much aligned with a counter-historical/post-structuralist development in religious studies. Studying Jews, Judaism, and Jewish culture helps us see the limits of and flaws in the Protestant discourse of "religion" that continues to haunt the field to this day. It reminds us that the study of religion must be interdisciplinary, and must turn a critical eye to the discourses of power that frame what we believe we know about Judaism and Jewish culture. Religious studies continues to wrestle with the legacy of Protestantism and its problematic

categories, but it does so with greater awareness of its own limitations. This impact can be seen clearly in a number of areas in the field, but it is the study of Jewish secularism as it has developed in the past ten to fifteen years that really stands out as an area of growth.

The emerging study of Jewish secularism has been nurtured in part in conversation with the work of Talal Asad, who, as an anthropologist, has been a major thought leader in shifting discourse in religious studies around "the secular" and comparative secularisms. Like Jewish cultural studies, Asad's work is also influenced by postcolonial theory and by the work of Edward Said in particular. Asad is best known for his critique of Geertz's overarching, universalizing theory of religion; seeing the very category of religion as the product of the particular narrative of Western Protestantism, Asad claims that any attempt to locate a "transhistorical" definition of religion fails, because the category of religion itself is historically situated and not universal in nature (Asad 1993). But Asad goes even further, to critique the discourse of secularism in the field of religion, as well—to show that it, too, has a genealogy that is historically specific and not universal (Asad 2003). The genesis of "religion" as a category goes hand in hand with the invention of "the secular" as its binary opposite, and as the framework within Protestant enlightenment discourse that enabled the fiction of a neutral, public sphere that could be separated from the private and interior space of "religion."

Several recent works in religion have explored the limitations of the binary between "religious" and "secular," most notably Janet Jakobsen and Ann Pellegrini in their jointly edited volume, *Secularisms*, which approached the issue of secularism and secularization from a global perspective (Jakobsen and Pellegrini 2008). In the particular case of Judaism, David Biale's *Not in the Heavens: The Tradition of Jewish Secular Thought* (Biale 2011), Shmuel Feiner's *The Origins of Jewish Secularization in Eighteenth Century Europe* (Feiner 2010), and James Young's *Posen Library of Jewish Culture and Civilization* (Moore and Gertz 2010), are representative of recent work that turns a critical eye to the development of Jewish secular culture and its importance in Europe, Israel, and America.

Leora Batnitzky's *How Judaism Became a Religion* is also influenced by the ideas surveyed in the previous section. Tracing the development of Judaism as a "religion," Batnitzky suggests that the lack of fit between Judaism and Enlightenment definitions of "religion" has been a source of creative tension for generations of modern Jewish thinkers (Batnitzky 2011). She traces a trajectory that begins with Moses Mendelson and continues to the present day to consider contemporary tensions between religion and politics. Batnitzky's work approaches some of the themes reviewed here through the specific lens of modern Jewish thought, itself a vibrant and complicated field of religious studies.

Another new area of scholarship is represented by Shaul Magid's *American Post-Judaism: Identity and Renewal in a Post-Ethnic Society* (2013), which, following Boyarin's *Border Lines*, draws on the postcolonial criticism of Homi Bhabha and the idea of "post-ethnicity" coined by David Hollinger in his work, *Post-Ethnic America* (Hollinger 1995) to critique a different set of categories in Jewish culture. Magid argues that

> when the ethnic bond is broken or dissolves into a multi-ethnic/multi-racial mix, the age-old strategies Jews deployed to meet the challenges of survival of both Jewishness and Judaism become largely inoperative, since those strategies assume an "ethnic" root of Jewish identity as its foundation. While Judaism as a religion was often viewed as the glue that held the Jewish people together, the opposite has also been the case. That is, it was a notion of peoplehood … that historically enabled Judaism to continue to serve as a marker of identity.
>
> (Magid 2013: 1–2)

Magid's work represents an important step forward in the conversation about Jewish culture in religious studies because it takes on the under-theorized categories, "ethnic" and "religious," that have been operative in conversations about Jewish identity. He is concerned not with multiculturalism but with American society's next cultural moment. Magid deliberately positions his use of the phrase "Post-Judaism" in relation to Amanda Porterfield's parallel use of the phrase "Post-Protestantism" in her work on American religion (Porterfield 2001), and argues that "the ethnic anchor of Jewish identity has been irreparably torn in post-ethnic America" (Magid 2013: 4). Indeed, American Jews are post-assimilation, according to Magid, and his focus on the Jewish Renewal movement joins other recent studies of religious "post-monotheism" and contemporary syncretic Judaisms (Rothenberg and Vallely 2008).

The contemporary study of Judaism must now be attentive not only to Judaism's diverse dimensions and content, but also to the power relations that shape Jewish religious practices, values, and norms, as Ra'anan Boustan, Oren Kosansky, and Marina Rustow point out in their introduction to *Jewish Studies at the Crossroads of Anthropology and History: Authority, Diaspora, Tradition* (2011). They make clear that religious studies scholars in the US, UK, Europe, and Israel are bringing "non-textual and non-Western phenomena under fuller consideration" tracking the "imposition, debate, and dissension" that mark how "Jews authenticate, promote, and contest the inclusion of certain texts as 'Torah'" studying "the transmissibility of Judaism across a range of media", and exploring the ways that Judaism "is transmitted heterogeneously through competing institutions" (Boustan 2011: 3, 17, 19, 20). Their focus on heterogeneity and hegemony is part of an increasingly global conversation among religious studies scholars that promises yet more opportunities for fresh questions and further research.

Essential reading

Batnitzky, L. F., 2011, *How Judaism Became A Religion: An Introduction To Modern Jewish Thought*, Princeton University Press, Princeton, N.J. This accessible study begins with the figure of Moses Mendelson and argues that the tension between Judaism and the enlightenment category of "religion" has been generative for the field of modern Jewish thought.

Boyarin, J. and Boyarin, D., 2002, *Powers of Diaspora: Two Essays on the Relevance of Jewish Culture*, University of Minnesota Press, Minneapolis. Invoking work in the field of postcolonial theory, this important work approaches "diaspora," a key concept in Jewish history, as a theoretical lens for understanding the hierarchies of power that frame the Jewish experience, arguing that the condition of diaspora is a source of strength, rather than weakness.

Heschel, S., 1998, "Jewish Studies as Counter History" in *Insider/Outsider: American Jews and Multi-culturalism*, eds. D. Biale, M. Galchinsky, and S. Heschel, University of California Press, Berkeley, pp. 101–15. Heschel's chapter in this important collection of essays provides a succinct account of the development of *Wissenschaft des Judentums* in Europe and the US, making the case that the development of Jewish studies in the modern university played a subversive role in an overwhelmingly Christian academy. Heschel makes some interesting predictions about the potential for Jewish studies to build on that legacy in the United States.

Levitt, L. and Peskowitz, M., 1996, *Judaism Since Gender*, Routledge, London; NY. This collection of essays broke new ground in illustrating for a broad, multidisciplinary audience the way feminism and gender studies had permeated Jewish studies by the mid-1990s. One of the book's important contributions is to show how neatly Jewish studies aligns with gender as a critical lens.

Smith, J. Z., 1983, "No Need to Travel to the Indies: Judaism and the Study of Religion" in *Take Judaism, For Example*, ed. Neusner, J., University of Chicago Press, Chicago; London, 215–26. This essay presents an argument for the place of Judaism in the academic discipline of Religion centered on Judaism's unique position of being simultaneously familiar and unfamiliar to students of the liberal arts. Smith suggests that Judaism presents the ideal test case for methods in the study of religion, and thus deserves its place in the curriculum apart from identity politics related to the academy.

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6

HISTORY

Klaus Hödl

Culture is as slippery and broad a notion as *Jewishness*; their meanings are much contested and subject to a wide variety of frequently very imprecise circumscriptions. The apparent difficulty of scholars in cultural or Jewish studies to concur around definitions becomes even more tangible when the two terms are linked in the nexus *Jewish culture*, which, in contrast to *Judaism*, is the topic of this essay. Whereas "Judaism has been located in a set of texts" (Biale 1994: 41) and possesses a strong religious dimension, Jewish culture encompasses both the realm of texts *and* practices. Judaism is a subsystem of the much larger and more secular concept of Jewish culture.

Disagreements concerning the definition of Jewish culture spring not only from differing ideological positions, such as religious, Zionist or liberal, but also from the intricacies of defining the generic term "culture" in the present-day academy. No single definition meets with an uncontested accord among scholars. Yet, a broad spectrum of academics accepts at least a few characteristics purportedly constitutive of culture. One of these central properties of culture, as it is understood in the field of cultural history, is its dynamic quality. Culture must be understood as a process. It is not fixed and solid, but always in flux. It is thus impossible to accurately de- or circumscribe it. James Clifford, for example, argues that "cultures are not scientific 'objects' … (They are) produced historically, and are actively contested. … culture is not an object to be described, neither is it a unified corpus of symbols and meanings that can be definitely interpreted" (Clifford and Marcus 1986: 18).

Culture, it follows, has no essence; it can never be reduced to a specific core content that would help to unambiguously differentiate one cultural "system" from another. Theoretically, writing about culture, that is casting it in a (static) text, does not do justice to its fluidity. Culture seems almost to be too elusive a phenomenon as to be dealt with as a subject of research. Still, many scholars work on it and thus have come to grips with its dynamic character. They usually proceed by divesting (some) cultural properties of their temporary quality, as has been done by the distinguished historian and political scientist William Sewell, Jr. He maintains that "culture is most fruitfully conceptualized as a dialectic between system and practice. It is a system of symbols and meanings with a certain coherence and definition but also a set of practices" (Bonnell and Hunt 1999: 13). Culture thus consists of dynamic as well as apparently static elements. The latter, such as signs and codes, are not completely fixed, but are sufficiently tenacious so as to render writing about culture feasible. In other words, culture is a phenomenon neither entirely transient nor rigidly determined. Additionally, this ambiguous nature enables

culture to give meaning to our experiences in a changing world. Sewell thus provides us with an understanding of culture that may serve as a suitable hermeneutic tool to approach the subject.

The relative fluidity of the term "culture" holds true for notions of Jewishness or Jewish identity as well. These also lack a fixed, steady content and their meanings are likewise hotly debated and widely contested, as Laurence J. Silberstein argues: "no universally agreed–upon criteria to support particular views of Jewish identity exist. All efforts to impose a dominant category such as religious group, race, nation, transnational people, or ethnic group on the heterogeneous world Jewish population ultimately fail" (Silberstein 2000: 13). It is impossible to determine the content of Jewishness, and even more so to come up with an accurate, lasting definition of it. As is the case with culture, Jewishness can only vaguely be circumscribed.

In the postmodern era, many (but not all) scholars in Jewish history have accepted the transient character of all notions of culture and Jewishness, and so of Jewish culture. Some have striven for a more definite delineation of Jewish culture characterized by at least a few presumably indispensable and static constituents. Frequently, religious tenets are emphasized as the very properties thought not to be subject to the processes of fluidity and relativity (Berger 2011). More secular perspectives refer to elements coming into relief when the Jewish social and cultural realms are analyzed, frequently in comparison with the non-Jewish world (Bonfil 1994). For example, a disposition or resistance to specific diseases caused by particular modes of everyday life such as eating habits or the observance of hygienic prescriptions are frequently mentioned as distinguishing traits of Jewish culture. Due to their apparently unchanging nature, they are understood as solid and static, disavowing the dynamics of culture as well (Patai 1996: 409–13).

This essay aims to give an overview of the various ways Jewish culture is comprehended in historical studies. The focus lies on contemporary scholars, but for comparative reasons references to historians of the more recent past are made as well.

Basic concepts of Jewish culture

Notwithstanding the methodological and theoretical difficulties in defining "Jewish culture," historians have introduced various circumscriptions and descriptions of it. At the core of these are two different concepts: the first conceives of Jewish culture as a unitary phenomenon, one distinguishable from the non-Jewish cultural world. This perspective does not deny interior fragmentations and differences. Instead, the proponents of this view hold that Jewish culture embodies phenomena that give it coherence and render it distinct from the non-Jewish cultural realm. In the past, historians such as Simon Dubnow (Dubnow 1967) or Jacob Katz (Katz 1993) subscribed to this approach. They maintained that, the dispersion of the Jews notwithstanding, all shared specific cultural traits with each other that infused the Jewish cultural cosmos with a unique profile.

This understanding of "Jewish culture" has weakened from the late twentieth century onwards when, in the wake of postmodern approaches to culture, the fluidity of Jewish culture and the blurring of its boundaries impinging on non-Jewish cultural systems have been stressed. Yet even now numerous historians adhere to the view of a distinct Jewish culture. A case in point is David Ruderman, whose work on the early modern period delineates five elements that presumably safeguarded the continuity of a coherent Jewish culture despite multifarious interactions with non-Jews. One of these characteristics was the so-called "knowledge explosion" generated by the printing of books. They undermined the position of rabbis as exegetes and ushered in the canonical text. In addition, printing "shattered the isolating hold of potent localized traditions and attitudes, as one community became increasingly aware of a

conversation taking place long distances away" (Ruderman 2009: 105). This development was not exclusive to Jews, but it laid the groundwork for fortifying their sense of belonging and group-consciousness. With regard to present-day Jewry, Laura Geller provides a similar example. She argues that the primary chord connecting Jews to each other is the Jewish story. There are, as a matter of fact, religious stories, such as the Hagaddah, as well as conversations emerging through Jewish art, film, theatre, and other media. The controversy over Steven Spielberg's *Munich* is a case in point of (many) Jews who felt connected through a secular story (Geller 2008).

The second concept that organizes understanding of Jewish culture stresses its pluralistic "hybrid" formation. It contends that due to its entanglement with non-Jewish cultures, numerous manifestations of Jewish culture exist. There is not one Jewish culture, but many Jewries and thus Jewish cultures. An example of this approach is Gershon David Hundert's *The Jews in a Polish Private Town* (Hundert 1991). According to his account of Opatów in the eighteenth century, Polish Jews were inseparably interwoven with Polish culture. Jews and Poles lived side by side, interacted with each other on a daily basis, maintained intimate relationships, wore similar dress, and the architecture of the synagogues attested to their Baroque origin. Consequently, non-Jews regarded them as an integral part of the Polish social and cultural cosmos. The flagship of this kind of historiography is the anthology *Cultures of the Jews* edited by David Biale. In various ways, it represents an outstanding and remarkable publication (Biale 2002). First of all, it defies the conception of a linear history in that it stresses discontinuities and historical breaks. Furthermore, Jews and non-Jews are no longer delineated as distinct entities, but intermingle and their cultures interfuse. Jewish identities and cultures are not seen as static and are strongly shaped and affected by given power relations. In this way, no unified Jewish culture could develop.

Jewish culture and Jewish historiography

At first sight, the dichotomy between the concept of Jewish culture as unitary or pluralist seems to arise from different positions that historians hold on the outcome of Jewish and non-Jewish encounters and mutual cultural mixing. Generally speaking, adherents of the first approach tend to devalue the impact of Jewish and non-Jewish interactions on local or regional Jewish cultures. They often maintain that the relations between Jews and non-Jews were primarily determined by anti-Jewish hostility that inhibited too close a contact between them, and provided the very preconditions for the persistence of a coherent and distinct Jewish culture. One example is the (historiographical) anthology *A History of the Jewish People*, edited by Haim Hillel Ben-Sasson in 1969. This text has been reprinted many times since its first publication and is still widely read within the academy. In his contribution to the anthology, Ben-Sasson focuses on Jews in the Middle Ages, whose relationship with Christians and Muslims, he writes in his introduction, were characterized by "unabating persecution." Owing to this Jews remained a distinct cultural group characterized above all by their faith (Ben-Sasson 1976: 386–88).

A recent example of anti-Jewish hostility preventing far-reaching Jewish diversifications can be found in the writings of Shulamit Volkov. In her account on the emergence of a new Jewish consciousness in the early twentieth century she also argues that due to anti-Semitism Jews in Germany had neither fully integrated into society nor become more similar to non-Jews. Instead, Jews developed their own distinctive culture within society at large (Volkov 1990: 185).

In contrast to this view, the concept of multitudinous Jewish cultures and Jewries emphasizes the importance of Jewish and non-Jewish interactions. They are considered to be of primary relevance for Jewish cultural processes and an integral agent of their development (Teller 2006;

Cohen 1997). The approach proceeds from the concept that there are not and never were "pure," "authentic" Jewish cultures. Even ancient Israel borrowed heavily from Canaanite polytheism. The adoption of cultural practices from surrounding societies, but also lending from their own cultural system to non-Jewish cultural realms, continued throughout Jewish history, sometimes more intensively, sometimes less so. Jewish and non-Jewish cultural interpenetration is thus at the very root, and an inherent property, of Jewish culture(s) and Jewish history/ies – if it is possible to talk about "Jewish history" at all instead of the "history of the Jews" (Neusner 1977).

The notion of Jewish culture as hybrid does not disregard the existence of Judeophobia. Yet it suggests that anti-Jewish hostility was not the only force shaping contact between Jews and non-Jews. A key example is Ivan G. Marcus's study of the years 950 to 1300 in former Ashkenaz, the areas of settlement of Ashkenazi Jews, which claims that "despite occasional eruptions of violence, it is remarkable that … Jews and Christians increasingly lived together in small towns, fully aware of one another and the ways they behaved" (Marcus 2002: 461). They not only lived alongside one another, but consciously and closely interacted with each other. And these encounters influenced cultural processes of society at large as well as among Jews. The wearing of elaborate costumes at Purim or the eating by Jewish children on their first day at school of God's words in the form of sweet cakes, which are practices adopted from the wider culture and transformed within the Jewish context, represent paradigmatic examples of how this social intermingling affected the Jewish cultural realm. Marcus plays down the impact of anti-Jewish hostility on Jewish and non-Jewish relations, and questions whether violence between Jews and Christians was always one-sided and directed exclusively against the former. According to him, Jews were not always passive victims. They also resorted to anti-Christian activities, although more often these were symbolic rather than physical ones, but assault their Christian neighbors they did. For example, in the *Life of Jesus* (*Sefer Toledot Yeshu*), a compilation of various counter-Gospel texts in Hebrew and Aramaic, Jesus is depicted as a magician and as a bastard son of Mary who was seduced during the days of her menses (Marcus 2002: 470). In this way, central elements of the Christian belief system were ridiculed and derided. Marcus thus proposes that Judeophobia did not hinder close contacts between Jews and Christians, and that the former were not always and the only targets of discriminatory and persecutory measures.

Among present-day scholars of Jewish history, the distinction between the "unitary" and the "multiple" concepts of culture seem to be strongly marked. This is indicated, for instance, by David Berger's recent *Cultures in Collision and Conversation* which lashes out right from the beginning against those who attempt to "replace the religious component (of Judaism) with culture or civilization" and thus implicitly open the door to arbitrary understandings of Judaism (Berger 2011: 3–4). For the author, the idea of a common Jewish culture is intimately bound up with Jewish peoplehood; the denial of the former puts the existence of the Jews as a collective at risk.

However, the two concepts of Jewish culture have more in common than it appears. On the one hand, those who believe in a singular Jewish culture do not disregard interactions between Jews and non-Jews, but merely ascribe less importance to them (Israel 1998). Even Ben-Sasson recognizes the entanglement of Jewish with non-Jewish culture. For example, with regard to German Jewry in the sixteenth century, he maintains that the emergence of non-conformist religious beliefs in that period was "nourished by Jewish-Christian contacts" (Bodian 2009: 118). On the other hand, the notion of multiple Jewish cultures due to multifarious Jewish and non-Jewish interactions does not necessarily damage the concept of a Jewish heritage connecting the scattered Jewish communities. For example, David Biale stresses a "continuity of both textual and folk traditions throughout Jewish history and throughout the many lands inhabited by the Jews" (Biale 2002: xxiv). Even though these traditions found differing expressions and

manifestations over the course of time and in various places, a common core Jewish legacy has existed.

Both approaches, as different as their outcomes seem to be, thus recognize the involvement of Jews with non-Jews, and both concur with the persistence of Jewish group cohesion and identity. In the face of these central concurrences, the differences between the two concepts of Jewish culture seem to be gradual rather than fundamental, and the disagreements that underlie them, namely the different positions on the role of Jewish and non-Jewish relations in the formation of Jewish culture, appear to be markedly exaggerated. Scholarly controversy over the understanding of Jewish culture, then, springs less from differing evidence garnered from research than from the ideological preconceptions of the historians.

One reason for opposition to the pluralistic concept of Jewish culture may lie with its implications for present-day Jewish life and Israel's policies. The view of a unitary Jewish culture is intimately associated with the idea of a common Jewish people. Moshe Rosman substantiates this interpretation by recounting the discussions among the contributors to Biale's *Cultures of the Jews* after the editor came up with the idea of using the term *culture* in its plural form in the book title. "The cons," Rosman writes, "insisted that, by denying the existence of a common Jewish culture at some basic level, the book was denying the existence of a common Jewish identity … ; for what might define such a collective except its shared culture?" (Rosman 2007: 100). Without the notion of a unified Jewish collective, various patterns of Jewish life meant to "preserve" and safeguard it, such as the avoidance of "intermarriage" and "assimilation," as well as one fundamental narrative providing legitimacy to the founding of Israel, would become null and void. In *New Jews*, for example, Caryn Aviv and David Schneer stress the existence of ethnic, linguistic, political, sexual, and other diversities among Jews, and thus radically deconstruct the notion of a coherent Jewish culture. When the two scholars presented their work to an interested audience, one of the participants asked: "'Are you telling me that this is the end of the Jewish people?'" (Aviv and Shneer 2005: 173). In addition, in pointing out that Jews live in various geographical and cultural settings throughout the world and consequently nurture different forms of Jewishness, each of them as valid and precious as the other, Aviv and Shneer question the binary of Israel and the diaspora.

The proponents of the notion of Jewish culture as hybrid are also aware of this "postmodern threat" to the conception of a common Jewish people, but for them it can be kept at bay. Biale, for example, suggests a distinction between the "*idea* of one Jewish people and a unified Jewish culture, and … the *history* of multiple communities and cultures" (Biale 2002: xxiv). Similar to French, German, and any other collective identities, Jews may believe in the idea of Jewish culture as a unitary phenomenon, even though facts contradict this imaginary construct.

Interpreting the interpenetration between Jewish and non-Jewish culture

In most historical work on Jews in the diaspora, Jews are treated as a minority. And yet, this category makes sense only under certain circumstances, for example when Jews and non-Jews are compared to each other according to their demographic size or, for a long time in their history, their access to political power. But Jews certainly did not represent a minority in specific occupational fields or when they are considered as individuals capable of shaping culture and society together with non-Jews. In terms of numbers, they thus alternate between their minority status and their position as a majority group, depending on the angle from which they are regarded. If Jews are described as fully participating in general cultural processes, however, the categories of majority and minority become irrelevant. Instead of being lumped together into a distinct sociological bracket Jews must be understood as full-fledged citizens.

Up to the late 1970s, the outcome of cultural contact between a minority and a majority group was interpreted as a process of *assimilation* mostly by the former. This also was the dominant narrative in Jewish historiography. Jews were seen as adapting to their surrounding culture by adopting various items and practices from that cultural ecology. They were said to become more similar to non-Jews among whom they lived and to give up some of their own cultural characteristics (Van Rahden 2001: 26). The end of the assimilation process was viewed as a complete cultural as well as structural accommodation (Gordon 1964: 68–71). This outlook implied that sometime in the future Jews would disappear as a distinct cultural entity.

In the 1980s, historians became aware that assimilation was a problematic concept. It was now seen to be too mechanistic a cultural process hardly reflecting the complexity of reality, moreover, it was now argued that Jews never completely assimilated (Waxman 1983: xviii). Despite their far-reaching adaptation to their non-Jewish cultural environment in spheres such as clothing or leisure activities, as a group they never became entirely absorbed by the "host society" (Rozenblit 1989: 9). Apart from some individuals, Jews as a group retained their own consciousness and identity, even though its manifestations might differ from Jewish expressions in former times. This "semi-adaptation" was termed *acculturation*. According to this idea, Jews take on only certain elements from the dominant culture and do not replace the core items of their own cultural traditions.

Both notions, assimilation as well as acculturation, are implicitly based on the assumption that Jewish culture can be discerned from the non-Jewish cultural realm, and that for this reason new cultural elements adopted by Jews can be identified and assessed as non-Jewish. However, what exactly (non-)Jewishness is composed of, the dimension of its meaning, has not satisfactorily been answered yet, particularly in the context of postmodern conceptualizations of culture. Therefore, it is difficult to determine cultural units, such as practices or material manifestations, transferred from Jewish to non-Jewish cultural systems or vice-versa. Even on the assumption that culture is not entirely fluid and volatile and that Jewishness can be delineated to a certain extent, the notions of assimilation and acculturation are hardly helpful in describing the outcome of Jewish and non-Jewish cultural contact. That is because these notions are predicated on what Jonathan Boyarin calls "'hydraulic' explanations for cultural change," meaning that "the rise in one phenomenon (contributes) to a decline in another" (Boyarin 2008: 37). Cultural processes, however, do not work in a "compensatory way."

More recently, acculturation has tended to be replaced by other hermeneutical concepts, this time more in keeping with an understanding of culture as a dynamic system. One of them is *performance*. According to a performative approach, the content of a specific cultural identity, such as Jewishness, is "contingent and contextual rather than definitive and presumptive" (Kirshenblatt-Gimblett 2008). It is expressed merely in certain situations and may be superseded in the next moment by a different self-consciousness (Bial 2005: 16). Strictly speaking, there is no "identity" per se – a notion that is too static – but rather a processal identification (Greenberg 1999: 18). Jewish culture, in this view, is a floating "reference system" that is related to only at certain moments. It is no longer "a whole way of life" (Williams 1987: 45). An individual may talk with a friend about the upcoming bar mitzvah of his son and thus identify as Jewish at this moment; and go on to talk about politics, baseball, and his wife, and thereby position himself as a citizen, a New York Yankees fan, and a spouse. In this light, Jewish culture is only one part in a dynamic interplay of cultural realms, always "at disposition" to draw upon, but never all-encompassing and exclusive. Different performances play with different identities (Friedman 1998).

In contrast to assimilation and acculturation, the performative approach does not depart from the idea of separable and distinguishable Jewish and non-Jewish cultures. Instead, Jews are seen

as fully participating in the society in which they live. Their Jewishness is temporal and expressed only under certain circumstances. Jews in general share a culture and concurrently help to shape it with non-Jews (Hödl 2013). And since (general) culture cannot be broken down into discrete items and its (Jewish and non-Jewish) origins determined, the notions of Jewish and non-Jewish culture tend to become at best secondary, if not completely negligible. This perspective radically undermines the idea of an identifiable Jewish cultural cosmos.

New trends in the historiography of Jews

Well into the late twentieth century, some historians were claiming that Jewish culture in Europe was heading towards disappearance (Wasserstein 1996). Shrinking Jewish communities and their reluctance, especially in Germany and Austria, to maintain any institutions besides the most exigent religious ones, impacted negatively on other aspects of their cultural lives. These circumstances conditioned an unexpected challenge to the prevalent understanding of Jewish culture. Among other developments, it was called into question by the burgeoning interest of many non-Jews in certain aspects of Jewish culture, especially those symbolizing the destroyed East European *shtetl* world. Klezmer music, for example, enjoyed a veritable boom in Central Europe. Not only did young non-Jews listen to klezmer music, they began to play it as well. Sometimes, on stage they played klezmer and dressed as Jews, thus literally mimicking Jews in their performance (Weissberg 2004: 12). In addition, this younger generation also became curious about Jewish history and launched initiatives to commemorate events from the Jewish past. Non-Jews thus enjoyed, maintained, and developed some aspects of Jewish culture.

This constellation of interests and activities was not always welcomed by the Jewish communities. Furthermore, it broached the question of what was meant by Jewish culture if it was increasingly being "taken over" and expressed by non-Jews? In her 2002 monograph, Ruth Ellen Gruber formulates pungent criticism of the non-Jewish "occupation" of Jewish cultural realms. She thinks that non-Jews, often devoid of sufficient erudition about "things Jewish," distort the meaning of Jewish cultural practices and material manifestations, or are not adequately familiar with Jewish memorial narratives (Gruber 2002). A similar challenge to Jewish culture is pointed out by the historian Diana Pinto. She argues that multiculturalism and democratic pluralism, which foster Jewish and non-Jewish interactions, threaten the emergence of a viable postwar European Jewish culture (Pinto 2011).

A second trend in recent historiography indicates an increase in non-linear historical narratives. Rather than providing a chronological account, non-linear histories of Jews tend to be an assemblage of various sub-stories imbued with a pronounced interdisciplinary quality. Although they frequently deal with different periods and places, and emphasize contingencies rather than a rigid cause-and-effect sequence, they still contribute to a cogent historical picture. Such a non-linear approach paradigmatically comes to the fore in the four-volume anthology *La société juive à travers l'histoire* edited by Shmuel Trigano (Trigano 1993). It gives a synchronous – instead of chronological – insight into Jewish life of the past. The publication focuses less on politics or on Judaism than on Jewish societies, their institutions, and economic life, thereby being much in line with the French tradition of historical sociology. The French publication is explicitly directed against German, American, and Israeli approaches to the history of Jews. This means that it refrains, as Trigano argues rather sweepingly, from dealing with the history of an idea or the "nature" of Judaism or, in the case of Israeli historiography, of a people. It thus understands itself as an alternative to already existent narratives.

Another example of non-linear historiography is Todd Samuel Presner's *Mobile Modernity*. He focuses on the German railway system as a symbol of German and Jewish images of modernity.

His study crosses boundaries between Jews and non-Jews and highlights their mutual entanglement (Presner 2007). Increased mobility brought Jews and non-Jews into closer contact and enhanced their encounters which, in turn, impacted on and inspired such seminal thinkers as Franz Kafka, Hannah Arendt, Martin Heidegger, Heinrich Heine, Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel, and others. Presner avoids a line of narration which draws upon concepts of development and sets events in a diachronic order. Instead he applies a cultural mapping, throwing light on the spaces where Jews and non-Jews interacted. A similar procedure characterizes Michael P. Steinberg's *Judaism Musical and Unmusical* (Steinberg 2007).

A third trend is the growing impact of the "new historians" on historiography in Israel. From the late 1970s onwards, they radically questioned the Zionist narrative of the "Jerusalem school" put forward by historians such as Jitzchak Fritz Baer, Benzion Dinur, and their disciples (Myers 1998). The "new historians," among whom are Benny Morris, Ilan Pappe, Amon Raz-Krakotzkin, and Uri Ram, frequently graduated from foreign universities, where they became familiar with postmodern and postcolonial methods of historiography, which they use in their research on Jewish and Israeli history. The two topics they deal with most intensively are the attitude of the Zionists in Palestine to Jews in Nazi-occupied Europe and the treatment of Palestinians by (Jewish) Israelis.

Jewish State or Israeli Nation (Evron 1995), by Boas Evron, one of the representatives of the "new historians," applies the tools of postmodern historiography to Jewish history in that he claims, for example, that Jews in the diaspora were an "imagined community." They were not related by any "national" ties. They neither spoke the same language, nor did they lead similar lives. Evron's work is similar in its radical deconstructing of the notion of a single Jewish people with a unified Jewish culture to Shlomo Sand's *The Invention of the Jewish People* (Sand 2009), which argues that the notion of a single Jewish people is a myth. Sand substantiates his thesis by delineating the history of Jewish proselytes, and claims that Jews throughout the world nurtured distinct cultures differing from each other by language, music, food, literature, and art. These differences could not generate a feeling of solidarity among all Jews. Evron and Sand are thus both scholars who provocatively attack the notion of a coherent Jewish culture.

A fourth trend to be highlighted in this essay is the growing scholarly interest in the economic history of Jews, especially their relationship to the development of market economies (Karp 2008; Penslar 2001; Reuveni 2006), the Sephardic Jews during the Dutch Golden Age in general and Spinoza in particular (Goetschel 2004; Israel and Salverda 2002), and Jews in *general* (instead of *Jewish*) popular culture (Hess 2010; Otte 2006; Gillerman 2003). Although the linkage between Jews and capitalism is a stable and recurrent topic in historiography, it has gained momentum in the last few years probably due to the economic crisis following the financial meltdown in 2008. Jerry Z. Muller's *Capitalism and the Jews* is one of the most recent examples of this trend. In explaining the Jews' involvement in capitalism through their comparatively high rate of literacy, the lack of religious barriers to economic activities, or the connection of Jewish communities which facilitated the trade of goods, he propounds the notion of a Jewish singularity. In his books questions about Jewish diversity and multiple Jewish cultures lose their relevance (Muller 2011).

This is in stark contrast to the other two subjects: the history of the Sephardim during the Dutch Golden Age draws much attention partly because it is seen as sort of a mirror-image of Jewish life in the United States. Amsterdam's ethnic diversity and prosperous economy in the seventeenth century seem to foreshadow urban experiences in the postmodern age. And research on Jews in general popular culture is even more inspired by the concept of Jewish and non-Jewish entanglement, and thus the deconstruction of a unitary Jewish culture. It demonstrates the co-constitutionality of culture and emphatically questions preconceived notions of Jewishness.

The fifth trend discernible in contemporary historiography of Jews comprises responses to the idea of a hybrid Jewish culture. In the United States, the concept of multiple Jewish cultures has been most thoroughly and extensively developed and the notions of Jewishness and Jewish identity most radically deconstructed. And it is in this country where postmodern historiography encounters its staunchest opposition. Among other outlets, it has found expression in an Orthodox (Ashkenazic) religious historiography. Its most popular proponent is Berel Wein, whose book *Triumph of Survival* has appeared in many editions (Wein 1990). The author deals above all with the persecutions of Jews throughout their history and their rescue from these ordeals. According to Wein, their survival shows that Jewish history is a history of miracles brought about by God. The reference to a metaphysical agent that intervenes in the course of history is a radical deviation from and incompatible with the postmodern understanding of the past as accessible only through subjective interpretation, through contextualizing events and denying any essential nature of things.

Admittedly, traces of religious thinking in Jewish historiography are not entirely novel. For example, Louis Finkelstein, former chancellor of the Jewish Theological Seminary in New York, maintains in the preface to *The Jews* that the contributors to the volume made a *Kiddush Hashem*, a "sanctification of the Name," bringing honor and glory to God (Finkelstein 1960: xxiii). In this way, historiographical publishing of research is interpreted as a religious undertaking, and the distinction between the two becomes blurred. Still, in contrast to Wein and except for his preface, Finkelstein tries to adhere as tenaciously as possible to the notion of "objectivity" or "intersubjectivity," i.e. to findings and conclusions that can be comprehended by other scholars as well, whereas the former pursues a clearly defined religious agenda. Wein is a representative of a broader and growing strand in Jewish historiography that emphatically opposes postmodern concepts of Jewish culture (Brenner 2010: 270–74).

Another example of this development represents the historiography of Jews based on the results of genetic studies in order to trace the Jewish past (Goldstein 2008; Ostrer 2012). It is the most drastic response to the constructivist approach of postmodern historiography in that it "essentializes" the conception of a common people and Jewish culture as a unified "system." The results of genetic studies on Jews are no longer restricted to the reconstruction of Jewish migration movements, but increasingly serve to confirm the notion of a single Jewish people and identity (Entine 2007).

Both strands of historiography, the religiously Orthodox variant as well as the genetically backed version, still hover on the periphery of the historians' "cognitive radar." Yet, their inroads into the academia cannot be ignored. The usefulness of genetic studies for historiography, for example, increasingly becomes an issue at scholarly conferences (Midwest 2012). Panels on "Jewish genetics" are organized alongside talks on the deconstruction of Jewish identity, and in some instances they even dominate workshops (IAJGS 2012; Berlin 2012). Concurrently, religious conceptions of the history of Jews are in accordance with notions of Jewishness put forward by the Israeli rabbinate. They not only impact on politics, but are given attention and discussed by scholars as well (Beinart 2012: 167–68), thereby seeping into the writings of traditional historiography. Genetically and religiously grounded historiography thus endorses the view of an intrinsically different Jewry and Jewish culture.

Essential reading

Bronner, Simon J., ed. 2008. *Jewishness: Expression, Identity, and Representation*. Vol. 1. Oxford: The Littman Library of Jewish Civilization. The first volume of the *Jewish Cultural Studies* series published by The Littman Library of Jewish Civilization. It provides an understanding of Jewish cultural studies, which includes descriptions of the notions of Jewishness and culture.

Cohen, Richard I. 1998. *Jewish Icons. Art and Society in Modern Europe*. Berkeley: University of California Press. A very important volume, though unusual in focus. Although dealing with "Jewish art," it lucidly demonstrates how Jewish and non-Jewish cultural intermingling and interpenetration throughout early modern and modern history can be deciphered through paintings.

Gruen, Erich S. 1998. *Heritage and Hellenism. The Reinvention of Jewish Tradition*. Berkeley: University of California Press. Offers a narrative according to which Jews felt much at home in the Diaspora. Gruen points out that Hellenism was an integral part of the Jewish cultural world in Palestine, and that Jews were always in very close contact with their non-Jewish surroundings. The straddling of different cultural realms and the resultant hybridity was the very essence of Jewish existence. Gruen's book is paradigmatic for how Jewish history focusing on Jewish and non-Jewish cultural involvement may be written.

Rosman, Moshe. 2007. *How Jewish is Jewish History?* Oxford: The Littman Library of Jewish Civilization. An excellent overview of postmodern Jewish historiography. The author also introduces several historians who pursue innovative methodological approaches.

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7

ART HISTORY

Samantha Baskind and Larry Silver

The first sentence of the first systematic English language book on Jewish art begins with the author stating "The conception of Jewish Art may appear to some a contradiction in terms" (Roth 1961: 11). Indeed, Jewish art has caused controversy and confusion in the mere handful of decades the field has been actively researched. In this essay, we will first examine why Jewish art is still in its infancy, which includes a discussion of the Second Commandment and Jewish art's place in art history in general. Then we will describe different ways that some contemporary scholars flesh out the meanings and argue over definitions of Jewish art.

One of the reasons that Jewish art does not have a long scholarly history is that from the nineteenth century onwards, students of Jewish culture have always accepted uncritically that Jews simply did not make art. Indeed, they assumed that obedience to the biblical proscription against "graven images" in the Ten Commandments perennially denied Jews the opportunity to make conventional religious representations. Interpreted stringently, the Second Commandment has been understood as prohibiting the creation of any art: "Thou shalt not make any graven image, or any likeness of any thing that is in the heaven above, or that is in the earth beneath, or that is in the water under the earth" (Ex. 20: 4). Deuteronomy repeats and broadens this ban:

> lest ye deal corruptly, and make you a graven image, even the form of any figure, the likeness of male or female, the likeness of any fowl that flieth in the heaven, the likeness of any beast that is on the face of the earth, the likeness of anything that creepeth on the ground, the likeness of any fish that is in the water under the earth.
>
> (Deut. 4: 16–18)

A closer reading of the text shows that the commandment was directed against figuration used for idol worship, not other types of artistic expression (Gutmann 1961; Barasch 1992: 13–22). In her anthology of original Jewish art sources, Vivian Mann includes primary material related to this so-called prohibition, including Moses Maimonides on permitted imagery (Mann 2000: 20–24).

Clearly the Second Commandment did not by any means preclude art. Jewish art *was* fabricated in ancient times, though most early synagogues have disappeared together with their decorations. With the destruction of the Second Temple and the dispersal of the Jews from their historic Jerusalem center, medieval Jewish visual traditions were more frequently carried out in

the form of regional creations, including smaller synagogues (Krinsky 1985), shaped by the architecture and ornamentation of the dominant culture, whether Muslim (Sephardic) or Christian (Ashkenazi). Both Spain and Germany also actively generated illustrated manuscripts, principally devoted to private Passover *siddurim* rather than communal forms. Human renderings do appear in public synagogue space by the time of the third-century synagogue murals of Dura Europos in Syria, but no other comparative narrative paintings survive. Even earlier, in the book of Exodus, Bezalel – the first Jewish artist and the only artist mentioned by name in the Hebrew Bible (Ex. 31: 1–6) – designed the Tabernacle and its holy vessels (Ex. 35: 31).

Only at the turn of the twentieth century were older Jewish traditions rediscovered or reconstructed – to the surprise of many cultural observers, including Jews, who had tacitly accepted assumptions about the "nation without art." When the extensive murals of Dura Europos Synagogue were discovered in Syria in 1932, their elaborate imagery and unprecedented range of Jewish subjects arrived with a shock only approximated by the discovery of prehistoric cave paintings in Spain and France in the late nineteenth century. Some scholars tried to see these synagogue pictures either as an aberration or only as an earlier prefiguration of later Christian sanctuary decoration. These presuppositions about the tensions between Jews and art-making have been discussed historiographically during the past decade by both Kalman Bland (2000) and Margaret Olin (2001). Older seminal studies laid the groundwork for understanding the Dura excavations archaeologically (Kraeling 1956) and iconographically (Goodenough 1953–68; Weitzmann and Kessler 1990), whereas newer studies analyze their cultural reception (Wharton 1994; Olin 2001: 127–54).

Such myths behind the Second Commandment have recently been deconstructed by Kalman Bland, who has demonstrated that the belief that Jews are aniconic is a mischaracterization, steeped in late nineteenth-century anti-Semitic perceptions about the Jews as uncreative visually and culturally prior to the modern era (Bland 2000). These characterizations are based on earlier ideas from Immanuel Kant and Georg Hegel, which were adopted in turn by German Jews as a spiritual badge of honor. Yet this notion still held sway as a cultural given for many modern Jewish artists, like Jack Levine and Archie Rand, and intellectuals like Harold Rosenberg and Cynthia Ozick well into the late twentieth century.

The discovery at Dura Europos was revelatory, following upon the initial discoveries only decades earlier of a Jewish pictorial tradition: medieval illuminated Hebrew manuscripts. A first key work, the Sarajevo Haggadah (c. 1350; Sarajevo, National Museum), was a Passover Seder liturgy produced in Spain, not under the Islamic rulers who had provided a medieval golden age for Jews in southern Spain, but rather under Christian kings in fourteenth-century Catalonia (publication, 1898). Not only did this impressive book include the first known medieval Jewish figural imagery, but it also featured narrative sequences like contemporary Christian manuscripts, such as Latin Psalters from France and England. Soon other manuscripts were discovered, and Jewish book illumination was recovered, which also included German and Italian works from the thirteenth through fifteenth centuries. Building on the work of her predecessors (e.g., Yerushalmi 1975), Katrin Kogman-Appel critically examines biblical imagery in several Sephardic haggadot, contextualizing Jewish–Iberian narrative imagery of the ancient text. Earlier, Kogman-Appel considered Sephardic illuminated Bibles, mostly aniconic, discussing their unique decoration (Kogman-Appel 2006, 2004).

For observant Jews, the only continuing visual culture consists of the decorative ornaments of ritual items used in synagogue worship, such as the metalwork *rimmonim* that adorn Torah scrolls. In addition, weavings and embroideries to serve for curtains on the ark or for Torah covers are still familiar sights for worshipers. Other functional objects, such as *Chanukiyot* (Chanukah candelabra) or spice boxes in metal, or decorated documents with graceful Hebrew

calligraphy, chiefly *Ketubot* (ritual marriage contracts), bridge Jewish ceremonies from past to present. Indeed, modern craftspeople, sometimes prompted by competitions and commissions, have striven to add their contemporary approaches as decorative artists to these Jewish traditions. For the most part, this range of objects, known collectively as Judaica, has formed the basis of Jewish art collections in synagogues, the sites of nascent Jewish museums.

Thus, at the middle of the twentieth century with the realization that Jewish art did exist, Jewish museums began to be built. The Jewish Museum in New York opened to the public in 1947 after beginning as a small collection at the Jewish Theological Seminary in 1904. The study of Jewish art as a dedicated subfield of art history, however, thrived primarily in Israel. Even today, few scholars elsewhere teach Jewish art. The reasons are manifold, partly because supporting textbooks do not yet exist for the field, and also partly because Jewish art is not a recognized field in the discipline compared with the way that modern Jewish literature, with texts available either in English or translation, is now more widely studied in American and European universities.

Also contributing to the slow acceptance of Jewish art by the academy outside Israel is art history's traditionally held bias in favor of paintings and sculptures. Jewish artists have only really taken up these forms in the past century-and-a-half, so there has not been a large body of work to contribute to widespread interest in Jewish art and to an identifiable Jewish visual culture. Typically, Jewish museums and antiquarians still work primarily with Judaica. Many medievalists focus on manuscripts, but those works are usually Christian texts in Latin, whereas Hebrew books still present a serious language barrier to any scholars outside Jewish studies. While there are some studies of Jewish architecture (Wischnitzer 1955; Wischnitzer 1964; Krinsky 1985), for the most part Jewish art is confined to collections in Jewish museums, which consider art as part of a history and culture. In the US and the UK especially, those Jewish museums in turn usually emerged from and are affiliated still with theology schools (e.g., Jewish Theological Seminary; Skirball Cultural Center), where Jewish artifacts have been discussed within the wider religious tradition.

Importantly, however, no university departments are devoted to Christian Art either – just to periods, particularly the Middle Ages and the Renaissance, when Christian subjects are dominant in art. No one would ever think to have a modern Christian art museum (except for a religious school, such as Bob Jones University, or the Vatican Museums) or subfield. The field of Jewish history does, exceptionally, hold some status in American and European universities, but that status owes a long and deep debt to Christian outlooks. In the United States, for example, Protestant interests shaped many private universities, where, from the nineteenth century, the historicity of the Bible formed a key focus. Additionally, Jewish American history aligns with the immigrant experience in America of other foreign groups, which in turn views Jews within larger historical and sociological studies of ethnic groups and their acculturation.

Western art is typically understood as a product of national "schools" (e.g., German art, Spanish art), and its imagery was created within a dominant Christian society (Olin 2001). Moreover, until recently, art – especially from the modern period – has been viewed as continually progressing, as one style evolves out of, or in reaction to recent models. Jewish art cannot be understood within this model. Jews stand outside Western, Christian-based norms by virtue of their (often marginalized) religion and because of their condition as a diasporic people, with a four-millennia history of homelessness and a particularly intense period of migration at the turn of the twentieth century. Jewish life, unstable and continually displaced with experiences of prejudice and exclusion through the ages, remains central to the artistic and cultural development of Jewish art.

Conversely, as a Jewish state, Israel has a mandate to study Jewish culture in all forms. Thus the Hebrew University houses a Center for Jewish Art, and Bar Ilan University offers a program that trains art historians in Jewish art. And while some American and European scholars discuss Jewish art in both these regions, nearly all research on Israeli art takes place in Israel or by Israelis, usually in Hebrew, and so is out of reach to a wider constituency. Three general discussions of twentieth-century Israeli art have appeared in English (Ofrat 1998; Fuhrer 1998; Zalmona 2013). Other work on Israeli art history in English focuses on the founding, agenda, and art of Jerusalem's Bezalel Academy of Arts and Design (Cohen 1994; Zalmona on Boris Schatz, 2006) and the larger project of cultural Zionism (Manor 2005). Institutional retrospectives and exhibitions on esteemed Israeli artists, such as Reuven Rubin, Mordecai Ardon, and Moshe Gershuni, are held chiefly at either the Israel Museum in Jerusalem or the Tel Aviv Museum of Art and unfortunately do not travel, even to the Jewish Museum in New York.

Jewish art has been largely treated by non-art historians as "illustrations" of a moment or cultural experience, such as immigration (e.g., Raphael Soyer's frequently reproduced *Dancing Lesson*, 1926, with its multiple generations and contrasts between young Americans and their elders from the Old Country). Art historians remain very interested in contextualizing art in social, religious, political, and historical terms, but they also are deeply mindful of the distinctive objecthood of art (Wharton 2007). Like works of literature, which certainly are never viewed through their prose plot summaries or reduced to authors' messages, paintings or sculptures or graphic works must be experienced and analyzed in their non-verbal qualities, realizations of pictorial purposes, and dialogue with pictorial traditions. They can neither be reduced to extensions of the biographies of their producers nor analyzed only in relation to a purported audience or restricted religious community.

Some historians with a cultural emphasis do show remarkable sensitivity to visual form. Richard Cohen's work provides an excellent example. His *Jewish Icons* (1998) considers the issue of Jewish subjects and audience through a series of case studies, culminating in exhibitions of self-proclaimed Jewish art during the early Zionist era in Europe, for example, the Anglo-Jewish Exhibition, London, 1887, and the Exhibition of Jewish Artists, Berlin, 1907. It discusses the prehistory of modern Jewish representations, chiefly made by outsiders – the documentation of Jewish rites and sites by either hostile or sympathetic Gentile observers. In the title study he also discusses the imagery of celebrated rabbis by the Orthodox movement, which arose in equal and opposite reaction in Europe to the Jewish Enlightenment, or Haskalah.

One final reason why the field of Jewish art has been slow to take hold in the academy is that there has been a lack of consensus about what Jewish art even is. In fact, one thread of scholarship has debated this issue repeatedly. Steven Schwarzschild put it aptly: "Treatments of Jewish art invariably feel constrained to begin by discussing whether there even is such a thing as 'Jewish art,' and, if there is, how it is to be defined" (Schwarzschild 1990: 109).

As early as the Fifth Zionist Congress in Basel in 1901, Martin Buber mounted a special exhibition of Jewish art, which explicitly aimed to identify and define Jewish elements in visual art (Schmidt 2003; Olin 2001: 101–26). Discussions of Jewish art tended to classify art as Jewish in one of four ways: style, subject, authorship, and/or some instinctive understanding about what constitutes Jewishness. In the first issue of *Journal of Jewish Art*, editor Bezalel Narkiss broadly embraces nearly all of these possibilities for the field, stating that while the general population of artists influences Jewish art, distinctive features in "form, iconography, motifs and style" are also apparent in the work of Jewish artists (Narkiss 1974: 1). Instinctive understanding refers to occasional efforts to create an indigenous Jewish "school" by intuitively discerning some essence of Jewishness in art. For instance, in 1941 journalist William Schack enigmatically described his perception of Jewish art: "One may detect something of Jewish feeling in those of

our contemporaries who make use of Jewish subject-matter in an unsuperficial way; indeed, one may conceivably find it in the work of such men as Chagall and Soutine, even when they record something as racially non-committal as a nosegay or a carcass … " (Schack 1941: 182). Schack's attempt to define a singular Jewish aesthetic was based on tenuous grounds – in this case an amorphous Jewish feeling that permeates even subject matter without explicit Jewish content. Unlike other fields described in this volume, Jewish art does not have a long history of scholarship or dominant paradigms or schools of thought. Accordingly, Schack's comment is one of a few scattered descriptions of Jewish art, none of which has ever garnered much consensus.

Critics have continued to argue about whether the term "Jewish art" should be limited exclusively to any art made by a Jew, independent of content, or else whether both the artist and the artwork must be identifiably Jewish, expressly engaging the Jewish experience, religious or worldly. Whereas ancient and medieval monuments, or even Jewish ceremonial objects are easily accepted as Jewish art, the issue becomes more unclear for post-Emancipation painting and sculpture. In other words, a nineteenth-century portrait of a Gentile sitter by the German Jewish artist Moritz Daniel Oppenheim could be considered a "Jewish" work of art, just as much as objects with obvious Jewish content, such as a Holocaust memorial by American artist Sol LeWitt, a scene of the landscape of early twentieth-century Palestine by Israeli painter Reuven Rubin, or an eleventh-century *Chanukiah*. A pivotal discussion of the definition of Jewish art was Harold Rosenberg's sarcastic and provocative essay "Is There a Jewish Art?" published in *Commentary* in 1966, which continues to serve as a springboard for scholarly debate. Heavily influenced by the formalist painting concerns of Abstract Expressionism, Rosenberg argued that an authentic Jewish art must be defined stylistically. Rosenberg's premise is that the term "Jewish art" is ambiguous, because artists as diverse as Marc Chagall, Chaim Soutine, and Amadeo Modigliani have so little in common. Rosenberg proposes possible ways to understand Jewish art, ranging from simply art that is produced by Jews to art containing Jewish subject matter. Simultaneously he points out that, aside from a period at the beginning of the twentieth century when Jewish artists were involved in painting their ghetto environment, Jews have not readily depicted Jewish subjects. Repudiating the definition of Jewish art by subject matter, Rosenberg makes the analogy that Christian subject matter, such as the Crucifixion, has been produced by artists from diverse countries embracing different styles, and that ultimately it is style, not theme, that gives art its distinct flavor: "To grasp the feeling of a work, one must look beyond its subject to the style in which it is painted. Style, not subject matter or theme, will determine whether or not paintings should be considered 'Jewish' or placed in some other category" (Rosenberg 1966: 58). While Rosenberg suggests that Jewish art should be defined by style, he concludes by wondering whether or not a Jewish style will ever exist (Rosenberg 1966: 59). Consequently, Robert Pincus-Witten also defined Jewish art stylistically, asserting that abstraction is inherently Jewish because of the Second Commandment's prohibition against imagery (Pincus-Witten 1975). Jewish aniconism, Pincus-Witten argued, is so ingrained in the Jewish psyche that expressions of Jewishness, as espoused over several millennia, must be abstract.

Conversely, uninterested in such discussions of style and focusing instead on the pre-modern periods of Jewish art, Joseph Gutmann felt that only art produced prior to the nineteenth century can be called Jewish, because earlier artists of Jewish descent formed an integral part of a distinct Jewish community. After the Emancipation, Gutmann argued, the artist's identification ceased being singularly Jewish, therefore his or her art no longer "reflected the collective Jewish thought, feeling, and symbolism of that community" (Gutmann 1993: 14–15). The notion that "Jewish art is art which reflects the Jewish experience" was also reaffirmed by Abram Kampf (1975; later revised and expanded – 1985, 1990) and by the 1984 "Seminar on Jewish Art"

group which included the eminent art historians Leo Steinberg and Meyer Schapiro (Mann and Tucker 1985: 10). They cited art created for purposes of worship, especially ritual art, synagogues, and Hebrew illuminated manuscripts, but curiously (since Steinberg and Schapiro are historians of modern art) failed to address painting or modern art, leaving open the question about how more contemporary Jewish art would fit into the group's definition. Also undiscussed was what comprises the "Jewish experience" – which differs in each country or continent, and for each generation. Further, Jewish worship itself comprises different denominations and forms of prayer and ritual. Crucially, Jews also can be described as a people as well as a religion.

A different approach is proposed by Margaret Olin, who rejects the notion that Jewish art must be defined, instead arguing that art can "speak 'Jewish' at different times, depending on how it is read and who views it" (Olin 1999: 33). More recently, Samantha Baskind used Raphael Soyer's work as a case study for discussing the meaning(s) of modern Jewish art (Baskind 2004). She ultimately concludes that for the term "Jewish art" to be really meaningful, "Jewish" needs to be more than a sociological description. Thus the classification "Jewish art" should be doled out prudently. Rather, Jewish art cannot simply be any art that is produced by a Jewish hand, but should be restricted to art made by a Jew with a Jewish subject or influenced by one's Jewish values. In reference to the latter, she demonstrates that a Jewish subject may not always be obvious, so sometimes meanings related to an artist's religiocultural heritage need to be teased out through careful scrutiny of the images together with close attention to biography within the historical and cultural moment. (Perhaps then the work may "speak 'Jewish.'") Indeed, for much of his life, Soyer disputed that his art was influenced by his Jewish heritage, preferring instead to adopt the moniker "New York Painter." Yet close examination of his art demonstrated that he was profoundly affected by the Jewish American acculturation experience, obviously a secular Jewish diasporic experience.

A similar approach, focusing on the indirect expression of Jewish experience, is taken by Ziva Amishai-Maisels in an analysis of Ben Shahn's art made during and after World War II (Amishai-Maisels 1986–87). While Shahn's work from this period did not overtly appear to be Jewish (religious or ethnic), close observation reveals Jewish identity encoded in his work. Amishai-Maisels argues that for a long period Shahn avoided direct reference to the Holocaust, while still exploring his Jewish identity through allegorical subjects. She uncovers Shahn's use of Holocaust photographs as source material for his paintings on other socially conscious topics with wider implications about the particular plight of Jews.

This interpretive slant is also adopted by Nicholas Mirzoeff. In the introduction to his edited volume on the visual culture of both the Jewish and Black diasporas Mirzoeff notes, "The diasporic visual image is necessarily intertextual, in that the spectator needs to bring extratextual information to bear on what is seen within the frame in order to make full sense of it" (2000: 7). In Mirzoeff's own contribution to the volume he puts this belief into practice, effectively showing that Jewishness in art need not be indicated by Jewish iconography. He convincingly demonstrates the influence of Camille Pissarro's diasporic/Jewish experience on his subject matter and style by understanding the artist's work in relation to Jewish ethics and French anti-Semitism. Mirzoeff describes his perspective on Jewish art thus:

> Art is typically described as Jewish if it fulfills a liturgical function or represents religion iconographically, that is to say, by rabbis and menorahs. Perhaps the most obvious example of Jewish art is that of Marc Chagall. Yet what is represented here is not Jewishness, but Judaism. … Jewishness, on the other hand, is not so much denoted as connoted. Connotation is a secondary meaning generated by association.
>
> (Mirzoeff 2000: 57)

Mirzoeff's edited volume on Jews and Blacks in the diaspora accompanies a number of other useful edited books addressing Jewishness in modern art, including Ezra Mendelsohn and Richard Cohen's anthology, the first of its kind (1990), and Tamar Garb and Linda Nochlin's volume on visual and literary representations of the Jew (1995).

The consideration of how the Jewish background of individuals inflected their work, within larger interpretive questions of art history, shapes several other collections of essays, including Catherine Soussloff's *Jewish Identity and Modern Art History* (1999), Matthew Baigell and Milly Heyd's *Complex Identities: Jewish Consciousness and Modern Art* (2001), and *The Art of Being Jewish in Modern Times*, edited by Barbara Kirshenblatt-Gimblett and Jonathan Karp (2008). In his essay on the pioneer Polish Jewish painter Maurycy Gottlieb, Larry Silver considers the formative question of where the modern profession of a Jewish artist originated. Silver concludes that this poignant young painter returned to Rembrandt as his inspiration and adopted Jewish figures from canonical literature as subjects along with his ambitious academic training in the major regional art centers (Silver 1999). Essays on the influence of Jewish identity on modern artists includes studies of Chaim Soutine, R. B. Kitaj, and Richard Serra (Baigell and Heyd 2001) and on the "diasporic values" of R. B. Kitaj, Ben Katchor, and Vera Frenkel (Karp and Kirshenblatt-Gimblett 2008). Analytical essays include Norman Kleeblatt's discussion of Jewish artists as minority outsiders, and Elisheva Revel-Neher's re-examination of the historical tradition of Jewish art, linking modernists to canonical works such as the Dura Europos synagogue and Sarajevo Haggadah.

The vast majority of research on modern Jewish art is conducted by Jewish museums, in the form of catalogs with essays and images; often these publications form the principal resource for Jewish artworks and artists. Exhibition catalogs from America, Israel, and Europe are laying the groundwork for future critical discussions of artists and eras. A 1995 retrospective at the Skirball Cultural Center, Los Angeles, for example, brought little-known nineteenth-century American artist Henry Mosler to light in an exhibition reconstructing his life and oeuvre. In the accompanying catalog, readers discover Mosler's art though one hundred images, along with essays describing how he made a name for himself in his own time with detailed genre compositions and narratives of Breton customs (Gilbert 1995). The Jewish Museum in New York leads the pack, producing lush catalogs on individual artists (e.g., Ben Shahn; Chevlowe et al. 1998), themes (e.g., Russian theater; Goodman 2008), and national movements (e.g., early twentieth-century Berlin; Bilski 1999). The past quarter-century has featured several foundational exhibitions that have investigated artists within their particular regions and eras, for example early twentieth-century immigrant artists in Britain (Spencer et al. 1983), the School of Paris (Silver and Golan 1985), American art in the first half of the twentieth century (Kleeblatt and Chevlowe 1991), the Russian avant-garde (Goodman 1995), and nineteenth-century European Jewish artists (Goodman 2001). This last show expanded on individual studies, such as the essays by Cohen (Cohen 1998) or the several monographs on Gottlieb (Guralnik 1991; Mendelsohn 2002), to address the turning-point of Jewish art to encompass participation in the wider European art scene.

Groundbreaking work in art history has often taken place at the New York Jewish Museum. The provocative *"Too Jewish?"* exhibition (1996), curated by Norman Kleeblatt, was instigated by Kleeblatt's visit to artist Archie Rand's studio in 1989; there he saw the artist's *The Chapter Paintings* (1989), a series of 54 canvases addressing the weekly chapters of the Torah in a variety of styles, sometimes with literal iconography but also with symbolic or abstract formulations. Reacting with "embarrassment," to use Kleeblatt's words, at the works' "excessive 'Jewishness,'" the curator then resolved to explore the upsurge in Jewish subject matter in several artists' work during the 1990s (Kleeblatt 1996: ix). Five years later, Kleeblatt spearheaded a show of work by

an international group of artists engaging visual material about the Holocaust, but not – as usual – cathartic, memorializing, or redemptive (Kleeblatt 2001). Rather, the works chosen for the appropriately titled exhibition, *Mirroring Evil*, often focused on the perpetrators of the Holocaust rather than the victims. This show elicited conflicting reactions from both viewers and critics, some arguing that it was sensationalizing and inappropriate for a Jewish museum.

A growing field of study is Jewish American art, spurred by Kleeblatt and Chevlowe's aforementioned catalog and especially Matthew Baigell's essay, "From Hester Street to Fifty-Seventh Street: Jewish-American Artists in New York." Baigell provides an impressive overview of Jews in the art world and in American culture more generally. He has since written several volumes on the subject, for the most part surveying the field in brief discussions of the Holocaust (Baigell 1997, 2002) and in a book of essays on Jewish identity in American art (Baigell 2006). His short introduction to Jewish American art consolidates some of this material (Baigell 2007). Other work in this field include Samantha Baskind's encyclopaedia of Jewish American artists (Baskind 2007) and Gail Levin's work on early American feminist artists, whose Jewish identity she locates in their life experiences as perennial outsiders and as the children or grandchildren of radical immigrants, for whom fighting for justice and equality was a natural heritage (Levin 2005). Lisa Bloom's book on Jewish feminist identities (Bloom 2005) also describes the impact of Jewishness on woman artists, notably Eleanor Antin and Judy Chicago, the latter of whom is the subject of a full-scale biography by Levin (2007), which gives close attention to the artist's religiocultural heritage.

Another current field of interest is photography, in which Jews have played a prominent role. Alfred Stieglitz, Richard Avedon, Weegee, Roman Vishniac, Diane Arbus, and Lee Friedlander, for example, all stem from Jewish descent. Recently, critics have attempted to evaluate whether and how Judaism played a role in these photographers' work. William Meyers suggests that Jews gravitated toward photography because of an attraction to new technology industries (not just photography, but also movies, radio, records, and television), which by virtue of their novelty at the time had yet to exclude Jews. He also argues that the representational nature of photography, which allows the artist to comment on society, is an inherent part of the Jewish tradition as a religion strongly rooted in social action (Meyers 2003). Joining Meyers in the discussion on Jews and photography is Max Kozloff, whose essay on Jewish photographers and how Jewishness influenced their images of New York anchored the Jewish Museum exhibition catalog accompanying the traveling show "New York: Capital of Photography" (Kozloff et al. 2002). Kozloff describes an "ethnic sensibility" on the part of Jewish photographers that manifests itself as a restlessness and intimacy not found in the work of their gentile counterparts. This restlessness is not neutral, a quality inherent in gentile photos, Kozloff argues, but personal and related to the minority experience. As Kozloff puts it: "Familiarity was both an asset that brought these photographers unprecendently close to street behavior and a form of knowledge with which to decode it" (Kozloff et al. 2002: 77). In dialogue with Kozloff, Alan Trachtenberg hypothesizes that Yiddishkeit is what Kozloff refers to when he describes an "ethnic sensibility," and explains that "Yiddishkeit probably does come into play in the work of many photographers connected with that culture, especially its secular humanism, its liberal and socialist proclivities" (Trachtenberg 2003: 24).

However, the same debate that shapes Jewish art history more broadly is evident here. Thus A. D. Coleman asserts: "There is no benchmark that distinguishes photography made by people of Jewish descent, no way of recognizing a 'Jewish photograph' by anything in the way it looks, its subject matter, its strategy of description thereof, or its response to its content. Any unified field theory of Jewish photography is surely doomed to inadequacy from its very conception" (Coleman 2000: 6).

Meanwhile, some scholars have considered the subjects of Jewish photographers' and others are interested in photographs of the Jewish environment. Deborah Dash Moore and David Lobenstine offer a survey of photographs of the Lower East Side throughout the twentieth century (Moore and Lobenstine 2000). Carol McCusker discusses four of Robert Capa's photographs shot between 1937 and 1945, arguing that Jews are an implicit subject in some of his work (McCusker 2002). Most recently, Samantha Baskind provides a twofold discussion in an article on photojournalist Weegee (Baskind 2010). First Baskind engages in conversation with Kozloff and Trachtenberg, suggesting that a unified theory or generalization will not yield a better understanding of the imagery made by Jewish photographers. Instead, she feels that scholars might better profit from specific approaches to individual photographers. To that end, her article looks closely at Weegee's iconography, especially his little-known pictures focusing upon acculturation, social justice, and anti-Semitism, to provide a case study of how Jewishness can shape a photographer's conception.

The Holocaust is a key topic in contemporary Jewish art history. Critics discussing Holocaust art adopt a variety of interpretative perspectives, ranging from identifying and interpreting the meanings embedded in the art to a more theoretical approach exploring the role of memory and loss in Holocaust monuments. Such diverse methods reflect the disciplinary training of scholars discussing the material as well as the varied kinds of work included under the umbrella term "Holocaust art." Indeed, Holocaust art includes imagery created during the actual years of Nazi power: work by Jews sequestered in ghettoes, Jews in hiding, concentration camp inmates, and Jewish and Gentile artists creating imagery in protest of the war and fascism. This often heart-wrenching material is followed by art from succeeding generations, especially by second-generation witnesses participating in a program of commemoration.

The definitive study of this subject is Ziva Amishai-Maisels' *Depiction and Interpretation: The Influence of the Holocaust on the Visual Arts* (1993). She addresses the effects of the Holocaust on Jewish artists, for example Audrey Flack and Jacques Lipchitz, and gentile artists, for example George Grosz and Max Beckmann alike, whether eyewitnesses or those who reacted from afar. Adding to the depth and texture of her work, Amishai-Maisels fleshes out common symbols and themes, for example barbed-wire fences, chimneys, and biblical subjects, in this foundational book's wide scope. Much more narrowly focused, Mark Godfrey divides his book on abstraction and the Holocaust into chapters focusing on individual projects by American artists (Godfrey 2007). He shows how artists – including Morris Louis, Barnett Newman, Richard Serra, and Sol LeWitt – all eschewed representational means yet effectively explored memory and the Holocaust through diverse forms.

Essential to any discussion of Holocaust memorials, as well as memorials in general, is the seminal work of James Young in *The Texture of Memory: Holocaust Memorials and Meaning* (1993). One of Young's influential insights is that while memorials were often instigated by the Jewish obligation to remember, they also simultaneously embody other objectives – to educate succeeding generations, to assuage guilt, and even to attract tourists. Thus, Young demonstrates that the memory and meaning of the Holocaust evolves over time and place. In *At Memory's Edge: After-Images of the Holocaust in Contemporary Art and Architecture* he discusses how work by contemporary, second-generation artists, such as Shimon Attie's site-specific photo installations, and Art Spiegelman's pioneering graphic novel, *Maus*, creatively remember the Holocaust (Young 2000).

Recent work on art and the Holocaust has included studies of the theological content of Holocaust art (Feinstein 2005), and representations in film, painting, photography, architecture, and memorials (Hornstein and Jacobowitz 2003). In *Impossible Images: Contemporary Art after the Holocaust* (2003), edited by Shelley Hornstein, Laura Levitt, and Laurence J. Silberstein, essays

discuss a range of subjects from the narrative presented at the Museum of Tolerance in Los Angeles, to installations by the Israeli artists Roee Rosen and Boaz Arad that adopt Hitler as a subject. United not only by their focus on visual manifestations of the Holocaust, the essayists in this volume ask similar questions about how the past is remembered, how responses to genocide differ, and how visual narratives are constructed.

One area of study on the Holocaust has been devoted to art made by inmates of the concentration camps or other contemporary Jewish eyewitnesses during their wartime years, most often in flight or hiding (Amishai-Maisels 1993; Blatter and Milton 1981; Mickenberg et al. 2003). Two artists in particular have emerged into prominence for the power and range of their creations. Felix Nussbaum (1904–44), a German painter hiding in Belgium, has been the subject of several exhibitions (notably Emily Bilski, 1985; Jewish Museum) and a major biography (Kaster 1997); the bulk of his oeuvre has been gathered in the Nussbaum Collection in the Kulturgeschich-tliches Museum Osnabrück, Germany. Charlotte Salomon, a Berlin native, took refuge with relatives in southern France but was ultimately deported to Auschwitz. Her moving artistic personal record, *Life? Or Theater?* consists of 1325 gouaches on paper with text and musical references, now preserved in the Joods Historisch Museum, Amsterdam (published complete in book form, Salomon 1981). Salomon, Nussbaum, and the less celebrated artist-survivor Arnold Daghani have been discussed in a number of recent studies (Felstiner 1994; Steinberg and Bohm-Duchen 2006; Schultz and Timms 2009).

To end where we began: Jewish art history, particularly dealing with the art of the past two centuries, remains at its early stages. But it is now possible to see more clearly how many different aspects of the Jewish experience, engaging both religious tradition and the historical experiences of a people, find expression in modern art. The canonical, major artists have been introduced, particularly in reference works on Jewish visual culture (Sed-Rajna et al 1997; Van Voolen 2006). In *Jewish Art: A Modern History* (2011), Baskind and Silver produced an analytical survey of modern Jewish art as well as a reconsideration of the varieties of Jewish art-making in Europe, America, and Israel across the past two centuries (2011). Building on the perceptive studies of Richard Cohen for the nineteenth century and Ziva Amishai-Maisels for the twentieth century, as well as the rich library of important catalogs from the Jewish Museum in New York and sister institutions, any student of Jewish traditions must now include visual traditions, Jewish art history, in cultural accounts of Judaism.

Essential reading

Amishai-Maisels, Ziva. (1993) *Depiction and Interpretation: The Influence of the Holocaust on the Visual Arts*. New York: Pergamon Press. This seminal and magisterial study looks at the effect of the Holocaust on a vast number of mostly Jewish, but also some non-Jewish, artists in America, Europe, and Israel. Organized into themes, Amishai-Maisels's always astute analyses grant important insights.

Baskind, Samantha and Larry Silver. (2011) *Jewish Art: A Modern History*. London: Reaktion Books. A chronological, geographic, and thematic study that examines Jewish artists against the background of an emerging modernity.

Cohen, Richard. (1998) *Jewish Icons: Art and Society in Modern Europe*. Berkeley: University of California Press. This study focuses on nineteenth-century Jewish imagery in response to the conditions of nascent modernity, after it surveys the long period when representing Jewish life consisted chiefly of imagery made by non-Jews.

Goodman, Susan Tumarkin, ed. (2001) *The Emergence of Jewish Artists in Nineteenth-Century Europe*, exh. cat. New York: Jewish Museum. Including diverse artists from across Europe, this catalog explores how nineteenth-century Jewish artists assimilated and became professional artists.

Sed-Rajna, Gabrielle, et al. (1997) *Jewish Art*. New York: H. N. Abrams. A copiously illustrated gathering of canonical imagery across the full range of Jewish art history.

Soussloff, Catherine M., ed. (1999) *Jewish Identity in Modern Art History*. Berkeley: University of California Press. A methodologically diverse anthology divided into three segments that considers biases of the field of art history against the very notion of Jewish art, essays on individual artists, and finally a series of discussions that consider how a historian or critic's identity shapes his (in all cases) approach to Jewish art.

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8

FILM, TELEVISION, AND NEW MEDIA STUDIES

Nathan Abrams

Screen sources, such as film, television, and new media, are valuable resources for studying both the Jewish past and the present. This is, in part, because of their reliance on visual stereotypes to communicate information quickly and easily. Stereotypes are regularly repeated, simplistic, easily understood, and (often) inaccurate categorizations of a social group (Abrams et al. 2010: 365). Stereotypes in general, and Jewish ones in particular, fulfill many functions and much has been written about this especially in terms of how they perform cultural work in demonizing minority groups from the outside, and perpetuating group solidarity and continuity from the inside.

Since stereotypes do not stay static and because screen media tend to rely on them, they allow us to map and track wider changes in the society from which those texts originate. They "change because the cultural patterns on which they are based are becoming anachronistic" (Antler 1998: 256). Likewise, screen stereotypes of Jews, existing almost as long as the media themselves, have evolved, and a diachronic study of screen media allows us to map the metamorphosis of the Jew/ess and what this tells us about the societies in which they live at any given point in time.

For these reasons, then, the study of Jewish film, television, and new media is a highly productive field with its own specific histories, identities, agents, productions, production contexts, industries, and festivals. Reflecting this, university film and media courses and programs, adult education programs, film festivals, and so on, have rapidly expanded over the last few decades.

To date the field of Jewish film studies can be divided into two key areas. First is the changing history and problematic nature of the representation of the Holocaust since the first documentary films and footage appeared and continuing right up to the present (Avisar 1988; Doneson 1987; Shandler 1999, Insdorf 2003; Hirsch 2004; Baron 2005; Lichtner 2008). The second field is that of the "image" of "the Jew" (Friedman 1982; Erens, 1984; Hoberman and Shandler 2003; Taub 2005; Bartov 2005). In the case of the latter, scholarship is primarily focused on the shifting formulation of US cinematic Jewishness as a response to the ongoing crisis in the construction of Jewish–American identity during the twentieth century. Furthermore, these studies are largely confined to the period before 1990. Two such important and valuable works stand out in this respect: Lester D. Friedman's *Hollywood's Image of the Jew* (1982) and Patricia Erens' *The Jew in American Cinema* (1984). Taking a diachronic and chronological

approach, both books cover a vast range of cinematic representations of American Jews from the silent era to the early 1980s, but their commendable breadth of coverage is undermined by lack of detail so the analysis of each particular film is restricted. There have also been studies of the American Jewish moguls (Gabler 1988; Cohen 1983) and Hollywood and anti-Semitism (Carr 2001). More recently, these studies have been joined by existing and forthcoming publications on countries as diverse as France, Germany, Poland, Russia, the UK, Mexico, and Israel (see Baron 2011).

Newer books have built upon this pioneering work, as well as having updated and expanded it (Baron 2011; Abrams 2012a; Reznik 2012). Abrams and Reznick in particular focus on the "contemporary" period, which Abrams defines as commencing in 1990 and continuing to the present. Unlike Reznik, who restricted himself to Hollywood and American Jewish identity, Abrams took a wider and more ambitious remit than just "American Cinema" to redress the curious lack of writing on "how Jews have been depicted through cinema *as a whole*" (Zimerman 2002: 934; emphasis added). Certainly the US entertainment industries predominate in terms of the production and distribution of films and television programs, particularly in terms of Jewish representations; studies have tended to ignore products beyond that country. Rosenberg's superb overview of film production and scholarly approach to it, for example, is marred only by its limitation to the United States reflecting the dominant proportion of Jewish film produced there in comparison to the rest of the world (Rosenberg 1996). To this can be added Lawrence Baron's anthology *The Modern Jewish Experience in World Cinema* (Baron 2011). Baron assembled an ambitious collection aiming to cover more than a century of cinematic representations of Jews, Jewishness, and Judaism dispersed over a wide geographical area. In addition to the twin Jewish filmmaking poles of the United States and Israel, films from the United Kingdom, Italy, Hungary, Mexico, and Argentina are considered. The book also spans the history of cinema from Yiddish silents through to *A Serious Man* (2009) in fifty-four chapters. In so doing, Baron is to be congratulated for acknowledging that the world of Jewish cinema is in fact "global" and that there is indeed a *world* of cinema beyond the United States and Israel, and which is not entirely based on either anti-Semitism or the Holocaust. This global scope and context allows for comparative themes to emerge, showing how, for example, national cinemas have developed in contrast with one another and by not suggesting a simplistic model in which the United States, as the paradigmatic cinema in Jewish terms, is copied across the world. Thus the collection allows readers to compare the specificities of different Jewish cinematic experiences, at varying points in the twentieth century, in one volume for the first time.

A series of political, sociological, and economic changes, which the above books cover, led to the appearance of more Jews on global screens than ever before, as these new Jewish identities were increasingly mapped onto cinematic, televisual, and other representations. Jews increasingly felt confident and comfortable. They were wealthier, more middle class, better educated, both in secular and Jewish terms, and more integrated into their countries of origin. They no longer saw themselves as immigrants, or had to fight for their rights, and were appointed to high level positions in most areas of public life. The growth of multiculturalism and cultural pluralism encouraged Jews to not only maintain, but also to exhibit pride in their ethnic identities. They began to define their Jewishness in different ways to those of their parents and grandparents, no longer feeling that they are "in the Diaspora" but rather that they are "at home" (Aviv and Shneer 2005). They are increasingly "post-denominational," rejecting institutional and communal norms in favor of something more fluid, labile, and spiritually and intellectually fulfilling. Their middle-class backgrounds, film-school training and access to national and international financial support assisted them.

Changes in the European film industry and funding helped to kick-start the careers of younger Jewish film-makers. A growth of schemes and shorts competitions, along with the proliferation of film production courses, created a climate of new-found energy, confidence, and optimism in the 1990s. Jewish film-makers obviously benefited from this context and from the financial support offered by a complex European network of funding bureaucracies, government film funds, television money, and private investment. Consequently, in Eastern and Central Europe, benefitting from the collapse of Communism and the breakup of the Soviet Union, films from the Czech Republic, Hungary, Poland, and Russia reflected on Jewish life in an unprecedented way. In Western Europe, in particular France, Germany, Italy, the Netherlands, Spain, Sweden, and the United Kingdom, films explored working-class Jewish identity, Jewish history and culture, interfaith relationships and the struggle to pass, without always referencing the traditional themes of prejudice, anti-Semitism, and the Holocaust.

Beyond the United States and Europe, new Jewish films also appeared in Argentina, Australia, Brazil, Canada, and Mexico, providing a broader palette beyond the usual strokes of Anglophone Ashkenazi "white" Jewishness. Bolder films and television have emerged from Israel, too, tackling topics such as homosexuality in the military, Palestinian–Jewish relationships, suicide bombing, Israel's invasion of Lebanon in 1982, and returning war captives. Israel is currently so successful in producing TV dramas (among other shows) that their formats are now exported and adapted into Anglophone versions. All of these developments are the subject of growing scholarly inquiry.

Yet, despite the strides that are being made in terms of non-Anglophone, non-Israel, non-American film and television studies, there is still more work to be done which opens up the field of study to the global Jewish experience, especially in trans-historical and transnational terms. The parameters of Jewish film and television Studies are also geographically limited, tending to focus on the United States and/or Israel, or on other individual countries. Transnational, global, and comparative perspectives have not yet been undertaken to any great extent to the effect that individual country-based Jewish film studies remain in isolation. A comparative approach would not only allow us to trace similar themes and concerns, but also, and perhaps more importantly, allow us to focus on the differences and to explore in greater depth why they did and are still occurring. Comparing the UK to France, for example, would open up valuable areas for consideration, not least why French Jewish films are both bolder and more commercially successful than their British counterparts.

Aside from geographical limitations Jewish film studies has been slow to open itself to mainstream film studies theory and methodology more generally. By the same token, few scholars outside Jewish Studies have taken into account the Jewish background of so many Hollywood producers, directors, and actors, or the relation between their work and the presence (or absence) of Jewish themes in their films. The current subfield of analyzing neoliberalism with reference to homosocial genres, as pioneered by Jewish director Judd Apatow and his soi-disant "Jew Tang Clan" ensemble of actors (Seth Rogen, Jason Segel, Jonah Hill, Michael Cera, Paul Rudd, and Jason Schwartzman), variously called "bromances," "bromcoms," "homme-coms," and even "dick flicks," is a case in point as few scholars consider the meshing between Jewishness and the masculinities on display in such films and why they may appeal to both Jewish actors and their audiences. Furthermore, the tendency towards psychoanalytic film theory, with a particular preference for the likes of Laura Mulvey, Julia Kristeva, and Gilles Deleuze, elides the historical specificity of many films, overlooking why and how films were produced when they were in search of such ahistorical cultural referents such as "the phallus," "the abject," or "the gaze." To date, for example, the majority of studies devoted to the British film *The Governess* (dir. Sandra Goldbacher, 1998) ignore the UK context in which it

was made in favor of a purely textual approach that considers little the world beyond the film's diegesis.

As with many aspects of Jewish history and culture, these issues tend to be studied separately, either by themselves, or subsumed under the general rubric of ethnicity and film. In fact, if a scholar of Jewish Studies wishes a wider market for her work, then using the tag "ethnic" rather than "Jewish" is a means of achieving that. Having said that, however, Jewish film and television studies has incorporated the growing field of cultural theory, including Homi K. Bhabha, Jean-Paul Sartre, Frantz Fanon, Sigmund Freud, and Jean-Francois Lyotard, as well as the growing body of Jewish cultural theorists such as Sander Gilman and Daniel Boyarin (Byers 2009; Abrams 2012a).

One of the reasons for this is possibly the fruitless, yet frustratingly ongoing, discussion of what constitutes Jewishness in terms of Jewish film, television, and new media. Baron attempts a brief answer to that perennial question, "what is Jewish cinema?" He suggested: "Jewish cinema consists of films whose plots revolve around events or cultural, economic, gendered, political, personal, religious, or social complications that arise because their antagonists or protagonists are Jews" (Baron 2011: 4). However, since these categories are notoriously thorny issues to define, any attempt to do so will reify those terms by reducing them to essentialisms. Furthermore, the attempt to define what is Jewish film, television, and new media has contributed to another problem. In Jewish Studies, since most film scholars continue to examine "Jewish" films in isolation from those treating other ethnic groups, the resulting ghettoization has not only contributed to its isolation but also has limited the explanatory powers of mainstream theory.

Furthermore, Jewish screen studies to date have taken as their primary task, "the locating, describing and analyzing of films in which identifiably Jewish characters appear or those in which Jewish issues figure into the plot," restricting themselves to "*explicit* content, assuming that Jews and their life, society and culture are being discussed or referred to *only* when they appear directly on screen" (Michel 1994: 248, 249; emphasis in original). In this way, scholars have taken on a very limited definition restricted to *visible* ethnicity.

Furthermore, scholars often restrict themselves to only Jewish practitioners or artists. In addition to those outlined above, there are many potential approaches to the systematic study of Jewish screen media that have not yet been explored, encouraged, or consolidated. Greater strides could be made in considering the theoretical, methodological, or ontological natures of the media themselves and how this intersects with Jewish Studies. Numerous and recent developments in Jewish Studies invite new foci and directions for this field in that they move beyond a focus on the Jewish *auteur* (Woody Allen being a particular favorite) or actor/actress and consider wider developments that affect Jews in many places where they live. These include diasporic and transnational cinemas, normalization of Jewish difference in multicultural societies, redefining or renewal of Jewishness in Europe, postcolonialism, post-Zionism, postmodern Jewish popular culture, renewal of Yiddish and *haredi*[1] culture, feminist and queer Jewish studies, trauma studies, and interest in postmemory, prosthetic, and multidirectional memory.

One of these new directions is to embrace the subsurface, implicit, symbolic, textually submerged, or conceptual Jewishness (Shandler 1994) and Judaism – where Jews, both ethnically and religiously defined, are literally conceived, more than represented, and consider what this might mean for Jewish film, television and new media studies. Here, the lead of Ella Shohat, who suggested that ethnicity inheres in many films, and not only in those where ethnic issues appear on the "epidermic" surface of the text (Shohat 1991: 215), should be followed. Such an approach was undertaken by Kane (1999) with regards to the films (and plays) of David Mamet revealing a rich reasoning for many of the significant choices that Mamet made, for example,

when he wrote the screenplay for the film *The Edge* (dir. Lee Tamahori, 1997), a film seemingly devoid of any reference to Judaism but which Kane reveals otherwise. Abrams (2012b) undertook a similar analysis with reference to Stanley Kubrick's horror masterpiece *The Shining* (1980) to argue that the Biblical story of the binding of Isaac may lie at its heart.

Jon Stratton has argued that in cinema and television there are many "Jewish moments" (Stratton 2000: 300), those in which the viewer is given the possibility of "reading Jewish," albeit not with certainty, by "employing a largely unconscious complex of codes that cross-check each other" (Bial 2005: 70), of which the Jewish identities of actors/actresses is a key, but by no means the only part. The "real-life" status of the actor/actress behind the depiction can provide the viewer with an additional clue to reading Jewish in the conflation of cinematic role/persona with real life. As Rosenberg points out, "In theory, the ethnicity, of an actor or actress should be irrelevant to the role – acting, after all, is just that: acting – but broader ideological factors influence casting decisions, and these in turn become relevant to the film depiction of ethnic experience" (Rosenberg 1996: 26).

Furthermore, reading Jewish relies on locating identifiably Jewish characteristics, behaviors, beliefs, or other tics, either explicitly, or by a range of undeniable signifiers. Other important clues include looks, intellect, behavior, profession, name, physiognomy, foods, verbal and body language, phenotype, religious practices, and historical and cultural references all of which require a prerequisite knowledge, "rely[ing] upon individual viewers to identify these clues that represent things Jews and elements that can be read as possibly Jewish" (Krieger 2003: 388). To quote Bial at length here:

> There is, I suggest, a Jewish audience that may glean Jewish specificity from performances that a general audience decodes as universal. The Jewish reader may decode Jewishness through aural, visual, or emotional/genre signs […] speech patterns and accents, an actor's looks or hairstyle, a certain kind of anxiety or neurosis about the conflict between tradition and modernity – all of these things maybe, and have been, read as Jewish by critics and audiences inclined to do so […] Only Jews (or those who know the codes) will interpret these elements of performance as Jewish. While general audiences may recognize these performance practices as unusual, urban, or ethnic, they will not necessarily recognize them as indicators of Jewish cultural difference.
>
> (Bial 2005: 152)

One of the key texts engaging film in this way is Cocks' (2005) exploration of the Holocaust in the films of Stanley Kubrick – the most extensive single study, to date, of how a secular agnostic Jew like Kubrick, who rarely referred to or invoked his Jewishness in his films, did use his background and upbringing in textually submerged ways. Cocks argued that although Kubrick intended to make a film about the Holocaust but never did, the film he ended up making on the subject was *The Shining*, albeit obliquely. He attempted to prove, somewhat controversially it must be stated, that the *auteur*'s use of color, music, theme, framing, and so on betrayed an obsession with World War II and the Shoah. Furthermore, he looked for similar markers in Kubrick's entire oeuvre. Another impressive study in this regard is Kane's (1999) analysis of the ethics and ethnicity in the film and plays of David Mamet which, as I suggested above, revealed a hidden substratum of Judaic referents in such films as *The Edge* and *Glengarry Glen Ross* (dir. James Foley, 1992) (Kane 1999).

Given the volume of research dedicated to analyzing the Jewish contribution to film and television both in front of and behind the camera, it is surprising to note that to date not much

work has been done on *Judaism*, as a system of beliefs, values, ethics, and practices, over-shadowed by a tendency to focus either on the *image* of the ethnically defined Jew/ess or on the Holocaust on film. As a consequence, it is possible to read entire books on these subjects but with almost no references to "Judaism." This is because, in the past, film studies scholarship largely focused on ethnicity (*Jewishness*) as an analytic category for the study of Jewish representations and industry participation. As Robyn Wiegman noted, "This is the case even though early cinematic representations of Jews were predicated on nineteenth-century *racialized* notions of Jewish identity" (Wiegman 1998: 159, my emphasis). Religion is typically ignored because as Carolina Rocha observed, "Jewish traditions and rites are absent in the many Eastern European and American films analyzed" (Rocha 2010: 47).

Greater exploration of the religious factor (*Judaism*) in contemporary screen media is required, particularly as the number of films, television programs, video games (as we shall see later), and uses of the internet, such as social networking sites, in which Jews are defined religiously rather than solely ethnically, are growing. Such studies must start from the premise that there is a clear distinction between Jewishness as racial, ethnic, political, and cultural identities, and Judaism as a religion and set of beliefs, behaviors, and values. Where Gertel (2003) began to map these representations, his desire to criticize what he sees as their distortions of Judaism clouds what is an otherwise useful survey. But to this can be added the useful work of Miles (1996), Pearl and Pearl (1999), Wright (2006 2009), Smith (2009), and Abrams (2012a). Taken together, these approaches look for signs in film in which Jews are treated explicitly as adherents to some sort of Judaic creed, whether Reform, Conservative, or *haredi*. What they have discovered is that a hitherto absent spectrum between the previous poles of secular and *haredi* is beginning to be populated with different varieties of Judaism not before seen on screen. "New" forms of religion, in screen terms, are being articulated in film. Furthermore, it is not just a question of the "representation" of religion: as more *haredi* adherents begin to make films about their lives from the inside, there are increasingly other ways in which religion shapes films at an aesthetic and/or epistemological level. Scholarship has yet to consider this relatively recent phenomenon to any great extent, however.

Strangely, given the growth of women's and gender studies, little has been written about Jewish female representation in *contemporary cinema*, especially when compared with television. Perhaps this is explained by the fact that the Jewess on film suffered from consistent under-representation, being relegated to a limited number of secondary roles. If this scholarship tends to concentrate on "the Jew" (who is implicitly assumed to be male) it is because he drowns out by sheer force of numbers the Jewess who, for the most part, is defined by her absence, as the majority of films and hence scholarship focus on Jewish men. When she does appear, she rarely exists in her own right (although there are notable exceptions): she is defined largely by the viewpoint of and/or her relationship to the Jew. As late as 2006, one critic could entitle her article about Jewish women in film "Invisible in Hollywood" (Dines 2006).

Because of the paucity of the range of representations, much of the academic literature on the Jewess in film, unfortunately, also tended to be restricted to these categories, thus is guilty of, to borrow a phrase from elsewhere, "perpetuating asymmetries" (Miguélez Carballeira 2007). It is also confined to examining a limited range of women, in particular Barbra Streisand. While the Jewess is reduced to secondary roles and appears less frequently than her male counterpart, this does not explain the relative lack of scholarship devoted to her. Perhaps this can be explained by the fact that studies of the cinematic Jewess are generally submerged within studies of "the Jew in cinema" – "the appellation 'Jew' assuming a study of the Jewish man as representative of the Jewish community" as a whole (Lewin 2008: 239) such as Friedman (1982), Erens (1984), and Bartov (2005).

The study of the cinematic Jewess is further hindered by the theoretical trends within the wider field of Jewish Studies of which it is a part. The Jew in many studies is "implicitly masculine, and perceptions of Jews are frequently seen as projections of anxieties about masculinity. Cultural theorists, from Sartre to Fanon to Lyotard to Sander Gilman similarly assumed the masculinity of the Jewish subject" (Valman 2007: 3). Judith Lewin added: "Even in groundbreaking work on the representation and construction of the Jew as symbol there remains the same frustrating tendency"; Sander Gilman, for example, states "(The category of the female Jew all but vanishes)" (Lewin 2008: 239). Explorations of the feminization of the Jew (such as the work of Boyarin [1997]) further render invisible the Jewess and prevent the examination of her representation As Ann Pellegrini stated, "*All Jews are womanly but no women are Jews*" (Pellegrini 1997: 109).

The limitations that apply to film and television are exacerbated when applied to Jewish new media, a nascent field. Significant work on Judaism online began to surface only recently. Jewish Studies cannot be blamed for this, however, as new media scholarship and pedagogy is just taking off in general (one gets the sense that it is still a discipline in flux – that is, still in the process of working out its paradigms and boundaries), and the apparently "slow" pace of Jewish Studies must be contextualized in light of the overall slow pace of scholarly and institutional adaptation to the digital humanities that is completely shaking up higher education in the United States and around the globe.

Existing Jewish Studies scholarship on new media has tended to focus on what happens *online*, exploring such issues as Judaism and Second Life (Voloj 2008; Shandler 2009). The writing so far has begun to consider the relationship between religion and interactive technology to address how people engage with Judaism online (Brasher 2001; Beckerlegge 2002; Dawson and Cowan 2004; Hojsgaard and Warburg 2005; Karaflogka 2006). Contributions such as Brasher (2001) in particular argued that the Internet enables new forms of traditional religious expression, highlighting such examples as a cyber-Seder or virtual Passover as a way of helping people reconnect with their Judaism. Fairly recent studies of Internet use within Jewish religious communities in Israel, in particular *haredi* denominations, have shown that the Internet poses key challenges to the Israeli religious sector, demonstrating that while the new media and other new technologies are readily utilized by many Orthodox groups, they are still viewed by some of them with suspicion. Fears expressed, primarily by *haredi* groups, show how rabbis often attempt to constrain Internet use in particular (but also cellular phones) to minimize their potential threat to religious social norms and the structure of authority (Livio and Tenenboim 2004; Barzilai and Barzilai-Nahon 2005; Campbell 2010; Campbell forthcoming).

But, as might be expected, while research into online Judaism has been growing, it is restricted both geographically and denominationally, in that it is largely confined to the United States and Israel and *haredism*. Those fairly recent studies of Internet use within Jewish religious communities in Israel mentioned above are limited by their tendency to focus on *haredi* denominations. Since *haredim* have a fraught relationship with new technologies such as the Internet and cellular phones (Campbell 2010), their use in generalizing overall patterns to fit non-*haredi* Jews' relationship to such media is limited.

It is also surprising that social networking sites, such as Facebook, have not yet attracted significant academic attention in this area beyond a couple of publications (Abrams et al. 2013; Abrams forthcoming). To date, other than these two works the substantial still burgeoning body of research exploring social networking sites has completely overlooked Jews and Judaism, preferring to focus on students and reveals much interest in issues of trust, privacy, disclosure and security. There has been a substantial amount of work investigating the motivations and reasons for using social networking sites and work exploring the psychological parameters of

the users of these sites. The effectiveness of using social networking sites for the purposes of formal education or educational purposes (such as educating patients about management of medical conditions) has attracted the interest of researchers. Other major interests for researchers of social networking sites have been identity construction, identity presentation, and identity management of users, either as individuals or as members of wider cohorts, and social capital possessed by users of social networks. However, unfortunately, none of this has yet been related to Jews and Judaism to any great extent.

Furthermore, Jewish New Media research does not always benefit from a cross-disciplinary perspective. There is little cross-cultural comparative work and even less work which examines and compares Jewish self-definition globally.

Yet, the growing diversity of scholarly and philanthropic efforts in these new directions must be acknowledged. The Modiya Project (http://modiya.nyu.edu) is an open source resource for scholars and teachers of Jews, media, and religion, which has tried to address some of the issues raised here, in particular the relationship between *haredim* and the Internet and technology. It has also commented upon the rise of Jewish digital greetings cards that circulate online through YouTube, Facebook, and email. The Jewish New Media Innovation Fund (http://www.jewish newmedia.org/2011–12-award-recipients) is a collaboration of the Jim Joseph Foundation, Righteous Persons Foundation, and the Charles and Lynn Schusterman Family Foundation to develop and promote projects that use new media tools – video, digital communications, social networks – to empower Jews to interact with, share, build, and explore Jewish life. Although the Fund claims it "seeks to better understand how digital media can help preserve Jewish history, renew Jewish traditions, and revitalize Jewish institutions while promoting more vibrant and meaningful Jewish life in the 21st century," it is not yet offering any funding for scholarship on these topics. It is also solely focused on the United States.

Another promising sign, however, is that two new volumes which consider new media are forthcoming. Bunin Benor (2012), while focused on *haredim*, considers material on new media and does try to frame *haredi* use of it in terms of a global network of "frum" ("pious," i.e. Orthodox) linguistic practices. Lieber and Bronner (forthcoming), on the other hand, propose a wider remit to cover the effects of social media on Jewish identity, perceived conflicts and integration of the Internet with religious values, adaptation of technology such as cell phones and webcams for religious purposes, marketing and consumption of Jewish books and products in cyberspace, rise of virtual Judaism and Jewishness, changes to oral and social genres such as humor and ritual in digital cultural contexts, effects of the Internet on Jewish/non-Jewish relations, and the use of technology to challenge or redefine traditional structures of authority in the Jewish community. Other new research is beginning to address these concerns by investigating the way new media and communication technologies are used in the construction of ethno-religious identities, communities, and outlooks. It examines how construction of Jewish identity is accomplished in new media/online environments now widely used by everyone, but especially young people, namely the social networking site Facebook. In this way, it builds upon the recent move toward more theoretical work in studies of Judaism and the Internet. Such work explores in greater detail "the offline implications of online religious activities and how the Internet may serve as a microcosm for studying shifts of behavior and belief in offline religious culture" (Campbell 2011: 375). Abrams et al. (2013) take as their starting point Campbell's observation that "the Internet becomes a portal for the initiation and enculturation of Jews into a larger religious community and thus has interesting implications for the Jewish Diaspora" (Campbell 2011: 375). To quote Heidi Campbell, arguably the leader in scholarly inquiry into digital Judaism, further, and at length, "New media raise age-old questions of how Jewish religious identity is constructed, what constitutes the boundaries of community life, how

the sacred should be mitigated and lived out in contemporary society, and what constraints faith should place on engagement outside the Jewish world. These issues underlie the question of what it means to be Jewish in a new media world" (Campbell 2011: 377). Using a case study of an independent minyan called "Grassroots Jews," the research has shown how Facebook has facilitated bottom up, and "pop up" congregational formation among young post-denominational Jews in the UK allowing them to experiment with offline forms of worship and participation (Abrams forthcoming).

Finally, it is not surprising to discover that Jews, in various guises, crop up in a series of popular video games. Since game designers tend to downplay ethnic racial and religious issues it is difficult to find any identifiably Jewish characters in most top video games. Yet when they do appear they often perpetuate long-held stereotypes. Video games come in many guises, typically entertainment or educational, but what they have in common is some sort of "quest" in which the player attempts to reach a final stage or ending. This can be done by many means: shooting and killing, solving clues, collecting items, and so on. In these quests, Jewish characters appear, primarily as supporting ones, but in a manner which may be considered as an unhindered – and overlooked – hotbed of anti-Semitic stereotypes.

Jews, criminality and gangsterism is one of them in such popular mainstream games as *The Godfather II* and the *Grand Theft Auto* series. The video game adaptation of *The Godfather: Part II* features Jewish gangster Hyman Roth while neurotic Jewish mob lawyer and "comic schlemiel" Ken Rosenberg, modeled on David Kleinfeld (Sean Penn) in *Carlito's Way* has appeared in the *Grand Theft Auto* series. In *Grand Theft Auto: IV* stoop-shouldered Hasidim wander Liberty City's streets in their long black *kapotes*. A subplot requires players to gun down double-crossing *haredi* diamond dealer Isaac Roth who, together with other *haredim*, runs the Jewish Crime Syndicate, a criminal organization.

Unfortunately, games which promote the hating and killing of Jews are also in evidence. *Left Behind: Eternal Forces*, the video game based on the *Left Behind* book series, promotes an exclusionary Christian theology that believes Jews and others must convert or die during the End of Days. Even worse, in *Ethnic Cleansing*, *SA Man* (modelled on *Pac-Man*) and *KZ Manager*, Jews appear as victims to be killed racking up the player's points. The upshot is that these games are very niche, and non-mainstream, confined to the racist, right-wing fringe, no more than an extension of the existing type of racist propaganda that they already distribute. Yet, these texts are significant even if they are only consumed outside the mainstream. They are worthy of consideration in that while they replicate typical discourses of anti-Semitic propaganda, it is their very nature that is innovative, doing something that is arguably qualitatively different in terms of producing a less passive relationship between the consumer and text (which I will discuss in more detail later).

A more nuanced representation of Jews and Judaism appears in *The Shivah*. Unlike the other games mentioned, Jews are the central characters in this rabbinical adventure of mourning and mystery. It stars Russell Stone, rabbi to a poor synagogue in the Lower East Side of New York City, who inherits a large sum of money from a former member of his congregation murdered three days earlier. Stone decides to investigate the circumstances relating to the death, which takes him on a journey across Manhattan to uncover the truth, revealing a deep conspiracy. *The Shivah* is an unusual game in several respects. It is an old-fashioned 1980s-style 2-D format known as "point and click," lacking what some might perceive as the sophisticated graphics of contemporary games. Furthermore, while we might "drive" and "direct" Stone, we do not "occupy" him. It is not our hand-eye coordination that propels the character; rather it is our range of choices based on knowledge and intelligence. It is very much a cerebral game. Rabbi Stone is not an empty vessel; he has a past, he has made mistakes, and his choices are based on

who he is. He also has his religious-based prejudices, having refused to officiate a wedding because the groom was marrying out. It features a Yiddish dictionary (the dialogue is liberally peppered with Yiddishisms) and "rabbinical conversation methods." There are three possible outcomes or "endings." (This last feature prods one to think of the old quip about two Jews, three opinions.) Furthermore, unlike other video games, "words replace weapons" in the game. Answering questions with a question propels the narrative forward as questioning is the rabbi's power.

However, there has, to date, been no systematic academic study of this phenomenon although a new piece is about to appear offering a model of exploring Judaism in video games (Abrams and Carrillo Masso forthcoming). Video games are a potentially fascinating area for further study. Arguably, the game format allows for an unlimited and un-limitable range of representations to be produced in contrast to other media where notions of photorealism or greater censorship might apply. Potentially, the only limiting factors are within the terms of the game itself. Furthermore, this is boosted by the lack of censorship which governs other media. Typically, it is the responsibility of the game distributor or developer to decide whether a game requires statutory classification or not, but in the United States games fall under the umbrella of the First Amendment protecting freedom of speech. Games which are modified by the gamers in ways that the developers did not intend come under the radar. Yet, given this context, what is interesting to note is that, in a genre that allows for almost unlimited and infinite variety of possibilities, and in which the boundaries of censorship and classification are neither fixed nor rigid, age-old stereotyped images of Jews as criminals, as *haredim*, as victims, in particular Holocaust victims, as uncommonly smart, devious, calculating, are perpetuated. Perhaps this is attributable to the newness of the games industry and that what we are looking at is comparable to the early film studios which, during their nascent and silent period, tended to restrict themselves to overtly racialized portraits of Jews. This does not mean that games are any less interesting as a subject of study than film, not least because the relationship between the game and gamer is more complex than that between movie and audience.

Video games tend to stand outside of broader media tendencies. For one, they seem to exploit stereotypes in a more apparent manner than other forms of media. Such (often racist) images in mainstream video games would be condemned if they appeared in other media. Video games are often neglected, despite their strong popular appeal and economic relevance, because they are considered to be less relevant in cultural discourse and thus less subject to media critique.

Do video games merely reinforce and intensify received cultural stereotypes, or do they contain the potential to challenge and undermine them? While the nexus between video games and gamer is complex, perhaps more so than other media, games can be used to convey persuasive ideological messages since they are about taking on an identity, inhabiting a player and making choices. Thus video games have the potential to challenge existing stereotypes or to strongly reinforce them. Since the relationship between the gamer and the character is less passive, less one way, in that the player "occupies" or makes decisions for the character, the relationship between the gamer and the stereotype might need to be fundamentally reconsidered. Until research is done on the impact on gamers, which has not yet been done, we will not know if they are inclined to do one more than the other.

Significantly, unlike film, television, literature, and many other forms of popular culture, although there are Jews working in the games and new media industries (most notably Mark Zuckerberg, one of the founders of Facebook), video games have not yet been seen as a ripe area for exploitation of Jewish themes. Perhaps this will change and the nature of number of games featuring Jewish characters will alter along with them. In a world of horizontal

integration and cross-media ownership the impact of games on film and television may yet well be huge.

An underlying concern with all research in these areas is the potential impact of the images and representations depicted on screen, even if not explored as such (Jewish film, television and new media studies is seemingly little concerned with actual reception preferring to consider the potential or possible effects). As film mutates into digital and new media plays an increasingly prominent role in our lives, the relationship between us and what we are consuming will change in unexpected ways. The potential challenge that lies ahead, therefore, is not just to develop and explore new ways of looking at older media, but also the new ways in which we interact with that media. Games and social networking sites explicitly foreground these issues but they are just as applicable to film and television as well.

Note

1   "*Haredi*" (plural: *haredim*) literally means "one who trembles," deriving from Isaiah 66:5, in which the prophet admonishes his people to, "Hear the word of the Lord, you who tremble [*haredim*] at His word." It is often confused with the much more common term, in American English at least, Hasidic. *Haredi* is translated as "ultra-Orthodox," a definition that does not do justice to an extensive and nuanced term that covers a range of Jews who fall into this category but not all of whom are "Orthodox" in the strictest definition of that term.

Essential reading

Abrams, N. (2012) *The New Jew in Film: Exploring Jewishness and Judaism in Contemporary Cinema*, New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press. The first study to consider contemporary Jewish cinema in a global remit.

Baron, L. (2011) *The Modern Jewish Experience in World Cinema*, Waltham, MA: Brandeis University Press. An impressive anthology covering global Jewish cinema from the silent era to the present.

Brook, V. (2003) *Something Ain't Kosher Here: The Rise of the "Jewish" Sitcom*, New Brunswick, N.J.: Rutgers University Press. Surveys the Jewish contribution to television through the sitcom genre.

Campbell, H.A. (forthcoming) *Digital Judaism*, Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press. The first anthology to consider the relationship between Judaism and new media.

Erens, P. (1984) *The Jew in American Cinema*, Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press. Landmark study of the development of the Jewish image on film.

Friedman, L.D. (1982) *Hollywood's Image of the Jew*, New York: Ungar. Another landmark study of the development of the Jewish image on film.

Pearl, J. and Pearl, J. (1999) *The Chosen Image: Television's Portrayal of Jewish Themes and Characters*, Jefferson, N.C.: McFarland. Insightful study of Jewish Television.

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PART II

Theorizing contemporary Jewish cultures

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9

POWER

Michael Rothberg

In the past thirty years, power has become one of the most ubiquitous keywords of cultural studies and critical theory. Brought to prominence by two discrete but overlapping intellectual genealogies—the translation of Michel Foucault's work into English and the rise of ethnic and postcolonial studies—power is now an unavoidable category for thinking about cultural texts and identities in a comparative context. To be sure, no singular meaning of power circulates in such thinking. Indeed, the concept possesses completely opposed attributes in much contemporary thought: traditional understandings of power as a repressive, centralized, and hierarchical possession continue to attract adherents despite Foucault's famous dictum declaring that "we need to cut off the King's head" and think of power instead as a productive, dispersed, and immanent relation (Foucault 1980b: 121 and passim). While theorists emerging out of the ethnic and postcolonial studies traditions draw increasingly on figures such as Foucault, work in those areas also maintains some of the political urgency associated with compelling pre-Foucauldian notions of power hierarchies configured around variables such as race, class, sexuality, and gender. Against that backdrop, this chapter will argue that a serious and unsentimental consideration of Jewish cultures and histories can help illuminate the contradictory guises power takes in critical theory at large.

At the same time, however, Jewish studies—and even the more recent and theoretically invested formation of Jewish cultural studies—has rarely been an *explicit* contributor to this ongoing conversation about the nature of power in contemporary societies. The indexes of recent, path-breaking collections in Jewish cultural studies contain no entry for "power" despite their manifest interest in exploring race, ethnicity, gender, and sexuality in comparative perspective (Boyarin and Boyarin 1997; Biale et al. 1998; Boyarin et al. 2003). Nor is Foucault a significant presence in any of these works, with the exception of his work on sexuality, which plays an unavoidable role in *Queer Theory and the Jewish Question*. Yet, those works, along with a related collection emerging from the British context, Bryan Cheyette and Laura Marcus's *Modernity, Culture, and "the Jew"*, certainly suggest new ways of theorizing domination, focused as they are on what Cheyette and Marcus call the "ambivalent positioning which characterizes Jewish history and culture" between "the heart of western metropolitan culture" and "that which is excluded in order for ascendant racial and sexual identities to be formed and maintained" (Cheyette and Marcus 1998: 3).

Although, in complementary fashion, there is a paucity of "mainstream" cultural studies and critical theory work that engages with Jewish history and culture in a systematic fashion when

attending to questions of power, the figure of the Jew does make some notable appearances. Indeed, a whole tradition of twentieth-century French philosophical and theological thinking takes "the Jew" as emblematic of notions of foreignness and non-belonging. This tradition includes both thinkers identified as Jewish—such as Emmanuel Lévinas, Jacques Derrida, and Hélène Cixous—and non-Jewish figures such as Jean-Paul Sartre, Maurice Blanchot, and Jean-François Lyotard. Lyotard's provocative notion of "the jews"—plural, lower-case, and in scare quotes—has proven especially controversial, with critics taking him to task for his allegorization of Jewishness and his seeming disregard of "real Jews" (Boyarin and Boyarin 1993; Cheyette 2003; Shapiro 1994; Silverman 1998). Yet, Lyotard's notion of "the jews" has been influential nonetheless as a mode of disidentifation with powerful, exclusionary national and ethnic identities (cf. Hammerschlag 2010). Even more prominent in recent theory has been the figure of the concentration camp inmate—a figure not always identified as Jewish and sometimes even termed a *Muselmann* or "Muslim," an appropriation of camp slang, to which we will return, that has become a prominent, if contested theoretical concept deployed by Giorgio Agamben (1999) and others (see the critical commentary of Anidjar 2003). In these strands of poststructural and post-Holocaust thought, Jewishness has circulated in proximity to questions of national belonging, racial identity, and genocidal violence—in other words, to key sites where power is negotiated and exercised—even when a direct association between Jews and these questions has not been asserted.

This essay seeks to bring together such dispersed reflections on Jewishness and power in order to foster a mutually beneficial exchange between Jewish cultural studies and contemporary critical theory. It argues that any approach to power in relation to contemporary Jewish cultures has to situate itself at the intersection of at least four major discursive and material axes: a first involving antisemitic fantasy; a second involving genocidal violence and biopower; a third involving contested notions of whiteness and assimilation; and a fourth involving diaspora, Zionism, and state power. These intertwined and sometimes overlapping axes offer the possibility to begin formulating a necessary new account of contemporary Jewish cultures as implicated in—that is, both enabled by and cross-cut with—relations of power.

Historically, Jewish cultures have stood—and, indeed, they continue to stand—at the uneasy intersection of seemingly distinct understandings of power that correspond to these four axes: between economic and political forces, ancient and modern techniques, privileged and marginalized positions, and statist and diasporic social organizations. Jewish cultures are thus an interesting topic for theorists of power for the same reason theories of power ought to be an essential topic for Jews: taking Jewishness into account requires a vision of the world open to ambivalence, complexity, contradiction, and moral gray zones. Jews need theory, in other words, to makes sense of the world they live in; and theorists who don't make sense of the "Jewish question" are missing something essential about power in the modern world: its refusal to resolve into a two-dimensional, either/or, black and white grid.

A preliminary step

Before turning to our four axes, however, a further preliminary step is necessary. In order even to embark on a discussion of Jewish culture and power, it is necessary to break with a key presumption present both in much scholarship and in the non-scholarly attitudes of many Jewish communities: the myth of Jewish powerlessness. As David Biale has shown, the notion that Jews have largely remained external to power is not just a matter of folk wisdom, but has also united political actors and thinkers of very different ideological tendencies. Biale notes, for instance, that although David Ben Gurion and Hannah Arendt "disagreed profoundly about political

Zionism," they nevertheless "retained a similar contempt for the presumed apolitical and passive character of Diaspora Jewish history" (Biale 1986: 5).[1]

Biale conceived his study of "power and powerlessness" in the immediate wake of Israel's 1982 invasion of Lebanon—that is, at a moment of the exercise of evident state power in the name of the Jewish people—but his argument ranges widely through Jewish history in order to illustrate the ongoing negotiation of politics that has defined Jewish existence in the diaspora and beyond. Conceiving power in this context as "the ability of a people to control its relations to other peoples as well as its own internal political, cultural, religious, economic, and social life," Biale finds a complex pattern that cannot be reduced to the simple presence or absence of power, but is rather "characterized by a wide spectrum of persistent and ongoing political activism" (Biale 1986: 7, 6). In drawing attention to the ongoing political life of a non-state-based community, Biale revises both folk and scholarly understandings of Jews' external relation to power and helps establish the conceptual terrain for the flourishing study of diaspora in the 1990s and 2000s.

Biale's account is the most thorough study of the question of power in Jewish history, but it also has implications for the present. In antiquity and the Middle Ages, Biale finds a gap between the perception and reality of "Jewish power" within Jewish communities that remains significant: "The dominant modes of thought in the First Temple period exaggerated Israelite power in order to compensate for a far more perilous reality, while rabbinic political theory … often went to the other extreme of underplaying political power in order to avoid a repetition of the failed rebellions" (Biale 1986: 27). Tracing the ebb and flow of Jewish political engagement and communal capability along with Jews' relation to that dynamic, Biale demonstrates that "power must be historicized: it means different things in different periods of history" (2008: 389). Such an insight helps us make sense of the contemporary period because it encourages us to look beyond the timeless vision of Jewish powerlessness and instead to identify the historically situated, intersecting axes of power that constitute the terrain of Jewish life—and Jewish theory.

Axis I: antisemitism: fantasies of power

By tracing shifting relations and perceptions of power, Biale's history provides an important authorizing template for our discussion. Yet, it doesn't absolve us from having to begin in a rather awkward place: with the acknowledgment of the long tradition of antisemitic fantasy that ascribes unusual power to Jews as a collective as well as to individual Jews. Neither the Jewish people's waxing and waning ability to "control its relations to other peoples as well as its own internal … life" (Biale 1986: 7), nor its own perception of that ability can explain the extent to which Judaeophobic "theorists" have hallucinated phantasmatic power as a possession of "the Jews." The extent, nature, and danger of antisemitism in the contemporary world is the subject of ongoing debate—debate sharpened by considerations such as the ongoing Israeli/Palestinian crisis, the post-9/11 "War on Terror," the collapse of the financial order, and Europe's vexed relation to immigration and religious difference. For our purposes, however, the question is less the empirical extent of antisemitism today than what its structure can tell us about conceptions of power. Considering the structure of antisemitism leads to an insight about the shifting economic and political sources of power; whether we link antisemitism primarily to economic power or to political power will in turn shape how we view the present and future of anti-Jewish sentiment.

In either case, the close link between antisemitism and fantasies of power is itself a potentially distinguishing feature of the particular form of prejudice directed against Jews and Judaism. The precise relation of antisemitism to other forms of racism is also a matter of debate, but it does not presuppose a definitive answer to assert, as political theorist Moishe Postone does, that

antisemitism involves features not often found in, for example, colonial racisms. Postone contrasts the "concrete—material or sexual—" power attributed to the racially denigrated with the "intangible, abstract and universal" power attributed by antisemites to the Jews' "international conspiracy" (Postone 2003: 133).

The conspiratorial, hidden, and intangible power attributed to Jews in modern antisemitism finds its most obvious expression in the great fraud of *The Protocols of the Elders of Zion*, first promulgated by the secret police in Imperial Russia at the beginning of the twentieth century and still available in many of the world's languages.[2] In their original context, the *Protocols* provided, in Stephen Eric Bronner's terms, "a mirror image of history: the powerless become all powerful and the all powerful become powerless" (Bronner 2003: 9). Allegedly written by a member of a secret council of Elders, the *Protocols* both draw on centuries of antisemitic stereotype and promulgate a modern form that remains influential: it conceives the power of the Jews as global, materialist, and devious. But if the motifs of the *Protocols* are familiar, how can we explain their *persistence* and the *belief* they have attracted despite the debunking of the text as a forgery? Or, put in other terms, how does their continued (if by no means uniform) ability to elicit assent help us to understand the workings of power?

Social theorists have offered divergent theories accounting for the irrational persistence of the specifically modern, antisemitic form of racism illustrated by the *Protocols*. I focus on two here that, taken together, offer productive insights into divergent ways of conceptualizing power as rooted either in politics or the economy. As part of his wide-ranging account of modernity, the sociologist Zygmunt Bauman has offered an original account of Judaeophobia as primarily political in nature. In his contribution to *Modernity, Culture, and "the Jew"*—which builds on previous books such as *Modernity and the Holocaust* (1989) and *Modernity and Ambivalence* (1991)—Bauman makes two fundamental proposals. He suggests, first, that antisemitism (along with philosemitism) should be understood as part of a more encompassing phenomenon, "allosemitism": "the practice of setting the Jews apart as people radically different from all others, needing separate concepts to describe and comprehend them and special treatment in all or most social intercourse" (Bauman 1998: 143). Second, Bauman specifies that the particular quality that makes Jews "radically different" itself varies from other forms of racism. Antisemitism involves "*proteophobia*, not *heterophobia*; the apprehension and vexation related not to something or someone disquieting through otherness and unfamiliarity, but to something or someone that does not fit the structure of the orderly world, does not fall easily into any of the established categories" (Bauman 1998: 144). The model of this "orderly world" is the nation-state. Emblems of non-belonging, Jews are then a figure of ambivalence that disturbs the *ordered* and *state-based* vision of modernity—a figure against which that vision defines itself.[3]

While Bauman appeals to the "nation-state order" of modernity to explain the mutation in anti-Judaism that led to genocidal antisemitism (Bauman 1998: 153), Moishe Postone assigns the leading role instead to the structure and historical dynamics of capitalism, that is, to economic forces. As we have already seen, for Postone, modern antisemitism is not so much defined by the equation of the Jew with ambivalence (what Bronner calls the "chameleon" character of the Jew in the antisemitic imagination [Bronner 2003: 8]) as it is by its belief in the "intangible, abstract, and universal" nature of the Jew (Postone 2003: 133). Postone argues that this anti-semitic coding of the Jew as abstraction draws on a fetishized or partial understanding of the structure of capitalism (Postone 2003: 134–35). Because the abstract processes of capitalism outstrip the capacities of individual subjects to grasp them, those who feel left behind by the development of the modern economy search for a personification of those forces: a concrete name that can be given to the abstract powers shaping the world. The name that antisemites find is "the Jew": " the abstract domination of capital, which—particularly with rapid

industrialization—caught people up in a web of dynamic forces they could not understand, became perceived as the domination of International Jewry" (Postone 2003: 134). The particular forms of paranoia and conspiracy that define texts such as the *Protocols* derive exactly from this tendency to seek not simply scapegoats, but *personified* forms of social relations. For Postone, then, modern antisemitism represents a misguided, fetishized critique of capitalism that seeks out a "material carrier" to embody the invisible powers of economic structures and processes.

The differences between Bauman's and Postone's accounts of the genesis of antisemitism are instructive and bear on contemporary theorizations of power. Bauman emphasizes in particular the relation of antisemitism to the *political* realm—the "nation-state order"—whereas Postone sees it in relation to the *economic* realm, the realm of the capitalist production of value. While both theorists offer accounts of the conditions of possibility of the Nazi genocide, this distinction between their theories should also help us to diagnose the present. Since, as Bauman himself points out, the modern political order of the nation-state has seen decline, he argues for a related decline of prejudice against that order's ambivalent other, the Jew (Bauman 1998: 154–55). For Postone, in contrast, the decline of the nation-state would not spell the end of anti-semitism, since the fundamental driving force lies not in a particular political order but in abstract processes of value production that have exceeded the nation-state for a long time. His theory would then lead to the expectation that antisemitism would persist beyond the hege-mony of the Westphalian state-system. Indeed, he makes just such an argument in a more recent essay on forms of resistance to globalization. Citing both Islamic terrorist networks like Al Qaeda and certain forms of Western anti-imperialism, Postone finds the same fetishized response to capitalism he had diagnosed earlier: "a concretistic understanding of abstract historical processes" (Postone 2006: 96). Once again Jews—and now also Israel (whose actual abuses Postone does not deny)—take on an expanded symbolic value as localized, "material carriers" of global processes.

Depending on how one assesses the current force of antisemitic sentiment, Bauman's or Postone's accounts may seem more convincing. It may also be that both approaches contain elements of truth, for critics have observed both a shift from antisemitism to anti-Muslim racism (or "Islamophobia"), especially in Europe, and persistent anti-Jewish sentiment in various parts of the world.[4] For present purposes, my point is simply to illustrate the potential theoretical (and political) stakes of linking Jews and antisemitism with differently conceived understandings of power as either primarily political or economic in nature: understandings that, taken together, allow us to chart the kinds of continuities and discontinuities in relation to Jews and power that Biale also notes in his historical account.

Axis II: genocide and biopower

Regardless of its sources, when the fantasy of Jewish power is embodied in a text such as *The Protocols of the Elders of Zion* or in a state ideology such as Nazism, it can come to have deadly consequences: alleged Jewish power provides an opportunity and excuse for the radical disempowerment and expropriation of Jews and even for their extermination. Many of the issues raised by the Nazi genocide of European Jews exceed the scope of this essay; yet, no discussion of power and contemporary Jewish cultures can avoid referencing the Holocaust. For, if the gen-ocide presents opportunities to explore Jewish resistance or moral complexity in what Primo Levi famously called the "grey zone" (Levi 1988), it also first and foremost forces us to confront the most extreme exercise of power and the most abject experience of powerlessness.

The Nazi racial order remains a perplexing touchstone for theories of power today because it combines forms of domination that seem to come from different historical moments; a

combination of the modern and the seemingly outmoded Jeffrey Herf famously described as "reactionary modernism" (Herf 1986). The persistence of genocide into the post-Holocaust world keeps National Socialism's challenges uncomfortably current. Faced with these challenges, contemporary philosophers such as Agamben and Roberto Esposito have drawn on Foucault's writings and lectures from the mid- to late-1970s on biopower in order to provide new insight both into genocide and the workings of power more generally. Such insight also leads to potential points of intersection between Jewish cultural studies and postcolonial studies because it allows the simultaneous decentering of dominant European traditions from without and within.

In *History of Sexuality* and *"Society Must Be Defended"*, Foucault is concerned with tracing a shift from a centralized understanding of power based on the *sovereignty* of the absolutist monarch to dispersed forms of power that target individuals (*discipline*) and entire populations (*biopower*) (Foucault 1980a; 2003). Unlike sovereign power, these new forms of power are dedicated to *enhancing* productivity and human life, yet, observed Foucault, biopower also brings with it darker possibilities: "If genocide is indeed the dream of modern powers, this is not because of a recent return of the ancient right to kill; it is because power is situated and exercised at the level of life, the species, the race, and the large-scale phenomenon of population" (Foucault 1980a, 137). Foucault supplements these reflections with a consideration of "State racism," which supplies an answer to the conundrum of how a form of power whose "basic function is to improve life" (i.e., biopower) can be also be capable of mass murder. The answer is *racism*, which introduces "a break into the domain of life that is under power's control: the break between what must live and what must die" (Foucault 2003: 254). Taken to its extreme in the Nazi "final solution," however, state racism seems not just the result of biopower but also of the persistence of a supposedly superseded sovereign power: "That is where this mechanism inscribed in the workings of the modern State leads. Of course, Nazism alone took the play between the sovereign right to kill and the mechanisms of biopower to this paroxysmal point. But this play is in fact inscribed in the workings of all States" (Foucault 2003: 260). What remains unclear in Foucault is how we are to think of the "return" of the sovereign power of death in the era of modern biopower. Unpacking this coincidence of seemingly anachronistic forms of power becomes the project of those thinkers who have come after Foucault.

Agamben has gone the farthest in drawing out the implications of Foucault's theory for thinking power in the wake of Nazism. In *Homo Sacer*, Agamben emphasizes the intersection— or "indistinction"—between the sovereign or "juridico-institutional" and the "biopolitical models of power" (Agamben 1998: 6). These two forms of power—seemingly "ancient" and "modern"—come together at the site of what Agamben calls *homo sacer* or "bare life," a figure from Roman law "who *may be killed and yet not sacrificed*." Going a step beyond Foucault, Agamben argues that it is not simply "the fact that life as such becomes a principal object of the projections and calculations of State power" that characterizes modern politics, but the fact that "the realm of bare life—which is originally situated at the margins of the political order—gradually begins to coincide with the political realm" (Agamben 1998: 8). Already in *Homo Sacer*, Agamben makes clear the centrality of Nazism to the understanding of this sweeping history of "Western" politics when he designates *the camp* as "the 'nomos' of the modern"—that is, as its law, order, or paradigm (Agamben 1998: 166–80). In *Remnants of Auschwitz* (1999), this assertion is worked out in greater detail and with even more direct relevance to Jewish cultural studies.

In *Remnants*, Agamben investigates bare life in relation to a figure familiar from Holocaust testimonies: the *Muselmann* (see Levi 1986). The term *Muselmann*, whose origins are disputed, refers to those camp inmates whose experience of suffering and starvation had pushed them

beyond all human limits until they became the "living dead" or "drowned," in Primo Levi's description (cited in Agamben 1999: 44; but see Anidjar 2003 for a genealogy). For Agamben, the *Muselmann* does not simply indicate the extremity of the Nazi camps and the Nazi dehumanization of the Jew and other "enemies." Rather, Agamben also understands this figure as paradigmatic of the overlap between sovereign and biopolitical power suggested but not fully explored by Foucault. Drawing on Foucault's account of state racism, Agamben sees the *Muselmann* emerge at the end of a series of "biopolitical caesuras" that divide the "*people* and *population*" according to racist criteria, thus "transforming an essentially political body into an essentially biological body, whose birth and death, health and illness, must then be regulated" (Agamben 1999: 84). Like Foucault's account of Nazism, Agamben's account of the *Muselmann* seems to waver between an understanding of the Holocaust as an extreme version of modern biopolitics and as a singular eruption within it—between the camp as a modern paradigm and as a site that "transcends" all paradigmatic categories.

Responding to Foucault (and, implicitly, Agamben), Roberto Esposito's consideration of Nazi "thanatopolitics" makes this point powerfully: in Foucault's account, "[i]t as if … the generality of the [biopolitical] framework prevails over the singularity of the Nazi event" (Esposito 2008: 111). In contrast, Esposito puts forward an analysis that foregrounds the "rupture" represented by Nazi ideologies and practices. Without denying the relation between Nazism and the biopolitical paradigms that have preceded and outlived it (Esposito 2008: 146), Esposito nevertheless wants to identify its specificity in a way that arguably eludes both Foucault and Agamben by asking why "[u]nlike all the other forms past and present … Nazism propel[led] the homicidal temptation of biopolitics to its most complete realization" (Esposito 2008: 116). Esposito locates this specificity in the importance of a medical paradigm involving disease, infection, and immunization. He notes that, although "the characterization of the Jews as parasites is part of the secular history of anti-Semitism," in Nazi ideology "the Jews didn't *resemble* parasites: they didn't behave *as* bacteria—they *were* bacteria who were to be treated as such. In this sense, Nazi politics wasn't even a proper biopolitics, but more literally a *zoopolitics*, one expressly directed to human animals" (Esposito 2008: 116–17). Esposito's attention to the literalizing "zoopolitics" at the heart of Nazi anti-Jewish ideology and politics is an important complement to Foucault's and Agamben's approach to sovereignty and biopower because it represents an attempt to locate the specificity of that genocidal history within a larger history of power.

Despite presenting a powerful argument for the specificity of the extermination of the Jews, however, Esposito's focus on "human animals" also evokes other racial regimes such as those that developed out of imperialism and slavery, where a kind of "zoopolitics" has also been at work. We might, for instance, recall the linkage of imperialism and totalitarianism in Hannah Arendt's *The Origins of Totalitarianism*. For Arendt, European colonialists' "shocking experiences" in Africa of beings who "behaved like a part of nature" (i.e., like animals) ends up, in an indirect process she calls a "boomerang effect," returning to Europe in the form of Nazi genocide (Arendt 1973: 183, 192, 206). In Arendt's account, which often seems deliberately to inhabit the standpoint of the European perpetrators, these "savages" "were, as it were, 'natural' human beings who lacked the specifically human character, the specifically human reality, so that when European men massacred them they somehow were not aware that they had committed murder" (Arendt 1973: 185, 192). Foreshadowing Foucault's concept of biopower, Agamben's account of bare life, and Esposito's insights into zoopolitics, Arendt theorizes the dangers of "the abstract nakedness of being human" (Arendt 1973: 99). While Arendt's account certainly risks reproducing the racism it attempts to explain—and, I have argued, actually does reproduce that racism—the link she uncovers between colonial and Nazi "zoopolitics" finds

confirmation in more forthrightly anticolonial and antiracist critiques such as Aimé Césaire's *Discourse on Colonialism* (Césaire 2000).[5]

An account of modern power as simultaneously biopolitical and yet still sovereign thus provides a vocabulary that has both fostered new approaches to understanding Nazism and the Holocaust and allowed a redescription of earlier approaches to the intersection of violence inside and outside Europe that can bring Jewish/Holocaust studies into dialogue with postcolonial theory. Such a dialogue—still in its infancy—should attempt to develop an understanding of power in relation to race, colonialism, and the state that respects both the singularity of extreme acts of genocidal violence and the relationality that links historically and geographically dispersed regimes of racialized power. This differentiated account would also need to take into account our final two axes, both of which are inflected by the memory of the Holocaust and the radical forms of power and powerlessness unveiled in the genocide: the racial transformations of the postwar world and the ongoing conflict over the importance of diaspora and Zionism in Jewish life.

Axis III: post–Holocaust shifts: on the whiteness of Jews

The Holocaust constitutes a limit-case that allows us to see the murderous consequences of an antisemitic conspiratorial logic as well as the "paroxysms" of power in an age where biopower and sovereignty combine to make extermination a conceivable state policy. Yet, its extremity also shocked the conscience of much of the world and thus came to mark an important turning point. Since the Holocaust, fantasies of Jewish power are no longer *Salonfähig*, no longer openly expressible in "polite" society—at least in Western Europe and North America—even if continuities also persist in antisemitic thinking as do traumatic aftereffects for Jews around the world. In the postwar period, two new axes essential to the theorization of power in Jewish cultural studies emerge that cut in a very different direction from those that have preoccupied us so far: the "empowerment" of the diaspora and the establishment of the State of Israel. While a strong diaspora has generally contributed to the consolidation of Israeli power, the coexistence of state-based and non-state-based Jewish communities has also produced important tensions in theory and practice.

Especially in the United States, the capital of the Jewish diaspora, Jews underwent a significant integration into the mainstream in the post-Holocaust years: they became ethnically "white," as many scholars (and writers) have demonstrated, and succeeded in unprecedented ways economically, culturally, and politically in profiting from the postwar boom (see Rogin 1996; Brodkin 1998; Goldstein 2006). In a relatively short period of time, Jews in North America went from being an abject, racially marked immigrant group to being "white folks," in Karen Brodkin's phrase, with all the privileges that such a subject position brings with it in a society still divided dramatically by race. Meanwhile, in Western Europe, a persistent, if now markedly smaller Jewish population ultimately came to occupy a significantly different symbolic position than in the pre-Holocaust moment—rather than remaining the "Other" of the ethnically pure nation-state, some scholars have suggested that Jews have come to represent the cosmopolitan ideal of a transnationalizing European Union (Bunzl 2007). The ubiquity in modernity of phenomena such as urbanization, mobility, and intellectual labor have even led historian Yuri Slezkine to speak of the modern age as "the Jewish century," a thought-provoking redescription of an era often known for anti-Jewish excess and Jewish victimization—not just in Nazi Germany, but also in the Soviet Union, which constitutes one of Slezkine's prime examples of Jewish success (Slezkine 2004).

The postwar "whitening" of Jews and their movement toward the center of Euro-American culture has naturally led to tensions, since this was also the era of struggles for civil rights and

decolonization. In the United States, many Jews supported or even participated actively in the African American freedom struggle, yet this did not eliminate conflicts over whether Jews could maintain "minority" status even as they were accepted as white by a mainstream, Christian-dominated society. In *The Price of Whiteness*, historian Eric Goldstein notes a persistent contradiction, for instance, between Jewish desires for "integration" and "distinctiveness" (Goldstein 2006). Although primarily empirical, work such as Goldstein's contributes to the recent wave of theorizations of whiteness. While much work on whiteness and Jews concerns "how Jews *became* white," Goldstein emphasizes "how Jews *negotiated* their place in a complex racial world where Jewishness, whiteness, and blackness have all made significant claims on them" (Goldstein 2006: 5). The shift from *becoming* to *negotiation* has implications for theories of power. Goldstein does not deny "the power this vision of American society [as divided between white and black] has had in shaping people's lives," and he knows that "[f]irst and foremost, African Americans have had to suffer the social consequences of an ideology that positions them as the essential 'others' of an idealized white America" (Goldstein 2006: 4). But he also seeks to complicate the picture emerging from whiteness studies of "the unmitigated benefits [white] identity confers on the holder: power, social status, and financial rewards" (Goldstein 2006: 5). He finds that "there was also a good deal of coercion involved in the process by which Jews became part of the white majority, a process that entailed significant losses as well as gains" (Goldstein 2006: 5). Alongside the "material and social benefits," Goldstein wants to tally the "emotional costs" (Goldstein 2006: 6).

The vexed relation between the material and the psychic also plays out in theory emerging from the context of decolonization. Most famously, ironic passages from Frantz Fanon's now classic study *Black Skin, White Masks* (1952) bring such tensions to the fore.[6] Written just a few years after the defeat of Nazism and the liberation of the camps, Fanon's text proves ambivalent on the question of how to relate black and Jewish experiences of racism. While Fanon sometimes points to what Jews and blacks share, he also often "assimilates" Jews to "the white man." On the one hand, Fanon links blacks and Jews as "brother[s] in misery" (Fanon 1967: 122) because of parallels between European racism and antisemitism. On the other hand, because of the primacy he grants to the "racial epidermal schema" (Fanon 1967: 112) in the constitution of the colonial subject, he ultimately separates the experience of blacks from that of Jews by virtue of the Jews' allegedly greater ability to pass as white. Although Fanon adds a crucial comparative dimension to discussions of racialization, he ignores the contradictions and legacies of anti-semitism that make it a very peculiar kind of family affair. On the one hand, seen from the present, Fanon's distinction between the central role that the visual plays in anti-black racism and the centrality of ideas and ideology in antisemitism seems like commonsense. But, on the other hand, this commonsense account amounts to a surprisingly unhistorical theory of Jewish visibility; it ignores the relative consistency of the image of the Jew over time, the frequent association of Jews with various "anomalous" physical traits, including blackness (as demonstrated, for example, in the work of Sander Gilman [1991]), and—at the time Fanon was writing—the still recent production and mobilization of a visible, highly biologized, and even sexualized Jewish difference in the context of a genocidal project. In addition, whether employed in the early 1950s by Fanon or today in the works of some postcolonial critics, this simplified binary between blacks and white Jews risks homogenizing Europe and casting blacks definitively outside European space.

Despite the somewhat ahistorical nature of Fanon's account and acknowledging Goldstein's desire to add nuance and "negotiation" to the discussion of the whiteness of Jews, it remains the case that postwar developments have radically reshuffled the question of power for Jewish cultural studies. For instance, in addition to forcing scholarship to take into account Jews' relations

with other, more (or at least differently) oppressed minorities, the unprecedented security and well-being attained by most Jews so soon after the Shoah has also cast light on intra-Jewish differences. Contemporary theoretical approaches to power thus encourage attention to other axes, such as power relations *among* Jews and *within* Jewish communities. Such an approach addresses Euro-American societies, but is particularly relevant in Israel, where tensions persist between Ashkenazi and Sephardic/Mizrahi Jews. Some social movements and US-based critical theorists, such as Ella Shohat and Gil Anidjar, speak from avowed "Arab Jewish" positions and, drawing on postcolonial studies, denounce "Zionism from the standpoint of its Jewish victims" (to cite the title of a well-known essay by Shohat) in addition to providing powerful critiques of Zionism as such.[7]

Axis IV: confronting state power: from diaspora to Zionism and back

Besides processes of post-Holocaust material and symbolic "empowerment" of Jews in the diaspora, another unavoidable factor marks the contemporary moment, as the writings of Shohat and others already suggest: the realization of the Zionist "dream" in the founding of the State of Israel. Tracking the ways radical critics have recently theorized both Zionism and its "other"—the diaspora—provides a final, politically urgent axis through which to explore Jews' historical and contemporary location between power and powerlessness.

If, throughout Jewish history, the lack of a nation-state rendered Jews vulnerable to exclusion and even genocide, Israel was meant to provide a haven for the formerly powerless and a locus of Jewish political power. Indeed, Israel has developed into a formidable power; it is the sole possessor of nuclear weapons in the region and maintains one of the most powerful armies in the world. It also claims hegemony over world Jewish opinion and often presents itself as the representative and spokesperson for Jews worldwide. Furthermore, in the post–Cold War moment, the globe's only remaining superpower underwrites Israel's powerful position by providing it with billions of dollars of aid and a political and ideological shield against its enemies. In the words of psychoanalytic theorist Jacqueline Rose, "Zionism is one of the most potent collective movements of the twentieth century" (Rose 2005: 14). That "potency needs urgently to be understood," for Zionism has had "the capacity to foster identifications that are as immutable as, indeed, the ineffable Name" (Rose 2005: 15). As Rose's divine simile suggests, part of her clarification of Zionism's power involves what she sees as its unleashing of Messianic energies.

While there is undoubtedly a case to be made for understanding at least certain strands of Zionism as forms of religious nationalism—and therefore a discussion to be had about Zionism's relation to post-secular tendencies in contemporary theory and society—most theoretical approaches to Israel are more concerned with the particular forms of worldly power it exercises (see Ophir et al. 2009). The reality of Israeli power has led to a new dialectic, since its exercise has entailed the radical disempowerment and ongoing colonization of another people, the Palestinians—a phenomenon in recent Jewish history as novel as the state itself. Especially after more than forty years of occupation of the West Bank—and continued control over a blockaded Gaza—Jews, as embodied in a state declared Jewish, can seem to the uncharitable to possess something like the power antisemites have always ascribed to them. Of course, Israel does not embody Jewishness; nor is its power as invulnerable as fantasy might hold or its practices as unique as the extent of criticism it attracts might imply. Yet, for understandable reasons, much of the world looks on at the continued oppression of the Palestinians as one of the signature injustices of the contemporary world and nobody seriously concerned with the ethics of Jewish culture today can avoid facing the fact of Israeli power and the fact that that power is exercised, according to its own logic, in the name of Jews everywhere.

Beyond Israel, and especially in the UK and US, differences between unconditional supporters of the Jewish state and critics and critical supporters constitute a clear site of power. Although the situation is dynamic and criticism of Israeli policy among Jews has become more mainstream and politically influential with the emergence of organizations such as J-Street in the US, the preponderance of material resources and the power of public opinion in diasporic Jewish communities remain with uncompromising supporters of Israel. The "Israel lobby" and the "Holocaust industry" may not be the monolithic and all-powerful entities decried by critics such as Mearsheimer and Wald (2007) and Finkelstein (2000), respectively, but without doubt supporters of Israel (both Jewish and non-Jewish) work from positions of relative power with respect to its critics and, together with the state itself, sometimes draw on the moral capital and absolutist historical vision of the Holocaust as means of justification for policies otherwise unjustifiable.[8]

In the face of these new realities, some theorists not previously associated with Jewishness or forms of Jewish critique have begun not only to speak out about Israeli power, but also to seek within the Jewish intellectual tradition for critical tools to evaluate it. Rose, for instance, draws on Martin Buber's version of Zionism, which is "devoted to the life of the spirit" and not necessarily to the creation of a Jewish state (Rose 2005: 74). For Rose, Buber articulates a critique of Zionism as normalization that suggests a psychoanalytic perspective. She contrasts his binationalist perspective with the political Zionism of Herzl and Weizmann: "For Buber … the nation becomes normal … at the cost of perverting itself" (Rose 2005: 76). To underscore the problem with normalization, Rose turns to Hannah Arendt, who argued in 1944 that "there was no place on earth where a people could live like the organic national body that [Herzl] had in mind." Indeed, Arendt continued, "the real historical development of a nation does not take place inside the closed walls of a biological entity" (qtd. in Rose: 2005: 81–82). If the fetishization of becoming normal leads to the mythic "closed walls of a biological entity"—a biopolitical view, if ever there was one!—Rose's critique of Zionism leads her to want to open up the "organic national body" and develop what Edward Said, in an important essay, called "bases for coexistence" with Palestinians built on shared acknowledgment of suffering (Said 2000: 205–9; cf. Rose 2005: 115). Such acknowledgment would counter the deadly historical and psychic trajectory Rose traces from Zionists' shame at the abject experience of powerlessness in the Holocaust—the experience of being reduced to "bare life"—to an embrace of the power of the state without reserve: "Shame swept under the carpet, this history suggest, breeds violence like nothing else" (Rose 2005: 144). In Rose's psychoanalytically inflected perspective, "the dilemma of what to do with the internal debris of [one's] own past" is *the* post-Holocaust, post–State of Israel challenge for Jewish ethics.

Like Rose, Judith Butler—another distinguished feminist/gender theorist who has recently turned her attention to the Israeli/Palestinian crisis—seeks to draw on a counter-tradition of Jewish thinkers for alternatives to the organicist vision of state power embodied in political Zionism. In an essay that seeks to disentangle Jewishness, Judaism, and Zionism, Butler argues for a radical form of coexistence or "cohabitation," as she calls it. Such a radicalization of cohabitation as beyond individual or collective volition allows Butler to undo the forms of belonging Rose associates with the "normal" understanding of Zionism: "It may be that the sense of belonging to that group [defined by Jewishness] entails taking up a relation to the non-Jew and that this mode of approaching the problem of alterity is fundamental to what it is to 'belong' to Jewishness itself. In other words, to belong is to undergo a dispossession from the category, as paradoxical as that might seem" (Butler 2011: 86). By theorizing belonging as cohabitation and dispossession, Butler means to challenge the premises of the nation-state order that underlies political Zionism.

While Rose would no doubt subscribe to Butler's notion of belonging as dispossession, the two theorists also have slightly but significantly different projects. For Rose, the point is to think Zionism beyond simplistic binaries of for/against (Rose 2005: 14). For Butler, on the other hand, the point is to forge a position *outside* Zionism (Butler 2011: 76). Even as she often draws on the same thinkers as Rose, Butler situates the resources for a radical project of cohabitation beyond any Zionist logic and, instead, in traditions of diasporic thinking. Here, again like Rose, she draws on Said: "it is on the basis of [Jews' and Palestinians'] overlapping senses of … displacement and heterogeneous cohabitation that Said proposes diaspora as a historical resource and guiding principle for a rethinking what a just polity might be for those lands" (Butler 2011: 77).

In embracing diaspora as a response to the conundrums of Jewish power in Israel, Butler follows a highly developed line in recent critical theory. Most obviously associated in Jewish contexts with the work of Jonathan Boyarin and Daniel Boyarin, diasporist thinking is one of the sources of connection between Jews and other postcolonial or migrant subjects (see Gilroy 1993; Rothberg 2009), but also a potential source of tension between them. At a moment when cultural studies was moving in a decidedly transnational direction, the Boyarins published their influential essay "Diaspora: Generation and the Ground of Jewish Identity" (1993). "Diaspora" provides a critique of the allegorization of Jews and Jewishness in contemporary theory, defends a notion of Jewish collective identity grounded in notions of memory and kinship, and offers an alternative, non-Zionist model for thinking about Jewishness. Put in other terms, the Boyarins' diasporist vision situates Jewishness in a dynamic region between the poles of powerlessness and power. On the one hand, they defend a notion of Jewish collective identity against Walter Benn Michaels's reduction of all identities to forms of racism: Jewish collectivity in the diaspora develops, rather, in response to Christian power and provides resources for a critique of domination (Boyarin and Boyarin 1993: 705–6). On the other hand, they argue, the Zionist articulation of Jewish collectivity rewrites Jewish history from a position of hegemony: by "[c]apturing Judaism in a state," it "transforms the meanings of its social practices" and thus represents a "subversion of Jewish culture and not its culmination" (Boyarin and Boyarin 1993: 713, 712). In order to free Jewishness from entanglement with state power, the Boyarins call for the disarticulation of "race and space," which "together form a deadly discourse"—an argument reminiscent of Foucault and Agamben on racism and biopower. In addition, they suggest, anticipating Butler, "that [only] an Israel that reimports diasporic consciousness" can create "a consciousness of a Jewish collective as one sharing space with others, devoid of exclusivist and dominating power" (Boyarin and Boyarin 1993: 714, 713).

For the Boyarins, then, diaspora seems at first to be the negation of power and the embrace of powerlessness; as they conclude their 1993 essay, diaspora means the "renunciation of sovereignty" along with "a fierce tenacity in holding onto cultural identity" (Boyarin and Boyarin 1993: 723). Yet, they later argue in a 2002 book, diaspora does not stand outside of power, but represents a particular configuration of power. First, they assign a positive, *constitutive power* to diasporic formations: diaspora constitutes a "*resource* in the necessary rethinking of models of polity in the current erosion and questioning of the modern nation-state system and ideal" (Boyarin and Boyarin 2002: 5). Second, they recognize that diaspora also, negatively, *encodes power relations*: "Evaluating diaspora entails acknowledging the ways that … identity is maintained through exclusion and oppression of internal others (especially women) and external others" (Boyarin and Boyarin 2002: 7). Diaspora can even become a source of violence: "The ragged edges between diasporas sometimes spark violence rather than, or in addition to, coalition politics, as in the case of tensions between Lubavitch Hasidic Jews and members of the African diaspora in Crown Heights, Brooklyn. The powers of diaspora are not necessarily benign,

whether directed outward or inward" (Boyarin and Boyarin 2002: 8). We might also add, following Benedict Anderson, that diasporas are not even necessarily opposed to nation-states, and many diasporic groups (including especially contemporary Jewish communities!) practice "long-distance nationalism" (Anderson 1994).

Despite their clear-eyed assessment of the potential limits of diaspora, the Boyarins nevertheless make a strong case for its powers—and especially for what can be learned by other diasporic peoples from the Jewish diaspora. As they argue, "Jewish culture has elaborated a range of absolutely indispensable technologies of cultural transformation" (Boyarin and Boyarin 2002: 11). These "powers of diaspora" include practices of remembrance, communal textual inter-pretation, and openness to continued movement or "rediasporization"—technologies that over millennia have assured "survival and presence through absence and loss" (Boyarin and Boyarin 2002: 11–12).

Conclusion: cohabiting with contradiction

The nuanced account of diaspora in the Boyarins' book—and the engagement with conflicts and alternative traditions within Judaism and Jewishness found in their work as well as that of Rose, Butler, and numerous other critics working in the field of the (now, not so) new Jewish cultural studies—suggests the possibility and desirability of a multi-layered account of power in relation to contemporary Jewish cultures. What unites the critique of Zionism shared by Rose, Butler, and the Boyarins—despite significant disciplinary and, no doubt, political differences—is the rejection of an "external" account of power. All of these critics understand power as something *internal* that simultaneously produces and divides both individual and collective subjects. Despite a long history as a persecuted minority, a recent and still-searing collective memory of genocide, and the ever-present ugliness of antisemitism, Jews and Jewish communities are not conceivable "outside" power; nor are they simply its victims.

The ability to articulate an understanding of Jewish cultures as, instead, enabled by and implicated in power has advantages both for Jewish self-reflection and for critical theory more generally. The ambivalence of Jewish history—and the dramatic shifts in relation to power and powerlessness that has characterized it—forbids *moralizing* and *homogenizing* approaches. Minority status, this history teaches us, cannot be equated with powerlessness and thus with a morally "clean" slate. Conversely, the twentieth-century experience of Jews suggests possession of cer-tain attributes of power (say, economic wealth or white skin) does not necessarily situate a community in an unconditionally secure position either. Conceptions of power, like conceptions of Jewish communities, must be sensitive to discontinuity, dispersion, and historical change. They must be open to ironic outcomes and shifts of fortune; they must be ready to cohabit with contradiction.

Notes

1 For a defense of Jewish claims to power from a conservative position, see Wisse (2007). For a critical response, see Biale (2008).

2 For a history of the emergence of the *Protocols* in relation to other antisemitic tracts, see Norman Cohn's classic study *Warrant for Genocide* (Cohn 1996). For a recent analysis of the genesis and effects of the *Protocols*—written from an explicitly progressive political perspective—see Bronner 2003. Bronner also includes excerpts from the *Protocols* that I will cite here.

3 A productive connection can be made between Bauman's theory of Jewishness and ambivalence and Homi Bhabha's account of colonial mimicry: "In the ambivalent world of the 'not quite/not white,' on the margins of metropolitan desire, the *founding objects* of the Western world become the erratic,

eccentric, accidental *objets trouvés* of the colonial discourse" (Bhabha 1994: 92). In Bauman and Bhabha the Jewish/colonized subject both confirms and destabilizes the dominant order, but Bauman's analysis emphasizes especially the side of order while Bhabha's tends toward subversion. See also Bhabha (1998), where—in addition to mentioning analogous histories of trauma—he stresses jokes as a link between Jews and certain colonized subjects.

4 See Bunzl (2007) for an account of shifting relations between antisemitism and Islamophobia in contemporary Europe. Bunzl finds that anti-Muslim prejudice has replaced antisemitism as the driving force of the new Europe, but he also attests to the presence of new forms of antisemitism. The volume contains responses from a variety of positions to Bunzl's analysis.

5 See Rothberg (2009: chapters 2 and 3).

6 On Fanon and the Jews, see Cheyette (2005). This discussion of Fanon is adapted from Rothberg (2009: chapter 3).

7 See Shohat (1988); her title makes reference to Said (1979). On the question of Sephardim, Arab Jews, and Jews of color, see also Shohat (2006); Anidjar (2003, 2007); Alcalay (1992); and Kaye/Kantrowitz (2007).

8 To get a sense of the limited range of opinion on Israel, at least in the United States, consider the firestorm of controversy that erupted after the publication of the late Tony Judt's "Israel: The Alternative" (Judt 2003).

Essential reading

Biale, David (1986) *Power and Powerlessness in Jewish History*, New York: Schocken Books. A revisionary historical account arguing against the widely held conviction that Jews were a powerless and non-political people between the destruction of the Second Temple and the founding of the State of Israel.

Boyarin, Jonathan and Daniel Boyarin (2002) *Powers of Diaspora*, Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press. A programmatic essay on diaspora as a political resource followed by two case studies concerning rabbinic culture and contemporary ethnography by the founders of the new Jewish cultural studies.

Kaye/Kantrowitz, Melanie (1992) *The Issue is Power: Essays on Women, Jews, Violence, and Resistance*, San Francisco: Aunt Lute.

——(2007) *The Colors of Jews: Racial Politics and Radical Diasporism*, Bloomington: Indiana University Press. Two volumes of collected essays by a feminist and social justice activist on a wide range of contemporary political topics.

Ophir, Adi, Michal Givoni, and Sari Hanafi (2009) *The Power of Inclusive Exclusion: Anatomy of Israeli Rule in the Occupied Palestinian Territories*, New York: Zone. A collection of essays by Israeli and Palestinian scholars analyzing the configurations of power in the occupation of Palestinian lands.

Slezkine, Yuri (2004) *The Jewish Century*, Princeton: Princeton University Press. A provocative and engaging history of the twentieth century that places Jews at the center of modern cultural dynamics.

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10

TEXTUALITY

Devorah Baum

In the beginning is hermeneutics.

Jacques Derrida[1]

[E]verything begins with survival.

Jacques Derrida[2]

In a well-known Talmudic story known as the "Oven of Akhnai"[3] Rabbi Eliezer debates whether a certain oven should be considered ritually clean. Proposing every conceivable argument in support of his claim, Eliezer goes so far as to summon the powers of nature (rivers and carob trees) to bend in his favor. When these natural forces fail to convince his disputants, however, he enjoins a Heavenly Voice to speak up on his behalf, which it promptly does, provoking Rabbi Joshua to retort that "it is not in heaven," where "it" refers to the law. As Rabbi Jeremiah explains, ever since the Torah was given to man on Mount Sinai, authority over its meaning has migrated from heaven to earth, whence, notwithstanding Eliezer's ability to marshal both natural and supernatural evidence, the principle remains that "after the majority one must incline." The story concludes with a postscript in which God, upon hearing the outcome of the rabbis' argument, laughs and declares, "My sons have defeated me! My sons have defeated me!"

However arcane the debate, the Oven of Akhnai reveals an uncannily familiar depiction of ancient rabbis showing greater enthusiasm for questions of textual interpretation than for theological questions regarding the true will or intention of God. Resembling many modern representations of Jews and Judaism, the story may even be a source of this stereotype, for in the Oven of Akhnai the rabbinic tradition can be seen self-consciously representing itself, announcing with its pointedly happy ending (God's laughter and approval) that a much larger argument has been won than the specific issue at hand. The Oven of Akhnai in fact renders visible the efforts of the rabbis to shore up their own authority and establish what has since been taken for granted, but which was by no means always assured: the centrality of the text in the life of the community.

The "people" became a "people of the Book" when rabbinic Judaism succeeded its biblical predecessor. As Moshe Halbertal explains, this was a development that depended on the hierarchical rise of the rabbi-scholar whose "leading role […] constituted a revolutionary, post-biblical conception of religious authority" (Halbertal 1997: 6). Emmanuel Levinas's observation, for example, that "Judaism is indeed the Old Testament, but read through the Talmud," recalls

the complex interplay between two equally important canons: the "written law" (or Hebrew Bible) and the "oral law" (or Talmud) (Levinas 1989: 197). The product of a long and traumatic history, the massive sprawling intertext of the multi-volumed Talmud[4] has often been regarded as the principal source not only of Jewish tradition but of Jewish survival.

Scholars looking to make sense of this history have usually returned to the destruction of the first temple in Jerusalem and the exile to Babylon in the fifth century BCE as the point when Judaism (which had centered around the temple sacrifices) first found itself existentially threatened. It is Ezra "the scribe" who, on his return from Babylon, is generally credited with reconstituting the cult by establishing the written law as the new basis for communal life. His use of the word "*drash*" ("search") for the act of reading also laid the foundations for what was later to become *midrash*, the rabbinic method of exegesis.[5] "Searching" the Torah as a way of proving its relevance to new generations had been necessitated by the canonization of the Hebrew Bible (possibly as early as 150 BCE), after which time all new information had to be gained by interpreting those books already enclosed within the canon. The closing of the written law thus led to a further opening up of the oral law.

The oral law was itself redacted[6] following another crisis, the destruction of the second temple and resultant exile in the first century CE. Uniquely, since the transformation of the oral tradition[7] into writing entailed a risk to its vitality, the Talmud has usually been studied in an highly interactive social milieu, as Barry Holtz describes: "students sit in pairs or threesomes, reading and discussing out loud, back and forth […] it is as much talk as it is reading; in fact, the two activities of reading and discussion are virtually indistinguishable" (Holtz 1992: 11). No brow-bent *penseur* sitting in solitude, the student of the Talmud learns alongside a *havruta* (from the Aramaic word for fellowship), whose presence turns textual study into a source not only of research, but of togetherness at a time when the unity afforded to people gathered in one place had given way to a life of dispersion.

This hidden history may be glimpsed between the lines of the Oven of Akhnai. As a debate over where meaning comes from, the story gestures in the direction of the power struggles that eventually led the scholars to usurp the rival authority of priests,[8] philosophers, and prophets. The rabbis' rejection of evidence drawn from the natural world (philosophy) and the supernatural world (prophesy) reinforced the absolute authority of the text. Moreover, by presenting an alternative source of meaning to the knowledge to be gained from both heaven and earth, the rabbis appear to have located the text within a third space: the space of exile. Contemporary critics have often been drawn to rabbinic exegesis for precisely these reasons. George Steiner, for example, has looked to midrash as an antidote to nationalist discourses and praised the diaspora as a situation wherein the text is "home" and each commentary a "return,"

> Hermeneutic unendingness and survival in exile are, I believe, kindred. The text of the Torah, of the biblical canon, and the concentric spheres of texts about these texts, replace the destroyed Temple.
>
> (Steiner 1989: 40)

As a strategy for survival, the text-centered community sought to preserve traditional wisdom whilst adapting to the fraught and challenging demands of ever-new situations. Indeed, while conservative values underpin a culture whose quest to maintain itself has entailed the energetic dedication of all of its efforts, no matter how heterogeneous, towards the interpretation of an insuperable and closed canon, rabbinic exegesis also reveals surprisingly liberal tendencies as the constant need to respond to current events demands ingenuity and creativity on the part of the interpreter. There is, remarks Halbertal, "an interesting asymmetrical relation between

canonization and hermeneutical openness. The more canonized the text, the broader interpretative possibilities it offers" (Halbertal 1997: 44). Narrowness, thus conceived, becomes a spur to invention.

Significantly, both the orthodoxy of text-centeredness and the correspondingly open and diverse culture of interpretation that Halbertal describes reflect the nature of (the) text itself. Modern representations of Hebrew poetics have often been disparaging. Hegel's philosophical reprisal of supersession theology, for example, takes on secularized and linguistic form when describing the language of the Old Testament as "primitive" and contrasting this with the Greek language, which Hegel considered "a more appropriate language" for scripture or philosophy insofar as the spiritualized *logos* eschews the literalism of a Hebrew text whose dead letters remain insensible to truth and beauty (quoted in Derrida 1990: 75).

In literary theory, on the other hand, attitudes towards Hebrew poetics have largely been shaped by Matthew Arnold's identification of Hebraism and Hellenism as the twin poles of Western civilization: "At one time it feels more powerfully the attraction of one of them, another time of the other; and it ought to be, though it never is, evenly and happily balanced between them." Arnold distinguished between the two poles as follows: "The governing idea of Hellenism is *spontaneity of consciousness*; that of Hebraism, *strictness of conscience*" (Arnold 1965: 164–65). Yet Arnold's characterization has not always been corroborated by later critics. Geoffrey Hartman and Sanford Budick, for instance, have recently regretted that Arnold's reading of the Hebrew Bible out of context (T. S. Eliot's objection to the modern critic's proposal to treat scripture "as literature"[9]) overlooks Hebraism's "extensive and deep spontaneity" in the "presiding genius of midrash" (Hartman and Budick 1986: ix–x). It is all the more remarkable, therefore, that in Erich Auerbach's critical masterpiece, *Mimesis* (1953), which compares a section from Homer's *Odyssey* to the story of the binding of Isaac in Genesis, he locates traces of this midrashic genius in the original text itself. In Homer, writes Auerbach, "never is there a form left fragmentary or half-illuminated, never a lacuna, never a gap," the "Homeric poems conceal nothing, they contain no teaching and no secret second meaning." In Genesis, however, whose sparing detail, lacunae, and economy of style evokes the Bible's own prohibition on images, significance is enriched because "[e]verything remains unexpressed." The biblical stories seek "to subject us, and if we refuse to be subjected we are rebels." While Homer can be "analysed," writes Auerbach, "he cannot be interpreted" (Auerbach 1953: 13). By inviting interpretation, the Hebrew text enables "strictness of conscience" and "spontaneity of consciousness" to coexist within its black letters and white spaces respectively.[10] Eliot, then, need not have worried about the fate of scripture when read "as literature," for Auerbach's reading confirms, on literary grounds alone, that the Bible demands to be read, precisely, *as* scripture – a way of reading or being subject to the text that participates in the continuous unfolding of its meaning.

From such insights one can also infer how a closed canon like the Hebrew Bible has been capable of carrying so many stories, and so much history, between its lines and within its margins. In tales such as the Oven of Akhnai, as well as various midrashic depictions of God studying the rabbis' interpretations in order to learn the meaning of His own words, the Hebrew text takes on the divinity formerly ascribed to its creator: infinitude, autonomy, aniconicity, ultimate unknowability, etc. The rabbis of late antiquity might be said, in this sense, to have had strikingly similar insights into the nature of text as the post-structuralist thinkers of our own day. There are notable parallels, for instance, between the Oven of Akhnai and modern theorizations of the "death of the author." After all, if even God is unable to assume mastery over (His) text, the rabbis who sought to establish their own authority by making text study an absolute religious requirement, had also to recognize the text as inherently subversive of all authorized meanings. Realizing that the very source of their authority also posed a threat to it, the rabbis

thus extolled the text as sacred on the one hand whilst ring-fencing it with prohibitions on the other.[11]

To understand contemporary Jewish approaches to textuality it has therefore been important to consider the traditional reception of the "Book," both as a religious framework and as a source of identification (home and belonging) for people who have been increasingly dispersed and constantly on the move for the majority of their history. This history was to change dramatically in the eighteenth century, however, when the text-centered community began to break up and lose its "centre," as Jews in the West, following Emancipation, were able to participate in the political, social, and cultural spheres. Western modernity and the modern project of secularization are today virtually unthinkable without reference to, e.g., Karl Marx, Sigmund Freud, and Franz Kafka, whose "universal geniuses" proclaimed the end of ancient tribalisms. However, the critical and cultural discourses with which these "geniuses" have been associated – Marxism, psychoanalysis, modernism, etc. – have been continuously taunted, or even haunted, by a certain insoluble "Jewish question." The "Jewish question" was a question of Jewish identity *after* Emancipation: What is the nature of Jewishness beyond the ghetto walls? Why do Jews who identify with the universal values of secular enlightenment still remain Jews? If Jewishness is no longer a religious identity then what else might it be?

While the Jewish question would prove increasingly dangerous, and even fatal, for those of whom it was asked, it was also a question that many Jews asked of and about themselves. In his *Letter to his Father*, for example, Kafka complained bitterly of his Jewish inheritance as meaningless yet unassailable, just as, in his most famous parable, "Before the Law," man remains powerless before a law that retains its authority in the absence of any particular prescription. Paralleling Kafka's attestation of Jewishness, Gershom Scholem understood the law's appearance in Kafka's text as having "validity but no significance […] the wealth of meaning is lost and what is in the process of appearing (for Revelation is such a process) still does not disappear, even though it is reduced to the zero point of its own content" (Benjamin and Scholem 1989: 142). In a similar vein, Walter Benjamin compared modernist and midrashic approaches to the text when he claimed that Kafka "sacrificed truth for the sake of clinging to its transmissibility, its haggadic element" (Benjamin 1992: 142). Kafka's "haggadic element"[12] can be considered alongside Benjamin's own essay, "The Task of the Translator," which views translation in similar terms:

> The transfer can never be total, but what reaches this region is that element in a translation which goes beyond transmittal of subject matter. This nucleus is best defined as the element that does not lend itself to translation. Even when all the surface content has been extracted and transmitted, the primary concern of the genuine translator remains elusive. Unlike the words of the original, it is not translatable, because the relationship between content and language is quite different in the original and the translation. While content and language form a certain unity in the original, like a fruit and its skin, the language of translation envelops its content […] it signifies a more exalted language than its own and thus remains unsuited to its content, overpowering and alien.
>
> (Benjamin 1992: 76)

Overpowering, alien, and exalted, Benjamin's language of translation has been liberated from the original's attachment to content by inhabiting the "afterlife" of the translated text (Benjamin 1992: 72). This "afterlife" denotes the "metaphysical" passage of the text into foreign regions (other languages and epochs) where, while the content has blurred, the text itself has been able to

adapt and thus survive. Such a process can occur without loss of meaning, for Benjamin, because translation discloses its own originality: "all great texts contain their potential translation between the lines; this is true to the highest degree of sacred writings. The interlinear version of the Scriptures is the prototype or ideal of all translation" (Benjamin 1992: 82). Hence, if Kafka's Jewishness is akin to the "haggadic" "element that does not lend itself to translation," this attests, for Benjamin, to the originality of secondariness that one can also find inscribed in scriptural writing.[13] (Auerbach's representation of Genesis as a text manifestly demanding interpretation makes a similar point.) What, then, gets transmitted in Kafka's texts is, as Hartman has inferred, "the difficulty of dying, and the superficiality of all progressive schemes that cover up the old order, that try to lay it to rest" (Hartman 1980: 81). Indeed, this resurfacing of the "old order" in modernist fiction led Benjamin and Scholem to "search" Kafka in much the same way as their ancestors had searched the law itself, for Kafka, in Harold Bloom's words, "quite simply *is* Jewish writing" (Bloom 1995b: 454).

   Through their interpretations of Kafka, Scholem and Benjamin turn the modernity of the Jewish question into a question *of* modernity. Rather than breaking with the past, Benjamin represents the modern Jew as related to his/her ancestor much as a translated text is related to the original, while Scholem identifies a "revelatory" force in Kafka's fiction that attaches, without any determinate content, to the formal effects of his writing. Cynthia Ozick puts this still more stridently,

> In all of history the literature that has lasted for Jews has been liturgical. The secular Jew is a figment; when a Jew becomes a secular person he is no longer a Jew. This is especially true for makers of literature. It was not only an injunction that Moses uttered when he said [Jewish people] would be a people attentive to holiness, it was a description and a destiny.
>
> (Ozick 1994: 28)

Viewing the "people of the Book" as both "description" and "destiny", Ozick deems the sanctity of text-centeredness to have persisted, despite itself, in the Jewish discourses of modernity.[14] Sharing its fate with "the people," the Bible has thus sat out modernity rather uncomfortably on the shelf with other literature. Hartman compares its position in the West to that of a "resident alien," as if it was a book in some sense impossible to naturalize (Hartman and Budick 1986: 3). Like the familiar unfamiliarity of the Freudian uncanny, Hartman's Hebrew Bible is a sort of refugee in the West, which has had, like the Jews themselves, to survive the bonfires of annihilation.

   Certainly, the significance of survival in determining relations between "the people" and "the Book" has assumed much greater magnitude during the epoch that T. W. Adorno first named "after Auschwitz," when, for Adorno, there is a legitimate question as to whether "you *can* go on living" (Adorno 1990: 362). In his reformulation of Kant's categorical imperative,[15] Adorno demanded the complete transformation of all modes of thought and action "so that nothing similar will happen" (Adorno 1990: 465). Adorno's famous denunciation of poetic barbarism after Auschwitz ought therefore to be regarded as simultaneously a question about what form poetry might take "after Auschwitz" if it is not to risk complicity or continuity with Auschwitz's anteriority. By thus reviving the link between the Jewish question and the question of the book (the question of a book that would be able to narrate Jewish and world historical experience), Adorno articulates certain problems of representation that should be distinguished from the aporias of witnessing attested to in the testimonial literature of writers such as Primo Levi. Levi described the impossibility of bearing true witness to the death camps (because only the dead

have this right), whereas Adorno is concerned to interrupt the underlying structures of language and subjectivity that give rise to Auschwitz. Like the biblical prohibition on idolatry, his imperative warns against representing what can never be represented.

Writing after Auschwitz, these are Edmond Jabès' words,

> … a Jewish theme is not enough to make a book Jewish. The Jewish tale is much less in the anecdote, the confession, the local colour, than in the writing. You cannot tell Auschwitz. Every word tells it to us.
>
> (Jabès 1993: 173)

Jabès's dismantling of anything that could be mistaken for a thematic in his work reveals, as Josh Cohen observes, how "Jewish experience announces instead the very exhaustion of both a communicable content and a bounded form, giving voice to the impossibility of its own 'telling'" (Cohen 2003: 107). But isn't this impossibility of telling the same paradox to which Kafka gives voice when he sacrifices truth for the sake of clinging to its "haggadic element," or to which Benjamin gives voice when announcing the "language of translation" as the "afterlife" of a text that has grown "unsuited to its content"? Reading Kafka for the first time after the war, Holocaust survivor Aharon Appelfeld was struck by an uncannily prophetic sense of recognition: "how could a man who had never been there know so much, in precise details, about that world?" (Appelfeld 1994: 63). The world of the *Shoah* does not appear, for Appelfeld, in the content of Kafka's prose, but in his voice *qua* "language of the absurd," which Appelfeld identifies as that of "a Jewish man, like me, from a half-assimilated family, whose Jewish values had lost their content and whose inner space was barren and haunted" (Appelfeld 1994: 63). Cohen's articulation of the demand made on readers by Jabès' singular texts – "The demand of thinking after Auschwitz would be above all to expose and bear witness to this silence at the heart of language" – can therefore be traced back to the demand made by Jewish writing prior to Auschwitz (Cohen 2003: 108). What survives Auschwitz, in other words, which must have been there before, is the "silence at the heart of language," the untranslatable "haggadic element" that passes, with a privacy that can never be privatized, into the afterlife of the text – or what Kafka sometimes calls belief in the "indestructible":

> Believing means liberating the indestructible element in oneself, or more accurately, being indestructible, or more accurately, being.
>
> (Kafka 1991: 27)

> Man cannot live without a permanent trust in something indestructible in himself, though both the indestructible element and the trust may remain permanently hidden from him.
>
> (Kafka 1991: 29)

For Jabès, the indestructible element within Jewish belief or Jewish being is inscribed in a certain experience of writing: "Judaism and writing are but the same waiting, the same hope, the same wearing out" (Jabès 1991: 122). Nor does he distinguish "the writer in me from the Jew because one and the other are only torments of an ancient word" (Jabès 1991: 361). Jabès' comparison of Judaism and writing is not, however, as Cohen warns, "the cancellation of their differences, but intimates rather their shared logic of "incompletion" (Cohen 2003: xvii).

This logic of incompletion is also attested to in Jacques Derrida's writings, which logic he sometimes calls "messianic," although in thinking the messianic he does not anticipate any

personality or epoch that would bring the waiting, hoping, and wearing out to an end. Through his deconstructions of various works in the history of Western philosophy – a history he accused of scapegoating writing[16] – Derrida discloses how text gives way to an experience of absence, aporia, dissemination, and deferral that threatens to destabilize the "metaphysics of presence" encoded in logocentric patterns of thought and speech. Derrida's claim that "there is nothing outside the text" might then be supposed, on a certain reading, to repeat the trope that Hegel had identified as the nihilistic project of Judaism in its refusal to relinquish its attachment to the letter of the law. Privileging the subordinated terms in the binary structures supporting Western metaphysics, Derrida revaluates these "negatives" and finds in them traces of a future in whose passionate hopes and beliefs he detects, from his earliest essays on Jabès and Levinas, distinctly Judaic resonances. Responding to Jabès' hallucinatory dialogues between imaginary rabbis in the multi-volumed *Book of Questions*, for example, Derrida alights on Jabès' linking of Jewish faith to the experience of writing,

> … in question is a certain Judaism as the birth and passion of writing. The passion *of* writing, the love and endurance of the letter itself whose subject is not decidably the Jew or the Letter itself. Perhaps the common root of a people and of writing.
>
> (Derrida 1997: 64)

What had marked, for Hegel, the failure of Judaism to rise beyond the letter towards its spiritual fulfilment, opens up, for Jabès and Derrida, a future whose possibility remains bound to the "book" as "the radical origin of meaning as literality, that is, onto historicity itself, for there could be no history without the gravity and labour of literality" (Derrida 1997: 64). History and meaning merge in the experience of the text, which the reader enters as a subject summoned by the call to interpret what demands interpretation and finds herself simultaneously constituted *by* the text as the subject *of* interpretation. The "passion of writing" thus absorbs the subject into the text's indeterminacies, whence Derrida can mingle his own identity with Jabès' midrashic ethos by playfully signing off his commentaries as "Reb Rida" and "Reb Derissa."

Yet, as Cohen reminds, to compare Judaism and writing is not to dispel their differences. Jews are not the only "race born of the book" [*WD*; 64] and not the only subjects whose identities remain unfixed and as open to question as the text in which they reside (Derrida 1997: 64). The "situation of the Jew," suggests Derrida, is "exemplary of the situation of the poet" whose "negative capability" (to cite Keats' disavowal of poetic identity) renders the poet, like the Jew, "the *subject* of the book," just as the book is "the subject of the poet" (Derrida 1997: 65). The book is a site of both dispossession and renewal inasmuch as its processes of dissolution and destruction are integral to the subject's own production,

> … the movement through which the book becomes a subject in itself and for itself, is not critical or speculative reflection, but is, first of all, poetry and history. For in its representation of itself the subject is shattered and opened. Writing is itself written, but also ruined, made into an abyss, in its own representation. Thus, within this book, which infinitely reflects itself and which develops as a painful questioning of its own possibility, the form of the book represents itself.
>
> (Derrida 1997: 65)

Being in question, Jewish and poetic subjects are "made text," although unlike the "Word made flesh" or Christian *logos*, the merging of Jewish, poetic, and textual identities does not produce any *kerygma*.[17] In poet-survivor Paul Celan's poem "Shibboleth," for example, Derrida

encounters language performing its own deconstruction, such that "the becoming-poetic of the word … amounts to its becoming-Jewish" (Hartman and Budick 1986: 343). Nevertheless, there remains within the languages of both poetry and Judaism an indestructible (untranslatable, haggadic) element which, because resistant to deconstruction, is the very possibility of deconstruction. It is in this sense that the experience of writing can be likened to Judaism insofar as it, too, has withstood successive attempts at secularization. As Hartman identifies,

> The sacred has so inscribed itself in language that while it must be interpreted, it cannot be removed. One might speculate that what we call the sacred is simply that which must be interpreted or reinterpreted.
>
> (Hartman 1980: 248)

Responding to "that which must be interpreted or reinterpreted," rabbinic hermeneutics discloses the form of subjectivity demanded by an encounter with sacred texts. Midrash inspires creativity without the "myths of private genius" that would seek to claim authority or mastery over a work (Hartman and Budick 1986: xii). Hence, if the modern critic stands "opposed" to the text (Docherty 1987: 244) the midrashist remains *subject* to the text in the manner Hartman describes,

> The psychological drama of reading centers on that aroused merging: a possible loss of boundaries, a fear of absorption, the stimulation of a sympathetic faculty that may take over and produce self-alienation.
>
> (Hartman 1980: 50)

Indeed, while hermeneutics is a word deriving from the Greek god Hermes, whose role it was to transmit messages between gods and men, hermeneutic practices of interpretation have applied for the most part to the scriptural tradition, as if in recognition of Cicero's judgment that Homer had sent Hermes in the wrong direction, ascribing "things human to the gods: would that he had brought down things divine to us" (Cicero 1986: 3:137). For it is the indestructible kernel of something permanently foreign – Hartman's "sacred" – that invites interpretation, opening up the subject to the imbrications of meaning and historicity. The text is thus a stranger whose every approach presents a risk to the stranger that is oneself. In Donald Davidson's analytical philosophy this approach, known as "radical interpretation," founds a "principle of charity" against hermeneutic suspicion, for "[i]f we cannot find a way to interpret the utterances and other behaviour of a creature as revealing a set of beliefs largely consistent and true by our own standards, we have no reason to count that creature as rational, as having beliefs, or as saying anything" (Davidson 1984: 137). Interpretation is thus a form of "redescription": to redescribe is to repeat what one has heard, testing whether one has understood what was been expressed by trying it out in one's own language, or more correctly, in a language that is less and less one's own.

In 1986 Hartman and Budick published *Midrash and Literature*, an anthology of essays importing "midrash," then still an eccentric term of rabbinics, into the lexicon of mainstream criticism. "[L]ittle is more important today," explained Hartman, "than to remind secular literary studies of the richness and subtlety of those strange rabbinic conversations which have been disdained for so long in favour of more objective and systematized modes of reading" (Hartman and Budick 1986: 8–9). Nor was *Midrash and Literature* the only work of literary criticism to come out in the 1980s expressing this interest. The same decade also saw the publication of Hartman's *Criticism in the Wilderness* (1980), Susan Handelman's *The Slayers of Moses: The Emergence of Rabbinic Interpretation in Modern Literary Theory* (1982), Robert Alter and Frank

Kermode's *Literary Guide to the Bible* (1987), and George Steiner's *Real Presences* (1989). Secular studies seemed suddenly awash with Jewish approaches to textuality. Why?

In an essay elucidating "midrash [h]aggadah," Joseph Heinemann explained the communal practice as originally "an attempt to develop new methods of exegesis designed to yield new understandings of Scripture for a time of crisis and a period of conflict" (Hartman and Budick 1986: 42):

> By developing a method of "creative exegesis" the aggadists were able to find in Scripture – which might otherwise have come to seem irrelevant to contemporary needs – the new answers and values which made it possible to grapple with the shifts and changes of reality.
>
> (Hartman and Budick 1986: 43)

Aggadah is criticism for a time of crisis. Might it then be possible to surmise that the turn to midrash in the 1980s was a creative innovation on the part of critics responding to a crisis in contemporary criticism? Certainly this was the decade that saw the biggest battles of the "theory wars," which had grown especially ferocious following Paul de Man's death in 1983 and the discovery in 1987 of anti-Semitic rhetoric in his wartime journalism. De Man had already been accused of heralding a "crisis in the humanities" (precipitated by, amongst other things, the cutting of referential relations between word and world, the relativization of humanistic values, and the obscurantism of theoretical prose), which sense of crisis was exacerbated by his seemingly nihilistic claim in "Criticism and Crisis" that in fiction,

> … the human self has experienced the void within itself and the invented fiction, far from filling the void, asserts itself as pure nothingness, *our* nothingness stated and restated as the agent of its own instability.
>
> (De Man 1983: 19)

Thus, in the wake of posthumous discoveries, De Man's insights into literary language and loss of authority appeared, to his detractors, specially crafted to revoke responsibility for his own early collaborationist writings. So was this "humanities crisis" what brought midrash into literary theory? If so, then midrash was now being called on to do for literature what it had traditionally done for scripture: keep a threatened discourse viable.

But if midrash was invoked to "save" fiction from deconstructive criticism by endowing literature with scripture's authority, the midrashic approach also shared a great deal in common with deconstruction and even took its inspiration from what De Man had called the "void" within poetic experience. As Derrida remarked of Jabès' modern midrash,

> Life negates itself in literature only so that I may survive better. So that it may *be* better.
>
> (Derrida 1997: 78)

This, however, begs the question: how did Derrida, a Jewish philosopher, respond to De Man's wartime archive? He reviewed the articles carefully and detected within them signs of his former friend and colleague's collaboration with, and subversion of, Nazi ideology. While Derrida's charity in interpretation appeared to some to apologise for anti-Semitism (on suspicion of safeguarding his own discourse), his response was also characteristically "midrashic." It was an anti-Semitic impulse, after all, to burn rather than read certain books. Opposing a text on the

basis of its "content" alone fails to take the opportunity a text will always afford its most attentive readers to discover ways in which the text, in its *writing*, is always already contradicting itself, tripping itself up, revealing its own instability and inability to sustain the propositions it wishes to uphold. To oppose without reading thus lends support to ideas by relieving them of the very response-ability that interpretation consistently demands. Interpretation neither cancels responsibility, nor turns nothingness into meaninglessness,[18] but seeks out the indestructible element within a text which, released from its dependence on content, survives every act of deconstruction, translation or redescription in order to pass into its own afterlife. In Hartman and Budick's words, "midrash is the open word, the open door, through which we are always just passing," revealing "the enduring power of the provisional which understands that it is provisional" (Hartman and Budick 1986: xiii). By thus eluding the grasp of both God and man, this midrashic "power of the provisional" is the basis upon which Oedipal violence might be averted and a father can rejoice when "my sons have defeated me!"

So, if the role of literature in Western modernity has been deemed essential to secularization, these theories of textuality have had a different story to tell.[19] Analyzing this trend in contemporary discourses, Susan Handelman has examined the differential functioning of text in Jewish and Greco–Christian hermeneutic traditions by contrasting the Greek *onoma* (name *for* thing) to the Hebrew *davar* (word *and* thing). While Greek theories of reference sought to steer the "seeker of truth away from language towards a silent ontology," says Handelman, "the most important contributions of the Jews to Western culture was the concept of the divine text, a book whose contents and their interpretation were the key to knowing ultimate reality" (Handelman 1982: 4, xiv). During a time of "crisis in the humanities," the Jewish claim that textual interpretation is a "key to knowing ultimate reality" has appeared to many like good news indeed.

Notes

1 See (Derrida 1997: 67).
2 See (Derrida and Michal 1998: 1).
3 See Tractate Bava Metzia, 59b (1990: 237).
4 There are two versions: the Babylonian Talmud and Palestinian Talmud.
5 There are, broadly, two kinds of *midrash* – *Midrash Halachah* (interpretations of the legal parts of the written law) and *Midrash Aggadah* (interpretations of the nonlegal parts; homiletical and historical exegesis), although traditional Jewish hermeneutics also include other departures and historical innovations (shaped by, e.g., mystical, ethical or political concerns) too numerous and multifaceted to consider here.
6 First as the *Mishnah* and in the following three centuries the *Mishnah* were themselves commented on in the *Gemara*. Together the *Mishnah* and *Gemara* are known as the Talmud.
7 A tradition that records both majority and minority opinions and debates such as those between the schools of Hillel and Shammai.
8 "The study of Torah is greater than the daily sacrifices of the Temple" (Tractate Megillah, 3b).
9 "The Bible has had a literary influence upon English literature not because it has been considered as literature, but because it has been considered the report of the Word of God." T. S. Eliot, "Religion and Literature" (1935), in Eliot (1975: 97–106, [98]).
10 Jewish mysticism describes Holy Writ as black fire (words) on white fire (spaces).
11 While the ceding of authority from God to man suggests a rebellious spirit, the story also reveals who lacks the power to challenge rabbinic decisions: women's voices, for example, are conspicuously absent from the debate about how to determine the meaning of laws that will have a direct and lasting impact on their lives.
12 *cf.* footnote 5.
13 As Derrida puts it, "[i]n the beginning is hermeneutics," which may, too, help to shed some light on the orthodox belief that the written and oral laws were revealed together on Mount Sinai.

14 Ozick adds that writers like Marx, Freud, and Kafka have survived modernity by dwelling in the interstices and "judging culture like mad" (Ozick 1994: 25).

15 As enunciated in Kant's *Grounding for the Metaphysics of Morals*: "Act only according to that maxim whereby you can, at the same time, will that it should become a universal law" (Kant 1785 [1993]: 30).

16 Derrida argues that the history of Western metaphysics has envisaged speech as pure self-presence and maligned writing in order to blame the latter for the gradual erosion and loss of logocentric meaning.

17 Greek word used in the New Testament to refer to the proclamation of the Christian truth *qua* "good news."

18 For example, Harold Bloom ascribes "Freud's most profound Jewishness" to "his consuming passion for interpretation": the "ultimately Jewish conviction that there is sense in everything" (Bloom 1995a: 125–27).

19 Hence, while I take on board David Stern's point that midrash "is neither identical with literary theory nor simply reducible to it" (and do not wish to imply that the contemporary approaches referred to here are the exact doubles of their rabbinic precursors), the foregoing discussion has nevertheless sought to trouble the precise distinction that Stern makes between the midrashic effort to "recapture the fullness of divine presence" as opposed to what he sees as the ultimately self-reflective motive of theory (Stern 1988: 161).

Essential reading

Budick, S. and Hartman, G. (eds.) (1986) *Midrash and Literature*, New Haven: Yale UP. Anthology examining intersections between midrash, literature and criticism, including essays by Geoffrey Hartman, Frank Kermode, Jacques Derrida and Edmond Jabès.

Cohen, J. (2003) *Interrupting Auschwitz,* London; New York: Continuum. In depth analysis of post-Holocaust thought and aesthetics.

Halbertal, M. (1997) *People of the Book: Canon, Meaning, and Authority*, Cambridge, Massachusetts; London: Harvard UP. Illuminating account of the evolution and theory of text-centeredness.

Handelman, S. (1984) *The Slayers of Moses: The Emergence of Rabbinic Interpretation in Modern Literary Theory* Albany: New York State UP. Analysis of Hebraic influence on ancient and modern hermeneutics.

Holtz, B. (ed.) (1992) *Back to the Sources: Reading the Classic Jewish Texts*, New York: Simon & Schuster. Essays elucidating the traditional Jewish canon.

Zornberg, A. G. (2009) *The Murmuring Deep: Reflections on the Biblical Unconscious,* New York: Schocken. Contemporary exegesis intersecting traditional and modern sources.

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11

RELIGION/SECULARITY

Naomi Seidman

Toward a Jewish "secularization thesis"

It can hardly be denied that modernity brought with it, alongside other momentous changes, the rapid and widespread secularization of Jewish communities, producing both significant percentages of secular Jews and, at various historical junctures, self-consciously secular or ideologically secularist political and cultural movements. While it is clear that Jewish secularization emerged from the larger context of European trends of secularization, it is nevertheless distinct from it. The progression traced by Max Weber from Renaissance Humanism to the Protestant Reformation and post-Calvinist capitalism, for instance, only partly correlates with the historical and cultural conditions that gave rise to Jewish secularization (Weber 1904). In recent years, the Protestant biases of what has been called "the secularization thesis" have been revised to account for the secularizing experiences of other groups, from post-Catholic European societies to Europe's former colonies throughout the world. It is now clear to most critics that no single "secularism" exists (including in the Jewish world), despite the universalist claims and aspirations of some varieties of secularism. Under the influence of postcolonialism, the philosophical understandings of an earlier era of scholarship have given way to new political, economic, and cultural perspectives on the secularization process. With these resources, critics have called into question the empirical truth and underlying value judgments of the secularization thesis: it no longer seems obvious that the exemplary feature of modernity is the narrowing, privatizing, or "subtraction" of the religious sphere under the salutary pressure of rational thought and religious tolerance. For many observers, including some who had earlier asserted the inevitability of global secularization, it has become increasingly clear that we are living in a "desecularized" or "post-secular" age (Berger 1999).

The pioneering proponents of the secularization thesis focused their attention on secularization as a gradual transformation of traditional metaphysical worldviews. Peter Berger, borrowing Weber's famous phrase, described secularization as "the disenchantment of the world," emblematized by an "immense shrinkage in the scope of the sacred" (Berger 1991: 107). As Weber had argued, this "shrinkage" begins in the pre-modern world, in particular in Protestant revisions of Catholic worldviews. The Reformation left a channel between "fallen" humanity and transcendent divinity in its conception of God's grace, but this channel was so ethereal and narrow as to be easily severed. "A sky empty of angels," Berger writes, "becomes open to the intervention of the astronomer and, eventually, of the astronaut" (Berger 1991: 112–13). If

Protestantism carried within its own religious teachings the seeds of the rationalism that would leave the sky "empty," these seeds themselves were sown with the Biblical revolution, which much earlier had winnowed the pagan pantheons. It is true, Berger writes, that medieval Catholicism had repopulated the cosmos with angels and saints; nevertheless, "'the disenchantment of the world' begins in the Old Testament."

If Berger is correct that the "Old Testament" and, as he adds elsewhere, the rabbinic Judaism that emerged from it offer an already-disenchanted world, then Jewish monotheism represents earlier and more purely than Protestantism a religious rationalism that could mature into full-blown secularism. Such a proto-secularism, if it worked as the Protestant model ostensibly did, should have paved the way early on for the "disenchantment of the world" among Jews. While the conceptualization of Judaism as (proto-rational) monotheism is not entirely wrong, it fails to do justice to the rich variety of traditional Jewish cosmologies, some of which featured heavens as crowded as any imagined elsewhere. The demythologized monotheism Berger sees as quintessentially Judaic is, for most of Jewish history, the rarefied property of the philosophical elite. It could be argued, in fact, that Berger's notion of Judaism as biblical monotheism represents not its essence and ground but rather a modern—even secular—construct, arising as it does most clearly in the nineteenth-century theology (or apologetics) of *Wissenschaft des Judentums* and Reform Judaism; Judaism as monotheism is thus not the seed of Jewish secularity but rather the byproduct of Jewish modernity in its Europeanizing mode.

There is no reason to dismiss entirely the project of tracing "proto-secular" trends in traditional Jewish thought, given the crucial question of how Jews broke with their religion, if religion was as all-encompassing in the pre-modern world as scholars have assumed. In tracing the hidden roots of Jewish secularity, scholars have argued that secular Jewish thought arose in dialectical relation to religious trends, as, for instance, in the connection between Maimonides' purified and rationalized transcendentalist monotheism and Spinoza's rational, radically imminent pan(en)theism. Gershom Scholem followed a different and decidedly non-rational subterranean route from religion to Jewish secularism in the antinomian messianic forces unleashed by Sabbatianism, which Scholem believed found secular expression in the Berlin Haskalah [Jewish Enlightenment] and political expression in Zionism (Scholem 1971: 140–41). Shmuel Feiner sees the essentially theological phenomenon of Sabbatianism as feeding into the broader and more diffuse anti-theological culture of deism, libertinism, and antinomianism, far beyond the elites on whom Scholem focuses (Feiner 2011: 22). Among the more complex genealogies of Jewish metaphysical secularism is Yirmiyahu Yovel's tracing of Spinoza's freedom from received notions of God and the Bible not to a submerged tendency within Jewish tradition but rather to the phenomenology of the *converso*, in which the *co-presence* of conflicting religious systems gives rise to, among other effects, worldliness and philosophical relativism (Yovel 1992: 26).

The most ambitious recent attempt to narrate a history of Jewish secular thought is David Biale's *Not in the Heavens: The Tradition of Jewish Secular Thought*, which responds to the question of the emergence of the secular—of how "the new is always incubated in the old"—by reaching back not to the Bible, where Berger begins, but rather to the Talmud, where Biale explores (and partially rejects) the notion that rabbinic thought championed human autonomy over divine revelation. Taking as illustration the famous story of the Oven of Akhnai, in which the rabbis override a heavenly voice in favor of majority rule, Biale acknowledges that rabbinic proto-humanism "neither leads to nor causes the revolt by later secularists against the tradition." A relationship might nevertheless be suggested:

> One might argue that [the story of the Oven of Akhnai] is a symptom of a certain
> mentality, a willingness to stake out an independence from scripture, even in the thick

of a traditional culture. It is this mentality that may have predisposed certain Jews, once they became infected with modernity, to break from the religion. And the text is also available to those moderns who would use it to give their philosophies a historical pedigree.

(Biale 2011: 8)

In Biale's analysis, the relation between pre-modern and secular Jewish thought should be drawn not in the broad strokes of influence (or even causality) but rather through more nuanced readings of the ways the present emerges from, remembers, and appropriates the past. Biale's genealogy thus calls attention to the question of the Jewishness of Jewish secularism; in Biale's framing, Jewish secular thought is constituted by a self-conscious relationship to Jewish tradition, whether one views this relationship as one of genuine continuity or radical (mis)appropriation.

The attraction of such histories as Biale's, which draw connections between canonical Jewish texts and radical negations of religious claims, is obvious: Jewish identity relies heavily on the mobilization of a shared collective narrative—perhaps never more so than in the presence of radical historical disruption. But it seems to me that the story of Jewish secularization is as easily traced as discontinuity and break, particularly if one focuses less on intellectual than cultural and social history. In *The Origins of Jewish Secularization in Eighteenth-Century Europe*, Shmuel Feiner provides an analysis of Jewish secularization not as the organic, dialectical ripening of a meta-physical tradition but rather as the abrupt abandonment of Jewish practice, beginning primarily in eighteenth-century Central and Western Europe; that Jewish secularization should be defined less as a rejection of a set of beliefs than as the cessation of *halakhic* observance is particularly apt, given the centrality to Judaism of what Feiner calls "religious discipline." Feiner argues that the cultural rupture involved in the cessation of religious observance has been neglected in favor of intellectual history, particularly of the Haskalah (Jewish Enlightenment), a movement associated with Jewish secularization in its textual and conservative mode, which, in Feiner's view, "simultaneously represented a reaction to secularization and a secular revolution" (Feiner 2011: xiv). The abandonment of Jewish practice invites cultural rather than philosophical analysis, drawing our attention to new patterns of (ambivalent, paradoxical, and partial) integration in the context of public debate on "the Jewish question," political gestures toward the amelioration of Jewish civil status, and the popularization of Enlightenment ideas. Jewish secularization in this view was not, as for Protestantism, the snip of a theological thread but rather the opening of social and political possibilities.

That Jews have a peculiar proclivity for secularism has been widely noted; Jews seem to be among the most secular of moderns, the most enthusiastic of seculars. The intensity of the Jewish embrace of secularity, for social historians, may be related not to "proto-secular" tendencies in Judaism but precisely to the opposite—the long estrangement of Jews from their larger cultural contexts and, thus, the abruptness of their abandonment of religious observance. Hannah Arendt argues that the Jewish enthusiasm for "culture" should be traced to the fact that "the Jewish people not only did not share in the slow process of secularization that started in Western Europe with the Renaissance, and out of which modern culture was born, but … when con-fronted with and attracted by Enlightenment and culture, had just emerged from a period in which their own secular learning had sunk to a new all-time low" (Arendt 2007: 299). George Mosse has described the fervor with which German Jews continued to embrace Enlightenment ideals of *Bildung* and religious tolerance long past their widespread abandonment in non-Jewish circles, where "The Age of Reason" experienced a pan-European drift toward Romanticism, religious resurgence, and romantic nationalism (Mosse 1997). In Jacob Katz's words, "after the time of rationalism in Europe had passed, … Jews, perhaps more than most Christians, were

wont to stick to the way of rationalistic thought because it opened up for them the road from the old Judaism and the ghetto to the European Enlightenment and the surrounding society" (Katz 1986: 59). Jewish secularization reveals itself in such readings more readily in the "secular" light of social and political culture than in the more "metaphysical" understandings of an integrated history of ideas. Secularization, in these views, expresses the project and challenges of connecting Jews and gentiles, and only incidentally the recalibration of human and divine realms.

Varieties of (Jewish) secularity

The "pluralizing" of secularism in recent scholarship has had two interrelated dimensions: On the one hand, the recognition that what had seemed a singular secularism is in fact a panoply of cultural formations; on the other, the recognition that the "unmarked" secularism of an earlier era was also infused with the ideologies and patterns of thought of a particular religion. Without acknowledging the possibility of multiple secularisms, Weber had already suggested that secularism in the West was a child of Protestantism. For recent scholars, what is coming into view about this relation is less the dialectic that connects Calvinism with capitalism than the paths by which this one particular worldview asserted itself—disguised as neutral and universal—in relation to others, both in the academic understanding of secularism and indeed on the global stage. Thus, Janet Jakobsen and Ann Pellegrini introduce their recent volume titled *Secularisms* by wondering:

> What … were the implications of the fact that the world secular calendar—the calendar of global finance and world politics—was also specifically Christian time? Wasn't secularism supposed to be a discourse of universal influence precisely because it was free of the particularities of religion? How did it come to pass that secularism as a "world" discourse was also intertwined with one particular religion?
>
> (Jakobsen and Pellegrini 2008: 1)

In Joan Wallach Scott's view, post-secularization reflects a series of related challenges from the traditionalizing "right" and the anti-colonialist "left," in which secularism is exposed "as a mask for the political domination of 'others,' a form of ethnocentrism or crypto-Christianity, the particular product of the European nation state. Its claim to universalism (a false universalism in the eyes of its critics) has justified the exclusion or marginalization of those from non-European cultures" (Wallach Scott 2007: 92). Gender, largely absent from earlier formulations of the secularization thesis, has played a central role in the postcolonial turn, just as battles between modernizers and traditionalists have often revolved around sexuality and women's bodies. In a reading of Islamic secularization, for instance, Talal Asad argues that the modern reform of Islamic marriage law was impelled not by the reformers' vaunted concern for women but rather by an (unspoken) desire to reproduce "the monogamous nuclear family [prevalent] among the Westernized classes" (Asad 2003: 235).

Postcolonialism has turned out to be enormously powerful in illuminating Jewish secularization, recasting the secularization of European Jews as a form of European "internal colonialism," with gender as elsewhere often at the forefront of the colonial project. As Daniel Boyarin writes:

> For some three hundred years now, Jews have been the target of the civilizing mission in Europe. The civilizing mission, and its Jewish agents among "the Enlighteners," considered the fact that Jewish women behaved in ways interpreted as masculine by European bourgeois society to be simply monstrous. Modern Jewish culture, liberal

and bourgeois in its aspiration and its preferred patterns of gendered life, has been the result of this civilizing mission … The richness of Jewish life and difference has been largely lost, and the gains for Jewish women were largely illusory.

(Boyarin 1997: xvii–xviii)

Some scholars have further argued that Jews represent not one target among others of the Europeanization project, but rather the exemplary challenge to European colonialism in its homeland and origins. Aamir Mufti, reading "the Jewish problem" as symptomatic of the colonial aspirations of the European Enlightenment, argues that secularization, and not only of the Jews, arose around the question precisely of the plausibility of Jews as subjects of the nation-state:

The figure of the Jew has faced a paradoxical predicament in the culture of the modern West, and has typically been met with a contradictory set of representation demands: on the one hand, as a figure of particularity, it has generated anxieties about the undermining of the universalizing claims and ambitions embedded in the constitutive narratives of modern culture, with the Jews coming to be seen as slavishly bound to external Law and tradition, ritualistic and irrational, and incapable of the maturity and autonomy called for in the development of enlightened, modern subjectivity; on the other, as a figure of transnational range and abilities, it raises questions about deracination, homelessness, abstraction, supra-national identifications, and divided loyalties.

(Mufti 2007: 38)

In arguments such as these, Jewish secularization shows itself as Europeanization, *embourgeoisement*, assimilation, and a required submission to the norms of the dominant culture. Wendy Brown has argued that for Jews to "be made to fit," they needed to be both transformed and still marked as Jews: "These triple forces of recognition, remaking and marking—of emancipation, assimilation, and subjection; of decorporatization as Jews, incorporation as nation-state citizens, and identification as different—are what characterize the relation of the state to Jews in nineteenth-century Europe and constitute the tacit regime of tolerance governing Jewish emancipation (Brown 2006: 53). The submission of Jews to Enlightenment demands is evident in such cultural products of Jewish secularization as Reform Judaism, which moved Jewish practice further from the "ritualistic and irrational" and closer to Protestant modes of "faith" and "decorum." A major feature of Jewish "decorporatization, incorporation as nation-state citizens, and identification as different," in fact, is the invention of Judaism as a "religious affiliation"—paradoxically, just as religious observance was in drastic decline. Paula Hyman notes a further paradox: while traditional public observance had marginalized Jewish women, Jewish *embourgeoisement* entailed the adoption of Protestant notions of women as uniquely "spiritual," more suited to and responsible for religious observance and continuity; "assimilation," that is, made Jewish women *more* rather than less "Jewish" (Hyman 1995: 10–49).[1] As Laura Levitt has shown, a similar regulatory structure has resulted in the marginalization of secular Jewish identity in the United States, since tolerance in this national context has been conceptualized as primarily religious tolerance: "To assimilate into the dominant Protestant culture of the United States, Jews were required to identify their Jewishness as a form of religious faith to remain visible as Jews"(Levitt 2006: 822).

The relevance of postcolonial readings to the secularization of Mizrahi Jews may be even greater, since Jews functioned in that context on both sides of the colonial divide, most visibly in the educational "civilizing mission" of the French–Jewish Alliance Israélite Universelle to the Jews of North Africa and the Ottoman Empire (see, for instance, Rodrigue 2003: 7–12). These distinctive contexts have bred different varieties of Jewish secularity: against the European

pattern (or stereotype) of Jewish "rootless cosmopolitanism," Dalia Kondiyoti has called attention to Mizrahi "local cosmopolitanism," in which multilingualism and cultural mobility combine with strong indigenous attachments (Kondiyoti 2009).

The effect of postcolonial analyses such as these has sometimes been to cast religion as cultural resistance to the colonial demands of secularization; in this perspective, Scott's traditionalizing "right" and anti-colonial "left" challenges to secularization come close to overlapping. Both Boyarin and Mufti point to moments of religious resistance to Europeanization, Boyarin in such movements as ultra-Orthodox anti-Zionism and Mufti in Mendelssohn's defense of halakhah in *Jerusalem*. It is certainly possible to view contemporary movements of Jewish religious "return" in the light of both post-secularization and postcolonialism, as skepticism about the liberating powers of "the rational" and as challenges to the leveling forces of cultural homogenization. But the resistance to Europeanization, it is worth pointing out, took shape within secularist Jewish practices, as well. Katz long ago argued that the limits of Jewish social integration into Christian society were the result of ambivalence on both the Jewish and gentile sides of the cultural divide, which expressed itself, for Jews, in such forms as persistent occupation patterns and cultural allegiances. As Katz writes, "The definition of the Jewish community as a purely religious unit was, of course, a sham from the time of its conception. It was contradicted by social reality and much of Jewish activity" (Katz 1978: 32). Jews, that is, both did and did not capitulate to demands for the dissolution of Jewish collectivity and particularity, enthusiastically embracing some aspects of the Europeanization project (the separation of church and state, the abandonment of Jewish "fleshly" ritual) and rejecting others (the "normalization" of Jewish occupations, the disaggregation of Jewish local and global networks). It is a curious paradox of Jewish secularism, according to Katz, that the different rates of emancipation and modernization of world Jewries, a symptom of their global dispersion, encouraged, most emblematically in the 1840 Damascus Affair, the modern persistence and even intensification of the pre-modern sense of Jews as one dispersed people (Katz 1978: 319; see also Rodrigue 2003: 7–8). The very multiplicity of narratives of Jewish modernization thus led to the modern conception of a single world Jewry (Katz 1978: 219).

Homi Bhabha's now-ubiquitous notion of hybridity, the "interstitial space between fixed identifications," may illuminate the complexity and multiple paradoxes of of Jewish secularization, which cannot, I think, be simply reduced to the notion of "internal colonialism" or (to put it in more old-fashioned terms) "assimilation" (Bhabha 1994: 4). The notion of assimilation rests on outdated conceptions of purely Jewish realms, free from colonial contagion—but where might one discover such cultural purity? It is possible to argue, it seems to me, that secularization has meant simultaneously the Westernization of Jews and the Judaization of the West, if one grants Spinoza a pioneering role and recognizes Jewish political impulses as primary support for such emblematically secularist values as *Bildung* and the separation of church and state.

The study of Jewish secularization, once the notion that it simply represents Europeanization has been qualified, invites the question of what constitutes the Jewishness of Jewish secularity. Such an inquiry might benefit from Talal Asad's insight that secularity, and not only religion, is amenable to anthropological analysis, as a network of embodied practices, modes of being, "cultivated sensibilities and passions, an orchestration of the senses" which emerges from the cultural "shift in grammar" that is secularization (Asad 2003: 17 and 95). Asad's approach, which focuses on the forms of life that are enabled by secularism or religion, and which resists ascribing bodily practice only to religion, allows us to avoid some of the pitfalls of both classical and postcolonial approaches to religion. Where classical religion has associated religion with practice (particularly Judaism and Islam), postcolonialism has often understood practice through a reductive political lens, as subjugation to gender norms or through the trope of resistance. Saba

Mahmood has indeed warned us against understanding agency solely through Enlightenment structures of autonomy and freedom, or reducing religious phenomena (as in her ethnographical research on Islamist movements) to "a relationship of negation to the existing hegemonic order" (Mahmood 2005: 25). Such analysis of what is enabled by religious conceptions and practices of the self and society is usefully extended to secular social forms. Secularization may have led to the widespread abandonment of halakhah, but Jewish practice was never simply identical with Jewish law. The Eastern European Haskalah, so often identified with Europeanization, adopted a series of European reading practices while developing new "hybrid" cultural patterns. These shifts represent both Jewish continuity and difference, since the religious, the European, and the Haskalah worldviews accorded books, whether secular or religious, a value that could border on the fetishistic; but this shared valuation led to different cultural practices of collective versus private or even "secret" reading, of constructing relationships through Talmud study or building networks through underground circulation (with forbidden books sometimes hidden inside Talmuds!). The maskilic *bukh* did not evacuate the complex canonical, textual, ritual, and bodily practices that accompanied the traditional *sefer* (sacred book) but rather transformed them, accruing a distinctive and stylized set of body practices and sensibilities that were neither traditionally Jewish nor entirely European. The Jewish secular might be conceptualized, then, neither as an expression of Jewish acculturation nor as the triumph of Jewish cultural continuity, but rather as the very site of their negotiation.

Religious/secular

It is a truism of recent studies of religion and the secular that these terms are not separate entities, related through a simple chronology or opposition: religion does not simply precede and give way to the secular, it also succeeds and penetrates it. As Jakobsen and Pellegrini put it, "the religious and the secular have been constituted in relation to each other in modernity and, indeed, *as* modernity" (Jakobsen and Pellegrini 2008: 1). Secularism is not the opposite of religion, but rather the setting for its unfolding in the modern world—narrowed, "disembedded," voluntary, called to justify itself through persuasion rather than theological claims. Secularization is a "regulatory practice," the means by which "states have created acceptable forms of religion" (Wallach Scott 2007: 92). Modern Judaism, whether "Orthodox" or Reform, is in this sense as secular as what is ordinarily thought of as Jewish secularity. More radically, "Judaism" is an *invention* of the modern age, as Jonathan Z. Smith has asserted is the case for all religions, and "religion," in general (Smith 1998: 269). We have already seen variations of this claim in Katz and Levitt, who argue that the modern nation-state narrowed Jewish identity to a religious affiliation modeled after Protestantism. And it is not only Reform Judaism that is illuminated in this perspective; Orthodoxy, too, is a modern, secular phenomenon, with even its vaunted opposition to novelty—Rabbi Moshe Sofer's famous dictum that "*Hadash asur min hatorah*" (innovation is forbidden by the Torah)—itself a cultural innovation, a radically new response to radically new circumstances.

If religion should be understood within the framework of the secular—even as an effect of secularization—the opposite is also true: the secular is deeply derivative of and embedded in religion; it may also be a *kind* of religion. Mark Taylor writes that "Religion is not limited to what occurs in churches, synagogues, mosques, and temple; rather, there is a religious dimension to all culture … When the invisible as well as the visible aspects of religion are recognized, the simplistic opposition between secularity and religion collapses and the terms of analysis are effectively recast" (Taylor 2003: 3). Such recasting has long been underway, for instance in the work of such scholars as Karl Löwith, Carl Schmitt, and Amos Funkenstein tracing the

currents of "modern political theology" (see Löwith 1949; Schmitt 1985; Funkenstein 1986). Jewish examples of secularized religious formations are not hard to discern: even the most secular and political forms of Zionism openly trace their pedigrees to messianism (just as theological messianism may be described as a disguised fantasy of Jewish power). Jewish Studies, perhaps at its very heart, is the operation of reading continuities between messianism and Marxism, midrash and psychoanalysis, the synagogue and the Yiddish theater; secular Jewish culture, from this perspective, is the transposition or translation of Jewish tradition.

Recent work by Vincent Pecora casts the translation of religion in secularity more dramatically as a struggle between divergent strains *within* secularity, reflecting secularization as a "more circuitous, partial, and uneven path" than the one described by Weber; in Pecora's view, irreducible human impulses "may provide a powerful resistance to any attempt to finish once and for all what Habermas has called the 'project' of rationalized modernity." Magic and myth, as Pecora sees it, have not disappeared and perhaps have gained strength:

> Secularization is both an enlightened liberation from dogma and an opening up of certain collective possibilities—redemptive revolution, nationalism, imperialism, racism—that could not have achieved their full and often destructive potential otherwise. In the most striking accounts of this more ambiguous process—and for me, Durkheim's reduction of the social and the religious to the same inchoate logic of collective life is chief among them—the secularization through which magic and myth is eliminated by reason may never in fact be complete. This is not simply a function of language or geography but is perhaps something to be acknowledged as the result of an irreducible set of needs in human and group psychology. One might then conclude that the society that produces Enlightenment never fully outgrows its desire for religious sources of coherence, solidarity, and historical purpose, and continually translates, or transposes, them into ever more refined and immanent, but also distorted and distorting, versions of its religious inheritance.
>
> (Pecora 2006: 18–19)

It may be relevant to studies of Jewish secularization that Pecora's analysis highlights Durkheim's rather than Weber's theories; secularization, and not only of the Jews, is haunted not only by the departed gods but also by the disappearance of community—Durkheim's "inchoate logic of collective life." Secularization not only transposes these needs, more strikingly, it allows them (in a phrase that recalls Scholem's warnings about the submerged danger of the Hebrew revival) "full and often destructive expression."

The scholarly project of demonstrating submerged continuities between the religious and the secular has often been read in the ironic mode, as the exposure of the hidden dependency of secularism on what it claims to oppose or replace. But secularity, in many formulations, has also maintained a capacious role for religion. Jonathan Sheehan has argued, for instance, that the Enlightenment concept of "culture" (more specifically, a "cultural Bible") allowed for "a sacralized space of communal heritage," ultimately reconstituting religion as "a cultural phenomenon par excellence" and an integral part of Enlightenment secularity (Sheehan 2005: ix). In Talal Asad's more radical formulation, secularity neither "translated" nor found a place for religion, but rather produced one in retrospect, as a foil for an alienated and disenchanted modernity. If modernity provided "a direct access to reality, a stripping away of myth, magic, and the sacred" (Asad 2003: 13), this "stripping away of myth" was itself accompanied by the myth of what had been stripped away. This myth is constructed, in Asad's view, primarily by secular literature, especially nineteenth-century romanticism and "the growing habit of reading

imaginative literature—being enclosed within and by it—so that images of a 'pre-modern' past acquire in retrospect a quality of enchantment" (Asad 2003: 14).

Culture, for Asad, Pecora, and Sheehan, is the privileged site where the religious and the secular meet, even while maintaining their difference. Quoting Adorno, Pecora argues that "the 'lost unity' of art and religion cannot be recovered by contemporary efforts, because such past unity depended less on an artist's autonomous will than on 'the whole objective structure of society during certain phases of history.'" Nevertheless,

> "every work of art still bears the imprint of its magical origin," an imprint visible now not in specific religious contents but in the expressive traits of art as a category: its "halo of uniqueness, its inherent claim to represent something absolute," a "spell" that the Enlightenment's unerring tendency toward the domination of nature, embodied in the modern artist's ever more instrumental and conscious control of his or her materials, actually keeps alive in the rigorous attempt to eliminate all facile or commonly accepted versions of it.
>
> (Pecora 2006: 22)

Secular Jewish culture is a particularly pointed case study for such a position, since it owes its origins to the critique of religion: Haskalah literature begins as anti-Hasidic parody and satire, and rationality is among its explicit ideological aims. Even at the outset, however, secular literature took on the role of preserving, even inventing (as Asad would see it) Jewish tradition, creating enchanted worlds precisely at the moment Weber claimed was characterized by disenchantment. In this realm, too, religion and the secular—at their most apparently sharp extremes—worked together to create the foundations of modern Jewish culture.

Conclusion

The era when scholars might attempt a metanarrative of Jewish secularization—a "Jewish secularization thesis"—is certainly behind us. Nevertheless, the broad outlines of such a thesis are clear enough: The dialectical continuities Weber and Berger detected for Protestant secularization exist, as well, for Judaism, in the rationalization of Jewish monotheism, in the proto-humanism of rabbinic thought, or in the mystical antinomianism mined by Sabbatai Zevi. But Jewish secularization, read more fundamentally as the abandonment of Jewish practice, needed no such internal impetuses, reacting instead to the pressures and attractions of the non-Jewish context. Jewish secularization as social integration was, however, an incomplete process, with limits arising within both the Jewish and larger spheres. These limits, and the Jewish social and cultural patterns that persisted into the modern period, worked not to dissolve particular Jewish identities within a "neutral" secularity but rather to create new forms of the Jewish secular, alongside "secular" forms of the Jewish religion.

Recent developments in secularization studies have demonstrated that Jews are "good to think with," in the ways they expose the limits of Enlightenment universalism, keep in view the bodily practices slighted in metaphysical conceptions of secularization, and overflow the boundaries of what has normatively been understood to constitute "religion." The postcolonial critique of secularization as capitulation to a dominant culture, moreover, is familiar territory to students of Jewish history, in which modernity has often taken the form of a struggle between nationalists and assimilationists, traditionalists and modernizers. Nevertheless, the very familiarity of the postcolonial critique should warn us against its unreflective adoption. Secularization was not only, it seems to me, cultural imperialism over Jewish victims, mouthpieces or dupes; such a

stance rests on distinctions between the native and the foreign that can longer be sustained and damns ideas only by their provenance. Nor can cultural resistance be so easily separated from cultural submission: the postcolonialist critique—for instance, that Europeanization domesticated rather than liberated Jewish women—itself owes something to Enlightenment values. Jewish religious formations, in the ruptures of secularization, seemed to lose the very ground on which they stood; but we have arrived, perhaps, at another such juncture, in which secularism and its critiques face another abyss. Whether religion holds the power to rescue us from it remains an open question.

Note

1 In an earlier draft presented at a roundtable on Jewish secularism at the 2007 AJS conference in Toronto, this paper received the close reading and critical scrutiny of a group of scholars, including David Biale and the two respondents Laura Levitt and Lynn Davidman.

Essential reading

Biale, David. *Not in the Heavens: The Tradition of Jewish Secular Thought*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2011. A comprehensive history of Jewish secular thought, with Spinoza serving as the founding figure in a number of its dimensions; argues that, in secularism, the traditional taxonomy of God, Torah, and Israel did not disappear but were reconfigured.

Boyarin, Daniel. *Unheroic Conduct: The Rise of Heterosexuality and the Invention of the Jewish Man*. Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California, 1997. In an analysis that spans the rabbinic to the modern era, Boyarin argues that Jewish gender formations were not merely different from European dominant models, but rather deliberate forms of cultural resistance.

Feiner, Shmuel. *The Origins of Jewish Secularization in Eighteenth-Century Europe*, trans. Chaya Naor. Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2011 (2010). Analyzes the emergence of "libertines" and "freethinkers" in a number of Central and Western European urban centers, and the tensions that arose between these "epicureans" and the "guardians of the religion."

Hyman, Paula. *Gender and Assimilation in Modern Jewish History: The Roles and Representations of Women*. Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1995. Pioneered the study of secularization (or, in Hyman's terms, assimilation) and gender, arguing that the effects of secularization were sometimes diametrically different for women as for men; chapters focus on the German–Jewish, Eastern-European Jewish, and American–Jewish immigrant contexts.

Mufti, Aamir. *Enlightenment in the Colony: The Jewish Question and the Crisis of Postcolonial Culture*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2007. Explores the history of "the Jewish Question" in broad but precise postcolonial perspective, drawing suggestive comparisons between the experiences of Jews as religious minority in Europe and those of Muslims in India.

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——"The Influence of Religion and Society on Each Other at the Time of the Emancipation," in *Jewish Emancipation and Self-Emancipation* (Philadelphia: JPS, 1986), 49–60.

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12

MEMORY

Nils Roemer

Jewish studies have long since recognized remembrance as a vital factor in the formation of Jewish religion, cultures, and identities. It was not, however, until Maurice Halbwachs' *Les cadres sociaux de la mémoire* (The Social Frameworks of Memory) (1925) that memory became more widely described as the social process of recalling the past. Sigmund Freud in his *Moses and Monotheism* (1939) presupposed the existence of a biological basis for the transmission of memory. He also promoted the view of memory as something stored. His "A Note Upon the Mystic Writing Pad" (1925) set the model, wherein he argued that memories can be reproduced at any time with certainty as long as one knows where these memories are deposited in the mind. To Freud the challenge was facilitating their retrieval, but not the question of storage (Freud 1961). Yet remembrance is a process that actively shapes what it recalls. It does not supplant the past but transforms it and warrants a wider multi-disciplinary exploration that remains mindful of the particular practices of articulation, representation, and reenactment of the past.

Memory continues to feature in religious ritual and practices, in literary imagination, in artistic creations and in scholarly research. Preservation and innovation, continuity and discontinuity, and revolution and evolution commingle in the weaving of memory. Moreover, the advent of modernity, the Holocaust, and its aftermath have altered the texture and fabric of Jewish memory in a lasting manner. The digital world continues to transform it. Yet notwithstanding its many profound changes of form, remembrance has only become more pervasive. This popularity has been described, variously, as a "memory boom," a "memory industry," or it is simply noted that "memory is everywhere" (Winter 2000; Klein 2000: 127; Confino 1997: 1387). Coinciding with the rise of postmodernism and poststructuralism, interest in "memory" has been critiqued "as a therapeutic alternative to historical discourse" (Klein 2000: 145). Along these lines, Alon Confino rebukes memory studies for often lacking critical reflection on method and theory (Confino 1997: 1387). Responding to these concerns, Jan Assman and John Czaplicks argue that the "objectification and crystallization of communicated meaning in different forms like texts, images, buildings, monuments, cities, or even landscapes and collectively shared knowledge is a prerequisite of its transmission in the culturally institutionalized heritage of a society." Cultural memory, they argue, "preserves the store of knowledge from which a group derives an awareness of its unity and peculiarity" (Assman and Czaplicks 1995: 130). To many critics even this materialization of memory in artifacts and practices is simply a strategy for justifying the "analogical leap from individual memories to Memory" (Klein 2000: 135).

Notwithstanding this ongoing critique of the process of remembrance, there exists a consensus over the social dimension of memory. To Maurice Halbwachs, social frameworks like families, schools, political parties, and churches facilitate the construction of individual and collective memories. In these frameworks, groups create rituals, traditions, and experiences that recall the past (Halbwachs 1992). Building upon Halbwachs, the French historian Pierre Nora provides a more historicized understanding of memory and history. Nora's *Realms of Memory* (1992) contends that there are no more *mileux de mémoire* (environments of memory) but only *lieux de mémoire* (places of memory). Nora believes that with the advent of modernity, history and memory stand in opposition; he associates memory with the idea of loss and absence. His multi-volume study investigates French remembrance in monuments, street names, archeological excavation sites, museums, exhibitions, tourist guidebooks, catalogues, photographs, paintings, and postcards. By utilizing these varied sites of memory, Nora seeks to present a history that is "interested in memory not as remembrance but as the overall structure of the past within the present" (Nora 1992: xxiv).

Nora's collaborative and multi-volume study operates within the framework of the territorial or cultural nation. The ambiguity of the central category of French memory space is hardly explored; instead a national perspective is constantly assumed, which relegates Jewish sites to a few fleeting references. Moreover, in imagining the nation as homogeneous, this otherwise path-breaking work fails to consider the varied modalities of the production of heritages.

The role of religious beliefs and practices in the fashioning of collective memory outside political states and cultures was one of Halbwachs' objects of study. In Judaism, as Yosef Hayim Yerushalmi's influential study *Zakhor: Jewish History and Jewish Memory* (1989) illustrates, religious practices, particularly in rituals, recitals, and texts, functioned as "vehicles of memory." The publication of this seminal work, which investigates practices of Jewish memory from biblical to modern times, inaugurated a new approach to Jewish memory. For Jews before the advent of modernity, Yerushalmi contended, history did not matter, "for whatever memories were unleashed by the commemorative rituals and liturgies were not a matter of intellection, but of evocation and identification" (Yerushalmi 1989: 44). The forces of modernity excised and reshaped these traditional channels of memory and introduced critical historical scholarship. Whereas Jewish historians examined cultural, political, and social realities, Jewish memory had been enacted in religious rituals and festivals that recalled the interaction between the Jewish people and God (Yerushalmi 1989: 8–9). Like Nora, Yerushalmi views modern historical studies in opposition to traditional forms of memory: "Jewish historiography can never replace Jewish memory because these are both different traditions in the lives of Jewish people" (Yerushalmi 1989: 101). Indeed, he emphasizes the adverse relationship of modern scholarship to memory. The uncritical, holistic, and immersive quality of memory contradicts the perceived detachment of scholarly investigation and objectivity. For Yerushalmi, modern Jewish studies scholarship shapes the past "[w]ith unprecedented energy, it continually recreates an ever more detailed past whose shapes and textures memory does not recognize" (Yerushalmi 1989: 94).

From religious practice to modern memory

Yerushalmi too was keenly aware of how spaces of great significance in Jewish history throughout the ages had contributed to a sense of belonging, regardless of the way their past was recalled. As Yerushalmi suggested, Jewish life in the Diaspora vacillated between concepts of exile and domicile, that is, an awareness of its unfulfilled state in dispersion and a profound sense of attachment to particular places (Yerushalmi 1997). Far from mattering little, the Diaspora during the medieval and modern period conjured and invoked a sense of home and gave rise to local

memories. Places continued to matter to the literature of nostalgia that emerged in modern Europe, thereby providing a powerful means of navigating the path between tradition and modernity. The physical persistence of synagogues, cemeteries, religious artifacts, and historical documents anchored remembrance and bestowed continuity in the face of obvious discontinuity.

Much scholarship focused on memory presupposes the existence of located, coherent cultures, but according to James Clifford "the old localizing strategies" may obscure as much as they reveal (Clifford 1999: 245). Jewish nostalgia in the nineteenth century, for example, emerged most often from travel experiences. Yet travelers' recall of the past did not shape an enduring and fixed legacy, but entailed an element of ambivalence. Instead of retrieving the past, remembering in the modern age involved creating and remediating the past in a new format, thereby opening it up to interpretation and debate. The nineteenth-century Anglo–Jewish neo-classical artist Solomon Alexander Hart, for example, traveled extensively (Hart 1882). "The Rejoicing of the Law in Leghorn" was among the few oil paintings that emerged from his travels in Italy during 1841–42. For Hart, travel facilitated an imaginative temporal journey: viewed through the prism of the neo-classical movement, Italian Sephardic synagogues appear as much part of the classical canon as do vestiges of Roman architecture, churches, and Renaissance art. His wide canvas opens a view into the interior of the Sephardic synagogue in Leghorn, showcasing the interior brightly illuminated by beams of lights and the community in festive, colorful, and oriental dresses carrying Torah scrolls. The focus on *Simhat Torah* (Rejoicing of the Torah) emphasizes the continued renewal of Jewish life and worship, the day on which the reading of the Torah scrolls ends and begins again with Genesis (Kleeblatt and Mann 1986: 130). Where Simhat Torah marks the conclusion and new beginning of the annual cycle of public Torah readings, which served through the ages to recall the sacred traditions, its depiction in an oil painting observes the custom without enacting it. To be sure, placed alongside Hart's sketches of Christian places of worship, the painting depicts the ongoing vibrancy of Jewish religious traditions as it consciously aims to represent the present and recall the grandeur of the Sephardic past. The painting, however, also captures a sense of uncertainty. The Rabbis processing with the scrolls represent a generational progression: the first is confident and at peace; the second is uncertain, looking upward, and seems to be questioning God, while the third is down-trodden, looking wearily towards a child peeking out of the crowd. The last might be doubtful as to whether the next generation will be able to renew the covenant, as the child appears to be only watching. Yet at the same time, the child might symbolize hope for the future, yet remaining curious and shy, representing youthful uncertainty. The last scroll carrier perhaps remembers the initial enthusiasm with which he was introduced to the synagogue at his bar mitzvah. Hart's painting thus represents not just the glorification of Sephardic Jewry along with a sense of Jewish vibrancy, but interlaced with these bold strokes is uncertainty and ambivalence.

Not unlike Hart, Grace Aguilar's recall of the past created new channels of historical remembrance to serve contemporary needs. In her historical novel *The Vale of Cedars, or the Martyr: A Story of Spain in the Fifteenth Century* (1850), Aguilar suggests the path from the Iberian Inquisition to the Jews' arrival in England. Using the model of the secret religiosity of the Marranos (crypto-Jews), Aguilar represented the perseverance of Judaism as a domestic and feminized religion (Valman 2007: 90–129). Written during the 1830s, the novel relates the story of the Marrano heroine Marie, who attempts to resist the romantic advances of a Christian (Aguilar 1887: 40). Eventually tried by the Inquisition, Marie is rescued but finally chooses to die as a Jew rather than convert (Aguilar 1887: 249). Early modern Spain is remembered as the place where Jews flourished until they were persecuted; Aguilar implicitly draws a parallel with Victorian England, where Jews were "Jews only in their religion – Englishmen in everything else … In externals, and in all secular thoughts and actions, the English naturalized Jew is … an

Englishman … Only in some private and personal characteristics, and in religious belief, does the Jew differ from his neighbours" (Aguilar 1847: 16, 17). The novel, too, not only recalls the past but makes that past usable for modern Jewry.

Across the channel, in nineteenth-century European Jewish culture, remembrance of the ancestors emerged in urban centers. As Arnold Eisen's study beautifully illustrates, an author like Auguste Widal (alias Daniel Stauben), when describing his travels among Alsatian Jews in his *Scènes de la Vie Juive* (1860), provides an idyllic view of a still enchanted culture (Eisen 1998). As with Hart's painting, the travelogue becomes a performance of memory without, however, renewing the traditional forms of memory that it observes. Alongside Alsatian Jewry, nineteenth-century European writers recalled in particular the legacy of Jewish ghettos. Together with Prague's legendary heritage, rediscovered and popularized by Wolf Pascheles in his *Sippurim* (1847–64), Worms represented the other storehouse for such narratives. Both communities prided themselves on Rashi's alleged close association with their synagogues (Pascheles 1870: 27). Remembering the past of these communities created continuity in an age of radical change.

In the nineteenth century and early twentieth century in Europe, historical writing fueled public commemoration of the scions of the German enlightenment like Moses Mendelssohn and others (Miron 2003). Although there were a few such examples of public remembrance of people and places, however, Jewish memorialization continued to have a propensity toward textual remembrance. For this reason, at the beginning of the twentieth century, the Galician Jewish journalist and novelist Karl Emil Franzos searched almost in vain for public monuments of famous German Jews (Franzos 1902). The scarcity of monuments reflected traditional religious Jewish opposition to making images of men, although this was not translated into a disregard for physical structures and religious artifacts. Even during the Middle Ages, cemeteries, for example, played an important role in the commemoration of Jewish martyrs for local communities and visitors. In fact, Jews prayed in the cemetery at the graves of martyrs despite rabbinical disapproval. In Worms, pious travelers chiseled their names on the back of tombstones and on the chair of Rashi, where he had sat surrounded by his students. It was for the preservation of treasured objects and the restoration of holy sites that Jews from various communities donated money during the nineteenth century, for example, in Worms (Roemer: 2010).

The memory that is conjured by historical sites appears to be all that has remained of an otherwise absent past. Nora contextualized the shifting meaning of memory spaces within the paradigm of modernity, and thereby overstated the homogenous and stable nature of pre-modern remembrance as well as the discontinuity and rupture in the transition to modernity. Historical sites offered a sense of continuity in an age in which religious reforms, social advancements, and above all civic equality fundamentally changed the parameters of Jewish life and culture and with it the forms of remembrance.

Over the course of the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, then, the past became increasingly remediated as new channels of remembrance did not simply store but reshaped the past, reflecting new cultural practices, contestations, and debates. With the advent of modernity, Jews as a diasporic community faced the challenge that their past had not been preserved as a history. Jewish books were scattered in European libraries, archival records stored in city, state, and imperial archives. In contrast, emerging nation-states recorded their victories in memorials and street names, in their cities' capitals and in the historical writings of the time. Isaac Jost, the first author of a comprehensive history of the Jews, was keenly aware of the predicament and wondered in his introduction to his *General History of the Jews* (1832) "Is there a history of slaves?" (Jost 1832: 1: 2). Jewish historians in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries had the task of transposing the widely accepted, Christianized and nationalized forms of historical writing onto their own historical narrative in order to immortalize the Jewish tradition. Thus Jost

employed a Christian chronology and recreated a social–political history of Jews out of non-Jewish sources rather than describing Jewish life and culture. Notwithstanding this conflict-ridden beginning of Jewish scholarship, in the second half of the nineteenth century popular Jewish historical societies and institutions participated in the transformation of *Wissenschaft des Judentums* (science of Judaism or Jewish studies) from a scholarly discipline to an institution of public education. The nineteenth-century German Jewish historian Heinrich Graetz described the advent of Wissenschaft, therefore, not as a rupture but as an awakening of the Jews, who emerged from the night of the grave (*Grabesnacht*) "rubbing their eyes … searching to restore their memory and bringing forth their past glories" (Graetz 1853–74: 448–49). Graetz's appeal to the idea of restoration and recall thinly veiled the fact that modern Jewish historical writing marked a discontinuity with the past that it shaped. Yet, not unlike medieval chroniclers, Heinrich Graetz and Leopold Zunz epitomized the courage of past martyrs, for example, from the First Crusade. Their historical narratives constructed continuity in their remembrance where there existed otherwise sharp discontinuity (Roemer 1996).

The Holocaust and shattered memory

When, in Jerusalem in 1945, the Hebrew scholar Abraham Habermann published the Hebrew chronicles and liturgical dirges from the period of medieval persecution, he believed that mourning could find its first expression through these texts, until other forms of remembrance for the Holocaust were found. Quoting from the Babylonian Talmud (Shabbat 13a), he expressed the inability to comprehend, let alone find words for the erasure of European Jewry. Habermann hoped that in the meantime these medieval sources, which vividly depict the martyrdom of the Rhineland communities, would effectively express the horror of the death camps (Habermann 1945: ix–xii).

Habermann's book indicated a shift from secular investigation to theological interpretation and remembrance of the past. Yet historical thinking was not unchallenged even in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Some Jewish critics took aim at the overbearing presence of historical thinking, and, as David Myers has argued, anti-historicism became a pivotal force within the modernizing debates, emerging from a number of religious and political voices and from amongst the Zionists. The turn against history and to theology for the interpretation of the past thus significantly predates the Holocaust (Myers 2003). Yet the Holocaust more than any other historical event resulted in the questioning of both the ability of historians and the practices of remembrance to recall traumatic experiences (Caruth 1995). When the British liberated Bergen-Belsen on April 15, 1945, the London *Times* correspondent gave voice to that which defied narrative, comprehension, or representation: "It is my duty to describe something beyond the imagination of mankind" (Cook 2007: 106). For many scholars of the Holocaust, the events pose formidable challenges to the historian's ability to comprehend. In a collection of essays titled *Probing the Limits of Representation: Nazism and the "Final Solution"* (1992) Saul Friedländer declared: "[We] are dealing with an event which tests our traditional conceptual and representational categories, an 'event at the limits'" (Friedländer 1992: 2–3). Others, like the literary scholar Lawrence Langer, defined the "literature of atrocity" as "concerned with an order of reality which the human mind has never confronted before, and whose essential quality the language of fact was simply insufficient to convey" (Langer 1975: 3). Along similar lines Alvin Rosenfeld in his *A Double Dying* wondered how to read historical documents from the period: "A manuscript written secretly and at the risk of life in the Warsaw ghetto … such a manuscript begins to carry with it the aura of a holy text. Surely we do not take it in our hands and read it as we do those books that reach us through the normal channels of composition and

publication. But how do we read it? At this point in the study of Holocaust literature, the question remains open-ended" (Rosenfeld 1980: 17). Indeed the obligation to remember and the task to comprehend the past increasingly grate against each other.

Scholars of the Holocaust continue to wrestle with this challenge at a time when there has been a burgeoning of desire to record and store individual experiences and memories of the Holocaust. The Fortunoff Video Archive project at Yale University, led by Dori Laub and Geoffrey Hartman and the Shoah Foundation at the University of Southern California, aim to record Holocaust survivors' testimonies. The sheer quantity of these testimonies and many fictional accounts, testimonies, and plays has led others to conclude that the memory of the Holocaust has threatened to erase the Holocaust. Insofar as memory appears to silence history, memory, Patrick Hutton observes, "has become a pressing problem for history itself" (Hutton 2000: 534).

However, it is the nature of traumatic experience to engender a shift from history to memory, according to some scholars. Lawrence Langer, for example, in his *Admitting the Holocaust: Collected Essays* (1995) argues that traumatic memories of the Holocaust do not form a chronologically progressive account, but the remembered past disrupts the present (Langer 1995: 13–24). These memories stand outside of historical time. Langer draws on the complicated and conflicted notion of trauma, which has become a broader term referring both to the psychical experiences of individuals and to the collective experience of traumatized communities (Alexander et al. 2004). One might argue that what an individual recalls of a traumatic experience is not the trauma itself, but rather narratives about the event. Addressing this issue, Dominick LaCapra in his *Writing History, Writing Trauma* (2001) distinguishes between writing about trauma and writing trauma. Writing about trauma falls in the domain of historiography "related to the project of reconstructing the past as objectively as possible" while writing trauma "is a metaphor in that writing indicates some distance from trauma." Writing trauma for LaCapra involves the process of "acting out, working over, and to some extent working through in analyzing and 'giving voice' to the past – processes of coming to terms with traumatic 'experiences', limit events, and their symptomatic effects that achieve articulation in different combinations and hybridized forms" (LaCapra 2001: 186).

Recalling the Holocaust, perhaps, requires a process of remembrance that transforms the actual experience. The application of the idea of memory storage and retrieval potentially reaches its limits with traumatic events on this scale. Nonetheless, LaCapra cautions against binary oppositions like that between "objectivity and subjectivity, objectification and empathy, reconstruction and dialogic exchange, cognition and affect, thought and practice, excess and limits" (LaCapra 2001: 194). Historical reconstruction of the past assumes objectivity but "truth claims are necessary but not sufficient conditions of historiography" (LaCapra 2001: 196). What LaCapra is interested in is the interaction of forces where meaning and explanation can be constructed, and employed to "give voice" to the past. The literary critic James Young puts it in a different way: "With the rise of contemporary literary and historical theory, scholars of the Holocaust have come increasingly to recognize that interpretations of both the texts and events of the Holocaust are intertwined … What is remembered of the Holocaust depends on how it is remembered, and how events are remembered depends in turn on the texts now giving them form" (Young 1990: 1).

The remembered traumatic experience, however, thereby also becomes part of public debate and contestation. Peter Novick's *The Holocaust in American Life* (1994) posited a sharp difference between history and memory only to indict memory as part of a politically motivated industry of remembrance. Memory, according to Novick, is just not historical but in fact "ahistorical, even anti-historical." In contrast to memory, historical comprehension means "to be aware of its complexity, to have sufficient detachment to see it from multiple perspectives, to accept the

ambiguities, including moral ambiguities, of protagonists' motives and behavior," while collective memory "simplifies; sees events from a single, committed perspective; is impatient with ambiguities of any kind; reduces events to mythic archetypes" (Novick 1994: 4). Novick's interpretation of memory, then, is intimately tied to his attempt to critically analyze remembrance of the Holocaust.

Early filmmakers, novelists, and poets remained keenly aware of their limited ability to represent. They recorded their attenuated relationship to memory itself. *Night and Fog* (1955), directed by Alain Resnais, for example, captures the camps of Auschwitz and Majdanek. The voice-over to the black and white images of the camps emphasizes the void and silence, the absence rather the presence of the past: "No footstep is heard but our own … Who knows anything? The reality of these camps, despised by those who built them and unfathomable to those who endured them – what hope do we have of truly capturing the reality … Of this brick dormitory and these tormented dreams, we can show you the outer shell, the surface" (Resnais 1955). In the movie, the limits of comprehension and representation restrict what can be remembered. For the German Jewish author, Peter Weiss, the realization of not being a Holocaust survivor overlaps with his recognition that the Holocaust is unrecoverable and distant. Walking through the remnants of the camp, he feels disappointment: "I slowly walk through this grave. I feel nothing. I only see these floors, these walls" (Weiss 1982: 118). Paul Celan painfully recognizes that "*das, was geschah*" ("that which happened") is no longer readily accessible. In his poem, "Engführung" (Straitening) the speaker appears to command the reader: "Do not read any more – look! Do not look any more – go!" The short commands order the reader to follow and see, yet the sites are silent: "Nowhere does anyone ask after you." Even the graves conjure not the memories of the Holocaust: "The place where they lay, it has a name – it has none" (Celan 2002: 115). This potential void, however, has been replaced by what Marianne Hirsch termed "postmemory" which "is mediated not through recollection but through an imaginative investment and creation." According to her, "postmemory characterizes the experience of those who grow up dominated by narratives that preceded their birth" (Hirsch 1997: 22). Whereas Resnais, Weiss, and Celan experienced and articulated the silence and void of the past, postmemory profusely recalls the past, albeit mediated through inherited narratives and images. Postmemory therefore reenacts the process of retrieval by forging continuity, transforming that which was "beyond the imagination of mankind" into narratives, movies, images, and sites of remembrances. Such dissemination also expands the range of, and consumers for, the pasts of others. Michael Rothberg's *Multidirectional Memory*, for example, illustrates how and why Jewish memories become usable not only for Jews (Rothberg 2009). The transformation of memory is now being processed and delivered for multiple audiences.

Storage and retrieval in the digital world

More than ever, the past emerges in a wider, more diverse geographical space in which Jews and non-Jews, historians, writers, artists, and many other individuals partake. Jewish memory exists today more than ever not only for Jews. Rather, Jewish and non-Jewish memories more often appear as intertwined (Gruber 2002; Rothberg 2009; Roemer 2010).

The digital age with its unprecedented possibilities for the technological reproduction of objects and diverse practices of remembrance is only intensifying this process of confluence. Yet spaces, communities, books, images, and monuments are also taking on new meaning.

The advent of the digitized world has fundamentally altered forms of communication, sense of community, and also the process of remembrance. Notwithstanding its transformative impact, the book historian Robert Darnton comprehends the digital revolution less as a fundamental break but more in continuity with previous revolutions in print media communication. To

Darnton, we have recently entered the fourth information age in the history of humanity, which builds on the invention of writing, the development of the codex, and the spread of print. Catalyzed by the Internet, this new information age builds on the massive social and cultural changes ushered in by the previous information ages (Darnton 2008 and 2009). The digital transformation represents a process of reoccupation or even remediation (Bolter and Grusin 1999).

Moreover, the current shift from history to narrative, from the producer of texts and artifacts to the reader and recipient is also evident in the world of the museum. The Jewish Museum in New York, for example, invites visitors to "tell the story of the Jewish people through more than 800 works of art." The exhibited objects provide the prism for the "dynamic exploration of art and ideas" (www.thejewishmuseum.org). Museums like this one represent a shift from history to story and "journey," while social media seek to expand the visitor's experience of the museum. These visitors, however, encounter and traverse the museum's feeds as curators of various online communities to which they belong. Removed from the physical location, the individual becomes the consumer and creator of memory. Similarly, but in a somewhat different manner, the Jewish Museum in Vienna attributes significance to the individual as the agent of memory. The museum avoids a grand narrative and evades fixed chronology. Instead, the relative emptiness of the exhibition room invokes loss and destruction. The design, then, invites visitors to become an active participant in the production of meaning. For Moshe Rosman, however, the blurred line between consumers and producers of meaning and memory represents an epistemological crisis for Jewish studies that calls into question the premise of detachment and objectivity and makes larger historical narratives impossible (Rosman 2007). Reading the past in this light presents the history of the Jews unraveled into myriad experiences shaped by specific historical contexts; for Rosman this plurality defies the possibility of remembrance.

Virtual worlds of memory, which forge new representations of the past and new acts of remembrance, also provoke debates familiar in the humanities about the status of the authorial voice and the function of the reader as the producer of meaning. The participatory platform Hypercities, for example, headed by Todd Pressner, allows users to create maps of places in relationship to textual and visual material. Making available these resources allows the creation of multiple mappings, perspectives and pasts in which the user becomes the curator. Instead of offering interpretations, the project views itself as a "collaborative and educational platform for traveling back in time to explore the historical layers of city spaces in a interactive, hypermedia environment" (hypercities.com [accessed 12 March 2014]). Currently a large map collection allows the tracing of Berlin's geographical development from 1237 to the present by overlaying historical maps onto Google maps along with vast amounts of other historical information (including Holocaust narratives). Instead of a single authorial voice or narrative, Hypercities proffers "one story at a time" (Pressner 2006). A printed text offers a clearly charted path; in Hypercities and other sites like mapstory.com, the encounter with text and images from the past is highly individualized.

Yet opposing historical scholarship to popular recollection obstructs the comingling of the academic humanities with the social–cultural, political construction of memory. Associated with any historical artifact is not just its history, but also the process of its remembrance, destruction, and restoration. The historical source is always a product of its remembrance. In today's digitized world, the dichotomy has become even less useful; what is required in the study of memory is the mapping of media-specific interpretations of recollections of the past (Hayles 2004 and 2012). Media and mediation are at the forefront for those studying collective memory, who will have to overcome the model of storage and retrieval. Seeing new technologies as a form of mediation of memory within the spectrum of other processes of narrating and representing the

past might allow for the comprehension of varied practices, and for viewing remembrance as a process that actively shapes the past. Poems and paintings, religious rituals and public performances, historical sites and monuments, books and digitized objects all employ medium-specific modes of representation that the study of collective memories has barely begun to map and interpret.

Essential reading

Eisen, A. M. (1998) *Rethinking Modern Judaism: Ritual, Commandment, Community*, Chicago: University of Chicago Press. A highly informative and original investigation of Jewish memory in popular practices, religious rituals, and modern thought.

Roemer, N. (2010) *German Cities – Jewish Memories: The Story of Worms*, Hanover: University Press of New England. An investigation of the lieu de mémoire of Ashkenaz in Jewish culture over a millennium.

Roskies, D. (1999) *The Jewish Search for a Usable Past*, Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press. A wide-ranging discussion of Jewish remembrance in Western and Eastern Europe, America, and Israel.

Yerushalmi, Y. H. (1989) *Zakhor: Jewish History and Jewish Memory*, New York: Schocken. The classic and still most comprehensive theoretical discussion of Jewish memory and history.

Young, J. E. (1993) *The Texture of Memory: Holocaust Memorials and Meaning*, New Haven and London: Yale University Press. Groundbreaking study of Holocaust remembrance in monuments, public art, and culture in Europe, Israel, and America.

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13

BODIES

Barbara Kirshenblatt-Gimblett

What has been called the "corporeal turn" in recent Jewish studies is provoking anxiety. If "Judaism's mind has been more interesting and more influential than Judaism's body," a distinction worthy of study in its own right, critics are calling for "a swing back to its more traditional mooring in the text (which, in any case, has often dealt with the body)." But those who took the corporeal turn never left the text behind. Rather, they brought a concern with the body to the text and found new ways to read and think about those texts. What troubles the critics would seem to lie elsewhere. Reviewing several books published in the 1990s, Hillel Halkin characterized the trend as "feminizing Jewish Studies," which he did not intend as a compliment (Halkin 1998; for an alternative perspective, see Bunzl 2000). The problem was not that their authors ignored the text.[1] Rather, it was the way they read the texts; their approach was marked, in his view, by "postmodern thinking," skepticism, a "non- to anti-Zionist" stance, an affirmation of "Diaspora Jewish identity," and above all an open embrace of feminism and feminist theory (and, though he does not say so in so many words, a preoccupation with sexuality and homosexuality). Non–Orthodox Jewish America is, in his view, suffering from deep confusion, exacerbated (if not caused) by the "sexual revolution," and this kind of work just makes things worse. A firestorm ensued, fueled a few months later by Gabriel Schoenfeld's wholesale condemnation of "the voguish hybrid known as gender studies" in Holocaust scholarship (Schoenfeld 1998: 44).

Claiming that this trend "does not yet have a name," Halkin called it "the new Jewish scholarship." A year earlier, Jonathan Boyarin and Daniel Boyarin had announced "the new Jewish cultural studies," and a year later *The Chronicle of Higher Education* published its own assessment of "the new Jewish studies"(Boyarin and Boyarin 1997; Heller 1999). In an endorsement for the Boyarins' book, Eric Santner defined the new Jewish cultural studies as work that brings "to bear recent innovations in the study of gender and sexuality on readings of canonical Jewish texts."[2] While this may represent a corporeal turn in Jewish *textual* studies, it does not represent the full potential for a corporeal turn in Jewish studies more broadly conceived, a topic to which I will return. What is new in "the new Jewish cultural studies" is not only the concern with gender and sexuality (corporeality is not to be limited to these important topics in any case) but also the cultural turn in literary studies and the emergence of cultural studies.[3] Text has not gone away. Rather, the corporeal turn has intensified interest in text and offered new ways to think about text as a social, corporeal, and material practice (Biddick 1996; Biddick 2003; Kirshenblatt-Gimblett 1982).

If anything, text is everything. So powerful a metaphor for culture has text become that anything usefully understood as text has become fair game for "reading," including film, performance, landscape, image, fashion, the city, and last but not least, the body – note that Daniel Boyarin's appointment at the University of California is in "Talmudic culture" and *Carnal Israel* is subtitled *"reading* sex in Talmudic *culture"* (emphasis added) (Boyarin 1993). Scholars speak of "writing the body." They speak of the body as "the inscribed surface of events" (Foucault 1984). "Socially inscribed," the body "becomes the text that is written upon it"(Grosz 1987: 2; see also Grosz 1994). But, as Elliot Wolfson has demonstrated so eruditely in *Circle in the Square: Studies in the Use of Gender in Kabbalistic Symbolism,* the textualization of the body and embodiment of text are not new Jewish preoccupations. The people of the book are also the people of the body, to paraphrase Howard Eilberg-Schwartz, an early contributor to the new Jewish cultural studies, and, as even canonical Jewish texts amply demonstrate, the body is not only good to think about, it is also good to think with (Eilberg-Schwartz 1992; see also Gilman 1991; Biale 1992; Adler 1998; Weissler 1998; Prell 1999). Has an interest in the body lessened the "textualist" emphasis in Jewish studies? No. But it has altered "its traditional mooring in the text" by changing where and how scholars are dropping the anchor.

What is at stake is the identity – some might say the soul – of Jewish studies itself. There is a difference between Jewish studies and the study of Jews. Jewish studies as it has developed in the United States over the last thirty years is still multidisciplinary, with an emphasis on textual analysis and history. Those studying Jews in other ways – in the social sciences and the arts – do so largely on the margins of their respective disciplines, not in Jewish studies proper (for example, Dominguez 1993). In contrast, the new Jewish studies is interdisciplinary – even postdisciplinary – and this in itself poses a threat. As Susan M. Kahn pointedly asks: "Can Jewish studies survive an intense interaction with other disciplines?" (Heller 1999: A22). Such interaction – and the particular interdisciplinary formations that emerge from it – have profound implications for how subjects are constituted for study, the assessment of their importance, the value accorded theory, the analytical tools available, and the kinds of objects that get analyzed. Moreover, much that is not new in other fields may seem new – and even threatening – to Jewish studies as presently constituted.

The result is a culture war, as Naomi Seidman characterizes the situation in her review of David Biale's edited volume *Cultures of the Jews: A New History*, which won the 2003 National Jewish Book Award (Seidman 2004). On the one side is the "Berkeley school" (or, California school, to include Stanford) and on the other, the position articulated by David Roskies in his review of the same book. Roskies takes issue with the goal of *Cultures of the Jews* to make Jewish cultures (in the plural) rather than Judaism (in the singular) the object of study. Biale articulated this position some eight years earlier in the first issue of *Jewish Social Studies* to appear under the editorship of Aron Rodrigue and Steven J. Zipperstein (Biale 1994). Roskies takes issue with three aspects of Biale's approach, all of which flow from the premise that Jewish studies would be better served by a more inclusive and pluralistic view of Jewish cultures rather than by the longstanding "notion of a unified, normative entity termed 'Judaism'." First, the inclusiveness of Biale's approach places too much emphasis on vernacular, rather than elite, culture. Second, his pluralism makes too much of the interaction of Jews with their neighbors. Third, the questionable outcome is a shift from "the People of the Book" to the "People of the Body" (Roskies 2003: 64). To save Jewish identity from the new Jewish studies, Roskies calls for a return to the "value of approaching Jewish history the old-fashioned way, by looking closely at great men, great texts, and great ideas" and celebrating "true and lasting [Jewish] achievements" (Roskies 2003: 66). He also warns that without the premise that "uniquely Jewish ideas and forms of behavior" arise from "internal Jewish drives," "both the Jewish body and the Jewish soul [will]

stand before us draped in foreign garments" (Roskies 2003: 64). So, too, will Jewish studies itself.

The problem with the new Jewish studies, however, is not that the body is displacing text or a concern with the mind, which it is not. What makes the critics uncomfortable is that the new approaches do not feel "authentic" or "indigenous" to Jewish studies in the way that certain kinds of textual study do. Note, for example, how earlier studies of Jewish sexuality characterized their own approach. In *Sex Laws and Customs in Judaism* (1948), "the author has sought merely to present the historic facts without bias and without preachment" (Epstein 1948: xxii).[4] In *Marital Relations, Birth Control, and Abortion in Jewish Law*, first published in 1968, "the texts are allowed to speak for themselves; the interpretation offered is consistent with and documented by the processes of legal and literary developments in Codes, Commentaries, and Responsa" (Feldman 1974: v–vi).[5] This is a long way from Matti Bunzl's *Symptoms of Modernity: Jews and Queers in Late-Twentieth-Century Vienna* (Bunzl 2004) and even further from recent landmark anthropological studies of the lived experience of contemporary Jewish marital relations, sexuality, reproductive practices, and kinship, examples of which include Susan M. Kahn's ethnography of assisted conception in Israel and Susan Starr Sered's account of maternity, modesty, and militarism in Israeli society (Kahn 2000; Sered 2000; on the history of Jews and medicine, see Efron 2001 and Epstein 1995). Phenomena new to the field, if not new to the world, can alter the disciplinary subject and ways of thinking about all that went before, but not as long as *the study of Jews* remains marginal to fields marginal to *Jewish studies*.

Anthropology, which remains marginal to Jewish studies, has played an important role in the cultural turn in history and literature, as evidenced over the last thirty years in the new historicism (spearheaded by literary scholars and inspired by the interpretive anthropology of Clifford Geertz), the new cultural history, microhistory (*microstoria*), the history of everyday life (*Alltagsgeschichte*), and even experiential history (*Erfahrungsgeschichte*) (Goldberg 1998).[6] *Carnal Israel* was written in the context of the new historicism. In 1986, *Representations,* the journal of record for the new historicism, devoted a special issue to "the making of the modern body," explaining that

> Scholars have only recently discovered that the human body itself has a history. Not only has it been perceived, interpreted, and represented differently in different epochs, but it has also been lived differently, brought into being within widely dissimilar material cultures, subjected to various technologies and means of control, and incorporated into different rhythms of production and consumption, pleasure and pain.
>
> ([Editor] "Introduction", *Representations* 1986: vii)

This concern, the writer continues, arises from a particular interdisciplinary convergence (history and anthropology – and, even more importantly it should be added, literature), greater interest in culture on the part of historians, "the thematization of the body in modern philosophy (especially phenomenology), and partly from the emphasis on gender, sexuality, and women's history that large numbers of feminist scholars have brought to all disciplines" ("Introduction" *Representations* 1986: vii). The new historicism is also characterized by the inventive use of a wide variety of sources, textual, visual, and artifactual, and the engagement of art historians, among others.

Whereas Boyarin, following Stephen Greenblatt, characterizes the new historicism (also called cultural poetics) as a sensibility more than a theory, the theoretical stakes are clearly set out in microhistory and *Alltagsgeschichte*, which focus on the concrete details of everyday practices.[7] There is of course a legacy of Jewish inner-life histories – Israel Abrahams, *Jewish Life in the Middle Ages* (Abrahams 1896), Herman Pollack, *Jewish Folkways in Germanic Lands (1648–1806):*

Studies in Aspects of Daily Life (Pollack 1971), to mention but two – that describe family feasts and fasts, dress, etiquette, hygiene, child rearing, dancing and games, and ailments and remedies. But they differ from such recent books as Ivan G. Marcus's *Rituals of Childhood: Jewish Acculturation in Medieval Europe* (Marcus 1996) not only in terms of their larger argument (even when they cover some of the same empirical ground), but also in that they are not informed by the theoretical and methodological concerns that drive microhistory and *Alltagsgeschichte*. At stake is nothing less than the issue of historical agency and explanation. Is the answer to be found in a close examination of the embodied practices and lived experience of ordinary people in their everyday lives or in macrostructural forces over long periods of time? And what is the relationship between them?

These issues have been richly theorized in the social sciences around notions of habitus, embodiment, experience, practice, and feeling (Howson and Inglis 2001; Crossley 1995; Lock 1993; and Turner and Bruner 1986). Nor are these concerns alien to Jewish studies, as a corporeal or embodied reading of the scholarly record, attentive to experience and practice, would reveal. This is precisely what Lawrence Fine sets out to do in *Judaism in Practice*, an edited volume that explores the "embodied nature of Jewish religion," using literary, anthropological, and phenomenological approaches, as well as drawing upon gender studies and comparative religion (Fine 2001; see also Biale 2002). Complementing the historical record are ethnographic studies of the lived experience of contemporary Jewish communities, their synagogues, religious fellowship, study circles, domestic life, and popular and public culture.[8] This approach, by paying special attention to women and vernacular culture, has offered a more inclusive approach to Jewish life and attention to a wider range of Jewish and other texts (Hyman 1994).

That said, attention to habitus, embodiment, experience, practice, and feeling are worthy of study in their own right and for other reasons as well. The question "Has Judaism's mind been more interesting and more influential than Judaism's body?" – if indeed this is the most interesting question to ask – can only be answered by studying "Judaism's body" and by examining the ways in which it has already been studied, not by determining in advance what is of greater intrinsic interest, as if disciplinary subjects and their objects are already given and not constituted under particular circumstances.[9]

We might ask instead: How does a topic come into view? Under what circumstances does it become "interesting" and even urgent? Or too dangerous to broach? Why, for example, were American anthropologists, many of them Jewish, unable to constitute Jews as an anthropological subject until after the Holocaust? In a word, the answer resides with the Jewish body. American anthropology during the late nineteenth and first half of the twentieth century was so preoccupied with race that the only way concerned anthropologists could protect Jews from racism was to protect Jews from anthropology. As a result, Franz Boas, a German Jewish immigrant and one of the founders of American anthropology, devoted the better part of his career to trying to disprove anthropological theories of race and, more specifically, to demonstrate that Jews were not a race by any definition (Kirshenblatt-Gimblett 1995; Efron 1994; Goldstein 2000; Hart 2000). So urgent did this issue become, with the restriction of immigration during the 1920s and rise of fascism during the 1930s, that Boas systematically eliminated any basis for distinguishing Jews on any grounds, physical or cultural. He literally erased the Jewish subject by demonstrating that there was nothing to study, a strategy that might be characterized as constitutive negativity – that is, it was in the negation of Jewish difference that Jews were constituted as an anthropological subject. There were, however, some fascinating, if unintended, outcomes, including David Efron's groundbreaking study of Jewish gesture, which he undertook under the direction of Boas during the 1930s, shortly before Boas died (Efron 1941).

Efron had wanted to write a comprehensive study of gesture, but Boas wanted him to demonstrate that gesture was learned, not innate, and therefore yet another indication that bodily dispositions were not racially determined and that Jews were not a race. Efron therefore narrowed his focus to a comparison of two generations of Italian and Jewish immigrants in New York City. Predictably, he showed, in the introduction and conclusion to his dissertation, that while the gestures of the first generation of Italian and Jewish immigrants were very different from each other, the gestures of the second generation of Italians and Jews were more similar to each other (and to other native-born Americans) than to the gestures of their parents. But between the first and last pages of his study, Efron provided the richest account ever of the gesture system of East European Jews and made a lasting methodological contribution as well.

If race stopped Boas from allowing Jews to be constituted as an anthropological subject, psychoanalytic studies of the impact of culture on the formation of personality prompted great interest in what Marcel Mauss called techniques of the body, and especially in such early childhood practices as swaddling, weaning, toilet training, hygiene, affection, corporal discipline, comportment, and the like (Mauss 1979). During the early 1930s, Max Weinriech pursued this approach under the direction of the anthropologist Edward Sapir and the sociologist John Dollars at Yale and brought it back to the YIVO Institute for Jewish Research in Vilna, where he established the Youth Research Project and introduced the principles of interdisciplinary social science. Weinriech, who translated Freud into Yiddish, saw the body – its gendering, sexuality, regulation – as critical to an understanding of Jewish youth, in whom he placed his hope for a Jewish future in Eastern Europe (Kirshenblatt-Gimblett 1996).

Boas died in 1942 and by the end of World War II two of his most illustrious students, Ruth Benedict and Margaret Mead, inaugurated a major effort to study prewar East European Jewish culture – also from a personality and culture perspective – within the framework of Cold War anthropology. They paid close attention to the body, consistent with their interest in how specific cultural practices, particularly those connected with enculturation and socialization, form personality and national character. The result was *Life Is with People: The Jewish Little-Town of Eastern Europe* (Zborowski and Herzog 1952).[10] This important, though flawed, achievement notwithstanding, Jews have remained a marginal subject in anthropology to this day. As Virginia Dominguez asked, "Does anthropology have a Jewish problem?" (Dominguez 1993: 621; see also Feldman 2004). The answer is yes and the history of anthropology's Jewish problem is fraught with anxiety whose genealogy leads back to the body. To this day, most of the work on the Jewish body engages in one way or another with the problem of race, enriched of late by considerations of gender, sexuality, and class. Even after American anthropology and other fields repudiated the race "science" of their early years, the Holocaust ensured that the subject would be one of enduring concern. The study of the Jewish body has been conducted ever after under the sign and shadow of the Holocaust.

If there is "a mind/body problem in Jewish studies," is it the same as the "text/body" problem? The implication here is that the mind is in the text – or the text is the Jewish mind at work – and the body is somewhere else, unrecoverable and less consequential in any case. As Carlo Ginzburg notes, such abstract notions of text arose through processes of disembodiment and dematerialization as technologies of writing and printing separated the text from its oral and gestural performance, while reading and interpretive practices made the physical characteristics of the text irrelevant. As a result, the text was "gradually purified at every point of reference related to the senses" (Ginzburg 1989: 102–8). But, as Samuel Heilman shows in his detailed ethnography of study circles and religious fellowship, the texts are performed (Heilman 1983). They are voiced in the presence of others and embedded in densely textured social worlds. They do not move telepathically between minds, but interpersonally in space and time, under

particular material conditions, and in physically coded and embodied ways – dramatically. They are not just thought. They are sensed and felt. They are experienced. And, as Jeremy Stolow demonstrates in his study of the ArtScroll publishing house, they continue to be significant as material objects (Stolow 2006; see also the journal *Material Religion: The Journal of Objects, Art, and Belief*).

Rather than reasserting these binaries and weighing in on the side of the mind in the text, we might hang the pendulum somewhere else and let it swing in all directions. This would require a rethinking of what is "important." If "God is in the details," then even an apparently trivial detail – of no great importance or influence in its own right – might be the clue to a profound puzzle. Some of the most interesting historical work has proceeded on nothing less than this principle (Ginzburg 1989). Qualitative sociology, anthropology, the history of everyday life, and phenomenology are premised on the understanding that the ordinary is an achievement and deserves to be studied in its own right. Nowhere is this clearer than in Pierre Bourdieu's notion of habitus, understood as "durable, transposable dispositions" that are embodied, taken for granted, and function as "structuring structures" (Bourdieu 1990: 53). Haym Soloveitchik's essay on mimetic Judaism, while not cast in such terms, is an important contribution to the study of Jewish habitus – to the idea, following Bourdieu, of practical belief as a "state of the body" rather than a "state of mind," the body being a "repository for the most precious values (Soloveitchik 1994; Bourdieu 1990: 68–9). Studies of the role of *Bildung* and *Sittlichkeit* in the embourgoisement of Jews as part of the emancipation project, a concern of longstanding interest in Jewish studies, are also matters of habitus (Mosse 1985). The Zionist project, as explored by scholars such as Anat Helman and Tamar Katriel, attempted to create a new kind of habitus in the Yishuv (and later) (Helman 2008; Katriel 1997). We have the new Jewish scholarship to thank for an appreciation of the historical and cultural specificities of Jewish habitus in relation to gender and especially women.

What might a more embodied Jewish studies look like? While *sensuous histories* would be attentive to sensuous aspects of Jewish life, *sensory histories* would examine the nature of the Jewish sensorium itself, its structure and hierarchy, in all of its specificities and variations.[11] Until now, attention to the senses in relation to Jews has focused on pathologies – on negative representations (for example, the Jewish stench – "*foetor judaicus*" and deficits – the "artless Jew"). There are important exceptions, including Kalman Bland's attention to "the well-tempered sensorium" in *The Artless Jew* and Robert Bonfil's *Jewish Life in Renaissance Italy,* which, under the heading "Structures of Mentality," includes chapters on time and space, sounds and stillness, colors, tastes, and odors (Bland 2000: 71–91; Bonfil 1994). The only Jewish sense to receive sustained attention in its own right is the visual, whether its purported underdevelopment or the historically specific ways it figures in the Jewish mystical tradition, for example (Wolfson 1994).

Similarly, a more affective Jewish studies would attend to the emotional dimensions of Jewish life, as well as to the history of the emotions themselves, in ways that would rethink the mind (thought)/body (feeling) binary.[12] With the rare exception, for example James Matisoff's study of psycho-extensive expressions in Yiddish, the emotions that have received the most serious and sustained attention to date are those related to trauma (Matisoff 2000). Not surprisingly, it is around Holocaust memory and memorialization (and studies of them) that we find the richest, as well as most self-conscious and contentious, efforts to address affective – even somatic and visceral – experience, as can be seen in the protocols for viewing videotaped interviews in the Fortunoff Video Archive for Holocaust Testimonies at Yale University; the dramaturgy of March of the Living, which often culminates with "The Israel Experience"; the proprioceptic and kinesthetic design of Holocaust museums and memorials; and the embodied nature of

witnessing and memory (Felman and Laub 1991; Shandler 1999; Young 1993; Stier 2003; Kirshenblatt-Gimblett 2002a).[13]

Last but not least, what are the boundaries of the Jewish body, in all its variations, and where might such a question lead? Just as there are more than five senses – the number of senses, now calculated by scientists as nine, is itself a research topic – so too are the body's boundaries not given: the body does not begin and end with its biggest organ, the skin, or the limits of sensory perception. In 1992, the anthropologist Emily Martin asked, "Why is the body such an intense focus of attention in the academy today?" Her answer pointed to fundamental changes in how the body is organized and experienced, including transformations in body percept and practice, such that the very boundaries of the body and concomitant notions of personhood are put into question (Martin 1992).[14] Such changes in our own circumstances, intensified by new medical and communication technologies, produce a heightened awareness and scholarly concern with the body and prompt a rethinking of mind/body, text/body, thinking/feeling, hearing/seeing, and even the animate/inanimate dichotomy, nowhere more dramatically than in Bruno Latour's actor–network theory. An actor–network includes anyone and anything (objects, texts, technologies) that can act. Intelligence is distributed across the network (Latour 1996). Kathleen Biddick's work on graphic technologies in relation to circumcision and baptism is inspired in part by Latour (Biddick 2003).

Where then will the statement that the Jewish mind is more important and influential than the Jewish body take Jewish studies – indeed, where has this position taken the field to date? Are there no paths not yet taken – along the margins of the field as presently constituted – that might lead in unexpected, yet productive, directions, even if that means taking Jewish studies beyond its current, carefully guarded borders?

Notes

1 Indeed, they extended the notion of text, treating, for example, Jewish history as a text – "a text to be read between the lines," of course (Halkin 1998: 41).

2 Personal communication, 12 August 2004. When I indicated to him that I was writing this response, Santner raised a virtual eyebrow: "But concerning the 'corporeal turn': My sense is that it has already begun to fade. Is that your sense, too?"

3 Cultural studies (and fields that model themselves on it, for example, visual studies) has come in for its own fair share of criticism. See, among others, Heller (1996); Krauss (1996); Morris (1996); Hall (1992).

4 But also note, a few lines earlier: "To find in a report of the sexual behavior of the American male an indication that the conduct of the orthodox Jew rates high according to accepted norms of chastity and purity is sufficient recommendation for our supposedly antiquated code with all its shortcomings" (Epstein 1948: xxi). The Kinsey Report, which appeared in the same year as Epstein's book, was widely discussed at the time.

5 Feldman states his contribution as the "mustering of otherwise inaccessible classic and contemporary sources" on a subject, that despite its "intrinsic importance" has "until now been left virtually untouched in any systematic sense" (Feldman 1974: v).

6 For a lucid account of the differences between microhistory and *Alltagsgeschichte,* see Gregory (1999). See also Hunt (1989).

7 The inaugural statement for the new historicism can be found in Stephen Greenblatt's introduction to a special issue of *Genre* (Greenblatt 1982), and is elaborated in Greenblatt (1989). See also Gallagher and Greenblatt (2000). For a statement on what might be called the new Jewish cultural history, see Rosman (2002). For a Jewish example of *Alltagsgeschichte,* see Kaplan (2004).

8 Samuel C. Heilman's *Synagogue Life: A Study in Symbolic Interaction* (Heilman 1976), with chapters on gossip, joking, and singing, swaying, appeals, and arguments, is an early example of detailed attention to embodied practices as a way of understanding experience and meaning. Weissler (1989), and Prell (1989), offer pioneering studies of alternative congregations, while Kugelmass explores how a hardy

band of elderly Jews, barely enough for a minyan, creatively improvises in an effort to hold on to the last synagogue in the South Bronx (Kugelmass 1986). Shokeid (1995) is the first ethnography of a gay congregation. There are also ethnographies of Reform congregations and most recently a Moscow synagogue. Jenna Weissman Joselit's work is exemplary for its attention to material culture: Joselit and Braunstein, eds., *Getting Comfortable in New York: The American Jewish Home, 1880–1950* (1990), and Joselit (1994), while Hasia S. Diner's *Hungering for America: Italian, Irish, and Jewish Foodways in the Age of Migration* (Diner 2001), offers a fresh perspective on American Jewish immigrant life, as does Joelle Bahloul on North African Jewish immigrants to France. See Bahloul (1983) and Bahloul (1996).

9 See, for example, Peskowitz (1997), which explores early rabbinic Judaism on the basis of the routine everyday practices of spinning and weaving, as evidenced in texts and in material culture, as well as their symbolism.

10 When the book was issued in paperback by Schocken, the subtitle was changed to "The Culture of the Shtetl." See Barbara Kirshenblatt-Gimblett's introduction to the 1995 edition for a detailed account of the history of this project.

11 For an indication of what a sensory Jewish studies might address, see Howes (1991), Howes (2003), and Howes (2004).

12 For a sociological approach, see Katz (1999). For anthropological approaches, see Leavitt (1996) and Reddy (1997).

13 On what Raymond Williams calls "structures of feeling" in relation to klezmer music, see Kirshenblatt-Gimblett (2002b). For affective aspects of life in the Yishuv and in contemporary Israel, see Katriel (2004). I have argued elsewhere that the museum is a school for the senses and that its sensory curriculum has a history: see Kirshenblatt-Gimblett (2002c: 55–69). On the embodied nature of memory, see Connerton (1989) and Taylor (2003).

14 Technology plays an important role here as it does in Sander L. Gilman's work on the medicalization of Jewishness in *The Case of Sigmund Freud: Medicine and Identity at the Fin de Siècle* (Gilman 1993) and in Susan M. Kahn's work on assisted conception in Israel (Kahn 2000). On the role of technology in literary representations of the Jewish body, see Novak (2004).

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14

SPACE AND PLACE

Barbara E. Mann

The term *makom* in Hebrew may be translated, in deceptively simple fashion, as "place." As in English, the word has both concrete and abstract significance, and may also be used meta-phorically, as in "to know one's place," in a social, relational sense. Yet Hebrew usages of *makom* potentially bear another, more hidden burden, due to a special meaning of the term in Jewish tradition, where *makom* is also used as a synonym for God. This usage originates in a midrashic gloss on the book of Genesis: "Why is the Holy One, blessed be he, called *Makom*? Because he is the place of the world" (Genesis Rabbah 68: 8). Perhaps the rabbis who produced this text felt themselves to be in some sort of exile, and therefore invested space with transcendence, and God with the materiality of place.[1] This midrash refers specifically to the use of the term *makom* in the Jacob story, itself a classic tale of wandering. Jacob's journey from place to place, from Paddan Aram (28: 5) through Beer Sheva and Haran (28: 10), into the land of *bnei kedem* (literally, sons of the East) (29: 1) and eventually back home through Machanayim (32: 3), is itself an attempt to find his own place, in social and familiar terms. His journey, of course, echoes that of his grandfather Abraham, who inaugurated the national drama with God's command to "go forth from your land, from your birthplace, and from your father's house to the land that I will show you" (12: 1). This process of identity formation occurs in relation to movement toward and from particular locations. At the beginning of his travels, Jacob "came upon a certain place and stopped there for the night. … Taking one of the stones of that place, he put it under his head and lay down in that place" (28: 11). The dense, repetitive patterning of the word *makom* (three times in a short, fifteen-word verse) alerts the reader that a moment of divine revelation approaches. In the very next verse, Jacob dreams of a ladder reaching to heaven, and of God "standing beside him," announcing the terms of the covenantal promise with Jacob, his ancestors, and his descendants. When Jacob awakes, he again notes the sacred quality of *makom*: "'Surely the Lord is present in this place, and I did not know it!' Shaken, he said, 'How awesome is this place! This is none other than the abode of God'" (28: 16–17). And so Jacob names the place "Bethel" (Bet-El), literally, "house of God," the place where God is housed.

Another well-known example of *makom* marking an important moment of interaction, even relative intimacy, with God is found in Genesis 22, the *akeda* or Binding of Isaac, where Abraham is called upon to sacrifice his son Isaac as a sign of loyalty to God. The term *makom* appears twice near the beginning of this tersely told narrative, as Abraham approaches Mount Moriah and in both instances refers to the particular "place of which God has told him" (verses

3 and 9). *Makom* here signifies the proximity of God to man, unlike the term *shamayim* (heavens), which indicates God's remoteness or remove.[2] *Makom* indicates both the biblical topography—in this case, the heights—as well the presence (or absence) of the divinity. The idea of *makom* in these foundational biblical passages suggests an intermediary location between heaven and earth, between transcendence and the earthly profane, one in which God potentially "stands beside" human beings. Those events connected with *makom* are crucial moments of discovery, both for the biblical protagonist and the larger, national drama they represent.[3]

The potential difficulty of limiting God's presence to a single place is also addressed within biblical sources. Thus, for example, in I Kings, we find an express articulation of the problem of God "dwelling on earth" in relation to the placement of the Ark of the Covenant within Solomon's Temple in Jerusalem: "Even the heavens to their uttermost reaches cannot contain You, how much less this House that I have built. … May Your eyes be open day and night toward this House, toward the place [*makom*] of which You have said, 'My name shall abide there'; May You heed the prayers which Your servant will offer toward this place [*makom*]" (8: 27–29). Within later texts such as Deuteronomy and Leviticus we find an essential connection between sacred space and certain acts and rituals. Thus, "while God may be found in the whole world, the Lord may make the divine presence more acutely felt in certain places. God may therefore be in a specified locale but need not be limited to it" (Bokser 1985: 280). Just as God's presence will at all times and in all places "dwell" with the people, so certain forms of ethical behavior are also always expected, so that the people will retain their "purity" in God's presence.

These interpretations of *makom* as it appeared in biblical texts—a place that is potentially holy—developed in relation to the rise of Jerusalem and the construction of the Second Temple as political and cultic centers of Judaism. They are part of a worldview that evolved during and after the Second Temple period, and especially in the post-exilic world of rabbinic culture, within and without the borders of the land. Thus it is important to stress that the idea of *makom* discussed so far does not necessarily inhere in the biblical texts, but is itself a reflection of a postbiblical world, of a world located at a distance from the originary landscape of the Bible. One way of understanding this is to suggest that as the foundational, even mythological events of the Bible receded further in time, and in place, the desire to find holiness in some abstract or substitute space increased, especially in what was perceived as an exilic or diasporic condition. Indeed, as rabbinic literature developed, from roughly the third through the ninth centuries, the relation to the land became more symbolic, farther from "the source." Here is one example of how we might think about this process appearing in a rabbinic text, in this case a mishnaic tractate from about the third century CE, describing various degrees of holiness in reference to particular elements of the Temple that no longer exists:

There are ten (degrees of) holiness:

1) The land of Israel is holier than all lands …
2) The cities surrounded by a wall are holier than it [the land]. …
3) Within the wall [Jerusalem] is holier than they [other walled cities]. …
4) The Temple mount is holier than it. …
5) The rampart is holier than it [the Temple Mount] …
6) The court of women is holier than it [the rampart] …
7) The court of Israel is holier than it [the court of women].
8) The court of the priest is holier than it [the court of Israel].
9) [The area] between the porch and the altar is holier than it [the court of the priest].
10) The sanctuary is holier than it [the area between porch and altar].
11) The house of the holy of holies is holier than they …

Some of the specific reasoning explaining the attribution of holiness has been edited out of this lengthy passage; note, however, that the progress of physical detail, from largest (the Land of Israel) to smallest and most insular—a kind of spatial telescoping—may be read as an allusion to the growing temporal remove from the Temple, an awareness of the Temple's increasing historicity. This focus on detail makes of the Temple almost "a memory palace" (Yates 1966) as the rabbinic imagination moves in and out of its interior spaces, remembering its contours in a way that mimics the much more elaborate visions of the Temple contained in Ezekiel. In relation to this particular passage, one scholar notes, "since the Mishnah speaks as if such regulations were still in effect, it is not just recording 'ancient' practices but is making an ahistorical assertion that the lines of holiness continue: despite the fall of Jerusalem and the destruction of the Temple in 70 C.E. and the expulsion of Jews from Jerusalem in 135, the sacred is still found in the world" (Bokser 1985: 290).

This ability to imagine that "the sacred is still found in the world," at a remove from—or even following the destruction of—a holy center, characterizes what Jonathan Z. Smith, in his influential work on ancient religious practices, has called a "locative" view of the sacred. In a sense, Judaism is paradigmatic of a certain stage in the development of ancient religions, as they evolved away from viewing the sacred as necessarily immanent to a particular place to conceptualizing sacredness as mobile and portable (Smith 1992). This concept of sacredness as something that may be recovered and engaged through human activity, both individual and collective, and as a condition that may have originally derived from a particular place but is no longer dependent upon it, became increasingly important as Jewish communities continued to exist at a remove from ancient, biblical landscapes. Jewish culture's engagement with *makom*—understood as both transcendent and earthbound, sacred and profane—has generated a wealth of fascinating rituals, texts, and artifacts. For example, the tension between text and artifact at the heart of rabbinic culture, between textual depiction and material remains, may be related to the authors' sense of some gap—geographic, spiritual, practical—between their own place of domicile and the symbolic space of the homeland. Modem Zionism may also be understood as a collision of space's material and abstract faces, between the physical reality of the modern Middle East and biblical stories about the ancient Land of Israel.

One further illustration of this general property of *makom* as reflected in a Jewish ritual practice will suffice. After the death of a loved one, the mourner is traditionally comforted with the words "Ha-makom yinachem etkhem b'tokh she'ar avelei tsiyon ve-rushalayim"—"May God [*makom*] console you among the other mourners of Zion and Jerusalem." Jews are encouraged to repeat this formulaic expression in Hebrew to the mourner, even in lieu of a direct greeting or salutation. Within this phrase the mourner is connected not only to other mourners, whose shared experience may possibly provide comfort, but also to a wider, historical situation—the exile from Zion and destruction of Jerusalem, a paradigmatic event of expulsion and wandering. Grief has a social and, in this case, geographical context. Even the most private moments of grief become embedded, through the ritual comforting of the mourner, to important sites in Jewish collective memory.

Furthermore, the primary vehicle associated with grief and mourning in Jewish tradition is the shiva, the seven-day period immediately following the funeral in which mourners receive friends and other members of the community in their home. Though the shiva is an institution essentially defined by temporal boundaries, it may also be considered a kind of "space," in which mourning is enacted and evolves (the following month [the *shloshim*] and then the entire year [*shnat evel*] are similar examples of temporally defined spaces of mourning). To be clear, by suggesting that the shiva is a kind of space, I am not referring to the physical site in which mourners receive others. Rather, the prescribed behaviors of the shiva—covering mirrors,

sitting low to the floor, tearing one's garment, reciting certain prayers—transform an ordinary room in one's home into the space of the shiva for its temporal duration. This elastic relation between space and time characterizes many Jewish institutions, as well as the depiction of *makom* in allegorical and symbolic terms.

Agnon to Gurevitch: *makom* in modern Jewish thought

The degree to which this traditional idea of *makom* holds sway in modern Jewish culture may be gauged by examining its appearance in modern Hebrew literature. Although Hebrew writers sought to produce a secular idiom, the presence of traditional themes and texts was inevitable, given the enormous power and authority of canonical Hebrew texts. Indeed, the story of modern Hebrew culture may be understood in part as an attempt, only partially successful, to disengage from tradition. The writer who perhaps best embodied this often ambivalent link with the classical Hebrew canon was S. Y. Agnon (1888–1970), who was born in Galicia and immigrated to Palestine in the 1930s. Agnon also lived in Berlin for many years and the idea of migration and travel, of the often enervating effects of moving from place to place, may be found in a number of his works. Agnon's story "From Lodging to Lodging," composed and set in interwar Tel Aviv, concerns a high-strung, hypochondriac narrator who cannot seem to find a place for himself. As the story opens, he follows the advice of his doctor and "moves down" from Jerusalem to Tel Aviv to take advantage of the Mediterranean sea air. Ironically, the city's business and noise, combined with the tight confines of his room, irritates his condition even further, and he continues his search for a new home, eventually renting a room in a house on the outskirts of the city. The pastoral, edenic location is remote from the city's squalor and commotion. His new landlord's personal experience resembles his own in its continual peregrinations and disappointing encounter with life in Tel Aviv and in Palestine more generally. In relating their story, the landlord's wife concludes, "we live here in our house, enjoying everything with which the Lord [*ha-makom*] has blessed us." Upon which the narrator silently reflects, "I rejoiced that God [*ha-makom*] had brought me to pleasant lodgings and an honest landlord" (Agnon 1996: 155). Agnon's story deploys the midrashic synonym for God at a crucial juncture, and represents an exemplary instance of modern Jewish culture's engagement with the idea of space. Agnon's story, with its movement from Jerusalem to Tel Aviv, from the confines of a rented room to the pastoral cottage, a perpetual wandering that continues long after the protagonists have "settled the land," offers the reader a dense parable on *makom*, a deft commentary on how Jewish attitudes toward space might have changed with the great physical migrations of the early twentieth century and its concurrent social and political upheavals. Even as the ostensible gap between elsewhere and the Land has been closed, the old idea of a more abstract substitute hovers.

This passage in the story as a whole points to two fundamental tensions: the first concerns the passage from space to place—from space as emblematic of, or a container for, the divine, to the lived experience of an actual place; the second tension concerns the encounter with the land itself, as opposed to the biblical story about the place. This encounter raises a number of questions: How does the renewed appreciation for a homeland—for the creation of a material, sovereign political entity—affect the idea of space as divine? What happens when the idyllic expectations of the "Land of Milk and Honey" coincide with the experience of the land itself, the material conditions of life in the Middle East? Agnon's story does not offer concrete answers to these questions; instead it proposes that modern Hebrew culture, in its new material setting in Palestine; will continue to struggle with this fundamental revolution in attitudes toward space and place.

The dilemmas posed within Agnon's story are undoubtedly still at the center of Israeli discourse. In an influential article that first appeared in 1991, anthropologists Zali Gurevitch and Gideon

Aran articulated the problem of becoming native, referring to the inevitable gap between what they call the biblical "Story about the Place" and "the Place Itself"(Gurevitch and Aran 1991). Zionism's modern story of return is indebted to the biblical narrative of the land. The patriarchal narrative of wandering alluded to above—beginning with God's command to Abraham to leave his homeland, stretching to its eventual conclusion as the Israelites enter the Promised Land after Egyptian bondage and years of wandering in the desert—was evoked by Zionism as the ancient, exemplary model for the return of the Jews to Palestine in the modern period (Zerubavel 1997). This return would restore the people to the place, obviating the need for the portable "homeland of the text." The nation's new rootedness in territory would somehow constitute their nativeness; this bond with the land would dissolve the abstract connection between space and holiness, and render the concept of *makom*—in its substitutional sense— obsolete: having returned to the original site of revelation, there would ostensibly be no need to continually invent proxies for it. However, in Gurevitch's view, despite the achievements of Zionism and the establishment of the State, the problem of nativeness endures, due to "the irreducibility of the story to the place, and hence the unrest, the schism, perhaps, between the Israelis and their native place, namely Israel"(Gurevitch 1997: 204).[4]

Space and place, the academy and Jewish studies

The idea of *makom* may also be productively considered in relation to what has been called the spatial turn in the academy, a reference to the emerging importance of space as a critical category in the humanities and social sciences. Michel Foucault famously inaugurated this "spatial epoch" in a 1967 lecture:

> The great obsession of the nineteenth century was, as we know, history: with its themes of development and of suspension, of crisis and cycle, themes of the ever-accumulating past, with its great preponderance of dead men and the menacing glaciation of the world. … The present epoch will perhaps be above all the epoch of space. We are in the epoch of simultaneity: we are in the epoch of juxtaposition, the epoch of the near and far, of the side-by-side, of the dispersed.
>
> (Foucault 1996: 22)

One of Foucault's most important theoretical models was—following Freud, perhaps— archaeology, a model indicating the firmly intertwined nature of time and space, and the degree to which an understanding of one is always embedded in an appreciation for the other. The fertility of Foucault's almost casually tossed-off list (the published article retains some of the quality of lecture notes) for scholars of just about everything cannot be overstated. Concepts such as juxtaposition, globalization, and diaspora—which have become essential modes of inquiry in recent years—are all here in Foucault's suggestive remarks. In the following pages we explore the main features of this contemporary critical discourse on space.

The phenomenologically inspired work of human geographer Yi–Fu Tuan offers a foundational set of tools with which to explore the complex relation between space, culture, and nation. Tuan explores what he calls the "symbolic value" of space, noting that space may be thought of as neutral before people grant it meaning:

> "Space" is more abstract than "place." What begins as undifferentiated space becomes place as we get to know it better and endow it with value. Architects talk about the spatial qualities of place; they can equally well speak of the locational (place) qualities

of space. The ideas "space" and "place" require each other for definition. From the security and stability of place we are aware of the openness, freedom, and threat of space, and vice versa. Furthermore, if we think of space as that which allows movement, than place is pause; each pause in movement makes it possible for location to be transformed into place.

(Tuan 2001: 6)

In Tuan's formulations, place is viewed as more specific, local, and always-already embedded in a particular set of social, economic, and political practices. The ostensible tension between space and place may also be understood as the tension between the two faces of *makom* that deeply inform Jewish cultural notions of space. We may note here Tuan's relative accessibility as a theorist, especially his use of different and fairly transparent terms to convey both the elasticity of space and its reliance upon some human point of view (whether of an individual in her hometown or neighborhood, or a nation in its homeland). In addition to reminding us that space and place depend on one another for definition, Tuan's metaphorical comparison of "place" to a "pause" alludes to the important presence of a third category—that of temporality, or the flow of time. Not only are all places not created equal, our experience of an individual site—one's street, the house one grew up in—may evolve over time and thus effectively render it a different place. Place is thus never inert, static, or given (even in the natural domain) but always somehow produced, that is, shaped by human activity and/or attachment. Here Tuan's work veers out of the disciplinary confines of geography per se and into the realm of the human imagination, a domain whose spatial contours have been compellingly sketched by the French philosopher Gaston Bachelard in his *The Poetics of Space*. Bachelard's evocative meditations on the psychic function of space—what he calls "topoanalysis"—focus on the essential role played by the house as a kind of metaphysical container of memory, a site that may be dipped back into over the course of a lifetime (Bachelard 1994: 8). Both Tuan and Bachelard describe an elastic model for considering the centrality of subjective human experience in thinking about ideas of space and place.

The fluid but basically dualistic view of space in Tuan's work has been considerably complicated in recent years, as the spatial turn has become more indebted to the social sciences. The ideas of urban theorist Henri Lefebvre are largely responsible for elucidating the terms of this complication. In Lefebvre's work, we find a rejection of any notion of absolute space, and an insistence on the idea that space is always produced through human behaviors and actions. In the urban setting, what Lefebvre calls "social space" is produced and embedded in three intertwined domains: spatial practice, representations of space, and representational spaces (Lefebvre 1991: 26–46).[5] This "triad of the perceived, conceived, and lived" is dialectical in nature, with each domain potentially overlapping with and influencing the others (Lefebvre 1991: 39). Thus infrastructure such as roads and economic networks linking the individual to a larger institution such as the state are produced by the "signs and codes" of architecture and urban planning; these spaces are themselves "linked to the clandestine or underground of social life, as also to art" (Lefebvre 1991: 33).

Lefebvre's basic analytical frame has been adopted in a variety of scholarly endeavors. All this work moves against the idea of space as a transcendent, given, or abstract entity, insisting instead that space is "produced," that is, created and shaped by powerful ideological and economic forces. Within this type of analysis, space is conceived as dynamic and fluid, subject to the global flow of capital and power. David Harvey has forcefully articulated this model and expanded Lefebvre's Marxist critique of the relation between space and industrialization, especially the potentially exclusionary effects of the bond between collective identity and territory (Harvey 1993).

The work of geographers such as Harvey has often depicted this attachment to place, and particularly the idea that a group's identity derives from territory, as reactionary. Instead, they point to global flows and patterns as figures of agency that offer more palatable, though often unstable, forms of identity—thus privileging concepts such as hybridity, mobility, and diaspora in a world characterized by "space/time compression" (Harvey 1989: 240). Other scholars have pointed out that not everyone experiences this space/time compression in the same way: one person's zippy internet connection is another's migratory trauma. Furthermore, it may not be productive to dismiss the simple fact that people seem to need some attachment—to something—often to a specific place (Massey 1994). Even Lefebvre recognized the emotional power abiding in particular spaces: "Representational space is alive: it speaks. It has an affective kernel or centre: Ego, bed, bedroom, dwelling, house; or: square, church, graveyard" (Lefebvre 1991: 42). The work of Michel de Certeau builds on the Baudelairian notion of the *flâneur*—the urban dweller whose creative identity draws on his ability to move freely, yet anonymously, through the city's public spaces—and further elevates the role of subjective, dynamic experience, and the "strangeness in the commonplace" (de Certeau 2000: 103). Working somewhat against the idea that space is only and necessarily produced by the controlling machinations of planners and economists, de Certeau encourages us to follow the performance of the individual within the parameters created by those larger entities, and argues that space is in fact ultimately created by "footsteps," from underneath, and often in spite of, the welter of systems imposed from above.

Postmodern thought has further complicated the ways in which we think about space. According to geographer Edward Soja, for example, postmodern geography will defuse the preeminence of historicism in modern thought by demonstrating the degree to which the "historical imagination is never completely spaceless" (Soja 1989: 14). Soja's work recapitulated Lefebrve's basic model and introduced the term "third space" to describe the urban landscapes of Los Angeles and other global metropolises (Soja 1999: 260–78). In Soja's schema, first space applies broadly to the empirically defined sense of space that has traditionally been the object of geographic scholarship; second space refers to more subjective, imagined spaces. Soja's third space represents an attempt both to move beyond what may be perceived as binary thinking about space and to assert the importance of individual and collective human action. To say this another way, third space—as imagined by Soja and other critical theorists—is always potentially a site of resistance. It is also potentially a contact zone, a hybrid site marking the meeting of different cultures, whether in colonial settings or under the diverse set of conditions known as diaspora, where space and place take on multiple meanings and are often detached from a specific territorial setting. In a sense, Soja's work expressly spatializes the political dimension of cultural discourse produced within these mixed zones. Postcolonial theorist Homi Bhabha's phrase "the location of culture" helps us see how culture may be indebted to the material specifics of its environment.

The work of feminist geographers such as Gillian Rose and Doreen Massey further enriches our understanding of space and historical experience. Massey's reading critically unpacks the work of Harvey and Soja, bringing to bear the kind of antifoundational thinking that characterizes feminist theory as a whole. She suggests that the entire space/time divide is simply symptomatic of Western culture's endemically dualistic thinking:

> Space and the feminine are frequently defined in terms of dichotomies in which each of them is most commonly defined as not-A. There is a whole set of dualisms whose terms are commonly aligned with time and space. With time are aligned History, Progress, Civilization, Science, Politics and Reason, portentous things with gravitas

and capital letters. With space on the other hand are aligned the other poles of these concepts: stasis, ("simple"), reproduction, nostalgia, emotions, aesthetics, the body. All these dualisms … suffer from. … the problem of mutual exclusivity and of the consequent impoverishment of both of their terms.

(Massey 1994: 257)

These dualisms and the implicit devaluation of space as "feminine" have certainly figured in Jewish tradition. For example, the *shekhinah* (literally, indwelling) or feminine attribute of God's presence has historically been connected to Zion and powerfully coded in female terms. In modern times, the idea of space as something to be acted upon, to be entered into and molded to fit its human inhabitants, is very much at the core of Zionist practice and attitudes toward the Land. Following Massey, my goal here is not to somehow upgrade space in the space–time equation (Massey 1994: 260) but to examine how the relation between time and space has operated in Jewish cultures, and to offer a caveat or corrective to normative views of *makom* in Jewish culture. I plot the return of space as a real category in analytical discussion—not only as a metaphor for God. The utility of space as a "key word" will be sharpened as it is brought to bear on as wide a variety of situations and examples as possible, specifically in relation to other analytical categories that have shaped the study of Jewish culture: textuality, identity, religion, history, and memory. Indeed, the idea of space as a critical category arises precisely out of an argument with history, a desire to critique normative notions of Jews as a "people of history."[6] Space may be analyzed not as only one pole of the space-time dyad, but as an entity that is itself given to change and flux. Below we begin to examine how this theorizing of space emerged out of a contentious relation to history, a condition that is integral to the Jewish engagement with modernity.

The end of history, the beginning of space

The theorization of space and place described earlier derives, as noted, primarily from empirically grounded, pragmatic social sciences. In the phrasing of anthropological theorist Arjun Appadurai, place has been seen as a "problem," a contested discursive site, open to competing interpretations and modes of analysis (Appadurai 1988: 16). What kind of cognitive distortion, or leap of intellectual faith, might we have to perform as readers in order for these analytical categories to prove productive in the largely humanities-based domain of Jewish studies? First, we have already seen how Jewish culture's foundational preoccupation with *makom* may itself be understood in terms of a tension between place and space. Nonetheless, it may be worthwhile to reflect upon the specific historical conditions that have accompanied the ascendance of space as a critical category in the academy, and more recently in Jewish studies.

Interest in space within Jewish studies was preceded by a period of vigorous debate about Jewish historiography, most famously between Yosef Yerushalmi and Amos Funkenstein. At stake was the relation between modes of historical discourse and the longstanding but problematic notion of memory. In what sorts of dwellings did Jewish memory reside? What were the parameters and meaning, even the purpose, of the Jewish historical imagination, in its specific discursive modes (biblical narrative, medieval annals, modern memory books, to name just a few)? Do memory and history work together, or is their relation one of mutual antagonism? How did the relatively new discipline of historiography compare with the rich diversity of Jewish historical forms from the past? What, in fact, as historian Moshe Rosman has posed in the title of a recent book, is "Jewish about Jewish history" (Rosman 2007)? These questions and

more drove scholarly discourse among Jewish historians in the 1980s, a discourse that was itself related to similar debates among historians more broadly.

Trends in the writing of history had been shifting as early as the 1960s, especially in relation to the radical politics of that era. In France, the Annales school and social history emerged in relation to Marxist theory and practice. In America, a similar trend may be identified in the way in which women's studies grew out of the feminist movement. Cultural history, more broadly construed, was influenced by poststructuralism and early postmodern thinkers such as Claude Lévi-Strauss and Michel Foucault, who stressed the degree to which all human experience is mediated by textuality (in Foucault's terms, "discourse"). Later trends, including Germany's *Historikerstreit* (historians' debate), targeted the meaning of the postwar past in relation to conceptions of history, collective memory, and nationhood. In Israel, a similar historiographical school is represented in the diverse work of the New Historians, whose reevaluation of the 1948 war has spurred new understandings of both Zionism and statehood.[7] More recently, subaltern studies have stressed the importance of empire and colonial power in the writing of history. This rise of alternative forms of historical inquiry occasioned a kind of splintering within the discipline. Ironically, the explosion of historical work seems to have precipitated a sense of the exhaustion or inadequacy of a strictly chronological sense of historical inquiry. Out of this notion of the limits of historicism, space has emerged as an essential critical category.[8]

One might ask what it was exactly that "history" could no longer describe. In broad terms, we may consider the incipient and ongoing effects of what is now known as globalization, the worldwide disruption of what were previously understood as stable, even organic, ties between people and place, and the breakdown of the historical nation-state and its territorial borders, especially the collapse of communism and the disintegration of the Eastern bloc. As part of this widely studied phenomenon, we may also consider the mass migrations of diverse populations from various parts of the globe, for both political and economic reasons. The development of new technology and information networks is another example of how relations among different kinds of spaces, and different kinds of communities—both real and virtual—became a defining feature of "the postmodern condition" (Lyotard 1984).

An important example that may help us trace this passage from history to space in critical theory may be found in the work of French historian Pierre Nora, whose influential conception of "*lieux de mémoire*" (sites of memory) represents an ambitious attempt to theorize all these ideas—history and memory, place and space—at once. The immense popularity of Nora's ideas points both to the enthusiasm with which ideas about space were embraced by American and European scholars and the degree to which they were not entirely ready to let go of history.

Nora's article "Between Memory and History: Les Lieux de Mémoire" begins by noting the "acceleration of history," and asks what becomes of memory in the wake of the breakdown of traditional forms of culture and society (Nora 1989). Nora's idealized perception of memory, and the antagonistic, "brutal" effects of history, leads him to explore those devices and vehicles through which modern societies attempt to achieve some authentic experience of the past. The critical power of the article derives in large part from Nora's utopian idealization of memory, and its heroic resistance to the deleterious effects of history:

> Memory and history, far from being synonymous, appear now to be in fundamental opposition. … Memory is a perpetually actual phenomenon, a bond tying us to the eternal present; history is a representation of the past. … Memory installs remembrance within the sacred; history, always prosaic, releases it again. … Memory takes root in the concrete, in spaces, gestures, images, and objects; history binds itself strictly to temporal continuities, to progressions and to relations between things. Memory is

absolute, while history can only conceive the relative. … History is perpetually suspicious of memory, and its true mission is to suppress and destroy it.

(Nora 1989: 8–9)

As a way of resolving this supposed antagonism between memory and history, Nora introduces the term "sites of memory" to describe what has happened to our appreciation of the past in the wake of the end of "real memory." Though some of these "sites" are actual spaces—museums, memorials, cemeteries—many are not; for example, in Nora's view, holidays, commemorative volumes, the calendar year, archival collections, public speeches, and even the study of history itself (historiography) all may be considered "sites of memory," which provide access to some authentic experience of the past. This metaphorical use of space—akin to Tuan's metaphorical description of place in temporal terms (as a "pause")—is, I would suggest, a key vehicle for importing critical thinking about space in the social sciences into the humanities.[9] I alluded earlier to the importance of archaeology as a model for Foucault in his epochal proclamation of space. Indeed, something metaphorical also happens in Foucault's *The Archaeology of Knowledge* (1972), where the author deploys "spatial metaphors to portray a new kind of intellectual route into the study of history, literature, or whatever. … His thinking in this connection spills over from the realm of metaphor to embrace the empirical spaces and places existing in such messy abundance in … his historical works from *Madness and Civilization* (1967) onwards" (Philo 2000: 207–8).

Nora's work, with its territorial and national dimensions, has provided a remarkably productive way of thinking about how Jewish societies have coped with the burden of history during their various geographic wanderings, and especially during the prolonged transition from traditional to more modern forms of life. Indeed, according to Maurice Halbwachs, this very distance from the object of memory was a prerequisite to the formation of a collective memory of a particular event (Halbwachs 1992: 196). Examples of sites of memory in Nora's sense of the term abound in Jewish tradition. The Talmud may be considered a site of memory par excellence: its legal and ethical imperatives—many of which are tied back to "the Land," that primary *makom* where God and place seemed more intertwined—preserve details about a certain space and a relationship with it. The Jewish calendar year is also finely calibrated to remind the observant of different events in Jewish history, both singular and momentous—Passover recalling the Exodus, Sukkot (the Feast of Tabernacles) marking and celebrating the annual harvest—as well as the more mundane and cyclical; such as the Sabbath, which commemorates the seven days of creation. These sites of memory; "enveloped in a Mobius strip of the collective and the individual, the sacred and the profane' (Nora 1989: 19), embody the tension also inhering in the notion of *makom*, with its oscillation between material and transcendent, between place and space. The performance of these rituals expands our notion of how Jewish space may be imagined and co-constructed.

Notes

1 I am grateful to Malachi Hacohen for this suggestion.

2 "Just as 'Heaven' is a metonym for 'the God of heaven,' so is also Maqom [literally, 'Place'] used metonymically and refers to the God who reveals Himself in whatever place he wishes" (Urbach 1975: 72).

3 If you look up the word *makom* in the Even-Shoshan Hebrew dictionary (like the OED, it offers expansive definitions and examples from literature), you will find that it may refer to "a specific area or space that each body/person occupies or may occupy" and the following example from the Hebrew Bible: "the place that you are standing upon is holy land" (Exod. 3: 5). This primary definition is followed by several other general definitions of place including location, settlement, seat, space,

and condition or status. The first example of a secondary definition is the midrashic use, where *Makom* = God. But this consonance is hinted at, I would argue, in the very first instance, where holiness, or the divinity, is evoked to illustrate the most basic definition of space.

4 For an evocative set of philosophical meditations on the meaning of *makom* in Israeli culture, see Hirshfeld (2000).

5 For a helpful discussion of these terms and of space and place in critical theory, see Cresswell (2004).

6 The phrase is the influential formulation of German historian Heinrich Graetz, whose multivolume *History of the Jews* began appearing in 1853.

7 See especially the widely read 1995 special issue of *History and Memory* edited by Saul Friedlander, including articles by Anita Shapira, Uri Ram, and Ilan Pappe; and Penslar (2007).

8 Much of this dissatisfaction with history came from within the profession itself. Historians, especially those interested in visual culture, began to explore the movement between history and memory, an intellectual process that enabled the emergence of space as a productive analytical category.

9 The use of the term metaphorical here is meant to suggest the degree to which these less than physical "sites" (holidays, books, etc.) are always a kind of substitute, an imitation or copy that seeks to represent the imagined fullness of some originary space. Their failure to fully do so—the slippages between the plethora of extant memorial practices and the singular set of events they purport to commemorate—suggests nothing less than the very condition of memory itself, structured, as is Lacan's conception of the unconscious, like a language.

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15

NETWORKS

Laurence Roth

"Networks" refers to a number of burgeoning critical perspectives that attempt to describe and explain human experience as a product of interconnected relationships forged within and between natural and social worlds that are viewed as random, contingent, and continuously in flux. The word itself is seemingly everywhere these days: in the popular media as shorthand for our contemporary high-speed, global marketplace and public sphere; in corporate offices as a description of contemporary business culture; in the outposts of Internet and high tech development as a kind of brand name for a new culture of information; and in the academy as part of the jargon for new theories about complex systems, social relationships, human and non-human agency, and the histories and dynamics that helped shape colonial/post-colonial/postmodern political arrangements and cultures. As a result, it's not clear how to distinguish a general from a specific use of the word, and the challenge is compounded by the fact that many of the uses I've listed for "networks" overlap. This confounds scholars, even in their own backyards. Faculty in universities throughout the United States, for example, are generally accepting and assiduously studying how digital information networks are transforming research, scholarly publication, and teaching. At the same time, many are repelled by and are resisting their administrations' embrace of a corporate culture of networked information and knowledge development that, through managerial protocols and bottom-line accounting, seems to threaten "under-producing" departments and academic freedom. Such popularity and contradictory uses makes "networks" a very difficult word to pin down as a theory in its own right, or to claim that it reflects, as with contemporary space and place studies, or the obsession with language and linguistics before that, a "network turn" in humanities and social science scholarship, much less in Jewish studies.

And yet if one browses just a few titles from the eclectic mix of popular, critical, and analytical texts that inform my points above—Duncan Watts' *Six Degrees*, Bruno Latour's *Reassembling the Social*, Anna Lowenhaupt Tsing's *Friction*, Alan Liu's *The Laws of Cool*, Franco Moretti's *Graphs, Maps, Trees*—"networks" as a theoretical concern emerges as a remarkably coherent new tack in the seas of critical inquiry about the qualities and meanings of Western modernity (Watts 2003; Latour 2005; Tsing 2005; Liu 2004; Moretti 2005). This has particular import for Jewish studies, which came into being in Europe in the early nineteenth-century as the very model of a modern scholarly project. "Modernity" is itself a famously conflicted term, referring as it does to a complex of meanings and practices, and a rigorous archeology of the term is outside the scope of this essay. But in order to establish a foundation for my discussion of networks, a quick

review of one path of exploration in the scholarly quest to explain modernity will help illuminate contemporary critical thinking about networks and what's at stake in applying network thinking to Jewish studies. I'll then discuss contemporary works in Jewish studies that employ variations of network theorizing and explain the concepts and perspectives those works draw on, and conclude with some observations about which areas of network analysis are just emerging in Jewish studies and how they might prove constructive to future scholarship in the field.

The path to which I refer follows a particular intellectual discourse about modernity and human interconnections. It begins with Immanuel Kant and his philosophical description of reason, morality, and aesthetic cognition as fundamental attributes of human existence that are both transcendent of human subjectivity and yet rooted in individual consciousness. This conceptual splitting of, and interconnection between, objectivity and subjectivity, the universal and the particular, and the metaphysical and the material provides a warrant for deductive reasoning about human experience and knowledge, and lends an optimistic view to human enlightenment. In contrast to medieval "superstition" authorized by an established Church that binds subject to object through the mystery of God's eternal will, or a skeptical humanism in which the individual is marooned within subjective consciousness, Kant suggests that humans are separately mindful but naturally endowed with a universal ability to apprehend truth, determine social and political goods, and judge beauty (though not everyone is equally adept at these). Modernity can be thought of as the coming into consciousness of such human ability and potential, which is another way of portraying modernity as the progressive improvement of humankind in general and Western civilization in particular. It's a portrayal that subtends the Enlightenment belief in universal reason, rights, and justice, and helps authorize modern Jewish political emancipation, self-determination, and self-explanation. For Jews are, in this view and in the abstract, connected to humanity and to national polities as equal citizens by dint of their equal potential to discern these universals (by isolating Judaism as an object of scholarly study, as exemplified by the work of the Society for the Culture and Academic Study of Judaism founded in Germany in 1819) and to act on them accordingly.

Friedrich Nietzsche challenged this philosophical optimism in his well-known essay "On Truth and Lying in a Non-Moral Sense," in which he powerfully severs the particularity of human perception from fixed, universal truths. Nietzsche argues that the concepts we use to rationalize and order our world are really just metaphors; what binds us to "truth" or "reality" in the natural world is merely the unsurprising fit between those subjectively generated concepts and the ideals they bring into representation through language: "All the conformity to laws which we find so imposing in the orbits of the stars and chemical processes is basically identical with those qualities which we ourselves bring to bear on things, so that what we find imposing is our own activity. … [I]t is *language* which works on building the edifice of concepts; later it is *science*" (Nietzsche 2010: 771). It's we who bring into being supposedly fundamental interconnections between objectivity and subjectivity, the universal and the particular, and the metaphysical and the material, a view that calls into question not just Western philosophy, but also and more radically Newtonian physics and the natural sciences. Modernity here can be construed as the coming into consciousness of *this* self-awareness, a productive skepticism of the highly creative but unstable projects of conceptual metaphor making both past and present, in which reason, order, coherence, and science itself are seen as projections of human hubris and power (intellectual, social, political, etc.).

Nietzsche's perspective provided a point of departure for later post-structuralist thinkers (such as Jacques Derrida, Michel Foucault, and Paul DeMan) who see disconnection, entropy, contingency, and the vicissitudes of social and political power as the hallmarks of modernity. As Zygmunt Bauman observes in *Modernity and Ambivalence*, these are the conditions that

modernity futilely seeks to make comprehensible and solvable: "Among the multitude of impossible tasks that modernity set itself and that made modernity into what it is, the task of order (more precisely and more importantly, of *order as a task*) stands out—as the least possible among the impossible and the least disposable among the indispensible; indeed as the archetype for all other tasks, one that renders all other tasks mere metaphors of itself" (Bauman 1991: 4). The search for order, according to Bauman, drives modern Western civilization and its "morally elevating story of humanity emerging from pre-social barbarity" (Bauman 1989: 12). Yet its impossibility is evident in the dislocations and violence attending that story, as the Holocaust paradigmatically illustrates. After all, the technologies and moral equivocations that made the Holocaust possible, Bauman argues, are themselves products of modernity and the task of order; their uses and abuses reveal the ironies and ambiguities of a modernity in which the fragmentation of human experience and apprehension, and the disconnection between human subjectivity and the natural world, become (in yet another irony) the shaky ground of any human commonality (Bauman 1989: 28–29). Jews are thereby interpolated into this modified discourse about modernity and human interconnections as a kind of ethno-religious prooftext: in light of the Holocaust they illustrate the ways in which the "etiological myth" (Bauman 1989: 12) of Western, science-driven modernity—belief that the search for first causes or universal laws will make us free—is proved wrong; and in work that follows through on the Holocaust's implications for post-structural critiques of Western metaphysics (as in Jean-Francois Lyotard's *The Differend* or Maurice Blanchot's *The Infinite Conversation*), Jews illustrate the subjectively derived social construction of modern knowledges, identities, and collectivities (Lyotard 1998; Blanchot 1993).

The two views I've quickly sketched here describe one of the defining oppositional binaries of Western modernity; they help illustrate the critical dead end to which this binary and binaries such as subject and object, culture and nature lead, a limitation that Bruno Latour and others invested in network theorizing address. In *We Have Never Been Modern*, Latour retells the story of modernity in a way that shows how these now conventional views about modernity reveal internal contradictions that point not to their inadequacy, but to the unwitting, concomitant, and ironic hybridization of subject and object, culture and nature in their explanations of Western modernity. The presumption of a fundamental split between subject and object in this discourse—which makes order as a task possible, to borrow Bauman's perspective—is belied by the way that philosophical and scientific thinking continually mix the two in what Latour calls "hybrids of nature and culture" (Latour 1993: 10). According to Latour, Robert Boyle's seventeenth-century experiments with the air pump, which established experimental protocols for scientific investigation of natural matter, and Thomas Hobbes's argument in *Leviathan* on the social contract and human political subjectivity, which established a kind of proto-psychology for investigating people as political actors, reveal and model the incipient split in modernity between a world of things and a world of people. Assessing phenomena that had previously been considered of a mixed nature, modern thinkers "cut the Gordian knot with a well honed sword. The shaft is broken: on the left they have put knowledge of things; on the right, power and human politics" (Latour 1993: 3).

Yet as Latour shows, Boyle's scientific methods presume a transcendental Nature that embodies universal laws, but the uncertain outcome of experiments also describe an immanent nature whose workings depend on a network of human assent, on political networks, to replicate and legislate scientific observation. Hobbes' argument presumes an immanent society created through networks of human assent, but the mysterious function of power in and through those networks inadvertently describes a transcendental Society that hovers unseen over the Leviathan and surpasses human agency. To be "modern" in Latour's view is thus to embody these paradoxes: "First guarantee: even though we construct Nature, Nature is as if we did not construct

it. Second guarantee: even though we do not construct Society, Society is as if we did construct it. Third guarantee: Nature and Society must remain absolutely distinct from the work of mediation" (Latour 1993: 32). "Mediation" is Latour's term for the methods, styles, and sites of knowledge production (i.e. the laboratory and the legislature) that perform such intellectual sleights of hand. These help the "modern Constitution" (the politically created and agreed upon principles of Western modernity) to produce hybrids of people and things "whose existence, whose very possibility, it denies" (Latour 1993: 34). And the more emphatic the denial—the more emphatic the work of separating and ordering—the more hybrids will be created that make possible the intellectual, social, and political networks of shared interest and assent necessary to secure agreement about our understandings of the natural and social worlds. In this light, the West has never been modern, at least not in the sense described by the two views I've traced here, because Western philosophizing never really separated subject and object, people and things in the first place.

Latour's development in *We Have Never Been Modern,* and in *Reassembling the Social,* of his actor-network-theory (also known by its acronym, ANT, and often criticized for ignoring the experiences of race and gender on social actors and on their power to speak for objects), is indebted to and reflects affinities with a number of other late twentieth-century Western critical perspectives: Deleuze and Guattari's theorizing of "rhizomes" in *A Thousand Plateaus*—rhizomes are roots and fungal threads that in their chaotic, non-logical proliferation and growth offer a model for a modern "nomadic" thinking that slides around and maps the multiple threads of cognitive and social experience uncontrolled by any governing power (Deleuze and Guattari 1987); post-colonial critiques of empire and of Western representations of the Orient—these authors theorize hybridity and map the modern political, social, and cultural interconnections between metropole and colony, as in Edward Said's *Orientalism* and Homi Bhabha's *The Location of Culture* (Said 2003; Bhabha 1994); Antonio Gramsci's and Raymond Williams' insistence on the fluidity of cultures, social influence, and political consent in modern people's lived experiences—their work also pairs with Jürgen Habermas's recuperative view of modernity in "Modernity – An Incomplete Project" as a construct of face-to-face rhetorical persuasion among people whose vocabularies reflect a wide and interconnected range of political, scientific, and aesthetic points of view (Habermas 1983); social network analysis inspired by social scientists like Stanley Milgram and Mark Granoveter, and by mathematicians such as Anatol Rappaport—such analyses graph the complex, far-flung structures of modern human social ties, the movement of information between and among clusters of people and organizations, and the dynamism of modern social networks; Katherine Hayles' and Donna Harraway's investigations into the modern relation between technoscience and subjectivity—they consider how the human is hybridized with the machine creating de-centered "virtual bodies" and multiply engineered "cyborgs" (Hayles 1999; Harraway 2010); and critical studies of the global flows of modern peoples, cultures, and commodities by anthropologists such as James Clifford, Arjun Appadurai, Akhil Gupta, and James Ferguson—their work pairs with Paul Gilroy's theorization in *The Black Atlantic* of the hybrid identities and meandering routes of diasporic cultures, the "fractal patterns of cultural and political exchange and transformation" (Gilroy 1993: 15), that challenge the racial and national essentialisms of Western modernity and offer "a means to reexamine the problems of nationality, location, identity, and historical memory" (Gilroy 1993: 16).

The ascendance of these critical perspectives within the academy over the last thirty years, and their relevance to contemporary societies and cultures that are globally interconnected, suggests why Latour believed the end of the millennium called for a serious reappraisal of how a networked modernity is investigated, conceptualized, and taught by humanities and social

science scholars (Latour 1993: 1–3). This is especially true for Jewish studies. Instead of viewing Jews and Jewishness as a special category of universal concepts, or as a prooftext for the inadequacies of Western metaphysics and its interpretive ethnocentrism, network thinking posits modern Jewishness as a continually evolving and hybrid lived experience that exhibits a variety of forms and expressions within multiple and often overlapping transnational networks of shared interest and assent.

That fluid understanding of Jewish activities, behaviors, and cultural formations enables scholars to work through, and move beyond, identity-focused critiques of diaspora and cultural mobility like that in Daniel and Jonathan Boyarin's 1993 essay, "Diaspora: Generation and the Ground of Jewish Identity." Theirs was a timely broadside against the ways that post-structural philosophers and cultural/ethnic studies scholars allegorized Jews as the kind of inadvertent subject–object hybrid Latour describes: the *Jew* is "both signifier of unruly difference and a symbol of universalism" (Boyarin and Boyarin 1993: 697). The Boyarins trace this hybridity to Christian and specifically Pauline theological discourse about the "one body of Christ" (Boyarin and Boyarin 1993: 697) and Christian co-option and absorption of Jewish identity, so that a "true" identity in Western philosophy is imagined as metaphysical rather than as a product "of bodily connection and embodied practice" (Boyarin and Boyarin 1993: 705), one that is universal for all individuals, and therefore radically egalitarian, rather than one that reflects particular collective practices and is respectful of "the irreducibility and positive value of cultural differences" (Boyarin and Boyarin 1993: 711). "Diaspora" becomes the Boyarins' name for their counterview, "a theoretical and historical model" based on specific Jewish experiences and cultural practices that offers generative ground for an eclectic, synthetic ethnocentrism and a "disaggregated identity. … not national, not genealogical, not religious, but all of these in dialectical tension with one another" (Boyarin and Boyarin 1993: 721). Controversially, however, the Boyarins used their critique to argue against the "Jewish state hegemony" of Zionism, seeing such Israeli "racism" as "the subversion of Jewish culture and not its culmination" (Boyarin and Boyarin 1993: 712). Jewish diasporic culture for them is the model for a socially just, non-exclusivist collective identity. This, of course, is an idealization, as even the Boyarins admitted (Boyarin and Boyarin 1993: 711), yet another allegory for Jews and another deployment of them as an ethno-religious prooftext about modernity.

Network thinking, on the other hand, better serves the struggle to conceptualize how the intricacies of Jewish difference escape the confines of the modern liberal nation-state, the political–ethnic formation in which most Jews now live—and whose institutions and ideologies tend to organize, stabilize, and rationalize the multiple identities of its citizens in service of political order and control. But "Jewishness exceeds notions of ethnicity," as Laura Levitt explains, "because there are multiple Jewish ethnicities and because it can include forms of religious expression beyond privatized faith. Thus in order to appreciate what it means to claim a Jewish position, a Jewish identity, the common rubrics of liberal pluralist difference—race, class, and gender and/or sexuality—just do not fit, nor does the overarching notion of religion" (Levitt 2007: 810). Levitt reminds us that modernity ushered in a worldly and expansive understanding of Jewishness "that included both rational and nontheistic ways of being in the world as Jews" (Levitt 2007: 815), and that such Jewish "secularism" was embodied and enacted *in addition to* and not, simplistically, *instead of* Jewish religious practice and identity. Though she doesn't invoke network thinking per se, Levitt supports her critique of the dead-end binary of "secular" versus "religious" by quickly tracing three historically distinct networks of Yiddish-speaking Eastern European Jews in the U.S. whose overlapping and often hybridizing practices and discourses complicate the meanings of both "secular" and "Jewishness": the mass of poor, and poorly educated Eastern European Jewish immigrants between 1880 and 1924 who

"brought with them a mixture of pride, shame, nostalgia, and joy in the Yiddish politics and culture they left behind" (Levitt 2007: 816); Holocaust survivors and their children who bear witness to "a kind of broken Yiddish culture" that found refuge alongside "the narrow, religiously construed Jewishness of dominant U.S. Jewish culture" (Levitt 2007: 818); and contemporary Jews "who no longer speak the language of their ancestors but who bring. … feminist and queer politics, jazz and art, literature and film" to their reclamation of a postvernacular Yiddish culture (Levitt 2007: 818). Showing the contingent interconnections that describe these Yiddish cultural networks of shared interest and assent, Levitt steers clear of idealizing any particular one. Instead, she underlines the importance and the challenges of addressing "the complexity of Jewish modernization and enlightenment" (Levitt 2007: 828).

By doing so she also well illustrates what's at stake for Jewish studies in employing network thinking. What new issues and topics might arise if scholars and students of Jewish studies let go of questions about what lies "inside" or "outside" of Jewishness? What new questions might be generated by shifting attention away from critical perspectives that try to objectify the qualities, motives, continuities, or internal workings of some presumed Jewish subject position or cultural production, and toward those that focus on what Dan Miron, writing about Jewish literatures, calls the "contiguity"—the adjoining arrangements and connecting dynamics (Miron 2010: 405)—of Jewish cultural activities? How might that complicate presently fashionable intellectual schemas for categorizing and theorizing difference (predicated on critiques of ethnicity, race, gender, class, etc.) in a way that does justice to the lived experience of Jews? How might that help situate Jewish studies as an exemplary interdisciplinary field responsive to the multifarious nature of a globalized, interconnected modernity?

These questions are also indicative of the various meanings that attach to "networks" and "networking" in contemporary Jewish studies scholarship. As I've already indicated in part, and as I'll show in more detail in what follows, a network can be understood as 1) a conceptual metaphor for the hybridizing interconnections between binary oppositions (subject and object, people and things, secular and religious, Jew and Gentile); 2) a pattern of intellectual and commercial interconnections that give shape to historically contingent cultural activities and formations; and 3) a complex system of social affiliations and interconnections that are brought into being by human relationships created in and through social activities, practices, and media.

The busiest area of contemporary network theorizing and analysis in Jewish studies focuses on the history of "Port Jews" and of Sephardic Jews in early modern Atlantic trading networks, as well as on the cultural mobility of Western Jews in the modern era. These investigations treat networks as both a conceptual metaphor and a pattern of intellectual and commercial inter-connections. Historians like those gathered in the critical anthology *Atlantic Diasporas: Jews, Conversos, and Crypto-Jews in the Age of Mercantilism, 1500–1800* see Sephardic Jews, whose trade routes and modes of living in an Atlantic diaspora they analyze, as imperfect, embodied examples of the complexity and differences of early modern Jewish intellectual and commercial networks, and their contingent linkages and disconnections. By studying the history of that diaspora and of what Lois Dubin and David Sorkin call "Port Jews" (the Spanish, Portuguese, and Dutch Jewish merchants and colonial plantation owners who populated the generally tolerant port cities of the Atlantic and Mediterranean basins [Dubin 1999; Sorkin 1999]) these scholars can "move beyond nation-based historical narratives" that so dominated earlier European Jewish history, as Adam Sutcliffe points out in his contribution to the volume (Sutcliffe 2009: 22). Port Jews' heterogeneous commercial networks, he argues, also help to unsettle fixed notions of "Jewish" history and culture. Given the diversity of their identities and travels—whether of openly practicing Jews, or of Jews who converted to Christianity, or of crypto-Jews, or of the mixed-race progeny of Jewish slave owners—any scholarly assertions about their history, cultural

formations, or racialist thinking must, Sutcliffe says, be sensitive to "the emergence of particularly complex and finely graded forms of hybrid identity within these Jewish worlds" (Sutcliffe 2009: 27). These forms represented both fruitful and predatory sorts of socio-political adaptations wherein Sephardic Jews were sometimes victims and sometimes agents of colonial power, and it would be anachronistic to tout them as usable models for a contemporary, collective Jewish identity. Sutcliffe astutely observes that the creolization, pragmatism, familial ties, and weak political loyalties of the Sephardim were of their time: "The Sephardim of the early modern Atlantic, then, were not harbingers of modernity but, on the contrary, creatures of another age, sustained by informal ethnically based trading networks that were largely brought to an end by the advent of modernity" (Sutcliffe 2009: 29). Jewishness in this light is specific to particular times, spaces, and places within the Atlantic trading networks. Consequently, Sephardic Jews are similar to other Atlantic diasporic groups in their "economic behavior and cultural development" according to Sutcliffe, while their difference is evident in their own complex self-understanding, their uniquely liminal position among Atlantic cultures, and, crucially, in their appearance to us as "fascinatingly alien inhabitants of a world—and a culture—very different from our own" (Sutcliffe 2009: 30).

This comparative angle on networks, and concomitant emphasis on cultural mobility, mediation, hybridity, and difference, is also reflected in Todd Presner's intellectual history of German Jews, *Mobile Modernity: Germans, Jews, Trains*. Rejecting previous historical schemas that constituted German Jewish relations as a failed dialogue, Presner offers the formulation "German/Jewish as a way of characterizing the movements, slippages, and tensions" of a modernity in which "'German' is always mixed together, for better and for worse, in splendor and in horror, with 'Jewish'" (Presner 2007: 8). Here Presner's theorizing and analysis asks us to treat networks as a conceptual metaphor. Employing Walter Benjamin's concept of "dialectics at a standstill," Presner theorizes an historiography capable of showing the non-purposive flow and contingency of history by attending to a moment of particular tension in the dialectical encounter between German and Jewish thinkers (Heidegger/Celan, Goethe/Kafka, Hegel/Heine, Liszt/Herzl, Heidegger/Arendt, and Freud/Sebald), one that arrests that flow for the historian and so reveals *in situ* the dynamics, thoughts, and materials that, from the perspective of the present time, make up German/Jewish modernity. Presner examines these mobile and fugitive encounters through "the spatial constitution of German/Jewish modernity by mapping its intellectual and cultural history onto a decidedly cultural-geographic surface: the railway system" (Presner 2007: 12). That system helps illustrate the profound disorientations and reorientations in time, place, and space that made possible the deterritorialization, fluid identities, and unexpected interconnections of German/Jewish modernity, for both escape at great speed the boundaries of a nation state and national language.

Not surprisingly, Presner cites as theoretical inspirations scholarship not only in historical materialism and cultural geography, but also by a number of thinkers already encountered here: Franco Moretti, James Clifford, Homi Bhabha, and Paul Gilroy. He also credits the literary critic Stephen Greenblatt, a founder of the New Historicist critical perspective and a leading scholar of cultural exchange and transformation. In the introduction to his 2010 critical anthology, *Cultural Mobility: A Manifesto*, Greenblatt provocatively asserts that twenty years of critical work attending to "brave new theories of hybridity, network theory, and the complex 'flows' of people, goods, money, and information across endlessly shifting social landscapes" (Greenblatt 2010c: 1) as in *Atlantic Diasporas* or *Mobile Modernities*, seems to have had no real impact on contemporary social and political experience. Newspaper headlines make clear that people around the globe still take historical progress, national identities, and religious and ethnic authenticity as real, fixed, and worth shedding blood over. "While the older conceptions of

rootedness and autochthony seem intellectually bankrupt," he says, "the heady theories of creative métissage have run aground upon the rocks of contemporary reality" (Greenblatt 2010c: 1). Greenblatt argues that it isn't just the depredations of contemporary global capitalism, and the skepticism as well as hostility it engenders about economic and commercial networks, that is responsible for the still robust popular defenses of belief in historical, political, religious, and ethnic stability and fixity. Another reason for the appeal of founding fathers, originalist interpretations, and homelands is a continuing belief outside the academy in the stability and fixity of the past as a coherent narrative of things as they were.

Consequently, the rest of Greenblatt's introduction is an incisive analysis of the way cultural mobility is part and parcel of the past's legacy in the West, a legacy he maps in part by tracing successive European appropriations of Roman imperialism and Christian appropriation and supersession of the Hebrew Scriptures. Curiously, though, one implication of his historically oriented introduction is that the trouble with current network theorizing and mobility studies is that it has not been effective enough in rooting out conceptions of rootedness. Perhaps this attitude explains why the majority of network theorizing and analysis within and without Jewish studies is so focused on the early modern and modernist periods (the critical framework of Sarah Abrevaya Stein's *Plumes: Ostrich Feathers, Jews, and a Lost World of Global Commerce* and Shachar Pinsker's *Literary Passports: The Making of Modernist Hebrew Fiction in Europe* both employ insights from theory and criticism of commercial networks, cultural geography, and cultural mobility; see also the essays in *Identity and Networks: Fashioning Gender and Ethnicity Across Cultures*) (Stein 2008; Pinsker 2011; Bryceson, et al., 2007). Nevertheless, the five propositions in Greenblatt's "A mobility studies manifesto," included at the end of his volume, offer a vitalized sense of mission and methodology to humanities and social science scholars focused on various times, places, networks, and subject matters: "First, mobility must be taken in a highly literal sense;" "Second, mobility studies should shed light on hidden as well as conspicuous movements;" "Third, mobility studies should identify and analyze the 'contact zones' where cultural goods are exchanged;" "Fourth, mobility studies should account in new ways for the tension between individual agency and structural constraint;" and "Fifth, mobility studies should analyze the sensation of rootedness" (Greenblatt 2010b: 250–52). These propositions are all applicable to Jeremy Stolow's *Orthodox by Design: Judaism, Print Politics, and the ArtScroll Revolution*, a superb study of contemporary transnational Orthodox commercial, cultural, and political networks that thoroughly analyzes the contact zones between literature and the public sphere, Jewish and Christian formula literatures, and the producers, arbiters, and consumers of religiously sanctioned cultural productions. They also inform Jeffrey Shandler's critical approach to inventory in his 2010 David W. Belin Lecture in American Jewish Affairs, "Keepers of Accounts: The Practice of Inventory in Modern Jewish Life." Surveying "new practices of conceptualizing, gathering, organizing, and distributing wealth, goods, or information" in modern Western life, he considers how acceptance of or resistance to these everyday cultural practices, and the networks of collection and exchange they materialized, affected the ways that Jews negotiated their collective relationship with modernity (Shandler 2010: 11).

Other works that grapple with the mobile dynamics of networks arise out of sociological network analysis and scholarship analyzing the human relationships that energize and organize Jewish philanthropy, religiosity, and language practices, and how the Internet mediates those relationships. As Charles Kadushin observes in "Social Networks and Jews," this area of research still needs further development in Jewish studies and, especially, the application of methodologically sound practice, that is, the application of what he calls "true network studies" (Kadushin 2011: 55). This phrase signals to social scientists that Kadushin's theorizing and analysis will treat networks as a complex system of social affiliations and interconnections. Kadushin's essay, first

presented as the 2009 Marshall Sklare Memorial Lecture, responds to the contemporary obsession among Jewish philanthropies and cultural outreach organizations to employ social media as a means to lure young, unaffiliated, and weakly affiliated Jews back to their cultural heritage and into synagogue pews and pro-Israel activism. That enterprise germinated in the U.S. in the 1990s when these philanthropies and organizations made a conscious decision to co-opt "cool" Jewish cultural productions as vehicles for and examples of Jewish cultural renewal (Roth 2007: 101). Philanthropic money from a new class of "mega donors"—the Bronfman Family Foundation, the Koret Foundation, the Posen Foundation, the Avi Chai Foundation, and The Charles and Lynn Schusterman Family Foundation—has fueled an "entrepreneurial approach to organizing and managing communal change by creating seed funding for new and innovative programs to serve Generation X'ers and Y'ers," according to Steven Windmueller, and such a "new model of engagement and giving is drawing heavily on business and entertainment principles" (Windmueller 2007: 252, 254; see also Snyder 2011). Yet how young Jews actually work together and make social connections within a communal or cultural program, and how long as well as in what ways those social networks function, still awaits rigorous social network analysis according to Kadushin. His professional concern echoes Duncan Watts' explanation of the *science* of networks, grounded in sociology and mathematics, which posits that "real networks represent populations of individual components that are actually *doing something*," and that "networks are dynamic objects not just because things happen in networked systems, but because the networks themselves are evolving and changing in time" (Watts 2003: 28). Philanthropies that hope to create instant, organic social networks betray a serious misunderstanding about the complex operations of social connection and interconnection.

Kadushin claims that Jewish interest in, and manifestations of, social networks are not new. The first is evident in the work of social theorists who were Jews—such as Emile Durkheim, Georg Simmel (whose parents converted to Christianity), and Jacob Moreno—and the second in Jewish social structures in the diaspora following the destruction of the Second Temple. Simmel showed that "cross-cutting social circles was the essence of modern life," that one can be a member of many different social circles at the same time, depending on one's profession, hobbies, and cultural interests; and Moreno provided the means to trace and map such complex interconnections through "sociometry," the use of graph drawings that represent individuals as nodes and plot the relations between them as lines (Kadushin 2011: 58). While Kadushin makes a brief case for applying network studies to ancient, medieval, and early modern Jewish social networks, his essay focuses primarily on the opportunities that such analysis makes available to scholars examining modern social circles, "networks whose connections are based on common interests and values but do not have a hierarchical structure or a clear boundary," and which "are characteristic of modern mass society and serve to integrate apparently disconnected entities such as Jews into larger societies" (Kadushin 2011: 60). As an example, he uses a graph drawing to map the network that formed around the Yiddish writer Yoseph Chaim Brenner in London between 1904 and 1908 (Kadushin 2011: 62), using the volume of written correspondence to and from Brenner as the basis for an algorithm determining the spatial distance any one correspondent has from Brenner in the graph. Kadushin produces a network diagram that traces Brenner's "ego network" (a network with him at the center), and that suggests how such Jewish literary circles did not in fact depend on face-to-face encounters or on contemporaneous established Jewish cultural, social, or political institutions to sustain them (Kadushin 2011: 65). The diagram also reveals "the multiple pulls on the writers: their hometown affiliations, their friends and lovers, geography and the circles of other writers, not necessarily linked by Brenner's colleagues but whose influence was crucial nonetheless" (Kadushin 2011: 65).

Kadushin also illustrates how network analysis can help contemporary Jewish population surveys go beyond simplistic questions like "How many of the people you consider to be your closest friends are Jews?" as in the 2000 National Jewish Population Survey. This question, according to Kadushin, results in lists of people rather than in meaningful data about the relationships between them. But when surveys contain questions about the ego-networks of the respondents, as in the survey Kadushin and his co-researchers conducted on the friendships and social affiliations of Jewish high school teenagers, the method "allows, among other things, for an investigation into the way Jewish friendships are embedded, or not, in various institutional settings, including the neighborhood" (Kadushin 2011: 69). Similarly, studies of relationships between power and gender in contemporary Jewish religious, philanthropic, and political organizations can be fruitfully informed by network analysis and sociograms that map the relationships between board members, the number of boards they sit on, and the political or social importance of those boards (Kadushin 2011: 67). Kadushin concludes his essay by asserting that mistaking lists for networks is an endemic problem in Jewish studies, whether it is the lists of writers assigned in Hebrew literature courses, lists of friends among Jewish young adults, or top fifty lists of the most important Jewish community leaders (Kadushin 2011: 71). Social network analysis digs into how the relationships between those writers, friends, and leaders works, and by necessity considers the interpenetrating social circles described by those relationships, the organizations and institutions those relationships bring into being, and the new networks those organizations and institutions set into motion (Kadushin 2011: 72).

Taking account of this dynamism is crucial, and not just because it underlines the speed and contingency of modern flows of information, friendship, and power across social, commercial, and cultural networks. It's also because a key question in the science of network analysis is, as Watts explains it, "how does coherent global activity emerge from the interaction of peers without any centralized authority and control?" (Watts 2003: 54). An ego network places an individual at the center of relationships only in service of an analytical methodology; the center, or centers, of any event or encounter between social actors "*emerges only as a consequence of the event itself*" (Watts 2003: 53). That insight informs Franco Moretti's work at the online Stanford Literary Lab, which features cross- and inter-disciplinary use of network diagramming on literary works in an attempt to analyze the dynamic relationships between networks of characters, tropes, or literary genres and the ways they can be made to instantiate narrative, thematic, and literary historical coherence. Moretti's compelling improvisation on networks as both a complex system of social interconnections and a conceptual metaphor returns us as well to Bruno Latour and to what he calls, in *Reassembling the Social*, the dynamic work of "inscriptions" in networks of scientific knowledge. Inscriptions are proliferations of and agreements with scientific descriptions of material phenomena whose facticity is undeniable, but whose discursive power and social meaning (which makes the phenomena thinkable, gives it agency, and incorporates it into human reality) reside in the phenomena's importance and/or utility to those affiliated with a particular network of scientific knowledge (Latour 2005). Thus the increasingly coherent global conversation over the medical utility and cultural centrality of a "Jewish genetics" (see Yulia Egorova's essay, "Theorizing 'Jewish Genetics': DNA, Culture, and Historical Narrative", Chapter 27 in this volume) is less a matter of DNA facts about the genetic makeup of Jewish populations and more a "matter of concern," as Latour calls it: a contemporary material phenomenon that's emerging as socially "real"—in this case as the material proof of a persistent Jewish identity—as a consequence of the very arguments now concerned with explaining it (Latour 2005).

Research on this dynamism of networked knowledges, environments, and cultural practices is just taking shape in Jewish studies, and is currently focused on the Internet and digital media. Ari Kelman's report, "The Reality of the Virtual: Looking for Jewish Leadership Online,"

funded by the Avi Chai Foundation and published as both an online PDF-download and as an essay in the critical anthology *The New Jewish Leaders*, answers Charles Kadushin's call for new research employing social network analysis. Kelman's motive is that "we know almost nothing about how the Internet is changing the arrangements of power and order in Jewish communities worldwide, or how it is informing conceptions of Jewish collectivity, education, and leadership" (Kelman 2010: 5). In order to establish a starting point for such investigations, Kelman maps a cluster of interconnected Jewish websites and blogs (such as Myjewishlearning.com, Jpost.com, Urj.org, Jewscy.com, Frumsatire.net, etc.)—a "small world" in social network parlance—so as to track the online/offline and transnational feedback loops informing even local Jewish communal life, leadership, and power. What he finds is that "the internet is modeling a different kind of communal structure, one that is decentralized, multi-dimensional, diverse, and in which leadership can be exerted in a variety of forms. … The internet has given both younger and more marginal voices a platform for speaking, broad-casting, organizing, and creating their own communities while still participating in larger com-munal conversations" (Kelman 2010: 78). Kelman's conclusion is not really surprising. Yet sites like Keshetonline.org, which "works for the full equality and inclusion of lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender (LGBT) Jews in Jewish life" (Keshet 2012), and Jewishartnow.com, which offers "a central portal for the convergence of Judaism and contemporary art with a fresh and innovative perspective" (Jewish Art Now 2012), do show the democratizing import of these new online communities and illustrate the kinds of social and cultural issues that are currently galvanizing them.

Different in orientation, but similar in its emphasis on the mediating role of the Internet is the special issue of the journal *Language & Communication* edited by Sarah Bunin Benor and Tsvi Sadan, "Jewish Languages in the Age of the Internet." Here again, new research is predicated on thinking through the implications of social group interconnections. As Benor notes in her introduction to the issue, rather than view the speech and writing used in a Jewish community "as one distinct, bounded system," sociolinguistic analysis should proceed using a "repertoire approach" (Benor 2011: 96). This would take into account "an array of stylistic resources" available to Jewish speakers and writers and the way they combine them for and within the various social groups they belong to as differentiated by nationality, religion, and gender for example, as well as by more intimate social networks and practices (Benor 2011: 96). Thus, "Instead of asking 'What is a Jewish language?'" this issue asks, "How do Jews use language?" (Benor 2011: 96). The Internet is significant to the answers produced because it is now "a tool for data collection," "a locus of community," and a vehicle "for the development and trans-mission of language practices and ideologies" (Benor 2011: 96, 98). Benor's interest in the online dynamism of networked communities, practices, and ideologies is echoed in a growing body of scholarship investigating how Jews use the Internet, as witness articles such as Lori Hope Lefkovitz's "Ritualwell.Org—Loading the Virtual Canon, or: The Politics and Aesthetics of Jewish Women's Spirituality," Judy Tydor Baumel-Schwartz's "Frum Surfing: Orthodox Jewish Women's Internet Forums as a Historical and Cultural Phenomenon," Ravit Raufman and Rachel Ben-Cnaan's "Red Riding Hood: Text, Hypertext, and Context in an Israeli Nationalistic Internet Forum," and Oren Z. Steinitz's "Responsa 2.0: Are Q&A Websites Creating a New Type of Halachic Discourse?" (Lefkovitz 5765/2005; Baumel-Schwartz 2009; Raufman and Ben-Cnaan 2009; Steinitz 2011).

Finally, digital cultural mapping is an especially promising site of network analysis that takes advantage of new digital mapping technologies to explore the various "layers" of major cities around the world, their history, space, landscape, commerce, and even their metaphoric graphing in literature and the arts. What's exciting here is that digital cultural mapping allows all

three understandings of a network—as a conceptual metaphor, a pattern of intellectual and commercial interconnections, and a complex system of social affiliations and interconnections—to operate in synchrony. Both quantitative and metaphoric approaches to networks are available to researchers through sophisticated but now affordable and transferrable digital programming and media. The "Mapping Jewish LA" project at University of California, Los Angeles, for example, takes advantage of UCLA's new digital research and educational platform, HyperCities, created by Todd Presner in 2007 as a complement to and extension of his work in *Mobile Modernity*. As the platform's website explains, "A HyperCity is a real city overlaid with a rich array of geo-temporal information, ranging from urban cartographies and media representations to family genealogies and the stories of the people and diverse communities who live and lived there" (HyperCities 2009). "Mapping Jewish LA" thereby makes manifest the continually evolving and hybrid lived experience of Jews in a way that allows scholars and students to see, compare, historicize, and contextualize the multiple and literally overlapping networks of shared interest that describe modern Jewish identities and cultural formations. "Mapping Ararat," another example, takes a creative approach to these opportunities. It employs a mobile application, simulated cartography, and "augmented reality" to "animate Major Mordecai Noah's 1825 unrealized plan to transform Grand Island, New York into Ararat, a 'city of refuge for the Jews'" (Mapping Ararat 2011). Created by Melissa Schiff, Louis Kaplan, and John Craig Freeman, this public art project "offers the user/participant the tools to imagine an alternative historical outcome for Noah's Ararat and to navigate through an imaginary Jewish homeland" (Mapping Ararat 2011). Users thus take an active part in generating the intellectual and conceptual interconnections charted by the project.

These ventures provide students with compelling entryways into the critical perspectives and scholarly investigations I've discussed in my overview of networks. At present, though, the teaching of Jewish studies within the digital humanities remains the least explored and developed area here. Cathy N. Davidson and David Theo Goldberg's provocative definition of a learning institution in the digital era as a "mobilizing network," one that emphasizes "its flexibility, the permeability of its boundaries, its interactive productivity, and its potential as a catalyst for change" (Davidson and Goldberg 2010: 14) has yet to be tested and thought through in relation to Jewish studies. Nevertheless, many professors and teachers already take advantage of the increasing accessibility of digital information, resources, and materials from websites like Judaica Europeana (Judaica Europeana 2010), The Israeli Center for Digital Art (The Israeli Center for Digital Art 2012), and Jewish Atlantic World (Leibman 2012), as well as from the online archives of Jewish libraries and museums around the world. Their courses, along with the work at UCLA and by the recently convened New Media in Jewish Studies Collaborative at Columbia University, directed by Sam Ball and Jeremy Dauber, will no doubt help push network thinking in Jewish studies toward issues of pedagogy, classroom practice, and educational outreach.

How network theorizing and analysis can enrich teaching in the humanities and social sciences ultimately helps focus what's constructive about networks for future scholarship in Jewish studies. By taking advantage of the various understandings of a network, from quantitative to metaphoric, scholars can fashion a wider range of approaches to a shape-shifting modernity in which Jews and Jewishness are intricately bound up in complex arrangements of people and things. They can also help their students, who often see Jewishness only through the prism of their singular experiences, better confront and navigate an ever more networked Jewishness that is being acted out in a world scene where boundaries of all kinds are becoming increasingly porous and fast moving. This will, I hope, incite and inspire a renewed commitment to interdisciplinary research and teaching, in which scholars from a variety of academic departments and

from institutions around the globe will collaborate on intellectually holistic projects examining modern and contemporary Jewish cultures.

Essential reading

Greenblatt, S. (2010) *Cultural Mobility: A Manifesto*, Cambridge; New York: Cambridge University Press. A collection of essays on theory and analysis in mobility studies, concluding with Greenblatt's manifesto for how humanities and social science scholars focused on various times, places, networks, and subject matters ought to conduct their research.

Kadushin, C. (2011) "Social Networks and Jews," *Contemporary Jewry*, vol. 31(1), pp. 55–73. An overview and critique of Jewish interest in, and manifestations of, social networks in which Kadushin also explains methodologically sound practices of social network analysis.

Kagan, R. L. and Morgan, P. D. eds (2009) *Atlantic Diasporas: Jews, Conversos, and Crypto-Jews in the Age of Mercantilism, 1500–1800*, Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press. A collection of critical essays examining Sephardic Jews in the Atlantic diaspora and laying out new perspectives on the complexity and differences of early modern Jewish intellectual and commercial networks.

Latour, B. (1993) *We Have Never Been Modern*, Cambridge: Harvard University Press, and Latour, B. (2005) *Reassembling the Social: An Introduction to Actor-Network-Theory*, Oxford; New York: Oxford University Press. These two books are foundational reading for understanding Latour's influential actor–network–theory.

Mapping Jewish L.A. (2012), Available: http://www.mappingjewishla.org (accessed 17 October 2012). A multimedia, digital archive of Jewish Los Angeles, accessed through UCLA's digital research and educational platform, HyperCities, that illustrates how such new technologies offer a fresh approach to the multiple and overlapping networks of shared interest that describe modern Jewish identities and cultural formations.

Presner, T. S. (2007) *Mobile Modernity: Germans, Jews, Trains*, New York: Columbia University Press. An intellectual history of German Jews that uses the German railway system as a conceptual metaphor to help illustrate the profound disorientations and reorientations in time, place, and space that made possible the deterritorialization, fluid identities, and unexpected interconnections of German/Jewish modernity.

Watts, D. J. (2003) *Six Degrees: The Science of a Connected Age*, New York; London: W. W. Norton & Company. The best introduction for general readers to the history and development of network thinking and analysis.

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PART III

Case studies in contemporary Jewish cultures

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16

"JEWFACE" AND "JEWFAÇADE" IN POLAND, SPAIN, AND BIROBIDZHAN

S. I. Salamensky

A "Jew-themed" restaurant provides its patrons with broad-brimmed black hats with foot-long sidecurls to wear, and the menu has no prices; patrons must bargain, or "Jew," the staff down. A play billed as a tribute to a lost Jewish community ends in a gag: Death throws back his shroud to reveal an open-brain-pate wig, *à la* the horror flick *Nightmare on Elm Street*. In a "traditional Jewish wedding dance," "Jewish wealth" is represented by a local luxury: vacuum-packed juice boxes. In parts of the world where Jews, once populous, have nearly vanished because of oppression, forced exile, and genocide, non-Jews now strive to re-enact what has been lost.

In this essay, I will consider three general cases of what I term "Jewface" minstrelsy and "Jewfaçade" display, in Krakow, Poland; the village of Hervás in western Spain; and Birobidzhan, capital city of Russia's far-eastern Jewish Autonomous Region, which is known as Birobidzhan as well. Jewface—resembling the "blackface" prevalent in the United States in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries—is the practice of music, dance, theatre, and/or extra-theatrical types of performance, primarily by non-Jews, intended to convey notions of historical Jewish life and culture. Jewfaçade involves architectural and decorative constructions, again mainly by non-Jews, meant to evoke ideas of the Jew in similar ways. Ruth Ellen Gruber, the team of Daniela Flesler and Adrian Pérez Melgosa, and other journalists and scholars have documented what Michael Brenner has called "Jewish culture without Jews" in Poland and Spain, as well as elsewhere in Europe (Brenner 1997: 152). However, no comparative study has been made, and no scholar has approached this topic with regard to Birobidzhan. I will provide brief overviews of Jewface and Jewfaçade activities in Krakow, Hervás, and Birobidzhan. I will then demonstrate the ways in which the notions of the figure of the Jew and of local Jewish history are performed, or acted out in these three comparative geographical contexts. These cases, as, in conclusion, I will argue, represent three very different approaches to public memory and memorialization with regard to the Jew, and perhaps in regard to troubled historical legacies more generally.

Krakow

Kazimierz—the burgeoning Jewish quarter of Krakow from the thirteenth century until its liquidation by the Nazis in 1942–43—is the unofficial headquarters of the Jewish cultural revival

movement in Europe. This is not to say that Krakow is the center of Jewish life in Poland; the city has few openly Jewish residents, compared to the more cosmopolitan Warsaw, where the social and job discrimination found elsewhere in Poland is less evident. Rather, Kazimierz owes its importance to an intensive, ever-growing, largely non-Jewish-led Jewish heritage tourism industry centered around Szeroka, a square about four blocks long flanked by formerly Jewish-owned townhouses and storefronts, two historic synagogues, and a medieval Jewish cemetery, with several other Jewish cultural sites a short walk away.

The Kazimierz phenomenon began as a civic effort in 1988 with the inception of the annual Jewish Culture Festival—a now week-long *tour-de-force* of klezmer and klezmer-influenced jazz concerts, plays, films, historical lectures, historical and art exhibits, children's activities, public religious services, Christian-Jewish dialogue meetings, and other tolerance-oriented events. The festival was initiated by Janusz Makuch, a non-Jewish resident of Krakow who was haunted by his city's history, with help from a Warsaw-based circle of Jewish intellectuals and artists who had long been meeting underground, as the "Flying Jewish University," to share forbidden religious and cultural information. After the fall of communism in Poland in 1989, the festival began to receive foreign Jewish funding, as well as some degree of local and national governmental support, and the synagogues, cemetery, and other Jewish sites that had been damaged and/or fallen into disrepair were restored. In 2004, Chris Schwartz and Jonathan Webber, a photojournalist and an anthropologist, both Jewish and from Britain, founded the Galicia Jewish Museum, a striking art, lecture, bookstore, and lounge space. Meanwhile, other small museums and historic societies in Kazimierz began mounting more Jewish-oriented exhibitions.[1]

Jewish cultural revival in Kazimierz also has a strongly commercial basis. In the 1990s, recognizing the profit potential of the area, a few non-Jewish operators began conducting tours of the Auschwitz-Birkenau concentration camp forty minutes away, as well as of other local Holocaust-related and religious landmarks. After the 1993 on-location filming of *Schindler's List*, tours were added of the Schindler factory and other sites featured in the movie. Individual and group Jewish heritage tourists to Poland—who until then tended to fly into Warsaw to tour the area on which its Jewish ghetto once stood, travel to Auschwitz-Birkenau, and then fly out again—added a day or two in Kazimierz to their itineraries. Over time, souvenir stands selling wooden carvings of Chasidic Jews proliferated, as did flea-market tables jumbled with tarnished menorahs and other salvaged Jewish bric-à-brac, with the eventual appearance of "Jewish-Style" restaurants.[2] These establishments—run by non-Jews, housed in former Jewish buildings, and generally decorated with faux-Yiddish-lettered signs and other stereotypically Jewish motifs—range from the gracious and deferential to the slipshod and kitschy. Some, like the Klezmer Hoys, or Klezmer House, serve meals so well-researched as to include historical dishes no longer common even in areas of the world with high Jewish populations, while others serve dishes of questionable provenance, often expressly non-kosher. The Once Upon a Time in Kazimierz café typifies a somewhat mixed scenario. Assembled from a few different small storefronts joined together, Once Upon a Time is marked by large painted wooden signs bearing the names of the Jewish businesses that had been there before—a dry goods store, a carpenter's shop, a beauty salon—as though Kazimierz's erstwhile residents had never left. The signage is reproduced without faux-Yiddish fonts, and in Polish, as it would have been under interwar Polish-only mandates.[3] The low-key, historically accurate approach taken to the café's exterior may appear more thoughtful than the heavy-handed efforts seen elsewhere around the square. Yet, in contrast to Klezmer Hoys, which realistically reproduces that of a typical upper-class Jewish home, the interior of Once Upon a Time is zanily crammed with random antique bric-a-brac, "Jewish" and not—sewing machines, radios, washboards, pots, pans, hammers, hardware,

accordions, sheet music, ladies' dresses, and much more—stuffed into niches, piled atop one another, and even festooning the ceiling. Through the haphazard arrangement of these "fragments" (Barbara Kirschenblatt-Gimblett's term for ethnographic objects removed from their common contexts that may be interpreted as warmly humorous or dreamily abstract, as in a painting by the Jewish artist Marc Chagall), this degree of interpretive license on a site of Nazi roundups might also be taken as disrespectful to those from whose absence the business profits (Kirschenblatt-Gimblett 1998: 55). As if to underline issues of exploitation, a large placard next door to the café advertises Auschwitz tours.

The organizational committee, which includes several of the festival's founders as well as members of the Warsaw and Krakow Jewish communities, closely oversees festival content and the vast majority of the works presented are carefully conceived. However, here interpretive license is at times taken as well. For instance, a 2006 concert by venerable Jewish musician Leopold Kozlowski, known as "The Last Klezmer," included a corps of young non-Jewish Polish performers—the men in broad-brimmed black hats and kaftans, with false sidecurls, the women in long but tightly fitted black dresses and coquettish veils—singing cabaret-type songs of a suggestive nature very much at odds with ultra-orthodox doctrine. When interviewed, two performers reported that they had no personal interest in Jewish music—their goal was pop-music success—but simply found the job lucrative and convenient. A related point of difficulty lies in how the festival itself should be interpreted. While on the surface, governmental support of the festival demonstrates an official attitude of multicultural tolerance useful in terms of Poland's integration into the culture of the relatively progressive European Union, it also masks issues such as Poland's ongoing refusal of postwar property restitution, as well as the ties of some high-level officials—among them the late Polish president Lech Kaczynski—to anti-Semitic organizations such as the popular right-wing Catholic radio station, Radio Marija, which propagates blood-libel, Christ-killing, and gold-hoarding myths about Jews. At the same time, the festival stands as a site of resistance to conservative forces. Throughout the years of Kazimierz's Jewish tourist development, artists and musicians—drawn by Kazimierz's picturesque prewar architecture, charming cobbled alleys, and non-mainstream history—have come to inhabit the district, along with members of Poland's gay and lesbian community. Stylish inns, jazz bars, boutiques, and cafés now abound. Kazimierz has thus become a destination for not only Jewish-heritage seekers, but also local and foreign tourists in general. Meanwhile, the performance of world-music at the festival, as well as the high number of university students involved in it as volunteers, encourage the realms of neo-Judaic and alternative culture to overlap.

The final klezmer concert of the festival ends in Jewish *hora* circle dances that grow to fill nearly the entire square. The dancers move, in traditional fashion, faster and faster until the *hora* evolves, on the evident impulse of the students, into playful neo-punk-style pogo and slam dances. While this casual integration of popular dance forms into the *hora* may be regarded as disrespectful of Jewish tradition, it may also be noted that both klezmer and the *hora* are inherently syncretic—the former incorporating elements of Balkan and Roma music and American jazz, the latter brought in the late nineteenth century to what is now Israel by Balkan immigrants and adapted into a national Jewish "folk" practice. As Joseph Roach points out, performance traditions are subject to external influences, and generally change over time. To attempt to freeze an "intangible" cultural heritage at a certain moment in its development as inherently more authentic than at any other moment may be to falsify the nature of that tradition, and of culture in general (Roach 2007: 182).

Every year, the festival features a Sabbath service led by the Chief Rabbi of Poland, currently the US-born Michael Schudrich. The service, held at the grandest of Krakow's synagogues, the Tempel, a few blocks from the square, is open for both religious attendance by local and visiting

Jews and observation by non-Jewish locals and tourists. While there is no prohibition against locals and tourists actively participating in the service, the structure of it ensures that only the already initiated are, in Kirschenblatt-Gimblett's words, "licensed to do," while outsiders are "mandated to watch" (Kirshenblatt-Gimblett 1998: 75). Schudrich is an Orthodox rabbi, and the service—like most in Europe—is of a mainstream Orthodox nature, consisting primarily of prayers, sung, read in unison, and/or chanted by worshippers individually. Men pray on the ground floor of the sanctuary, while women pray in a second-floor gallery overlooking the men's section. Although the festival services are preceded by brief introductions in Polish and English, worship is conducted as if no outside observers were present, and once the service begins no translations or explanations are provided. Those observers who enter the synagogue after the service has started are thus provided no background at all. While observers are not technically unwelcome in the pews, most remain standing at the back. When male observers attempt to wander up into the women's gallery, ushers, often without explanation, halt them. To a Pole raised in the Roman Catholic tradition, the minor-key melodies, the cacophony of individual prayer, and the worshippers' dress and gestures might seem exotic or outlandish. A service I observed in 2006 concluded with a near-shouted rendition, unexplained and untranslated, of the non-liturgical mid-century Hebrew song "*Am Yisrael Chai*," or "The Jewish People Live On," a wrenching, yet also defiant statement at a site of Nazi roundups and murders, Polish betrayals, and ongoing anti-Semitism. From the perspective of the non-Jewish observers, the song would most likely have appeared to be situated in the context of ancient religious routine; from a Jewish perspective, the song would most likely have seemed historically significant and subversively political. Though perhaps not precisely aimed against the Polish and other European festival participants observing this spectacle, the performance of this song was far from inclusive or reconciliatory. When, after the service in 2006, platters of wine and challah bread—still commonly sold under that name in Polish bakeries, and thus in itself familiar—were passed around for traditional Jewish blessings, nearly all observers stepped back sharply in refusal, perhaps reading the wine and bread as symbols of religious induction akin to the Catholic host, which historically they are, instead of offerings of good will. It is unclear whether the public aspect of the service was received by its audience in any way that would promote understanding and tolerance—if that can be assumed as its intent—or only alienated or confused them.

While the civic element of the Kazimierz revival movement keeps the most problematic excesses of non-Jewish Jewish revival in check, this is rarely so elsewhere in East-Central Europe. For instance, the Anatewka restaurant in Lodz, Poland—named after the fictional Jewish village best known from *Fiddler on the Roof*—features at one of its tables a mannequin of a Jew in traditional religious garb praying, as per common stereotypes in Poland, over a bowl of money. Anatewka is a mini-chain. One of its outlets is located in the food court of a shopping mall and cultural center fashioned out of a formerly Jewish-owned factory, where it shares an outdoor dining deck with Panda Express and Pizza Hut. As another example, the Under the Golden Rose restaurant in Lviv, Ukraine, as mentioned above, provides guests with "Jewish" hats to wear that include attached sidelocks, and leaves prices off its menus, encouraging patrons to bargain. The restaurant encroaches on the grounds of the historic Golden Rose synagogue, sparking public objections by Lviv's small Jewish community. The restaurant proprietors run another theme restaurant nearby, based on the Lviv historical figure Leopold von Sacher-Masoch, after whom the term "masochism" was coined, as well as a patriotically folkloric-styled bar serving as unofficial headquarters for adherents of Ukraine's neo-fascist nationalist movement. This profitable triad at once airs, distorts, mocks, and rejects notions of cultural difference.

Hervás

The Extremadura region of Spain was home to large Jewish populations before the Spanish Inquisition, and to resultant, smaller Catholic *converso* populations afterward. The annual *Fiesta de los Conversos* of the mountain village of Hervás officially honors the contributions of these Jewish and *converso* communities, and celebrates the *Convivencia*, a perhaps mythical pre-Inquisition Golden Age of harmonious Catholic, Muslim, and Jewish co-existence. The festival revolves around a nightly theatrical spectacle, presented as a memorial to Hervás's past Jewish community, enacted by amateur actors chosen from among the townspeople. During the afternoons, a "Jewish market" is run by local and visiting vendors garbed as "medieval Jews."

The current play, *La Estrella de Hervás*, or *The Star of Hervás*, written in 2008 by local author Miguel Murillo specifically for the festival, is set in Hervás itself, and staged on a riverbank with the preserved medieval buildings of the neighborhood known as the Jewish Quarter looming above and reflected in the water below. Álvaro, a Catholic boy, and Myriam, a Jewish girl known as the "star" of the town for her beauty, fall in love. Laban, an older Jewish man, and Gil, Álvaro's best friend, also Catholic, are in love with Myriam as well. Before the lovers can run away, Laban and Gil murder them. Now five centuries afterward, in our own time, the ghost of Gil roams the banks lamenting Myriam's death. The narrative is frequently interrupted by comic vignettes featuring a pair of peasant fool figures whose bawdy courtship echoes the lovers' more romantic one, as well as by a band of gypsy-like rovers, a fire-juggling sequence, a parade of children dressed in carnival animal masks for the Jewish holiday of Purim, and live Spanish-Jewish music interludes. The director of *Estrella*, José Antonio Raynaud, closes the play, each year, with a different surprise prank. In 2011, after the final mournful soliloquy by the ghost of Gil, the actor playing the ghost tossed off his hood to reveal the gory, jokey "brain" wig mentioned above. The crowd—elders in folding chairs, teens in the bleachers, toddlers crawling in fresh-mown hay by the riverside—exploded into hilarity and cheers.

In the "Jewish market," vendors dressed as Jews—loosely envisioned in vaguely biblical caftans, headscarves, and hippie skirts—line Hervás' narrow twisting streets to hawk earrings, embroidery, Homer Simpson plaques, wind-up boxing pig toys, beer, stewed pig ears, and, in what seems the sole concession to the theme, "*Judería*" tapas: tuna and pepper paste on bread. Hervás also boasts a Hotel Synagoga, with no synagogue elements, but a swimming pool, grim business suites, and the look of a Holiday Inn; a Judería Tavern dishing up platters of ham; and Jewish star motifs adorning nearly every street sign, window grate, and even the church. At points during the festival, a band of children, again dressed in "Jewish" fashion, circulates with a "town crier" reading from a parchment scroll lined with decrees such as might have been issued in the Inquisition. The edicts, however, are also announcements of events: a speed-painting contest, an exhibit of comic books relating tales of the region at large, and a sampling of local products sponsored by a soccer club. Serious educational efforts are almost entirely absent. The one exception in 2011 was La Karamba, a folklore song group from Caceras, a small city in the region, leading a Sephardic music and history tour through the throngs. Buyers and sellers glanced up from their dealings, jarred by accurate tales of gruesome violence, subterranean synagogues, and bloodlines that continue to emerge today. One visitor, an elderly man from a nearby town quietly burst into tears. When I asked him why, he said that he had always known that his ancestors were *conversos*, but had not been aware of all they had gone through. Otherwise, as La Karamba passed on, the market resumed its tranquil air. Abigail Cohen, an Israeli-born local calling herself "the one real Jew in town," reported to me in a 2011 interview that she had offered to give lectures on Jewish culture, but had been turned down.

It is unclear how many Jews were actually ever in residence: a 1492 census lists forty-five individuals or families, few with property, scattered about the town. As scholars, among them Daniela Flesler and Adrián Pérez Melgosa, have suggested, rather grander myths of a once-wealthy, flourishing Jewish community may have arisen around a street with a name meaning "synagogue," and a derogatory saying: "*En Hervás, judíos los más*," or, most people in Hervás, despite the purge, are still secretly Jews and thus heretical or untrustworthy. When, in the 1960s, town representatives seeking to recoup from ruinous Francoist economic policies succeeded in having the best-preserved section of the town—which did not, apparently, boast a greater concentration of Jews than any other area—accorded official status as an historic Jewish Quarter, the old adage was recast in an affirmative light. The annual *Fiesta de los Conversos* was contrived in the 1990s as part of an effort to make the remote Hervás a stop on Spain's international Jewish heritage tourism circuit. Organizers built the three-day festival around an Inquisition-themed play by a Jewish writer in Madrid, who later wrote another specific to the setting of the town. There was not, however, much to celebrate in oppression and forced conversion, and the latter was a sticking point *vis-à-vis* Catholic doctrine, which traditionally regards acceptance of Christ as redemption. Further, the play's focus on Jews may have come to seem less desirable over time. The hoped-for Jewish tourists from abroad failed to materialize, perhaps due to the distance of Hervás from major cities, where Spain's remaining self-identified Jews remain, and the near-absence of public transportation to the town. The festival gradually developed into less of a Jewish-related than a regionally themed celebration. The council hired two new theatrical directors who altered the play into a conventional love story in which Jews, villainized, came to appear stereotypically stiff-necked, tricky, and greedy, and essentially responsible for their ill fate (see Flesler and Melgosa 2010). While this revision technically absolved the greater community of historical wrongdoing, the notion highlighted in the town's promotional materials that the current townspeople may be descended from *conversos* themselves, as well as the fact that the festival was meant to celebrate the town's *converso* past, rendered this strategy awkward at best.

The council finally solicited a wholly new work from Miguel Murillo, a relatively well-known Extremaduran playwright. The result, *Estrella*, was not only set in Hervás, but was based on local legends and written with an eye toward more upbeat entertainment and inclusion of more townspeople in roles. In one run, these totaled eighty adults and children, in addition to a live horse, donkey, and dog. As well as local stories, *Estrella* combines elements of medieval pageantry, *commedia dell'arte*, Shakespeare, *Fiddler on the Roof*, *West Side Story*, and lurid soap-opera *télénovelas*. *Estrella* solves the problem of how to represent the Inquisition and forced conversion by avoiding almost any culturally specific content; apart from the issue of inter-marriage, mention of Purim, a questionable reference by Myriam to her father's love of money, and a brief, passing address by the ghost of Gil to the medieval Spanish-Jewish philosopher and poet Yehuda Halevi, there is little to mark the play as Jewish-related at all. Sensitive aspects of local mythology were diverted; rumors of treasure buried by escaping Jews, for instance, are recast as "Moorish," in a less volatile reference to Spain's medieval status as a Muslim caliphate. Meanwhile, the gypsy-like characters are said, rather, to hail from what is now Uzbekistan, perhaps in deference to contemporary issues of the treatment in Europe of Romani peoples. In addition, the narrative tactfully ends before the Inquisition, and there is to be no conversion or mixed marriage as the lovers are dead.

Jew figures appear throughout Spain in Catholic-related events such as *moros y cristianos*, or Moors and Christians, pageants hailing the conquest of Spain from Muslim rule; in one such pageant in the town of Alcoy, locals marching as "Jews" are accompanied by a brass band playing the theme from *Exodus*, the 1960 American blockbuster film detailing the post–Holocaust fight

for Israeli independence from Britain. In a pre-Lenten festival in the village of Fresnedillas de la Oliva, men costumed in flowered, pajama-like suits as what are variously called Jews and "*motilones*," or "shaven-headed ones" (most likely a reference to the Barí people of South America) pursue another man, dressed as a bull, through the streets. At the close of the day, the Jews and/or shaven-headed ones spit gold coins into the hands of others, dressed as priests, apparently recalling conversions by both of these groups, as well as the riches gained for Spain through inquisition and colonization. Contemporary notions of the Jew in religiously based contexts are primarily derived from biblical sources surrounding the betrayal of Jesus. As in Hervás, Jews appear in these contexts as fairly abstract supporting characters in Spanish historical and Catholic theological narratives, of little specific interest in themselves, but useful in adding justification and color to these myths.

The exhibit on display at a small Jewish museum in Bejar, near Hervás, concludes with a wooden trunk full of keys. According to legend, when the Jews were expelled from their homes, they retained their keys in exile and across generations, occasionally returning to try them in their doors. A placard by the trunk explains that the keys "symbolize the memory of the homes which the Jews had to abandon […]. It may be that some of these keys had traveled with them to their new place of refuge. Even if this is not actually the case, this chest gives us a reason to imagine this." This notion of legitimate imagination prompted by perhaps false evidence typifies, in a sense, Spanish neo-Judaic activity. During the Hervás festival, recorded music of a vaguely apposite nature—Spanish-Jewish, North African–Jewish, medieval Spanish, Israeli—is pumped through the streets. On the last day of the 2011 festival, these resources seem to have run out. Echoing down the cobblestone alleys was a cover by the American folk singer Joan Baez of Bob Dylan's "Blowin' in the Wind." So it may be in Spain in terms of the Jew: a creature of the ether, everywhere, yet finally nowhere.

The Jewish Autonomous Republic

The JAR was established by Joseph Stalin in 1934 as a communist relocation colony for Ukrainian Jews. The project technically addressed three problems: the presence of a large petty-mercantile, and thus "capitalistic," Jewish population unwanted in the Ukraine; the under-development of the swampy region bordering on Manchuria; and the specter of invasion by Japan. While religion would be banned as elsewhere in the Soviet Union, Yiddish—the Jewish workman's tongue, as opposed to the Hebrew of worship—would share equal billing with Russian, rendering the JAR the only place in the world in which Yiddish has ever been an official language. Secular Jewish theatre, music, art, and other culture would also be encouraged. As with his other ethnic republics in his early years, Stalin sought to hybridize communist ideology with "native" languages and cultures on the theory that communism would thereby take firmer root. The JAR stood, as well, as a retort to Zionism, which the USSR opposed. Attracted by financial incentives, as well as by the prospect of removal from sanctioned local oppression, over 30,000 Ukrainian Jews made the treacherous overland journey. Socialist Jews from elsewhere, including Western Europe and the US, were drawn to Stalin's project as well. Conditions in the JAR were extremely hard. Few of the promised building materials or farming tools materialized; the swamps were near-impossible to drain; winters were frigid, summers rife with malaria. Many settlers died and a number left. Still, for many others the JAR became home. Yiddish was taught in the schools and appeared on buildings and street signs. After finishing the settler barracks, the first structure built was a Yiddish theatre. A Yiddish newspaper was produced, Yiddish literature was written, and even films were made. Stalin's later purges brought significant persecution, yet the Jews of the JAR escaped the ravages of Hitler, with more Jews arriving as refugees during and

after the war. With the Glasnost period and the fall of the Soviet Union, a majority of those in the Republic with Jewish backgrounds emigrated, primarily to Israel.[4]

Today, although only a few elderly people attend religious services—most in the cottage that served as the town's one prayer house until the recent construction of a Chabad center (an outreach and educational center sponsored by the Chabad-Lubavitch Hasidic movement)—an estimated 77,000 people, 16 percent of the total population of 190,000, claim some degree of Jewish heritage. In recent years, the JAR has received government grants as well as Russian and foreign Jewish grants to restore and showcase its history. These efforts appear directed primarily at local residents and at Russian day-trippers from Khabarovsk, a few hours away. For the 70th anniversary of the city of Birobidzhan in 2007, Chinese workers were brought over the border to pave the muddy roads, reface the main square, and affix to walls, buildings, and a vast number of other surfaces the Birobidzhan coat-of-arms, a seven-branched menorah pierced through the center by a 1930s-era Soviet communications tower. Recently erected monuments included a three-story-high menorah, a statue of Yiddish writer Sholem Aleichem, and a fountain crested by a "Fiddler on the Roof" figure: a simulacrum of a simulacrum, evidently copied from the cover of the 1964 cast album of the Broadway musical based on Aleichem's writings. A number of elderly residents remain who arrived in the JAR as children, were born there to settler parents, or arrived from Ukraine during or after the war. These residents speak Yiddish natively and clearly recall family tales. But nearly all cultural memory of pre-JAR Ashkenazic life is at least second-hand, not only personal testimony but also well-worked productions such as the musical, which derive not only from sources in the Ukraine but also from elsewhere.

In contemporary Birobidzhan, Yiddish music concerts, theatre, and Jewish-related performances and exhibits of various sorts take place frequently. A local television series focusing on Jewish culture has been produced, and in the early 2000s a Chabad rabbi posted to Birobidzhan conducted a weekly radio show on the Jewish religion. Several small museums, libraries, and archives in the area display Jewish cultural holdings, and the newspaper, which retains its Yiddish title, continues to print one page of news in Yiddish per week. Every other year, Birobidzhan hosts a Jewish cultural festival in which the regular schedule of activities is intensified and supplemented with performances by guests from Moscow. One typical event is a series of dances by students of mixed heritage choreographed by the high school dance teacher, Elena Antonova, who has no Jewish background herself. In one of the dances, accompanied by recorded Jewish music, male dancers were clad in Jewish prayer shawls cut and sewn into tunic-type garments. In another, billed as representing a traditional Ukrainian Jewish wedding of the early twentieth century, male and female dancers—contrary to religious practice of the time—held hands, and students in oversized chef toques waltzed around bearing trays to which were affixed symbols of plenty: papier-mâché roast chickens, plastic fruit, and the above-mentioned contemporary "brick-pack" juice boxes, a luxury in Russia's impoverished, current-day East.

Most of the townspeople involved in cultural revival in the JAR are partially Jewish in background; others, like Antonova, and Motja, a young man who has performed as a lead singer in a Yiddish song troupe, have no Jewish heritage at all. When I interviewed him in 2007, Motja was a central member of two self-styled coteries, a black-clad group who call themselves the "Rockers," and another called the "Players," who do parkour, an urban stunt sport. He studied Yiddish, English, and Chinese, worked at the local radio station, composed hip-hop songs, and was well-known at the local disco and about town. To Motja, Jewish culture was "just something" he did in addition to his other activities. He pronounced it "cool," and other Rockers and Players I interviewed, whether ethnically Jewish or not, emphatically agreed.

While it is unlikely that there is no anti-Semitism in the JAR, Birobidzhan has won a national prize for multicultural integration, and all residents interviewed spoke of the town's

Jewish heritage in a positive light. This special distinction—often noted in Russian and international media—appeared to be a point of civic pride, reflecting well on even citizens with no Jewish background. In addition, the ability of those with Jewish background to relocate to Israel seemed to convey upon them an enviable status. Motja and his friends characterized Israel as the bright, bustling, sophisticated West, tied for them to other cosmopolitan delights such as Asian electronics, European fashion, and African-American music. They also held notions of Jewish wealth, as represented for them by powerful, current-day Moscow oligarchs with Jewish backgrounds who are often mentioned in the Russian press. For Motja and friends—as, seemingly, for others invested in notions of Birobidzhan's "Jewish" identity—the Jew is a fairly idealized figure representing much of what is lacking in their lives today.

Cultural memory, cultural desire, and the figure of the Jew

As Eric Lott argues, American blackface permitted white performers and audiences to air cultural anxieties over race in the relatively safe, comfortable guise of mere entertainment (Lott 1995).[5] Jewface and Jewfaçade in Krakow, Hervás, and Birobidzhan similarly allow non-Jews—or, in Birobidzhan, a mix of those with some degree of Jewish heritage and those without—to engage problems of history and identity under cover of heritage preservation. However, these three cases vary greatly from one another in context, ranging along a spectrum from what might be called "plethoric," or over-full memorial scenarios, to what might be called "voidic," or under-sufficient ones. The memorial strategies employed in these scenarios differ greatly as well. The Jewish history of Krakow is relatively recent and highly volatile: artifacts of past Jewish life are widely evident; elderly residents are still able to recall Jewish presence; and questions are increasingly raised in the press about national and individual culpability in oppression and genocide, as well as about perceived threats of Jewish return and property reclamation. In the plethoric memorial context represented by Krakow, neo-Judaic activity functions largely in what might be called a "negotiatory" capacity, at once releasing, revising, and managing sensitive historical and cultural information. Hervás typifies a relatively voidic memorial situation. While its claim to Jewish history is legitimate and that history rich, the temporal divide between that era and our own engenders a near-complete absence of cultural continuity or recall. Neo-Judaic activity in Hervás enacts what might be called a "constitutory" operation by which invented histories take on a life fully their own, with little or no reference to cultural memory itself, and in this—with, perhaps, exceptions such of that of the man who, through an educational performance, learned his *converso* ancestors' history—appear mainly to benefit non-Jewish host cultures by providing local entertainment and income. Birobidzhan boasts a unique and continuous Jewish historical legacy; while not entirely untroubled, it is a relatively placid one. Meanwhile, the remote quality of the locale combined with the effects of communist secularism, intermixing with other populations, and the passage of time have overwhelmingly diluted Jewish cultural transmission and recall. On the memorial spectrum, the JAR is situated between a plethoric and a voidic state, with neo-Judaic activity playing what might be called a "compensatory" role vis-à-vis community anxieties over memorial gaps.

"Heritage" activity, as Kirshenblatt-Gimblett maintains, far from restoring past histories and cultures, "produces something new" within a cultural economy (Kirshenblatt-Gimblett 1998: 150). As Kirchenblatt-Gimblett writes of the museum, a cultural festival or event may perform numerous coexistent, or even conflicting, functions. It may, for instance, serve as a "vault" storing and releasing cultural memories, a "laboratory" for creating new expressive forms, "a school" aimed at developing an "informed citizenry," and/or a "space" of imaginative "transport" and "fantasy." It may stand as a "place to mourn"—and/or a "party." It may persuasively

"advocate" values such as historical "preservation" and social "tolerance" (Kirshenblatt-Gimblett 1998: 138–39). It may misrepresent that which it purports to display, and/or reproduce stereotypes leading to further misunderstanding. It is thus impossible to characterize all such festivals or events in a fully positive or negative light. Yet insofar as all effect carnivalesque disruptions of everyday life, potential exists for what Victor Turner terms "public reflexivity," in which, in Lott's words, "societies" may come to "think" in freshly, productively "displaced" ways "about their forms and functions" (Lott 1995: 13). The notion of Jewish culture without Jews may well be a deeply discomfiting one. Yet neo-Judaic activities may be useful in maintaining a space for public curiosity and discourse in the face of otherwise overwhelming cultural forgetfulness and public silence. At their worst, as in Hervás, Jewface, Jewfaçade, and other such phenomena can misinform and offend. At their best, however, as in Krakow, they hold the potential to spark more genuine forms of education, debate, outreach, and understanding.

Notes

1 For in-depth examination of the establishment of the festival and redevelopment of Kazimierz, see Murzyn (2006).
2 For a broad survey of "virtual" Jewish culture in Europe through the early twenty-first century, see Gruber (2002); on Krakow specifically, see also Lehrer (2007).
3 I am grateful to Edward Portnoy for his explanation of the mandate.
4 For in-depth background on the history of the JAR, see Weinberg (1988).
5 Michael Rogin makes a related argument concerning Jewish performers participating in blackface and related entertainments (Rogin 1998).

Essential reading

Flesler, Daniela and Adrián Pérez Melgosa. "Hervás, *Convivencia*, and the Heritagization of Spain's Jewish Past." *Journal of Romance Studies* 10:2, 2010, 53–76. Vital background on the establishment of Hervás's yearly festival.

Gruber, Ruth Ellen. *Virtually Jewish: Reinventing Jewish Culture in Europe*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 2002. A vast survey of "virtual" Jewish culture in Europe through the early twenty-first century.

Kirshenblatt-Gimblett, Barbara. *Destination Culture: Tourism, Museums, and Heritage*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1998. The seminal, and still most important, work on display of "heritage culture" worldwide.

Lipphardt, Anna, et al. "Exploring Jewish Space: An Approach." In *Jewish Topographies: Visions of Space, Traditions of Place*, Lipphardt et al., (eds.), 1–23. London: Ashgate, 2008. An excellent introduction to issues of Jewish space and place, particularly vis-à-vis contemporary Europe.

Weinberg, Robert. *Stalin's Forgotten Zion: Birobidzhan and the Making of a Soviet Jewish Homeland*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1988. An encyclopedic, entertaining account of Birobidzhan's history.

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17

TELEVISION BLACKFACE

Jews, race, and comedy in the UK and Australia

Jon Stratton

Blackface has been making a comeback, not just in the United States but also in Britain and Australia, and possibly other countries too. However, it is in the United States that blackface, with its link to the African-American population and its fraught association with minstrelsy, remains most contentious. John Strausbaugh (2006: 14) notes that "blackface, unconditionally banned for decades … , has crept back into the public arena." In 1993 Ted Danson caused a storm of outrage when he blacked up to roast his then partner, Whoopi Goldberg, at a Friars Club event in New York. Yet, as Strausbaugh points out, Chuck Knipp, a white American drag artist, has become a cult figure blacking up to play welfare queen Shirley Q. Liquor. One way in which blackface has returned to acceptability is through its being positioned as self-conscious commentary. Thus, for example, Spike Lee's film *Bamboozled*, released in 2000, can be read as a fictionalized discussion of the history of American minstrel blackface. Differently, the use of blackface in Ben Stiller's film, *Tropic Thunder* (2008), can be understood ironically to indicate the extreme to which the self-important method actor, Kirk Lazarus (played by Robert Downey Jr.), would go for his art. In these instances postmodern blackface has become acceptable as the reflexive, knowing, performance of nineteenth- and early twentieth-century blackface.

Historically, Jewish blackface, its use or, indeed, its absence, has been one way that Jews have come to terms with their positioning in various racialized hierarchies. Discussions of Jewish blackface draw on issues of identity, performativity, race, as well of course as debates about Jewishness. In this chapter I will discuss two recent Jewish exponents of blackface, one English, Sacha Baron Cohen, and one Australian, John Safran. Both are comedians and both have specialized in subverting the conventions of everyday life. Cohen has an international reputation as the performer behind the character of Ali G whose straightface interviews in the late 1990s and early 2000s with high-profile figures ranging from politics to the world of entertainment very often showed these people up to be pompous, self-absorbed, and out-of-touch. As Ali G, Baron Cohen does not put on blackface but he does wear clothes and speak in a style drawn from African-American and Black British popular culture. As Richard Howells notes, "the underlying (and unanswered) question [is] about exactly who Ali G is supposed to be." (Howells 2006: 165).

Safran has made three comedy-documentary series for Australian television on popular music, religion, and race relations (see Sunderland 2009: 201–20).[1] Here, I am particularly interested in one segment of Safran's 2009 *Race Relations* series. In this, Safran traveled to Los Angeles where

he interviewed Jane Elliot, who developed the exercise for diversity awareness where people are divided into two groups based on eye color, with one group being preferred over the other. Elliot suggested to Safran that he read John Howard Griffin's *Black Like Me*. Griffin's book is a record of a white man who, in the late 1950s, darkened his skin and, passing as an African American, traveled through the American South. Safran subsequently donned blackface and passed as an African American in Chicago. This episode of Safran's series was shown in late October 2009. Three weeks earlier there had been an outcry when, on an Australian variety show with deep roots in vaudeville, *Hey Hey, It's Saturday* (actually, in this case broadcast on a Wednesday), six men blacked up as Michael Jackson and his brothers and performed to the Jackson Five's "Can You Feel It" (see Stratton 2011). In contrast there was little response to Safran's escapade. Perhaps one reason for this difference in reaction is that it appeared to many that the Jackson Jive men were making fun of Jackson and his brothers—the performers denied this—while Safran always ends up making himself the butt of his humor.

This chapter discusses the difference between the ways that Baron Cohen and Safran utilize blackface as compared to earlier Jewish uses of blackface. Earlier uses of blackface functioned in a context where race was thought of as a fixed and determining identification. Today, when "race" is widely considered to be, in some sense, a cultural construct, the recent return of blackface is associated with performativity. This is reinforced by the increasing awareness that race itself is a performance—in the sense that we all learn to perform the race with which we are identified. At bottom, this is what Baron Cohen and Safran have in common. With some irony, what makes their use of blackface so successful in highlighting the performativity of race is that during the modern era race was thought of in essentialist terms, while Jewishness, because of its racial indeterminacy, came increasingly to be understood in terms of performance. Thus, while Baron Cohen and Safran play with the more generalized indeterminacy of race today, they are able to be so successful because of the specifically chameleonic understanding of Jewishness.

Before going further, we need to think a little about the forms and functions of blackface. Susan Gubar suggests that

> Historically, white *posing* counters black *passing*. Often, in other words, the white poseur flagrantly exhibits the artifice of the performance, its theatrical falsity, while the black poseur seeks to screen or camouflage signs of a discrepancy between hidden identity and outer appearance.
>
> (Gubar 1997: 44; emphasis in original)

The humor of Cohen's Ali G character lies in the audience's awareness of Ali G's obviously phoney blackness, something seemingly not obvious to those being interviewed. While in Safran's case, the emphasis of the narrative is on his successful passing as he moves from interviewing members of a Black Power group to attending a black speed-dating session and asking an African-American woman, who apparently believes him to be black, for a date. The Jackson Jive minstrelsy performance is best understood as "posing" in Gubar's terms—that is, it utilized African-American stereotypes to make humorous reference to Michael Jackson and his brothers. In contrast, Cohen's and Safran's identification as Jewish, rather than white, disturbs and makes complex their blackface performances.

Blackface and identity

Blackface has a long European history, in which it was not always associated with race. Dale Cockrell writes that: "Although the whole notion of blackface masquerade among the common

peoples of northern Europe might have first followed from direct contact with dark-skinned Moors (but probably did not), the facts seem to be that the rituals using chimney soot soon lost much if not all of the racial association, and blackface masking became a means of expressing removal from time and place through disguise" (Cockrell 1997: 52). While blackface continued to be used in this way, the American reworking of blackface in its racialized, minstrel form rapidly reached Britain: "Quickly taken up in England after its introduction in London in the 1830s, so-called 'nigger' minstrelsy became a pre-eminent form of British popular entertainment during the rest of the century, and for much of the twentieth century as well" (Pickering 2008: 1–2). Likewise, minstrel blackface had reached Australia by 1838 when Jim Crow was first danced at Sydney's new Royal Victoria Theatre. Richard Waterhouse notes the continuing popularity of minstrel blackface right through the nineteenth century and into the early years of the twentieth (Waterhouse 1990).

While other forms of entertainment became more popular, examples of minstrel blackface continued to be found in both Britain and Australia into the 1970s. The most well-known was the British television variety program, *The Black and White Minstrel Show*, which was shown in both countries, in spite of complaints about its perceived racism, up to 1978. In Britain this was complemented by, for example, Peter Sellers browning up to play comic Indians in *The Millionairess* (1960) and *The Party* (1968) and Spike Milligan browning up as the half–Pakistani, half–Irish Kevin O'Grady in the short-lived television comedy series *Curry and Chips* (1969). In Australia blackface did not die out but, rather, went underground with, for example, the comedian Louis Beers performing in Aboriginal blackface as King Billy Cokebottle for over thirty years mostly outside of capital cities. Thus, in both countries blackface shifted during the twentieth century to portray racialized, and subordinated, groups other than African Americans.

There is now a rich literature on the meanings of blackface in the United States. David Roediger has argued that around the time of the Civil War American blackface helped to define whiteness. Writing that blackface "usually involved a conscious declaration of whiteness and white supremacy," he goes on to explain that

> the hugely popular cult of blackface … developed by counterpoint. Whatever his attraction, the performers and audiences knew that they were *not* the Black dandy personified by Zip Coon. Nor were they the sentimentalised and appealing preindustrial slave Jim Crow.
>
> (Roediger 1991: 116; emphasis in original)

Here we have an appreciation of blackface as both an expression of dominance and a way that disparate migrant groups came to see themselves as "white," in contrast to African Americans, founded on the mediation of blackface. Michael Rogin's discussion of Jewish blackface in *The Jazz Singer* (1927) runs along similar lines, in that Jews were able to see themselves as "white" through the blacking up of Jewish entertainers. Where Roediger's argument is about the production of whiteness, Rogin's is about how Jewish immigrants became accepted as (white) Americans. He argues that "Motion picture blackface … inherited the function of its predecessor [blackface minstrelsy]: by joining structural domination to cultural desire, it turned Europeans into Americans" (Rogin 1996: 12). More specifically, Rogin writes that in *The Jazz Singer* blackface

> allows the protagonist to exchange selves rather than fixing him in the one where he began. Blackface is the instrument that transfers identities from immigrant Jew to American. By putting on blackface, the Jewish jazz singer acquires … first his own voice, then assimilation through upward social mobility, finally women.
>
> (Rogin 1996: 95)

The women Rogin mentions here are white, Gentile women, access to whom is the final marker of the Jew's acceptance into white, American society. Blackface, with its African-American reference, functioned as the mediator enabling Jews to be whitened and enabling the possibility of assimilation. By putting on blackface, Jews removed themselves from the exclusion that was the lot of African Americans. Once Jews became thought of as white, by the 1950s, moreover, the structural purpose discussed by Rogin became irrelevant (see Brodkin 1998).[2]

   Obviously, without a large population of African origin, this tactic was impossible in Britain and Australia. Indeed, Jews did not number among the British who took up blackface entertainment. Discussing its function in Britain, Pickering has argued that

> Blackface entertainers in Britain have … to be understood as providing examples of "natives" who as "half devils" and "half children" were in need of colonial subjection, but at the same time also offering a taste of what was repressed in the name of civilisation and the imperial endeavour, respectability and middle-class cultural norms, and John Bull's nationalist pride of place in the world.
>
> (cited in Featherstone 1998: 237)

In this case Jews, who in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries were still striving to find a place in British society, would have been unlikely to perform in blackface. Blackface would have reinforced their Otherness, their association with the colonized "natives" who were being read onto the blackface characters. In the United States Jews were whitened by blacking up because African Americans were already understood to be problematically American. Considered historically, then, Sacha Baron Cohen marks a significant break with this British past.

   Australian society was different again. While to some extent congruent with British attitudes towards colonized populations—and in Australia's case this applied directly to the local indigenes, Aborigines and Torres Strait Islanders—after 1901, the year of federation, the establishment of the White Australia policy barred people identified as non-white from settling in Australia. This new Australian national identity was thus fundamentally bound up with whiteness. As I have noted, through the nineteenth century blackface minstrelsy was extremely popular in Australia, and this popularity continued for the first decade or so after federation. From the later years of the nineteenth century, as the concern grew that Australia should be a white country, blackface took on the role of demarcating those excluded from Australia and its society. In part this attitude was similar to that in Britain. However, in Australia blackface took on a further role. In Australia, blackface was understood in terms of the establishment of whiteness against an excluded Other: an absent Other who was excluded from Australia as well from Australian society; and also Aborigines, who could not be excluded from Australia, but were most definitely excluded from Australian society (see Stratton 2011). Again, it is not surprising that in this context Jews did not become blackface entertainers. Although Australian whiteness was assigned visually and most Jews, though not all, passed the test,[3] however, during the 1920s and 1930s long-standing anti-Semitism increased, directed especially against migrant Yiddish-speaking Jews from the Pale but spilling over to more assimilated Jews (see Bartrop 1987; Stratton 2000). Jews in blackface would have been courting an association that would have threatened Jewish acceptance.

   Except that the assertion that there were no Jewish blackface entertainers is not correct. Roy Rene, who is held in high regard even now as one of the best, if not the best, Australian comedian, was Jewish. Rene was born Henry van de Sluys to a Dutch, Jewish father and an Anglo-Jewish, Australian-born mother in 1891. In his teens he started performing in blackface as part of a troupe. Rene was a corner man (Rene 1945: 37–38). He tells how he got his big

break when he was about nineteen. Harry Clay, an impresario, "took a look at me and then came up and said 'What are you doing to–night, Jewboy?' I said, 'Nothing, sir.'" Rene goes on to explain how Clay allowed him to perform the act that he had been working up. This he did in blackface. Sometime later, on a tour of New Zealand, Rene was told by another impresario, Ben Fuller, to go to Wellington: "'You are not on the corner, you go on in the second half as a Hebrew comedian'" (Rene 1945: 47). It is clear from these interactions that the identification of Rene as a Jew shaped his early career. Indeed, as he got identified as a Jewish comedian so he started to wear Jewface rather than blackface. The Hebrew comic, as Harley Erdman has written, was "a regular feature of vaudeville" in the United States in the first decade of the twentieth century, and "almost every major traveling burlesque show had a wisecracking Jewish comedian. Often a bearded, unkempt figure who walked with a limp and stood in grotesque contrast to the alluring dancing girls who surrounded him" (Erdman 1997: 102). In Jody Rosen's depiction,

> The Hebrew comedian had a distinctive look, and shtick. He had bulging eyes, an unkempt beard, and an outlandishly exaggerated hook nose, an effect achieved through the generous application of face putty or "Jew clay," as it was called in the trade.
>
> (Rosen 2006)

In his biography of Rene, Fred Parsons writes that

> His Jewish make-up, he once told me, was an inheritance from a comedian he had never seen, one Will King, who was popular on the West Coast of America during World War One. When Roy was looking for a character make-up, someone described Will King's chalk–white face and black beard. Roy adopted it as his own.
>
> (Parsons 1973: 3)

However, Jewface was by no means unknown in Australia. A number of "Hebrew comedians" toured, for example, Julian Rose in 1911 and 1924. When the American Hebrew comedians Jordan and Harvey, who sang Irving Berlin's "Yiddle On Your Fiddle," split up, Rene even replaced Harvey for a while (Van Straten 2007). However, in the United States, ethnic humor, and Jewface along with it, went into decline in the second decade of the century (Mintz 1996: 20–28). Rene continued wearing Jewface until sometime in the early 1930s. He seems to have stopped shortly after marrying Sadie Gale in 1929. In an undated review from the Melbourne *Age* around the time of the Great Depression included in his autobiography, Rene's stage persona is described as "a spluttering Jewish gentleman who can raise a laugh with a lift of his little finger or a twitch of an eyebrow" (Rene 1945: 119).

At the same time that he was performing as a Hebrew comedian, Rene was cultivating an image as "one of the mob," a larrikin Australian. Keith Wiley writes that

> The fact that Roy Rene was Jewish and that the Mo character looked like a Jew never entered into it. Apart from the size of his nose, there were no Jewish jokes per se. Basically, the Mo character was an Australian lair trying to better himself but always bringing himself undone.
>
> (Wiley 1984: 92)

In the best discussion of Rene to date, Kath Leahy suggests that the source of Rene's success was that "In partial blackface, 'Mo' displayed signifiers of two 'inferior' races and the effect may well

have reduced the 'threatening inferiority' of aliens through comic release" (Leahy 2003: 92). I would go further than this. Rene's overtly Jewish image as a Hebrew comedian was balanced by his determinedly Australian character portrayal of Mo. The alienating effect of seeing a "Jew" on stage performing as a white, larrikin Australian enabled the audience to see themselves with the shock of a mediating distance. This helps explain why Rene retained his Jewface make-up for so long. In watching Mo the audience could laugh at themselves. In the end, it was this distancing that enabled Rene to be regarded as a better larrikin comedian than those who followed in his footsteps such as Paul Hogan.

Jews, modernity, and race

Underlying these Jewish positionings was a more profound experience. In *Modernity and Ambivalence*, Zygmunt Bauman argues that the modern state divides people into friends, members of the state, and enemies, members of other states. The state cannot abide ambivalence, and ambivalence exists in the person of the stranger. Bauman explains that

> The threat [the stranger] carries is more horrifying than that which one can fear from the enemy. The stranger threatens the sociation itself—the very possibility of sociation.
>
> (Bauman 1991: 55)

This is because, being neither friend nor enemy, the stranger unsettles the categories of modernity. The stranger exists as an undecidable who disturbs, perhaps most importantly, race as a classifying tool.

Bauman goes on to assert that "The Jews have been the prototypical strangers in Europe split into nation-states set on annihilation of everything 'intermediate,' underdetermined, neither friendly nor inimical" (Bauman 1991: 85). He describes their situation:

> And it was the Jews, exposed to powerful assimilatory pressures, called and pressed to shed and to pick up identities, to build their own selves out of glimpses of somebody else's selves, to self-assert and self-deny, to become different from what they were and to become like what they were not, to simulate and dissimulate,—who were among the first to experience the full impact of the modern condition and to be made fully aware of the dire consequences of improper response.
>
> (Bauman 1991: 157)

Bauman goes on to tell us that, placed in this situation, "discovering the contingency and ambivalence of being … the Jews were the first to sample the taste of postmodern existence" (Bauman 1991: 158). In this existence, race is an uncertain construction.

In the United States in the early twentieth century, at a time of certainty that the racial categories of "black" and "white" existed (see Goldstein 2006),[4] even if it was sometimes unclear to which race a person belonged, Jewish identity was thought by both "black" and "white" writers to be, as Daniel Itzkovitz writes, "performative and inauthentic" (Itzkovitz 1999: 37). Itzkovitz goes on: "Jews, it was commonly claimed, were a 'chameleon race' whose veins coursed with what one magazine termed 'strange chameleonic Jewish blood'" (Itzkovitz 1999: 38). Behind this suggestion we can see the pressures exerted on the stranger outlined by Bauman. Itzkovitz sums up the Jewish experience in America in the early part of the twentieth century: "The Jew was most Jewish … when not Jewish at all" (Itzkovitz 1999: 39). This taste of the postmodern, as Bauman describes it, is the experience of race as both categorically present and absolutely unsettled. It is this reflexive ambiguity that has become the everyday experience of race in American life.

Safran and blackface in postmodernity

Anoop Nayak, writing about the idea of post-race from a British perspective, identifies various popular culture texts in which post-race ideas are present, one of which is Sacha Baron Cohen's *The Ali G Show*. For Nayak, "What I feel is at stake in a number of these iconographic representations is the 'knowing' construction and deconstruction of race, the knowledge of its boundaries and how they might be affirmed, transgressed or in many cases parodied from inside out" (Nayak 2006: 426). It is this knowingness that pervades both Safran's and Baron Cohen's blackface performances.

At the instigation, though not with the support, of Jane Elliott, Safran chose John Howard Griffin's *Black Like Me*, a canonical text of the early civil rights movement on which to base his comedic investigation of the black American experience. Griffin was a remarkable man. Among other events in his life he underwent a period of blindness from which he was seemingly miraculously cured. Coming from a southern American, white background, he had gone to school in France at fifteen. At the University of Poitiers he studied medicine until, with the outbreak of the Second World War, he joined the French Resistance. At this time he worked to save Jews who were under threat from the Nazis of deportation to concentration and death camps. In his biography of Griffin, Robert Bonazzi explains that it was not until after Griffin's experience of passing for black that he made the connection between the Nazi treatment of the Jews and the white American attitude towards African Americans (Bonazzi 1997: 11).

Black Like Me is a critique of the segregated South of the United Sates. Baz Dreisinger describes the book as "at heart, a travel narrative, a characteristically American story of the open road." For Dreisinger the underlying motif of the book is space: "In *Black Like Me*, living close to black people hardly turns white to black, instead it boldly intimates the wide gulf between them" (Dreisinger 2008: 51). As she remarks, this is not surprising given that space was the organizing feature of segregation. In Griffin's understanding of his journey, the racialized structuring of space is replicated in his own feeling of being split into two men, of being doubled as white and black.

The experience that is described in *Black Like Me* could not have been undertaken by a Jew. A Jew in the role of narrator would not have had the same shock impact; white readers would have been able to preserve more easily a distance from the narrator and what he experiences because a Jew, unlike Griffin, would not have been perceived as white. Indeed, associations between Jews and blackness were especially strong in the South. In 1922, for example, the Jewish Waldo Frank had travelled into the South, passing as a black, along with Jean Toomer. Quoting Frank, Itzkovitz describes Frank's "racial panic," when he would have nightmares that he was, actually, "a Negro" (Itzkovitz 1999: 35). Sander Gilman tells us that "The Jews are black, according to nineteenth-century racial science, because they are not a pure race, because they are a race that has come from Africa" (Gilman 1991: 99). In early twentieth-century America too, associating Jews with African Americans was a common way of positioning them within the American racial order. Eric L. Goldstein explains that "Many commentators remarked on the Jew's dark hair, 'sensual' lips and 'animal' jaw as a way of linking him to well-known stereotypes of the African American" (Goldstein 2006: 44). It is no surprise, then, that Frank should feel such panic, especially as another Jew with the same family name, Leo Frank, had been lynched as if he were a black man only seven years earlier in Georgia. Especially in the highly segregated South, Jews were still not considered to be white. As late as 1964, three civil rights workers, two of them Jewish, were murdered in Mississippi, a fate at that time usually reserved for "uppity" African Americans. While American Jews were increasingly included in the category of whiteness during the 1950s, this was truer in the North than the South, which

remained a much more divided society. Thus, much of the shock and horror that comes through the narrative of *Black Like Me* is a consequence of a privileged white man discovering the life led by his racial Other.

Safran was not the first person to rework *Black Like Me*. In 1984, the African-American comedian Eddie Murphy had developed a sketch for *Saturday Night Live* called "White Like Me" in which he whited up and discovered the great time that whites had when blacks were not around. Safran's segment is more complicated because he genuinely passes for black—though not, it must be said, in the American South. This episode of *Race Relations* starts with an old clip of Safran's early hip-hop group, Raspberry Cordial. He raps a song about Melbourne trams. This rap becomes a recurring motif through the segment as Safran later raps it twice, once with the members of the Black Power group that he is interviewing and again at an outdoor African-American all-comers hip-hop session. Safran (2009) tells us that "People always mocked me for trying to act black when I was growing up but all these cross-cultural relationship experts say that I should try to walk in the shoes of other people." Safran later addresses an African-American church congregation, telling them how he was brought up in a Melbourne Jewish family who wouldn't acknowledge his blackness. In the end, the segment appears as an opportunity for Safran to act out his fantasy of "acting black" in blackface. The deeper irony here is that, two generations earlier, Jews in the United States had blacked up as a way of not being identified as black.

Safran's screen character is a nebbish. He is pale, skinny, and bespectacled. The black Safran, in contrast, strides down the street without glasses. In *Black Like Me*, Griffin looks at himself in the mirror after his transformation and is horrified. He has had to shave his head because his hair is straight and he sees himself as "a fierce, bald, very dark Negro." He comments: "The transformation was total and shocking" (Griffin 1964: 10). Safran, however, keeps his Jewish curls, merging Jewishness and blackness. He enjoys his transformation: he becomes the assertive black man that, he tells us, he wanted to be when he was growing up in Melbourne. Here, we can also think of the modalities of desire that run through Safran's blackface performance and finally become obvious in the speed-dating segment when he asks an African-American woman for a date. We do not find out if the date took place.

Ali G and blackface in postmodernity

Discussing Baron Cohen's creation of Ali G, Rachel Garfield writes that

> in European anti-Semitic discourse, the Jewish male was feminised. This image has been absorbed within [the] Jewish self-image which often sees the Jewish mother as all-powerful and the father as ineffectual. Maybe Baron Cohen's adoption of Ali G is a bid to find a different image of manhood than this. Many North-West London Jewish boys have been mimicking street codes of blackness for years.
>
> (Garfield 2001: 70)

In the United States, and increasingly elsewhere, white boys who emulate black styles are derogatively known as wiggers. Safran, and those North-London Jewish boys, might be called jiggers. His Jewish fascination with American blackness has a long historical context, that of hipsterism, a state first discussed in depth by Norman Mailer in "The White Negro." Andrea Levine has highlighted the unacknowledged Jewish identity that is central to Mailer's article: "The white preoccupation with black masculinity takes on new resonances, I will suggest, when a Jewish writer begins his 1957 essay with an allusion to the 'psychic havoc of the concentration

camps and the atom bomb'" (Levine 2003: 59). Safran's blackface would seem to be a similar way of escaping his compromised Jewish masculinity. At the beginning of each episode of *Race Relations*, Safran tells us: "You think that love will conquer all, but mother says that I must marry a Jew." Even in his rebellious blackface, Safran's life remains overdetermined by his Jewish mother (see Antler 2007).[5] In this particular segment, however, Safran's blackface stabilizes his Jewishness through his parodic revision of *Black Like Me*.

Commenting on Sacha Baron Cohen's character Ali G, Nayak observes that: "In viewing Ali G as a post-race cultural text of our global times I find myself asking what are the embodied performances that enable us to see this character as simultaneously white and black, modern day minstrel and postmodern parody?" (Nayak 2006: 426). Nayak previously mentions that Baron Cohen is Jewish, but here, in his outline of Ali G's productive indeterminacy, that group which, as Bauman argues, was the epitome of modern strangerhood, is elided. By contrast, Garfield, commenting on the confusion over Ali G's race/ethnicity writes that "from the start it could be argued that many Jews would have already recognised the ethnicity of both [Ali G and the at that time unknown performer who created him] through such signs as his flashy attire and swagger (*sprauntz*), albeit through the ubiquitous Nike and Tommy Gear street wear" (Garfield 2001: 63). Garfield's point is that Ali G, for all his apparent "blackness," can be read as the image of a nouveau riche Ashkenazi Jew—an anti-Semitic stereotype from the early years of the twentieth century. That Ali G's clothes and bling can also be read as in some way African-American, signals the similarities in the ways that excluded and previously impoverished groups enter consumer society.

In order to understand what I call the bleed between Baron Cohen and his characters it is better to start with Borat, the purportedly Kazakh journalist who started life in Baron Cohen's early television series but is best known from the film, *Borat: Cultural Learnings of America for Make Benefit Glorious Nation of Kazakhstan*, released in 2006. What we need to examine here is Borat's complex relation with Jewishness. Borat is unashamedly anti-Semitic. For example, he asks an American gun-shop owner which is the best gun for killing Jews, and he encourages a bar full of good ole boys in Tucson, Arizona to sing along with a rousing rendition of "Throw The Jew Down The Well." Borat's "Kazakhstan" is a composite of negative images of the Ashkenazi nostalgic invocation of the eastern European Old Country, focusing especially on anti-Semitism. As Dickie Wallace writes, "eastern Europe and the Balkans have, of course, a long history of persecuting Jews … so for Baron Cohen's brutal satire it makes sense that he evokes a feel for this historically antisemitic part of the world" (Wallace 2008: 42). However, Borat's relation with Baron Cohen's Jewishness goes further. Eliot Borenstein argues that

> Baron Cohen, in creating Borat, is participating in his own abjection. … Borat embodies everything that is backward about the "Old Country,". … Uncultured, uncivilized, unwashed, Borat is a contemporary reimagining of the ethnic vermin who populated racist propaganda in general and Nazi propaganda in particular. Perverse as it may sound, Borat is a Jew.
>
> (Borenstein 2008: 4)

Here we can note that a common feature of the humor in Baron Cohen's characters and in Safran's television persona is their lack of civility. In *Coming Out Jewish* I argued that learning civility, a trait characteristic of modernity, was a traumatizing, and indeed long-term, task for eastern European Jews entering the modern world (Stratton 2000: 69). Incivility remains a characteristic of many Jewish comedians in the United States, from Lenny Bruce to Ben Stiller in *Meet the Parents* (2000) and its sequels. In Australia Rachel Berger, Libbi Gorr (who used to

perform as Elle McFeast), and Austen Tayshus, (born Alexander "Sandy" Gutman) are examples of a similar style of Jewish comedy.

Borat, then, is both not-Jewish and Jewish, not a self-hating Jew but a complex figure of Jewish ambivalence. In this, Borat, like Ali G, exists on that reflexive boundary identified by Nayak of the construction and deconstruction of race. At the same time, this very indeterminacy calls the Jewishness on which the character of Borat is founded into being. Garfield suggests that "Ali G can be considered as a problematised reconfiguration of that [blackface] tradition" (Garfield 2001: 64). Asking if Ali G could be played by a Gentile, Garfield argues:

> What saves Ali G from the position taken up by Rogin—of benign minstrelsy as an assimilationist tactic—is the political stance he takes up. Minstrels played straight, Baron-Cohen is constructing himself as an object of laughter.
>
> (Garfield 2001: 68)

Minstrels made a clear distinction between their mask and the person beneath the mask. Many minstrel performers were, actually, African American. Baron Cohen, as Garfield indicates here, bleeds into Ali G, as he does into Borat.

The laughter that Baron Cohen engenders—the laughter, really, of the schlemiel—is a manifestation of what is really at issue: the problematizing of race and its discursive effects. In the modern world built on certainties and the eradication of indeterminacy, the Jew, as Bauman explained, was the stranger, the person whose very identity called those modern verities such as race into question. Commenting on the film that Baron Cohen made with Ali G as a character, Paul Gilroy writes:

> To me, an undecidable Ali is far preferable to the retreat involved in making him into the joker in the New Labour [government's multicultural] pack of ethnic happy families. Regrettably, *Ali G in Da House* plays it safe by making it clear we should classify Ali G as white.
>
> (Gilroy 2002)

As Gilroy indicates, while in the film Baron Cohen gives us a more conventional Ali G with a clearly identifiable racial background, Ali G the television interviewer was a protean character born out of Baron Cohen's Jewish experience. The anxiety he generated, based on that undecidability, the inability of deciding for certain precisely to what race Ali G belonged, was founded in the Jewish experience of modernity—indeed, on the chameleonism that was one of its consequences. Ali G exists as a representation of life beyond the differentiations on which modernity was built. At the same time, Ali G, and Borat, assert a Jewishness denied in the blackface tactics of the early twentieth century as discussed by Rogin.

Blackface today—postmodern blackface—is a different, more reflexive performance compared with the racial certainties that underpinned modern blackface. Jewish blackface today functions differently from the ways that it did in the first half of the twentieth century when, in the United States, it helped whiten Jews and, in Australia, formed the basis for Roy Rene's Jewface performance of Australian Otherness. Baron Cohen's blackface, in his television interviews, drew on the discursive history of the association of Jews with chameleonism, constructing an indeterminate identity that, nevertheless, was founded in Jewish experience. Safran's parodic revisioning of Griffin's experience in *Black Like Me* was possible because of Jews' new confidence in their own complex and indefinite identity. And this is something only possible in a world where "race" itself is now unsettled and reflexive.

Notes

1 For a discussion of Safran, see Sunderland (2009).
2 On the whitening of Jews in the United States after the Second World War, see Brodkin (1998).
3 On this history, see Stratton (2000), chapter 7, "Jews, Race and the White Australia Policy."
4 Goldstein discusses the ways Jews were positioned within the ideological organization of American society in terms of a black/white dichotomy.
5 On the Jewish mother stereotype see Antler (2007).

Essential reading

Boyarin, J. and Boyarin, D. (2008) *Jews and Other Differences: The New Jewish Cultural Studies*, Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press. A key text on Jewish identity.

Pickering, M. (2008) *Blackface Minstrelsy in Britain*, Aldershot, England; Burlington, Vermont: Ashgate. The key work on blackface in Britain.

Rogin, M. (1996) *Blackface, White Noise: Jewish Immigrants in the Hollywood Melting Pot*, Berkeley and Los Angeles, California: University of California Press. Establishes the link between Jewish blackface and identity in the United States.

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18

MIZRAHI/ARAB/ISRAELI/QUEER
The cultural politics of Dana International

Ted Swedenburg

Israeli singer Dana International has been celebrated abroad for, first, the "scandal" surrounding her popularity in Arab countries and especially Egypt; second, her victory at the 1998 Eurovision Song Contest; and for her transsexual status and her prominent role in Israel's LGBTQ scene. The significance of her Mizrahi ("Eastern" Jewish), Yemeni background, has remained relatively unexamined, especially outside Israel.

The family of Yaron Cohen, the future Dana International, belonged to the wave of thousands of Yemeni Jews that migrated to Israel in the late 1940s. After spending time in Israel's notorious *ma'abarot*, the rough tent camps where Jewish migrants to Israel from Arab countries were routinely dumped (Nivelle 1998), the Cohen family eventually settled in Kerem ha-Temanim, an old neighborhood of Tel Aviv founded by Yemenites in 1903. It was in this community, with its majority Yemeni population, that Yaron was born in 1972. He no doubt grew up hearing the local bands that routinely performed at weddings and parties and that were key players in the growing Mizrahi music scene of the 1970s and 1980s. Kerem ha-Temanim was home to several of the era's most important Yemeni/Mizrahi artists, including vocalists Daklon, Moshe Ben-Mosh, Rami Danokh, and Ahuva Ozeri, and the group Tselile ha-'ud (Horowitz 2010; Saada-Ophir 2006). By the mid-1980s the music of Mizrahi artists, which came to be known as Israeli Mediterranean music, was making inroads into the Israeli cultural mainstream. The music was Eastern-tinged, more Greek-flavored than Arabic. Yaron, who began singing at an early age, claims to have been influenced in particular by the popular Mizrahi singer Ofra Haza, whose 1984 album *Yemenite Songs*, a collection of traditional Yemeni music sung in Hebrew, was a bestseller in Israel.

Yaron began to frequent the gay clubs of Tel Aviv as a teenager, and he eventually joined the drag review of Ofer Nissim, a DJ and producer, also of Yemeni heritage. Yaron specialized in doing drag parodies of popular Israeli and American songs, at gay clubs in Eilat and Tel Aviv. It was his performance of an "Eastern" sounding song, however, that caused his career to take off. Ofer Nissim dreamed up a drag scenario in which Yaron was Whitney Houston in Saudi Arabia, performing her 1991 hit "My Name Is Not Susan," a song of a woman outraged because her boyfriend has confused her with his ex. Yaron added Arabic verses to the Whitney original, and screamed at the conclusion of the chorus, "My name is not Sa'īda!" "Saida Sultana," as the song was known, was the first cult hit on the drag circuit for Dana International, the stage name that Yaron adopted, and it was released as a single in 1992. In 1993 Dana put out her first

album, *Danna International* (her first name was rendered "Danna" in English on her earliest recordings; "Dana" became standard in 1996). It was an immediate hit, achieving gold status in Israel. Four of the album's ten songs featured Dana singing in (mostly) Arabic: the title track, "Dana International," "Samar-mar," a version of Egyptian sha'bi singer Hassan al-Asmar's "Samara," "Arusa" (Bride), and "Saida Sultana." She sang two of the remaining six songs on the album in English; one, a cover of Baccara's 1977 Euro-disco hit, "Yes Sir I Can Boogie," and the other, "Ha-Hatzga Chayyevet L-Himshakh," a cover of Queen's "The Show Must Go On," sung in Hebrew and English. She sang the remaining three tracks in Hebrew. Most of the album was in the dance vein.

Sex tapes

Dana first came to the Arab world's attention when some of the thousands of Israeli tourists who poured into Jordan, in the immediate wake of the signing of the Israel–Jordan peace treaty (October 26, 1994), left behind copies of the *Danna International* cassette (Moriel 1998: 234). Bootlegs of *Danna International* spread quickly in Jordan and to other parts of the Arab world. *Danna International* probably entered Egypt via South Sinai's resorts, popular destinations for Israeli tourists. In December 1994, the scandalmongering Cairo weekly magazine *Rūz al-Yūsif* published an article (Majdī 1994) alerting its readers to a lewd and dangerous Israeli cassette available on the black market. Additional condemnatory articles about the outrage of "Sa'ida Sultāna" (as Dana was often known) appeared in the Egyptian media, both state-owned and opposition, throughout 1995. Meanwhile, despite police raids on cassette shops, bootleg copies of Dana's cassette circulated in Cairo and blared from the tape players of taxis and foul-and-ta'miya stands. The contraband item was enjoyed by diverse social groups, from the elite upper-middle class students of the American University in Cairo to the youth of working-class quarters of Cairo like Dar al-Salam. Its popularity had much to do with all the stories, put about on the street and the mass media, that it was a risqué "sex tape." But its popularity was also based on Dana's ability to do songs, in Arabic, in a cultural vernacular that made sense to Egyptian audiences. It is telling that, despite all the attacks on Dana in the mainstream media and the police harassment, many in Egypt rejected the official propaganda and continued to consume and enjoy Dana. So favored and ubiquitous was the tape in Egypt, in fact, that the "Saida Sultana" track was employed in a video commercial for Egyptian shampoo Luna 2.

The diatribes against Dana in Egypt reached their apogee in summer 1995 with the publication of a sensationalist exposé in Arabic entitled *A Scandal Whose Name is Sa'ida Sultan: Dana the Israeli Sex Artist*. The book, by one Muhammad al-Ghaytī, elaborated on previous charges raised against Dana by the mass media and brought forth new accusations, most of them borrowed from European anti-Semitic discourse. According to al-Ghaytī, Dana's sex change operation made her a "deviant." Dana enjoyed the backing of influential Zionist power brokers, who had facilitated the "penetration" of Dana's music into Egypt. Dana, for al-Ghaytī, was an example of a commonplace figure in Egyptian cultural–political discourse: the predatory and wanton Western/Israeli female, who threatened to seduce and manipulate the innocent and vulnerable young Egyptian males who were tempted by the lures of Western sexuality and commodities (al-Ghaytī 1995).

To al-Ghaytī, all this was, at root, a Masonic–Jewish conspiracy. Dana herself was a believer in Freemasonry, a philosophy that al-Ghaytī claimed was invented by Zionist Jews and that advocates for an individual's right to sensual delight and that aims to destroy society. The philosophy, according to al-Ghaytī, was in keeping with the basic character of the parasitic and rootless Jewish people, whose purpose is to undermine civilization. Relying on misinterpretation and

mistranslation, Al-Ghaytī asserted that Dana's songs were loaded with depraved lyrics whose subjects were sexual adventures. One song, for instance, was an "unambiguous call for prostitution and immorality," another treated the sordid encounter between a woman and a dog, and others were composed chiefly of "scandalous [orgasmic] groans." The singer's shameless voice and lyrics on the cassette's final song (her cover of Queen's "The Show Must Go On") exemplified, in al-Ghaytī's interpretation, how Dana deviated from all basic moral and traditional standards and represented an attack on the very principles of monotheistic religions (Swedenburg 2000).

Although her Yemeni heritage was essential to Dana's abilities to appeal to Egyptian listeners, al-Ghaytī regarded her simply as one of many Israeli artists who, he claimed, had stolen as well as perverted the Arab world's musical cultural heritage. Despite the fact that Egyptian Jews had made substantial contributions to the cultural life of Egypt during the first half of the twentieth century (Beinin 1998), al-Ghaytī depicted them as having all been collaborators with the British colonialists and agents of Zionism. His, and all the other anti-Dana commentary, was in some senses symptomatic of longstanding opposition, especially on the part of intellectuals, to the cultural normalization with Israel that the Egyptian regime pursued in the wake of the 1979 peace treaty. The educated class's refusal of "normalization" has served as the one means by which they could register their ire at Israel's occupation policies and their solidarity with Palestinians, as well as a displaced form of expressing opposition to the Egyptian regime's authoritarianism. The fact that the critiques were often redolent with anti-Semitic discourse was a product of the Arab–Israeli conflict, which fostered an active forgetting on the part of Egyptians of the rich and active role that Jews had played in country's life prior to 1947–48 and even into the 1950s. That so many Egyptians were still open to listening to an Israeli singing in Arabic during the early 1990s is testimony to the fact that official memory had not entirely destroyed all possibility of inter-cultural communication.

"That mutant"

Meanwhile, in Israel, Dana's next two albums were also hits: *Umpatampa* (1994) went platinum and *Maganona* (1996) achieved gold status. (Each album included one Arabic tune: "Zomba" on *Umpatampa*, and *Maganona*'s title track.) As record sales propelled Dana into Israel's media spotlight, she quickly became a subject of controversy among conservative segments of the country's population. Due to her transsexual status (Yaron underwent surgery in 1993 and changed his legal first name to Sharon), the ultra-Orthodox establishment regarded Dana as an abhorrent being. Remarks reportedly made by Yigal Amir to a nearby policeman just before he assassinated Israeli Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin in November 1995 illustrate how public discussions of Dana's monstrosity resonated among Israel's ultra-Orthodox and ultra–rightist population. "Today," said Amir, "they give us the spectacle of Aviv Gefen," referring to the Israeli pop star who had just performed onstage with Rabin at the rally in support of the Oslo "peace process." "[N]ext time," Amir went on, "they'll make us listen to that mutant, Diana [sic] International" (Schattner 1995: 2). Concurrently, Israeli secular media figures tended to view Dana's transsexuality as freakish, and, due to the apparent undecidability of her sex, gender, and biology, they were prone to endless speculation about her. Talk show hosts interrogated Dana about her orgasms and whether "it" was cut off during surgery. Media commentators wondered aloud: Does she have a lesbian girlfriend? A gay boyfriend? A heterosexual boyfriend? What kind of sex and what kind of anatomy does she have?

Dana's celebrity was not, however, simply due to controversies about her biological and sexual persona. Dana enjoyed a big fan base among youth in the Mizrahi Jewish community, which constitutes over half of Israel's Jewish population. Most are of Arab background, like

Dana herself, and many are familiar with Arabic music and language through their parents or grandparents, as well as by watching the Egyptian films broadcast in the Arabic-language time-slot on Israeli state television, whose target audience was Palestinians in the West Bank and Gaza but which also enjoyed an Israeli viewership. Although some Mizrahim were breaking into politics and into the academy during the 1990s, "Eastern" Jews nevertheless continued to make up the majority of the poor and low-income among Israel's Jewish population (Chetrit 2010: 199, 201). Dana's young Mizrahi fans could identify with Dana's Arabic songs, her modest Yemeni background, and her frequent swipes at dominant, Eurocentric Ashkenazi cultural values.

On the Israeli Mediterranean Music scene, the singer Zehava Ben, the daughter of Moroccan parents, launched the so-called "Turkish" trend with her 1990 hit "Tipat Mazal," which pushed other practitioners of the genre to adopt more "Eastern" elements. In 1995 Ben recorded an album of songs in Arabic by the canonical Egyptian singer Umm Kalthoum, and in 1996 she began performing the Umm Kalthoum repertoire with a Palestinian–Israeli orchestra from Haifa, even doing some dates in cities in the Palestinian Authority. By performing the work of Umm Kalthoum, Zehava Ben positioned herself on the radical Eastern-Arab fringes of the Israeli Mediterranean Music scene. Ben was working, however, in a respected, classicist vein of Arabic music repertoire, and at a time when Umm Kalthoum was, for a brief "peace process" moment, in vogue in Israel. Dana's experiments with Arabic songs also positioned her in a culturally radical position in relation to Mizrahi popular music, but her interventions were much more "trashy" and "vulgar" than Ben's. Her song "Samar-mar," a cover of Hasan al-Asmar's "Samara," was in the vein of Egyptian sha'bi music, a genre considered to rank far below the neo-classical music of Umm Kalthoum on the cultural scale. Meanwhile songs like "Dana International," "Saida Sultana," and "Maganona" were in the dance music style, which at the time occupied a lowly position in the Israeli cultural ranking system, and which, like Mizrahi music, was considered to be in polar opposition to the superior "quality" music (in Hebrew, *eikhoot*) promoted by Israel's Ashkenazi cultural elite.

Her Hebrew songs, moreover, often poked fun, from queer and Mizrahi perspectives, at canonical Israeli popular music and political culture. "Yeshnan Banot," which begins with the strains of an accordion, in an appropriate style for its status as a classic Israeli "military" campfire song, gradually becomes a parody as Dana adds to it an "Oriental" tone and the strains of disco synths (Maurey 2009: 90–93). Her version of "Nosa'At Le-Petra," a canonical song from the 1950s about macho Israelis making a heroic journey to visit the ruins of Petra, in Jordan, turns the subject of the song into a sexual encounter with the desert, a "return" to the "East" rather than, as in the original, a militaristic conquest of the East (Ben-zvi 1998: 28). "Qu'est-ce Que C'est" (on *Umpatampa*) is a witty, satirical riposte to the racist, vulgar Ashkenazi parodies of the "bad" French stereotypically spoken by North African Jews. One of the staples of Israeli comedic radio and stage sketches during the 1950s and 1960s was to lampoon Mizrahi "mis-pronunciation" of "qu'est que c'est?" This was done through exaggeration and making a play on words with "cous-cou-sou," in reference to the North African staple food, couscous, as well as calling attention to the similarity of "qu'est que c'est/cous-cou-sou" to the Arabic word for "cunt," *qus*. Because modern Israeli Hebrew borrowed most of its curse words and epithets from Arabic, the word *qus* is widely used. The insult, "*qus immak*" (literally, the cunt of your mother, or "fuck your mother"), for instance, is used by speakers of both colloquial Hebrew and Arabic.

The title track to Dana's 1996 album *Maganona* ("crazy" [*magnūna*] in Egyptian Arabic) comments on her underground success in the Arab world and the attendant scandals and controversy. It is a brilliantly wacky dance number sung and spoken in an entirely over-the-top

manner, in Egyptian dialect. The song opens with the noise of sirens, and Dana, in the guise of a woman who has just been stopped by the police, defends herself: "Who do you think my husband is? / I'm a respectable woman [*sitt muḥtarma*]," and, "You all think I'm crazy / I'm not crazy ['*ānā mish magnūna*]." The song goes on to playfully undercut her claim not to be crazy. Dana belts out the chorus, "cucaruca cucu," like a rooster, evoking the word cuckoo and recalling Mexican singer Lola Beltrán's hit "Cucurrucucu Paloma." She utters the hilarious nonsense line, "greet (an) eggplant for me" (*sallimnī ʿala baytingān*), over the distinctively Arab rhythms of a derbouka. The last, shrieking, line of the song emphasizes the undecidability of the case for lunacy: "'*ānā mish magnūna /*'*ānā magnūna*" (I'm not crazy/I'm crazy). Young Mizrahim with even a rudimentary knowledge of Egyptian Arabic could appreciate the song's humor, while at the same time, the album *Maganona* was a best seller on Egypt's black market, despite being banned. And Dana appreciated the successes that she won with her Arabic music: "I like to sing in Arabic. I like the language. I like the music. I like the instruments" (Grynberg 1996: 35).

And of course, gay fans were a key element of Dana's fans as well. Dana's Hebrew-English cover of Queen's "The Show Must Go On" (on *Danna International*), could appeal to the campy and cosmopolitan sensibilities of Israel's dance scenesters, especially in the wake of the death of Queen's singer Freddy Mercury, a global gay icon, from AIDS in 1991.

From abomination to national icon

Dana's status in Israel began to shift dramatically in November 1997, after she was picked to represent Israel in the May 1998 Eurovision Song Contest in Birmingham. Her selection raised a predictable furor among ultra-Orthodox Jews. The reaction of Rabbi Shlomo Ben Izri, deputy health minister and Shas Party MP, was typical: "Dana is an abomination. Even in Sodom there was nothing like it [sic]" (La Guardia 1997). The attacks of the ultra-orthodox and Dana's impassioned denunciations of her critics transformed Dana's mainstream image from "freak" to heroine for secular-minded Israelis. Dana had long publicly identified with Israel's LGBTQ community, only just becoming visible and active in the mid-1990s, and so her selection for Eurovision and her criticisms of the ultra-orthodox also served to confirm her position as a gay icon (Shokeid 2003). But being embraced by the liberal Israeli establishment did not, however, transform Dana into a spokesperson for the status quo, as she continued her habit of gently mocking or undercutting normative Zionist values. Upon her selection as Israel's Eurovision entry, for instance, Dana took the occasion to challenge the country's conventional self-image. In an interview with Sky News, Dana stated, "As far as I'm concerned, I was elected to represent Israel's citizens, not the Jewish state. Which means that I'll go to the Eurovision as the representative of the Christians and Muslims who live in Israel as well" ("I Was Chosen to Represent" 1997).

Dana took first place in the 1998 Eurovision contest at Birmingham, performing the dance number "Diva," in English ("Viva Maria, Viva Victoria, Aphrodite, Viva le Diva, Viva Victoria, Cleopatra") before an estimated international viewing audience of 100 million. She accepted her prize in a glamorous Gaultier gown that was fully worthy of her supermodel figure. The victory was widely hailed in Israel and seized on as an occasion for the celebration of national pride, for despite Dana's Yemeni origins, the win appeared to reconfirm Israel's European identity, its "developed" status and its distinctiveness from the rest of the Middle East, where it is ambiguously located. The triumph was of special significance for Israel's LGBTQ community, particularly because – with the exception of one alt-music lesbian singer – Dana was the only "out" singer in Israel's otherwise very-closeted popular music scene (Ziv 2007: 124). Moreover, the campy Eurovision affair is a major event in the international gay cultural calendar, and so

Dana's prize also seemed to mark the arrival of Israel on the global LGBTQ scene. The novelty factor of Dana's transsexuality also made her triumph a major international media event, even in the US, where the Eurovision affair is usually ignored. (Even Thomas Friedman [1998] noticed.) Thousands of fans, chanting "Dana, Queen of Israel," celebrated the win by dancing all night in Tel Aviv's Rabin Square, where, for the first time, gay rainbow flags were raised alongside the usual city and national flags. Males kissed openly in front of TV cameras, in a country which, while not militantly homophobic, did not encourage public displays of same-sex intimacy. Upon her return from Birmingham, Dana was welcomed at the Israeli Knesset (parliament) and met with the Netanyahu government's minister of tourism and Deputy Prime Minister Moshe Katsav (Likud). The event marked Dana's emergence as a public symbol of Israel's gay and lesbian community, now much larger, more visible, institutionalized, politicized, and assertively proud than in the past (Ziv 2007: 125). Post-Eurovision, Dana became the go-to choice for many journalists seeking pithy quotes on queer issues (Moriel 1998: 232).

For a moment, Dana also seemed on the verge of becoming a truly "international" star. The Eurovision winning song "Diva" was a hit throughout Europe in the wake of her Eurovision triumph, hitting number 11 in the UK charts and entering the Top Ten in Sweden, Belgium, Finland, Ireland, and the Netherlands. Dana was a featured invited guest at a number of gay events abroad, serving, for instance, as a performer at the Gay Games in Amsterdam in 1998 and as a headliner at San Francisco's Gay Pride celebration in 2001. Her newly won celebrity did not, however, prevent her from occasionally undermining normative narratives about her career and identity. She often resisted the de-ethnicization and acculturation that was deemed necessary in order for a Mizrahi to be accepted as a full-fledged member of the Ashkenazi-dominated gay Israeli community. By asserting her continued affinity to Yemeni culture, she undermined the normative narratives of "coming out" in Israel, which conceptualize that process as involving a kind of liberation from "Eastern" backwardness and religiosity and the adoption of the white culture of hegemonic gayness. A notable example of how she could disrupt Eurocentered notions of Israeli gay identity was her appearance on an Amnesty International poster with the slogan "Gay Rights Are Human Rights" in 1998. Dana wears uncharacteristically modest dress and headcovering and holds a candle, in a nod to the religious traditions that Mizrahim are known to hold dear, and as a gesture that undercut the radically secular and anti-fundamentalist ideology of mainstream Ashkenazi Israeli gays. Dana's spectacular entry onto the world stage as a gay Israeli also prompted a spurt of academic articles about her. The tendency of this work – motivated in large part by the new visibility of Israeli queerness – was to stress Dana's importance on the LGBTQ scene, at the expense of systematic attention to her equally important Yemeni/Arab background (see Lemish 2004; Maurey 2009; Meyers 2001; Moriel 1998; Solomon 2003; Vancil 1999; Ziv 2007).

Post–peace process: gay but not Arab?

Dana released several well-produced albums in the Euro-dance genre subsequent to Eurovision. *Free*, her 1999 international release, features songs mostly in English. But after her failure to make it in the international scene, she turned back to the Israeli market, releasing *Yoter Ve Yoter* (More and more), in 2001, and *HaHalom HaEfshari* (The possible dream) in 2002. The "Arab" elements that had been an essential part of Dana's repertoire during the 1990s, however, were now absent. Perhaps part of the reason for this loss of "Eastern" flavor is to be attributed to Dana's efforts to become an international star, but changing local political circumstances were probably a more significant factor. Ben-Zvi has observed that Dana's music became more politically conventional in the wake of the second Palestinian intifada (launched in September 2000) and the fading

prospects for a negotiated settlement between Israel and the Palestinians (Ben-Zvi n.d.). In retrospect, it appears clear that the multicultural and transnational elements that so distinctly marked Dana's entry into both the Israeli and the Arab scenes were both partially made possible by, as well as represented interventions in, the political–cultural openings attendant upon the "peace process" (Stein and Swedenburg 2005: 11–14) and the moment of "post-Zionism" in Israel (Silberstein 1999; Solomon 2003: 152–56). This does not mean that the Israeli Jewish interest in Middle Eastern and Arab music that characterized the 1990s entirely ended. Galeet Dardashti argues that, paradoxically, and in the face of negative political circumstances, Israeli curiosity about "Eastern" music has increased. Dardashti has described several of its important features, from tributes to Jewish Iraqi musicians who migrated to Israel in the late 1940s and early 1950s (Dardashti 2008); a craze, that has even attracted some secular Ashkenazim, for learning the *piyyutim*, the religious devotional poems from the Jewish North-African Andalusian tradition (Dardashti 2007); and collaborations between Israeli Jewish and Palestinian Arab musicians, in the interests of peace initiatives (Dardashti 2011). But Dana played no part in these musical developments.

Dana's trajectory since 2000 has also coincided with a national revaluation of queerness in Israel. The visibility of homosexuality in the Jewish state has now come to stand, in official discourse, as a symbol of the country's culture of democracy and toleration. State discourse rarely deploys the image of Israel's LGBTQ community without also articulating an overt or implied statement that Israeli tolerance contrasts sharply with the ostensibly illiberal and fanatical policies of Israel's surrounding Arab, and particularly her Palestinian, neighbors. Israeli LGBTQs function then as a way to assert the country's apparent moral superiority over the Arab world. The very real and substantial legal gains made by Israel's LGBTQ community over the last two decades (see Ziv 2007: 124–25; Solomon 2003: 152) are frequently deployed, by state discourse, as a tool in Israel's propaganda war for legitimacy, and as a means to "pinkwash" international outrage against Israel's ongoing occupation and colonization of Palestinian territory and aggressive acts such as its assaults on Lebanon in 2006 and Gaza in 2008–9. Pinkwashing also serves to divert attention away from ethnic and national forms of discrimination inside Israel, particularly towards Israel's Palestinian citizens and, more recently, non-European immigrants. Yael Ben-Zvi observed over ten years ago, before pinkwashing became state policy, that "Queerness is less threatening than racial or national identities that cannot be reconciled with Ashkenazi Zionism. By aligning themselves with hegemonic national interests, queers enable the Zionist establishment to perpetuate the myth of Israel as 'the only democracy in the Middle East,' even as it brutally oppresses occupied Palestinians as well as national 'minorities,' including Mizrahim, Palestinian citizens of Israel, Ethiopian immigrants, and guest workers" (Ben-Zvi 1998: 26). And already, in 1999, the openly gay Israeli talk show host Gal Uchovsky, partner of famed Israeli film director Eytan Fox, was hailing Dana, in the pages of the *Village Voice,* as the face of the "new Israel," the tolerant Israel open to transsexuality (Uchovsky 1999). Alisa Solomon charts the altered value of queerness for the state of Israel. "In today's Israeli culture war," she notes, "queerness – or at least the tolerance of queerness – has acquired a new rhetorical value for mainstream Zionism: standing against the imposition of fundamentalist religious law, it has come to stand for democratic liberalism" (2003: 153).

Dana, as Israel's most famous gay celebrity, is placed in the awkward forefront of the state project of using the country's LGBTQ scene to burnish its image. Dana has not been an active party to such moves, although the Israeli Foreign Ministry did book her for the 2001 Gay Pride events in San Francisco. In fact she has tried to stay out of Israeli politics, in the sense of aligning herself with any political party or taking stands on Israel's relations with her Arab neighbors or the "peace process." When she rose to prominence in the late 1990s Dana insisted in media interviews that she would not discuss "politics." At the same time she has and continues to be

quite frank and open in giving her opinion about LGBTQ politics (Skogseth n.d.). This has, at times, included doing benefits for political candidates from various locations on the political spectrum, who were willing to endorse gay rights. In the late 1990s, Dana did spots for the leftwing Meretz party. In February 2009, just a month after the end of Operation Cast Lead, Israel's deadly Gaza campaign, Dana sang at a campaign rally for gay-friendly "centrist" Kadima leader Tzipi Livni, who was then Israel's foreign minister. The fact that Dana has been coy about discussing other "political" matters while prioritizing support for Livni based on queer issues, could be interpreted as buttressing, or at least tacitly reinforcing, official Israeli pinkwashing efforts. (One could argue as well that for Dana to speak out bluntly in support of Palestinians would probably spell career suicide.)

While Dana did not become an international star in the wake of Eurovision, and (since she has ceased recording songs in Arabic) is no longer a popular underground artist in Egypt, she has retained her celebrity status in Israel. After a hiatus between 2003 and 2006, during which time she released no new material, Dana resumed recording in 2007 and released the well-received *Hakol Ze Letova* (It's All for the Best). In 2009 and 2010, she served as a judge for the television show *Kokhav Nolad*, Israel's version of *American Idol*. In 2011, Dana was selected to represent Israel again in the 2011 Eurovision competition, in an apparent attempt on the part of Israel's musical establishment to reprise her 1998 success. Dana was eliminated, however, at the semi-final level, with her performance of the unfortunately titled and very unmemorable song "Ding Dong."

Although the demise of any pretense of a peace track since 2000–2001 seems to have narrowed the radical scope of Dana's interventions, she is still on occasion capable of making gestures in favor of a less Eurocentric vision of Israel. One of the notable tracks on the *Hakol Ze Letova* album is "Seret Hodi" (Indian Movie), a duet sung in Hebrew with Idan Yadiv, which features a very Bollywood production. The Eastern feel of this track, however, seems less an expression of cultural affiliation than a nod to the growing global appeal of Bollywood. More noteworthy is Dana's infectious dance track, sung in Hebrew, with the English title "Love Boy," and in particular, its official video, which is easily found on Youtube. The song is about what in English we would call a "boy toy." Dana describes him as "A six-pack in chocolate color/He says he's from France but he's more likely from Morocco." Dana refers here to a very common trope about Mizrahim from North Africa who, in order to get ahead, attempt to "pass" as French. (Such efforts are enabled by the fact that Morocco is a francophone country.) Dana goes on to sing that it's not necessary to check her love boy's integrity, because he's in the gym all day. His "integrity" is in his body. This could be read as an ironic commentary on all the speculation in the past about the "honesty" of Dana's own body, a body remade through surgical intervention. And in the very funny, very campy "Love Boy" video, Dana in turn shows off the trademark charms of her own body: her slinky form, her long, shapely, supermodel-worthy legs, her ample décolletage. At the same time, any implication that this a heteronormative tale is undercut as the video ends with six love boys who show up at Dana's door and who look and dance around like updated versions of the Village People. Their skin tones range from light to dark, and they include one love boy in an FBI baseball cap and another in a kippa. If Dana is Israel's chief gay icon, she continues to be one who is ever willing to undercut the monolithic, Eurocentric self-image of Israeli gays, by foregrounding rather than excising Israel's Mizrahi–Arab and religious elements.

Essential reading

Beinin, J. (1998) *The Dispersion of Egyptian Jewry*, Berkeley: University of California Press. Discusses substantial contributions Egyptian Jews had made to the cultural life of Egypt during the first half of the twentieth century.

Chetrit, S. S. (2010) *Intra-Jewish Conflict in Israel: White Jews, Black Jews*, London: Routledge. Covers Mizrahim, "Eastern" Jews, and their conflicts breaking into politics and into the academy in Israel during the 1990s.

Horowitz, A. (2010) *Mediterranean Israeli Music and the Politics of the Aesthetic*, Detroit: Wayne State University Press. Discusses the growing Mizrahi music scene of the 1970s and 1980s.

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19

TURKISH JEWISH JOURNALISM AND ITS AUDIENCES

Marcy Brink-Danan

Introduction[1]

Whether a website, list-serve, Facebook page, Xeroxed pamphlet or printed newspaper, every Jewish community around the globe produces what it considers to be its "own" media. Studying Jewish media in any number of global sites would be instructive for an understanding of the dialogic nature of self-representation, relationships obtained between and among Diaspora Jews and Israelis, as well as the position of minorities within broader social, media, and political landscapes in which they are necessarily embedded. Based on ethnographic field research in Istanbul and an analysis of news articles produced by a Turkish Jewish newspaper, I analyze the practices of journalists whose deep awareness of the likelihood that their writing may be taken out of context necessarily conditions the style and content of the knowledge they produce. It might be assumed that minority media primarily targets minority audiences; in what at first seems counter-intuitive, I here suggest that in order to understand minority media, we should focus on the audiences minority media producers *don't* want to reach. My research reveals that minority news, in addition to serving the complex communities it purports to serve, is written with a surprising diversity of audiences in mind, including advertisers, politicians, and even (or especially) anti-minority readerships. These local concerns about audience reception piqued my interest in what linguistic anthropologists call "intertextuality," the movement of language across domains – often far from its origins – where meaning is altered in the context of new interpretive frames (Kristeva 1980; see also Spitulnik 1996). This project's research design hones in on the particular practices of a small Turkish Jewish press in order to think more generally about an idea I call "injurious intertextuality."

By presenting the Turkish Jewish case, I show how an ethnographic approach to minority presses contributes to new directions in Jewish Studies by attending to the *present* and the *process* (see Bunzl 2003) of today's global media ecology.

The present

Historical analyses overwhelmingly render a picture of Jewish journalism's universal morbidity. Is Jewish news dead? This lachrymose question implies, somewhat nostalgically, that the circulation of Jewish culture through journalistic channels reached its peak before World War II (Penslar

2000). If Jewish news is dead, how does one account for claims made recently, by editors of the *Jewish Voice and Herald of Rhode Island* (United States) that their bi-weekly newspaper is "the glue that holds the [Jewish] community together" (personal communication, 2009)? Is the *Jewish Chronicle*, the oldest continuous Jewish paper, still a venue for British Jews to "flourish as patriotic Englishmen" (Cesarani 1994: 7)? What of the volunteers in the Istanbul office of *Şalom*, the last Jewish paper of the Turkish Jewish community? At *Şalom*'s office, one can observe reporters busily editing local stories and translating articles from the *Jerusalem Post* (an English-language Israeli newspaper) or *Le Monde* (a French paper). Against prognoses of morbidity, Jewish journalism remains a critical site of knowledge production through which Jewish Studies can map the dramatic, if not largely ironic, moment in which Jews perform a special role in claims to cosmopolitanism, especially as a foil against which to compare majority relations to other differentiated citizens (Peck 2006: 154–74).[2] The long history of global Jewish presses is increasingly chronicled; however, to my knowledge, no in-depth ethnographic studies of contemporary Jewish journalism exist.

The process

If archival research chronicles the discourses Jewish journalists deemed acceptable for public consumption in the past, ethnography allows us to observe why certain ideas never make it to press and what this reveals about power relations between Jews and the majority societies in which they live. Boyer and Hannerz (2006) have outlined the potential for ethnography of journalism to highlight the processes of meaning making in cosmopolitan settings. The growing body of work in the anthropology of journalism discusses the dilemmas and pleasures of representation, relations with one's sources and audiences, questions of authorship and self-censorship, the labor of producing the public and other dimensions of experience involved in the labor of social mediation and cultural production (Beeman 1987; Bell 2003; Bird 2009; Bishara 2006; Hannerz 2004; Hasty 2006; Malkki 1997; Paterson and Domingo 2008; Pedelty 1995; Peterson 2003). This work offers models for the methods – participant observation, interviews, and textual analysis – by which we can study the process behind today's Jewish news making, many of which I draw on in this essay.

Minority representations and the public sphere?

In a widely cited article, Stolow suggests that "(T)he study of religion and media has not produced a common definition of the religious public sphere. No doubt, part of the problem stems from the ambiguity of the word 'public' itself" (Stolow 2005: 331). Recent studies dealing with the notion of public and private space emphasize that these domains are fluid and flexible, and that "leakage" occurs between the seemingly opposed spheres (Herzfeld 1997; Shryock 2004). Turkey, in particular, has garnered special attention as a test case for contemplating the public/private divide with the rise of political Islam in Turkey since the 1990s (White 2002). The secular imaginary of the public domain has been challenged and secular idols (such as the Turkish Republic's founder, Atatürk) are increasingly domesticated in private spaces (Özyürek 2006; Navaro-Yashin 2002). In parallel, forms of Jewish representations in the public sphere are now studied as a central object of ethnographic research (Bunzl 1996; Levy 1999).

My ethnographic observations of Turkish Jews in Istanbul over the past decade reveal that cosmopolitan ways of being frequently conflict and contradict each other and are therefore self-censored in public. I began to think about this worldview as one type of lived cosmopolitanism: an awareness of multiple audiences, some of whom might be antipathetic ones. Applied more

broadly, this scenario complicates the notion that cosmopolitanism requires a public nomination of difference (Calhoun 2002); it may well be that lived cosmopolitanism is observable only by accounting for knowledge of what should be kept private. The privatization of cosmopolitanism has been tied to the emergence of the nation-state out of multi-ethnic or multi-religious empires. Being a Turkish cosmopolitan means not only knowing about different ways of being, but knowing in which *contexts* – public and private – one should perform difference. This leads to "disemia," or "the expressive play of opposition that subsists in all the varied codes through which collective self-display and self-recognition can be balanced against each other" (Herzfeld 1987: 114).

Anti-Semitism, periodic attacks on Jews and ongoing threats on their institutions (Bali 2001, 2003, 2009; also see Mallet 2008:456) create a somewhat paranoid worldview for many Turkish Jews: displaying difference is a dangerous game few wish to play. Not long ago, anti-Semitism came to the fore following Israel's invasion of the Gaza Strip. Anti-Semitic signage appeared on a Turkish social club, reading "Dogs Welcome; No Jews or Armenians" (Teibel 2009), with the photo of the club circulating widely in the Turkish and international press. The conflation here, on the part of the sign's authors, of Diaspora Jews, Israelis, and Armenians speaks to a regularly occurring slippage between different kinds of perceived "enemies of Turkey." The equivalence should strike us as deeply ironic, given that – unlike other groups who have openly challenged Kemalist nationalism, such as Islamists, Armenians, and Kurds – the Jews have supported a classically republican Turkish national identity, advocating internationally for Turkey. The Jews, in the role of the "good minority," serve as a powerful foil to the Armenian genocide discourse (Mallet 2008: 415–29) in particular, enabling Turkey to display a history of cosmopolitanism and refute the bad press it so often garners over the genocide question but also with regard to Kurdish and Islamist critiques.[3]

The perception that *all* religious minorities in Turkey are somehow lesser citizens is common among Islamists as well as secularist Turks, creating a situation of double-Othering from multiple political perspectives, as anthropologist Yael Navaro-Yashin has written: "As a person of 'minority' status in Turkey, I was not perceived as a proper native by many of my own informants, whether Islamist or secularist" (Navaro-Yashin 2002: 14). By means of sloppy associations, citizenship is symbolically reassigned or entire religious traditions are conflated (why, otherwise, should Armenians and Diaspora Jews be banned from a Turkish club as a reprisal for Israel's military actions?). Although the government condemned the act and fined the club officials, the calculus Jews make of the official discourses, media caricatures as well as intermittent attacks on the community averages out to what Marcus might deem "paranoia within reason" (Marcus 1999: 5). Marcus understands paranoia not as a crisis of interpretation but one of representation: "So in this version of the crisis of representation the plausibility of the paranoid style is not so much its reasonableness, but rather the revitalization of the romantic, the ability to tell an appealing, wondrous story found in the real" (Marcus 1999: 5). How does this problem translate to the work of minority journalists, who are responsible for presenting a certain kind of display in a publicly accessible newspaper?

While conducting research at the Jewish newspaper office in Istanbul, I noted a constant worry about *Şalom*'s articles being cited in injurious ways by other Turkish media outlets. Indeed, a number of Turkish presses regularly use the community's own publications as primary sources for apocryphal stories about Jewish conspiracies (Brink-Danan 2012).[4] A productive site for understanding the negotiations of power, media, discourse, and representation can be examined by looking at the everyday practices of minority journalists whose primary concern is the management of representations as they exercise their will to represent at an intersection between power and weakness: they are the authors and editors of representations of themselves

and their community, but they do not operate in a vacuum (see Peterson 2001). Imagined and real audiences, available through the ethnography of speech circulated around (but not necessarily printed on) the news page, reflect and condition the possibilities for a democratic public sphere and for the creation of minority "counterpublics," communicative spheres that offer alternatives to hegemonic understandings and representations (Fraser 1990; Warner 2002). Yet, as minorities, they (we) recognize that representational choices can be reinterpreted with other frames and with different kinds of intentions. Representations are, of course, detachable, but also somewhat controllable. It is this tension that arises out of the knowledge that texts travel – and that injury can ensue from this detachability – to which I dedicate this essay's remaining pages.

Press night at the Turkish Jewish newspaper office

During Ottoman Imperial rule, Jewish journalism exhibited a florescence of papers written in multiple languages (Stein 2000). The memory of a prolific and bustling Jewish press lives on in the The Quincentennial Foundation Museum of Turkish Jews (the Jewish Museum of Turkey), in Istanbul, where an exhibit about Jewish newspaper publishing celebrates the fifteenth-century introduction of the Hebrew printing press to Ottoman soil. The museum exhibition offers colorful images and texts from various early twentieth-century Ottoman and Turkish presses, emphasizing, however, that the Jewish press' transition from Ladino or French to Modern Turkish printing reflected the increasing integration of the Jewish population into the Turkish Republic. Today, only one Jewish newspaper, called *Şalom*,[5] remains in Turkey, the former Ottoman heartland. Printed in modern Turkish (with one page weekly in Ladino), it functions as the main representative of the tiny Jewish community – today likely fewer than 25,000 people (Tuval 2004: xxxiii; Şule Toktaş 2006a: 123) – and a negligible fraction of Turkey's overall population of over seventy million people.

The Turkish Jewish press operates against the background of rules of omission, both formalized in law and, perhaps more of interest to me, in implicit social norms of what one should and should not say. These levels of discourse are not separable, but often run in complex and sometimes contradictory ways. In Turkey, one of the central legal principles that governs the tone of public discourse is Article 159 that

> (…) forbids "public degrading" of "Turkishness, the Republic, the armed forces, and other institutions of state on pain of six months' to three years' imprisonment." Most recently, a prominent Turkish-Armenian journalist, Hrant Dink, was sentenced to six months' imprisonment for "insulting Turkishness," while the novelist Orhan Pamuk was indicted in September 2005 under the same clause for stating in an interview that "one million Armenians and 30,000 Kurds were killed on this soil" (…). [A recently updated version reveals] the persistence of a culture of silencing political dissent and wariness of instituting a reasonable standard of free speech overall.
>
> (Benhabib and Isiksel 2006: 226)

Scholars of Turkish film, for example, document how censorship of religious themes from Turkish films in the 1960s and 1970s helped create a state-sponsored ideal of the secular public sphere and, inversely, the "right" kind of Islam: privatized, Sunni, and national (Mutlu and Koçer 2012). This broad expectation of general Turkish censorship sets the social backdrop in which Turkish Jewish practices of self-censorship is, frankly, taken for granted. Anthropologist Robin Sheriff calls this "cultural censorship, which, unlike state-sponsored censorship, is practiced in the absence of explicit coercion or enforcement. Although practiced by different and opposed

groups, cultural censorship tends to be constituted through, and circumscribed by the political interests of dominant groups" (Sheriff 2000: 114). This kind of approach leads us to study the dialogic play between censors and their subjects, but, more centrally, the motives of those who self-censor. As Boyer writes of another milieu, when he asked his East German interlocutors about journalistic professional standards and the history of censorship, their response was to refocus his attention on the fact that self-censorship played a stronger role than most decisions from the government (Boyer 2003: 529). As another leading anthropologist of journalism has argued, "Most news stories are negotiated in defined social contexts among many different actors, including sources, journalists, editors and press agents. Much of this negotiation occurs in an unwriteable register. Such discourse is thus a key site for looking at interpretive agency in newswriting" (Peterson 2001). Just because some kind of speech is permitted by law doesn't mean it is a great idea to open one's mouth, never mind print an unpopular opinion on a mediated page.

In spite of the seeming impossibility of finding the right representational pitch for the Jewish community, during ethnographic fieldwork among Jews in Istanbul, I found the news office of Turkey's single remaining paper to be a fun and lively place. Tuval (2004) estimates that 75 percent of Turkey's Jews subscribe to *Şalom*. While this might be an exaggeration, while living in Istanbul I did notice many people across the community's age and gender distribution actually reading the paper. A staff member at the Jewish museum browsed through a copy while waiting for a group of visitors to arrive; mothers of friends perused it with tea in the evening after work. A telling indicator of how widely the paper is read can be found in the following anecdote: a Jewish acquaintance involved in a legal battle with another member of the community considered writing a letter to the paper critiquing his opponent's unseemly behavior on the premise that "everyone he knows reads *Şalom*, so if I wrote a letter to the editor he wouldn't be able to get away with his schemes any longer" (personal communication, 2007).

The paper runs largely on labors of love; in addition to the overwhelmingly female editorship that dedicates enormous amounts of unpaid time to the functioning of the paper, the staff is comprised of young adults with university education who are highly involved in other arenas of community life. In the evenings, middle-aged men join the others after a full day of work to write editorials, check sources, and mentor the younger volunteers. I observed that these intelligent and dedicated volunteer reporters for the Turkish Jewish press endlessly engage in a comparison of their community's status as a religious minority within a secular state with other places and times, producing what I have elsewhere called "cosmopolitan knowledge." Having met a number of journalists working in small Jewish community newspapers elsewhere in Europe and the United States, I learned that most Jewish presses today operate in a very solitary way: an editor sitting alone most days in a borrowed office of a larger Jewish community organization or her own kitchen, sending emails and assigning articles, sometimes with a small editorial board and/or advertising staff, but without the bustle one imagines animating the newsroom of old. *Şalom*, at least in the early 2000s, still had this energy of working together to make, in its own rhetoric, something of value to the community. An anthropologist like myself could join in on press nights to hear the buzzing dialogue over the best ways to represent a story, news item or image.

On October 24, 2002, Jews throughout Turkey participated in the first community-wide election of the Turkish chief rabbi. Soon thereafter, I attended a staff meeting in the newspaper office that shares building space with an upscale boutique and a meditation center, although the news office itself is separated from the other building occupants by a rigorous security apparatus. I sat at a long writing table, reading a copy of the past week's newspaper, enjoying endless glass cups of tea and the clever conversation and jokes all around me. The light camaraderie of the

staff lubricated the sometimes-tedious labor of editing, translating, and formatting articles. In my field notes from that evening, I recorded their criticisms of the lack of disclosure about the details of the election and disappointment at the low voter turnout for what was supposed to be a major step in the democratization of the Jewish community in Turkey. A twenty-five-year-old reporter cited a statistic that less than 20 percent of the community had voted, and wanted to report this as a personal disappointment. His editor, a sixty-three-year-old head writer for the paper, interpreted the results in a more positive light, saying, "Let's look at it from a different perspective; there are always two sides to a story: on one hand, it was a low turnout; on the other hand, for the first-ever election, it wasn't so bad." After debating the matter among themselves, the staff agreed that *Şalom*, as the sole mouthpiece of Jews in Turkey, had to report on the event in a way that would be meaningful to its readers as well as to the participants in the election. As minority elites, the staff has the unenviable job of presenting a unified front to the majority or its officials in order to make their small voice "countable" (Herzfeld 1997: 92); however, this pretend unity can discredit their authority among those who have disagreed in the first place, namely their constituents and fellow members of the community.

In an interesting compromise, the paper reported on the election in a few different modes. As is typical in the paper, major news items recurred across columns, allowing dialogue to become text and dissonance to emerge. For example, while on the Turkish-language pages, reporters offered a basic description of the event including dates, procedures, and outcomes, on the Judeo-Spanish page there appeared a humorous column entitled "Letra e-mail a mi Prima Zelda" (An E-Mail Letter to My Cousin Zelda) (Anonymous 2002).[6] A hypothetical e-mail from a Turkish Jew, "Rachel," intended for her cousin "Zelda," "mistakenly" ended up in the hands of the editors, who claimed that after contacting the author about her mistake, they received permission to reprint the letter. In the letter, "Rachel" critiques the handling of the elections, questioning whether or not they were democratic and expressing her disapproval of the delegates who would eventually elect the chief rabbi. Describing her husband's involvement as a delegate, she notes his anxiety about the process. Further, she belittles the election by complaining that she had to miss out on a boat cruise on the Bosphorus in order to vote. She continues in this vein, mocking her husband and other voters and critiquing the fuss made over "una eleksiyon ke savemos kualo va ser a la fin!" (an election whose ending we already know!). This was a common criticism of many with whom I spoke about the elections, perhaps accounting for the low voter turnout that so concerned the news staff.

Perhaps this light criticism can emerge because it is written in Judeo-Spanish, still a relatively intimate language with few (non-Jewish) local readers. Yet the newspaper only prints one page in Judeo-Spanish each issue; not all Jews in Turkey can read it (limiting its ability to reach readers, especially young ones) and its content usually reflects the aging demographic that still do. Given that the majority of pages appear in Modern Turkish, *Şalom*'s journalists write about the community with the knowledge that their representations can easily be criticized – from within and without the Jewish community – and create these representations with an eye and ear trained on what one must not claim to know (usually exactly what everyone actually knows!). Based on distribution statistics, one assumes that the newspaper has two main readerships: members of the Jewish community (who have a real stake in how they are portrayed), and non-Jews (some of whom are obsessively curious about the Jewish community). A *Şalom* journalist once wondered aloud, "What are all those women in headscarves doing with our paper in Fatih [an overwhelmingly conservative Muslim area of Istanbul]? I can only imagine that they are searching for conspiracy, scanning our innocent pages, ready to pounce like lions on any seemingly offensive statement." Concern about the best way to represent the Jews to the general public is

particularly acute at the community newspaper office. Jewish perceptions of anti-Semitism in Turkey are not always based on acts of political or overt discrimination but on social exclusions, widespread conspiracy theories and reactions to pervasive negative media representations of Jews (Şule Toktaş 2006b: 220). Nonetheless, self-regulating fears instill in the editors a constant undertone of caution, fearing that a bad editorial judgment about article content, tone or language might endanger the community.

Indeed, there is a troubling history of Islamist and/or ultra-nationalist presses citing the Jewish community paper's articles out of context. I came to see this kind of citational practice as an injurious intertextuality in which text is lifted directly, giving it a high modality, as in, "If the Jews said it, it must be true." But the framing context guides interpretations for the new audience in a detrimental manner. To add insult to injury, the most anti-Semitic publications in Turkey regularly use the community's own publications as primary sources for apocryphal stories about Jewish pseudo-conspiracies and plots to undermine Turkey, Islam, and the world at large. For example, in 2002, a Turkish Islamist paper printed a feature on the funeral of Turkey's former chief rabbi, Rav Asseo. The article selected a minor government official whose presence at the funeral had been reported by the Jewish newspaper and, on a front-page spread, interrogated his motives for attending the funeral. A clichéd anti-Semitic cartoon, in which the Jew is portrayed as an octopus, greedily grasping for power in every part of society, accompanied the article.

As a newcomer, I found the image and article astonishing in their blaring anti-Semitism and disturbing assumptions about Jewish power. However, when I shared it with friends in the Turkish Jewish community, none were surprised. They had grown quite accustomed to being represented as octopi, snakes, devils, and other such scoundrels. The author of the original *Şalom* article about the chief rabbi – quotes from which were taken out of context in order to suggest a conspiracy between Jews and Turkish officials – made copies of the injurious one, signing his name on them and dedicating each copy ironically "with love" to the other staff members. The group laughter that ensued signaled a collective sigh of relief; all present could share a self-conscious critique of their fear of their supposedly "hidden" transcripts being revealed publicly (see Scott 1990: 66). Perhaps irony and joking balance the power disparity between intimates and non-intimates (or minorities and majorities), allowing a safe space for critique, as Bhabha suggests:

> Read as a minority speech-act the joke circulates around a doubly-articulated subject: the negatively marked subject, singled out, at first, as a figure of fun or abuse, is turned through the joke-act into an inclusive yet agonistic form of self-critical identification for which the community takes responsibility.
>
> (Bhabha 1998: xvii)

The group laughter signals a collective sigh of relief – someone finally uttered the unspeakable – and all present could take responsibility for putting him in his place while enjoying the linguistic breach for what it was worth, a self-conscious critique of the great fear of expressing difference in dangerous times (see, again, Scott 1990: 66). Joking aside, staff members and others recognize the social and psychological damage that this injurious intertextuality can provoke. They may joke among themselves, but when, on a cold night in 2002, members of Turkey's Islamist party visited the offices of the Jewish paper to seek votes for the general election, the editors expressed one, simple request: stop publishing anti-Semitic treatises in the Islamist Turkish press.

Against media as a system of shared meanings

Working under this atmosphere of surveillance and fear, a Turkish Jewish newspaper editor once shared some techniques for writing under the radar of antipathetic readers. First, one can use terms that only intimates will recognize, such as neighborhood names instead of cities, foreign terms, or other subtle allusions. Translations (mostly from English and French newspapers) constitute a large portion of Şalom's articles on Jewish topics, however, I was told by a reporter at the paper that, "We don't always give sources because Turkish readers are sensitive; they will think everything is biased just based on the source from which it was translated by staff at our office." Many reporters admit they probably should give all the sources, but this doesn't happen in practice. Finally, no matter what they write, reporters are inevitably seen as "mouthpieces" of the community. As such, the paper often prints even original articles without an author's byline, in order to protect the writer from certain accusations or even personal injury. Yet, no matter how much minority newsmakers operate within the logic of a semiotics of secrecy (Kirshenblatt-Gimblett 1998), their presses, in addition to serving the communities they aim to reach, are widely accessed by antipathetic audiences. In the Turkish Jewish news scene, this specter takes on two primary forms: critics from within and without.

The first spectral reader is the communal leader, those who have a great deal invested in controlling the community's image in public. Although there is some social overlap between the elite of the community and those working for the newspaper, there are still many instances when a communal leader feels that the paper has exceeded its role as representative, as reflected in a comment made by one communal official to me on condition of anonymity: "Those folks at Şalom, they don't know how to make news; they never check with me first" (personal communication 2003)!

The second kind of specter is the overtly antipathetic reader, specifically non-Jewish Turks. However, the fact that anti-Semitic readers might *consume* the paper's news stories is not the biggest concern. What really concerns the producers of stories for Şalom is what those consumers then do with those "detached" texts. Injurious intertextuality here involves citing of Şalom's text out of context, within the frame of anti-Semitic or conspiracy-theory publications, with the purpose of critiquing the community and or those with whom they strive to have good relations. As linguistic anthropologist Miyako Inoue has argued (following De Certeau), "To cite is, thus, to alter" (Inoue 2003: 166). But might it prove intellectually productive to differentiate between the effects of antipathetic alterations, neutral and flattering ones? Inoue continues in a vein well-suited for the ethnographic case at hand: "The epistemic violence of linguistic modernity lies, therefore, not so much in its erasure of what the other is saying but in the exclusion of what that other is saying about what he or she said" (Inoue 2003: 166).

Too often, scholars of media production take as their subject popular and hegemonic discourses assumed to be at the core of a given society in that their circulation speaks to an inherent "public accessibility" and "shared meaning" (Urban 1991: 10 in Spitulnik 1996). For those of us who study minority news – or other counterpublic discourses – this view is problematic in that we cannot assume any such desire to participate in a broader shared culture (indeed, we should be suspicious of it).

Much linguistic anthropological scholarship highlights the desire of media makers to find a "reproducibility formulation," a way for authors to "pre-formulate the characteristics of the text-artifact" that attempts to control the way an audience will interpret it (Briggs 2011; see also Cody 2009). In her landmark essay on the mediation and circulation of intertextual forms, Spitulnik writes, "features such as transparency of form and function and prominence (via frequent repetition or association with dramatic moments) create a 'prepared-for detachability' (Bauman

and Briggs 1990: 74) that enables such discourse to be circulated across communities" (Spitulnik 1996: 180). Anticipating injurious intertextuality, Turkish Jewish media producers seek – with good reason – opaqueness in form and function, indeed, an *ir*reproducibility formation, taking into close consideration the way to write a story in order for it *not* to be taken out of context (or even picked up at all). If much work on intertextuality reveals the myriad ways mass media create imagined communities (in Benedict Anderson's sense), here we see something of the opposite phenomenon: the *Şalom* staff writers quite consciously produce news that is not "ready for detachability" (Bauman and Briggs 1990), lending itself less easily to travel into injurious waters.

Conclusions

> The category "Turk" (commonly used synonymously with "Muslim") disguises the diversity of linguistic, ethnic, and religious origins of Turkey's "majority" population. Due to the performance of a singular identity in the public sphere, however, these alternative histories remain unacknowledged, and may even be suppressed at the level of the individual psyche.
>
> (Neyzi 2002: 141)

Turkish Jews erase difference in their everyday Turkish lives not out of conspiracy but out of a deep knowledge about the acceptable limits for the performance of cosmopolitanism and difference, as outlined above by a prominent Turkish sociologist. Especially during the early years of the Turkish Republic, becoming Turkish was a process of absorbing this knowledge about "what not to know," what Taussig calls "the most powerful form of social knowledge" (Taussig 1999: 2). Minority representational practices that keep secrets guarded from the public are often interpreted in a facile way by antipathetic audiences as part of some conspiracy. Yet, another way to look at the phenomenon of self-censorship is as a defensive reaction to the late modernist assumption that transparency is a central value (Schumann 2007); sometimes there are good reasons for people to desire the maintenance of a semi-private or counterpublic sphere. As Boellstorff (2004) argues about gay Indonesian speech, what at first appears to be exclusive or secret practices is less about hiding any publicly forbidden discourses than about community building vis-à-vis secret keeping itself (i.e. for its own sake). As a staff member explained, *Şalom*'s work is at least as important for the staff as for the readers; as such, socialization into the *idea* of maintaining a counterpublic sphere is perhaps as important (if not more so) than the maintenance of any kind of *actual* counterpublic sphere. I have written elsewhere about the erasure of certain minority narratives from the public record (Brink-Danan 2012); here we have a more complicated picture in which we have self-erasure in order to not have the wrong kind of inclusion – that is, the more paper writers can control their own self-representations, the less risk that antipathetic "citers" will reframe their own words to critical ends.

Contemplated from the present, Jewish journalism provides a window into ongoing negotiations for representations in the public sphere that reflect broader national and international discourses about the role of religion in public life (Brink-Danan 2009). Further study is needed to understand "minority forms of news" (Cottle 2007: 12) and the "revitalization of a journalistic Jewish public sphere" (Penslar 2000: 7; see also Gruber 1999). If archival research chronicles the globalized discourses Jewish journalists deemed acceptable for public consumption in the past, ethnography allows us to observe why certain ideas never make it to press and what this reveals about contemporary social trends. The material presented here thus begs a shift away from what has largely been the mainstay of media studies – production and reception – to a third domain, that of perceptions of the way potential audiences might receive the media produced. Analysis

of self-censorship may tell us as much about minority publics and counterpublics as what is eventually printed on the page (or read off of it). This essay analyzed the specific case of Jewish journalism in twenty-first-century Turkey in order to investigate more broadly how minorities imagine the public sphere today and what implications these imaginaries have for cultural production. Whether or not this particular case, in which Jews have historically self-represented as model-minorities (see Brink-Danan 2012), resonates with other minority experiences (both within and outside Turkey) is open to further historical and ethnographic analysis. Minority representation in the public sphere is conditioned by economic, political, and juridical realities; representations also necessarily depend on collective memory, history, and even fear of self-portrayals being taken out of context and used against them.

Notes

1 Parts of this essay are drawn from the author's full-length ethnography, *Jewish Life in 21st Century Turkey: The Other Side of Tolerance* (2011), although with a much stronger emphasis on the particular question of media representation and intertextuality than the monograph's more generalist approach allowed.

2 This is especially true in today's Europe, as Jews' historical role as Europe's internal "Other" now offers them a unique task in public discourse, especially as the question, "How much difference is tolerable in the European public sphere?" burns with ever-increasing intensity.

3 Striking examples of Turkish Jews' deployment of their particular history to counter claims of Armenian genocide can be seen from at least the early 1980s, when a delegation of Turkish Jews nearly thwarted an Israeli conference on genocide in which the Armenian case was included on the program. As recently as 2007, prominent Turkish Jews challenged the decision of the Anti-Defamation League, an American organization with the mission of fighting anti-Semitism and bigotry, which supported a United States congressional resolution (House Resolution 106) calling the tragedies visited upon Armenians "genocide."

4 This phenomenon is hardly limited to Turkey. In 2009, tired of their community being the "object of news," the Union of Italian Jewish Communities created a national newspaper geared toward a non-Jewish audience with the explicit goal of "(…) creating a constructive dialogue between Jews and non-Jewish Italians. (…) In *Pagine Ebraiche,* Jews will make their own voices heard" (Gruber 2009).

5 The newspaper's title is taken from the Hebrew for "peace" (Shalom); the spelling is a Turkish phonetic transliteration.

6 The use of irony and humor in the paper to soften a real critique of the rabbinate in the face of censorship has historical precedents; nineteenth-century Judeo–Spanish periodicals found in Ottoman lands likewise offered criticism and commentary of rabbinate practices and policies, even given the risk to the publishers and reporters for publishing such material (Loewenthal 1996).

Essential reading

Bird, S. E. (ed.) (2009) *The Anthropology of News and Journalism: Global Perspectives*, Bloomington: Indiana University Press. A collection of essays treating the theoretical and methodological concerns of anthropological research about news and journalism.

Brink-Danan, M. (2012) *Jewish Life in 21st Century Turkey: The Other Side of Tolerance*, Bloomington: Indiana University Press. The first full-length English language ethnography to describe and analyze Turkish Jewry; a strong focus on issues of representation by and about the community.

Mallet, L. (2008) *La Turquie, les Turcs et les Juifs: Histoire, représentations, discours et strategies*, Istanbul: Isis Press. A well-documented study of the representational strategies and problems facing Turkish Jewry (in French).

Navaro-Yashin, Y. (2002) *Faces of the State: Secularism and Public Life in Turkey*, Princeton: Princeton University Press. A much broader analysis of the makings of notions of Turkish public and private life; strong focus on the last decade of the twentieth century.

Shryock, A. (ed.) (2004) *Off Stage/On Display: Intimacy and Ethnography in the Age of Public Culture*, Stanford: Stanford University Press. An excellent collection of essays working with ethnographic evidence of how

the notion of "intimacy" can help us better understand the value various societies place on public and private domains.

Spitulnik, D. (1996) "The Social Circulation of Media Discourse and the Mediation of Communities," *Journal of Linguistic Anthropology*, 6(2): 161–87. An early and oft-cited anthropology article dealing with the notion of intertextuality and its explanatory value for studies of media.

Stein, S. A. (2004) *Making Jews Modern: The Yiddish and Ladino Press in the Russian and Ottoman Empires*, Bloomington, Indiana University Press. A comparative historical study of the role of the press in parallel Jewish languages and the role it played in the modernization of Jewish communities across the globe.

Warner, M. (2002) "Publics and Counterpublics," *Public Culture*, 14(1) Winter: 49–90. A distilled – and foundational – version of arguments regarding the "fiction" of the public/private divide that the author makes in his longer texts treating a similar subject.

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20

THE IDEA OF YIDDISH

Re-globalizing North American Jewish culture

Amelia Glaser

A century ago, close to 80 percent of the world's Jewish population spoke Yiddish. Today, less than 15 percent speak Yiddish, and those who do are, primarily, over the age of seventy, Hasidim, or students of the language. Although Yiddish speakers are still among us, for the mainstream Jewish population of North America, the language has all but ceased to function as a mode of communication, that is, as a *signifier*, and has instead become a subject unto itself – a *signified*. Although Yiddish remains the vibrant language of the streets in many religious communities, the idea of Yiddish has remained an important cultural symbol within a secular, English-speaking, North American Jewish mainstream, and it is worth exploring the reasons for this more deeply. Awareness of, if not fluency in, the Yiddish language has helped North American Jews to address key concerns about their cultural identity in the twenty-first century. For the purposes of this chapter, we shall focus on three of these concerns: the role of a nation-state in contemporary Jewish identity, how Jewish historical memory informs contemporary group identity, and whether the Jewish experience can be compared to other immigrant and minority experiences in North America.

I shall begin with the ways in which Yiddish has been viewed as a language without borders. The lack of a clearly defined state where Yiddish is spoken has occasionally prompted Jewish scholars and writers to imagine a collective Yiddish-speaking homeland resembling what Pierre Nora has called a *lieu de mémoire* (Nora 2006).[1] Yiddish, unlike Hebrew, has remained a stateless language, thereby offering many Jews a diasporic identity, which some come to view as an alternative to the politics and geography of the State of Israel. Second, I shall discuss the role of memory in Jewish identity formation, something that has been addressed through the device of temporal bifurcation in Jewish American fiction and film. Yiddish has long marked itself in English-language literature either through accented characters, the motif of translation, or the insertion of Yiddish-style folk stories (Wirth-Nesher 1998; Wirth-Nesher 2006). Whether these Yiddish motifs reinforce the idea of an idyllic historical community or evoke past horrors, they offer a counterpoint to mainstream American and Canadian culture, fostering a sense of group identity, and suggesting a collective mourning for an absent place (Shandler 2006; Margolis 2009). Finally, I shall discuss multicultural performances that make Yiddish relevant to contemporary North American culture by fusing it with other subcultures. These three devices use the idea of Yiddish to strengthen a North American Jewish cultural identity in ways that complicate religious practice, Zionism, and even race.

Yiddishland

The Yiddish literature scholar Janet Hadda recalls, "I remember vividly how – as I started my academic career – my colleagues would go off every summer to Germany, Austria or Norway, and I would be reminded that there was no Yiddishland that I could go to" (Hadda 1999: 95). Hadda's sorrow over an absent Yiddishland carries with it the burden of a century of European history. Whereas the nineteenth-century "Springtime of Nations" initiated the building of nation-states throughout Europe, Europe would soon become unlivable for its Jewish population. Hadda's complaint, then, is an expression of both the tragic death of European Jewish culture, and the kind of modern nostalgia Svetlana Boym has defined as "a mourning for the impossibility of mythical return, for the loss of an enchanted world with clear borders and values" (Boym 2001: 8). The idea of Yiddish, a language disconnected from political borders, might prompt longing for a state where the language is spoken, but it has also come to stand, by its very statelessness, for a pride in diasporic, transnational culture.

Since World War II, the language can be said to have entered its "post-vernacular" and "post-ideological" context, descriptions Cecile Kuznitz has aptly applied to the field of Yiddish Studies: "[A] sense that the golden age of Jewish creativity in Yiddish has passed leads some to take a retrospective view, feeling that the time is now ripe to take stock of the achievements and shortcomings of Yiddish culture" (Kuznitz 2002: 550). Jeffrey Shandler draws similar conclusions in his study of Yiddish in the post-World War II Jewish imagination: "[O]ne of the particular challenges of imagining Yiddishland is the question of how one might either situate it in some geographically specific locus or develop an alternative vision that somehow thrives despite geography" (Shandler 2006: 37). Indeed, World War II and the formation of Israel as a Hebrew-speaking state catapulted Yiddish into an inaccessible East European past. However, a newfound fluidity between North America and Eastern Europe since the breakup of the Soviet Union has made it possible for Americans to reinvigorate the idea of Yiddish culture by comparing the Eastern Europe of today with the pre-World War II shtetl. Such visits have also made the loss of pre–World War II European Jewish culture painfully evident. Yiddish summer programs take place in former Jewish centers like Vilnius and even in Birobidjan, the Soviet Jewish autonomous republic in Central Asia. Websites like "shtetlinks.jewishgen.org" teach descendants of the Jewish Pale of Settlement about their ancestors' shtetls, and provide a forum for photos, interviews, and observations gleaned on visits to these sites. Moreover, Russian-born American writers, many of them Jewish, have introduced an influx of fiction that bridges the US and their East European origins.[2]

Scholars and writers have applied "Yiddishland" to either the transnational Ashkenazi community that existed in Europe prior to World War II, or to a less specific, collectively imagined homeland. The Yiddish scholar David Roskies titled his family memoir *Yiddishlands*, using the term to describe the very real locales his mother occupied in her passage from Eastern Europe to Canada, places he would explore as an adult, reestablishing lost connections with Jews who remained in Eastern Europe (Roskies 2008). Others have described Yiddishland not through its historical presence, but through its absence. Ellen Cassedy, in her essay "Yiddishland," juxtaposes the Lithuania she visits as a participant in the Vilnius Yiddish Summer Program with that of her childhood imagination. "Lithuania, in my childhood, had always seemed utterly inaccessible, as if it existed in another dimension, like Atlantis or Narnia. No one from my family who'd made it across the Atlantic from there had ever been back" (Cassedy 2006: 163). Merle Bachman embraces precisely this sentiment, and suggests that the fragmentary nature of Yiddish culture lends a productive tension to American Jewish identity politics (Bachman 2008: 33). "Yiddishland," writes Bachman, "is not a utopian space filled with the pleasures of an intact culture, but one

whose ambivalence can remind us of the complexities of Jewish adaptation to American society" (Bachman 2008: vi). If Yiddish, during the second half of the twentieth century, inspired longing for a unified Ashkenazi past, then the search for Yiddishland in the twenty-first century has mixed this longing with a renewed Diaspora pride.

The idea of Eastern Europe as a historical exilic homeland is more accessible to many secular American Jews than the desire for a restored temple in Jerusalem. For some Eastern Europe seems to have replaced the historical Jerusalem as a lost homeland. Eastern Europe is a recent homeland, a place that bears direct relevance to American Jewish culture through the experience of immigration. Unlike Modern Hebrew, which is inextricably tied to a contemporary geopolitical identity, Yiddish, with its lost East European reference point, remains open and malleable. Moreover, citizenship in this imagined terrain is not subject to the same ethnic and halakhic litmus tests as immigration to the State of Israel. Non-Jews with a love of Jewish culture, Jews without a religious education, and Jews of mixed descent may be drawn to the idea of Yiddish as an inclusive expression of Jewishness.

Strikingly, even before the formation of a Jewish state, the idea of Yiddishland tended to work in opposition to something – namely to "Hebrew-land" or the State of Israel. As early as the 1908 Yiddish conference in Czernowicz, Yiddishists were talking about Yiddishland, "where 'the world language,' Yiddish, served in lieu of a State" (Harshav 2007: 99). The Yiddish journalist Chaim Zhitlovsky used "Yiddishland" to refer to "A spiritual-national home … whose atmosphere consists of the fresh air of our folk language and where with every breath and every word one helps maintain the national existence of our people" (Chaver 2004: xiv; Zhitlovsky 1953). The poet Yankev Glatshteyn later addressed ironic verse about Yiddish to the new state of Israel: "Red tsu mir yidish, mayn yidish land,/un ikh vel tsu dir redn ivris mimeyle" (Speak Yiddish to me, my Yiddish/Jewish land,/And I will speak to you in Hebrew naturally).[3] Jordan Finkin has stressed the ambiguity of Glatshteyn's term "yidish land": "[I]t is *yidish land*, not *yidishland*, simultaneously Yiddishland *and* 'Jewish land,' that is, Israel, the so-called Jewish state, a territorial realization" (Finkin 2010: 73–74). As Modern Hebrew increasingly represented a concrete nation-state for the Jewish people, Yiddish, even for Ashkenazi Jews who have lost the ability to speak the language, came to represent transnational Jewishness.

Michael Chabon summoned a heated debate about the continued use of Yiddish as a global Jewish language with his article, "Guidebook to a Land of Ghosts," where he questioned the contemporary usefulness of Uriel and Beatrice Weinreich's 1958 phrasebook, *Say it in Yiddish* (Chabon 1997). The response of the Yiddish-speaking subscribers on the online forum, "Mendele" was to vehemently reject the implication that Yiddish must be connected to a specific place. Ron Robboy responds to Chabon's comment that "There is no nation to take the Weinreichs' little phrasebook to" by evoking the continued importance of Yiddish as a transnational Jewish language.

> As I was growing up, my own understanding of the primary usefulness of Yiddish was that, like Esperanto, it could serve as an invaluable lingua franca nearly anywhere in the world – a kind of visa in and of itself – albeit for a limited constituency.
>
> (Robboy 1997)

Chabon, who does not speak Yiddish, followed his article with *The Yiddish Policeman's Union* (2007), an adventure novel that questions the viability of a contemporary Yiddishland or, for that matter, a Jewish land.[4] Here, Chabon allows himself to imagine an actual land in which the Weinreichs' book would be helpful. The novel's setting – a temporary Yiddish-speaking state in Sitka, Alaska – presents a bizarre alternative to the State of Israel. In *The Yiddish Policeman's Union*, neither Chabon's hypothetical Jewish dystopia, nor Israel as the Jewish nation-state, seems

especially viable in the twenty-first century. What makes Chabon's novel entertaining is the secular Yiddishland he creates, which exists outside of history. Landsman, a protagonist so enamored of the past that the love interest is his ex-wife Bina, is a first-generation resident of the impermanent Jewish settlement in Sitka. Landsman, throughout this noire murder mystery, is learning that his homeland cannot be rooted in a single place:

> You have to look to Jews like Bina Gelbfish, Landsman thinks, to explain the wide range and persistence of the race. Jews who carry their homes in an old cowhide bag, on the back of a camel, in the bubble of air at the center of their brains. Jews who land on their feet, hit the ground running, ride out the vicissitudes, and make the best of what falls to hand, from Egypt to Babylon, from Minsk Gubernya to the District of Sitka.
>
> (Chabon 2007: 230)

This may be the same lesson that Chabon learns between his inflammatory article and the novel that followed it. The very idea of a concrete Yiddishland is an exception that proves a rule: Chabon uses Yiddish to argue for a version of Jewish culture that transcends states and empires. Quite unlike his assertion in his earlier article that Yiddish is not viable because it has no nation-state, Chabon suggests in his novel that Yiddish is a movable homeland, and that its strength is in its transience. Ultimately, Chabon uses the transience of his Yiddish-speaking characters as a pretext for questioning the viability of a Jewish state. The villains in Chabon's novels are members of a Hassidic sect whose goal it is to reclaim Jerusalem (which, in this alternate reality, the Jews lost in 1948) by bombing the Temple Mount.

The idea of Yiddish, then, as a Diaspora language, can be a tool for questioning the importance of a Jewish state to Jewish culture, and for considering the relationship between Jewishness and statehood, whether that state is Israel, the Tsarist Empire, or the United States. Chabon's extreme use of Yiddish to question and criticize the notion of a Jewish nation-state harkens back to a time when the future of any institutionally supported Jewish nationhood was indeed precarious. Yiddish, having been rejected in favor of Modern Hebrew, was discouraged on the streets of the newly formed State of Israel. In the twenty-first century, however, Yiddish is no longer a threat to the Zionist project, but can remain in dialogue with it. Rather than referring to a specific place, the language has remained inextricably connected to the Diaspora. For Jews of greatly varying political and religious persuasions, whether or not they speak the language, Yiddish is a language of wandering.

The double plotline

The Coen brothers opened their film, *A Serious Man*, with a seven-minute episode, performed entirely in Yiddish and culminating with a Jewish woman stabbing a visitor she claims is a "Dybbuk." As the guest exits the house, an ice pick still lodged in his chest, the woman's husband exclaims, "Alts iz farshvindlt!" (All is lost!) (Coen and Coen 2009). The viewer must draw a connection between this vignette and the seemingly unrelated subject of the film itself, set in a Minnesota Jewish community in the 1960s. The Yiddish episode stands in for an absolute memory of the past, which, although inaccessible to the characters, has been reconstructed for the viewers. As Yiddish can help contemporary American Jews to consider the value of a clearly defined homeland, it can also serve to jog collective historical memory.

Inherent in East European Jewish history is the awareness of the stories and histories that disappeared with the world wars and immigration. David Roskies writes that, growing up in Montreal, he "understood from an early age that time was riven in two: Time Before/Time

After" (Roskies 2008: 12). Increasingly, the Yiddish theme has offered English-language writers a pretext for meditating upon this temporal rift, often doubling what Bakhtin has defined to be the novel's "chronotope" or space-time (Bakhtin 1981: 84). The temporal division of a plot allows for a dual narrative, where one sequence of events is centered in contemporary, secular American society, and the other in an East-European, Yiddish-speaking milieu, usually beginning well before World War II. The introduction of Yiddish thus initiates a process of self-discovery by a new-world protagonist, who might travel between the two narratives either as a translator, traveler, or researcher. These dual narratives might center on a relationship across an ethnic or age divide. A pogrom often serves as the central crisis in the old-world plotline. Allusions to the language, accented English, and occasional Yiddish words and phrases help to create a formal distinction between plots unfolding in the past and present.

In fiction, as in film, folktales or magical objects emerge from a seeming abyss of history to establish a relationship with the present. Rebecca Goldstein's *Mazel* (1995), a novel that blends a pre-war East European narrative with a late twentieth-century narrative set in New Jersey, begins with a folk-style anecdote: "Mazel, which is luck in Yiddish, encountered Saychel, or brains, on the road one day, and the two fell into a conversation. Before too long they began to bicker about which of them was the more important" (Goldstein 1995: 1).[5] There is wisdom, Goldstein suggests with this anecdote, that is buried in the Yiddish language; the reader is in turn led to believe that the personification of two Yiddish words, like the Yiddish episode in *A Serious Man*, might help to unlock the mysteries of a seemingly fractured American present. In *The Frozen Rabbi* (2010), Steve Stern goes beyond animating Yiddish to *re*animate a Yiddish speaker: a teenage boy in twenty-first-century Tennessee finds a rabbi who had frozen a century earlier. The rabbi speaks only Yiddish, eventually comes to life, and forces Bernie out of his adolescent slump. The narrative alternates between the present and the frozen rabbi's journey from Poland to the US. Bernie, in order to communicate with the rabbi, takes it upon himself to learn Yiddish and its literary context, in the process, breathing life into his parents' feeble attempts at Yiddish literacy. "Seated beside the rabbi on the harvest plaid sofa adjacent to the squawking TV, he read his parents' copies of *The Joys of Yiddish* and *The World of Our Fathers*, books that were standard issue in Jewish households but appeared never to have been opened in this one" (Stern 2010: 48).[6] Bernie's father, in response to the discovery, hands his son a book, which contains the rabbi's strange story: "My papa wrote it all down himself. Problem is, he wrote it in Yiddish" (Stern 2010: 4). Like the folkloric prefaces to *Mazel* and *A Serious Man*, the secrets of the frozen rabbi have evaporated into the faintest remnant of superstition, and the resuscitation of these past secrets not only drives the plot of the novel; it is also one of the hopes that secular Jews, with a weakening link to history, have placed on the idea of Yiddish. For this reason, Americans continue to purchase books like *The Joys of Yiddish* and its many successors, even if the books remain unopened.

Michael Wex, author of several books about Yiddish in English (Wex 2007a; Wex 2007b; Wex 2009), pokes fun at the rift between an old Yiddish-speaking world and contemporary interest in profiting from the language, with his novel *The Frumkiss Family Business* (2010). The "old-world" protagonist is Elyokim Faktor, "a *tzaddik of shtik*, a saint of shenanigans," who dies at the beginning of the novel, in twenty-first-century Canada (Wex 2010: 11). The novel's anti-hero, Allan Milner, is a dilettantish, self-promoting biographer who describes himself as "the premier contemporary link to the glories of the East European Jewish folk tradition" (Wex 2010: 140). Milner got his start at Yiddish cultural organizations, where he spent time with old Yiddish speakers:

> The old men liked him; since none of their relatives wanted to listen to their stories or hear about their quarrels, he was popular for the first time in his life. He started to tape

their memories, especially any songs they might remember, any local customs or peculiarities of the sort not likely to be described in standard histories. … He became a one-man tribute band for pre-1925, maybe even pre-1915, Yiddish popular culture.

(Wex 2010: 142)

By the time he meets Faktor, Milner is "running out of old guys" (Wex 2010: 143). There may be some good-natured self-mocking here. Wex, after all, had won international acclaim only a few years earlier with his *Born to Kvetch: Yiddish Language and Culture in All of Its Moods*, a humorous book about Yiddish that emphasizes the underbelly of the language. In an addendum to the second edition of *Born to Kvetch*, "Old Farts Watching Wrestling: The Yiddish World That Really Mattered to Me," Wex describes his own start as a Yiddish scholar, among men who "knew they'd never be held responsible for anything that came out of their mouths" (Wex 2005: addendum, 7). Rather than a source of redemption, the language in *The Frumkiss Family Business* is the source of contention. Nonetheless, a single family's history is woven out of precisely such contentious, and irreverent, figures as Milner and Faktor.

Yiddish, in these examples, is a family secret of sorts, which, if discovered, might furnish the assimilated North American Jew with embarrassment for its crude familiarity, or pride for its demarcation of an immigrant past, accessible only to a few. In Dara Horn's *The World to Come* (2004), Yiddish is never anything but an object of pride, although a family's knowledge of Yiddish has muddied the relationship between forgery and authenticity. Here, the family secret belongs to the history of Jewish modernism: in the "old-world" plotline, Marc Chagall gives one of his paintings to a young orphan, and the Yiddish writer Der Nister inserts a manuscript inside of it. Past Yiddish literature is therefore transported into the future, contained in one of Marc Chagall's images of the shtetl. In the "new-world" narrative, set in New York, the thirty-something protagonist steals the painting, and commissions his artist twin sister to produce a replacement (Horn 2004). Horn, who holds a Ph.D. in Yiddish literature, intersperses translations and paraphrases of Yiddish stories throughout her novel. Mirroring the genetic heritage of a single family is the story of the family's aesthetic heritage, in which generations of well-meaning progeny find themselves copying, intentionally and unintentionally, the work of past artists. The protagonist's deceased mother, a children's writer and illustrator, is herself a copier of sorts, and the inauthenticity of her stories and illustrations, borrowed as they are from many of the classics of early twentieth-century Yiddish fiction and from Chagall's visual images, para-doxically lends authenticity to the family's heritage.

The continuity between the twenty-first-century family and the early twentieth-century East European Jewish community reconciles the two plotlines. The vision of a child in a womb is a recurrent artistic and poetic motif throughout the work. The novel culminates in a narrative that moves the plot from past to future by depicting a developing child, prepared for life on Earth by its ancestors. The dual motifs of authenticity and parentage make explicit a theme common to many of these Yiddish-themed novels: the search, through Yiddish, for a cultural past is always intimately connected to an interest in one's nation, and even in one's gene pool. Horn leaves the reader with two ways of understanding Jewishness. On one side is biological inheritance, and on the other is the family's inheritance of cultural symbols. Significantly, these symbols, rather than harkening back to biblical time, take the reader to an East European homeland. In Horn's novel, the most important historical memories are inaccessible to the characters that need them. The omniscient reader, rather than the protagonist, knows of the gift of Chagall and Der Nister to a young orphan in Eastern Europe, the ancestor of the larcenous protagonist. Likewise, it is the omniscient reader, and not the fictional protagonist, who will benefit from the idea of continuity displayed through these dual narratives.

These texts, then, offer a North American Jewish community a sense of rich heritage. Yiddish objects from the past, however, are not only available to Jews, a point that Peter Manseau makes in *Songs for the Butcher's Daughter* (2008), which alternates between chapters describing the life of Itsik Malpesh, a Jewish poet born in Kishinev during the 1903 pogrom, and the "translator's notes" of a recent college graduate who has learned Yiddish by working for an organization that resembles the Yiddish Book Center in Amherst, Massachusetts:

> At the time of our first meeting, in the fall of 1996, he was already a nonagenarian, and I was just twenty-one years old. He was a Russian Jew reared in an era when the czar's days were numbered; I was a Catholic boy from Boston born at the end of the Nixon administration.
>
> (Manseau 2008: 1)

The worlds of the young lapsed Catholic and old Yiddish poet intersect through a budding romance between the translator and Malpesh's long lost great granddaughter, a naïve *ba'alat teshuvah* (a Jew returning to the religious fold) in search of her identity, who is none too happy to learn that the object of her desire is not Jewish. Thus, the friendship between the main character and Malpesh functions as a circuitous blessing of a modern interfaith union on the part of the young woman's lost ancestry. The young translator has access to Malpesh's secrets not through birthright, but through his decision to study Yiddish.

Jonathan Safran Foer created a bifurcated plot that treats both the temporal and the geographical rift between a contemporary American Jew and his family's East European memories in *Everything is Illuminated* (2002). One of the narratives is set in an old-world shtetl-community, which glitters improbably with the sheen of myths and idealized memories. The other chronicles the contemporary adventures of the protagonist – a fictionalized version of the author – and his Ukrainian translator Alex who, in an English–Russian linguistic mélange, ironizes and estranges the protagonists' search for an idealized Yiddishland. Alex, despite having grown up in Odessa, is taken aback by Jonathan's reference to "shtetls."

> "Why don't you merely dub it a village?"
> "It's a Jewish word."
> "A Jewish word?"
> "Yiddish. Like schmuck."
>
> (Foer 2002: 60)

Foer's novel captures the disconnect between a growing number of Jewish Americans who, since the 1990s, have sought their roots in former shtetls, and the East Europeans whose relationship to their native landscape is neither nostalgic nor defined by its former Jewish population. Foer shows the awkwardness of Jewish memory as it encounters an Eastern Europe that refuses to conform to an American vision of "Yiddishland."

Recently, Soviet-born writers have helped to temper the romanticization of Jewish Eastern Europe in American literature. Anya Ulinich appears to have Foer in mind in her short story, "The Nurse and the Novelist," where a Russian nurse confronts an American writer, calling his characters "monsters who fashion heaps of bones into tiny missing pieces of themselves"(Ulinich 2008). As Ulinich here implies, American portrayals of Eastern Europe often have the goal of affirming American Jewish identity. Indeed, a writer like Foer, by placing an American character in an Eastern European setting he can relate to only through fictionalized memories, is inviting precisely such criticism. As we shall see in the next section, post-modern performers have taken

the further step of using what can be broadly defined as Yiddish culture as a means of connecting North American Jews with Jews in contemporary Eastern Europe, and of integrating Jewish culture with other ethnic cultures.

Yiddish as performance

The Canadian Jewish rapper DJ Socalled opens one of his songs with a soliloquy by the Yiddish singer Theodor Bikel: "I sing Jewish songs not because they are better songs than the songs of my neighbor. I sing them because they're mine. And unless I sing them that part of the culture will vanish, and that wonderful meadow with proliferating flowers, with their profusion of flowers, will have the Jewish flower missing" ("[Rock the] Belz", Socalled 2007). This sample is one of many that DJ Socalled, the stage name of Joshua Dolgin, uses in fusion music that integrates Yiddish, English, and French, among other languages. The quote illustrates another use of Yiddish in North American popular culture – as a contribution to multiethnic, fusion performance.

As we have seen, the search for a Yiddishland allows American Jews to identify with a lost Jewish homeland, even if that homeland is defined by the condition of statelessness. The use of a temporally bifurcated plotline restores fluidity to a contemporary sense of Jewish cultural history. Both of these artistic devices build group solidarity among mainstream North American Jews. By extension, in order to place the history of the European Jewish Diaspora within multiethnic American culture, a growing number of Jewish artists and musicians have come to integrate Yiddish with other languages, thereby placing the experience of Jewish exile in conversation with other subcultures.

Klezmer musicians, who pushed Jewish music into the American mainstream in the late twentieth century, have more recently moved from a pure Jewish musical tradition to combine Yiddish lyrics and Jewish melodies in a celebration of musical and ethnic hybrids. The Klezmatics, who have performed together since the 1980s, have completed crossover albums and cross-cultural collaborations with other musicians, including Arlo Guthrie, the Palestinian musician Simon Shaheen, the Celtic singer Susan McKeown, and the African-American Jewish gospel singer Joshua Nelson. Their 2004 album, *Rise Up* (*Shteyt Oyf*) combines Yiddish and English to convey progressive American social messages. The title song, "Rise Up," adapts Holly Near's original English to include a Yiddish translation, and is an indictment of religious fundamentalism:

> Keyn moyre far ayere kloysters/keyn moyre far ayere shiln/Keyn moyre far ayere tfiles/Kh'hob moyre far dem vos ir tut lekoved ayer got.' '(I ain't afraid of your Churches/I ain't afraid of your temples/I ain't afraid of your prayin'/I'm afraid of what you do in the name of your god.)
>
> ("I Ain't Afraid," Klezmatics 2003)

The combination of Yiddish and a progressive American folk tradition recalls the leftist Jewish tradition, which flourished in the interwar years, offering an American Jewish community a sense of cultural heritage that is not necessarily tied to religious orthodoxy or Zionism (Michels 2005).

Daniel Kahn, the lead singer in "The Painted Bird," has imbued his own Yiddish and klezmer music with a similar nod to a secular and political tradition. In "Borsht Revisited," Kahn covers a song first performed by Michael Alpert with the klezmer ensemble "Brave Old World," but adds his own English lyrics to the Yiddish original. "Or perhaps you have a problem with my people, you didn't realize I was a Jew. Well, a chuppah can go underneath a steeple, because

there is something about you" ("Borsht Revisited," Painted Bird 2009; "Borsht," Brave Old World 1994). This line removes the song from a purely Jewish context, inviting intermarriage, and even cross-cultural friction, into his Yiddish music. Kahn has collaborated with the Moscow-based singer and satirist Psoy Korolenko (Pavel Leon), who has created his own comedic multilingual hybrids since the 1990s. Among their projects is a Yiddish translation of the 1979 West German Eurovision hit, "Moskau," a kitschy satire celebrating all things Russian (Dschinghis Khan 1979). The Korolenko/Kahn translation is a parody of a parody, embedding the German song with Yiddish idiom, and in the process bringing it closer to the Soviet Jewish experience. "Moskve, Moskve: kosher iz dayn kaviar, nisht keyn got un nisht keyn tsar" ("Moscow, Moscow: kosher is your caviar, there is neither God nor Tsar"). The two musicians also collaborated with the Moscow-based Nayekhovichi on the punk klezmer album "Klezmer is Dead" (Nayekhovichi and Kahn 2010).

Russian writers and singers have taught their American colleagues the extent to which popular Yiddish culture took its own course of development in the Soviet Union, where religion was not an option. By the 1980s, Yiddish songs were becoming important hallmarks of Soviet Jewish identity (Shternshis 2006: 106–42). A more recent fascination with Yiddish, internationally, has led to new efforts by American and East European artists to compare notes on the Jewish experience. Twentieth-century American Jews were apt to view Eastern Europe as purely an "old country," bereft of Jewish culture if not of Jews, a generalization that, if largely true in the case of religion and Zionism, was not necessarily true of Yiddish. International Yiddish and klezmer programs, which now exist in major East European centers including Warsaw, Krakow, and St. Petersburg, help to facilitate transnational conversation. Most of these incorporate Yiddish language classes into the program, and, increasingly, many music and Yiddish teachers are themselves East Europeans.

The collaborative nature of the klezmer scene has paved the way for integrating not only Eastern and Western Jewish musicians, but also Yiddish with other North American subcultures. DJ Socalled has brought Yiddish and contemporary hip-hop together. He has performed and recorded with the acclaimed klezmer clarinetist David Krakauer, and frequently mixes samples from old Yiddish hits with current, non-Jewish, rap stars. The effect is a subtle combination of Jewish nostalgia with a sharp critique of precisely this nostalgia. Dolgin is a skilled and creative sampler. His rhythms are extremely tight, and the result, a mélange of old Yiddish songs and rap, is postmodern collage at its best. "(Rock the) Belz" mixes the classic Yiddish song "Belz, Mayn Shtetele Belz," performed by Theodore Bikel, with the English of Socalled ("We were spoiled upper-middle class, living the life of ease/Yo worse-case scenario, we were skinnin' our knees") and the French of the Congolese Canadian rapper Sans Pression, who made his name with Creole rap songs. Nostalgia for the shtetl is juxtaposed with nostalgia for a comfortable North American childhood, and both are dwarfed by the threatened lives of immigrants from places of current instability. Sans Pression mocks nostalgia with his own narrative: "Quand j'étais jeune je regardais les génocides à la télé/Je n'ai jamais oublié d'où je viens/Ex-Zaire, Congo/Je me souviens/J'ai souvent revé d'y aller" (When I was young I saw genocides on TV/ I never forgot where I came from/Ex-Zaire, Congo/I remember/I often dreamed of going there) ("(Rock the) Belz", Socalled 2007).

Dolgin, by building as many cross-cultural bridges as possible, makes explicit the place for Yiddish culture in a multiethnic community, infusing Jewish music with new meaning and validating the eclectic forms of music he samples. Nevertheless, this kind of continued rejuvenation of Yiddish-themed cultural products in English depends on actual Yiddish speakers. There would not be experimentation with Yiddish in literature or music if there were not communities of Jews who still spoke the language, wrote in the language, learned and taught

the language. A small group of North American Yiddish speakers publish in the language for a secular Jewish readership (see, for example, Rosenfarb 2000; Schaechter-Gottesman 2002; Harshav 1948; Kerler 2006; Menkes 1996; Berger 2010). *Yugntruf* (The call to youth), a group founded by David Roskies and Gavi Trunk in the 1960s, has continued to nurture young Yiddish speakers and learners in search of a community with programs like *Yiddishvokh* (Yiddish week), a yearly family camp, for Yiddish speakers of all ages. The Boston-based radio show, *Dos Yidishe Kol*, broadcasts news stories and documentaries in Yiddish. In these forums, Yiddish is not a nostalgic link to the past, but an active language, and its members actively seek ways to adapt the Yiddish language to contemporary America. Specialized Yiddish dictionaries, like Mordkhe Schaechter's *Pregnancy, Childbirth, and Early Childhood* and *Plant-names in Yiddish*, help Yiddish-speaking households incorporate updated vocabulary into their daily lives (Schaechter 1991; Schaechter 2005). Translations of popular English children's books into Yiddish provide an updated means for Yiddish literacy from a young age (Rey 2005; Dr. Seuss 2003; Dr. Seuss 2007; Milne 2000).

Yiddish blogs on a variety of topics reach readers interested in transcending their community and demographic (Jochnowitz n.d.; Berger n.d.; Starik 2006). Yiddish-speaking actors, many having left religious families, have become involved in films that combine Yiddish with English and often center on the difficult divide between the religious and the secular communities. These include Adam Vardy's *Mendy, A Question of Faith,* the story of a young Hasid who leaves the fold and falls in love with a Jamaican dancer, Eve Annenberg's *Romeo and Juliet in Yiddish*, a romance across Hasidic groups in Brooklyn, and Pearl Gluck's *Divan*, a documentary that follows the director to Hungary in search of a family heirloom (Vardy 2003; Annenberg 2010; Gluck 2003). Members of a strictly observant community in Monsey, NY produced the feature-length murder-mystery in Yiddish *A Gesheft* (Kirsh 2005). For these artists, Yiddish is not a language of the old country, or of an idealized Yiddishland, but of the present.

There is indeed hope that the language itself will live on, not only within insular communities, but also among those who choose to learn Yiddish. The fact that the idea of Yiddish continues to have meaning for non-Yiddish speakers attests to its continued importance in a post-vernacular North American Jewish community. The Yiddish language has the strange property of representing any number of diverse cultural or political persuasions, from culturally conservative religious communities to those who rebel against either the religion of Biblical Hebrew or the Zionism of Modern Hebrew. Yiddish, as an element of Jewishness that is separate from religion, the State of Israel, and genetics, can accommodate shifting paradigms in the definition of Jewish identity. Visions of an imagined "Yiddishland" confront conceptions of a language that needs a nation-state with the possibility of a culture that thrives in exile. Fiction that creates a connection between a Yiddish-speaking past and an English-speaking present suggests that the memories that bind a culture need not belong to a gene pool, or even to religious ritual, but can be born of anecdotes and accidents. Finally, Yiddish, bearing the imprint of both exile and nostalgia, can provide a tool for empathizing with other American subcultures. Through these popular uses of the language, Yiddish, once a lingua franca among East European Jews, has been re-globalized.

Notes

1 David Roskies has applied Nora's concept of a *lieu de mémoire* in his excellent study of East European Jewish memory (Roskies 1999).
2 For good discussions of contemporary Russian–American–Jewish fiction, see (Furman 2011) and Adrian Wanner (Wanner 2011).

3 Translated, from the Yiddish, by Jordan Finkin (Glatshteyn 1961: 105; cited in Finkin 2010: 75).

4 Janet Hadda defends Chabon against his attackers, suggesting that Yiddishists, who are engaged in collective mourning for the death of the language, may still be in a stage of denial. Hadda has discussed this Mendele conversation in some detail (Hadda 1999: 94).

5 Anna Ronell has called *Mazel* a "saga of three generations of Jewish women … [that] parallels an intriguing rise of interest in the Eastern European genealogy of individual families and entire shtetlach (communities) and a variety of topics connected to self-discovery and seeking out one's roots" (Ronell 2007: 153).

6 Pete Hamill's best-selling *Snow in August* (1997), which was made into a film in 2001, is similarly centered on mysticism, and on a cross-generational relationship, but lacks the irony and ridiculousness of Stern's novel (Hamill 1997: 104).

Essential reading

Harshav, B. (2007) *The Polyphony of Jewish Culture*, Stanford: Stanford University Press. This collection of essays demonstrates the multilingualism, and multitude of voices, that make up modern Jewish culture.

Katz, D. (2004) *Words on Fire: The Unfinished Story of Yiddish*, New York: Basic Books. Tracing Yiddish from its origins in Hebrew and Aramaic to the present, Dovid Katz shows that the language not only flaunts a rich cultural past, but that it enjoys a flourishing present among its largely Hassidic contemporary speakers.

Kuznitz, C. E. (2002) "Yiddish Studies." In M. Goodman, J. Cohen, and D. J. Sorkin, eds. *The Oxford Handbook of Jewish Studies*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, pp. 541–71. In this comprehensive article about the state of Yiddish studies, Kuznitz innovatively relates the term "postvernacular" to Yiddish, paving the way for a number of works that would come later.

Roskies, D. G. (1999) *The Jewish Search for a Usable Past*, Bloomington: Indiana University Press. Borrowing the term *lieu de mémoire* from Pierre Nora, Roskies discusses the importance of memory sites, including the symbolic landscape of East European shtetls, to the modern Jewish experience.

Shandler, J. (2006) *Adventures in Yiddishland: Postvernacular Language & Culture*, Berkeley: University of California Press. Shandler explores the changes Yiddish has undergone since World War II, from a vernacular language to a symbol associated, in various ways, with Jewish identity.

Wirth-Nesher, H. (2008) *Call It English: The Languages of Jewish American Literature*, Princeton: Princeton University Press. Through an analysis focusing on syntax, accent, and translation in English language literature, this book demonstrates the multilingualism that informs American Jewish literary texts.

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21

YIDDISH AND MULTILINGUAL URBAN SPACE IN MONTREAL

Sherry Simon

Montreal's cultural landscape long had the look of a standoff: the more powerful English in the west, the more numerous French in the east, and immigrants in a narrow buffer zone between them. From the 1880s until the 1950s, this middle ground was largely occupied by Yiddish-speaking Jews.

Though the power of these boundaries has diminished since the 1950s, the memory of these divisions has made Montreal a city where translation carries strong social and historical resonance. Crossing from one zone of the city to another still means changing languages, entering new time zones, and engaging with the legacy of competing identities. And so, to follow the pathways of Yiddish through the streets and neighborhoods of the triangulated city is to find a rich point of entry into the history of Jewish Montreal.

Leonard Cohen, Montreal's most celebrated Jewish writer, was irritated by the tensions of Montreal's conflictual traditions. The dissonant clamour of the city became a burden to Cohen—who, like his character Breavman was relieved to leave behind Montreal's "ugly magnificence" (Cohen 1963: 128) and to turn his back on its "absurd" and "vicious" "cross-fertilization" (Cohen 1963: 113). This was a city whose differences were aggressive and intrusive, reminders of past wars which would not go away. " … In Montreal there is no present tense, there is only the past claiming victories" (Cohen 1963: 125).

By contrast, the poet and novelist A. M. Klein, a generation earlier, experienced his home city Montreal in resonance with the other great cities of historical Jewish culture, Prague, Amsterdam, Cordova, Venice, reflecting back onto Montreal their richly polyglot worlds. Klein's modernism takes shape within the multiple languages of his home city, recalling the experience of canonical Jewish writers who were also shaped by the divisions of their cities, like Kafka in German–Czech Prague (Spector 2000). Not only is the city a site of competing languages, it is a space that recedes infinitely into the past, a layered construction of new and old, relics and innovations, a palimpsest of memory and a polyphonic display of sound.

Whether reacting against or in favour, the Jewish community of Montreal has been shaped by the competing identities and languages of the city.[1] Many commentators have explained the strength of Montreal Jewish institutions by the markedly parochial character of the city, and the resulting need for each community to develop its own resources. The tack I will take is somewhat different. I would like to show how Montreal's strong language consciousness has allowed for a singular valorization of Yiddish as a vehicle of Jewish experience. The story of translation from Yiddish through successive embeddings of language into city space offers an unusual

narrative of connections across communities. Few cities permit mappings across such stark lines of spatial and linguistic division; few North American cities have experienced the kind of language make-over which Montreal underwent during the second half of the twentieth century. I will follow the travels of Yiddish across the city, as it leaves the central zone of immigrant experience and becomes folded into the Anglicized Jewish community but also, in an unsuspected deviation, moves into the francophone community as well. The following pages will explore three directions of translation: translations into Yiddish, from Yiddish into English, and from both English and Yiddish into French.[2]

Yiddish as it was

Upon her arrival in Montreal in 1950, the poet and novelist Chava Rosenfarb found a vigorous Yiddish social life. Without having to learn English, she could remain in contact with world and Canadian news events through the Yiddish-language daily, the *Keneder Adler*. There was an active writers' union, a number of literary salons, "constant public lectures on literary topics" and "visits by the great Yiddish writers from abroad" (Anctil et al. 2007: 11). The activities of this busy world were largely confined to an area around Saint Lawrence Boulevard. The map of Yiddish Montreal that Rebecca Margolis features in *Jewish Roots, Canadian Soil* shows the offices of the *Keneder Adler*, Hershman's Jewish Library and Reading Room, the Jewish Public Library, the Workmen's Circle, the home of Ida Maza, Jewish People's School, Peretz School, Monument National, and the Baron de Hirsch Building all occupying sites along or close to St. Lawrence Boulevard—the community moving northwards as it leaves the port area to move into more comfortable neighbourhoods (Margolis 2011a).

Yiddish-language culture in Montreal flourished for some fifty years, within a network of political, philanthropical, and social institutions. Montreal fostered an influential Yiddish-language press, an important network of secular Jewish schools, a vibrant theatre scene (Larrue 1996), a strong school of visual artists (Trépanier 2008), and a rich community of writers (Margolis 2011a). Though the Montreal Yiddish-language community was not as important as that of New York, it emerged as a major world centre of Yiddish education (Margolis 2011a: 122), and was the metropolis of Canadian Jewish life. Rosenfarb describes the closeness of the community, and in particular her relationship with the best-known Yiddish poet J. I. Segal:

> When I arrived in Canada in 1950, Segal was at the peak of his literary powers. I lived in what was then called, "a double parlour", as the boarder of a refugee family who had come to Canada shortly before me. The apartment was located on the corner of Park Avenue, which was the main promenade for us newcomers. There I would often run into Segal, his prematurely gray head raised high, his eyes staring into the distance through his glasses, his mind preoccupied with some new poem … Sometimes I would meet him on the Mountain, where, in some literary dispute with the always cool and composed Melekh Ravitch, Segal would hotly defend his positions … Or I would encounter him arguing with Rokhl Korn, insistently trying to convince her that her most recent poem was much more profound than she had intended it to be. Sometimes I met him at the home of Ida Maza, who wrote the most beautiful children's poetry … Or I would see him at the Jewish Public Library, where, given his position as president of the Yiddish Writers' Union, he would be greeting a distinguished visitor, like Leivik, or Opatoshu, or Manger before reading a thoughtful essay about their works.

> (Rosenfarb in Anctil et al. 2007: 14)

A rich crop of memoirs and essays emphasize the intensity of the literary life that sustained the Yiddish community from the 1930s to the 1950s, among them David Roskies' *Yiddishlands* (Roskies 2008) and Eva Raby's "Memories of Yiddish Montreal" in which Raby vividly describes her own mother's salon, and the many stars of Yiddish culture who passed through (Raby 2007). Miriam Waddington described the warmth and generosity of the salonnière Ida Maza (Waddington 1989).

The paintings of Jack Beder also convey a rich sense of Yiddish Montreal. Like fellow painters Sam Borenstein and Alexander Berkovitch, Beder was a product of Yiddish Montreal. The warm colours of his Montreal street scenes, the salmon-red bricks and glistening rainy streets, cast the city in an affectionate light. One of his paintings is, unusually, an indoor café scene, painted in 1935 and called "And by night they resume their existences." Groups of men and women crowd around a table, lean into each other, in intense conversation. These could well have been the Yiddish-speaking poets who worked at mundane jobs all day—but at night woke to their artistic and political lives.

Like many of the landmarks and gathering places of Yiddish Montreal, the café has disappeared. Not only the cafés but the religious buildings which once marked the area have been demolished or made over—turned into condos, or yoga centres or apartment buildings. And so has the soundscape, the particular music of language, evoked by the painting. By the 1950s and 1960s, the Jewish community of Montreal was engaged in a double translation. Leaving the "old neighbourhoods" around St. Lawrence Boulevard, the traditional immigrant corridor, for the newer districts of Snowdon and Côte St. Luc in western parts of the city, the community was also enthusiastically turning towards English as its language of expression. There was little regret for either the run-down cold-water flats they were leaving behind or for the language, Yiddish, which had dominated its streets. Nostalgia would come later. For many, both the place and the language were associated with painful memories of poverty and of refuge from the war.

As the upwardly mobile Jewish population moved westwards, a new Jewish population took their place in the streets of the old neighbourhood. These were largely Chassidic survivors of the Holocaust arriving only after 1948 (Bauer 2011: 218), often having transited through Paris. They moved into the flats that had been vacated by the earlier arrivals, but unlike the secular or less observant Jews they did not move on. They continue to live in concentrated groups around their small synagogues, and are particularly numerous on several streets of the old Jewish neighbourhood (their total population estimated at 18,500 in 2010; Bauer 2011: 221).

The presence of this new population explains why it is still possible to hear Yiddish, often mixed with English, on the streets of the "old" Jewish neighbourhood of Montreal.[3] But this Yiddish is the vehicle of an entirely different cultural world from that used by the secular and often left-leaning Jews who immigrated to Montreal in the late nineteenth or early twentieth century with the great waves of immigration from Eastern Europe. It is a language resolutely closed to the progressive ideologies that were such an important part of Yiddish life before the war.

Translation

The move towards the more comfortable neighbourhoods of Montreal's west end confirmed the passage of Montreal Jewish life into English. This physical translation of the Jewish population was accompanied by other kinds of translations which would ensure the transmission of Yiddish-language writing. All cities are multilingual, but in a city where two strong identities are in competition, mediation plays a special role. Languages that share the same terrain rarely participate in a peaceful and egalitarian conversation. Movement across languages is marked by the special intensity that

comes from a shared history, a common territory and a situation of contending rights. Translations, then, are rarely neutral events in a placid field of encounter; rather they are events which sustain or transform social and literary interrelations; they are vehicles of conflict and mistrust as well as of creative engagement.

The spaces of the city offer a privileged template for studying these displacements. For much of its past, Montreal was a city that resisted translation. Relations between its constituent languages were distant or fraught. Early moments of exchange were respectful gestures acknowledging the presence of the other—but not inviting further interaction. The rigid geometry that character-ized Montreal simplified into a polarized grid during the 1960s, with the events of the Quiet Revolution (which created the modern Quebec state, revalorized the French language and began a radical movement of secularization), the violence of the FLQ crisis in 1970 (the kid-napping of a British consular official and subsequent murder of a Québécois politician, which involved the invocation of the War Measures Act and wholesale arrests of left-wing intellectuals) and then the election of the nationalist Parti québécois in 1976. This election provoked a sig-nificant exodus of the anglophone and Jewish population. By the end of the 1980s a new Montreal of increasingly relaxed social interactions began to emerge as the francophone eco-nomic, political and linguistic "reconquest" of the city seemed near to completion (Levine 1990). The end of the economic depression of the 1980s and the defeat of the 1995 referendum on political sovereignty for Quebec created the conditions for new prosperity, and the city has been building, renovating and condo-izing with belated frenzy. These changes and increasingly diverse waves of immigration have moved Montreal into the global realities of the twenty-first century.

Montreal today is a mixed, cosmopolitan city with French as the matrix of its cultural life. Still, the image of the fragmented city continues to dominate and translation carries special revelatory powers as a vector of memory in urban space. Indeed, to live in Montreal is to daily experience the irregular shape of translation, its gains and losses, its differing cultural objectives and meanings. Though Yiddish has disappeared as a language of artistic creation, it continues to act in the present, through the many kinds of translations that it inspires.

Yiddish has become a language with a special relationship to translation—and this relationship above all expresses a tragic condemnation. "Of what other language can it be said that it died a sudden and definitive death, in a given decade, on a given piece of soil?" asks Cynthia Ozick (1983). To translate from such a language is like "moving from the kingdom of the dead to that of the living … Each word of this language, each line of poetry or each sentence that she tried to translate could have been pronounced seriously, playfully, lovingly or angrily by those whose mouths were now definitively silenced" (my translation, Robin 1996: 80).

Yet translation is also a form of survival—not only a retrospective mode of recuperation and salvaging, but also a forward looking activity of rediscovery. Transmission sets off new con-nections. There will always be those who insist that Yiddish is untranslatable. Yiddish was a language of "insiders", intimately linked to the life of a community—and therefore including references to beliefs, practices and knowledge known only to members of that community. It is also a richly expressive language, the product of a historical *mélange* of tongues and full of characteristic expressions. And—the most definitive reason of all—it is a language which has been severed from its roots.

While the linguistic aspects of Yiddish are in themselves a challenge (the elements from Hebrew having different connotations than the Germanic), it is the cultural status of Yiddish as a language at once non-Christian and pre-Holocaust that is most troublesome. For I. B. Singer, who has himself been considered a traitor to the cause of true Yiddish culture, the boundaries of Yiddish are the borders of Poland, Russia, and Rumania, and "temporally, the date of his (the

Yiddish writer's) departure for America" (quoted in Seidman 2006: 253). And so the Yiddish spoken in America was for Singer already a translated tongue, incapable of ensuring contact with the faraway origins of true Yiddish culture. "Translation from Yiddish is thus a particularly fraught cultural activity expressing itself both as betrayal and as redemption, as resistance and as assimilation" (Seidman 2006: 250).

The translatability of Yiddish is ensured, however, when translation is understood as a displacement, which inevitably brings about transformation. In moving from one cultural space to another, translations show that circulation is not a singular or empty space. Pathways of transmission carry meaning in themselves. This also means that translation cannot have exclusively positive connotations. Sometimes translation is simply a polite gesture of greeting, and serves only to reveal the chasms of distance that lie between texts, cultures or individuals.

Into Yiddish

Discussions of translation in relation to Yiddish are almost inevitably dominated by the movement *out of* Yiddish in the postwar period. But Montreal was the scene of two remarkable and significant translations *into* Yiddish which merit attention. These are Melekh Ravitch's translation of Kafka's *The Trial* into Yiddish and published in New York in 1965 (Figure 21.1), and the translation of Michel Tremblay's play *Les Belles-sœurs* into Yiddish, performed in 1992. Both speak eloquently of cultural forces at play in the city during their respective periods.
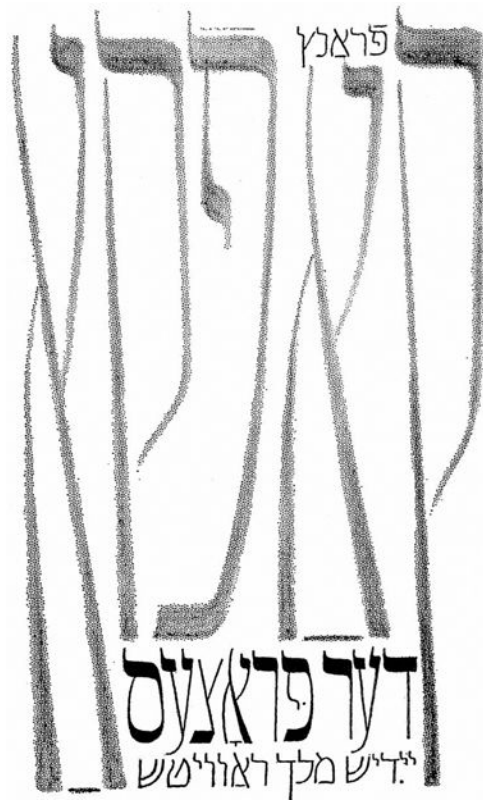
Figure 21.1 Cover for Melech Ravitch's Yiddish translation of *The Trial* by Franz Kafka.

It is important to recall the extent to which translations were a major element of Yiddish-language culture from the 1880s onward, feeding a "mass transnational Jewish readership hungry for access to a variety of knowledge that included world literature" (Margolis 2009: 184). The standard joke about translation into Yiddish has to do with the Yiddish version of Shakespeare's *Hamlet* whose title page declares that the Shakespeare play has been translated and "improved." In fact, what was improved was the Yiddish language itself, as translations into Yiddish enlarged the repertoire of the language and ennobled the vernacular. The Montreal Yiddish-language community, like its international counterparts, was actively engaged in translating into Yiddish, particularly between the two world wars. Yiddish daily newspapers fostered a sense of Jewish identity by translating works from the Jewish tradition, but also on politics, modern science, history, philosophy, literature and art. Literary journals translated poetry and in particular left-wing literary favourites, understood as contributing to a greater sense of solidarity with leftwing movements around the world (Margolis 2009). There was religious translation as well, and among the most important translators was Symcha Petrushka, a Polish-born Montreal scholar, once a prolific journalist in Warsaw, who produced his most significant works after his arrival in Canada on the eve of World War II (Margolis 2009: 183). Petrushka published a two-volume version of his own Jewish encyclopedia in Yiddish in Montreal in 1943 and a Yiddish version of a foundational text of Judaism, the Mishna (Margolis 2009: 188).

To translate into Yiddish after the Holocaust, however, took on a very different set of meanings. The translation of Kafka's *The Trial* by Melekh Ravitch (1893–1976) is both a landmark and an enigma. The book was published as *Die Prozess* in 1966 (Kafka 1966). Ravitch settled in Montreal in 1941 after leaving Poland and wandering the world for some years. In Montreal he became a mainstay of the Yiddish cultural community, serving on the boards of its institutions and publishing four collections of verse, a two-volume autobiography *Dos Maysebukh fun mayn Lebn* ("The storybook of my life", 1962–64), and six volumes of an encyclopaedic work on Yiddish writers, *Mayn Leksikon* ("My lexicon", 1945–82). His efforts helped to turn Montreal into one of the major centres of Yiddish literary activity in the 1940s.

Ravitch's motivation for undertaking the translation may have been autobiographical. He had written on Kafka as a journalist, and had met Kafka's widow, Dora Diamant (Diamant 2003: 148–49). The startling cover of the translation, dominated by Kafka's name in Hebrew (Yiddish) characters, would surely have pleased Kafka himself—who nourished a fascination for Yiddish. Ravitch's version makes abundant use of oral expressions which are more informal than the German equivalents, and conveys a lighter and more comic feeling (Bruce 1994). The book was published with humorous illustrations by Ravitch's son, Yosl Bergner, an Israeli artist. And so the move to Yiddish clearly marked a difference in tone from the German classic. Why this translation in 1965? This was a work that was literally *à contre courant*, against the spirit of the times, an astonishing statement of defiance, and a monument to the spirit of the language. Yiddish by the 1960s was a language with fewer and fewer readers. To translate a masterpiece of German-language literature into Yiddish after the Holocaust was to assert the value of Yiddish despite its diminished population of speakers. The sources of Yiddish culture in the European heartlands had been irrevocably cut off; the Yiddish speakers of North America were assimilating rapidly to English. The goal of the translation would have been less to communicate the content of a work already available to most readers than to affirm the intrinsic value of Yiddish. Ravitch's translation speaks to the forces at work in North America by defying them.

Like Ravitch's translation of Kafka, the Yiddish version of *Les Belles-sœurs* had an impact that was largely symbolic. But this time, the symbolism of the translational gesture had immense resonance in the wider society. Michel Tremblay's classic play, *Les Belles-sœurs*, originally written in the urban slang of Montreal, *joual*, was performed in Yiddish in 1992. *Di Shvegerins* was

an exceptionally effective translation of a play across divides of space and language (see Margolis forthcoming). A product of Montreal's east end, working-class Catholic milieu, still the most popular of Tremblay's plays (he is an astonishingly prolific writer, with about sixty titles—plays and novels—in a career which has now spanned fifty years), *Les Belles-sœurs* was also the first to deploy *joual* on a theatre stage (Tremblay 2007). The controversies provoked by the first performances of the play (in 1968) were soon after replaced by adoration, and Tremblay continues to speak directly to the hearts of his ever-faithful audience. The play is the first in a cycle of plays in which Tremblay shows the bitter divisions within families, here presented through the monologues of women who express their resentment, frustration and petty rivalries. The play is set around a comic situation: housewife Germaine Lauzon has invited her friends and family to help her stick the million Pinky stamps she has won into the required booklets. As the play goes on, the characters progressively steal packages of stamps for themselves, and Germaine comes to realize that her dreams will never be fulfilled. The play ends in a mix of burlesque and tragedy as the stamp books are thrown into the air and a rainfall of stamps covers the stage.

During the 1970s and 1980s, Tremblay refused to have his plays translated into English in Montreal. He did allow translations into English elsewhere, and Tremblay's plays have been translated into numerous languages worldwide. Translation into Yiddish, however, was part of a very different cultural enterprise, and Tremblay was an enthusiastic promoter of the effort. To translate *joual* into Yiddish made a great deal of sense—just as translating *joual* into Scots turned out to be an overwhelming success.

And so through this performance *Les Belles-sœurs* travelled across the city, from east to west, from the theatres of east-end rue Saint-Denis to the Snowdon location of the theatre of the Saidye Bronfman Centre for the Arts. This translation can be said to have initiated a new era in relations between the francophone and Jewish communities, as two similarly marginalized tongues came together in the tragi-comic performance of ordinary women expressing their anguish, their sorrow, their envy and nastiness.[4] Presented in 1992 to audiences made up of both Yiddish and non-Yiddish speakers, the play was a theatrical success. At the same time it generated a great deal of media attention, as the first play to be translated from Quebec French into Yiddish. The surprising conjunction of the two language-realities was very evocative, and had an estranging effect. While the two languages had coexisted on certain streets of Montreal in the past, there had been little conversation between them. The translation into a now almost-dead language paradoxically confirmed that no such conversation would ever take place. The translation into Yiddish also expressed the tensions and the desires of a still difficult moment in Montreal's history (three years before the second referendum on the independence of Quebec in 1995, which would be narrowly defeated), yet announcing the new connections between Yiddish and French across Montreal urban space which were to come.

Transmigration: Klein and Cohen

With the emptying of its creative forces as a result of the Holocaust, Yiddish gradually ceased to be a language which received translations. From the 1940s onward, the flow of language most naturally occurred from Yiddish into English. If translation into Yiddish was sustained by optimism and the desire to expand the range of the Yiddish language, translation out of Yiddish was driven by necessity, by the steady anglicization of the Jewish population in Montreal and—after the arrival of Holocaust survivors around 1950—the impossibility of any renewal of Yiddish culture from what had been the source, Central Europe.

Translation into English of the classic works of poetry by Montreal's Melekh Ravitch, J. I. Segal and Rochl Korn were undertaken in steady increments over the years—in single publications or

more frequently in anthologies. But there is another kind of translation which was widely practiced in Montreal, and which we might call *transmigration*. This was the self-translation of Yiddish-language sources into English by writers who had Yiddish-language childhoods and had become English-speaking writers. A. M. Klein, Irving Layton, Mordecai Richler, and to a lesser extent Leonard Cohen—these writers turned Montreal's Yiddish past into an important body of English-language works.

Montreal's A. M. Klein (1909–72) is widely recognized as the first Canadian writer to turn Jewish experience into English. As a firm believer in the richness of diasporic culture and its polyglot histories, Klein made his work an intersection of languages and cultural histories. Klein was a major English-language poet and novelist, and an important public figure in the Montreal Jewish community (Ravvin and Simon 2011). He was the hinge between the Yiddish-speaking world of his parents and the world of Anglo-Canadian modernism. Though he wrote in English, Klein maintained his interest in Yiddish and the strong literary and folkloric traditions it represented (Margolis 2011b). As a critic and reviewer, Klein commented on countless translations from and into Yiddish and his own *Collected Poems* include a wide range of translations—principally from Hebrew and Yiddish (Klein 1987: Klein et al. 1982). But Yiddish was also a ferment for his own writing. Klein's works are now appearing in annotated editions, and their notes show the extent to which so many of Klein's expressions are in fact translations from Hebrew and from Yiddish. The critical apparatus helps us to see the extent to which his best-known work, the novel *The Second Scroll*, is an architectonics of language, where references are multiplied vertically as the story unfolds across time and space. Notes inform us that expressions like "May he dwell in a bright Eden", or "renegade" to refer to apostates, are from the Yiddish. He remained connected with all the important community figures and writers of the Yiddish community, especially J. I. Segal, and even in the last years of his creative life translated a musical comedy, *Worse Visitors We Shouldn't Have*, based on the comic adventures of the Yiddish folk character Hershel of Ostropol (Simon 2006).

There is a link between Klein as a Montreal writer and his vocation as a translator of Yiddish. Klein wrote about Montreal, and his poetry is often lively with the colours and landscapes of the city. He writes affectionately of his "fabled city" and especially of Mount Royal, the mountain park. And his poems on Montreal (collected in *The Rocking Chair*) are attentive to the multilingual character of the city (Klein 1948). A. M. Klein had a keen sense of Montreal as a space of mediation, and understood the links between his city and other great urban centres of Jewish culture throughout history, cities whose imaginative worlds highlight particular moments of encounter, fusion and mixture (Ravvin and Simon 2011). His poetry, essays and translations combine his Yiddish immigrant roots, his Talmudic learning, and the whole range of references encompassed by the English-language world he adopted. Using arcane words, exploiting etymologies and inventing neologisms, Klein brought the Jewish tradition into dialogue with international modernism. This awareness is powerfully portrayed in "Montreal", perhaps his most famous poem, in which he uses an invented vocabulary to describe the city:

> Grand port of navigations multiple
> The lexicons uncargo'd at your quays,
> Sonnant though strange to me; but chiefest, I,
> Auditor of your music, cherish the
> Joined double-melodied vocabulaire
> Where English vocable and roll Ecossic,
> Mollified by the parle of French
> Bilinguefact your air!
>
> (Klein, 1990 II: 621)

The poem not only reports on the multiple voices of the city; it creates an idiom that calls up the multilingual city, with words like "sonnant" or "parle" which are imported from French. Klein's novel *The Second Scroll* similarly uses borrowings from Hebrew and Yiddish. In his writing we find questions that continue to act in the present: how do cultural identities meet and intermix; how does language carry memory and history?

Klein's modernism takes shape within the multiple languages of his home city, just as Kafka shaped his modernism against German–Czech Prague and Svevo his modernism against German–Italian Trieste. These are writers who are at home in a space of competing idioms, in a place of permanent dislocation. Across continents and centuries, Montreal shares the sensibility of these other cities—because it has inherited the sense of fragility and dissonance that comes out of competing languages, and competing national affiliations. It seems especially relevant, then, that Klein lived all his life in the "old" neighbourhood, in what is today again known as Mile-End, inscribing his vocation as a translator into the fabric of his city, fully inhabiting the "middle ground" of mediation. His goal was to imbue the present with the forms and styles of the past, to express a culture traversed by many languages and histories.

The meaning of the "middle ground" has been developed one step further as Klein has been recently discovered by francophone translators and critics. The translation of Klein's work into French and the interest in his writing by French-speaking literary critics point Klein in new directions. The translations show Klein's writing, weighted with Jewish tradition, to be strikingly mobile. A half-century after his death, Klein is enjoying a new readership in a second language of translation. Klein's passage into French speaks both of the enduring qualities of his work and of the new moment in Quebec cultural history which welcomes it. Poet Chantal Ringuet has translated Klein's emblematic poem "The Mountain" into alternating stanzas of French and Yiddish, re-embedding Klein into the polyglot city of his childhood (Ringuet 2011: Camlot 2011).

Leonard Cohen's world was also a product of Montreal's multiple modernities, of their points of convergence and their flashpoints of conflict. His early writing is suffused with the dark heritage of the Holocaust, and he was strongly influenced by poets Irving Layton and A. M. Klein. Yiddish figures only in a minor role in Cohen's imaginative world. Cohen's family was one of the first Jewish families to move "Uptown", from the old neighbourhoods and therefore to leave the Yiddish-speaking world behind. But they remained in close contact with Hebrew and Yiddish culture through Cohen's maternal grandfather who was a scholar and grammarian (Nadel 1996: 5).

Cohen's take on the nationalism of francophone Montreal during the 1960s reflects the frictions of the divided city in which he grew up. His imagination was shaped by the conflict of histories that meet in the city and the continuing ideological battle between English and French. He would have been aware of the dissonant clamour of the city, and its many spaces of isolation. For an English-language Jewish Montrealer, the voyage across town led to foreign, even hostile territory. And for Cohen, the definition of the Montrealer as a "crossbreed" between English, French and Jewish (Cohen 1963: 146) was not necessarily a source of pride. In Cohen's 1963 novel *The Favourite Game*, Lawrence Breavman is a teenager who, like Cohen himself, grew up in the wealthy English-speaking neighbourhood of Westmount. One Saturday night Breavman and his buddy Krantz travel downtown for an escapade in a dance hall where they find themselves in a crowd of francophones. In a scene which will be repeated in slightly different form in *Beautiful Losers* (1966) the boys suddenly hear "a noise like a wail of national mourning" and, as a brawl begins, "see the mass of dancers change to a mass of fighters" (Cohen 1966: 50). In the later novel, the event is a nationalist demonstration in a park, but the protagonist once again finds himself in the middle of a crowd that confuses dancing, fighting, politics and sex. This time the sexual excitement of mingled bodies leads him to join in the

chanting of anti-English slogans, even though he knows that the anti-colonialist rhetoric of "Our turn!" is aimed at people like himself.

Cohen left Montreal to live in Europe, but when he returned to the city again after years abroad, he chose to settle in the central zone of Montreal, near the legendary dividing line, St. Lawrence Boulevard. One of his neighbours was good friend, Quebec poet and playwright Michel Garneau. The fact that it was Garneau who has become the translator of Cohen's poetry into French says much of the changes that had occurred between the 1950s and the 1990s in Montreal's cultural geography. Garneau is known for his brilliant translations of Shakespeare into his own personal version of Quebec French, a partly archaic, partly invented language that has become a classic of Quebec theatre (Shakespeare 1978: Shakespeare 1989a: Shakespeare 1989b). These translations were part of a wave of writings, in all genres, that were vehicles of francophone Quebec's new linguistic confidence. When Cohen realized that the French (France) translation of *Stranger Music* was not satisfactory, he asked Garneau if he would consider taking it on. Garneau accepted, as a gesture of friendship, and then translated the *Book of Longing* as well (Cohen 1993: Cohen 2006). These translations are a new turn in Cohen's relationship with Montreal. Garneau's French versions enable Cohen to be at home in the francophone city, which is now increasingly a mixed and cosmopolitan space (Cohen 2000). As Garneau's Shakespeare versions represented a remarkable moment in the history of cultural renewal in Montreal, so his translations of Cohen speak of a new kind of exchange—transactions that radiate outwards from the city's contact zones, linkages that reflect the sensibility of an increasingly hybrid city. Just as Cohen's work was fashioned out of the divided landscape, so Montreal continues to reinvent itself out of the traces of its past—which are appropriated, translated, fused, into new patterns. And so, as for Klein and Cohen, translations into French of Mordecai Richler have become increasingly familiar and popular elements of francophone Montreal culture.

Into French

A new twist in the story of Yiddish translation comes with rerouting through the city into French. Beginning in the 1980s, the Yiddish heritage of Montreal began to be appropriated into the new intellectual topography of the city. This movement was largely due to one translator, Pierre Anctil, who has brought into French some fifteen volumes of Yiddish. This is a deviation from traditional lines of transmission, a deviation that points to exciting developments in the life of the city. It is a symptom of the more general reconfigurations of identities occurring in Montreal.

It is rare that a translation project is as laden with historical significance as this one. Yiddish was the language of the Jewish immigrants of the early twentieth century. The dominant language of the city was English, and for the first decades of the century there was little significant cultural contact between Jews and French Canadians. Though French was the language of the majority in Montreal, its weaker cultural status in relation to English made it, in the context, a minor tongue. The lateral transfer from Yiddish to Quebec French was literally un-thought, unthinkable.

Anctil joins the company of a number of non-Jewish Québécois intellectuals who have carried out foundational research on Jewish topics. These include Jean-Marc Larrue (for Yiddish theatre), Esther Trépanier (for the visual arts) and Pierre Nepveu (for his work in particular on Klein) (Larrue 1996: Trépanier 2008: Nepveu 2007). Time has altered the distances between cultures. And what seems untranslatable, opaque or excessively culture-laden at one moment may be welcomed at another. Translations are time-bound interventions, undertaken in function of current interests and sensitivities. The move from Yiddish to French reinforced contact

between two languages whose relations had been minimal. But the translations also confirmed another change. They signalled a shift of intellectual territory. To write about Jewish Montreal in French has made possible the convergence between Jewish and French–Canadian social realities and opened a new space of discussion and debate within the Quebec social sciences and the arts. This means that the history of Yiddish in Montreal is now a field of investigation for francophone researchers, no longer falling under the exclusive purview of anglophone scholars. It means that there is a stronger sense of diversity within the French language, as it integrates and encompasses a broader range of cultural identities. These translations are a spectacular illustration of the way translations can act upon the present, their impact defined less by their stylistic innovations than by their unusually powerful social and historical implications. In Montreal, this impact is literally written onto the civic spaces of the city, opening new terrains of interaction. Unlike the translation of Tremblay's *Les Belles-soeurs* into Yiddish, this is not a one-time symbolic gesture but a long-term scholarly enterprise which is profoundly altering the perception of Montreal history.

Pierre Anctil's translations of Yiddish, along with his commentaries on Jewish life in Montreal, fill several bookshelves (Anctil 2002: Anctil 2010). The list of authors translated includes Sholem Shtern, Hershl Novak, Simon Belkin, Israel Medres, Haim-Leib Fuks, and the poet J. I. Segal. Anctil is a historian and anthropologist. He turned to Yiddish and to translation in an effort to better understand the culture he was studying—and in particular to avoid having to remain confined to the only question that seemed to arise in discussions of the Jewish presence in Quebec: anti-Semitism. Having access to Yiddish opened up a "hidden continent" of Yiddish-language culture that had thrived for decades in Montreal, and which became invisible once Jewish culture was entirely absorbed into the English language.

There is another important strategic reason for Anctil's decision. Since the 1960s, the tensions between English and French have been the overarching backdrop to political and cultural life in Montreal. Polarization is periodically revived with moments of concern for the future of French in the city. By contrast, little of this politicized antagonism spills over onto third languages. By bringing into new prominence a neglected chapter of Montreal's past, and by focusing on the history of Montreal's Jewish community—in Yiddish—before it became fully identified with the English-speaking population of Quebec, Anctil has created a new space for Jewish studies in the francophone world.

Memory rebooted

Montreal. A summer afternoon in the park in June 2009. A popular Haitian performer, Danielle Guillaume, is performing for an enthusiastic audience—and she is singing in Yiddish. The occasion is the Zumerfest, a day of entertainment for the community in the park across the street from the Segal Centre. The event is part of the 2009 International Yiddish theatre festival, the first ever festival to bring together Yiddish theatre companies from Poland, Rumania, Israel, Austria, Australia, France and the USA. Later there will be a Filipino choir who will also sing in Yiddish, and later still the rap-klezmer sounds of Josh Dolgin (known as So-Called).

The festival was celebrating the 50th anniversary of the founding of the Dora Wasserman Yiddish theatre company, created first as a children's theatre company in Montreal in 1959. A survivor of the Holocaust, Wasserman arrived in Montreal in 1950. She had studied at the Yiddish State theatre in Moscow, and in Montreal founded a company that performed countless plays of the classic Yiddish repertoire, continuing a tradition of theatre that had flourished in Montreal since the beginning of the century (Margolis 2011: 111). After Dora Wasserman's death, her daughter Bryna Wasserman became the driving force behind Yiddish theatre in

Montreal. She was the inspiration for the international gathering—which was repeated in the spring of 2011.

The Yiddish songs of the Haitian singer and the Filipino choir were appealing gestures, but hardly the sign of any real engagement by outside communities with the Yiddish language. Nonetheless the crossovers initiated by the festival were significant. They acknowledge the reality of a changed city, where the once English-speaking neighbourhoods like Snowdon and Côte-des-Neiges have become the most cosmopolitan in the entire city. If the Segal Centre (formerly the Saidye Bronfman Centre, housed in an elegant modernist building designed by Phyllis Lambert) was once at the centre of a largely Jewish enclave, it is now in the heart of a richly diverse district—an area whose new populations of immigrants are replaying the early years of the Jewish community in Montreal (Figure 21.2). Both the International Festival and the Montreal Yiddish theatre have over the years worked to create ties with the various communities of Montreal, opening Yiddish to audiences other than the now mainly English-speaking Jewish public. A recent example was an evening organized in collaboration with a Montreal-Italian foundation.

This tradition of interaction, in particular with the francophone community of Montreal, highlights the enduring power of Yiddish in the cultural history of Montreal. Translatability, it turns out, has less to do with the technical problems of equivalence than with the desire to make connections. New narratives increase the points of contact between languages. Along the pathways that have been traced across the city, from the centre to the west end, and then back to the east in the new garb of French, Yiddish continues to act through the circuits of translation.

Figure 21.2 Simcha's grocery store was for long years a fixture on St. Lawrence Boulevard. Its overlay of languages evokes the instability of language relations in Montreal.

Notes

1 The story of the Montreal Jewish community must include the exodus of large numbers during the most tense years of Quebec nationalism and in particular following the victory of the Parti québécois in 1975.
2 While this paper emphasizes the symbolic role of Yiddish, it must not be forgotten that Montreal also has a significant population of Sephardi Jews (who arrived mainly in the 1960s) whose mother tongue is French and who do not share the history of Yiddish Montreal (see Cohen in Anctil and Robinson 2011).
3 The five most numerous groups of Chassidim in Montreal are Belz, Loubavitch, Satmar, Skver and Tash. Other groups are Bobov, Bretslav, Klausenberg, Munkacs and Viznitz. Both the Loubavitch and the Tash have left the old neighbourhoods, the Loubavitch for the west-end and Tash for a distant suburb (Bauer in Anctil and Robinson 2011: 219)
4 See Margolis (forthcoming).

Essential reading

Anctil, P., Ravvin, N. and Simon, S. (2007) *New Readings of Yiddish Montreal/ Traduire Le Montréal Yiddish/ Taytshn Un Ibertaytshn Yidish in Montreol*, Ottawa: University of Ottawa Press. An overview of varied translation practices which have ensured the survival of Yiddish in Montreal.
Margolis, R. (2011) *Jewish Roots, Canadian Soil. Yiddish in Montreal 1905–1945*, Montreal: McGill–Queen's University Press. The most recent and authoritative study of the educational and cultural life of Yiddish Montreal.
Ringuet, Chantal (2011) *A la découverte du Montréal Yiddish*, Montreal, Editions Fides. A richly illustrated guide to Yiddish Montreal, containing walking tours.
Seidman, Naomi (2006) *Faithful Renderings: Jewish-Christian Difference and the Politics of Translation*, Chicago: University of Chicago Press. A magnificent study of the way translations tell the story of evolving Jewish–Christian relations.
Simon, Sherry (2006) *Translating Montreal: Episodes in the Life of a Divided City*, Montreal: McGill–Queen's. A cultural history of Montreal, from the 1940s to the present, through the prism of translation.

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POP, PIETY AND MODERNITY
The changing spaces of Orthodox culture

Abigail Wood

Introduction: the Orthodox music industry

For those familiar with the public soundscape of diaspora Jewish music – klezmer, cantorial, modern Reform – it might come as a surprise to discover that today the most successful kind of contemporary American Jewish music is none of these, but rather, another, more hidden genre: Orthodox pop.[1] Jewish listeners from outside the Orthodox community might call to mind a couple of hits that have traversed community boundaries: Mordechai Ben David's dance hit *Moshiach*, or *Yidden*, his unlikely Yiddish reworking of Germany's 1979 Eurovision entry. Yet for a transnational public of strictly observant Jews, MBD, Lipa, Schmeltzer, Shwekey, the Chevra, and Avraham Fried – among many others – are household names, commanding full-page magazine advertisements, performing to sold-out audiences at major venues, and filling the shelves of specialist music suppliers.

As Mark Kligman observes in an informative history of the genre, the Orthodox pop industry has its roots in popular recordings of Hasidic music made in the 1950s and 1960s, which were followed by a rise in newly composed Jewish religious music which helped to bridge the gap between traditional Hasidic music and contemporary American styles.[2] The innovative work of Shlomo Carlebach, which melded the structures of Hasidic *nigunim* (spiritual melodies) with the musical language of folk rock, paved the way for today's Orthodox pop. Later, the *nigun* structure of Carlebach's music gave way to the verse-chorus structure of soft rock. Since then, most bands have followed the pattern of combining English language songs based on American pop formulae with other material, from older *nigunim*, to Hasidic hits of the mid-twentieth century, to newly composed pieces; styles are adapted from popular American genres from light rock to techno, often with relatively large orchestration and heavy use of synthesizers and effects. Recordings are primarily marketed in Orthodox-oriented bookshops and Judaica stores, and by specialist online retailers who often double as production companies.

More important than musical features in defining this genre, however, is the overt self-identification of this body of musical material with Jewish Orthodoxy. This is manifest both in its projection of religious norms and values, and its positioning by its makers and promoters as an object of expressive material culture marketed to a broad imagined Orthodox public.[3]

Religious values are subtly cued in the visual presentation of CDs: where artists are shown, they are dressed according to the norms of the strictly Orthodox community. Female

performers are not pictured, consistent with their omission from other areas of Orthodox visual culture. Other cues may include imagery with strong religious overtones – the tree (of life), a chain (of generations), references to Jerusalem – or more explicit indications, such as words drawn from well-known Biblical verses, Judaic imagery or the use of Hebrew fonts associated with religious texts. The text of the packaging also articulates a value system shared between consumers and producers: most contain admonitions linking the consumption of music to *halachic* (Jewish legal) observance, such as: "Do not play on the Sabbath or Holidays," "Ladies Only" or "Unauthorised copying is a violation of applicable law and against *Halacha* [Jewish law]." The religious norms of the Orthodox community are also enacted in the musical sound itself. Reflecting the all-pervading emphasis on Torah values in strictly Orthodox thought, which eschews overtly "secular" culture, lyrics are always religious in content: short quotations from biblical, rabbinic or liturgical texts, or newly composed vernacular (English, Yiddish or Hebrew) texts that refer directly to religious ideas or lifestyle. Strict gender segregation is observed in the name of "kol isha," the halachic ruling that the sound of a woman's singing voice is immodest, based on a rabbinic interpretation of a verse from the Song of Songs in tractate *Berachot* of the Babylonian Talmud. Most commercial recordings feature male voices only with a much smaller corpus of women's recordings intended for an all-female audience.[4]

Such recordings slot into a much wider Orthodox Jewish media and consumer culture, marketed to a mass audience. Etan Diamond has suggested that the origins of religious Jewish consumer culture lie in the development of the "kosher lifestyle" in post-war suburbia: "rather than shed their religious traditionalism on contact with secular suburban commercial culture, Orthodox Jews used that commercial culture to facilitate, strengthen and even expand their traditionalist religious behaviours" (Diamond 2002: 489). Today, products aimed at an Orthodox Jewish mass market range from contemporary editions of traditional religious texts (the *Artscroll* publishing house has been particularly prominent in this area, as surveyed by Jeremy Stolow [2010]) to media products that mirror the lifestyle of their audience: newspapers, magazines, fiction, music, DVDs, cookbooks, websites, and podcasts.

These popular cultures provide a fruitful window into the internal debates of contemporary Orthodoxy. As Yoel Finkelman eloquently points out in his study of *hareidi* adventure fiction, while from the outside strict Jewish orthodoxy might appear homogenous and isolationist, in fact this internal popular culture reveals a changing and much more complex web of relationships between strict Orthodoxy and the wider cultures within which its adherents are embedded (2005: 51–52). Internal audiences are also diverse: the consumers of strictly orthodox music might range from modern Orthodox Jews who might pick up the odd recording as an alternative alongside secular music, to strictly Orthodox (yeshivish, chareidi, Hasidic) Jews who eschew the vast majority of non-Jewish music, and some of whom will also draw conservative boundaries of acceptability within the Orthodox music scene itself.

The entanglement of Orthodox music in wider narratives of piety and modernity was manifest in the Passover 2011 edition of *Mishpacha* (Family) magazine, a popular Orthodox weekly, published in Jerusalem and widely distributed in the USA, Europe, and Israel. The front cover portrays a comfortable, domesticated view of religious authority: the twinkling eyes of an elderly figure with a black skullcap and flowing white beard catch those of the reader, titled: "From dawn to dark with Rav Nissim Karelitz, preeminent halachic decisor of Bnei Brak." Meanwhile, the back cover advertises an electronics store. Handheld arcade games, digital cameras, and a Hello Kitty microphone set jostle for space, indicating an equal comfort with high consumer culture. However, text splashes – an mp3 player is marked "No video, no radio," and another "Optional radio removal" – recall the anxieties with which the Orthodox community encounters secular culture beyond its boundaries. It is within this frame that

Orthodox music finds its audience: literally, in a full page ad in the magazine and a featured interview with musician Benny Friedman in a supplement featuring fathers and sons – and also figuratively, embedded into the material fabric of Orthodox Jewish life.

Sociological studies of strictly orthodox Jewish life have often highlighted difference, portraying orthodox Jews as an exotic non-modern "Other", who fail to conform to Western liberal construction of selfhood. This exoticization tends to distance researchers from their subjects, drawing a picture of a rather monolithic, determinist culture, against which some individuals stand out as non-conformists, managing to "bend" the system to accommodate their own personalities or needs. Nevertheless, the complexities of the consumer culture introduced above demand a more nuanced approach to the construction of piety and selfhood in contemporary Orthodoxy, and a careful reading of its encounter with modernity. Recent approaches to Orthodox culture including those cited here begin to interrogate the roles that material culture plays in imagining and creating contemporary Orthodoxy; in his study of Orthodox print politics, Jeremy Stolow observes that even those elements of culture that one would traditionally read as "texts" are embedded in practice and community. Poised at the interstice between material culture and performance, and embedded in quite distinct forms of practice, discourse and sociality, music provides an interesting window through which to further probe and challenge these themes.

Producing an Orthodox mainstream: the Chevra

The Chevra – roughly translated as "in-crowd" or "group of friends," is a particularly successful example of a mainstream commercial Orthodox musical act. Four vocalists, the sound of their songs echoes secular American boy bands, combining close harmony with various influences from pop music, from rock to techno, mainly synthesised and highly produced. Most songs set a single Biblical verse or a short rabbinic text, which is repeated during contrasting sections of music that correspond to the verse-chorus structure in the secular equivalent. They are produced by Eli Gerstner, an Orthodox vocalist who has also produced other successful acts including the Yeshiva Boys Choir and Tek-Noy – a "yeshivish techno" band. Between 2001 and 2006 the Chevra released four albums – *The Chevra* 1, 2 and 3, and an acapella album. They also appear alongside Gerstner's other acts in a 2007 DVD featuring a live concert in Queens, New York (*YBC Live II*).[5]

The Chevra have a slick and tightly managed image – essential to the group's identity, since several members changed during the ten years since their first album. Entering their website, a Flash video plays: as a medley of excerpts from favourite songs plays, the smiling faces of the four singers appear one by one, dressed identically in white shirts and ties with black *kippot*.[6] Finally, the band's name appears, followed by the names of each of the four singers: Eli D, Mordechai, Dovid and Chaim – the names again indexing social norms of the strictly Orthodox community. This imagery, spanning both Orthodoxy and American popular culture is echoed in the packaging of their albums. In the pages of the liner notes of *The Chevra 3* (2007), we see the band in both formal (white shirts) and informal (stripy shirts) attire, elsewhere posing with their jackets over their shoulders in classic American close-harmony-band style.

The centre fold is a collage of informal "behind the scenes" pictures. One member is playing a kid's keyboard; one shows us a doodle on a piece of paper. At the top left the boys are studying Talmud together, yet on closer inspection, this is clearly a posed picture – their books are not open on the same page. In pointing this out, I do not suggest the Chevra don't study religious texts together – they quite probably do. However, it does suggest that the concern of the album cover is less to document four individuals than to promote an idealised picture of the Orthodox man. He is clean cut and smartly dressed, knows how to have fun but also knows

where his priorities lie. Nobody sticks out of the crowd – rather, the band's image helps to homogenise its four members into representatives of the group.

Likewise, although almost all of the Chevra's songs are newly composed, there is nothing that musically rocks the boat. Melodies are catchy and formulaic, drawing on secular models with little or no recognisable "Jewish" musical content. Outside occasional solos, the four members perform as a tight ensemble, with little space for individual expression of musical or textual nuances. In other words, while this CD draws heavily on outside models, it is conservative in its appropriation of musical style and expression. Rather, like the adventure novels discussed by Finkelman, this is music that forms part of a long tradition of Orthodox imitation of secular creative genres. These materials respond to a widespread desire within the Orthodox community – many of whose members, Finkelman notes, are well acculturated within the outside society – for parallel cultural forms which engage with modernity and respond to the same cultural currents as those outside, yet do not conflict with Orthodox values.[7]

Yet to limit discussions of creativity in the Orthodox musical mainstream to the production of *ersatz* commercial pop would overlook the role of bands like the Chevra in a wider public sphere of creativity: home-made internet video clips. The notion of mainstream Orthodox popular music as a visual, performative medium is clearly articulated in the staging of concerts such as the one presented on the 2007 *YBC II* DVD. The boys' choir performs elaborate choreography; the Chevra's stage image is more conservative, but the DVD extras include a MTV-style music video for their new track "*Chizku*." The video both references and parodies the visual language of secular pop music: lip sync and effects like split screen; stock scenes: the singers walk down a Manhattan street, one shouldering a ghetto blaster, and a further street scene references the Beatles' famous Abbey Road shot. Elsewhere they turn to comic scenes, wandering in and out of street life: a barbershop, a fast food restaurant and a charity shop.

Dance is an important feature of expressive culture in Orthodox Jewry, especially at weddings and other celebrations. Male dancing is particularly performative, with groups of wedding guests or individuals often dancing solo to entertain the newlyweds.[8] The rise of small media and Web 2.0 has redefined the public spaces of Orthodox dance culture. The video sharing site YouTube hosts literally hundreds of videos where music by the Chevra and similar acts provides a soundtrack for dance performance. Songs form a canvas for group choreography; a multitude of videos show groups of young men performing elaborately choreographed dance routines to recorded Orthodox pop music as entertainment at weddings. Like the Chevra's video, these dances reference secular styles, notably hip-hop and breakdancing, but also serve the religious function of making the bride and groom happy on their wedding day, and perform the intense peer-group sociality experienced by groups of young Orthodox men who typically spend a year or more in yeshiva (religious seminary), studying religious texts intensively in a live-in setting.

A more elaborate phenomenon is the creation of video clips synchronised to music tracks. In around 2006, a yeshiva student named David Lavon posted a new creation on YouTube: to the accompaniment of the Chevra's song "*L'cha*" (*The Chevra 2*, 2004) a dizzying sequence of video clips portrays a group of yeshiva students variously performing hip-hop style lip syncs to the music, dancing with cheerleader pompoms, pranking in and around the yeshiva, dancing at weddings, imitating famous film scenes and more. Although later removed from YouTube by its creator, the video was a runaway success, becoming an intra-Orthodox "meme" in its own right and prompting copycat versions: a spoof of Lavon's video currently has over 84,000 hits on YouTube, and a girls' version has reached over 50,000.[9] Numerous other similar YouTube videos have likewise reached many thousands of hits, forming a distinctive – and distinctively modern – arena of Orthodox youth culture, where the musical products of high commerce

meet everyday sociality, technology and creativity, carving out Orthodox spaces in the most mainstream, transnational media settings.

Musicians, music and discourse

Orthodox pop music is not only embedded in performance: it has also generated lively discourse within the Orthodox community, acting as a stage upon which wider questions about the encounter between Orthodoxy, modernity and the secular world are addressed both implicitly and explicitly. In 2006, *Mishpacha* magazine printed a nine-page interview with two of Orthodox pop's longest-standing stars, Mordechai Ben David Werdyger and Avraham Fried, speaking together for the first time.[10] Embedded in their discussions of music and the processes of creation are responses to two contested issues: the role of musicians as prominent figures within the Orthodox community and the nature and acceptability of popular Orthodox music.

> On one side of the table sits our host, Mordechai Ben David (MBD), whose voice melts hearts and sets feet dancing, and whose generous beard and curly *peyos* [sidelocks] don't betray the fact that he's close to sixty. On the other side of the table sits Avraham (Avremel) Fried, a man with a refined expression and modest mien, whose voice brings thousands of Jews to the brink of tears and alternately, joy.
>
> (Elituv 2006: 27)

Yossi Elituv's careful introduction sets the scene for his interview with the two singers. Both are introduced as respected Hasidic Jews; Elituv mirrors the respectable, appropriate outside appearance of each of the two men with his ability to bring about pious emotional engagement through his voice, a musical projection of an equally respectable inner self. The table between them hints at longstanding rivalry, but this is soon diffused, as Elituv asks each to comment on his colleague's best song, enabling the two musicians to express admiration and appreciative remarks, setting a tone of mutuality and positive judgment, and further establishing the high ethical standing of the two men. This is mirrored in the photographs accompanying the story: far from glitzy pictures of stage stars, we instead see informal shots of the two men in Werdyger's home, shaking hands, conversing and drinking tea against the familiar visual backdrop of a typical strictly Orthodox home: white tablecloth, silver Judaica and hundreds of religious books in dark mahogany bookcases.

Following a lengthy discussion of their music, peppered with anecdotes of their relationship with their *rebbes* (Hasidic leaders), the singers turn to other topics of personal relevance. Werdyger vehemently speaks out against the internet, which he considers tremendously damaging to young people; Fried speaks his opinion on Israeli politics, citing a rabbinic text to suggest that Israel's policy towards the Arabs is too lenient. The opinions expressed by both are consonant with the wider editorial line of the magazine and accepted religious and societal norms in strictly Orthodox circles. However, a letter in a following issue questioned the magazine's decision to print these opinions, complaining that while the singers are "wonderful, *ehrliche Yidden* [good Jews]," they are entertainers; asking their opinions on "weighty issues" seemed inappropriately to accord them the status of religious leaders.[11]

Notwithstanding Elituv's careful depiction of Fried and Werdyger's respectability, Y. W.'s response echoes widespread anxieties about the impact of mass media on Orthodox society. Numerous *pashkevils* (street protest posters), a widespread form of intra-communal communication in the most strictly Orthodox neighbourhoods, decry technologies ranging from television to the internet to mp4 players. Nevertheless, while articulated from a conservative position and

referencing internal Orthodox debates about propriety, his question also mirrors debates in the secular world about the role models provided to children by media stars.

A still greater potential challenge to the communal standing of musicians like Fried and Werdyger comes from public debate about the nature and acceptability of Orthodox popular music itself. In their *Mishpacha* interview, both artists take pains to assert their own acceptability, distinguishing themselves and their music from newcomers on the scene, most of whom they perceive to lack spiritual depth and correct intentions. "We had the intention of touching people's hearts and bringing them closer to Hashem [God]. Today, anyone who can count to three can put out a disc," says Fried. Werdyger echoes: "I can't take what the new generation is doing. I can't even listen to it. It has no connection to Chassidus [Hasidism]" (Elituv 2006: 32, 34). Nevertheless, the evident closeness of all commercial Orthodox pop to non-Jewish musics means that lines are not so easily drawn. Debates about the acceptability of music that draws on non-Jewish sources have a long-standing basis in the rabbinic literature and continue to occupy a prominent place in the public forum, from questions by religious teenagers to the moderators of the popular *frumteens.com* internet site, to pronouncements by rabbinic authorities.

Assertions of rabbinic authority have potentially vast economic implications for the Orthodox music scene. In recent years, strictly Orthodox rabbis have tried to censure prominent public performances by Orthodox pop stars: a 2008 advertisement by 33 rabbis in the Orthodox press decrying a concert by Hasidic star Lipa Schmeltzer, due to take place the following week in Madison Square Garden, was covered in both the Orthodox and mainstream press, and ultimately resulted in the concert's cancellation.[12] While this statement appeared to cite concerns about decorum at the concert (other similar statements have decried mixed seating), others have attacked the musical basis of Orthodox pop itself. In a controversial 2008 pamphlet, Rabbi Efraim Luft, cited as the head of the "Committee for Jewish Music" in Bnei Brak launched an incendiary attack on Orthodox pop, quoting a colleague overtly attacking Fried and Werdyger by name, and proposing a series of rules for playing "kosher music," based around three broad principles implying strict segregation from non-Jewish culture: music should befit the text it sets and the occasion on which it is played; non-Jewish popular musical forms such as rock are unacceptable, along with associated instrumentation; Orthodox music idols are also not acceptable.[13]

These pronouncements have attracted a vigorous response from performers and other Orthodox commentators, including many bloggers. A recent article in an Orthodox academic journal surveys the relevant rabbinic literature concerning the Jewish appropriation of secular musics, finding differences of opinion in authoritative sources and proposing a nuanced, case-by-case approach (Gelbfish 2011). Nevertheless, in the wider Orthodox sphere the debate outlined here seems to index not so much specific practices as a contestation of the discursive spaces of contemporary Orthodox society. Traditional rabbinic authority, based in the consensual ascription of power by a self-defined public, is at risk of being challenged, not only by direct temptations of the secular world, but also by the rise of alternative publics and figures of authority that employ old and new media to straddle the boundaries of Orthodoxy and modernity, and where prestige is influenced by desirability and commercial success as well as ethical values.

Gender, piety and selfhood

Pop music also opens up new perspectives from which to consider gendered spaces in Orthodox society. It is tempting to reduce gender issues in Orthodox music to a simple binary power relation: men wield all the power in a patriarchal system; the precept of *kol isha* serves to silence

women, who may make valiant attempts to voice their own musical personalities, but ultimately are denied access to the "system" itself. Nonetheless, women's musical practices nuance this binary distinction. In exploring this, I do not intend to belittle the asymmetric distribution of power, audience, performance contexts, and opportunities for professionalisation which are inherent in the Orthodox pop industry owing to the observance of *kol isha*. However, within this framework – a range of different gender and power relations, and aspects of religious identity, are expressed by both male and female performers. Here, I will explore two contrasting albums by groups of Orthodox women, both of which received international distribution.

The London Girls Choir: *Silver Lining* (Sameach Music, 2005)

The London Girls Choir is modelled on successful Orthodox boys' choirs. Unlike the average girls' school choir, the London Girls Choir has raised its sights outside the local community, producing a CD marketed internationally, and touring to perform on stage in Israel. Listening to "Shiru l'hashem" (Sing to the Lord) from their first CD, one is immediately struck by the confident vocal sound. Once within an all-women's environment and outside the constraints of *kol isha*, these girls sing in a manner very similar to their male counterparts. This contextual, embodied approach to modesty challenges simple liberal conceptions of freedom and stricture; in her study of Hasidic girls Ayala Fader notes similar surprise when she discovers that the Orthodox women and girls who she was used to seeing in very strictly modest dress wore diverse bathing costumes to swim in an all-female setting (2009: 155).

The vocal range used is notably low – the girls sing entirely in chest voice, at least a fifth lower than most Western-trained girls' choirs or boys with unbroken voices would sing. This contributes to the strength of the sound, and also reflects a wider aesthetic in Chareidi pop music: the vast majority of songs are sung consistently in a loud, forceful dynamic range, an aesthetic probably ultimately derived from the singing of *nigunim* where the strong sound of voices singing together is preferred to the dynamic variation, but hence "weaker" sound generally used in Western music.

One English song on the CD reflects explicitly on gender relations – "Little Bird". Here, the choir presents reflections on the wedding of a girl, as seen by a younger sister and by the girl's mother. In this song, marriage is presented entirely within the female realm. It is a coming-of-age ritual for a girl, experienced by each generation in turn: "My little bird has come of age – who would believe we'd reach this stage?" The role of the man is entirely instrumental: now her family accompany and sustain her; in the future, this will be his task: "Now someone else is taking her under his wing."

In connecting growing up directly to the wedding, this song might confirm stereotypes of a community where a woman is expected to find her principal fulfilment in life through marriage. Nevertheless, within this framework, marriage is presented as marking the beginning of, not the end of, a girl's individuality: "In our storybook she's turning the page/A fresh start in life, beginning all over again." By sidelining the presence of the male partner in the song, the songwriter avoids falling into stereotyped images either of romantic love or of the suitable match; instead, we are presented with a strong role for the female in the marriage partnership. This is echoed in the penultimate song on the CD, "Shabbos Spirit" sung by the adult choir. It is a medley of Shabbat tunes, during which the women take the text of *Eyshes Khayil* (A Woman of Valour), a text from Proverbs traditionally sung by a man to his wife before the Sabbath dinner, into their own voice. Again, the traditional model of femininity is retained, but within this, the woman has control over her own role, rather than this being imposed somehow from outside.

Overall, then, while nothing on this CD challenges the religious or social norms of the strictly Orthodox community, the CD also makes a strongly empowering statement about women's roles. The girls sing in a confident, strong voice, not adhering to any abstract musical convention of femininity, and claiming ownership of the religious texts they sing. While they sing within an all-female sphere, the performance history of the choir and its sound produced echo those of their male equivalents, suggesting that women have equal access to the "core" musical ground of the Orthodox pop industry, and have the possibility to strive for excellence through public performance, and international CD sales. Further, female characters are presented positively, as individuals in their own right, who are partners in – rather than subject to – the recreation of traditional feminine roles.

Jewish Housewives: Fabulously Funny Songs for the Frum Woman (self-produced, London, n.d.)[14]

A contrasting CD, *Jewish Housewives: Fabulously Funny Songs for the Frum Woman* is a compilation of thirteen songs produced as a charity fundraiser for a London-based Orthodox Jewish matchmaking agency. All the songs rewrite "classic" pop songs, here performed with tongue-in-cheek words parodying a religious woman's life, from trying to get a wig (worn by religious women as a hair covering) to look less artificial, to following a complex recipe, to the Jewish Princess's nightmare of cleaning her own home when her cleaning lady quits. The recording is more laid back than *Silver Lining* – some of the singers are professionals and some certainly aren't; the overall effect is intentionally light hearted and humorous. The artists, and implicitly their audiences, straddle the realms of Orthodox and non-Jewish music: much of the humour is predicated upon the audience knowing the original songs drawn from the secular mainstream; one of the artists sang in London's West End before giving up her career to become more observant.

Two songs on this album deal with the subject of gender, male–female relationships and religious identity in very different ways. "Stand By Your Man" is based on the well-known country song. This song parodies the roles of both an Orthodox woman and her husband. The woman seems forced to take pride in her man rather than having her own public religious life ("you have *tsniyus* [modesty], he gets *aliyos* [called up to the Torah], saying things that you don't understand") and to accept the role of cooking and cleaning for her husband ("Give him gefilte fish and every Jewish dish your mum taught you to make"); the mother and mother-in-law seem to loom large in the husband's domestic life. Nevertheless, in the end the woman is dominant "send him off to *shul* [synagogue] in time for *shacharis* [morning prayers] if you can": despite the seeming advantages of being a man, he still can't get his act together without his wife's help. Nevertheless, by contrast to the strong, confident women's identity portrayed throughout the *Silver Lining* CD, which, while limited to the female sphere, did not otherwise feel constrained; here "Stand By Your Man" expresses a real feeling of constraint: it's hard to cover your hair and give up a public role, but this is what a Torah lifestyle demands. Here, the concept of Torah lifestyle is deliberately anti-progressive, implying a domestic female piety that actively rejects Western feminism in favour of embodied self-mastery; modesty is presented as the definitive feminine quality.[15]

The hapless husband of "Stand By Your Man" contrasts sharply with another male figure on the CD. "Stand By Your Man" is followed immediately by "Shaming me Softly", a parody of Fox and Gimbel's "Killing me Softly", a 1970s hit which has been covered by numerous popular artists. Here we see another important male–female relationship: an observant woman and her rabbi. The scene is a moment of religious transformation. The girl goes to hear a

new rabbi speak: "I heard he gave a good *shiur* [religious class] … and so I came to see him and listen for a while." Unlike the jokingly domineering woman of "Stand By Your Man", here her role is passive. As she sits and listens, her religious transformation comes from the outside, and once it has started, she is powerless to stop the process – she is completely held in the thrall of, and in awe of the rabbi: "He looked into my soul and said my sins out loud/I prayed that he would finish/But he just kept right on/Causing me pain with his *mussar* … [ethical teachings]."

Strikingly, this deeply emotional but passive experience is mirrored in the song's use of romantic language: "and there he was/a stranger to my eyes/I felt all flushed with fever/he looked into my soul." Clearly, the language chosen here is partly a reflection of the song being parodied, but I think it is also instructive at a deeper level – the classic language of romantic fantasy reflects the strong emotional feelings associated with embracing religious observance, but at the same time reinforces the passive role of the woman, who, in the love story, sits waiting for Prince Charming to ride by and sweep her off her feet into a life-changing experience. The use of romantic imagery helps to reinforce the unequal power relations between men and women within the sphere of religious experience: it is through the teaching of a man that a woman achieves a spiritual experience. Transferring romantic language from an idealised love relationship to an idealised experience of religious connection also suggests sublimation: the woman must learn to channel her emotional feelings to accord with the perceived demands of a Torah lifestyle.

The examples I have given here strongly point away from the simple equation of the limitation of a performance audience by *kol isha* with the restriction of that musician's capacity for self-expression, self-confidence in performance, or sense of ownership of the religious tradition. It is perhaps surprising that the recording based on secular songs exudes much more constraint in female self-image than the more obviously conventional *Silver Lining* CD.

The transformations of popular music from the margins of Orthodox society to an arena for the reinforcement of religious values has perhaps had a positive impact on the expansion of opportunities for women's public music making within the strictly Orthodox community, casting musical performance as an appropriate public role for a woman, even if only within the female sphere. As Asya Vaysman observes in a groundbreaking article on the musical lives of Hasidic women, even within those very strictly Orthodox communities where the marketing of commercial CDs by female artists is not seen as appropriate, women have the opportunity to pursue creative musical lives; recordings of high school productions are circulated by informal means yet ones that also bear the imprint of recent technological developments (Vaysman 2010). Nevertheless, this expressive space only goes so far. Opportunities for commercial success for Orthodox women singers remain limited, and even if a girls' choir can assert musical parity with boys (*Silver Lining*) or a woman jokingly express her superiority over her husband ("Stand By Your Man"), ultimately cultural power still lies within the male realm, whether as those who ultimately control the financial strings via the production of CDs, as religious authorities ("Shaming me Softly") or as abstract "owners" of Jewish religious musical traditions.

Of course not only women but also men are constrained in their musical expression by gender stereotypes, and in some ways more so: while women's music imagines a restricted, semi-private sphere, Orthodox men's musical performance is a public act. Heard out loud in shops, cars, and so on, it is subject to the kinds of scrutiny discussed above. The idealised Orthodox masculine identity used to market the Chevra, discussed above, together with their tight vocal sound and relative lack of musical innovation and reliance on "safe" religious texts, and the careful social positioning of Werdyger and Fried testify to the constraints of conformity placed upon *men* within the Orthodox popular music industry.

Conclusion

Orthodox pop occupies a complex web of cultural spaces. It is embedded into a framework of religious sociality, through which cultural norms and power relations are contested. It is implicated in a mesh of debates concerning the relationship between Orthodox Judaism and its cultural others, tradition and modernity. It is a space of transaction, where cultural materials are transformed, mediated and sold. Yet it is also a technology of the self, where individual intentions count: one might read Orthodox pop as a way to enjoy the forbidden, or might read it as a way of constantly enacting a choice of difference. While a short article offers little space to explore this wide cultural phenomenon, the growing new literature on religious Orthodoxy challenges us to move beyond the Western liberal exoticism that has too long dominated sociological discussions of Jewish Orthodoxy, and instead to consider the processes via which Orthodox creative culture defines its own spaces of pious sociality: re-reading, transforming, appropriating, and interrogating the modern world as it goes.

Notes

1 Mark Kligman (2001: 106), and personal communication, 13 June 2011. Thanks to Mark for his helpful suggestions of literature related to this subject.
2 See Kligman (2001).
3 The term "Orthodox" is problematic and covers a diverse range of religious attitudes, practices, and communities. In this chapter I follow Kligman's use of the term Orthodox to label this genre, though the term Haredi, as used by Stolow (2010) might be substituted, since this music is primarily marketed to the more strictly observant parts of the Orthodox community. It is also separate from a growing body of singer-songwriter music by Israeli Orthodox singers associated with the national–religious community.
4 BT Berachot 24a, interpreting Song 2:14. See also BT Sotah 48a. See Berman (1980) for discussion.
5 All albums and DVDs released by Sameach Music.
6 www.thechevra.com (accessed 13 June 2011).
7 Finkelman (2005: 51). Processes and ethics of the appropriation of outside musical styles are discussed at greater length by Ellen Koskoff in her discussion of Lubavitcher music (Koskoff 2001: particularly ch. 10).
8 Like women's singing, discussed later, female dancing generally takes place in private or semi-public spaces not visible to men; dancing at Orthodox weddings is gender segregated.
9 See "Lecha Spoof" (http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=E-4Bm4zsDwE) and "Lecha video – Girls Version" (http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=eXdLGuSlrSc), both accessed June 14, 2011.
10 See Elituv (2006).
11 Letter, Y. W., *Mishpacha* 139, 27 December 2006: 7.
12 See, for example, coverage in *The New York Times*: http://www.nytimes.com/2008/03/03/nyregion/03concert.html?ex=1362200400&en=87dffb35e59d5c56&ei=088&partner=rssnyt&emc=rss (accessed June 14, 2011).
13 The pamphlet was not available at the time of writing; discussion is based on the extended critical review and scanned excerpts at http://blogindm.blogspot.com/2008/11/in-review-r-ephraim-lufts-torah-is-not.html (accessed 14 June 2011). See Fader (2009: 158–70) for a nuanced and helpful discussion of conceptualised boundaries between Jews and Gentiles in Hasidic society. See also BBC coverage: http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/world/middle_east/7609859.stm (accessed 14 June 2011).
14 Individual artists are named on the CD notes but names are omitted here in line with norms of modesty in the Orthodox community.
15 Saba Mahmood's discussion of the Egyptian piety movement is a helpful parallel (Mahmood 2005); see also Fader (2009: chapter 6).

Essential reading

Berman, Saul. 1980. "A history of the law of Kol "isha." In Leo Landman, ed. *Rabbi Joseph H. Lookstein Memorial Volume*. Jersey City, NJ: Ktav, pp. 45–66.

Gelbfish, Ezriel. 2011. "Secular music." *Journal of Halacha and Contemporary Society*, 61: 82–91. Both this and the previous title survey the relevant debates in Jewish law.

Kligman, Mark. 2001. "Contemporary Jewish music in America." *American Jewish Year Book* 101, 88–141. Historical survey of the development of Orthodox pop.

Koskoff, Ellen. 2001. *Music in Lubavitcher life*. Urbana: University of Illinois Press.

Vaysman, Asya. 2010. "She who seeks shall find: the role of music in a Hasidic woman's life cycle." *Journal of Synagogue Music* 35: 155–83. Case studies focusing on the role of music in contemporary Hasidic society.

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23

SEEING AND BEING IN CONTEMPORARY ORTHODOX JEWISH DRESS

Jonathan S. Marion

> Those religious groups attempting to exist in the dominant secular culture must find ways to negotiate the tensions between this culture and religious values and ways of life.
>
> (Davidman 1990: 49)

Samuel O. Silver ז'ל, an observant Jew of Lithuanian descent, was among the first activists to fight Massachusetts's Sabbatarian laws, allowing observant Jews who closed their workplace on Saturdays to remain legally open on Sundays, and was the last surviving founder of the Maimonides school in Brookline, MA alongside "The Rav," Rabbi Joseph B. Soloveitchik[1] ז'ל. Samuel O. Silver ז'ל was also my *zaydeh* (grandfather). His daughter, my mother, grew up attending Soloveitchik's Sabbath and holiday services, and the Maimonides school. My father, by contrast, descended from largely secular Austrian and White Russian Jewish families. As a result I grew up aware of, and sometimes pulled between, family traditions of the observant and of the secular worlds. Such tensions are negotiated, enacted, and embodied across the gamut of contemporary Orthodox Jewish dress. Starting with theoretical underpinnings and cultural context regarding Orthodoxies, dressed bodies, Biblical and Rabbinical beliefs regarding G-d's ownership of the body, and *Tzniuth* (modesty), this chapter explores dress as both means and site of negotiation, presentation, and challenges between ancient traditions and contemporary social circumstances for Orthodox Jews.[2]

Orthodoxies

Representing the majority of observant (i.e. non-secular) Jews worldwide (and unlike the Reform and Conservative movements), Orthodox Judaism has no central organization. As such, the religious umbrella "Orthodox" covers a wide spectrum of beliefs and traditions, from Open Orthodox[3] on the left, to Modern Orthodox, and the various sects of *Hasidim*[4] on the right. Likewise, there are differences in observance across cities in North America, Europe, and Israel, as well as among congregations from Syrian, Russian, Afghani, Persian, and Bukharan Jewish descent (just to name a few!). Typically associated with large urban centers, Orthodox Judaism exists in many places, and the balance between (1) religious rules and traditions, and (2) secular circumstances is negotiated in each location. Indeed Judaism has always been multivocalic (e.g.

Dorff and Newman 2008: xvi), and as Markowitz aptly notes, "Jews … and Jewishness … are startlingly varied" (2006: 43). Rather than speaking of an artificially homogenous Orthodox Jewish dress, then, this chapter recognizes the range of Orthodoxies, and is intended as a jumping off point for thinking about how the wide-ranging varieties of Orthodox Jewish dress reflect, concretize, perform, and embody variations of an observant Jewish identity—each rooted in different evaluations, understandings, and negotiations between living in modern society on the one hand, and religious dictates and traditions on the other.

Dressed bodies

As I have pointed out elsewhere, "clothing is never only about itself—functional or communicative, dress is always more than simply self-referential" (Marion 2008: 124). Indeed as other scholars have noted, dress "mediates how we see ourselves and how others see us" (Martin 2001: xv), "constitutes one of the most basic methods through which we are able to place ourselves and others in the social world" (Goodrum 2001: 86), serves as "society's way of showing where we belong in the order of things, our role and position in the social pageantry" (Keenan 2001: 4), and is key to self-image (Keenan 2001: 32). Such ideas are not unique to secular scholarship, however, and figure prominently in the thinking and choices of Orthodox writers and laypersons alike.

Discussing the "ultra-Orthodox" in Israel, for instance, Orna Blumen recognizes that "clothes, by redefining human bodies, offer the easiest way to structure and display meanings and identity in the public space" (2007: 126), and, as she goes on to note, "The visibility of bodies, clothes and accessories renders categorization inevitable and provokes a reflexive response of 'knowing before thinking' what a person does and what her/his way of life is" (2007: 126). Orthodox Rabbi Eliyahu Safran explicates exactly this type of understanding as well, noting that "What we wear, when we wear it, is the most obvious way we communicate to others who we are on the inside—what kind of person on the inside" (2010 [2009]: 30). Taking this a step further, Rebbetzin (the wife of a rabbi) Tziporah Heller specifies that "We often fail to realize that how we dress influences not only how others view us, but how we see ourselves" (Heller 2003: 52). Clothing choices represent enactments of identity (for both the self and observers alike) which, as we will see later, alternatively respond to and manifest desires both to "fit in" and to remain distinct.

More than simply utilitarian clothing, then, dress serves as the "assemblage of body mod-ifications and/or supplements displayed by a person in communicating with other beings" (Eicher and Roach-Higgins 1997: 15); which, for Orthodox Jews, includes non-Jews (and often non-observant Jews), other observant Jews, and G-d. Clothing, of course, is also—and always—about bodies (e.g. Goodrum 2001: 92; Keenan 2001: 22), which makes decoding Orthodox Jewish dress inextricable from Orthodox ideas about the body. As Eilberg-Schwartz notes, for instance, popular labeling of Jews as "People of the Book" ignores an "intense preoccupation with the body and its processes,"[5] such that "ancient Jews multiplied rules that both regulated the body and turned the body into a symbol of other significant religious concerns" (Eilberg-Schwartz 1992: 19). Perhaps this is nowhere better seen than in the biblical and rabbinical beliefs regarding G-d's ownership of the body, gender, and *Tzniuth*.

G-d, the Body, Gender, and Tzniuth

Rooted in biblical passages, key Jewish ideas about the body and dress include:

- That humans are created in G-d's image (Genesis 1: 26–28).
- That *Shatnez* (the combination of wool and linen) is prohibited (Leviticus 19: 19 and Deuteronomy 22: 11).

● That tattoos are prohibited (Leviticus 19: 28).
● That cross-dressing is forbidden (Deuteronomy 22: 5).

Thinking about the human body as being created in G-d's image has specific implications within Jewish thought and ideology. From the biblical Tabernacle, to the Temple, to modern synagogues, within Judaism the hidden has always been associated with the holy (Heller 2003; Manolson 2005 [1997]; Safran 2010). For observant Jews, then, "Judaism covers the body not as a source of shame or because it views it as Christianity does … but because it regards the body as sacred" (Heller 2003: 54). The corollary is that being less exposed in public translates into greater associations with intimacy (Heller 2003: 54). At the same time, however, the *issur* (prohibition) against *ervah* (nakedness) is intended to avoid *hirhur* (sexual arousal), which is also the basis for having married women cover their hair.

As Modern Orthodox scholars Heller (2003), Manolson (2005 [1997]), and Safran (2010) argue, *Tzniut* (modesty) is an antidote to linking beauty and physical appearance to self-worth, and allows people to refocus on the internal versus the external. "There is an inherent absurdity in a woman's desire not to be regarded as a sex object," Heller suggests, "while dressing in a way that calls attention to her physical attributes" (2003: 48). Far from being a subjugating practice of a patriarchal tradition—as has been argued by some—for those who choose them, then, the prescribed dress standards can be seen as inherently feminist.[6]

While probably invisible to most visual inspection, the prohibition on wearing *shatnez* has given rise to the idea of "kosher" suits and "Shatnez Research laboratories" (Solomon 2009: 349), such as the Boston Shatnez Laboratory (http://testshatnez.com) and the many other members of the International Association of Professional Shatnez Laboratories (IAOPSL), which currently lists certified labs in 15 countries. An important and perhaps easily overlooked idea here is that precisely because clothing materials are not necessarily obvious to casual inspection, the choice to adhere to this requirement symbolizes a powerful personal commitment to one's religious observance and identity. This is different from the prohibition on tattooing (originally meant to distance Jews from common non-Jewish practices), which took on greater cultural weight in the aftermath of the Holocaust.

In the prohibition against cross-dressing, however, we start to see the role of *halakha* (Jewish law) in providing interpretation and nuance to biblical dictates, with *Poskim* (halakhic decisors) playing key roles in defining the religious requirements for observance. Are slacks forbidden to women in modern times for instance? Some say yes (based on the stipulations of Deuteronomy 22:5), while others note that the cut of men's and women's pants are quite different and hence not a violation. This is exactly what is at issue in interpreting the prophet Micah's condensation (Micah 6: 8) of the 613 *Mitzvot* (commandments) given to Moses: "What does God seek from you; but only the performance of justice, love of kindness and walking with *tzniut* with God."[7] Where Rabbi Falk (1998), for instance, describes the specific meanings and restrictions of *tzniut* in his 700-page *Modesty: An Adornment for Life*, Rabbi Henkin's *Understanding Tzniut* takes great issue with this approach, cogently identifying the many *halakhic* requirements for taking note of contextual circumstances in delimiting Jewish women's modest dress (Henkin 2008).[8] Henkin's perspective well captures the Modern Orthodox approach in recognizing the what-counts-as-what variability across place and time, and as demonstrated by different people's individual experiences and perspectives.

Additional dress considerations

Additional Orthodox dress considerations include both everyday practices, such as wearing *tzit-tzit*, and special occasion practices, such as wearing a *kittel* and fast-day clothing prohibitions. The

command to wear *tzit-tzit* (tassels, or fringes) comes from Numbers 15: 38–40 and Deuteronomy 22: 12 as a reminder of the *mitzvot* (commandments). These fringes are found on the corners of the *tallit*, a four-cornered prayer shawl worn during morning services by married men.[9] Orthodox Jewish men typically wear a *tallit katan* (literally a "little tallit") beneath their shirts, but leaving the *tzit-tzit* hanging out from underneath.

Where *tzit-tzit* serve as everyday reminders, special occasions call for both specific garments— such as the white *kittel* (robe) worn by a man at his wedding, and during Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur—and specific restrictions, such as during fast days. Meant to return one's focus from the material to the spiritual, within Orthodoxy fasting includes refraining from (1) wearing shoes made of or containing leather, (2) wearing any sort of cosmetics (e.g. make up), and (3) having sexual relations. As with foregoing food, these restrictions are meant to re-focus observers from the physical to the spiritual, to focusing on G-d versus physical comfort (leather shoes) or appearance (cosmetics).

The voices of lived choices: individual's experiences

Marc,[10] a "long-term" *ba'al teshuva* (formerly secular Jew who has chosen to become more observant) for many decades, living in Massachusetts, related to me that he came to the threefold realization that by dressing "as an observant Jew," he (1) became very visible, (2) was "representing the Torah world" by his very presence (i.e. without needing to do or say anything else), and (3) that dressing in a *kovodick* (respectable) way fit societal norms (of his religious community). Describing how he dresses today he joked that his "normative" clothing is "boring," consisting of black pants and a long-sleeve white shirt, a black velvet *yarmulke*, and possibly a black sport jacket. His wardrobe changes somewhat for Shabbat, when he wears a black suit and a long-sleeve white shirt—but he makes sure to wear a shirt without any blemishes—and a high-sided *yarmulke*, popular from the 1800s to the early 1900s, of the same style that his grandfather (for whom he is named) used to wear.

Another difference between Marc's weekday and Shabbat dress concerns his hair. Marc has a long beard and *peos* (sidelocks). Because he works in the secular world during the week, he says, he tucks up his beard (i.e. folded under itself) and his *peos* (under his hat), but wears both down on Shabbat. Describing how his wife Batya dresses, Marc notes that she never wears pants, and that she keeps her hair covered if anyone is present who is not immediate family, usually wearing a *tichel* (headscarf) or a hat, or a *sheitel* (wig) if attending a celebratory event such as a wedding. Marc goes on to note that Batya loves to dress, and has many and varied head coverings. A final item noted by Marc is that he does go to sleep with his yarmulke on, but that if it falls off that is "OK."

Several facets of Marc's account are particularly noteworthy. First, his choice to start dressing "as an observant Jew," involved the recognition of his clothing as a powerful communicative tool and social marker, both within his religious community and to the larger world. Second is the almost seamless transition between daily and Shabbat dress, as the beard and *peos* easily get "tucked up" to facilitate work in the secular world. Finally, asked if there was any specific (i.e. religious) reason for the different *yarmulke* choice for Shabbat, Marc says there is not—which highlights the role that family-level history, tradition, and connection plays in dictating his choice of religious attire.[11] In an interesting and related side note, Marc was explicitly aware of the role that *yarmulkes* can play in marking different communities, and recounted how he had recently visited a community in Israel where everyone was wearing a *kippa sruga* (crocheted kippa).[12]

Rabbi Or, the rabbi of Marc's community, describes their community as 75 percent *ba'alei teshuva*, and makes a point that this is very different from other communities, "like Brooklyn" where the ratio would be reversed. Speaking directly to the differences between various

Orthodox communities, this contextualizing comment also sets up Rabbi Or's comments that in their community "the norm is very modern and assimilated," that most community members (of both genders) will go to college and have professional careers, and that no one would be "unhappy with someone if they wore jeans and a sweatshirt." Describing his own ideas about modesty, Rabbi Or said it means not revealing the physical body and thus "not being sexually provocative," going on to explain that it is "improper and undesirable" for anyone to make themselves "sexually attractive to anyone other than their mate." In line with the pragmatism of much Modern Orthodoxy, Rabbi Or specified that modesty was situational, pointing out that one cannot go into the *mikvah* (ritual bath) clothed, that is, there are recognized exceptions. He went on to give the example that he could mow his backyard bare-chested on a hot day—since it was entirely private—whereas that would be entirely inappropriate for the front yard. Likewise, Rabbi Or noted that although one should try to remain as covered as possible in medical settings, it was "OK" to uncover for any *necessary* medical treatments.

When I asked Rabbi Or about the struggles faced by congregants who had not grown up with these traditions (as was the case for three-fourths of his congregation), he explained that this really was not an issue for two interrelated reasons. First, he said, when people feel like they want to belong to a religious community, they are willing and understand that it is "not unreasonable for the community to have some standards of dress." Second, that for those "willing to give up using a computer and electricity, driving and shopping, on Saturday"—as is typical for all observant Jews—"the dress is not that difficult." These points are noteworthy, and underline the simple (but perhaps too easily and too often overlooked) fact that dress practices are always part of a larger picture.

Yet the nature of the larger picture varies between individuals, situations, and circumstances—and Modern Orthodoxy seems to have room for most. This point is well articulated by both Abby, who has lived in several major US cities, and Gila, who grew up in the US and now lives in Israel. Explicitly aware of the far more casual dress typical in Israel for all but the *Haredim*, Gila observes that while some of the elderly gentlemen get more dressed up and wear a suit (although typically without a tie) to go to *shul* (synagogue), the younger men typically wear chino pants and a white shirt ("even at weddings"), although some will wear dark pants and a white shirt on *Shabbat*. Abby comments in a similar vein on the absolute variety between different Modern Orthodox *shuls* and communities she has visited in New York and Chicago, noting that while you do not see people wearing shorts, since people often come from work you do typically see attire ranging from suits to t-shirts and jeans (although, as she goes on to clarify—and in line with Gila's perspective—"you assume they're Israeli" [i.e. those wearing jeans to *shul*]).

An astute social observer, Abby specifies that while the total range of clothing in Modern Orthodox settings is very broad, it typically varies along specific lines and in specific ways. Noting that what you see in *shul* tends to be very different from what people wear during the week, she goes on to clarify that there are actually three distinctions that can be made:

1 What people wear to *shul*.
2 What they wear during the week within the (Orthodox) community.
3 What they wear outside the community.

This tripartite scheme is an important one, as it opens up some of the biggest differences between Modern Orthodoxy on the one side and Hasidic Jews—who typically live in much more self-contained communities[13]—on the other. Whereas there is less variation in clothing "in more *yeshivish* [close to yeshivas; with high concentrations of observant Jews] neighborhoods" (due to the greater overlap between the people present and the overall community), Abby reiterates that

there is great variation between what people wear to *shul*, inside the community, and outside the community. As Abby goes on to describe, the same woman who may show up to *shul* wearing a *sheitl* may wear a bikini at a weekend far away from her community where she does not expect to be seen by anyone "from home."

Continuing to describe the range of practices she's observed in the Northeast and Midwest US, Abby comments that within Modern Orthodox settings you can see "anything and everything," going on to specify that while some "follow all the rules"—meaning no low cut necklines, three-quarter length sleeves, hemlines well below the knee, etc.—others may wear a tank-top with a wrap or sweater over it in *shul*, but which they then take off when they go out to eat with friends. She also notes that some women will wear whatever is the latest fashion—such as a summer dress "meant to show cleavage," or with spaghetti-straps—and just wear it with a thin, long-sleeved shirt on underneath it. Concerning head coverings, Abby sees these as being very varied in Modern Orthodox settings as well, with *sheitls*, scarves, hats, snoods, and even a few "Conservative doylies"[14] always being worn in *shul*, but then typically taken off when people go home for meals[15] (mirroring the in-*shul* versus out-of-*shul* pattern of removing sweaters or wraps noted earlier). A final point in this regard is that the issue of head covering in particular, and dress more broadly, emerges as a big discussion topic between couples planning to get married, with "how much, and when" being very significant issues.

To conclude this section let me use Simcha to contrast the two, non-exclusive, themes that can be seen in Modern Orthodox dress patterns: the internally and externally motivated. Reflecting on her experiences, Simcha says that when she dresses modestly she finds that she gets treated "more respectfully" (including by non-Jews). Describing her overall approach, she specifies that she certainly likes to dress "fashionably" and "stylish," but "doesn't want to attract the wrong kind of attention." As such, if she finds a shirt she likes but that is "scooped too low," she will wear it backwards (so that it covers up to her neck), and typically dresses in layers. Similarly, while she will wear slacks in the house, to go out she wears skirts, and if she finds a skirt she likes but that has any kind of slit, she will wear it with a slip or pants of the same color underneath. When deciding on outfits, she looks in the mirror to evaluate (1) if it meets her own standards, (2) what someone *frum* (observant) whose opinion she values would think, and (3) what a possible *shitach* (match mate) might think.

Feminist framing vs. patriarchal context

As the work of sociologists Lynn Davidman (1991) and Debra Kaufman (1993) illustrates, many Orthodox women see Judaism as a source of both communal belonging and distinctly feminine gender identities. More than just abstract "distinct but equal roles," for example, Kaufman points out how the laws of *niddah* (menstruation) are seen by Orthodox women as "giving structure, regulation, and control to them over their sexuality" (1993: 9). More recently Chia Longman (2007) found a gender ideology of "equivalence"[16] used by Antwerp Orthodox women. Digging deeper, she relates that "the more 'extreme' Orthodox Hasidic the women I interviewed were (such as the Satmar), the more likely they were to draw on essentialist constructions of gender and the more apt they were to explain these in a religious frame" (Longman 2007: 84).

The problem here is that male:female are never side-by-side categories within patriarchal contexts. As Susan Gubar (1994: 297) identifies in her personal exploration of the tensions between feminism and Judaism, there are many problematic patriarchally situated points:

> [T]he daily Orthodox prayer: "I thank thee, O Lord, that thou hast not created me a woman." … The linking of the covenant between God and Abraham with

circumcision (Genesis 17:10); The maxim that a woman who bears a male child is unclean for seven days, while she who bears a female baby remains contaminated for two weeks (Leviticus 12:2–5); the law "Do not lie with a male as one lies with a woman; it is an abhorrence" (Leviticus 18:22) (how hilarious this sounds if we suppose it to be meant for a female reader!); the punishment allotted a man raping a virgin, which consists of a fine paid to her father and of the rapist having to marry the woman without the right to divorce her (Deuteronomy 22:28–29).

In a similar vein, Jewish historian Adam Ferziger recognizes how accusations of "heresy" were used by "prominent rabbinical authority to reject attempts at upgrading the public religious roles available to women" (Ferziger 2009: 494). This is not to deny the agency or discount the choices made by Orthodox women,[17] such as those who see the rules of *tzniut* as insulating them from objectification. At the same time, however, it is important not to lose sight of the larger frameworks within which such insulation is seen as desirable or even needed.

Conclusion

As these materials make clear, the range of customs and practices related to contemporary Orthodox Jewish dress represent concrete manifestations of underlying concerns and tensions informed by—and reflecting—social, cultural, and religious issues and ideas concerning appropriate modesty, religiosity, and observance. Far from abstract or esoteric considerations, however, they represent lived negotiations. People do not, after all, simply act within interpersonal cultural fields, but act to achieve specific aims (Marion 2008: 129). Following Barnes and Eicher, for instance, dress clearly serves as "both an indicator and a producer of gender" (Barnes and Eicher 1997: 7) within the Orthodox community. But to what ends?

As the work of some Orthodox scholars suggests (e.g. Heller 2003; Manolson [1997] 2005; Safran 2010) *tzniut*—inclusive of speech, behavior, and dress—is not about restrictions, but about shifting focus from the external to the internal, from the superficial to the spiritual. As these authors contend, and as seen in other cases (e.g. Davidman 1991; Yadgar 2006), some women interpret Jewish rules and traditions not as subjugating them, but as honoring, recognizing, and valuing women's essential differences from men. For Heller, for example, it is through *tzniut* that a woman is empowered to be who she really is versus only who she is physically (2003: 61). This approach parallels Davidman's analysis of Modern Orthodoxy as "selling itself" (she was studying conversion) as the "healthiest, most ethical, and most satisfying way to live" (1990: 42). Contrasting the *accommodation* of Modern Orthodoxy with the *resistance* of Lubavitch Hasidism Davidman goes on to recognize that "modern Orthodox Jews live a 'biworldly' existence characterized by a dual allegiance to the conflicting worlds of tradition and modernity" (Davidman 1990: 36; based on Heilman 1976: 97).

While modest dress is thus often conceptualized as a way to live an observant Jewish life in modern circumstances, it is important not to overlook its role in making and marking social belonging. To the extent that the dress customs called for require dedication and take effort they can be seen as exemplars of the costly signaling theory of religion (Irons 2001; Sosis 2004): that since it requires too much effort and sacrifice to fake, the religious "credentials" of adherents can be trusted. Conversely, those who do not adhere can be cast as "imposters" to their religiosity. Simcha, for instance, describes having once worn slacks into the Israeli Bookstore and "being treated like a *shiksa*!"[18] Similarly, Abby notes that within the observant community "people can be *very* judgmental," and goes on to describe a woman who had started to wear jeans, so people stopped eating at her house—the underlying idea being that if her adherence to *tzniut* could not be trusted, neither could her adherence to *kashruth* (Jewish dietary laws).

While observant Jews find their own meaning in religious traditions, even as they sometimes resist them (e.g. Lieber 2010; Zalcberg 2007), social pressures matter and they start early. Such socialization has been noted in the Hasidic and Haredi communities (Fader 2009; Yafeh 2007; Zalcberg 2007), and Abby's three-year old niece does not ask "Why are you wearing slacks aunt Abby?" by accident. Ultimately, then, the range of Modern Orthodox dress is best understood as sartorial signaling of identity and membership—both informed by and attempting to negotiate the interstices between biblical and rabbinic traditions and contemporary circumstances.

Acknowledgments

Notes

1 Widely considered among the leading Jewish philosophers of his time, a seminal figure in the Modern Orthodox movement, and twice asked to be the head rabbi of Israel, Soloveitchik was a tremendous advocate of synthesizing Torah and secular scholarship and believed that a life of faith could be lived within the modern world, and not only in isolation from it (e.g. Soloveitchik 2006 [1965], 1983, 1986).

2 The case studies discussed in this chapter are based on the experiences of Orthodox Jews in and around the Boston, New York, and Chicago areas in the USA, and Jerusalem in Israel. For a broader historical account of Jewish dress and its uses in negotiating and signaling religious conviction, identity, and gender roles see Silverman (2013).

3 For more on the "Open Orthodox" approach founded by Rabbi Avraham Weiss see the video clips of "Open Orthodoxy: A Modern Orthodox Rabbi's Creed" by Weiss at http://www.hir.org/ 1_AV_dock/111_video_hub.htm (accessed 15 June 2011). Most controversially, Weiss ordained Sara Hurwitz as "Maharat" in June 2009, but then changed her title to "Rabba" in February 2010 to convey her equivalence to a male Rabbi. Met with severe criticism by many, including the Rabbinical Council of America, Weiss agreed not to ordain any more "Rabbas."

4 Tracing back to the Baal Shem Tov, the founder of Hasidism in the eighteenth century, the various denominations (including those of both Ashkenazic and Sephardic decsent) each follow the teaching of specific rabbis, and include the Belz, Lubavitch, Satmar, and Toldot Aharon Haredim amongst many others. For classic works on Hasidic clothing and identity see Poll (1962); and Yoder (1969, 1972); regarding Hasidic women's head coverings see Carrel (1999); regarding the socialization of Hasidic girls see Fader (2009); and regarding those who question and struggle with their Hasidic upbringings see Winston (2005).

5 For more on Ancient Israelite preoccupations with the body see Boyarin (1995); Eilberg-Schwartz (1990). For more on contemporary issues regarding the Jewish body see the edited volumes by Dorff and Newman (2008) and Eilberg-Schwartz (1992).

6 See Zalcberg (2007) regarding the plurality of perspectives among even the most Orthodox women.

7 This translation comes from Rabbi Abraham Twerski's foreword to Safran (2010).

8 In an important and instructive comparison regarding Yemenite Jewry, Loeb (1996: 264) notes that: (1) Jewish women went out wearing a partial veil, covered hair, and trousers; (2) these standards "coincided with widespread sentiments of feminine modesty"; (3) were "more rigorously enforced by the women themselves than by the direct or indirect intervention of men"; and yet (4) "in the private domain, Jewish women did not cover their faces when Jewish men were present." As Loeb also notes, young girls went about unveiled, and were seen as non-sexual (Loeb 1996: 266), and that for Habbani Jews, "public male-female interaction was considered wholly innocent" (Loeb 1996: 272).

9 This is in contrast to non-Orthodox denominations, wherein women may also wear a *tallit*. The Orthodox practices of only married men wearing a *tallit* and only married women covering their heads provides clear markers about who is single within the community.

10 I have used pseudonyms for all individuals out of respect for those who shared with me, especially given possible community scrutiny and consequences.

11 In much the same light when Rivka, who grew up in the US but now lives in Jerusalem, sat down to respond to some questions I had emailed her, she realized that she knew what she wore, but could not really say why.

12 See Baizerman (1997 [1992]) regarding the *kippa sruga* and gender construction in Israel, including a classificatory system for Israeli men based on chosen head coverings (ibid.: 97–98).

13 Describing Orthodox Jews in Boro Park, Brooklyn, in 1977, for instance, Egon Mayer noted that, "a kind of modern day 'shtetl' had been reconstructed in Boro Park," one wherein "even Thanksgiving Day passes by largely unnoticed … all of the Jewish festivals and fasts are meticulously observed by the majority of the residents. In other words, time itself has come to be defined by Jewish religious categories" (Mayer 1977: 96). Making a more explicit related point, Blumen argues that, in fact, "Segregation from others is essential to ultra-Orthodox theology. It makes possible a supportive milieu for adherents and facilitates large-scale systems of social reproduction in a distinct public space, while minimizing conflicts with the dominant modern culture" (Blumen 2007: 129).

14 Small white linen or mesh head-coverings more common for married women in Conservative Jewish synagogues.

15 This is a marked contrast to Hasidic women, who typically wear a head covering at all times, and certainly when in the company of any non-immediate family members. See Carrel for an analysis of such head coverings as the "quintessential symbol of Hasidic womanhood" (Carrel 1999: 163).

16 As per Spiro's (1979) "equality of equivalence" versus "equality of identity."

17 Indeed, and as described by Zalcberg, even the extreme practice of head shaving among *Toldot Aharon,* "one of the most extreme Jewish ultra-Orthodox groups," reveals a "variety of voices among the women, ranging from the view that these practices are desirable, through the view that they empower the women, to the view that they damage one's attractiveness and are quite painful" (Zalcberg 2007: 13).

18 A non-Jewish woman, often with a somewhat derogatory overtone (as used here).

Essential reading

Eilberg-Schwartz, Howard, ed. (1992) *People of the Body: Jews and Judaism from an Embodied Perspective*. Albany: SUNY Press. This excellent edited volume provides both broad—including historically, disciplinarily, theoretically, and methodologically—and strong treatment of various perspectives on Judaism and the body.

Fader, Ayala (2009) *Mitzvah Girls: Bringing Up the Next Generation of Hasidic Jews in Brooklyn*. Princeton: Princeton University Press. Winner of the 2009 National Jewish Book Awards, this text does an exceptional job of taking the reader inside the socializations of Hasidic girls into Hasidic women, and the negotiations of non-liberal religious practices and conceptualizations with secular modernity. Chapters 6 and 7 are particularly pertinent to discussions and understandings of modesty and proper conduct.

Goldberg, Harvey E., ed. (1996) *Sephardi and Middle Eastern Jewries: History and Culture in the Modern Era*. Bloomington: Indiana University Press. Although not dress-specific, this edited volume provides a good survey of intersections and negotiations between various Mizrahi traditions with non-Jewish contexts in the Middle East.

Henkin, Yehuda (2008) *Understanding Tzniut: Modern Controversies in the Jewish Community*. New York: Urim Publications. Written in response to Rabbi Pesach Falk's (1998) *Modesty: An Adornment for Life*—which is critiqued as casting locally situated standards as unequivocal religious mandates—in the main essays dealing with *tzniut* in Part I of this volume (a modified reprint from the journal *Tradition*) Rabbi Henkin cogently identifies the *halakhic* requirements for Jewish women's modest dress, taking note of contextual circumstances.

Manolson, Gila (2005 [1997]) *Outside/Inside: A Fresh Look at Tzniut*. Southfield, MI: Targum/Feldheim. This easily accessible account provides an Orthodox woman's perspective of the benefits and value of *Tzniut* (modesty), highlighting how it facilitates attention to and valuing the internal instead of the external.

Rubens, Alfred (1973 [1967]) *A History of Jewish Costume*. New York: Crown Publishers. Although now somewhat dated, this book remains the most comprehensive volume in print devoted to the history of Jewish dress.

Safran, Eliyahu (2010 [2009]) *Sometimes You ARE What You Wear!: An Argument for Tzniut —Modesty*. Bloomington, IN: Xlibris, Corp. Written by the vice president of communications and marketing of the

Orthodox Union, this short philosophical volume presents modesty as a means to human dignity and self-respect in the face of modern (often bodily) commercialization and license.

Silverman, Eric (2013) *A Cultural History of Jewish Dress*. London: Bloomsbury. Providing a consolidated account of Jewish dress (primarily Ashkenazi) from biblical through modern times, this text describes the Jewish uses of dress to "communicate their devotion to God, their religious identity, and the proper earthly roles of men and women." (See especially Chapter 5 regarding women's clothing and Orthodoxy.)

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24

LIFE DRAWING

Autobiography, comics, Jewish women

Sarah Lightman

For over 16 years I've been creating my own visual autobiography, *The Book of Sarah,* and I recently co-curated and exhibited my work in *Graphic Details: Confessional Comics by Jewish Women*—an internationally touring exhibition that traces Jewish women's autobiographical comics from the 1970s until today. Doing so "was like finding my own creative family" (Lightman 2010: 1), though not all Jewish women artists are as enamoured. Corinne Pearlman, an artist in *Graphic Details*, wrote in her comic column "Playing the Jewish Card," about her disappointment in discovering other autobiographical comics by Jewish women: "And I thought I was UNIQUE! Huh. I'm giving up CONFESSION for LENT" (2009: 2) (Figure 24.1).

Why are so many Jewish women artists living and working today driven to tell their life stories? Speaking for myself, my art is inspired by the lack of a book about my Biblical name-sake, Sarah, as well as my own search for a voice and search to find an audience. Women writers, Jewish and non-Jewish, have long searched for appropriate spaces to house their life stories in the world. Virginia Woolf in her diary entry on 20 April 1919, deliberates on approaches to writing styles for her diaries, and parallel qualities could also apply to the bindings of the books themselves: "What sort of diary should I like mine to be? Something loose knit, & yet not slovenly, so elastic that it will embrace anything, solemn, slight or beautiful that comes to mind" (V. Woolf quoted in Anderson 2001: 95). Artists seek a physical form that can embrace them and their lives. This search for a format is about more than just material, paper, and ink; they seek a political freedom for their own experiences, as Linda Anderson has argued about Woolf: "By imagining her diary as an unbounded space, […] she also created the space for something new to emerge" (Anderson 1997: 49). Visual memoir reflects the search for a physical space of memory and the drive to evolve a space for women artists and their voices.

Comics offer a unique space for Jewish women to tell their life stories. The comic form suggests an analogue to traditional Jewish learning and intellectual endeavour. Like the Talmud, the codification of Jewish Oral Law that records rabbinic discussion and development of that Law, the Talmud transforms multi-vocal verbal debate into a text (Steinmetz 2009: 53). A page of Talmud has to incorporate different voices and opinions in a construct not dissimilar to the comic page, with borders and panels (Figure 24.2). Spaces segregate texts, varying font sizes create different emphases. In Talmud the different voices and texts jostle with one another, and on a comics page, text and image pull and push against each other in a similar way, as Charles Hatfield describes in *Alternative Comics*: "Comics would seem radically fragmented and unstable

Figure 24.1 "Show and Tell" (detail) from *Playing the Jewish Card*. Courtesy of Corinne Pearlman (2009). Pen and ink on paper

Figure 24.2 Page of Talmud (from the Tractate relating to building a Sukkah – a temporary dwelling)

[…] composed of several kinds of tension, in which various ways of reading—various interpretative options and potentialities—must be played against each other" (2005: 36). The varying forms of comics, often changing from page to page, thereby resemble the different voices and arguments on a Talmud page. Comics similarly achieve a dialogue that ebbs and flows through collaboration between two art forms.

Comics have other qualities that offer powerful metaphors for Jews and diaspora—for telling a history of exile and of being outsiders in another's lands. Hatfield describes comics as "restless" and "polysemiotic," stretching and developing as "a wandering variable" (2005: xiv). In many cases comics are considered an outsider art form and often dismissed as low culture, neither literature nor fine art. The comics medium is attractive for Jewish women artists who share a history of exclusion as Jews and as women in societies that retain elements of an anti-Semitic and misogynist cultural heritage. While many Jewish women comics artists address themes of being an outsider in their comics, a particularly instructive and early example is Sharon Rudahl's autobiographical comic *The Star Sapphire* (1974). In it she exploits the qualities of comics to describe her own life journey, traveling *outside* her religion and *away* from her family, into a rondo, a visualized and physical commune of security and acceptance.

Rudahl's work has been published in underground newspapers and magazines—she was part of the collective that started *Wimmen's Comix* (1972) and she contributed to *Anarchy Comix #2* and *#3* (1979)—and she recently illustrated *A Dangerous Woman: The Graphic Biography of Emma Goldman* (2007), the Jewish anarchist and revolutionary. Rudahl describes the exclusions she experienced when she was making comics in the 1970s:

> I realized I had faced so much more sexism in art school and in my home community and in looking for employment, housing, etc.—that the world of comics seemed comparatively open. Certainly there was far less anti-Semitism in 1970s San Francisco than in 1950s and 1960s southern USA. Where I was raised, in Virginia and Maryland, there were still covenants against Jews living in certain neighborhoods, I was refused entrance to private schools, Jews and non-Jews did not mingle socially, and so forth. So for me, what may have been incomplete liberties were nonetheless great freedoms.
>
> (Rudahl 2011)

Rudahl's "incomplete liberties" are reflected in the narrative of *The Star Sapphire,* a four-page comic first published in *Comix Book* (1974). It opens with a young Rudahl "rummaging through trunks at the Salvation Army" (Rudahl 1974: 8) (Figure 24.3). This choice of shop already suggests a world where rejected items find new hope, in a space dedicated to community spirit and charity. Rudahl becomes aware that the stone from her ring—a star sapphire—has fallen out. As an assistant helps Rudahl look for the star sapphire, the artist reminisces how the stone was from her engagement ring, a gift from her fiancé with whom she was co-habiting: "When I was young and in love […] we lived together long before it was in style. I was a girl, going to art school in the big city. My parents objected and never let me forget" (Rudahl 1974: 8).

Juxtaposed with the sensuous drawing of a free wheeling naked young woman making love to her long-haired boyfriend, surrounded by lounging cats, is a sharp-edged word balloon representing the voice of Rudahl's mother: "I tell you, my heart's not what it was. The doctor said I shouldn't worry you" (Rudahl 1974: 8). Guilt, anxiety, and pressure to conform to the accepted practices of traditional Judaism remind the viewer of just how radical Rudahl's life is in the context of her family. The religious and familial emphasis of keeping oneself apart and insulated from outside influences, of being wary of fashion and change, argue with Rudahl's images, which celebrate free love and independence.

Figure 24.3 The Star Sapphire (1994) (1 of 4). Courtesy of Sharon Rudahl. Ink on paper

Much of the narrative of the comic is about Rudahl's struggle to get married. Reaction to the engagement is dubious: "We promised to marry, my father cried and accepted our decision." The wedding itself keeps being delayed, because of a litany of excuses from her fiancé (Rudahl 1974: 9). The emphasis here is on the reactions, expectations, and thoughts of others: "My parents were tired of making excuses to their neighbours" (Rudahl 1974: 9). The couple are pressured by the requirements of the marriage license (Rudahl is under twenty-one), and as a result the ceremony needs to be performed by a judge or clergy. They go to a Russian Orthodox temple on 10th Street, a Lutheran church on Second Avenue, a Unitarian church, and an Orthodox Jewish synagogue. All reject them. The response at the synagogue is symptomatic of the insider/outsider theme—forbidding marrying out: "No! It is evil! Evil! You must stay within the faith!" (Rudahl 1974: 3). Ironically, the Rabbi's response excludes and alienates Rudahl from the Jewish community even further. This exile is emphasized by the way in which the image of the young lovers being sent from the synagogue mimics Adam and Eve being banished from Eden in Masaccio's painting. Rudahl replays and plays off the displeased father figure in the earlier work as well as the loss of home and of being sent unprotected into a wilderness, revisiting these figurative displacements and exile on a later generation.

The Star Sapphire is thus also a coming-of-age narrative, a complementary mode of commentary that charts Rudahl's life as she begins to grasp her own destiny. Looking to get married, and for a priest or a rabbi to carry out that marriage, Rudahl is waiting for a man to define her, to make her "kosher." She wants to choose a life away from traditional roles, and acknowledges she is living ahead of her time, yet she seeks traditional means to emancipate herself. Rudahl's life choices cannot fit comfortably with any of the communities she approaches.

In *The Star Sapphire* two central objects act as narrative motifs: a star sapphire engagement ring and a wooden chest. Each represents a movement away from being contained and controlled, concluding with the creation of Rudahl's own space in society. The comic's narrative begins with her losing the stone from her ring—a stone that played to her mother's materialism; "A star sapphire huh? Not bad" (Rudahl 1974: 9). In losing the stone, and ultimately not caring that she does, Rudahl frees herself of her anxiety for approval that is represented by the Salvation Army shop. The loss of the stone also signifies, in the narrative, the end of the memories of her marriage (an "anti-war priest" eventually performs a quick and simple wedding), creating space for Rudahl to emerge as herself and not as a daughter or wife. More specifically, the empty space of the lost stone is filled materially, psychologically, and narratively by a wooden chest, which in turn will be filled by new interests and events. Rudahl says: "I think I **will** buy this trunk—it's perfect for my comics collection" (Rudahl 1974: 12). The bold format that emphasizes the word "**will**" here is significant. This is a statement of self-definition that emerges earlier. Her ambitions grow out of her fiancé's ambivalence: "If he doesn't marry me, I'll go to Graduate School" (Rudahl 1974: 9). Although Sharon seems to describe this thought as a "desperate resolution," the word "I" indicates a sense of empowerment and liberation in that she does not defer to the agendas of others. In Rudahl's drawing of her old world and herstory, she redraws the lost stone in the title panel of her comic where its loss becomes her artistic and personal gain (Rudahl 1974: 1).

The format of *The Star Sapphire* well reflects comics' symbiotic relationships with form and narrative. Charles Hatfield discusses how the works of some comics creators are "characterized by a keen grasp not only of comics as a narrative form [but] also the physical medium" (Hatfield 2005: 63). Many of Rudahl's panels use the spaces drawn on the page to symbolize the artist's struggle with conventional expectations of women's personal and social behavior and the pressure to conform to Jewish cultural expectations, "before it was in style" (Rudahl 1974: 8). As Hatfield notes, comics use a "traditional grid-like panelling [that] enclose and delimit open spaces" (Hatfield 2005: 63). Significantly, two panels whose images are not self-contained within their frames mark moments of freedom. In the opening panel, as Rudahl is looking for her ring, her long black hair tumbles outside the border of the panel and her foot similarly stretches outside it. In the final panel of the comic, which is drawn as a circle, Rudahl is sitting eating supper with others from her commune (Figure 24.4). Whilst the comic is about a lost stone, an incomplete ring, Rudahl finds happiness in her own shape, in the final circle, inside her own chosen community. This final panel signifies completion—her ring found. Surrounded by others who support her, Rudahl is reminded: "Don't forget: Cartoonists Union meeting tonite" (Rudahl 1974: 12). Rudahl's quest is traced through guilt (mother), unfaithfulness (ex-husband) and rejection (religious figures) until the Union and commune appear, communities that accept and protect her interests just as the newly acquired wooden chest protects her comics and, symbolically, her art and ambitions.

Rudahl's drawing style is expressive and descriptive, and it too furthers her comic's dialogue about Jewish women's outsiderness. She frequently uses graphic shading, or cross hatching, and Rudahl's rich cascading hair is intricately filled with tiny dots that stand out like a reversed constellation of stars—her hair shines with and without the star sapphire. This hair has a richness and depth: black and curled around her, it is the tonal, binary opposite of the white cats that languish around the flat. Rudahl's hair significantly stands out in the comic, remarkable and distinguished. There is, in fact, an unmistakable sense of celebration in the drawing of her hair, reflecting the intense concentration and the delight at draftsmanship in its creation, as Rudahl explains: "I've aspired to illustration rather than comics style—influenced by the woodcuts of Fritz Eichenberg, Käthe Kollwitz prints, Daumier, etc. Comics impose limitations of space and

Figure 24.4 The Star Sapphire (1994) (4 of 4). Courtesy of Sharon Rudahl. Ink on paper

time, which I welcome, but I have noticed my work becomes more dense and elaborate with more generous deadlines" (Rudahl 2011). The drawing of the hair in *The Star Sapphire* bursts forth from the page, with all its forms and movement; the paneling and page only just about contain it.

This resonates with the narrative tensions of *The Star Sapphire*, where the comics format is both a relief and a limitation. Rudahl's drawings echo Teresa Strasser's attitude in "On Jewish Hair" and Strasser's ambivalence in that article about straightening her own curly hair, which she sees mirrored in other women's hair: "I just know that lurking inside this woman's well-tamed wall of hair is a mass of curls just waiting to break free, like my own" (Strasser 1998). And as Connie Koppelman observes in "The Politics of Hair" (1996) women's hair can be interpreted as "a sign of strength, power […] or powerlessness" (Koppelman 1996: 87). A reading of Rudahl's hair in *The Star Sapphire* is similarly conflicted, revealing an ambivalent relationship with structure and conformity, and a burgeoning celebration of her individual identity and authenticity. Rudahl's hair escapes the panel borders to suggest an unbounded individualism and her artist's journey beyond her family and outside her religion, into comics and her own community.

These are the themes and cultural dynamics that animate the creative community within *Graphic Details: Confessional Comics by Jewish Women*, and which are explored by the other artists in the exhibit. Holocaust survivor Miriam Katin's "Eucalyptus Nights" (2006) is a four-page

comic in pencil that explores the racism Katin experiences in the Israeli Defence Force in the 1960s. The artist falls for a Moroccan soldier, but is warned by her superior: "Listen to me I know what I am talking about. He is not for you. You don't understand. They are different. Not as civilized. You should not carry on with one of those. And your parents … " (Katin 2006: 8). Katin is surprised and replies, whilst staring at the officer's own concentration camp numbers tattooed on his arm "How can you sir, talk like that? A Jew? Is a Sephardi not a Jew?" (Katin 2006: 8). In the eyes of the Nazis all Jews were Jews, but suddenly, in the Jewish state, they are not all equal. The officer reminds her to think of her parents, both Holocaust survivors, yet ironically during the Holocaust all Jews experienced what it was like to be an outsider.

Miss Lasko-Gross and Ariel Schrag also address the social and cultural differences between Jews. In "The Gruswerk's Sabbath," from Lasko-Gross's autobiography *Escape from Special* (2002), the setting is a traditional Jewish Friday night dinner. Whilst the blessing over candles is written in Hebrew font and said by her hosts, Lasko-Gross has her own, humorous, transliteration of the prayers: "Barbie-Ruck-A-Toy-Ad-Annoy." The father of the hosting family is unimpressed by Lasko-Gross's interpretation and silences her: "If you cannot speak it correctly say nothing" (Lasko-Gross 2002: 63). Lasko-Gross amuses herself as she plays with her kippah, making it fall off her head. Again, the father reprimands her, threatening to exclude her: "Sit quietly or leave the table" (Lasko-Gross 2002: 64). Lasko-Gross states, "I'm glad my family isn't Orthodox and has a sense of humour," acknowledging that even within traditional activities among other Jews there are many ways to be an outsider. The translation of behaviors is as complex and subjective as linguistic transliteration.

Ariel Schrag's "The Chosen" (2007) also addresses different levels of Orthodoxy, Jewishness, and belonging. The artist wants to rent her apartment through a Hasidic agent. Previous experience has taught her that if she acknowledges that only her father but not her mother is Jewish she will be considered "Not Jewish." So this time she thinks "I liked Joseph and I wanted him to like me"—so when he asks if she is Jewish she replies "Yes" (Schrag 2007: 31). At the end of the comic she worries Joseph will know she was lying: "Had Joseph's image of me been shattered?" (Schrag 2007: 31). The comic ends on a note of accomplishment: "But no matter what, for at least two weeks, I had been one of The Chosen" (Schrag 2007: 31). "The Chosen" as a comic frames this moment of dialogue materially, for in seven of the sixteen panels in the comic Schrag as an artist has enabled Schrag the Jew to belong. To many of the artists in *Graphic Details*, comics offer an artistic home for a people who live in exile, for women who feel conflicted and excluded even when they are among family and surrounded by other Jews. Rudahl's wooden trunk from The Salvation Army, connoting a kind of spiritual recycling of Jewish argumentation and memory, and with its history of transport between owners and different uses, is a perfect icon of comics as a container for Jewish women's lives in flux.

My own quest to combine traditional Jewish forms with autobiography, as I seek my own identity, is one of the subjects of my autobiographical project, *The Hampstead Bible*, which includes *The Book of Sarah* (Figure 24.5). The seeds for *The Book of Sarah* were sown two years before I actually began drawing it. In 1992 in Jerusalem I studied at an Orthodox feminist seminary, learning Talmud. I then returned to London for a foundation year at Central/St. Martin's School of Art, and then on to a degree course at Slade School of Art in 1995. But after a number of terms at the Slade I felt increasingly uneasy. My religious life encouraged a structured day, and constant awareness of rules, limitations, and time frames. Yet the degree course encouraged us to follow our own instincts, create our own agendas and projects, and express ourselves. Art school was a place where clothing and sexual relations were autonomous and self-expressive, but the behavior and dress of Orthodox Jewish women was monitored by strict guidelines. I was not sure how to marry religious life and art school, and I found myself too
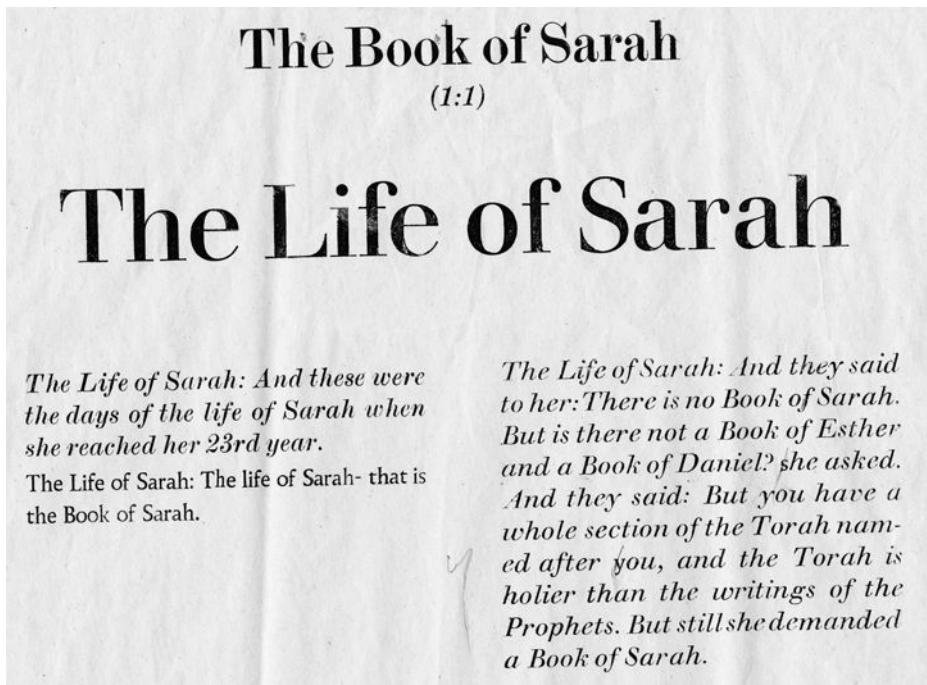
Figure 24.5 The Book of Sarah (1996). Sarah Lightman. Pencil on paper, ink on paper

self-conscious to begin the process of discovering a reconciliation of my worlds in the shared studios. My professor, the Jewish painter Bernard Cohen, saw me struggling. "Go home," he suggested, and so I found myself in my art studio at the back of my parents' garden, looking through family photographs and hoping this might give me a sense of who I was, where I came from, and what kind of art I wanted to make. Drawing from those photographs became part of a greater project, plaiting the personal and the political. I decided to return to what I knew and had experienced. My sister and brother, Esther and Daniel, had their own literature in the Bible, *The Scroll of Esther* and *The Book of Daniel* respectively, but I did not. So I decided to rectify this oversight in my Biblical heritage, as well as humorously reflect upon sibling rivalry.

On a grander scale, I was committed to re-engaging Judaism with the visual instead of just the textual. Jewish experience for me had been an intellectual and not aesthetic experience, unlike Catholic churches which were beautiful spaces where art elicited awe. The synagogues I attended were utilitarian, and sparsely decorated. I spent hours reading and studying Jewish books and examined pages of Hebrew and Aramaic text, until the words started to swirl. But I was frustrated by the Rabbinic emphasis on text—and my visual analysis, imagination, and graphic skills were not valued. I knew images could be complex, profound, important for coherence, and subject to different interpretations like the texts I read, so I wanted to create a new Jewish visual literature. *The Book of Sarah* was to be full of narrative self-portraits and studies of family photographs and diary drawings interspersed with texts from the Torah as they figured in my life—a text to be read and seen, that could have depth and reflect personal and Jewish national history.

In 1996 I created a work from pages of tracing paper sewn together, called *The Scroll of Sarah*. On it I wrote the story of the family origins of my name. I performed a reading of this scroll in

my undergraduate seminars. In my religious world this was a creative and self-expressive overspill, but also critical of my community. I frequently went to synagogue, but because it was Orthodox I was unable to read from the Torah Scrolls myself. I also went to *shiurim* (religious classes), but found the emphasis was on reading and on the opinions and arguments of others, with less encouragement for my own interpretations. Additionally, men taught many of these classes, and I wondered if female logic and argument would have come to different conclusions.

I found myself excited by the intellectual possibilities of university but simultaneously bewildered, and I turned inwards to sustain myself and inspire my art. I started to draw my life. On the first few pages of the earliest series of drawings are three elements, a text and two drawings. The handwritten text, written directly onto the page reads: "I've loved reading/ Living in other people's worlds/Reading so I could place myself in mine" (Lightman 1996a: 1) (Figure 24.6). The two drawings that accompany this text are a partial drawing of my face as a one-year old, and *The Scroll of Sarah*. The scroll is drawn partially unravelled, a hand (my own) is pointing at the text on the scroll, reading it like a Torah Scroll in synagogue. The text reads: "Esther Sarah was the name of my great grandmother on my paternal side, Sarah is the name of her mother. Esther was the name of my grandmother on my maternal side" (Lightman 1996b: 2). Like the biblical chapters that list names of characters, I list all the others who had my name before me. The rest of the text is difficult to read as the hand and arm that points at the word "Sarah" covers it up, mimicking my own sense of only slowly growing into myself. *The Scroll of Sarah* is partially unrolled, a life as yet unread, undrawn, and unwritten.

In the pages that follow, I merge the two drawn elements, with my own face looking out from the scroll. I wanted to describe what it felt like living in a religion and a family when I was trying to create my own identity. I felt claimed by others; my history and family was loving and
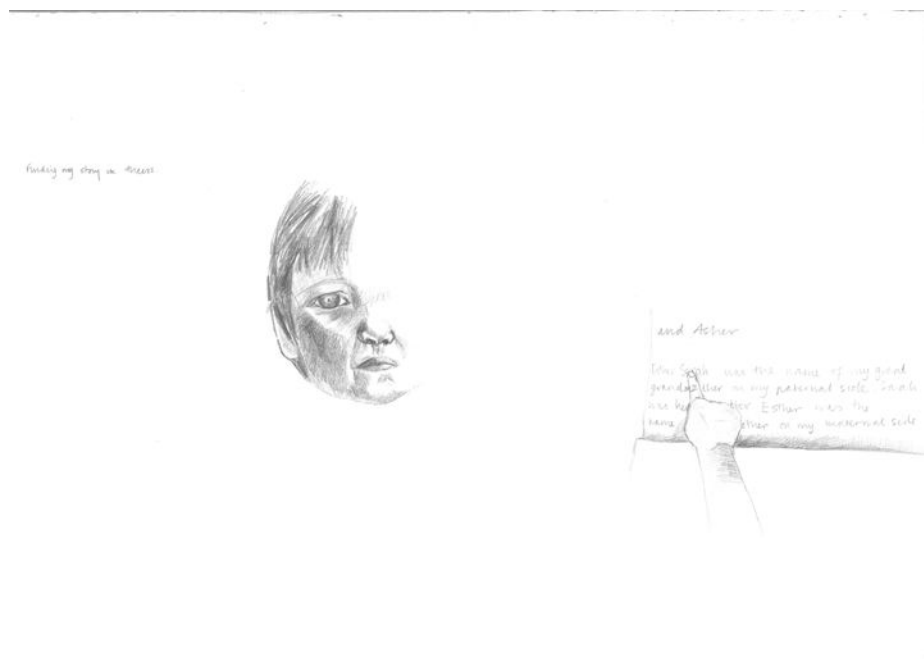
Figure 24.6 The Book of Sarah (1996). "Finding my Story in Theirs." Sarah Lightman. Pencil on paper

secure but also suffocating and entrapping, enclosed and belonging to others. Caught between the narrative voice and the scroll, my face can only begin to develop. My own personal archaeology is a balance between creation and revelation.

I continued my visual autobiography over the next two years, in big, hard-backed black sketchbooks resembling the books of the Talmud that were sitting on my shelves at home, increasingly going unread. My drawings revealed an awareness of how my past relationships with my family were influential in my present. To be born last, into a pre-existing structure of a family of four, brings its own dynamics, as I write: "Constructing yourself in an already established community" (Lightman 1996). These drawings show my siblings and I as we pose, push and squabble in our photograph—I lean on my sister, and also stand on her toe. In looking backward to old photos, and capturing them with my pencil, I controlled the external transitions in my life. Every day when I opened my sketchbooks, I entered a quiet and protected space away from the outside noise and complex events taking place. Drawing became a way for me to acknowledge my emotions and express my feelings in a quiet way without fear of anyone's reactions. In an essay printed to accompany my exhibition of diary drawings, "In Memoriam" (2009) at New Hall Art Collection, University of Cambridge, Kylie Cardell wrote: "Traditionally, diaries have often been used as modes for spiritual and individual reflection and in this context were perceived as forms that encapsulated a value of care for the self" (Cardell 2009: 2). Cardell touched on both the religious and also therapeutic drive to make these works.

When I first started *The Book of Sarah* I was an observant Jew at university, questioning my own identity. The only space I had, where I felt comfortable making art, was in my studio at the back of my parent's garden. It was a very lonely time, but here was important, protected, and undisturbed space, away from art school fashions and influences, and my feelings resonated with those of the German–Jewish painter Charlotte Salomon in her "Postscript": "I had to go further into solitude, completely away from all humanity. Then perhaps I could find—what I had to find: namely myself. A name for me" (Salomon quoted in Watson 2002: 412). At art school I hovered between the painting department and the media department, as my text image work did not fit comfortably into either. In Salomon, I found an artistic mentor, and years later I found the world of comics, my first artistic community.

My work both belongs and does not belong in comics, and my drawings look different from the majority of comic artists. I do not use panelling, preferring to work over a whole uninterrupted page, and my style of drawing is very labored and careful, without the loose graphic style of many artists. Yet comics offer a world I feel comfortable and welcomed in: my drive to tell narrative is accepted unquestioningly, whilst in the fine art world it was viewed with suspicion. Perhaps also the underground roots of the comics world meant that I experienced less competitiveness and was greeted with a generous attitude. Like Rudahl, I find inspiration for my art from other artists, and like her I record the process of finding a voice and a community and of dealing with unsuccessful relationships—about feeling separate and dissonant from surroundings and using the space of the page to express this.

My most recent work is "The Reluctant Bride" (Lightman 2012) a two-minute animation film based on diary drawings that traces my engagement and my ambivalence toward the traditional Jewish and secular wedding cultures. "How can I be a feminist in a traditional Jewish wedding?" (2012: 10) I ask, as I struggle with ill-fitting shoes and over-priced underwear: "As I say to my friends it may not be the happiest day of my life, but it sure will be the most expensive" (2012: 12). The narrative of the "Reluctant Bride" changes halfway through the film: "Meanwhile my Grandfather is ill and in hospital" (2012: 14)—and I return to traditional Jewish practice. "We read him Psalms" (2012: 15), I say, and the text moves from left to right. Then, "Though I walk through the Gates of Death" (2012: 16) written in Hebrew, traces

across the screen right to left—two moments of departure, two valedictory texts. An image of my husband-to-be, Charlie appears with a candle in front of him: "All this reinforces how much family means. Makes me feel glad and blessed to have a man I love who will be my family now too" (2012: 17). Charlie's face disappears and we are left just with a candle: "A candle for my Grandpa's sweet soul said the lady from the Burial Society" (2012: 18). The visual and textual struggle of two languages that are read in different directions, and the intertwining of written and spoken words, reflect my struggle with Jewish tradition, yet my simultaneous comfort in its rituals.

This is an uncomfortable but enabling dialogue during a time of endings and new beginnings, of overlapping life-changing moments. I hover between questioning, dismissing, and relying on the thousand-year-old practices of Jewish life. Today's society makes the exhibition of such intimate drawings pertinent and also enlightening—making the ordinary, extraordinary. *Graphic Details* exhibits eighteen Jewish women doing just that by making comics of their lives, and when the show opens in new gallery spaces many more artists approach me with their work. In our curator's introduction to the exhibit, Michael Kaminer and I wrote: "We live in a world of unfiltered sharing, partly thanks to Facebook, Twitter and cell phones. In that context, the ability to transform material from one's own life into art becomes a particular form of alchemy" (Lightman and Kaminer 2010: 2).

Essential reading

Baskind S. and Omer–Sherman R. (2008) *The Jewish Graphic Novel: Critical Approaches*. New Jersey: Rutgers University Press. A wide selection of fascinating essays on Jews and comics including a visual essay by Miriam Libicki.

Chute, H. L. (2010) *Graphic Women: Life Narrative and Contemporary Comics*. New York: Columbia University Press. The first academic book dedicated to the autobiographical comics and memoirs by women—including the work of Aline Kominsky-Crumb.

Graphic Details: Confessional Comics by Jewish Women. The first exhibition to thoroughly examine the history of Jewish women's autobiographical comics. The exhibition also resulted in a book, Sarah Lightman (ed.) (2014) *Graphic Details*: *Jewish Women's Confessional Comics in Essays and Interviews*. Jefferson, NC: McFarland.

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PLAYING WITH HISTORY

Jewish subjectivity in contemporary lens-based art

Rachel Garfield

Introduction: contextual factors

What does an explicit engagement with Jewish identity give to an art practice and what does such a practice tell us of our lived relations as Jews – in our multifarious ways of relating to that term? The urgency of this question can be understood within a context of multiculturalism where art is seen as a key component in the production of culture. The post war model for art funding has revolved around the idea that art has an impact on society and therefore can be of use in improving it; art projects are often funded on the basis of their direct impact on local neigh–borhoods and their communities.[1] Recent governments have seen the visual arts as central to developing economic regeneration and social cohesion in multicultural cities (Fisher 2011: 63). This is an instrumentalist vision of what art does and I suggest in this essay that art can stimulate change in a more subtle and profound way through the way it forms an understanding of the subject that is not altogether coherent or in line with a putative community. My aim is not to find artists who confirm a special relationship to victimhood, nor who celebrate Judaism parti–cularly. Alongside many contemporary thinkers such as Stuart Hall or Judith Butler, and building on their work, I am concerned with posing questions that address what possibilities are constituted through thinking about identity as an ongoing and negotiated articulation of lived relations.

Judith Butler has famously posited that "the subject is produced in discourse" (Bell 1999: 164), arguing that there is no fixed, authentic or stable core of the self, but that the coercive norms of society form you, the subject, in a way that is constantly being rearticulated with and through the world. In that sense, identity is an effect of reiterative practices. If, then, identity is unstable, art must take account of the provisional subject that arises out of instability, in order to tell us something that is relevant to our sense of self in the viewing.

In thinking about reiterative instability or what I might in a more positive vein call reiterative provisionality (as what is provisional is only ever for-the-moment and to be changed later), Walter Benjamin can be usefully drawn from, through his text *The Storyteller* (Benjamin 1999). Benjamin pits the experiential and interpretative value of storytelling through repetition and assimilation against the verifiability of information, such as journalism. Benjamin argues that a story "does not expend itself" unlike information. Information, he states, is ephemeral and overrun by the next latest news bulletin. The value of storytelling is ongoing, likening this figure of the storyteller to teachers and sages (Benjamin 1999: 83–107).

I propose that the art considered in this chapter, that of Susan Hiller, Suzanne Treister, and Doug Fishbone, enriches the notion of reiterative provisionality and looks to a much needed transformation of thinking in so-called mainstream Anglophone Jewish cultural narratives. I focus here on their video works as this form can offer a unique contribution to the questioning of the formation of subjectivity through the contingency of the edit – its relationship to the real and time.

Historically, photography and film have been associated with the truth through their indexical link (or trace) to the real. There are three ways to read an image: indexical, iconic, and symbolic. The indexical is where the referent has a role in the making of the image and leaves a physical trace, such as a scratch or a footprint, or a photograph: light from the sun reflects off the object and instigates a chemical reaction with the film and this is what produces the photograph. Photography can weave a path through all three (such as the iconicity of a photograph of Marilyn Monroe for example), however, in the analogue, it always holds an indexical link. The artists I analyze here use the lens to subvert the idea of the index through provisionality and to question the notion of authenticity and the stability of the subject in various ways that I will elaborate, explain, and explore through this essay.

Although all of the artists operate from London, Susan Hiller and Doug Fishbone grew up in the United States and Suzanne Treister lived and worked in Australia during the 1990s. Thus they all have a broad relationship with the Anglophone world. They are each from different generations, which in some ways forms the nuances of their approaches. I have chosen these artists because they offer me a way of thinking that does not try to recuperate a metaphorical Jewish home or access to an authentic past (of the "I matter because my grandparents died in the Holocaust" variety), but, rather, situates Jewishness within the common terms of reference for contemporary artists – of structures of power, performative subjectivity, and history. So their art represents broadly two methodologies that question the terms of representation in the visual field: problematizing the received account of the past and the authority of those versions of history through the archive; and questioning the subject through the invention of "personas" in art. It is, perhaps, not surprising that artists who are Jewish have been amongst those at the forefront of these kinds of practices.[2]

Any consideration of an artist's career or the visibility and value of an artwork needs to consider the context in which it arises. Art practices that explore Jewish identity do so inevitably within the hegemonic discourses of Ashkenazi Jewry and the proliferation of US scholarship on Jewishness and particularly the Holocaust. In the US, the dominant identity discourses are generally couched within a narrative of "hyphenated identity" that, I would suggest, emphasizes the importance of origin such as *African*-American or *Irish*-American, so that by being American you are free to be from *somewhere else* and more, that you are truly authentic in your origin through the fact of being American. This dominant narrative persists despite the considerable critical thinking in academia that has challenged and continues to contest origin narratives in the US (e.g. Sollors 1986). However, apart from some notable exceptions in academia such as Paul Gilroy, origins are understood in singular terms, and there are attendant hierarchies and rivalries between different identity groups (Mirzoeff 1999). In the UK, race is also overdetermined (that is, subject to pre-existing suppositions) but resonates differently from concerns with the Black/ White divide and where Jews may fit in. The legacies of slavery do not dominate as an overriding feature, nor does race define the subject so completely, which may be due to the influence of class on perceptions of entitlement. Otherness features prominently, however, in rightwing discourse on the alien. Yet for Ashkenazi Jews in the UK the dominant self-narrative is still that of emancipation through the assimilationist discourses of the Enlightenment (Steyn 1999; Garfield 2003; Stratton 2000; Brown 2006) – in contrast to the defining narratives of other ethnic

communities: the postcolonial struggle for visibility within representations of Whiteness and the multicultural celebration of difference. As Zygmunt Bauman has stated,

> the age into which a minority is emancipated will to a large extent determine the priorities of its self-identification, not only at the time of emancipation itself but into the future as well.
>
> (Bauman 1986: 52)

Jewish artists, in the main, fall between two different forms of advocacy. On the one hand, there is the line of scholarly enquiry that searches for an existential sense of "Jewishness" in the expressive mark-making of Abstract Expressionist artists such as Mark Rothko and Barnett Newman in the US (Chava 1989; Hess and Newman 1972) and expressive figuration such Frank Auerbach or Leon Kossoff (Hyman 2001) in the UK. On the other hand there is a developed discourse of Otherness in the art world that does not generally include Jewish artists. This can be seen in operation through the "astonishingly hostile reception of the London critics" (Wolff 2000: 31) to R. B. Kitaj's retrospective at London's Tate Gallery in 1994 which is still a resonant example of the difficulty for artists who make "Jewish work."[3] The reception was in direct contrast to the press build-up to the opening: Kitaj had been one of the artistic elite in the UK until this exhibition (Figenschou 2002: 14). In this exhibition Kitaj added explanatory texts beside the paintings that framed fifteen of them in Jewish terms (Steyn 1999: 153–71). It was these fifteen out of seventy five that were picked up on again and again in the press, for example Wlademar Januczek's review in *The Guardian*:

> There are few subjects in art which I, as a gentile and a coward, feel less qualified to comment upon than the subject of another man's Jewishness. But that is exactly what the new Ron Kitaj exhibition fiercely demands of the spectator.
>
> (Steyn 1999: 153)

The ghettoization of artists who make "Jewish" work is not just the case in the UK. Despite the apparent support of numerous Jewish museums and many collectors, Deborah Kass, an artist who exhibited in the influential "Too Jewish? Challenging Traditional Identities" (1996) exhibition at the Jewish Museum New York, also concurred that making "Jewish work" is tantamount to "professional suicide" (interview with R. Garfield, 2003). What Kass means is that making work about Jewish identity severely limits an artist's ability to be exhibited, collected, and written about in the art world at large. Both Kitaj and Kass make work with explicitly Jewish content and both claim it has significantly undermined their ability to "make it" in the art world. These examples expose what is at stake in "coming out Jewish" as an artist. While my case studies suggest that this may be changing now, the most prevalent paradigm in the art world is still one of a presumed internationalism but one that excludes Jewish identity.

The commonplace assumption in the contemporary Anglophone art world is one of "post-identity": the argument that identity politics is no longer needed (Jones 2012). Conversely there are those who argue that it is still important, not least the galleries committed to supporting marginalized groups. Debates about ghettoization and "the burden of representation" (i.e. the burden to represent "your" community) remain familiar in the UK, even while there is now support for "Black arts" in the guise of funding for special prizes and galleries or group shows in the UK and also a considerable collector base in the US.[4] Indeed many artists from the Southern hemisphere or of postcolonial heritage are still caught within the inverse problematic identified by Jean Fisher, that of being ignored unless they show obvious signs of cultural

difference in their work, thereby exoticizing themselves (Fisher 1995: 3–7). As I have argued elsewhere, Jews are seen to have a choice of whether to be Other or not, a choice which other minorities have yet to have conferred on them (Garfield 2001). Meanwhile one of the key shifts in scholarly discourse over the past two decades has been the shift of concern from race to the post-9/11 discourse of faith; yet neither term is adequate for an analysis of Jewishness. Depending on the overall artistic approach, categorization (and art making) through markers of race, ethnicity or faith can be at the same time a straightjacket, a liberation, and an ethical platform.

The archive

The curator Okwe Enwezor has set out the reasons for the predominance of contemporary artworks that use the archive. Building on the work of Jacques Derrida and Michel Foucault Enwezor views the archive "as an active, regulatory and discursive system" and thus a fruitful source of artistic enquiry (Enwezor 2008: 11). As well as an already constituted archive, in its broadest terms the notion of the archive encompasses any historical objects, found footage or documents. Artists themselves, of course, create archives by bringing objects together and with this methodology, they claim, hold the world up to scrutiny through a non-didactic form of commentary. Working with an archive for an artist can produce work with many different types of outcome. It is merely the starting point but yet defines the work. The artist scrutinises an archive, making work in response to it, often with a view to asking questions about the formation of historical narratives and the canon. This was first established as a working methodology for artists through what is now known as "institutional critique." Artists who work with the photograph as archive are building on the theoretical work of John Tagg, who has been particularly influential in articulating the relationship between the "truth" of the photograph through its indexical link and the regimes of "truth" enacted by the state in capitalism – the photograph's symbolic "truth" (Tagg 1988). Many Black artists were at the forefront of this kind of work, specifically using the medium of photography to turn the tables on its usage as a tool in racist ethnographic study and eugenics.[5]

The use of the archive in art is a way of re-animating the past, using objects to draw different conclusions now for the future. For an artist thinking about the position or representation of Jews it can be a way to reconsider themes such as anti-Semitism, stereotyping, and the trauma of the Holocaust. At best the archive can be used to take charge of history, to look forward with some kind of agency, challenging stereotypes and hegemonic discourses; at worst, however, it can be used as an agent of reinvestment in nostalgia or narratives of victimhood. Each of the artists I consider here uses the archive in different ways, but each use the material as an object of transformation.

Susan Hiller had her first solo show in the UK in 1973 and now exhibits internationally. Her work generally offers images or objects that catalogue ideologies through modes of representation and she was one of the early proponents of the archive in art. Always her material is derived from pre-existing objects or images and she represents them in multiples. Both the multiple and found footage are common tropes that were developed through the Conceptualist movement from which her work emerged.

The *J Street Project* was developed during a DAAD Fellowship in Berlin in 2005. It consists of photographs and a video. The photographs are shown both on a wall as a grid of framed images, and in a limited edition book. The images are of every street sign in Germany that contains the word "Jew" such as *Judenstrasse, Judenweg, Judenberg*, and so forth, totaling 303. Hiller filmed and photographed them as a testament to the dearth of Jewish communities in
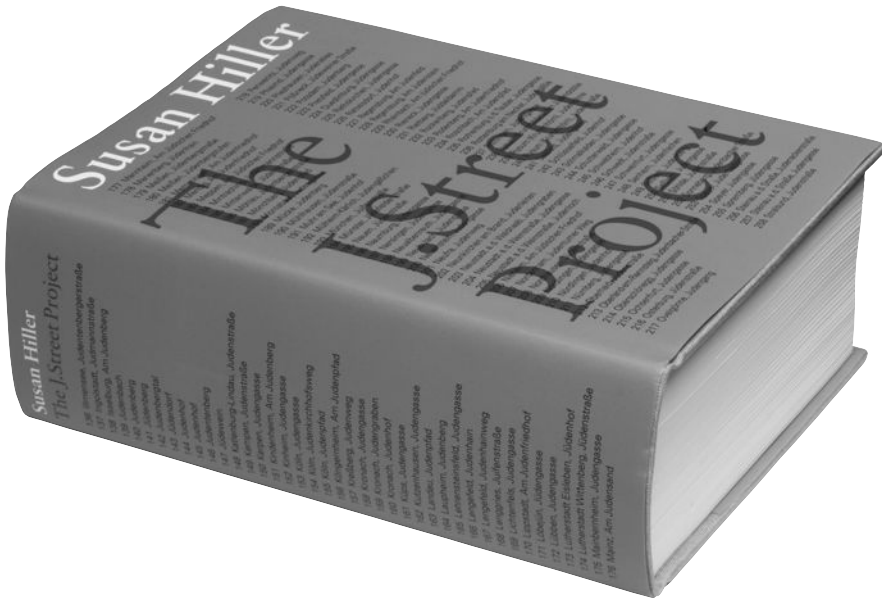
Figure 25.1 Susan Hiller, "The J Street Project," 2002–2005. 303 photographs, each 28.7 x 20cm; map; list of sites; film: colour, 67 min; book, published in 2007

Germany, and a commemoration of the Jews' former status as a significant minority and the history of erasure of those communities. The dust cover of the book version depicts a list of numbered place names, privileging the truth-value of the work. In contrast to artists like Omer Fast, who problematize memory and witnessing, Hiller's piece catalogues through an index, mapping the sites where the streets were found. In *Archive Fever*, Enwezor argues that the camera is an archive-producing machine and in this sense the *J Street Project* produces again the evidence of the communities destroyed, using the indexical link of the photograph in a way that is probably the most prominent artistic response to the Shoah (Figure 25.1).

According to Guy Debord, the horror and Evental properties of the Holocaust are devalued and dissipated by their media representation (Debord 1992). For Mark Godfrey, in contrast, abstraction is a way of circumventing the spectacularization of the Holocaust and Hiller's *J Street Project* functions in this way (Godfrey 2007: 254). However, while abstraction has been important as an anti-spectacular device, it is particularly the relationship between abstraction and the archive that gives the work its impact (and differentiates it from, for example, Claude Landsmann's film *Shoah*). Many contemporary artists use the archive precisely because it obviates spectacularization: *J Street Project* depicts the Holocaust through the absence of Jews. In this way it could be seen to be an inversion, or rather a contemplation of lack and its ciphers.

While indexing loss, this work insists on the present. There is no speaking witness – as with Omer Fast whose film *Spielberg's List* (2003) interviews extras from the film *Schindler's List* on their memories of the film.[6] Nor is there public intervention as in the work of Jochen and Esther Shalev-Gertz, in their anti-monument to the Holocaust, *Monument Against Fascism*, for which the residents of Hamburg were asked to sign their names onto a sinking column.[7] The witness in Hiller's work is the camera, that is the viewer, seeing what the camera sees. In Fast's film, in contrast, the witness is "over there," in the film talking to the viewer. Hiller's video is immersive, placing the viewer in the experience, whereas the interview device in Fast's work

separates the viewer from the experience of loss – but that is in part the point of *Spielberg's List*: laying bare the devices that immerse the viewer in the emotion, or in Spielberg's case, in the *schmaltz*. It is a question of degree however, as Hiller would also claim to be engaged in distancing, using the processes of archiving as a distancing device. The simplicity of the methodology of Hiller and her husband, cataloguing and shooting the film themselves around Germany, also evokes the present as well as the notion of the witness (she who archives). In the video version of the Hiller piece, the viewer's role as witness is underlined by their constant awareness of the present – through incidental sound, of music played, or cars driving past – and through this device temporal distance and proximity envelop each other. Furthermore, this immersive encounter with the everyday amplifies the significant impact of the historical Event: with every road sign the dearth of contemporary Jewry is underlined and re-inscribed, building in poignancy through the film. The mode of filming is knowingly situated also through a generational paradigm in the "prevalence of indirect address, the use of long takes and synchronous sound, tending toward spatiotemporal continuity rather than montage evoking a feeling of the 'present tense'" – purportedly to rid the film of the subjectivity of the filmmaker (Renov 2004: 174) (Figure 25.2).

Hiller's subjectivity cannot be erased so easily, however. In the video, the timing and composition of the images of the roads seems random. However, each shot is beautifully composed, complicating the seemingly mechanistic framework. The format is simple and relies on a multiplicity of single shots. The "long look" of the camera, as Andre Bazin describes the single, fixed frame, is a common device for adding both portent and realism. Here the long look belies an emotional response, pregnant, hovering. That this portentous framing is the canonical paradigm is exemplified through the reception of the Jewish Museum New York exhibition *Mirroring Evil: Nazi Imagery/New Art*. *Mirroring Evil* horrified audiences, specifically because the art worked outside this paradigm, using jokes and irreverent pop culture to describe and critique the role the Holocaust plays in contemporary Jewish consciousness (Kleeblatt 2002).[8] Nonetheless, however important or appropriate to the seriousness of the Shoah or how prevalent an artistic

Figure 25.2 Susan Hiller, "The J Street Project," 2002–2005. 303 photographs, each 28.7 x 20cm; map; list of sites; film: colour, 67 min; book, published in 2007

Figure 25.3 Susan Hiller, "The J Street Project," 2002–2005. 303 photographs, each 28.7 x 20cm; map; list of sites; film: colour, 67 min; book, published in 2007

paradigm, this reference to the index as witness to an atrocity is out of step. Many younger artists today, such as Omer Fast, are suspicious not only of the "truth" indicated through the photograph's indexicality but also of the totalizing aims that the *J Street Project* represents (Figure 25.3).

Feminism and Jewishness

Jonathan and Daniel Boyarin (1996: 87), suggest that feminist theory is at the forefront of critical thinking today and therefore vital to "thinking in Jewish" (Boyarin 1996: 92). Artists who emerged with the second wave feminism of the 1960s were quick to incorporate questions about the body, labor, and visibility and were thus at the forefront of exploring the constitution of the subject in representation. This has usefully been explained and interrogated by art historians.[9] Photography and film, particularly tropes from documentary practice, were important in developing a visual language that had a direct relationship with events in the world and the representation of the subject. The link between Jewishness and feminism, however, has been underexplored. Lisa Bloom's recent book shows its continuing relevance, claiming that Jewish identity is the ghost haunting feminist art (Bloom 2006). Bloom interrogates the practices of key artists in the 1970s, namely Judy Chicago, Eleanor Antin, Martha Rosler, and Mierle Lederman Ukeles, to analyze the problematic of elision and exclusion. She shows how the complexity of their practices was ignored by scholars, who only focused on the feminist tropes. Furthermore, Bloom argues that Jewish identity was the subaltern presence that could not even be seen or read in the work by critics at the time (Bloom 2006: 11–12). Others, whose work does not include explicitly Jewish imagery, could be added to this roll call of feminist artists such as Joyce Kosloff or Hannah Wilkie. Bloom's book goes some way to overcome a reductive reading of feminist practice in the United States where artists' work is read exclusively in terms of feminism. *Ghosts of Ethnicity* is important in establishing a lineage of critical work in relation to Jewish identity. For

example, one of the key artists of Bloom's ongoing interest and analysis is Eleanor Antin, who has developed a range of personas to think through issues of Otherness, Diaspora and the aspirations of Modernity in the twentieth century. Antin's personas, enacted in photographs or films, are culturally specific and racially marked. "Eleanora Antirova" an invented ballerina, is Black, for example. But what exactly does the device of the persona say about Jewish identity? This question is one that I have asked of other artists who deploy personas, such as Lynn Hershman Leeson, Deborah Kass, and Oreet Ashery.[10] As Cherise Smith argues in her recent book on artists who use personas in relation to Black identity, Antin problematically flattens out different subject positions between Blacks and Jews (Smith 2011). Nonetheless, recent interest in Antin's later "persona" work, rather than just her iconic 1972 photographic piece "Carving: A Traditional Sculpture" (where she photographed her body for thirty-six consecutive days while on a strict diet), may point to conditions that allow for a wider and more complex reading of her work. Bloom suggests that "Carving," usually read as a comment on male expectations of the female body and the nude sculpture, "can be seen as a willful failure to assimilate as a generic subject. Antin doesn't offer an easy solution to the dilemma of being both Jewish and female, but she points to the limits of fitting in by presenting a series of anti-aesthetic photographic self-portraits that refuse to offer a neutral and undisturbing aesthetic experience" (Bloom 2006: 64).

My next case study, Suzanne Treister, explores this artistic terrain in the creation of the persona Rosalind Brodsky. According to Peggy Phelan, whose book *Unmarked: The Politics of Performance* (1993) has been a key text in persona work, the link between the neutral and the normative or hegemonic (i.e. White), re-inscribed in advertising and cinema, is problematized through the use of a persona in art (Phelan 1993: 60–67). Bloom's point, that Jewishness is the ghost of feminism, is exemplified, I would argue, by the way that Phelan elides Cindy Sherman's Jewish identity in her example of performative iterations of the female that critique expectations of normativity. Thus, Phelan is a good example both of how Jewishness is taken for White in art criticism, therefore not worthy of analysis, and also of how Jewish identity is under-theorized by critics who explore persona work.[11] Nonetheless, with the device of the persona, the subject becomes an unstable category. This instability obviates the usual associations of lens-based media with notions of authenticity as the viewer cannot be sure who they are looking at: the indexical link to the trace is profoundly destabilized.

In other words it is discombobulating if your inability to trust that you know who you are looking at in a photograph is explicit, as you cannot be sure of who you are either in this instance of looking, and therefore cannot lose yourself in the Other of the image. Video and film work is particularly incisive in this regard, I would argue, as the modality of time creates gaps and reiterative possibilities for the constitution of a subject mired in undecidability (Jones 2005: 24). Uncertainty in reality can be inserted through the editing process. Editing is the act of putting different images together in time; if there is a slight mismatch in coherence this impacts on the viewing experience, causing uncertainty or undecidability in the viewing subject. This technique was used to great effect by the surrealists, for example (see Krauss 1985). I will explore and explain this further through the next two examples and another theoretical context.

Suzanne Treister: passing as Rosalind Brodsky

Wendy Brown has recently considered the dilemma of Jewish identity in relation to the state. She asks why claims were made for equality for women but for tolerance in relation to Jews. Women, she argues, are considered equal because of the ontology of the female body that can be split into public and private, or, in other words, into reproducing bodies and professional agents. Women

are therefore subordinated, through unequal labor practices for example, *even while* they are given equality in other areas. Jews, on the other hand, through the discourse of emancipation and assimilation have lost their absolute (i.e. corporal) difference and so can be subsumed into society but then are merely tolerated in order to maintain the hegemonic order. Similarly, heterosexual women are equal but lesbian women are tolerated because of the subjugating heterosexual social order (Brown 2006: 75). Tolerance hides its own subordinating role. Importantly, the language of tolerance creates an obstacle to equality through its subjugating language, and at the same time shows by example the point where equality ends and tolerance begins.

Passing has a particular role to play as an example of how the body can be "split and domesticated" through the destabilization of the gaze, in situations where you cannot be sure of who you are looking at. Through the example of passing, Brown brings homosexuals and Jews together with "other racialized bodies" (Brown 2006: 75). Passing is an effect of the subordination of being tolerated at the same time as it is a gesture towards equality through the undecidability of the subject in the viewer's gaze. I would speculate that the predominance of women, gay, and Jewish artists (and those who would claim to traverse those categories) who enact others are working at the fault lines of tolerance, to resist, worry, and refuse the categories that the discourse of tolerance relies upon, thus exposing its regulatory power. Suzanne Treister and Doug Fishbone, whom I will now look at in detail, work at these fault lines.

Suzanne Treister's work encompasses many forms that include drawing, the internet, and video (http://ensemble.va.com.au/tableau/suzy). Treister intentionally overloads imagery and information, and is concerned with history, subjectivity, and structures of power, especially through various devices employed by her persona of the time traveler Rosalind Brodsky (1995–2010). She is a prolific artist and I will focus on videos that crystallize her relevance to my argument that making work using a persona (or personas) destabilizes the certainty-in-looking – or rather, the certainty of being able to tell exactly who you are looking at – that racism relies upon. This operates in a similar way to destabilizing the notion of a canon through interrogating the archive.

While Treister's drawings and paintings may look more accomplished, her videos are particularly apposite for their home-made aesthetic that is intimately linked to the everyday socialization and self-empowerment of the Other. Her whole oeuvre, like Hiller's *J Street Project*, uses the devices of the witness and the archive but with a very different treatment. Treister's videos turn on play: they are funny and deflationary. The deflationary aesthetic employed here and by Doug Fishbone, my final case study, can be characterized as a response to the domination of the "aestheticized gaze" in the academy, a maneuver in the 1990s of anti-spectacularization that continues to be a relevant critique. Treister uses a low-fi visuality with high technology futuristic concepts that send up the B-movie genre of Cold War, paranoid, American sci-fi. Science fiction has had a particular resonance as a counter-hegemonic form and speaks not only of being out-of-time and out-of-place, of "race consciousness as earth bound and anachronistic" (Gilroy 2000: 344), but also in its actual impossibility constitutes a refusal to accept the status quo or the dominant narratives of history. "[B]arred from ordinary humanity … artists seek, like Sun Ra, another mode of recognition in the most alien identity they can imagine" (Gilroy 2000: 348). "Roots" here are the Lacanian *objet petit a,* that is, the desired symbol of the lack of power in reality (an object of both the pain of loss and desire that can never be resolved or made whole again), transformed into a cipher of agency or empowerment in the present.[12] The transformation is achieved by the combination of failure and wish-fulfillment in the approach of her art, particularly through the low-fi kitchen-table strategy that was so important ethically to second-wave feminist artists.

For example, "Ghosts of Maresfield Gardens" (1998), is a video written by Treister's father, in which he acts as the ghost of Sigmund Freud and his wife acts as Freud's daughter Anna.

Figure 25.4 Suzanne Treister, "Ghosts of Maresfield Gardens" (also a component part of the CD ROM "No Other Symptoms – Time Travelling with Rosalind Brodsky," 1999). Medium: Video; duration: 7:00; date: 1998

Sigmund Freud (Treister's father in a sheet), is telling Anna (Treister's mother in a sheet) about how Rosalind Brodsky goes back into the past to tell Freud about the Holocaust, entreating him to go to England, thus saving his life.

In "Rosalind Brodsky's Time Travelling Cookery Show: Episode 1: Pierogi" (1998), a woman stands in her kitchen and unmakes a cake. She is dressed in a silver nineteenth-century style dress, face obscured by a helmet. The unmaking of the German Black Forest cake to make Polish Pierogi is a funny, inverted metaphor for the destruction of Polish Jewry: "I originally invented this recipe for a time travelling journey to try and rescue my Polish grandparents from the Holocaust," she states. Imagining the impossible is a route to agency through an imagined *tikkun olam* of rescue that becomes the *objet petit a* through its impossibility.[13]

In both works, what could be mawkish becomes amusing: the lighting is flat, the close-ups wobble, the costume home-made. The viewer is completely aware of the construct of the video – this is a deflationary and absurdist aesthetic, that refuses to assimilate the Holocaust even while it attempts to satisfy a redemptive desire. The desire played out in the videos is both personal and social. It is on the one hand, to find and save her (Treister/Brodsky's) grandparents and on the other to bring into view the influence on the contemporary of the great figures of modernity by soliciting their attention in fiction (by Treister, using the cipher of Brodsky).

Furthermore, like Antin's work, the fiction conceals the "true" protagonists. The masks and costumes worn by Brodsky in both films accentuates this. The intersubjective gaze, that is the gaze between the viewer and the subject depicted on the film, acts as a mirror back to the viewer, misrepresentation rebounding, lack met with lack of ever-deferred desire. In other words, the viewer does not lose herself in the Other on screen but becomes self-conscious in the viewing.

Figure 25.5 Suzanne Treister, "Rosalind Brodsky Time Travel Research Project: Operation Swanlake" (12 stills from the video component of the project). Medium: Video; duration: 30:00; date: 2004

For Treister, the fact of being Jewish explicitly informs the relationship to her working methodology overall, and unlike many other art practices, brazenly backtracks on some of the rationalist conceits of the Jewish contract of *Wissenshaft des Judentums*.[14] Treister foregrounds the folkoric and the ritual as part of a panoply of tools to comment on the structures of power in the world, with humor rather than didactic judgment, romance, or nostalgia. For example in the spoof sci-fi essay film, *Operation Swanlake* (2004), constructed through photographic stills and drawings, Treister invokes the figure of the Golem. Through "alchemical research" drawings, links are sought and drawn between many seemingly unconnected events and places. In 2028, the Golem helps the fictional Institute of Militronics and Advanced Time Interventionality in its research on sound waves for the Psychotronic transmitter (an instrument that extracts sound waves from images and objects and uses them to communicate with the universe using black hole energy). The names of real historical people, such as Kirov, written in Hebrew text, are common also across the drawings. All information has equal footing in her work, but as it is from the future, it makes a nonsense of the trace or indexical link, instead reconfiguring the archive more as Walter Benjamin's "Storyteller" through an ongoing retelling (Benjamin 1999).

What is at stake in the inflection and transmission of Jewish folklore and ritual, asserts Jonathan Boyarin (1994), is the relationship between the elision of the experience of the Other within Europe (in other words, how the Jews are not regarded as Other because they are seen to be from within Europe[15]) and Europe's relationship to postcolonial subjects who are seen as Other. For Boyarin, the ritual and practice of Judaism is a productive alternative to a Jewish search for origins or victimhood in the terms shaped by the postcolonial debates (Also, in the spirit of Benjamin, it foregrounds and gives importance to the present and future rather than the past).

The *temporality* of Jewish identity, as handed down through the rituals and practices of Judaism, is juxtaposed with the *geographically* placed postcolonial Other, the "immigrants or refugees from some place worse but more loved than here" (Boyarin 1994: 424–28). Treister however, refuses to reject the idiosyncratic specificity of her own historical and geographical legacy and instead transforms it through contact with the present and the imagined future. She does not assimilate into the universal in her work but instead transforms the notion of origin (that is usually geo-graphically understood) into a temporal play with folklore (the passing down of ritual to the present) in *Operation Swanlake* and in other works. Through a secular artistic practice, she gives life to the claim by Boyarin of the need to think about Jewish identity as transmitted through the handing down of tradition through time rather than through a relationship to place (Boyarin 1994).

Unbound by time Brodsky has choices, gaining the power of agency – and Treister has fun with it. Thus Brodsky travels through time to be psychoanalyzed by the heroes that Treister would not be able to access in reality: Freud, Lacan, Kristeva, Jung, and Klein. She visits the Russian Revolution and the Holocaust invoking characters and lived people, not in order to revel in a lost past but to transmute history. She transforms the past into something that is not fixed, through which she (Brodsky/Treister) can change and therefore alter the fate of her

Rosalind Brodsky in her Electronic Time Travelling Costume to rescue her Grandparents from the Holocaust ends up mistakenly on the set of Schindler's List. Krakow, Poland, 1994.

© Institute of Militronics and Advanced Time Interventionality

Figure 25.6 Suzanne Treister, "Rosalind Brodsky in her Electronic Time Travelling Costume to rescue her Grandparents from the Holocaust ends up mistakenly on the set of Schindler's List, Krakow, Poland, 1994" (also a component part of the CD ROM "No Other Symptoms – Time Travelling with Rosalind Brodsky," 1999). Medium: Archival giclée print; dimensions: 70 x 50 cm; date: 1997

family, even if only in her imagination. In fact, in Treister's typical deflationary way, which mistakes the semblance for the real (within the semblance of art), Brodsky rarely achieves what she sets out to, often arriving in the wrong place. For example, according to her online time traveling diary, instead of arriving at the Russian Revolution, she arrives on the set of *Dr Zhivago* by mistake and enjoys the night-life of Madrid, where it was filmed.[16] She also arrives on the set of *Schindler's List* when aiming to rescue her grandparents from the Holocaust. Importantly the time traveling figure here effectively acts as a "deterritorializing" motif, that is a motif with no particular attachment to any ancestral home of origin. The aim, I would argue, is to overcome the contemporary nostalgia for roots.

Treister's strategy of deterritorialization is a significant comment on an art world that, despite its claims to the global, still binds otherness to the notion of geographical origin. That is not all, however, as Brodsky always travels through representation. She does not evoke the witness, she never finds the real Holocaust and never rescues her grandparents nor does she expect to. The lack of utopian fulfillment in her work, the deflationary, humorous aesthetic around Jewish history and tragedy is where the work is contemporary and challenges thinking about Jewish subjectivity.

Doug Fishbone: anti–Semite and Jew

Doug Fishbone is not interested in witnessing nor in *tikkun olam* but in the possibilities of a Subject that cannot be pinned down nor contained. His voice narrates over still images in his films, as a riff on the stand-up. He also performs live. The narrator, usually the voice of authority, in Fishbone's work becomes the trickster. He cites artist Sarah Morris: "the most interesting narrator is one you can't trust" (interview with author 2011). His films from 2003 until 2005 follow the same format: a series of disconnected internet-derived images, displayed in fast succession, while a voiceover tells similarly seemingly disconnected shaggy dog stories, jokes, asides. Like Treister, Fishbone creates a world with no apparent logic external to the tale it weaves, and work that is lo-fi and deflationary. In the first film *The Ugly American* (2003), there is no redemption, just a relentless Lenny Bruce-inspired alienation and self-hatred. The persona formed through the narration could be seen as an inversion of Jean Paul Sartre's definition of the anti-Semite (Sartre 1948), who mimics the Jew's attributes out of a fear of change: it is just this anti-Semitic philistine that Doug Fishbone (a Jewish man) gives voice to in his art. However, this is not a nihilistic project. In other films such as "Towards a Common Understanding" he uses Yiddish and Jewish jokes, binding his Jewishness into the narrative. He is the *shlemiel*, telling bad jokes, the insufferable bore positioning himself as a Jew, yet also, in the imagery, pushing the limits of the acceptability of the Jew. For example, in this film he asks the viewer "Can you see anything hidden?" showing an elephant with six legs, then the IMF insignia that shifts to contain an image of an anti-Semitic stereotype of a Jew. His tactics are shock tactics yet like Treister he does not self-exoticize nor explain Jewishness in his work. He takes the viewer into a world that he considers normal, with its smattering of Jewish references, yet a world that is not directed at a "Jewish" audience but a predominantly non-Jewish art world. This overlap between different viewing publics is created through the wacky humor; like Treister, Fishbone creates a crossover through eccentricity. (He is also interested in the work moving through different audiences and exploits this in his newer piece *Elmina* where he plays an African chief in a Ghanaian "Nollywood" feature film.) Nor does it elevate Jewishness as a condition, but is irreverent toward that which he loves. Fishbone tells self-hating jokes with love, for in the end this is a gentle humor, using the stereotype and the collision of brutal imagery as an absurdist device.

The worlds Fishbone creates are composites made of images of stereotypes of Jews, the *magen david* (shield of David) symbol, Hebrew words, photographs of the *Shtetl* or Israeli soldiers,

Figure 25.7 Doug Fishbone, Religion (2008). Digital Giclee Print; size: A2 (59.4cm x 42.0 cm); edition 4 plus one AP

Jewish celebrities. He juxtaposes these with images of pornography, "trailer trash," animals smoking, the hammer and sickle and other symbols of ideology. However, it is not individual images that create the overall meaning in the work. The imagery is so fast-moving that the effect is of a build-up of these fragments into a reeling sense of undecidability as the viewer struggles to construct some kind of overall meaning that remains elusive, kind of.

Fishbone repeatedly plays the imbecilic but fragmented fantasist with his homespun philosophy, who knows the world through his inability to understand what is going on. This is the projection, the delusional fantasy of a putative YouTube subject – the obsessive, distrustful but authoritarian conspiracy theorist scouring the net for clues that offer no conclusive answer and no real self-reflection. And yet if the work, in my description, sounds distasteful or boring, it is not. It is as compelling as surfing the net. Part of what makes it compelling is the familiarity, for a viewer conversant with American popular culture, of a particular kind of Jewishness encountered through Woody Allen, Lenny Bruce, or Jackie Mason. Fishbone owns this version of Jewishness, wearing it lightly through his humor; he brings it into the arena of art as well as embracing the enjoyment of storytelling. His work exudes a kind of "love it or hate it, it's mine" kind of ethos which reclaims the shame of being the subject of an anti-Semitic history but takes responsibility for it through addressing the politics of victimhood.

The politics of victimhood also forms part of the deflationary tactic that Fishbone uses to great effect. The undermining of expectation and the constant self-contradiction undercuts stated aims in meaning in order to jolt the viewer out of complacency. For example, "Everybody Loves a Winner" opens with a Chagall painting, "I and the Village" and while the narrator (Fishbone) is recounting "There's an old Jewish saying that asks … " several anti-Semitic images flash past. The narrator continues, "When does a hunchback rejoice? When he sees someone

with a larger hump. You know, that's kind of how I feel about life," then an image of Woody Allen, then "there's another Jewish saying … ." Suddenly, in the same register, a political comment is embedded within the rapidly changing imagery: a Moretti beer label, the Luba-vitcher rabbi, an anti-Semitic stereotype again, the IDF beating someone up (two in succession), then Ariel Sharon meeting George Bush and a State of Israel Bonds advert while the narrator relates another Jewish saying in Yiddish, translating into English for the viewer's benefit, then segueing to "Back in the old days, scientists used to think the world was flat." The homespun philosophy always inexplicably sinks into the muck (Fishbone's term) of pornography; vomiting people; off-color jokes–sometimes repeated, such as "a gorilla walks into a deli and asks for a pastrami sandwich … ." Throughout Fishbone's work of this period the images and the narration are at odds, creating meanings antipathetic to each other. Fishbone announces his own Jewish-ness and attachment to it in the opening line by stating "There's an old Jewish saying" while at the same time the images flashing past are of virulent anti-Semitic stereotypes. The *schadenfreude* expressed in the joke "when does a hunchback rejoice?" is undercut by "'you know that's how I feel about life'." Fishbone's narration is brutal but spoken in a homely familiarity as if he is your friend telling you something you're bound to agree with. It is a persuasive voice.

Despite having a different thrust, each of the films has some common features in the telling. It is striking that, like Treister, the works make a call to being out-of-time, "what if what we think now turns out to be as silly in the future as our past seems to us today?" he repeatedly asks

Figure 25.8 Doug Fishbone, Megillah Gorilla (2008). Digital Giclee Print; size A2 (59.4 cm x 42.0cm); edition 4 plus one AP

in his films, thereby questioning the supremacy of the contemporary and our place within it. The repetition re-inscribes instability but also, invokes, like Treister, the "Storyteller" of Benjamin who commends the possibility for contingency. Compared with the dominant paradigm in Jewish art which follows an immersive lament for a past of loss and atrocity, such as Judy Chicago's *Holocaust Project* (1993), Fishbone's work, which celebrates interpretation by focusing on the present without total immersion in it, is profoundly counter-hegemonic.

Part of the importance of this work is the refusal to be tolerant, or tolerated. Like Ali G (see also Jon Stratton's essay in this volume), its seemingly imbecilic naivete and offensive material belies a sophisticated critique through the personae it constructs.[17] Some examples are the continual and seamless but knowing shifts in discursive register between philosophical musings and pornographic imagery, scientific skepticism and French philosophers, Jewishness and anti-Semitism. There is no single subject of these films: as I have argued in the case of Treister, the subject is constituted through undecidability. That is, constituted through the discursive material presented in the film, which in these works is unassimilable.

Conclusion

This essay has considered two dominant, productive paradigms for art making that repositions thinking about contemporary Jewish identity through the use of the archive and persona work. However, throughout this essay the Holocaust continually emerges and re-emerges, so in writing about these artists, whose work I find fascinating, I find myself reflecting on the Holocaust. I intended not to deal with the Holocaust here. My own artwork avoids it, and I tend instead, to focus on contemporary Jewish culture and its relationship with other Others, looking to the future. However, I have to acknowledge the lingering cultural preoccupation with this momentous Event in Western modernity; it is the defining trope differentiating the artists' work and intentions as expressions of their Jewish subjectivity. The way each of these artists responds to Jewish history points to *how* for each generation, it is possible to speak, what lexicon is available and how the dialectic between art (as exemplified by these artists) and culture (that is their understanding of what Jewishness might mean) is constituted in concrete terms.

Thus, Susan Hiller feels able to engage with the real in the form of documentary evidence of the Holocaust. The camera in the *J Street Project* has the authority of the witness and the indexical link to the real, filming the putative lack of Jews in Germany. The lens is contemplative but also accusatory. It helps shape our perception of Germany as a land without Jews, yet Germany does have a considerable Jewish population. However this voided space, *Judenrein* Central Europe, remains the hegemonic symbol of the Holocaust for Western Jews. By contrast, Suzanne Treister and Doug Fishbone assume no moral authority but accept that the world is imperfect. By attempting to travel back to the reality of the Holocaust, and instead finding herself caught up on the set of *Schindler's List*, Treister effectively offers an elegant cipher of the unreachability of the Real of the Shoah. In attempting to establish subjective meaning, she instead finds herself entangled in the overarching tropes and structures of the Western Allies' post war settlement and that of post war Zionism. This is the narrative in which the Holocaust is the foundational Event of post war secular Jewry, a narrative in which *heimishe* European Jewry is saved from its own tragic passivity by the Righteous Gentile (Oskar Schindler) – the compromised goy who nevertheless does the right thing when the chips are down. Through this fumbling deflationary misfire – ending up on the film set rather than in the Shoah itself – she complicates those tropes of Jewish identity predicated upon absence and victimhood. While Treister is the comedic meddler with the grand narrative of history, Fishbone, the youngest of the three, goes even further. Like all these artists, his work could be considered anti-humanist in the way

the subject is caught within the contingencies of history, unable to act effectively. But with Fishbone, all positions are refused. Instead the films collapse into a mediated mulch of equivalences that constitute an implicit critique of looking back and a liberating plea to just get on with it.

Notes

1 See Richard Hylton (2007); Margaret Garlake (2001).
2 Other examples include Claude Cahun, Eleanor Antin, Judy Chicago, Lynn Hershman Leeson, Cindy Sherman. Scholarship on this subject has been limited, apart from Appignanesi and Steyn (1995), Bloom (1999), Frank and Rosen (2009), Ashery (2009), Garfield (2002).
3 The exception to this is Israeli artists who are critical of Israel, such as Yael Bartana, Ori Gersht or Oreet Ashery.
4 On self-ghettoization, see Hylton (2007) for a discussion of funding, art institutions, and their representation of black artists in the UK.
5 For example, Carrie Mae Weems, Coco Fusco.
6 The archive of actors that Fast interviews in *Spielberg's List*, who merge the real but mediated memory of the Holocaust with their real memories of the fiction of film sets up an important critique of the notions of authenticity, the witness, memory, the documentary form, and history.
7 See http://www.gerz.fr/html/main.html?res_ident=5a9df42460494a34beea361e835953d8&art_ident =76fdb6702e151086198058d4e4b0b8fc (accessed 12 January 2012).
8 See http://modiya.nyu.edu/handle/1964/256 (accessed 14 January 2012).
9 See Jones (2002); Cottingham (2002); Butler and Mark (2007); Hershman Leeson (2010).
10 See http://manchesterarthistory.wordpress.com/2010/03/24/the-complete-roberta-breitmore-symposium (accessed 25 October 2011), Garfield (2002), Garfield (2010), Garfield (2004). Juliet Steyn and Richard Appignanesi curated the exhibition *Pretext: Heteronyms*, Rear Window Publications (1995) but not in relation to Jewish identity. See also Mock (2009a) and, from a performance studies perspective, Mock (2009b).
11 I have argued that Jews problematize the white/black dichotomy and can be read as neither black nor white (Garfield 2001, 2003, 2006).
12 According to Margaret Iversen's foundational text "What is a Photograph?": "[Lacan's] account of the constitution of the subject involves a series of painful self-alienations which are described almost as bodily auto mutilations. One's very birth involves the casting off of a vital part of the organism, the placenta. Then one is weaned from the breast, understood by the infant as co-extensive of the body. One 'gives up' urine and faeces. Finally symbolic castration seals one's fate as a desiring subject haunted by lack and retrospectively turns all the other infantile experiences of loss into forms of castration. In each case a cut is made which initiates both an erotogenic zone (lips, rim of anus, tip of penis, slit of eyelids) and an object (nipple, faeces, urinary flow, phallus as imaginary object, 'the phoneme,' the gaze, the voice – the nothing). The 'part objects' formed by the cut are the *objets petits a*" (Iversen 1994: 458).
13 *tikkun olam* is a Hebrew term meaning repairing the world.
14 *Wissenshaft des Judentums* was a nineteenth-century movement to Westernize Jewish culture and belief through rationalist analysis of its tenets and literature.
15 This assumption is itself a misnomer that is an example of racist thinking amongst Ashkenazi Jews as well as the wider population of the Europe and the US. Only the Ashkenazi communities are from within Europe.
16 See http://ensemble.va.com.au/tableau/suzy/diary/diary.html (accessed 25 October 2011).
17 See Garfield (2001).

Essential reading

Bloom, L. (2006) *Jewish Identities in American Feminist Art: Ghosts of Ethnicity*, New York: Routledge. This book aims to create a complex reading of feminist art that takes account of the importance of the elided Jewish identity within artists' practice. It focuses on the United States, three generations of artists in two locations – East Coast and West Coast. Bloom particularly focuses, on the recent, younger artists, on the involvement with questions of multiple identity or the political condition of Jews in relation to Palestinians or other Diasporic communities.

Boyarin, J. (1994) "The Other Within and the Other Without," in *The Other in Jewish Thought and History*, Silberstein, L. and Cohn, R. (eds.), New York: NYU Press, pp. 424–52. This text sets out how to conceptualize a progressive Jewish identity in thinking through the discourses by theorists from other Diasporic communities.

Fisher, J. (1995) "Some Thoughts of Contaminations," *Third Text*, 32, pp. 3–7. This introduction to Third Text in 1995 (and developed in the catalogue of *Documenta 11* in 2001), sets out the pressures of difference that arise from the condition of being a Black artist in a predominantly White art world.

Garfield, R. (2006) "Towards a Rearticulation of Difference: Problematising the Jewish Subject in Art," *Third Text*, 20(1): 99–108. This paper sets out the issues regarding what a radical Jewish practice is.

Kleeblatt, N. (1996) *Too Jewish? Challenging Traditional Identities*, New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press. The catalogue of this groundbreaking exhibition includes several essays on art, art history, and the stereotype in relation to Jewish identity in the US.

Mirzoeff, N. (1999) *Diaspora and Visual Culture: Representing Africans and Jews*, New York: Routledge. This edited volume consists of art historical texts looking at the differences, similarities, and crossovers in the perception and understanding of the Diasporic condition between these two communities.

Steyn, J. (1999) *The Jew: Assumptions of Identity*, New York: Routledge. Steyn uses particular examples in history and culture, such as Kitaj's art and Greenberg's difficult relationship to his Jewishness and its impact on high Modernism in the US to question what being Jewish means in art and culture in the UK.

Stratton, J. (2000) *Coming Out Jewish: Constructing Ambivalent Identities*, London: Routledge. Jon Stratton sets out some of the problematics and particularities of the Jewish Diasporic condition, particularly in the UK and Australia. This book explores the histories of the discourses around Jewishness, Blackness, and multiculturalism and assimilation.

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26

SCOREBOARD

Sports and American Jewish identities[1]

David J. Leonard

Question: What does the *Encyclopedia of Jewish Sports Stars* look like?
Answer: A Pamphlet[2]

Grandma: What are you guys doing today?
Grandson: We are going to play basketball
Grandma: Why do you spend so much time playing basketball?
Grandson: Because we love the game
Grandma: We're Jewish. We don't play sports we own the team[3]

The above epigraphs capture the defining themes of a discourse about sports and Jews: dismissal and erasure. For many, sports are seen as outside the scope of Jewish American history and culture. Within current scholarly literature there is ample examination of the ways in which popular culture has influenced American Jewish identity formation, impacted assimilation and acculturation during the twentieth century, and otherwise been central to the history of Jews (Bial 2005; Buhle 2004; Epstein 2002; Melnick 2001; Rogin 1998; Gabler 1989). The scant scholarly inquiries into sports and Jews have, for the most part, sought to correct this historical erasure, highlighting successful Jewish athletes. However the focus on Jewish athletic pioneers and the emphasis on athletic success within much of the literature (Slater 2005; Siegman 2005; Silverman 2004) erases the power of sports as a space where racial, ethnic, class, gender, and national meanings are staged, contested, and created.

Stephen Riess explains this absence as the result of ubiquitous anti-Semitic stereotypes. "One reason for this lack of interest was that Jews were historically stereotyped as physically weak, unfit, and intellectual rather than athletic and brawny" (Riess 1998: 1–2). Jews and non-Jews alike propagated these stereotypes, solidifying antipathy between sports and a Jewish identity. By the 1930s, the acceptance of this race/ethnic-based logic was evident on the sports pages. Fred Lieb, a commentator with *The Sporting News*, wrote in 1935 that, "Jewish boys are smaller than kids who sprang from other races. The Jewish boy was pushed aside on the playground diamond by the bigger youth with an Irish, German, or Scandinavian name" (Rosengren 2013: 187). Acknowledging Jewish success in boxing but not baseball, Lieb deployed anti-Semitic logic to explain this sporting reality:

> For centuries the Jew, in his individual business, had to fight against heavy odds for his success. It sharpened his wit and made him quick with his hands. Therefore he became an individualist in sport, and skillful boxer and ring strategist, but he did not have the background to stand out in a sport which is so essentially a team game as baseball.
>
> (Rosengren 2013: 181)

Henry Ford once announced, "Jews are not sportsmen," while in 1907 Charles Elliot, then president of Harvard University, concluded that, "Jews are distinctly inferior in stature and physical development to any other race" (Whitfield 2007: 52). All of this rhetoric led to a clear conclusion: If non-Jews were exceptional athletes, then obviously to be Jewish meant to be non-athletic. As such, a history of Jews within sport is one defined by a "suspicion of the physical fear of hurt, and anxiety over the 'pointlessness' of play" (Whitfield 2007: 52). Such stereotypes focused on Jewish men, so much so that sports, an overly masculine sphere, have functioned as a referendum on the existence of a truly masculine Jewish body, playing an important role in debates over Jewish fitness for citizenship.

However, sports also became a space where Jews attempted to provide evidence of their worthiness, fitness, and desirability within the United States. Sports, "as the zeitgeist of America" provided proof of fitness, masculinity, and national strength, illustrating "the fit between Jews as citizens and America as a nation" (Kugelmass 2007: 5). Nate Bloom describes the effort to highlight Jewish athletic success, most evident in documentaries like Aviva Kempner's *The Life and Times of Hank Greenberg* (Kempner 1998) and books like *Great Jews in Sports* (Slater 2005) as understandable in the context of an anti-Semitic dominant culture (Bloom 2007).

Sports have existed as a vehicle of "fending off accusations that these newer immigrants were 'unassimilable because they belonged to a weak and alien race whose people historically rejected physical pursuit in favor of religious and intellectual study'" (Kugelmass 2007: 13). Given the powerful ways that citizenship has been linked to whiteness throughout the Western World, and that athleticism and physical prowess paired with intellect and cultural civility has been attributed to Aryan and white bodies (especially in the early part of the twentieth century), it is no wonder that Jews have often cited, and celebrated, any sporting accomplishment.

This paper examines four distinct identities that represent the diversity of the contemporary Jewish community in the United States – Orthodox (Yuri Foreman), Israeli (Omri Casspi), secular American Jewish (Ryan Braun), and black-Jewish (Taylor Mays and Jordan Farmar) – and reflects on how different identities are staged and received in a larger Jewish context. While focusing on an American context (though neither Foreman nor Casspi are American-born Jews), I examine the ways in which these athletes' Jewishness and their inscription as "New Jews" allow for their popular ascendance in particular ways. As immigrants, as athletes engaged in sports that are seen as physical, as individuals who embody ethnic and religious identities, I argue that both Casspi and Foreman come to embody the "New Jewish" identity. I juxtapose these two athletes with two other athletes, Ryan Braun, and Taylor Mays, who because of their secular orientation and racial identity do not provide legitimacy to a narrative of the New Jew that centers on religion, whiteness, and a particular set of politics.

In looking at which identities are constructed in media representation as legitimate, and how sports participation intersects with Jewish identity formation/reception, I argue that sports becomes a space for privileging certain identities and Jewish bodies over others, elucidating what constitutes an authentic and real Jewish identity in the twenty-first century through much of mainstream Jewish discourse. As is evident in the anti-Semitism of the early twentieth century in both Europe and the United States, in longstanding anxieties about sports participation and in the ongoing emphasis on Jewish sports integration as a warrant for the fitness of masculine

citizen/subjects, sports has long been a space where Jewishness has been contested, defined, and otherwise imagined as a marker of individualized personification of a religious–cultural identity.

"The Lion of Zion": Yuri Foreman

The current face of the community of Jewish athletes in the United States is Yuri Foreman. Foreman, known as "the Lion of Zion," was born in Belarus. He immigrated to Israel at the age of nine. Aspiring to become a professional boxer, he moved to New York City at the age of 19. Foreman's popularity is most certainly reflective of his success in the ring and the cultural appeal of boxing, given its history and the masculine prowess displayed by the sport's "gladiators." Yet, the celebration of Foreman within the Jewish press, particularly conservative circles, elucidates a desire to use sport to define Jewish identity through religiosity, uncompromised assimilation, and connection to Israel. In other words, his greatness or his worthiness as a role model of Jewishness stems not from his boxing success, but from his promotion of the Torah, his decision to observe the teachings of Orthodox Judaism, his dedication to his studies as a rabbi, and his uncompromising spirit. In fact, much of the media discourse focuses not on his boxing career but on the broader narrative of how he successfully bridges the gap between a "true Jewish identity" and professional boxing. This is clearly evident in a recent *Los Angeles Times* profile of Foreman:

> Yet after climbing to the top of a sport he has long attacked with zeal, Foreman finds that his accomplishment has to share the spotlight with his other pursuit. The boxer, you see, is studying to be a rabbi, spending each morning in the middle of the Torah learning how to interpret the will of God, and each afternoon in the middle of a gym learning how to break the will of his next opponent.
>
> (Baxter 2010: 1)

Rabbi Yonah Bookstein lauds Foreman in similar terms:

> [He] has been able to keep one foot firmly planted in his Jewishness and the other foot planted in the world that he loves, boxing. Young people need positive role models and Yuri's a great role model. His story is very compelling. … It's a story that includes an Israeli national title won while training in an Arab gym, the Chernobyl nuclear disaster, a death threat from a masked gunman, and a marriage to a Hungarian model.
>
> (Bloom 2010)

In celebrating Foreman's commitment to Orthodox Judaism, the narrative consistently represents him as uncompromising and as someone whose commitment to his Jewishness is evident in his discipline. Likewise, in representing Foreman as a transnational Jewish figure, as someone whose mobility has not compromised his sense of Jewishness and his connection to a larger Jewish community, the discourse, which in many ways rehashes neoconservative tropes and ideologies, repeatedly elevates Foreman as both emblematic of the New Jew and an ideal inscription of modern Jewish identity. In "Aspiring rabbi Yuri Foreman juggles religion and the ring," Bob Velin chronicles Foreman as extraordinary because of his discipline and commitment to following the traditional teachings of Jewishness. This portion of the discourse links the discipline required for boxing success with the discipline required to follow Orthodox Judaism; athletic success emanates from the discipline that Orthodox Judaism teaches its practitioners.

Foreman also performs his identities – religious, ethnic, national – while in the boxing ring. He can often be seen wearing black trunks with the yellow Star of David. Such a performance

is not limited to a religious identity, but can also be seen in his efforts to locate himself as part of a Zionist Diaspora. "I don't just have to prove myself, I have to prove I'm representing Jewish people, many things are involved," Foreman says. "So when I come there, I'm not just fighting for myself, I'm also fighting for Jewish people, and for Israel" (Velin 2010). He enters the ring to the sound of the "Lubavitcher rebbe singing 'Tzama Lecha Nafshi' ('My Soul Thirsts for You')" as "two Israeli flags [are] waved about his entourage in the moments before the fight" (Nathan-Kazis 2010). Ironically, deploying his connection to Israel not only substantiates his new Jewishness, but also grounds his connection to the Orthodox American Jewish community, which is equally fervent in their support for Israel.

The celebration of Foreman as a Jewish (American) athlete, as someone who is able to succeed in the American Jewish world and the American gentile world of professional sports, doesn't merely reproduce a particular type of narrative commonplace within sports. It also elucidates the ways in which Jewishness is defined, staged, and represented through Orthodox Judaism, through a transnational Jewish identity linked to Israel, and through a clear connection to Jewish ethnicity. Foreman is constructed as an authentic Jew because of the ways in which his identity is both performed and consumed. Embodying the New Jew – one who can bridge sports/athleticism/physical prowess, qualities long associated with non-Jews, with a sustained connection to Jewishness as defined through religious practice, ethnic connection, and links to Israel – Foreman tells us a lot about Jewish identity formation.

The chosen one: Omri Casspi

One of the more hyped and media saturated stories of the 2009–10 National Basketball Association (NBA) season was the arrival of Omri Casspi, a rookie with the Sacramento Kings. Treated like a "rock star" (Hochman 2010) and receiving tremendous fan support throughout the league, Casspi's Israeli/Jewish identity has been placed front and center. While not the first Jew to play or even excel in the NBA, Casspi, as the first Israeli to play in the NBA, has received ample support from the Jewish–American community. According to Andy Altman-Ohr, "Fans in opposing arenas welcomed Casspi with banners and Israeli flags, and even *Sports Illustrated* jumped on the bandwagon, publishing an article titled 'Welcome, The King of Israel'" (Altman-Ohr 2010). One of the interesting aspects surrounding the celebration of Casspi is the way in which his identity has been marked both by food and by cultural signifiers connecting him to Israel.

Describing his first year in the league, Casspi summarized the experience thus: "There are a lot of differences. The food is different, the culture is different, obviously the language. It's hard being away from home, from my family and friends. It's different going to a new team and the NBA. It is a whole new level of basketball" (Sayles 2010). As the absence of "authentic hummus" represented one of the biggest hardships that Casspi claimed to have faced during his initial year in the NBA, food became a powerful marker of his Jewishness.

Indeed, Casspi's love of hummus was noted so often in media accounts that during one road game a family handed him a homemade batch. In cities where the Jewish fans didn't come to the game with hummus in hand, he spent his off time searching for Israeli food (Wallace 2010). Most indicative of the narrative that imagines food as both the basis of identity and the obstacle to full assimilation was an article published in 2009 in the *New York Times*, entitled "From Israel to the N.B.A., Missing the Hummus."

> The first Israeli in the N.B.A., Omri Casspi, is busily trying to adapt to life in the United States.

For starters, he needs a cellphone with a local number. He just received a $4,500 bill for about two weeks of calls, which is expensive even by N.B.A. standards. He needs new chargers for all his gadgets. But he is struggling most to find comfort food.

(Beck 2009)

This portion of the discourse represents an effort to reduce Jewish identity (ethnic and racial in general) to particular foodways. The media focus on humus imagines a middle-eastern food as essentially Jewish while marking Casspi as essentially white. It represents an effort to celebrate and elucidate the signifiers of identities that are easily digestible and profitable, not surprising given the efforts from the league and individual teams to market Casspi's NBA arrival as an entry way into the cultural practices of Israelis/Jews.

Although during Casspi's initial year in the NBA he was often represented as a commodity – a representative symbol for and marketing tool directed at the Jewish American community, to generate Jewish fan interest – one of the more interesting aspects of the media coverage has been the explanations for his success and his style of play. Historically, reflecting on the successes of Jewish basketball players in the 1930s and 1940s, sports commentators and the Jewish community itself has cited qualities, cultural attributes, and even racially based characteristics as the basis for such dominance. For example, in the 1930s, Paul Gallico explained the prominence of Jewish basketball superstars in the following way: "The reason, I suspect, that basketball appeals to the Hebrew with his Oriental background, is that the game places a premium on an alert, scheming mind, flashy trickiness, artful dodging and general smart aleckness" (Shapiro 2007: 88). In 1936, a Jewish star at City College of New York offered a similar assessment of his community's hold on the basketball world. No other sport required "the characteristics inherent in the Jews … mental agility, perception … imagination and subtlety … If the Jew had set out deliberately to invent a game which incorporated those traits indigenous in him … he could not have had a happier inspiration than basketball" (Shapiro 2007: 188). Other sports writers cited the ostentatious skills of "natural athletes," the advantages that Jewish players had because of their short stature, which resulted in better foot speed and balance, and their "sharp eyes." Reflecting on shared experiences of Jewish and African American basketball players, Jon Entine notes the historical continuity:

There are plenty of parallels between the Jewish stars of years past and today's "flashy" black players. The players then and now were subject to sometimes egregious racial stereotyping. The newest showmen of modern basketball, such as Allen Iverson and Kobe Bryant are singled out for their "athleticism" and "natural talents", rather than their well-rounded play. Such stereotypes reflect a long tradition that goes back more than seven decades, when the game emerged from the ghettos of Philadelphia, New York and Baltimore.

(Entine 2001)

The arrival of Casspi has not elicited a recycling of Gallico's reasons, or of arguments that emphasize Jewish characteristics or cultural attributes. Yet, the media discourse certainly emphasized his Israeli identity in discussing his talents and his approach on the floor. Embodying the New Jew trope, the focus on Casspi's Israeliness as explanation for his physical talents, his aggressiveness, and his discipline, not only recycles Orientalist ideas, but also reaffirms the power of the new Jewish identity. Focusing on his physical and mental toughness, his discipline, his determination, and his swagger, much of the discourse points to these qualities in explaining why he has become a successful NBA player and how that relates to his experiences, life, and cultural

upbringing in war-torn Israel. Whether citing his military service (although as a great basketball player he was reassigned to desk duty and refereeing basketball games as part of his military service), or the aggressive mentality Casspi shows on the court, his Israeli identity is part of the explanation as to why he is in the NBA.

Thus his success is attributed to his personality, demeanor, and attitude rather than to his athleticism, skill, or talents. For example, one commentator identified his mentality as the reason why he would be a great addition to the Sacramento Kings: "Omri Casspi always plays with a swagger that says, 'I'm better than anyone else on the court'" (Levin 2010). Eran Soroka of the *Ma'ariv Sports Newspaper* described Casspi in the following way:

> He's a good athlete comparing to some of his European colleagues, he's fast and runs the fast breaks to finish with authority. He hustles for loose balls, moves very well without the ball and has a knack for finding the basket.

> The most important thing about Omri, in my humble opinion, is his motivation to improve and his quick learning and execution. … .

> Although he's not a massive guy, he's a tough one.

> (Ziller 2009)

A Kings' blogger latched on to this description, noting how much the Kings "need fighters" (Ziller 2009). These qualities in Casspi are not linked to his Israeli identity, but are positioned as reflective of growing up amid violence and turmoil. Unlike his European or even American peers, Casspi grew up in a war zone, where the threats of suicide bombers and handheld grenades, not to mention the compulsory military service, all instilled in him those qualities associated with the New Jew. He reflects the broader power of a neocon discourse about Israelis since 9/11 that not only positions Israelis as allies, but also as friends that share a similar ideological agenda and capacity for "toughness" in the face of threatening enemies. Like the New Jews of yesteryear, Casspi, like Foreman, represents the idea of equality with non-Jewish whites. His mental toughness reflects his "Israeli spirit," one defined by perseverance, survival, and persecution, which is often linked to a larger Jewish history. Having the requisite cultural traits (imagined through a love of hummus) and loyalty to Israel, Casspi, like Foreman, is celebrated as a great Jewish athlete, a worthy neoconservative role model in the twenty-first century. The same cannot be said for Ryan Braun, Jordan Farmar, and countless others.

The Hebrew Hammer: Ryan Braun and the reform (secular) Jew

The Jewishness of athletes is often tied to their willingness to skip games because of religious observance. Sarah Kricheff, in "Observant Athletes Sit One Out," describes this dilemma as one fundamental to modern Jewish athletes: "To play or not to play, that is the question that Jewish athletes must grapple with each year during the High Holy Days" (Kricheff 2007). In 1934, Hank Greenberg anguished publicly over whether or not to play in an important game against the New York Yankees, which happened to fall on Rosh Hashanah. Amid his public wonderment as to what to do, the Detroit media sought out the spiritual/religious insight of local rabbis; the *Detroit Press* printed a headline that captured the seriousness of the issue, which said, "Talmud clears Greenberg for holiday" (Merron 2001). Greenberg was still torn between his commitment to tradition and team. "The team was fighting for first place," wrote Greenberg in his auto-biography, "and I was probably the only batter in the lineup who was not in a slump. But in the

Jewish religion, it is traditional that one observes the holiday solemnly, with prayer. … I wasn't sure what to do" (Merron 2001). With the blessing of the Detroit rabbinical community and his family, Greenberg forsook tradition in this case, choosing to take the field rather than his place in synagogue. His decision to play and his two homeruns in that game contributed to the widespread acceptance of Greenberg by non-Jewish fans, despite a small show of vocal anti-Semitism. More importantly, like the selection of a Jewish woman, Bess Myerson, for Miss America in 1945, it marked and contributed to the gradual acceptance of Jews within and outside of popular culture.

Ten days later Greenberg once again faced a choice. This time he decided to skip the game scheduled for Yom Kippur, which was in fact meaningless to the Tigers since they had already clinched the pennant. As with Rosh Hashanah, Greenberg's decision elicited positive reaction from the media and fans alike. Edgar Guest, in the *Free Press*, offered significant praise for Greenberg with the following poem:

> Came Yom Kippur – holy fast day world wide over to the Jew,
> And Hank Greenberg to his teaching and the old tradition true
> Spent the day among his people and he didn't come to play.
> Said Murphy to Mulrooney, "We shall lose the game today!
> We shall miss him on the infield and shall miss him at the bat
> But he's true to his religion – and I honor him for that."
>
> (Merron 2001)

Such praise was especially loud from the Jewish community, which celebrated Greenberg's newly found iconic/celebrity status derived from his religious convictions. More importantly, he served as an example to Jewish youth that acceptance did not come through abandonment of tradition, and reminded Jewish parents that popular culture and sports could facilitate acceptance.

Similar community debates, and questions as to what success in a sporting context meant for Jewish identity, took place during the careers of Sandy Koufax (1955–66) and Shawn Green (1994–2007). Green's decision to skip a game in 2001 prompted national debate and discussion, and elicited praise from within the Jewish community. As with Greenberg's and Koufax's decisions, Green's decision to play or to pray became a powerful staging ground to debate whether or not the New Jew – physical, yet committed to Jewish identity – remained a viable possibility. In this Sukkot sermon, Rabbi Mitchell Wohlberg expressed his admiration for Green as an example of what modern Judaism needs to look like:

> Shawn Green announced that this year he would not play on Yom Kippur. This, despite the fact that his team is battling for a play-off berth. This, despite the fact that at the present time, Shawn Green has played in more consecutive games than any active player, and that not playing on Yom Kippur would break his streak. But Green said he would not play.
>
> (Wohlberg 2001)

Calling Green "a real winner," Wohlberg celebrated him for representing the Jewish community proudly on *and* off the field. With this decision, and his emerging fame in Los Angeles, Shawn Green transformed himself from a baseball All Star with a distant link to the Jewish community to a Jewish ballplayer in the tradition of Hank Greenberg and Sandy Koufax. While Green did not have a Bar Mitzvah, has never regularly attended services, and did not marry a Jewish woman, his decision to sit out a game, his growing-up with two Jewish parents, and his overall relationship with the Jewish community provided Green with a Jewish pass of sorts (Pearlman 2009).

The retirement of Shawn Green left a Jewish vacuum within Major League Baseball, despite the presence of several Jewish players. Gabe Kapler, Ian Kinsler, and Kevin Youkilis each elicited Jewish fanfare and celebration. But it was Ryan Braun, dubbed the "Hebrew Hammer," who next prompted the most widespread public contestation. His emergence as an elite player incited discussion as to whether he would follow in the footsteps of Greenberg, Koufax, and even Green, or whether he would follow the path of other non-Jews to minimize the intrusion of a religious identity into the public sphere. In, "Greenberg To Green To … Braun?," Irwin Cohen wonders if Braun will be able to represent a tradition of observant Jewish athletes.

> Braun's already been dubbed "The Hebrew Hammer" and he says he's cool with that. His big test, as far as most of us are concerned, will come on Friday night and Saturday, September 21 and 22. That's Yom Kippur, and the Brewers are scheduled to be playing in Atlanta with both clubs figuring to be in the pennant race.

> Will Braun play? Will he suit up and just watch from the dugout? Will he stay away from the ballpark? Kevin Youkilis was in uniform last Yom Kippur and watched his Red Sox teammates from the dugout. Because he didn't play, one of the papers called Youkilis an observant Jew. I call him a Jew who observed the game from the dugout.
>
> (Cohen 2007)

Similarly, in "Rookie could Make History – but will he cut Yom Kippur?," Martin Abramowitz asks a similar question, further connecting Jewish identity to religious observance:

> As the baseball season heads into the home stretch and the High Holy Days approach, Ryan Braun is supplying a double dose of suspense: Will the Milwaukee Brewers' slugging third baseman become the first Jewish player to be named Rookie of the Year in either league? And does he plan to take a day off on Yom Kippur in the tradition of Hank Greenberg, Sandy Koufax, and Shawn Green?
>
> (Abramowitz 2007)

Braun, like Youkilis, ended up playing on Yom Kippur, raising questions about his Jewish authenticity. To Braun, this decision and his religiosity (or lack thereof) doesn't define his Jewishness. "I am Jewish. It's something I'm really proud of. But I don't want to make it into something more than what it is. I didn't have a Bar Mitzvah. I don't want to pretend that I did. I didn't celebrate the holidays," Braun told *USA Today*. "It's a touchy subject because I don't want to offend anybody, and I don't want groups claiming me now because I'm having success. But I do consider myself definitely Jewish. And I'm extremely proud to be a role model for young Jewish kids'" (Nightengale 2010).

Some gatekeepers, however, remained unconvinced. Nate Bloom questions both Braun's religiosity and even the efforts to claim Braun as Jewish. Noting that his father is Jewish, but not his mother (who told *USA Today* "he's totally not Jewish"), Bloom sees Braun as someone "raised in no faith." As such, he wonders that the Jewish community has been so quick to claim Braun as part of the tribe:

> Sometimes a marvelous thing happens when the Jewish community fetes a Jewish athlete: The athlete enjoys the attention and becomes "more Jewish." He thinks of himself as a role model for Jewish kids and is drawn into the sphere of the Jewish community. Such a thing happened with Hank Greenberg, Sandy Koufax and Shawn

Green, none of whom was a particularly religious Jew. But all became strong cultural Jews and good role models, overall.

There is nothing wrong with Jewish fans having special regard for Ryan Braun. Maybe the attention will make him more of a cultural Jew and prompt him to do some Jewish cultural or charity events.

Still, there is something almost sad about some Jewish fans and Jewish journalists writing about him like he is the second coming of Moses.

(Bloom 2007)

The questions about Braun's Jewishness and the undercutting of his identity – in spite of Braun's acknowledgment that he is Jewish, and notwithstanding his assertions about being a Jewish role model as well as his induction into the Southern California Jewish Hall of Fame – are revealing. His disavowal by some, or the reluctance to claim him as a Jewish athlete, reflects the ways in which inter-faith individuals, those who see themselves as possessing a cultural rather than a religious identity, have found difficulty in embodying the New Jew. While connected to athletic endeavors, Braun does not compel fanfare like Casspi and Foreman, even amongst American Jews. As a result, his self-proclaimed identity, the lack of outright acceptance by Jewish fans, and his cultural ambiguity renders him more an assimilated Jew than a New Jew.

The ambivalent reception of black–Jewish athletes

At the conclusion of the 2010 season, Amar'e Stoudemire announced his plans to sign with the NBA's New York Knicks. Shortly thereafter, he announced plans for a trip to Israel, hinting at a newly found Jewish identity. *Slam* reported it as such:

Believe us, we couldn't make this story up. Amar'e tweeted an hour ago that he's already arrived in Jerusalem. From Haaretz: "U.S. Basketball star Amar'e Stoudemire is apparently on his way to Israel for a voyage of discovery after learning he has Jewish roots. … News of Stoudemire's trip quickly had Israeli basketball fans buzzing with speculation that they might one day see him playing alongside another Jewish NBA star, Israel's Omri Casspi, on the national team."

(Abramowitz 2010)

Registering fascination, shock, and doubt, the media and the online community in general debated the veracity and meaning of Stoudemire's purported Jewishness. His wearing a yarmulke, his star of David tattoo, his mother's possible Jewishness, his efforts to learn Hebrew, his Hebrew tweets, and countless other signifiers were analyzed to determine whether or not this African American athlete was indeed Jewish. Within a few days his agent announced, "I know there are some reports that he is Jewish, but he is not. He thinks there may be some Jewish blood on his mother's side and he is researching it" (Chavez 2010). Such commentary once again points to the ways in which Jewishness, as with Casspi and Foreman, is defined through whiteness. While a sizable portion of the American Jewish population is people of color (estimates place the number of black, Latino, Asian, and Native American Jews at 435,000), the history of Jews in the United States has been a story told through a white imagination. Jews of color are represented, and in many ways function, as a contradiction in terms; they experience questions, doubts, and

alienation. In "Black and Jewish, and Seeing No Contradiction," Trymaine Lee describes the experience of Orthodox black Jews in the following way: "In yeshivas, they are sometimes taunted as 'monkeys' or with the Yiddish epithet for blacks. At synagogues and kosher restaurants, they engender blank stares" (Lee 2010). The efforts to define Jewishness through whiteness are also evident outside the Orthodox community.

The power afforded to Casspi and Foreman, and not Taylor Mays (football) or Jordan Farmar (basketball), is best understood given the desire to celebrate white-Jewish success within an athletic context; the project of the New Jew, one who as physically powerful and integrated into Gentile culture yet religious/ethnically connected, is not helped by Jews of color. In the end, it reflects a desire to elevate those white Jewish athletes who embody and practice an accepted notion of "true" Jewishness – defined by whiteness, connection to Israel, clear religious practice, and connection to a larger Jewish community.

Taylor Mays, an All–American football player, is the son of a white Jewish mother and a black Baptist father. Carin Davis describes his upbringing as follows:

> Mays attended Sunday school starting at a young age and continued with Hebrew school twice a week. Although he attended a Catholic high school, he identifies with being Jewish and cherishes the holidays he spent with his maternal grandparents. "We celebrated Chanukah, Passover and Yom Kippur always." With few Jewish athletes in professional sports, Mays' entrance into the NFL would turn him into an instant role model for Jewish kids. It's a role he's ready to embrace, one he's proud and excited to take on. He acknowledges the small number of Jewish athletes in the spotlight and feels lucky that he'll have that opportunity.
>
> (Davis 2009)

As with so many black-Jewish individuals, the focus of articles about them often rests with their interracial identity and their navigating multiple worlds. Bill Witz describes the difficulties that resulted in a complex and ambivalent relationship to Judaism: "With so many influences, Stafford and Laurie said their son never struggled with questions of identity. Taylor said he was able to keep a foot in different cultures. He does not observe the High Holy Days because they interfere with football, and when he is asked what part of Judaism resonates with him, he says he is not sure" (Witz 2009). What is interesting here is how a black/Jewish identity is constructed as a dual identity comparable to that of Foreman or Casspi; they all exist in two worlds. In this regard, whiteness and Jewishness are flattened into a single identity, so that Mays' blackness and whiteness/Jewishness are imagined as the two distinct worlds that he must navigate. He is a spectacle, an Other, and an anomaly within a presumed white Jewish community.

Jordan Farmar, a professional basketball player whose mother is Jewish and who grew up with her and his Israeli-born Orthodox stepfather (his father is African American), does not embody what is mandated as an authentic Jewish identity within much of mainstream Jewish discourse. Mixed-raced and non-practicing as an adult, he was bar-mitzvah, yet he didn't celebrate Shabbat. In a profile of Farmar in the *Jewish Journal*, Brad Greenberg described Farmar and the broader history of Jews in sports in the following way: "Indeed, a sport once dominated by Jews now counts only one MOT [member of the tribe] at the highest level. And Farmar, who doesn't celebrate Jewish holidays and considers himself spiritual but not religious, is no Sandy Koufax. At the same time, though, Farmar doesn't shy away from his Jewish heritage, from the mixed racial and ethnic identity to which it contributes or from the pride that many Jews take in having their own hoop hero" (Greenberg 2009).

Conclusion

Questions regarding what it means to be Jewish and what behaviors, attributes, and bodies define a Jewish identity or community have long weighed down the American Jewish community (Goldberg and Krausz 1993; Prell, 1999; Stratton 2000). Whether citing religion, culture, a sense of shared history/belonging, outsider status, or anti-Semitism, scholars and public intellectuals have historically debated both the essence of Jewishness and the responsibilities of being a member of a Jewish community. This process is not simply a personal debate or even an internal communal discussion, but reflects larger processes of constructed racial and ethnic meaning.

In *Coming Out Jewish*, Jon Stratton chronicles the transformations in Jewish identity in the twentieth century: "In being accepted as white, Jews were able to express their Jewishness provided they did so within the bounds of civility" (Stratton 2000: 288). In several instances discussed here, Jewish athletes not only came out as Jewish, they did so within the "bounds of civility." Their connections to Israel or a heightened level of religiosity, and their efforts to compromise, to honor father and nation, reified the possibilities of the New Jew. They pointed to the possibilities of a new Jewish identity, one grounded by physical prowess (a presumed quality of gentile men) and a clear Jewish orientation.

From 1924 to World War II, Jews became more and more white within the popular imagination; in the years leading up to the civil rights movement and now through the War on Terror, the whiteness of American Jews has been accentuated within both popular and political discourses, allowing for greater acceptance of, privilege for, and performative possibilities in describing Jewishness. Casspi and Foreman have been able to pass or function as honorary white Jewish Americans, allowing them to become representative of the white American Jewish community, whereas Stoudamire, Jordan Farmar, Mays, and even Braun are never able to represent and embody the Jewish community (there won't be Jordan Farmer heritage nights) given their blackness and their cultural performance of Jewishness. My examination of Jewish identities in a sporting context suggest that the prospect of a mixed Jewish identity within U.S. sports culture remains tenuous because of the assumed dilution of identity that comes through mixture. Questions regarding what it means to be Jewish, and what characteristics define "authentic" Jewish identity or community, will thus remain integral to identity discourses both inside and outside of sports.

Notes

1 This chapter contains parts of a prior essay written by the author entitled "To Play or Pray? Shawn Green and His Choice over Atonement," which appeared in *Shofar: An Interdisciplinary Journal of Jewish Studies*, special issue edited by Mikel Koven, Vol. 25, No. 4, 2007, pp. 150–67. Said prior material is included herein with the permission of Purdue University Press; http://www.thepress.purdue.edu. This essay also contains parts of a prior essay written by author entitled "A Global Game: Omri Casspi and the Future of Jewish Ballers," which appeared in *Jews in the Gym: Judaism, Sports, and Athletics* (*Studies in Jewish Civilization,* 23: 275–89), edited by Leonard Greenspoon. Said prior material is included herein with the permission of Purdue University Press, http://www.thepress.purdue.edu; "A Global Game: Omri Casspi and the Future of Jewish Ballers" was presented at "Jews in The Gym: Judaism, Sports, and Athletics," Omaha Jewish Community Center and Creighton University, October 24–25, 2010.
2 This is a widely circulated joke.
3 This brief exchange is based on the experience of a friend of the author.

Essential reading

Rebecca T. Alpert (2011). *Out of Left Field: Jews and Black Baseball*. New York: Oxford University Press. This book examines the history of black–Jewish relations in the era of Jim Crow.

Hank Greenberg (2001). *Hank Greenberg: The Story of My Life*. New York: Benchmark Press. An important account of the life – inside and outside of sports – of Hank Greenberg.

Jack Kugelmass, ed. (2007) *Jews, Sports, and the Rites of Citizenship*. Champaign-Urbana: University of Illinois Press. An important intervention, this collection highlights the connections between citizenship and sports participation within the larger history of Jews.

Peter Levine (1992). *Ellis Island to Ebbets Field: Sport and the American Jewish Experience*. New York: Oxford University Press. Like much of the literature Levine provides a corrective history, highlighting the ways in which Jews have been integral to a history of sports.

Steven Riess, ed. (1998) *Sports and the American Jew*. Syracuse: Syracuse University Press. This works provides an important historic and cultural discussion of Jewish sports participation.

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27

THEORIZING "JEWISH GENETICS"

DNA, culture and historical narrative

Yulia Egorova

Introduction[1]

In June 2010 two papers appeared in major scientific journals – *Nature* and the *American Journal of Human Genetics* – which attempted to address the question of the "genetic structure" of the Jewish people (Behar et al. 2010; Atzmon et al. 2010). Both papers set out to assess the degree of Jewish communities' "genetic" relatedness to each other and to their non-Jewish neighbours, and to explore whether the origin of contemporary Jews could be traced to the Middle East. Atzmon et al. examined seven Jewish populations and concluded that their "[genetic] comparison with non-Jewish groups demonstrated distinctive Jewish population clusters, each with shared Middle Eastern ancestry, proximity to contemporary Middle Eastern populations, and variable degrees of European and North African admixture". More specifically, the paper states that the study "refuted large-scale genetic contributions of Central and Eastern European and Slavic populations to the formation of Ashkenazi Jewry" (2010: 850). Behar et al. suggest in a similar vein that the results of their study "trace the origin of most Jewish Diaspora communities to the Levant" (2010: 238).

These papers contribute to a sizeable body of genetic research that has endeavoured to test the account of Jewish history, according to which contemporary Jews are genealogically connected to ancient Hebrews. This research has added a new dimension to the debate about what it means to be Jewish, injecting new meanings into the "ethnic" discourse about Judaism and Jewish culture.

In academic Jewish Studies any essentialist conceptualizations of Jewish identity have in the past decades been challenged by commentators coming from the perspective of critical theory, who generally see theoretical foundations of essentialist thinking as problematic. Thus, Laurence Silberstein, drawing upon Judith Butler's formulation, has suggested an approach which recon-figures such contested terms as *Jew*, *Judaism* and *Jewish* into a site of "permanent openness and resignifiability" (Silberstein 2000: 13). Sander Gilman argues that "there is no such thing as a 'purely' Jewish identity", and that "from the prebiblical world to the Babylonian Diaspora to the world of Sepharad or Ashkenaz, Jews – like all people – have formed themselves within as well as against the world that they inhabited, that they defined, and that defined them" (Gilman

1994: 365). In Israel, further complexity to the question of Jewish cultural (and regional) diversity is added by the fact that society is divided into various *edot*, or groups of repatriates from different parts of the world, who maintain the cultural and social specificities imported from their counties of origin.

Nevertheless, the idea that different Jewish groups around the world are not only culturally similar, but also "genealogically" connected, is still prominent in the public imagination both within and outside Jewish communities. The notion that Jews are a people almost "biologically" related to each other was promoted by early Zionist ideologues. The racialization of Jewishness in Zionist discourse was a response to the shift from Christian anti-Semitism to racial anti-Semitism, which occurred in Europe in the late nineteenth century. This new wave of anti-Jewish sentiment grounded many of the old-standing stereotypes about the Jews in their physicality and therefore aimed to close the door to assimilation (Weikart 2006). As John Efron comments, in Europe this effected the emergence of "race science" in the Jewish communities themselves, who saw in it "a new, 'scientific' paradigm and agenda of Jewish self-definition and self-perception" (Efron 1994: 4–5). The notion of Jewish people being on some level related to each other appears to be alive and well also in our days. Writing about contemporary constructions of Jewishness among the Jews in the West and particularly in the USA, Susan Glenn has observed that even "in our post-ethnic age of 'voluntarism,'" it is hard to ignore "the centrality of blood logic to modern Jewish identity narratives," the logic, which Jews retained "throughout all of the de-racializing stages of twentieth-century social thought" (Glenn 2002: 139–40).

It is against the backdrop of these debates about the genealogical dimension of Jewishness that I would like to consider studies in what is sometimes popularly described as "Jewish genetics". Have these studies and their results had any weight in public debates about Jewish identity? Has DNA become a new "marker" of Jewishness and an aspect of Jewish culture? Has genetics come to play any role in specific cases involving issues of identity arbitration in the context of "emerging" Jewish communities?[2]

My discussion is based on an analysis of in-depth interviews with seven key scientists involved in population genetic research,[3] and of three examples of the way this research became indexed in debates about Jewish identity. The first two come from Jerusalem and reflect the opinion of the co-director of the Centre for Kohanim, an organization established to promote awareness of priestly heritage and duties among Cohens and Levites,[4] and of the chairman of Shavei Israel (Hebrew for "Israel Returns") – a charity which assists isolated Jewish communities in connecting to Jewish culture and migrating to the State of Israel.[5] The third case study highlights the way genetic research has been received and interpreted by the community of the Bene Ephraim – a Judaizing group of Andhra Pradesh (India).

I will focus on the "mismatch" between the argument about genetics being not much more than a new tool for reconstructing Jewish history, espoused by scientists and some lay commentators, and the perception of it being a "litmus test" of Jewishness demonstrated by members of Judaizing communities. The paper will address this discrepancy in the way genetics is represented by different agents and will argue that in order to understand the meanings that DNA research has acquired in the context of Jewish tradition, it may be helpful to explore how it contributed to constructions of Jewish historical memory. I will suggest that though so far there is no indication that DNA tests are likely to be used in determining Jewish identity either on a group or communal basis, this kind of genetic research may contribute to what I describe as a "biologization" of Jewish culture and historical narrative in the public discourse.

But first, a few words to set the background of wider theoretical debates in Science and Technology Studies – a field in social sciences which will be of particular relevance to our discussion – and their specificity within the study of Jewish history.

DNA and history

Studies in "Jewish genetics" belong to a much larger field which came to be known as genetic anthropology,[6] an area of genetics which aims to reconstruct the history of human migrations and cast light on the early history of groups with "unclear origins" (Brodwin 2002; Davis 2004; Elliott 2003; Johnston 2003). Scientists involved in such studies tend to portray their work as a neutral and objective contribution to historical research, a novel way of doing history by using the methods of genetics.[7] Nevertheless, scholars coming from the perspective of social sciences and humanities disciplines have suggested that this work indicates a worrying trend in DNA research, as they appear to naturalize social and cultural differences (Abu El-Haj 2007; Palmie 2007; Palsson 2007; Reardon 2005; Simpson 2000; Skinner 2006; Smart et al. 2008).

Some social scientists have paid particular attention to the way genetic anthropology has engaged with issues of personal and communal modes of self-identification, narratives of origin, and notions of relatedness. It has been lucidly demonstrated that such DNA studies are often informed by pre-existing cultural and political discourses about the meaning of histories that they endeavour to reconstruct, and that in the imagination of the tested and their observers the genetic markers "assigned" to populations in the course of this research are likely to be re-inscribed as markers of social identification. To give an example related to the history of Jewish genetics, Nurit Kirsh has argued that Israeli scientists involved in such studies in the 1950s almost unconsciously internalized Zionist ideology, which found expression in their work trying to prove the common origin of various Jewish groups around the world (Kirsh 2003). Nadia Abu El-Haj cites the example of genetic research on the Lemba[8] – a Judaizing group in southern Africa, whose claims to Jewish origin have received a positive response from geneticists, and suggests that the genetic study that established a "biological" connection between the Lemba and the Jews has paved the way for their recognition by a number of Jewish organizations and educational charities (Abu El-Haj 2004).[9]

At the same time, other commentators have pointed out that the genetic knowledge hardly superseded communal traditions or led to the emergence of new forms of belonging which would be completely at odds with those already in existence. Thus, Nikolas Rose suggests that "ideas about biological, biomedical, and genetic identity will certainly infuse, interact, combine and contest with other identity claims," but they can hardly be expected ever to supplant them (Rose 2007: 113). Alondra Nelson in her study of the genetic ancestry tests offered to African American and Black British citizens, has convincingly argued that those who do these tests in an attempt to establish which part of Africa their ancestors may be from, do not accept their results at face value but re-interpret them in light of their own "genealogical aspirations". Nelson therefore suggests that "while the geneticization of race and ethnicity may be the basic logic of genetic genealogy testing, it is not necessarily its inexorable outcome" (Nelson 2008: 761). Reflecting on the role that genetic anthropology has played in the (re)construction of collective and individual pasts, Marianne Sommer observes that

> [w]e have only just begun to understand the complex processes at work when DNA technologies enter into cultures of remembrance. Nonetheless, our current knowledge points towards the importance of the history and diversity of these cultures for the ways in which communities may or may not come to (re) imagine themselves in terms of new genetically based histories and in relation to biosocialities, which may or may not (re) form around genetic markers of ancestry.
>
> (Sommer 2010: 387)

To return to the context of genetic research on the Jews, it has also been noted that it is too early to suggest that genetic constructions of a common Jewish origin are superseding other

definitions of being Jewish. Thus, Barbara Prainsack and Yael Hashiloni-Dolev have argued that new discoveries in Jewish genetics have mostly remained without any political or practical consequences (2009). It has been demonstrated that in case of the Lemba, as well as of some other "emerging" Jewish communities, DNA evidence did not play any role in defining their *halakhic* status[10] or their eligibility for making an *aliyah*[11] to the State of Israel (Parfitt and Egorova 2006; Prainsack and Hashiloni-Dolev 2009).

This chapter continues the discussion about the naturalizing effect that DNA studies may (or may not) have had on constructions of Jewishness. In the following section I will focus on the way genetic research has been represented by geneticists in the mass media and in their interviews with me. I will then proceed to discussing case studies in the "lay" perceptions of this research.

Genetic cultures and Jewish origins

The two articles mentioned at the beginning of this paper contribute to a sizeable body of genetic research that has endeavoured in one way or another to test the account of Jewish history, according to which contemporary Jews are genealogically connected to ancient Hebrews.[12] Both in their interviews with me and in the mass media geneticists involved in such studies have warned against using genetics as a means of identifying either an individual or a community as Jewish or non-Jewish.[13] I suggest that in their discourse, DNA is treated not as a marker of identification, but as a historical site producing "artefacts" that could be placed in a "Jewish museum" alongside items belonging to Jewish material culture, which would not necessarily be found in *every* Jewish household, but which nevertheless deserve "museum space". They were adamant that being Jewish could not be reduced to DNA and argued that their research aimed at providing additional evidence to tackle a riddle of history, which otherwise could not be solved by using conventional historical tools. Every scientist stressed in the interviews that being Jewish had nothing to do with genetics and that Judaism should not be understood as a religion centered around a particular "ethnic" group. Many respondents emphasized that it was possible to convert to Judaism and acknowledged that not every person who considered himself or herself to be Jewish and came from a well-established Jewish community would have a genetic connection to the Levant. Thus, scientists appear to perceive and describe this kind of genetic studies as nothing more than a new tool for historical work that was going on anyway.

As I have demonstrated elsewhere, genetic studies do not always reach a consensus about the way Jewish populations were founded (Egorova 2009a: 171–72). More importantly, so far professional historians have engaged with genetic research only to a very limited degree and normally refrain from using the findings of genetic anthropology as historical evidence. They argue that the way geneticists formulate their questions hardly makes genetic history relevant to contemporary historical research (Egorova 2010). However, papers in genetic anthropology have been readily accepted as the final word in the study of the formation of the Jewish diaspora by those lay commentators who support the common origin model of Jewish history.

Research in Jewish genetics thus received a positive appraisal by Rabbi Yaacov Kleiman, the director of the Centre for Kohanim. The aim of the Centre is to promote awareness of priestly heritage and duties among the Cohens and the Levites. Rabbi Kleiman particularly welcomed genetic studies conducted on Jewish priests[14] and on the origins of various Jewish communities, and in 2004 published a book developing the idea that DNA research supports the Jewish historical tradition (Kleiman 2004).

In the introduction to the book Rabbi Kleiman posits that until recently such questions were decided on the basis of faith, and "belief in the Bible as God's revealed wisdom included a belief in its historical and genealogical accuracy" (Kleiman 2004: 9). However, now, in the "age of

reason", knowledge gained through science could shed light on the reliability of the Biblical tradition, he argues (ibid.). Chapter by chapter the book goes through different genetic studies focusing on research on the Kohanim and on the genetic relatedness of Jewish communities from different parts of the world. In Kleiman's view, they all support the Biblical tradition.

At the same time, throughout the book Kleiman insists that Jewish identity has little to do with genetics. He suggests that "research results are of general interest regarding origins, ancestry, history – but are not applicable to individuals or communities in terms of their Jewish identity", which Kleiman describes as "*Metaphysical* and based on tradition, law, culture and custom and not *physical* considerations (including DNA)" [emphasis original] (Kleiman 2004: 15). Quite apart from that, he stresses that anybody can become Jewish by converting to Judaism (Kleiman 2004: 21).

As in the geneticists' discourse considered earlier, here, DNA research is depicted first and foremost as a source of scientific evidence, which allegedly validates the Jewish tradition, but should not be seen as a marker of identification. It may be suggested that in Rabbi Kleiman's discussion, the genes connecting contemporary Jews from different parts of the world to the Middle East are conceptualized more as historical artefacts than used as a litmus test for determining one's Jewish status. This is not surprising, given that genetic studies also clearly demonstrate that not *every* tested person from the Jewish communities appeared to have a DNA connection to the Levant. Thus, ironically, genetic interventions into Jewish history construct a genetic dimension of Jewishness, while at the same time demonstrating that many Jews lack any "natural" link to the Middle East.

A very similar engagement with DNA research on the history of Jewish communities is demonstrated in the discourse of Shavei Israel (Hebrew for "Israel Returns"), an Israeli NGO which aims to provide educational support and assistance in migrating to Israel for isolated Jewish communities, people who rediscover their Jewish past, and groups who have claimed the status of Lost Tribes, and those who wish to convert to Judaism.[15]

Members of Shavei Israel stress that Jewishness cannot be reduced to biology, and state that all sincere converts are welcome. At the same time, they are ready to consider genetics an important means of validating the Jewish tradition. As a Shavei Israel newsletter states, commenting on the two studies published in 2010 (Atzmon et al. 2010 and Behar et al. 2010), "As Jews, we have always been confident in the truth of our tradition, which is rooted in the Bible and in history, as well as in the heritage passed down to us across the generations. We can now add the laboratory to that list."[16] Michael Freund, the chairman of Shavei Israel and the author of the newsletter, argues that these studies provide "scientific validation" for the Jewish historical narrative. As in the book by Rabbi Kleiman, here genetics is summoned to construct a collective past and to reinforce a particular account of Jewish history.

However, at the same time, the author explicitly dissociates himself from a position which would use genetics as a measure of Jewishness. The article stresses that "the Jewish people are about more than just genetics" and reminds the reader that Shavei Israel are open to those who "wish to join the Jewish family". This representation of the relationship between Jews and genetics reveals a complex mosaic of perspectives on the meaning of being Jewish, which both view the Jewish people as relatives AND insist on the cultural and religious (as opposed to genealogical) dimensions of the Jewish tradition. Like the previous commentator, the author is keen on de-biologizing definitions of Jewishness, but at the same time is prepared to geneticize Jewish history to ensure that it acquires more weight in the eyes of those who doubt that Jewish people have a "natural" connection to each other, to ancient Hebrews, and therefore, to the Land of Israel. Having a genetic connection to the Jewish people is seen by Freund as just one possible way of joining the Jewish tradition. For him, rediscovering one's Jewish past through

genealogical research, or simply converting to Judaism, are equally valid ways of becoming Jewish both for individuals and for communities.[17]

And yet, it appears that in some corners the biologization of Jewish history effected by genetics will unavoidably create the perception that DNA could be used as a much more potent, if not critical, marker of identification. An interesting example of this comes from my ethnographic research on the Bene Ephraim of Andhra Pradesh (India).[18]

The community of Bene Ephraim was established in the late 1980s in the village of Chebrole in Guntur District of Andhra Pradesh by a group of Christianized Madiga Dalits (untouchables) who declared that they belonged to the Lost Tribes of Israel.[19] The group is led by two brothers who adopted the names of Shmuel and Sadok Yacobi. In 1991 they established a synagogue and introduced a number of Jewish rites into the practice of their congregation. At the moment, the Bene Ephraim number about 150 people who are in one way or another associated with the community and are willing to emigrate to the State of Israel. In their everyday life, community members strive to observe Jewish dietary laws, rules of circumcision, the Sabbath and main Jewish holidays. For many of them adopting Jewish practice meant having to sacrifice Saturday wages, as the majority of the Bene Ephraim are agricultural labourers and are expected to work six days a week. Community members have been actively learning Hebrew and studying the Jewish tradition. One significant outcome of these practices is that many Bene Ephraim children and young people now consider themselves to be first and foremost Jewish, as this is the tradition that they grew up with.

In 2002 Shmuel Yacobi published a book entitled *The Cultural Hermeneutics*, offering an account of the history of the community, which may be summarized as follows. The Bene Ephraim descended from the tribes of Israel, who in 722 BCE were exiled from the ancient kingdom of Israel by the Assyrians. After their sojourn in Persia, they moved to the northern part of the subcontinent, which was then populated by Dravidian groups. In the seventh century BCE, the subcontinent was conquered by the "Aryans", who established the caste system and relegated the Dravidians and the Bene Ephraim to the positions of Shudras and untouchables respectively. Both groups were later moved to the south of India, where they now reside. The current state of affairs in the community is explained as an unfortunate result of the further advance of "Aryan rule", under which the Bene Ephraim lost their status and political significance, were reduced to poverty and, left with very few means of maintaining their tradition, almost forgot it. The book claimed that at the time of writing only a few Bene Ephraim were aware of their Israelite origin and they are now concentrated in the Kothareddypalem hamlet of the village of Chebrole in Andhra Pradesh (Yacobi 2002).

It appears from the accounts of the Yacobis and of their village neighbours that the community began practising Judaism only in the late 1980s, however, the Yacobis maintain that their parents and grandparents had been aware of their Israelite origin and had practised Judaism in secret for a long time. The Judaization of the Bene Ephraim has been dismissed by some commentators as an attempt by a former untouchable community to change its members' position in the local hierarchy, or to improve their material circumstances by moving to the State of Israel. The Yacobis stress that their low-caste status had nothing to do with the emergence of the Bene Ephraim. At the same time, Shmuel Yacobi explains that his research and activism towards finding the Israelite connection was partially driven by observing his fellow members' exploitation at the hands of higher castes. Embracing the Jewish tradition was his way to vocalize a protest against the social system that put his community at a disadvantage.

Anthropologists and historians of Judaizing movements have discussed a number of socially marginalized groups who, similarly to the Bene Ephraim, have reinterpreted their condition of discrimination in light of Jewish history. Some of them turned to Judaism because the historical

experience of the suffering of the Jewish people seemed to mirror that of their own (Parfitt and Trevisan Semi 2002: viii). In the twentieth century a considerable number of Judaizing movements emerged in different parts of Africa, as well as among African American groups. It has been demonstrated that for some of these groups, and particularly those that developed in the USA, embracing Judaism represented a protest against white supremacism and a search for new modes of self-understanding (Singer 2000; Markowitz et al. 2003; Jackson 2005; Dorman 2006; Bruder 2008).

Similarly, the story of the Bene Ephraim suggests both a desire to express social protest and a need to explore the past. The Jewish tradition is seen as a suitable means of satisfying both ends, and thus appears to be imbued with liberatory potential for socially marginalized communities. This case study reminds us that Judaism cannot be unproblematically described as an "ethnocentric" religion. However, as I demonstrate later, it also illuminates the strength of the perception that membership in the Jewish community is based on Jewish genealogy and that in issues of Jewish identity arbitration "genetic evidence" has a potential to give one's claims a degree of cultural weight.

Recently the leaders of the community suggested that the Bene Ephraim should undergo DNA tests to prove that they were Jewish.[20] They were convinced that, provided geneticists tested the right people in the village, the results would confirm their narrative of origin. It appears that the Yacobis would be willing to use DNA tests as a means of producing a piece of factual evidence for their origin narrative. This understanding of the role of genetics goes well beyond the assertions quoted earlier that these studies are of general interest regarding ancestry and history, but are not applicable to individuals or communities for the purposes of identifying them as Jewish. Ironically, the community whose story was supposed to challenge genealogical understandings of the Jewish tradition, chose to construe the Jewish people as a natural family and to use genetics to justify their place in it.

The Bene Ephraim were not the first Jewish community to see genetics as a means of external identification. The Bene Israel, another Indian Jewish group, had paid a great deal of attention to the outcomes of a genetic study conducted among them, and were delighted that the results turned out to be "positive" (Parfitt and Egorova 2006; Egorova 2009b).[21] For both communities DNA identification becomes important in light of the fact that their early history is not well documented. Both the Bene Israel and the Bene Ephraim perceive DNA as a marker of identification that external agents are likely to recognize as valid. How did Jewish genetics acquire the image of a tool for defining one's Jewishness? I suggest we can find one possible answer to this question if we consider the importance that reconstructions of history are accorded in modern Jewish thought.

DNA and collective memories

Drawing on Yosef Hayim Yerushalmi, anthropologist Tamar Katriel observed that the secularization of Jewish history at the time of the Jewish Enlightenment involved a shift from a communal transmission of the knowledge of the past through ritual practices towards a historization of the past. This shift, in its turn, led to a quest for collective memories, which involved "the emergence of newly constructed, ritually enclosed memory-building practices" (Katriel 1999: 102).

Jewish genetics appears to satisfy both the traditional and the secular cultural quests for Jewish collective memory. Indeed, the commentators discussed in the previous section present it both as an embodiment of the eternal presence of the past and as a new site for collective memory-building. While geneticists see their research as a new tool for reconstructing Jewish history, for Rabbi Kleiman their findings are divine revelation and a confirmation of God's covenant with

the Jewish people. "In the history of mankind only the Jewish people has retained its genetic identity for over 100 generations while being scattered throughout the world – truly unique and inspiring. Perhaps, even more unique and inspiring, is that this most unlikely scenario expresses both a prophecy and a promise," he writes (Kleiman 2004: 35).

Jonathan Webber has pointed out that following the establishment of the State of Israel re-identifying as a historical people became part of Jewish self-understanding (2007). It is not surprising then that though the Yacobi family do not possess any material evidence of their Jewish origin or of their earlier practice, they feel under pressure to shroud their narrative in what Katriel has described as "the rhetoric of factuality" (1999). To give but a few examples, Shmuel Yacobi's book tried to provide historical and linguistic evidence for the antiquity of the Bene Ephraim (Yacobi 2002); visitors to the community are often taken on a tour around the sites of ancient Bene Ephraim heritage in India. As DNA has become one such site of Jewish historical consciousness, it inevitably had to join the collection of artefacts documenting the community's Jewish past.

At the same time, it is noteworthy that both the Bene Israel and the Bene Ephraim have a strong sense of being Jewish irrespective of what their "genetic profile" (endorsed by Western science) may be. As Tudor Parfitt and I have suggested elsewhere, the Bene Israel used the results of DNA research to affirm their Jewishness in the face of those who doubted their origin, but they made it clear that they were confident they were Jewish no matter what the tests would have indicated. Moreover, they reinterpreted these results in light of their own tradition as proving the community to be the purest of the Jews (Parfitt and Egorova 2006). In the case of the Bene Ephraim, it appears that if a DNA study were to be carried out among them and its results proved to be negative, the community would be very unlikely to accept them. When I asked Sadok Yacobi about the possibility of genetic results turning to be negative, he replied that it was not possible, unless the geneticists were to make a mistake.

I have argued elsewhere that though studies in genetic anthropology are interpretative by nature, they are perceived as hard science, which makes them a good rhetorical tool for asserting diverse historical and political agendas (Egorova 2009a; Egorova 2009b). In some situations genetic history may even be seen as a unique means for creating images of authenticity and asserting preferred historical memories. It has been demonstrated by social scientists that renegotiating history is often an important aspect of re-shaping collective identities (Baumann 2002; Webber 2007). This process undoubtedly works both ways. An encounter with a new historical "fact" or a solution to the "mystery" of a community's origins – and it is such mysteries that genetic anthropology often strives to solve – can be expected to affect communal self-understanding, particularly if such "solutions" are provided by those in the position of power. Geneticists can hardly be described as officialdom, however, they do present their work as a voice "from above", a voice providing superior narratives based on hard science and legitimated by the social capital that comes with academic positions, publications in prestigious journals and the successful pursuit of funding opportunities.

At the same time, although DNA evidence IS widely used by lay commentators as a rhetorical means for inscribing identities, it is often used selectively to support more favoured accounts of the origin and historical development of the tested communities. I suggest that the interest that the Bene Ephraim have expressed in embracing "genetic history" indicates that while accepting its biological determinism, they also perceive it as imbued with liberatory potential. Communities like the Bene Ephraim and the Bene Israel struggle to produce material artefacts documenting their early history, and they feel that of all the items that a *bona fide* Jewish community would place in a rhetorical museum of its heritage, all that they can offer their interlocutors is their DNA. The gene thus emerges in the cases considered here both as an immutable determinant of identification imposed on the tested communities externally, and as a

site of agency and resignifiability, where both scientific establishments and those undergoing tests construct their own historical narratives. However, the question that remains to be asked is whose voice is more likely to be heard in the mass media and to be taken into account in policy-making practices? Would the assertions of the Bene Ephraim about their genetic relatedness to the rest of the Jewish people have weight in the eyes of the Israeli authorities? How much agency could they exercise in facilitating migration to the Jewish State with or without "genetic evidence" if the State were to decide against this migration? What other actors – apart from the scientists and the tested communities – are involved in creating and using the stories authorized by genetic anthropology? These questions will continue to require the attention of social theorists and to call for an open discussion in the public domain.

Notes

1 Parts of this paper were presented at the international conference on "Biohistories: DNA and bones in cultures of remembrance" (Zurich, October 2010). I would like to thank the audiences for their feedback, and I am particularly grateful to Marianne Sommer and Gesine Kruger for their in-depth discussion of this material.

2 I borrow the term "emerging" Jewish communities from Kulanu, an American organization aiming to help communities which embraced Jewish identity in modern times. In academic literature these communities have also been described as Judaizing movements (for a detailed discussion see Parfitt and Trevisan Semi [2002]). Some such groups adopted Jewish religious beliefs and practices without claiming Jewish descent (for instance, the Jews of San Nicandro, Italy), others produced an origin narrative connecting them to the Ten Lost Tribes of Israel or other Jewish groups (see Parfitt 2002; Parfitt and Trevisan Semi 2002; Ben-Dor Benite 2009).

3 For the purposes of maintaining the anonymity of my informants I will not disclose their names and institutional affiliation.

4 The Cohens and the Levites are two priestly lines in Judaism. The status of a Cohen or a Levite is transmitted from father to son. See http://www.cohen-levi.org/the_center/the_center.htm (accessed 15 November 2013).

5 See http://www.shavei.org (accessed 15 November 2013).

6 Genetic research aimed at reconstructing the history of human migrations is also sometimes referred to as anthropological genetics and genetic history. For an excellent historical discussion of the emergence and early development of the field, see Sommer (2008).

7 For analysis of these attitudes among scientists see Abu El-Haj (2004), Egorova (2010), Sommer (2008 and 2010).

8 For the scientific papers based on this research, see Thomas et al. (2000).

9 For a detailed analysis of genetic research on the Lemba see Parfitt and Egorova (2006). For a general discussion of Lemba origins see Parfitt (1997).

10 Halakhah is the collective body of Jewish religious law.

11 Aliyah (Hebrew for ascent) is a term used to describe immigration of the Jews to the State of Israel.

12 For a fairly detailed source of scientific papers and mass media articles on this research see http://www.khazaria.com/genetics/abstracts.html (accessed 15 November 2013).

13 For a discussion of the mass media representations of genetics see Abu El-Haj (2004), Parfitt and Egorova (2006).

14 For scientific papers see Skorecki et al. (1997), Thomas et al. (1998). For a more detailed discussion of such studies see Abu El-Haj (2004), Parfitt and Egorova (2006), Prainsack and Hashiloni-Dolev (2009).

15 See www.shavei.org (accessed 17 August 2011).

16 Shavei Israel newsletter, July 2010.

17 Personal communication, July 2010.

18 My research among the Bene Ephraim was funded by the Rothschild Foundation and by the Arts and Humanities Research Council (Ref. AH/G010463/1). The project employed Dr. Shahid Perwez as a postdoctoral research associate.

19 For research on the Madiga see Still (2007). For research on the Bene Ephraim see Egorova and Perwez (2010), Egorova and Perwez (2012), and Egorova and Perwez (2013).

20 Sadok Yacobi, personal communication, December 2009.

21 For research on the Bene Israel and the relationship between their Jewish and Indian heritage, see, for instance, Isenberg (1988), Weil (1994).

Essential reading

Abu El-Haj, N. (2007) "The genetic reinscription of race," *Annual Review of Anthropology* 36, 283–300. A comprehensive discussion of the social aspects of population genetic research engaging with issues of race and ethnicity.

Egorova, Y. (2010) "DNA Evidence? The impact of genetic research on historical debates," *BioSocieties* 5, 3, 348–65. A study of the relationship between genetic anthropology and history.

Parfitt, T. and Egorova, Y. (2006) *Genetics, Mass Media and Identity: A Case Study of the Genetic Research on the Lemba and Bene-Israel*, London: Routledge. A socio-historical study of genetic tests conducted on two Jewish communities in Africa and in India.

Parfitt, T. and Trevisan Semi, E. (2002) *Judaising Movements: Studies in the Margins of Judaism,* London: Routledge Curzon. An extended discussion of the "emerging" Jewish communities.

Prainsack, B. and Y. Hashiloni-Dolev (2009) "Religion and nationhood: collective identities and the new genetics", in: P. Glasner and M. Lock (eds.) *Genetics and Society Handbook: mapping the new genomic era*, London: Routledge, pp. 404–21. An extended theoretical treatment of the impact of genetic research on identity formation with reference to "Jewish genetics."

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28

JEWISH SPIRITUALITY AND LATE CAPITALISM

Ayala Fader

> Organic Market
> Kosher Market
> Stock Market
> Going Together Naturally on the Upper West Side.
> TD Waterhouse Investments – visit our new Upper West Side office (72nd Street)

The advertisement above, spotted on a bus shelter last year across the street from the new Jewish Community Centre on Manhattan's Upper West Side, draws "natural" connections among Jewish religious observance, consumption, finance, and the changing urban landscape. This chapter looks at the relationship between a shift to Jewish spirituality and late capitalism in the Upper West Side conservative-style synagogue of B'nai Jeshurun or "BJ" as it is known. Since the mid-1990s, a time when many synagogues in North America, indeed many congregations more generally, were struggling to maintain members, BJ has been a social phenomenon. There are few other synagogues which can boast of drawing over 2,000 people for every Friday Shabbat service, being a *de rigueur* stop on the global circuit of Jewish tourism, and being frequently written up in *The New York Times* for its thriving singles scene.

While there are a number of complex explanations for BJ's popularity, here, drawing on ten months of ethnographic fieldwork from 2000 to 2001, I discuss an historical moment in which a new interest in Jewish spirituality was supported by neo-liberalising processes in unexpected ways. In the mid-1990s, the two head rabbis at BJ, Rolando Matalon and Marcelo Bronstein, began to focus on what they called "turning inward." This was in contrast to the previous rabbi, Marshall T. Meyer, who emphasised an activist social justice agenda. The spiritual turn at BJ included many features of what Jeffrey Salkin has described as New Age or spiritual Judaism (Salkin 2003). Many congregants, part of the "generation of seekers" (Roof 1993; Wuthnow 1998), claimed that in BJ they were able to engage in a journey of self-discovery and healing, something they had never expected to find in the setting of a synagogue.

With new forms of Jewish spirituality, the membership exploded. Simultaneously, the synagogue's president, vice-president, some board members and the rabbis heightened efforts to professionalise the running of the synagogue. Their goal was to replace what had been an organisation driven by volunteers with an organisation that adopted a modified corporate management style, which necessitated a changing attitude toward money.

These shifts at BJ must be understood in the context of neo-liberalising shifts in New York City beginning in the 1970s, when the Upper West Side was increasingly being gentrified by an upwardly mobile population (Harvey 2005). BJ members were a microcosm of this shift, and saw its congregation change from one that was predominantly middle-class artists and social service professionals to one with a large population working in law or finance.[1] This new population was economically secure, less politically progressive (although still politically liberal), and increasingly committed to the emotional, therapeutic forms of prayer at BJ. Their involvement in BJ included the expectation that the synagogue would be a professional organisation marked by accountability, discipline and efficiency, and they increasingly drew on their professional skills to create that kind of institution.

I argue that these changes to prayer and institution building are part of the cultural production of Jewish neo-liberal subjectivity in late capitalist New York City. Jewish spirituality and New Age practices at BJ were resources for emotional, personalised searches for God and meaning. This search muted professional identities by emphasising the cultivation of an "internal" self. However, professional identities were key to institution building at BJ, where money and corporate management styles were transformed into "energy", a way to more efficiently offer spiritual experiences to members. Jewish spirituality transformed congregants' wealth and power into positive forces for personal fulfilment. More broadly, my analysis contributes to the emergent study of Jewish spirituality by emphasising the importance of contextualising Jewish religious practice within broader economic, political, and cultural processes.

Methodologically, my ethnographic research in BJ was funded by a non-profit Jewish organisation and the BJ leadership that were interested in analysing their popularity and generating educational materials for other congregations. My own research was, in fact, one small part in BJ's self-study and assessment, which I discuss later.[2] I was thus granted unusual access to the synagogue. I worked in collaboration with ethnomusicologist Mark Kligman, and attended a wide range of events in the synagogue. I regularly went to services, board meetings, steering committee meetings, and meetings for new members. I also conducted ethnographic interviews with members from very different positions within the community, rabbinic and lay leaders, affiliated and unaffiliated, new and old, committed and critical. These interviews were tape-recorded and transcribed, as were the majority of communal events.

In the next section I discuss how the adoption of a religious discourse among Jewish baby boomers, in contrast to their parents, can be clarified by drawing on the cross-cultural study of New Age spirituality and scholarship on neo-liberalism in New York City. Then I provide a brief history of BJ in the context of economic and social changes to the Upper West Side of Manhattan. I turn to the meaningful experience of Jewish spiritual and New Age worship at BJ during synagogue services. I contrast Jewish spirituality within the sanctuary to changing institution-building practices. These changes to synagogue administration and the role of money did not go uncontested, and I examine debates about these shifts at BJ. While the implications of the changes at BJ are far from clear, they suggest the importance of ethnographically examining Jews as distinctive participants in city, state and global processes in the twenty-first century.

Jews, spirituality and neo–liberalism

Recent ethnographers of conservative synagogues have contributed the important insight that, from the late twentieth century, Jewish baby boomers who attended synagogues were increasingly drawing on a religious rather than ethnic or class-based discourse to explain their affiliations (Heilman 2000; Wertheimer 2000; Wertheimer 1987). This was in marked contrast to parents of baby boomers, whose participation was performative of their suburban bourgeois, North

American identities (Sklare 1955). For example, Prell shows how members of a conservative synagogue were engaged in discovering their own relationship to Jewish ritual practice, rather than using the synagogue for social purposes of class mobility or creating ties based on ethnicity (Prell 2000). Similarly, BJ has a large number of baby boomers in its congregation. Most also explained their participation using a religious discourse, particularly emphasising their experience with Jewish spirituality. They frequently contrasted BJ to the synagogues of their youth. As one member noted, "BJ is not your father's shul [synagogue]". This turn to religious discourse through the language of spirituality can be understood as part of North American baby boomers' experiences more generally as documented by the sociologists Cohen and Eisen and Waxman (Cohen and Eisen 2000; Waxman 2000).[3]

However, the study of Jewish spiritualities must also attend to political and economic changes simultaneously ongoing in late capitalist urban centres.[4] Comparative scholarship on New Age spiritualities has firmly established connections among spirituality/New Age, postmodernism and late capitalism. Some suggest that New Age spirituality is one response to late capitalist culture (Heelas 1993: 108), while others point to the shared features of postmodernity and New Age spiritualities, including a centring of the self, a shift to consumer capitalism, doubt in the efficacy of politics, and processes of globalisation (Lyon 1993). Most explicitly, some argue that popular discourses of spirituality "reflect and support social and economic policies geared toward neoliberal ideals of privatisation and corporatisation, applied increasingly to all spheres of human life" (Carrette and King 2005: 2).

These literatures point to the need for ethnographically investigating the cultural and religious aspects of neo-liberalism in order to understand the growing interest in Jewish spirituality. The political economic theory of neo-liberalism posits that "we can best advance human kind by liberating individual entrepreneurial freedoms and skills within an institutional framework characterised by strong private property rights, free markets, and free trade" (Harvey 2005: 2). Neo-liberal processes in North America linked to the Reagan years have led to the recon-struction of the "everyday life of capitalism", where resources are redistributed among the wealthy few and there is a growing tolerance of widening inequalities of many kinds (Duggin 2003: xi). I limit my discussion here to the study of neo-liberal processes ongoing in New York City which have shaped BJ as a congregation since the mid-1990s.[5]

There is a rich body of work which analyses neo-liberal processes in New York City through attention to processes of gentrification in, for example, analyses of social space, particularly real estate (Smith 1996) and the marketing of culture (for example Davila 2004; Gregory 1999; Zukin 1995). However, there has been less attention to the relationship between religion, especially Judaism, and neo-liberalising processes.[6] I build on scholarship about gentrification by analysing the emotional religious experiences of congregants, contextualised within the sanc-tuary and New York City more broadly. This approach shifts attention to what Leigh Schmidt calls "the cultural import of seeker spirituality" without negating, as the academic left has sometimes done, the meaningful experiences of spiritual seekers (Schmidt 2005). Examining the relationship between Jewish spirituality and neo-liberalising processes in New York City provides insight into the production of contemporary Jewish neo-liberal subjectivities.

In the next section I discuss the history of BJ as a religious institution and the place of that institution in a changing Manhattan neighbourhood.

BJ on Manhattan's Upper West Side

In 1825 Congregation B'nai Jeshurun was established and became the first Ashkenazic con-gregation in the United States. After several homes, B'nai Jeshurun moved to its current location

on Manhattan's Upper West Side (88th Street) in 1918. The BJ of today, however, has a much more recent history. By the 1980s, B'nai Jeshurun had fallen on hard times and had a dwindling congregation. A prominent philanthropist stepped in to save the 88th Street sanctuary, which was about to be auctioned off. The philanthropist had visited Rabbi Marshall T. Meyer's congregation in Argentina, Bet El, known for its intellectually challenging and spiritually uplifting services, and urged Meyer to come to B'nai Jeshurun, which he did in 1985. Upon his arrival, Meyer demanded some institutional changes which continue to be important features of BJ today. These include an unusually strong leadership role for the rabbi, unhampered by a ritual committee or other organisational overseers. Meyer soon asked his former students from Argentina to join him. Matalon (known as Roly), who was studying at the Jewish Theological Seminary, came as the assistant rabbi and Ari Priven came as the cantor and musical director. BJ was still small but had a growing, increasingly committed membership marked by a dedication to both national and international social justice issues. Meyer's activism occurred during the Cold War when national politics were increasingly conservative.

Then, in 1993, Meyer suddenly fell ill and died. At that time, the congregation had grown to 850 households. In 1995 Bronstein (known as Marcelo), another of Meyer's students from Argentina, was invited by Roly, his childhood friend and rabbinic colleague, to leave his congregation in Chile and join Roly as an associate rabbi. It was right after this that the membership of BJ exploded. In 2001, BJ was a congregation of 4,000 or 1,850 units: 55 per cent were families and 45 per cent were singles. Most did not come from observant backgrounds, although I was unable to locate quantitative data on this. The growing membership required additional space and the synagogue rented space from the nearby Church of Saint Paul and Saint Andrew on West 86th Street.

The dramatic influx of new members from 1995 to 2001 highlighted a generational and class rift among congregants which must be placed within the context of broader neo-liberal shifts on the Upper West Side of Manhattan. Demographic data from 1990 to 2000 in Manhattan and the Upper West Side reveal changes in wealth. Drawing on United States census data, sociologist Andrew Beveridge notes that while the average income dropped between 1990 and 2000 in the four other boroughs, in Manhattan the average income grew 12.3 per cent (Beveridge August 2002). In 1990 in Manhattan, according to the United States census, the top 20 per cent of income distribution made at least $95,000. In 2000, that same top 20 per cent made at least $119,000 (Beveridge June 2002). Beveridge writes: "The rapid growth of the financial sector fuelled a boom that saw those living in the Wall Street area, in Tribeca, in Soho, in Morningside Heights and on the Upper West Side with much higher median income in 2000 than in 1990" (Beveridge June 2002).

Following neo-liberal patterns of growing discrepancies between the wealthy and the poor, sociologist and political scientist John Mollenkopf told *The New York Times,* "What happened between 1990 and 2000 in metropolitan New York and especially New York City was that the number of really high-income households went up and low income went up and the middle shrank" (Roberts 2006). While income distribution for Jews is not readily available, according to the Jewish Population Survey, 31 per cent of Upper West Siders are Jews. Among that number, at least 20 per cent reported that they were "comfortable" economically.[7]

BJ members described the changes to wealth and power on the Upper West Side in terms of generation and a shift in profession. Those who had experienced the synagogue under the original rabbi, often older Jewish baby boomers, were sometimes called the "old core" or the "old guard". Many of the old core worked in the arts or in social services as social workers, therapists, and teachers. Newer members were at the very tail end of the baby boom period, had young children, and most often worked in law or finance.[8]

These newer members expected a different sort of synagogue experience. Though equally passionate about their emotional experiences during services, they expected professionalism and efficiency from the synagogue organisation. Lay leaders, for example, the president and the vice-president of the synagogue, were often representative of the generational and class shift. They were critical of the way the synagogue had been operated on a volunteer basis in the recent past. They claimed that the synagogue was run in a haphazard way which they felt was unprofessional. They often referred to the "Upper West Side social worker mentality" as a problem to combat in their goal of rationalising the synagogue and dealing with its exploding membership. An assistant rabbi expressed the shift this way:

> Counter Manhattan capitalism. I'm sure that a lot of BJ was that 1960s [kind of place]. Now a lot of BJ is not that. It probably began that a lot of the population was that. Now with the families and stuff, it's different. It's a more conventional population than it used to be … There's still a huge range I would say [income-wise], but the higher class has more visibility than it used to.
>
> (Author's interview, November 2000)

According to BJ's rabbis Roly and Marcelo, their rabbinate ushered in a new kind of religious worship, what they called a "turning inward". This shift from the more demanding social action of Meyer, for example, in working with gay rights activists or challenging Israel's treatment of Palestinians, to a focus on "combating the loneliness in the city" through prayer and worship, was due to their own religious sensibilities and interests. Marcelo described the differences between Meyer and his and Roly's focus on spirituality:

> He [Meyer] would say my *halakha* [Jewish law] is human rights and the rest [of Jewish religious practice] is voluntary. That was so radical that how many people could be with him? So only the radicals, there's some people left from the sixties … I have that in me too and at the same time I think he was wrong. It's not one or the other [e.g., Judaism or human rights].
>
> (Author's interview, M. Bronstein, December 2000)

The rabbis' shift in focus was not designed to appeal to a different social class of Jews, and they continue to challenge the congregation gently, particularly on issues of Arab–Israeli relations. However, their turn to spirituality was, I argue, particularly appealing to a generation of baby boomers because it incorporated New Age Jewish practices and emphasised a personalised relationship with God through embodied experience.

Jewish spirituality at BJ

Prayer at BJ was about an individual journey, shared with kindred spirits, led by charismatic rabbis, but nevertheless about fulfilling the self through an intimacy with God. Congregants and the rabbis framed Jewish spiritual practices as resources available for all to choose with the goal of achieving self-fulfilment. Cultural conceptions at BJ of the person and spirituality were accomodationist in their apolitical focus on the internal self. Spirituality at BJ shared many of the features that Salkin describes as New Age Judaism. He creates a genealogy for New Age Judaism, claiming it is the direct descendent of Jewish baby boomers' emphasis on spirituality and meaning, particularly from the *havurah* movement (Salkin 2003). Salkin suggests that Jewish New Age is a "style" of thought and practice among non-Orthodox Jews, whose roots are wide-ranging. They

include picking and choosing from Eastern and alternative religions, meditation, Jewish mysticism, reclaiming and reinvigorating certain ritual practices often associated with Jewish orthodoxy, and an emphasis on healing the person (Salkin 2003: 365).

However, prayer at BJ had features which are distinctive from this list of traits, complicating the concept of Jewish New Age in productive ways. The rabbis were committed to using the conventionalised conservative prayer service in Hebrew. They did not allow any innovations in the text or the ritual practice. The rabbis suggested that prayer can be "expanded", such as the singing and dancing around the synagogue during the Friday evening service, but that they would not make changes or excisions to the traditional forms. Marcelo explained his theological stance, "We are about the experience of the divine, not necessarily to change too much of the form." Further, unlike many New Age religious forms which are non-authoritative, BJ is a rabbi-driven synagogue.

There are elements to BJ spirituality which may be less New Age and more part of a North American interest in emotional, embodied religious experiences evident since the 1960s, as anthropologist Tanya Luhrman discusses (Luhrman 2004). She suggests that middle-class baby boomers – including Jews – have been seeking religions that use ritual and the body in ecstatic ways to create an intimate relationship to God (Luhrman 2004: 518–19). Similarly, at BJ, as Roly suggested, God is central:

> God is the philosophy we try to practise here. Prayer is not decorum but inner light … private alone with God. When we connect with one another, and we realise we are made of the same stuff, of the same breath, that we are really one community, by extrapolation, it's also the oneness of the entire universe, *ayn od* [there is nothing else]. We are God …
>
> (Author's interview, R. Matalon, December 2000)

Some congregants I spoke with echoed the rabbi's emphasis on God. For example, an involved congregant told me that if you do not believe in God, if you are not climbing a spiritual ladder or even "dipping your toe in at the bottom rung" then you do not belong at BJ. Another said he began to come to BJ when his wife went to "take out the trash and discovered God in the utility room".

However, there were others who spoke less explicitly of God and used more of a therapeutic framework, describing the potential for individualised "healing" through embodied, emotional prayer. This focuses attention on individualised psychology rather than an individual's position in social and political time and space. A rabbinic intern, for example, suggested that the rabbis' message was that "Judaism has something important to say about your spiritual and psychological life". He said, "It's not about something outer. It's like you fixing something inner; which is a very Hasidic message … don't think Judaism is just about fixing the world … it's for you."

Indeed, a significant experience for most members, and one that kept them attending, was feeling so emotionally moved by their experiences in synagogue that they cried. This experience and display of emotion, unusual in the synagogues in which many had grown up, personalised the traditional prayer service and provided a corrective to Abraham Joshua Heschel's indictment of the modern synagogue as a cold place where "the services are prim, the voice is dry, the temple is clean and tidy … No one will cry, the words are still-born" (Heschel cited in Salkin 2003: 354). I recorded many narratives about crying during prayer, including one by a new member who said: "And everyone started singing … [The rabbis] engaged us in praying with them together. Of course, I started to cry. I think I cried every Friday night." Congregants with

a range of religious backgrounds, from the orthodox to the secular, reported experiencing a similar level of emotional response, evidenced particularly in crying.

Emotional prayer for some congregants emerged out of a combinative spirituality which drew on therapeutic language and Eastern traditions as resources for personal fulfilment, a characteristic of New Age spirituality. Both psychology and Eastern traditions were equally available, along with Jewish traditional practice, for spiritual consumption by BJ congregants. The rabbis have been influenced by the Jewish Renewal Movement, and they frequently discuss notions of healing the individual and wholeness, in addition to drawing on therapeutic frameworks from outside of Judaism. Indeed, one of the rabbis, Marcelo, has training in psychology and has worked as a therapist. For example, one congregant explained: "I can connect to myself, like meditation in a group … it's a place I can actually be drawn into myself and be drawn into the, outer world … personal fulfilment." Another member explicitly compared her involvement in therapy, Eastern meditation, and synagogue services. She reported that all three are ways that she works on herself. And another member described his prayer style as merging Judaism with Yoga and Zen practices:

> Yoga, Zen breath. I do meditation at BJ. In the synagogue, in the *amidah* [a portion of the liturgy]. It's silent. I put the *siddur* [prayerbook] down. I bend my knees slightly. I put my arms out … It's a very meditative experience … You can meditate on the Hebrew words, or the prayers or the *kavanah* [the intention/meaning]. I usually just chill.
>
> (Author's interview, February 2001)

For many, services at BJ were one place, among many, to go and recharge, cultivate themselves, and become "whole" again.

For other members, in contrast, it was their experiences seeking spirituality in other religious traditions that ultimately led them back to Judaism. Using the language of "return" and "home", these congregants suggested that, for them, authentic spirituality needed to be rooted in their own tradition (see Vallely 2006). For example, at a new members' meeting, one person said:

> I began seeking something spiritual. I went the Eastern route, with meditation, etc. I'm a Jungian analyst which has a spiritual aspect to it. But I didn't really find anything that goes to my roots … someone told me about BJ and I went. I was blown away. I felt that I had come home.
>
> (Author's interview, March 2001)

In contrast to the combinative Jewish spirituality at BJ which congregants described as therapeutic, Jewish multiculturalism at BJ exoticised Jewish difference, providing an alternative, "ethnic" form of Judaism to replace normative Ashkenazic traditions. This form of reverse orientalism, for some, made BJ a "cool shul". The rabbis and congregants embraced Sephardic traditions which implicitly critiqued Ashkenazic hegemony and offered a new genealogy, one without the victimisation of the Holocaust. Ritual, music, and material culture were all sites where a Jewish Other was created and then consumed by the predominantly Ashkenazic congregation. The rabbis themselves are from Argentina. Many members purchased and wore colourful Sephardic-style embroidered *yarmulkes* and prayer shawls. The rabbis and cantor, Ari Priven, frequently incorporated unfamiliar melodies and instruments into the services, including traditional, Israeli, Sephardic, Hasidic, and popular music. Priven played an electric keyboard, and there were

several musical groups at BJ which featured a variety of instruments and music from Latin America and the Middle East (Kligman 2000). A number of members reported that the Sephardic and Latin American elements made the synagogue experience more "exotic" and "exciting". Even the Spanish rabbis' "accents" in English were appealing to some who found the conservative Hebrew liturgy unappealing or incomprehensible. At a new members' meeting, a committee member joked that it was BJ's multiculturalism, both Jewish and non-Jewish, that made it especially inviting: "This is a very funny Ashkenazi synagogue that's very Sephardic, that meets in a church, that has rabbis from Argentina … so you'll have to kind of learn Spanish. It's a very interesting place to be." Jewish multiculturalism at BJ created a Jewish sensibility where boundaries of time, geography, and denomination were mixed and blurred and so, ultimately, available for the choosing to all Jews.

Jewish spirituality at BJ included ecstatic, neo-Hasidic embodied religious practice, often framed in a discourse of "energy". Ecstatic worship was one more resource that members could choose to participate in as part of their search for emotional, personalised involvement in the liturgy. During services, the rabbis closed their eyes, they moved to the music while they pounded out the beat on the podium with their fists, and at times they raised their arms in a Hasidic gesture of simultaneously heightening the level of excitement and displaying their emotional, almost trance-like involvement in prayer.

The rabbis demanded that congregants also display ecstatic experiences during the embodied aspects of prayer in which all could participate, regardless of religious background. When, for example, the energy of the congregation seemed too low during the singing and dancing portion of a Shabbat service, one of the rabbis stopped the service. He told them that he did not feel any special Shabbat energy, that they were going through the motions of worship, but were not actually pushing themselves to experience and display the emotions that worship should inspire. He asked them to begin all over again with more energy, which they did. This exchange emphasises that participating in the emotional aspects of ritual is up to the individual. Ecstatic, embodied worship models and provides tools for how congregants can choose to have Jewish ritual speak to them in transcendent, personalised terms. This is a conception of the religious self which has an unlimited agency to intimately experience the divine.

The rabbis presented Hasidic and orthodox traditions as a new means to experience the "beauty" of Judaism, to reclaim traditional Judaism in order to personally connect. This democratising of tradition as a resource one chooses contrasts with traditional observance of Jewish law as obligation. For example, Roly described how going to the *mikvah* [the ritual bath] before Rosh Hashana and Yom Kippur had become a part of BJ practice for a core group of congregants: "It's beautiful … The expectation is that it belongs to you … if you wish to honour it, we can help you do that."

Overall, Jewish spirituality at BJ focused on offering individuals a range of resources to choose from in order to transform their internal lives. In contrast, congregants I spoke to generally kept their work lives separate from their spiritual journeys. Many committed members told me that their time praying at BJ provided them with a space free from everyday concerns, a time to focus on their spiritual selves. Many reported that their work lives had not been significantly transformed by their membership; it was their internal lives that had really changed. In fact, some congregants said that they explicitly did not bring their work identities into the sanctuary. For example, at an orientation for new members, a long-time congregant described how for years he and his fellow members had spent time in services and on retreats before asking one another what they did for a living. A more common question, he suggested, was asking what had brought someone to BJ. The implication from these members was that during prayer at BJ one had the unusual chance to engage with one's inner self, separate from the market.

However, placing spirituality outside of the market is only a possibility under certain economic and political conditions. Despite meaningful religious experiences at BJ, this is an upwardly mobile congregation of Jews who are not especially anxious about wealth. Many within the congregation did not need a synagogue to build their social networks, which were already in place. Rather, they needed a synagogue, and the rabbis in particular, to guide their spiritual journeys.

One staff member of BJ described the informal aesthetic that dominated BJ and linked this aesthetic to a specific class position. He noted the common practice of wearing jeans and shorts to services at BJ. This could be read as a critique of practices at many synagogues where the public display of wealth through dress is an assertion of upward mobility. This staff member, however, understood the casual, informal style of self-presentation at BJ as a more complex class statement. Underneath those jeans, he guessed, those same members wear "Armani underwear". There was no need, he implied, to publicly display wealth at BJ because members were sufficiently economically comfortable and politically powerful to think about other things.

As I discuss in the next section, these same congregants who drew on spiritual and New Age practices as resources for their emotional and personalised involvement with prayer, had new expectations of their chosen synagogue. Further, while professional identities were downplayed in the sanctuary, a new generation of lay leaders used their professional experience to restructure the institution of BJ, an institution that so many felt so passionate about.

Corporatising the synagogue: professionalisation, assessment, and money

As the congregation continued to grow, the increasingly affluent membership began to express dissatisfaction with the ad hoc, voluntary way that the synagogue was run. The staff structure was not equipped to handle the increasing demands for efficiency and accountability. Members got frustrated when, for example, a holiday service for children was chaotic, when the office never returned phone calls, or when they could not get in touch with a rabbi. A former staff member noted: "As more people from the financial and legal fields joined, they expected more services for their membership dues."

This was especially true for families with young children, the tail end of the baby boomer generation, who were representative of the broader social and economic changes ongoing on the Upper West Side. A staff member drew a connection between these members' occupational experiences and their expectations of the synagogue and the Hebrew school:

> These are very smart, wealthy people. They're used to things running the way that they do at investment banks and management consulting firms and IBM or whatever because that's where they work … When they don't get that, it's like, how is it possible that whenever I go to work at Morgan Stanley, and I have a deliverable, that deliverable comes in … how come your deliverable doesn't come in? It's really intense I have to say.
>
> (Author's interview, October 2001)

This same staff member suggested that the "sense of entitlement" she described at BJ could be attributed to members "caring more" about the synagogue. Thus, members' spiritual involvement at BJ intensified their commitment to the synagogue, while their social and economic positions shaped their expectations for the kinds of services the synagogue should provide as an institution.

In response, the synagogue's president, the vice-president, and other lay leaders began working with the rabbis to initiate changes to the structure and management of the synagogue.

This included professionalisation of the staff, board development, which tapped into members' professional expertise, the implementation of long-range planning and self-study, and new attitudes to money. Some members, especially the generation who had joined during Meyer's time, criticised the changes as too "corporate". However, the new executive director, who had been, as she said "professionally headhunted", noted:

> There is no choice because it's so big. They [the old-core] consider corporate negative, but it isn't if it's done properly. Corporate is a way of putting everything in a framework. The other way wasn't working. Things were falling through the cracks. You can have both [i.e. organisation and spirituality], but it takes skill and expertise.
>
> (Author's interview, April 2001)

The president of BJ, the vice-president and other lay leaders often drew directly on their professional experience in the corporate or business world to guide them in their voluntary leadership roles at BJ. For example, during one meeting of the size task force, a member suggested that the volunteer work at the synagogue be held to the same professional standards they were all used to in the corporate environment. He asked, "Are you doing this task force the same way that you would do a task force for your company? … Do we get the professional product that we want?"

The president and other lay leaders, along with the rabbis, began to work on professionalising the staff, the majority of whom had not been formally trained in non-profit work. For example, the current executive director has extensive experience in Jewish non-profit organisations. She has been working closely with the board to help facilitate the ongoing restructuring process, as well as to provide training for the staff and volunteers. She expressed her goals for change this way: "We need to establish standards, accountability, and discipline." An assistant rabbi who had witnessed the professionalisation of the staff commented:

> The new director made things much clearer. Now people [the staff] can give an answer. She's made it more of a science. She's willing to say whose job is whose. I think that there is more clarity … The staff has found that difficult, but things are definitely running more efficiently than they ever have. Even if it seems less enjoyable or as though the love isn't showing through.
>
> (Author's interview, November 2000)

The assistant rabbi suggested that an organisation can either put efficiency or people's feelings first. Efficiency, at that point in time at BJ, was a priority.

In addition to the professionalisation of the staff, the president and other lay leadership at BJ centralised the synagogue governance structure and began to use strategies of assessment, branding, and long-range planning. They drew on their own professional experience and hired a range of outside experts. A few years prior to the research period, some involved members even raised money themselves in order to hire a professional management consultant to clarify areas for development and draft a strategic plan when there was not support from the board. However, during the research period, marketing strategies had become quite common. For example, when the board convened an advisory group on evaluation, they included an outside expert evaluator. Similarly, volunteers regularly ran focus groups and conducted informal phone surveys to self-examine in a structured way. In addition to the consultants, the president and other lay leaders created a series of steering committees and task forces which regularly presented their findings to the board and the rabbis. The rabbis also began to use new approaches

to institution building, in particular attempting to gain insights from experts in a range of contexts outside of BJ: mega-churches, Jewish organisations, and management consultant firms. An increasingly strong BJ lay leadership tried to create efficiency, structure, and a model of progress and growth to serve BJ's spiritual goals.

Board participation, especially around the issue of money, also began to shift. Board membership at the synagogue had historically been a reward for involvement and volunteering. However, the president and some other board members saw board membership as resources for developing in specific directions, particularly in fund raising and more long-term growth. For example, in an open letter to the community announcing board nominations, the leadership made their goals very explicit: "The committee is particularly interested in identifying members with organisation experience, programmatic expertise, and experience in real estate, fund-raising and finance" (Kol *Jeshurun* 2001).

The assistant rabbi suggested that this shift challenged the previous board's attitude to money more generally. She noted that with the growing membership BJ needed to raise a great deal of money. However, there was resistance to this new model from board members whom she referred to as "the old school":

> People were very resistant on the board to raising and spending money, to making that the focus. I think we're still trying to negotiate how to do that … that money isn't a bad thing. There's definitely a lot of *mishegoss* [craziness] around money. Some of that old school mentality, of this mom and pop [a local, family owned business model], we can function without, essentially got obliterated from the board and different people were brought in.
>
> (Author's interview, November 2000)

Indeed the composition of the board changed dramatically. The new approach was to build a board that had business skills and networks which could help BJ grow. This was made explicit when a very involved congregant, whom the rabbis recommended, put himself forward and was not elected to the board. He and his wife were very disappointed, and they explained the event in terms of the new concern for connections and resources. He said, "There were very elliptical questions about resources … The guy they elected [instead] is not a bad guy. He's young, not progressive or emblematic of the synagogue's values, but he has tens of millions of dollars."

The president of BJ and several other key lay leaders concluded that for BJ to continue to fulfil what they called the "spiritual vision", attitudes toward wealth had to be re-examined. Some lay leaders remembered that early on at BJ, the wealthy had often felt uncomfortable and underappreciated. One wealthy congregant remarked that every volunteer was honoured at BJ with a call to the Torah, except for those who contributed financially to BJ. Interestingly, this attitude toward wealth was a feature that Meyer initiated, although he himself came from a wealthy background. The shift in attitude to wealth and giving can be traced to the rededication of the remodelled sanctuary in 1996. In this ceremony, all those who had given generously were publicly honoured for the first time, along with others who had given their time and energies. Wealth and volunteerism were presented as equally valid ways to support the "spiritual" vision of BJ. Money became complementary to religious spirituality, a facet of Jewish neo-liberal subjectivity.

Hoping to change the negative perspective on wealth and giving, the president and other lay leaders recognised that the rabbis themselves were ambivalent about wealth. This was, perhaps, a part of their rabbinic training and a factor of their own histories. In response, a fund-raiser who had worked with Mother Teresa on similar issues was brought in for a coaching session with the

rabbis. The session focused on "spiritual giving" or the idea that money could be a form of "energy", a way to accomplish spiritual goals. The rabbis remembered the experience enthusiastically:

RABBI MARCELO: We really were blown away. *Al regal ahat* [to summarise] basically she said that money is energy, and energy could be used in many ways.

RABBI ROLY: She said that money has to flow. You have to talk to people in terms of money as energy that flows like water in a river. If money is stagnated, it pollutes.

RABBI MARCELO: … It was like therapy about money. We had a transformation. After that, the budget jumped! We really began to change.

Before their session, the rabbis said they were uncomfortable fundraising, especially when they were expected to court potentially big donors. However, they realised that money could become a tool for spirituality, framed in terms of energy. Their coaching session encouraged them to compare money to the natural world, "flowing like water in a river". They even used therapeutic and spiritual analogies when they compared the session to "therapy about money" or talked about their "transformation". After their session, they understood money as a means for creating spiritual and therapeutic opportunities and were more comfortable going out to fundraise for BJ.

These changes to the structure and management of BJ, as well as changing attitudes to money, supported the shared goal of spiritual exploration. This was in contrast to prayer and religious ritual at BJ which downplayed professional identities and issues of wealth through an aesthetic of informality, a focus on emotional engagement, individualised healing, and combinative religious traditions. However, both Jewish spirituality and institution building are cultural and religious aspects of a Jewish neo-liberal subjectivity. The congregants' search for emotional, spiritual, and therapeutic experiences shaped their expectations of how a synagogue should be run. Their professional abilities were also resources, a form of "energy", a way to support members' spiritual journeys and make them run smoothly. By simultaneously downplaying professional identities during prayer, adopting corporate strategies and transforming concepts about money, congregants created a spiritual institution which allowed them to experience their own class positions as positive forces for personal growth.

Some of these changes to the synagogue, however, were contested, especially by the rabbis, as I discuss in the next section.

Contesting change at BJ

During the research period, the rabbis and some congregants made an effort to challenge certain shifts at BJ. This included the commodification of spirituality where religious practices, particularly New Age Jewish practices, became resources for individual consumption. As a younger member noted: "BJ's gotten so large that it's become more of a general vehicle for people to just check-in and get some spirituality … it feels like it's gone corporate. That's OK. I'm one of the few people who is not complaining about that."

The rabbis were especially reluctant to allow BJ to become what Marcelo called a "feel-good, bubble bath" of spirituality. For example, at a board meeting where members brainstormed about creating community, one of the rabbis spoke up and redirected the conversation. He noted that in the discussions around creating community, no one had mentioned *mitsvot* [commandments]: "You have talked about why people come [to BJ]: to find calm, to find a mate, to be educated in Judaism, to deal with Jewish continuity. But not *mitsvot*. This is the critical part of spiritual Judaism and community." The rabbi attempted to steer the conversation

from one where Judaism provided opportunities for individuals to acquire something (a mate, education) to a notion of Judaism that emphasised Jewish religious practice as a choice, a way to build a relationship with God and community.

There were also rabbinic efforts to articulate the differences between the synagogue and the marketplace, efforts to challenge the increasing parallels between the corporate world and the world of the synagogue. This was explicit in a meeting between the membership committee composed of lay leaders and one of the rabbis. In an effort to encourage people to join BJ, rather than just attend services regularly which many did, the membership committee had created a brochure in which they tried to articulate the value of joining the synagogue. Both committee members and the rabbi struggled to distinguish how synagogue membership was different from other kinds of membership where services were exchanged for money:

RABBI: I have one problem. "The benefits of the membership." This is a wonderful compilation of things that you've collected [referring to a list which detailed community activities], however, it sounds like an American Express thing – what do I get? The person who asks the questions doesn't get it, understand? The benefit is the opportunity to serve, not to be served. So, I'm hesitant to use benefit language … I'd say the blessing of membership. Or why be a member.

MEMBER 1:   Or the gift of membership, since that goes both ways.

RABBI: … I don't want people to become members here because they feel there's a benefit. I want them to come here because they want to belong. A conscious community … That's the benefit.

MEMBER 2:   I think what the rabbi said about benefit-thinking doesn't apply only to non-members, it applies to members … we need to get them thinking about wanting to be a part of a community that you care about and that reflects what your values are.

In this exchange, committee members and the rabbi attempted to find language which went beyond the exchange of money for membership. More broadly, they were attempting to challenge what some perceived as a growing trend at BJ, where spirituality was about individualised benefits which members could drop by, pickup, and then continue on in their everyday lives.

Conclusions

Max Weber noted long ago the relationship between early capitalism and the privatisation of religious life (Weber 1930). Some scholars of late capitalism argue that what is new about contemporary spirituality is that neo-liberal policies have created the possibility for a decentralised model of market economics to be applied to religion itself (Hann 2000; Carrette and King 2005). While this perspective is helpful, it tends to discount people's passionate religious experiences of spirituality, as well as the historical, cultural, and political conditions which make this religiosity possible.

At BJ, professional, upwardly mobile Jews are participating in a meaningful search for spirituality, one which is part of their social positions in the urban landscape. Within the sanctuary, congregants and the rabbis *focus* on embodied, emotional experiences, hoping to develop a relationship to God and to minister to their own needs. They draw on New Age spirituality as well as ecstatic and meditative traditions, both Jewish and non-Jewish. They exoticise and "reclaim" practices and ritual objects from Jewish ethnic minorities and more observant Jews. Jewish spirituality is a *resource* at BJ, a way to tap into a more personalised, emotional form of Judaism which cultivates individuals' inner lives. Jewish spirituality provides far fewer opportunities to reflect on one's political and social position. In synagogue services, congregants background their professional identities. Their search for spirituality provides respite from everyday demands, including the market.

Outside of prayer, these same congregants expect that BJ as an institution will function efficiently and effectively, respond to congregants' needs, and grow financially to accommodate all who

wish to come. This requires that BJ change its "mom and pop" "social worker mentality" and function more like a corporation. The president and other lay leaders draw on their professional skills to enable BJ to fulfil its congregants' needs. Corporate management and wealth at BJ are used as resources to support a "spiritual vision". This is especially evident in the transformation of money into energy, one more resource, like neo-Hasidism or yoga, which has the potential to facilitate a connection to God, to heal and understand the self, to connect to other Jews, to be touched emotionally.

The relationship between Jewish spirituality and the upward mobility associated with neo-liberalism can be cross-culturally compared to activism in a Christian mega-church in the suburban North American south as elaborated by anthropologist Omri Elisha. He describes a tension between upward mobility, religious piety, and progressive activism (Elisha 2004). Activist evangelicals, according to Elisha, try to reconcile religious and class identities by preaching that wealth can become a resource for accomplishing God's purposes on earth (Elisha 2004: 46).

At BJ, in contrast, institution-building activities transformed upward mobility and corporate professionalism into resources for building, as BJ's president called it, "a container to hold the nourishing water of BJ". This transformation was supported in synagogue services which focused on the internal self and had an aesthetic which de-emphasised professional identities and displays of wealth. Upward mobility, the expectation of certain kinds of services from the synagogue, and a search for spirituality in prayer as a break from the market are mutually constitutive of Jewish neo-liberal subjectivities.

However, the implications of these changes at BJ are not clear. Within the last few years, BJ has turned a great deal of effort to social action in the synagogue including the hiring of a full-time social action coordinator. BJ conducted a congregation-wide survey, *Panim al Panim* (Face to Face), to determine future directions for social action. One outcome of this survey was the finding that most congregants wanted to focus on social action at home rather than take on global issues. One possible interpretation of these changes to social action at BJ is that goals of political social change in Meyer's time may have been replaced by the more modest goal of helping those less fortunate.

More broadly, in terms of the ethnographic study of Jewish spirituality, BJ makes the case for studies of religious life embedded within dynamics of social class and politics, for, as Robert Orsi notes, "Religion comes into being with an ongoing dynamic relationship with the realities of everyday life" (Orsi 1997). By attending to the nexus of culture, religion, economics and politics, ethnographic studies of Jewish spirituality have great potential to show Jews as history makers, engaging local and global processes over time and space.

Acknowledgements

Notes

1 Personal communication, BJ membership director. According to the current director of BJ, however, before 2000 there are very few records of either members' occupations or income bracket.

2 My own history as a lifelong Jewish Upper West Sider (unaffiliated with any synagogue) provided a continual backdrop for my analysis of BJ and ongoing changes in the neighbourhood. For a fuller discussion of the politics of Jewish ethnography see Fader (2007).

3 BJ members' religious experiences resonate with the studies of both Cohen and Eisen and Waxman who report that Jewish baby boomers' religious practice has become more privatised and often symbolic.

Jewish baby boomers are comfortable with picking and choosing from a range of religious practices, both Jewish and non-Jewish, to fashion their own individualised belief system, often using the concept of spirituality rather than religion. However, a key difference for the baby boomers at BJ is that they engage Jewish spirituality in the institutionalised space of the synagogue.

4 Chava Weissler is one of the few scholars who notes Jewish spirituality's ties to the culture of late capitalism, evidenced, she claims, in the current concern with marketing among Jewish professionals. In the "spiritual marketplace", Weissler suggests, Judaism becomes a form of leisure commodity, and marketers attempt to access individuals' desires for personal enrichment, novelty, and enjoyment that motivate other consumer choices (Weissler 2004).

5 Neo-liberal processes in New York City can be traced to the 1970s when the federal government cut aid to the city. A powerful group of investment bankers refused to roll over the city's debt, sending New York into bankruptcy. Investment bankers, suggests Harvey, then stepped in to restructure the city, creating a strong business climate and using public resources for business infrastructure subsidies and tax incentives for capitalist enterprise (Harvey 2005: 44–48).

6 Some anthropologists have suggested that neo-liberalism can be understood as a new form of religion with its own set of moral, ethical values dictated by the desire for consumption and often engaging "economies of the occult" in order to reach prosperity, for example, Camoroff and Camoroff (2000). Others have examined certain kinds of religious movements as a response (especially non-liberal religions) to neo-liberal policies. These religions, some suggest, offer an alternative moral framework for interpreting the economic and cultural uncertainty that neo-liberalism brings. See, for example, Mahmood (2005) or Weller (2000).

7 I was unable to find statistics which track professions for Upper West Side Jews for this period, nor obtain this information from BJ. In addition, the Jewish Population Survey from 1991 and 2000 which addresses issues of income in very general terms had innate methodological differences between 1990 and 2000 which makes comparison difficult. For an assessment of these surveys see the journal *Contemporary Jewry* (2005), special issue.

8 Personal communication, BJ membership office.

Essential reading

Bender, Courtney (2010). *The New Metaphysicals: Spirituality and the American Religious Imagination*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press. An ethnography of contemporary spirituality in Cambridge, Massachusetts. Bender shows how practitioners' focus on progress and science obscures spirituality's history from those who practice and those who study it.

Fader, Ayala (2013). 'Nonliberal Jewish Women's Audiocassette Lectures: A Crisis of Faith and the Morality of Media' *American Anthropologist* 115 (1): 72–84. An analysis of inspirational lectures for nonliberal Jewish women, which draw on ethical Jewish writings and the North American therapeutic framework. Lectures are contextualised in an ongoing crisis of faith in the community due to new digital media.

Heinze, Andrew (2004). *Jews and the American Soul: Human Nature in the Twentieth Century*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press. A historical examination of the relationship between Jewish thought and the therapeutic movement.

Ho, Karen (2009). *Liquidated: An Ethnography of Wall Street*. Berkeley: University of California Press. Another view on processes of neoliberalism. A study of the global financial crisis through a particularistic ethnography of the culture of investment bankers and banks.

Huss, Boaz, ed. (2011). *Kabbalah and Contemporary Spiritual Revival*. Beer Sheva: Ben-Gurion University Press. An edited volume with multiple ethnographic perspectives on the use of Jewish mystical texts in the construction of contemporary spiritualities.

Further reading

Boustan, Raanan, Oren Kosansky and Marina Rustow eds. (2011). *Jewish Studies at the Crossroads of History and Anthropology: Authority, Tradition, Diaspora*. Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press. An edited volume, which brings together scholars in anthropology, history, religious studies, comparative literature, and other fields to plot new directions in Jewish studies.

Finkelman, Yoel (2011). *Strictly Kosher Reading: Popular Literature and the Condition of Contemporary Orthodoxy*. Brighton, MA: Academic Studies Press. A textual analysis of new genres of Orthodox literature and what these genres tell us about social reproduction and change in Orthodoox communities.

Stolow, Jeremy (2010). *Orthodox By Design: Judaism, Print Politics and the Artscroll Revolution*. Berkeley, CA: University of California Press. An ethnographic study of the largest Orthodox publishing house and the changes it is making to understandings of Jewish orthodoxy. Including chapters on self-help, cookbooks, as well as religious texts.

Weissler, Chava (2005). 'Meanings of Shekinah in the "Jewish Renewal" Movement' *Nashim*: *A Journal of Jewish Women's and Gender Issues* 10 (2005): 53–83. An ethnographic study of the Jewish Renewal movement, which draws on Jewish texts and New Age spiritualities.

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