

AJS Review

<http://journals.cambridge.org/AJS>



Additional services for **AJS Review**:

Email alerts: [Click here](#)

Subscriptions: [Click here](#)

Commercial reprints: [Click here](#)

Terms of use : [Click here](#)



Downloaded from <http://journals.cambridge.org/AJS>. Published online by Cambridge University Press

Stephen Katz. *The Centrifugal Novel: S. Y. Agnon's Poetics of Composition*. Madison and Teaneck, NJ: Fairleigh Dickinson University Press, 1999. 219 pp.

William Cutter

AJS Review / Volume 26 / Issue 01 / April 2002, pp 175 - 178

DOI: 10.1017/S0364009402490046, Published online: 20 September 2002

Link to this article: http://journals.cambridge.org/abstract_S0364009402490046

How to cite this article:

William Cutter (2002). AJS Review, 26, pp 175-178 doi:10.1017/S0364009402490046

Request Permissions : [Click here](#)

BOOK REVIEWS

Paul Heger. *The Three Biblical Altar Laws*. Beihefte zur Zeitschrift für die alttestamentliche Wissenschaft, 279. Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, 1999. xi, 463 pp.

In this monumental book, Paul Heger attempts to explain how synagogue recital of biblical texts replaced the sacrificial cult (p. 366). He posits that gradual disaffection with the Temple enabled the rabbis to institute synagogue ritual for sacrifice even while the second Temple stood. The work is wide-ranging, yet focused, and provides a detailed history of the cult from the Bronze Age until the destruction of the second Temple. The first half is a diachronic study of the three biblical altar laws. The second half investigates the impact of Ahaz, Josiah, Ezra and Nehemiah, the Maccabees, and finally the rabbis on attitudes toward temple sacrifice.

Perhaps it is unavoidable in a work which spans the time from the Bronze Age to the Rabbinic period that much is left out. Heger relies heavily on a Persian period dating for P, and does not attempt to engage other views.¹ The three biblical altar laws Heger refers to are Exod. 20: 24–26 (which he mysteriously refers to as vs. 21–23), Deut. 27: 2–8, especially 4–7, and Exod. 27:1–8. He assumes these laws were known by the populace and binding on them. He does not discuss Westbrook's work (nor the large amount written generally on the role of law codes in the ancient Near East) that suggests law codes were confined to scribal schools.²

Heger argues for a progressive weakening in lay attachment to the sacrificial cult. Ahaz instituted the first step when he substituted the bronze altar (a presentation altar) by a great altar for burnt offerings (2 Kings 16: 10–16). Prior to Ahaz, altars throughout Israel were for presentation offerings only; burnt offerings were made on an *ad hoc* basis (p. 262). Ahaz encouraged burnt-offering altars in the towns, and instituted a regular daily burnt-offering ritual in the temple (p. 264). This reform changed the relationship between the deity and the people—it forever removed the theological necessity of feeding the god.

Heger derives evidence for Ahaz's inauguration of burnt-offering sacrifices from two sources. The first source is the biblical text. The description of Solomon's temple does not mention a burnt-offering altar, so there was none in the temple pri-

1. Several scholars have argued recently that P is early and precedes D (the many articles and books by A. Hurvitz; I. Knohl, *The Sanctuary of Silence: The Priestly Torah and the Holiness School*, Augsburg Fortress Press, Minneapolis, 1995, J. Milgrom, *Leviticus*, Anchor Bible Commentary, Doubleday, New York, 1991). Others want to do away with the documentary hypothesis entirely (e.g. R. N. Whybray, *The Making of the Pentateuch: A Methodological Study*, JSOT Supp. 53, Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1987).

2. See especially, J. Bottero, "The 'Code' of Hammurabi," in idem., *Mesopotamia: Writing, Reasoning, and the Gods*, Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1992, pp. 156–184; B. M. Levinson (Ed.), *Theory and Method in Biblical and Cuneiform Law: Revision, Interpolation and Development*, JSOT Supp. 181, Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1994; and R. Westbrook's article in that book "What is the Covenant Code?," pp. 15–36.

or to Ahaz. (The small bronze altar Ahaz put aside was not capable of sustaining burnt offerings.³) Heger does not consider that the statement in 2 Chron. 4:1 might have been simply left out of the Kings account by haplography.⁴ The second source is archaeological. The large altar in the court at Arad was used for slaughtering only, and the temple of Arad was lined with offering benches. These offering benches disappear in Stratum IX, the middle of the eighth century, the period of Ahaz's reign (742–727). This convinces Heger that Ahaz instituted a nationwide reform to eliminate food offerings to the deity (p. 263). What Heger does not mention is that the entire temple at Arad was buried in Stratum IX, an act the excavator attributes to Hezekiah.⁵ The temple of Arad cannot provide evidence for Ahaz's reform.

To Heger, the second step in the elimination of the sacrificial system was the reform of Josiah (2 Kings 22:3–7)—a reform confined to the removal of local *bamoth* (p. 284). The reform of Josiah was the main cause of the weakening of lay attachment to the temple. The centralization of the cult resulted in “a professional class of clergy and . . . exclusion of laics from . . . the sacrifices” (p. 366). “The priesthood developed into an intermediary body between God and the people.” “[This notion was] totally incompatible with Israelite tradition and consciousness” (*ibid.*). No evidence is brought for the latter assertion. An elaborate priesthood is part of the tradition of the entire ancient Near East.⁶ Ostraca indicate the presence of a priesthood at Arad. Heger brings no evidence for the historicity of Josiah's reform, except to posit the Deuteronomic redactor would have no reason to make it up. Yet, archaeological evidence shows all cult sites were destroyed during Assyrian conquest—long before Josiah.⁷

The centralization of the cult and the exclusion of the laity led to “minimal concern for the temple among a significant element of Israelite society” (p. 335). Ezra and Nehemiah reversed this, invigorated the cult, and brought about a theocracy in Jerusalem (pp. 350–351). Heger does not mention that both these men worked for the Persian government. According to Heger, the Persian government played no role in Judaeon internal developments. The wishes of two Persian officials were paramount,

3. N. H. Gadegaard, “On the So-Called Burnt Offering Altar in the Old Testament,” PEQ, 110, 1978, pp. 35–45.

4. S. Japhet, *I and II Chronicles*, The Old Testament Library, Westminster/Louisville: John Knox Press, 1993, ad. loc. p. 564. Gadegaard (*ibid.*, n. 4) states that a small bronze altar could never sustain a fire large enough to consume an entire sheep or bull. A very large *copper* altar would be able to sustain such a fire however, and “copper” may be the correct translation (Deut. 8:9). Heger argues (p. 242, n. 24) that 1 Kings 8:64, which refers to a large altar out in the middle courtyard, was a priestly interpolation, and so from the Persian period. Rather than the end of chapter 8 being a priestly interpolation, I would argue that vs. 14–61 are a *deuteronomic* interpolation. [I thank Victor (A) Hurowitz for reminding me of Deut. 8:9 (personal communication).]

5. Z. Herzog, “The Arad Fortress,” in *Arad*, Hakibbutz Hameuchad Publishing House, IES, Tel Aviv, 1997, p. 199–203 (Hebrew).

6. A cursory reading of ANET will confirm this.

7. A survey of cult sites in Judah/Samaria shows that none remained in existence after 701. All were either destroyed in the course of conquest, or intentionally buried to avoid desecration (L. S. Fried, “The High Places (Bâmôt) and the Reforms of Hezekiah and Josiah,” forthcoming; presented at the Meeting of the American Oriental Society, New Orleans, April 1998).

yet these two officials had only the interests of the Jews at heart. This is not consistent with Persian administrative patterns.⁸ Heger provides no evidence for priestly secular power. A detailed study of the history of Judah in the Persian period suggests the priests had no real power. Except for brief periods, they were subordinate to the Persian monarchs and their local representatives.⁹

To Heger, the elaborate ritual developed by the priesthood shifted the performance of the cult from the offerer to the priest. It thereby “diminished the excitement of the sacrificial celebration for the individual who came to Jerusalem for that purpose” (p. 370). The ability to send money to pay for the cult (a system developed by Nehemiah) also helped to eliminate the “emotional devotion” of those who could not come in person (p. 370). Yet this conclusion is belied by the huge holiday throngs that both Josephus and the New Testament report.

According to Heger, the rabbis substituted synagogue ritual for temple sacrifice. Even before the destruction of the Temple, the rabbis had organized the populace into assemblies to recite appropriate biblical pericopes instead of attending the sacrifices (p. 381). As proof, he quotes only the *Mishnah Ta’anith* (4:2) as if it were a reliable source for first century events. The entire purpose of his work is to explain the rapid substitution of recitation for sacrifice. Yet he provides no real evidence to indicate when this occurred or that it was a first-century phenomenon.

In sum, Heger attempts to show a gradual weakening of attachment to the sacrificial cult. This weak attachment enabled the rabbis to substitute the recitation of biblical passages even before the Temple’s destruction. The phenomenon of ritualized prayer as a substitute for the sacrificial system is interesting and worthy of investigation. I am not convinced it was caused by a decrease in emotional attachment of the laity toward the Temple, nor do I think it was a first-century phenomenon. A critical reading of Talmudic texts might yield an answer to this interesting question.

Lisbeth S. Fried
University of Michigan
Ann Arbor, Michigan



Steven L. McKenzie. *King David: A Biography*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000. viii, 232 pp.

Marti J. Steussy. *David: Biblical Portraits of Power*. Studies on the Personalities of the Old Testament. Columbia: University of South Carolina Press, 1999. viii, 251 pp.

Baruch Halpern. *David’s Secret Demons: Messiah, Murderer, Traitor, King*. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2001. xx, 492 pp.

8. L. S. Fried, “The Rise to Power of the Judaeen Priesthood: The Impact of the Achaemenid Empire,” Doctoral Dissertation, New York University, May 2000.

9. Ibid.

Biography is not a genre usually associated with the academic study of the Bible, but it has found a small niche therein. The University of South Carolina publishes the series called “Personalities of the Old Testament,” in which Steussy’s volume is the eighth, and Oxford University Press will soon release what may be considered a companion to McKenzie’s book, *King Josiah of Judah* by Marvin A. Sweeney. The advantage of biography is that it can encompass literary, historical, and archeological information, uniting them holistically around the focal point of a biblical figure, or as holistically as the author chooses. As a heuristic device, biblical biography may serve well even if the subject of the biography is fictional, or suspected of being so. (The “Personalities” series has volumes on Noah, Jonah, Esther and Daniel, hardly the most “historical” of characters.) When it comes to David, suspicions about his fictionality are at an all-time high. While the historicity of Abraham has been in doubt for some time, it was, until recently, axiomatic that one could speak with confidence about the early history of the Israelite monarchy and could draw on the books of Samuel and Kings as primary sources, or at least as containing remnants of primary sources for the period of the united monarchy. Now that confidence has been shaken; the very existence of a united monarchy is being questioned by some scholars, especially the “minimalists,” who see its “primary sources” (the Deuteronomistic History) as a fabrication from the Persian or Hellenistic period.¹ A battle currently rages among historians of ancient Israel between the minimalists and their opponents (not all of whom are “maximalists”) about the antiquity and the reliability of the Deuteronomistic History as a historical source.²

Remarkably little of this battle intrudes into the books by McKenzie and Steussy, although both authors acknowledge its presence on the academic scene. Steussy is concerned not with history but with literature. She is interested not in the historical David but in the Bible’s portraits of David. In this she conforms to the goal of the series in which her book appears, which examines biblical personalities not to “learn ancient history . . . or to discover models for ethical action” but in order to see what “light they throw on the imagining of the deity in biblical times” (viii). The study of the Bible’s religious outlook is the goal, and the means is literary exegesis of the biblical text.

While Steussy does not have to wrestle with the question of the historical accuracy of the biblical material, she does not ignore the dating of the texts she examines: Samuel, Psalms, and Chronicles. She summarizes quite intelligently the range of dates attributed by various scholars (including the minimalists) to all her biblical material, never deciding which dates to accept. Then she makes a subtle move, typical of literary approaches. Instead of belaboring the issue of when the texts were ac-

1. See G. N. Knoppers, “The Vanishing Solomon: The Disappearance of the United Monarchy from Recent Histories of Ancient Israel,” *Journal of Biblical Literature* 116 (1997): 19–44. For a representative of the minimalist view see K. W. Whitlam, “The History of Israel: Foundations of Israel” in *Text in Context*, edited by A. D. H. Mayes (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000), 376–402.

2. The names prominent among the minimalists are Philip Davies, Niels Lemche, Thomas Thompson, and Keith Whitlam. The bibliography on this debate is large and growing. For an overview see Amy Dockser Marcus, *The View from Nebo* (Boston: Little, Brown and Company, 2000), 105–128, 256–257.

tually written, she focuses on the issue of how they present themselves to be read in their canonical form. The material on David, 1 Samuel 16–1 Kings 1, presents itself as connected to the Deuteronomistic History, whether or not it was written as part of it; Chronicles reads as though it is to be associated with Ezra-Nehemiah whether or not it had the same author. Both Chronicles and Psalms, being in the Ketuvim section of the canon, align themselves with late biblical writings. Steussy notes that the “literary matrices of our three major David portraits each suggest a horizon for interpretation” (p. 24). Psalms and Chronicles, Steussy says, “draw our attention to the life of the Second Temple community, thus inviting us to interpret David as part of that community’s history” while Samuel contains “little to make us look beyond David’s own lifetime” (no matter when it was written—p. 24, and cf. 194–96). Samuel’s account is more realistic while Chronicles and Psalms are more imaginative and idealized. This is an observation about the literary nature of these writings, not about their accuracy or their distance from the events they recount. But it is easy to see why many scholars take the “realistic” material in Samuel as being more “historical” than the imaginative material in Psalms and Chronicles. The clues that most scholars take as pointing to signs of dating the compositions, Steussy takes as literary markers of the claim the text makes on the reader, regardless of when they were actually written. “When I use these horizons in interpretation,” says Steussy, “I do so as a response to the reading cues offered in the texts, not as a claim about compositional dates” (p. 24).³ This approach is “literary-critical” in that it seeks to distinguish texts on the basis of their genre, style, and position in the canon. I stress the point because at times it may appear that Steussy employs standard source criticism, but that is not her intention.

Steussy’s broad time horizon works well for her purpose of helping the modern reader understand David’s relationship with God, and ultimately the reader’s relationship with God. This a-chronistic approach (or what I think of as source-critical agnosticism) is still favored by many modern literary scholars of the Bible, and has always been favored by traditional faith communities. It makes the Bible timeless—unbound by chronological constraints—such that every reader in every period can find his or her meaning in it. Literary scholars like this because it breaks free of the notion that the text has just one meaning. The text comes to have many meanings and the meaning is as much a product of the reader as of the author. Traditional communities like it because it lets every generation connect with the Bible, making the Bible its own. On the other hand, biblical scholars of the historical persuasion have always sought the “original meaning” or the meaning for the first audience. Increasingly, though, both historians and literary interpreters are interested in reading the Bible in light of its ideology. In order to discern its ideology, we

3. This is trickier than it sounds. Take the book of Ruth as an example. Ruth tells us that it is a story from the period of Judges, and culminates in the genealogy of David. It seems to be telling the reader: “Read me as a prologue to the story of David.” But it is not part of the Deuteronomistic History. Its location in Ketuvim suggests that it belongs to the context of the postexilic community. As such, it becomes part of the idealized portrait of David from this period. Dating Ruth by this literary feature corresponds to the date ascribed by most scholars on other grounds. Whether such literary dating works in all cases is unclear; one can never break free completely of the hermeneutic circle in which we date a text by what we think it is saying while at the same time we interpret it to fit the date we assign to it.

need to know the context—the social and political location—from which the text emerged.⁴ This is another way of saying that many biblicists are still interested in the “original meaning” or the “intent of the author”—an idea that is acceptable once again if couched in the postmodern admission that there is not one correct meaning for all time. In fact, uncovering the ideology of the text is where literary and historical readings converge nicely.

Enter McKenzie. McKenzie, unlike Steussy, is searching for the historical David. As if reversing the words of the editor of the “Personalities” series, McKenzie states that “We will read the Bible not for its model of David as a religious hero nor for the artistry of its story about him, but for the historical information about him that it may provide” (p. 5). Right from the start McKenzie confronts the question: “Was there a King David?” He reviews the epigraphic and archeological data and readily admits that they do not prove incontrovertibly that David was a historical person. All we know of David comes from the Bible.⁵ If so, why assume that David actually existed? Because, according to McKenzie, the David stories in Samuel are an apologia, propaganda in defense of David. They are a cover-up intended to justify David’s actions. No one would construct a cover-up unless there were things to be covered up. In McKenzie’s words, “Who would invent such allegations against David just to try to explain them away?” (p. 35). “The fact that the author felt the need to try to explain the motives behind David’s deeds indicates that those deeds were widely believed to have occurred” (p. 186). This, then, becomes the most compelling reason to conclude that David was a historical figure and that the stories about him bear some relationship to actual events.

That the David stories are apologetic is not a new idea, but McKenzie develops it in a thoroughgoing and convincing way.⁶ In order to get to the “real” history of David, he must strip away the apologetics and uncover what it sought to hide. This is done by interpreting the biblical text, and it is at this point that the projects of McKenzie and Steussy coincide, because they are both constructing portraits of David based on their interpretations of the biblical text.

McKenzie’s David is ambitious and ruthless. David did what many men have done to gain, consolidate, and protect their political power. He tried to usurp the kingship from Saul and he is implicated in the murders of Nabal, Saul, Abner, and Ishbaal. He even had his own sons Amnon and Absalom killed when it looked like

4. The same hermeneutic circle is present here, for one can never escape it.

5. This is not a new position, as McKenzie makes clear. The only new extra-biblical factor, noted by both McKenzie and Steussy, is the phrase *byt dwd* on a recently discovered Aramaic inscription from Tel Dan, dated to around 800 BCE. Most scholars take this as a reference to the Davidic dynasty or the kingdom of Judah. Interpretations range from considering the inscription as proof of the existence of a historical David to reading the word *dwd* as something other than David’s name, to taking the inscription as a forgery.

6. For earlier readings of the David story as an apologia see P. K. McCarter, “The Apology of David,” *Journal of Biblical Literature* 99 (1980): 489–504; J. VanderKam, “Davidic Complicity in the Deaths of Abner and Eshbaal: A Historical and Redactional Study,” *Journal of Biblical Literature* 99 (1980): 521–539. The “apologetic” reading has become a commonplace, especially given the current tendency to analyze literature in terms of its political ideology. Cf., for example, P. K. McCarter, *II Samuel* (Anchor Bible, Garden City, NJ: Doubleday, 1984), 120 and *passim*, and Marc Z. Brettler, *The Creation of History in Ancient Israel* (London and New York: Routledge, 1995), 91–111.

they were becoming a threat to his kingship. This portrait is less flattering than the one the Bible presumably tried to convey, and more radical than most readers would like. While McKenzie knows he can't prove it, he maintains that it is certainly plausible. And so it is—it offers one scenario, although perhaps not the only one, that makes sense of the material.

The David that Steussy finds in Samuel is somewhat, but not altogether, different. He is “more worldly-wise, more fallible, and conspicuously less pious than our first overview led us to expect” (p. 70). Steussy is not looking for a unified reading of the material, so it is not unexpected that she finds a mixed portrait David, with both positive and negative images. She begins by accepting the common perceptions of David but then problematizes many of them. She too implicates David in the murder of Abner, noting that the narrator protests David's innocence too much (p. 57), and of Ishbaal. She too does not take the Abigail story at face value, but interprets it differently from McKenzie (a negative picture of Abigail emerges from Steussy's reading). Some of these similarities in interpretation should make us wonder how clever we are when we discover “hidden secrets” about David's actions. Just how hidden are they? Were we meant to see them all along? If the defense of David is so transparent, how good a defense is it?

The books by Steussy and McKenzie are thoroughly researched and clearly written, and accessible to students and non-specialists. Both authors are well-informed and sophisticated readers, and their interpretations of many passages are models of exegesis. While each book stands solidly in its own right as a contribution to the study of the Bible, reading the two together is beneficial because each problematizes the approach of the other. McKenzie's argument is more powerful because it is more focused and unified. He identifies the David material in Samuel as apologetic, and interprets all of it in that light. He privileges the Deuteronomistic History, which he views as being as close to the historical David as we can get (p. 36; he accepts the standard source-critical position on its composition), and consequently has relatively little to say about Chronicles and Psalms, which he perceives as more distant in time and less accurate. (Actually, of course, the Chronicler is just as much a historiographer as the Deuteronomistic historian, but since his work derives from the Deuteronomistic History and his ideology is more obvious, his “objectivity” as a historian is taken less seriously.) Steussy's approach is more diffuse and more encompassing, and is not dependent on a particular position regarding the composition of the Deuteronomistic History or its purpose. She also has some interesting things to say about the book of Psalms as a coherent work, reflecting its own view of the history of Israel—a parallel ideology of David, as it were, to the material in Samuel and Chronicles.⁷ When McKenzie and Steussy agree in their interpretations of a passage, we can feel pretty confident that we have the best that modern interpretation has to offer. When they disagree, we realize that biblical interpretation is an art, not a science.

7. See also A. Cooper, “The Life and Times of King David According to the Book of Psalms,” in *The Poet and the Historian. Essays in Literary and Historical Biblical Criticism*, edited by R. E. Friedman (Chico, CA: Scholars Press, 1983), 117–131. This work is not listed in Steussy's bibliography.

The art of interpreting the Bible for its historical information has been finely honed by Baruch Halpern. Of the three books reviewed here, Halpern's is the most recent, the longest (twice as long as the others), the most erudite, the most ambitious in scope, the most intricately argued, and the most daring. McKenzie's goal is to reveal the historical David, Steussy's is to describe how the Bible presents David, and Halpern's goal is to reconstruct the early history of the Israelite monarchy and, concomitantly, to argue against the minimalist position that the David story was fabricated several centuries after his putative life. Halpern, too, reads the story as an apology, and considers David to have been a "serial murderer" (p. 100), suspected of involvement in the deaths of Nabal, Saul and his sons at Gilboa, Ishbaal, Abner, Saul's other descendants, Amnon, Absalom, Amasa, and Uriah. David possibly instigated the rape of Tamar (p. 87). But Halpern, who has the longest list of possible murders, is more subtle than McKenzie in his disposition of these accusations. Whereas McKenzie tends to imply that David was guilty of the crimes for which the apology clears him, Halpern suggests that the apology was necessary because David was thought to have been implicated in these crimes, whether or not he did them. Halpern finds him guilty of some, but not of all.

The one murder that the apology clearly holds David accountable for is Uriah's, and this fact is troubling if the David and Bathsheba story is read as part of an apology for David. McKenzie is at something of a loss as to what to do with the story, so he suggests that it was added after the completion of the Deuteronomistic apology. Halpern is much more clever in his explanation, partly, I suspect, because he works hard to show that the David story was written no later than the time of Solomon, so to have such a crucial part of it as a late addition would undermine his position. Why, then, would an apology include such a damning episode? Because, according to Halpern, it makes clear that Solomon was David's son, therefore, he could not possibly be Uriah's. To get at the truth behind the apology, just flip it over; "Historians . . . can invert the obvious implications of textual data" (p. 100). Halpern proposes that Solomon was, indeed, Uriah's son—that the first heir to the Davidic dynasty and the builder of the Temple was not a child of David but a usurper. Furthermore, parts of the apology of David were meant to justify Solomon's taking of the throne. Halpern supports this daring proposal with other evidence, but whether it will be widely accepted remains to be seen.

Because his scope is broader, Halpern goes beyond David's personal history and takes in the entire sweep of early monarchic history. (Halpern's reconstruction of historical events is too long and complex to be addressed substantively in this review.) As a writer of history, he brings to bear on his reconstruction all the evidence at his disposal, including archeology, ancient near eastern inscriptions, chronology, and geography (as opposed to McKenzie and Steussy, who do not look beyond the Bible). Halpern's knowledge is impressive and his conclusions are at times eye-opening. For example, after an intense and closely argued analysis of 2 Samuel 8, Halpern concludes that it is equivalent, in form, style, and purpose, to the display inscriptions familiar from Assyria that glorify the feats of kings. This chapter, and other sources from which the final text is composed, are, according to Halpern, more or less contemporaneous with the events they describe, and they do, indeed, reflect actual historical events, but sometimes the sequence of events has been changed, or oth-

er liberties taken with the facts, in order to achieve their purpose of making David look good. This approach might be called post-Albrightean (Halpern was a student of Frank M. Cross, who was a student of Albright). Halpern employs the same type of evidence that Albrighteans did, and takes the evidence just as seriously. His stance towards the biblical text is similar in that he views it as authentic—ancient and reliable (in Halpern’s sense of “reliable”)—but he interprets the text more skeptically and less literally. It is Albright with the “hermeneutics of suspicion.” As Halpern says in a deliciously oxymoronic line, “We know that Samuel is accurate because it is nothing but lies” (p. 100). Halpern’s point is that the existence of an apology for David proves the existence of David. Moreover, such an apology could only have been written close to the time that the issues it addresses were current, during David’s lifetime or shortly thereafter. If one were to fabricate a story of a national icon, or rewrite it centuries after his death, it would not look like the cover-up in Samuel; it would be an unambiguous encomium (more in the mold of Chronicles). This is a compelling argument against those who deny any credibility to the biblical evidence, and to the history that can be extracted from this evidence. Halpern’s book has a lot to offer about Israelite history, Israelite historiography, and our own writing of the history of Israel.

David is the star of biblical narrative. There is more information about him than about any other biblical figure, and there are probably more studies of David than of anyone else in the Bible. Now there are three more, and the fascination with David does not abate. All this interest is due to the public relations genius who authored the David story, and whose promotional efforts have been successful for three millennia.

Adele Berlin
 University of Maryland
 College Park, Maryland



Uriel Simon. *The JPS Bible Commentary: Jonah*. Philadelphia: JPS, 1999. xliii, 52 pp.

The JPS Torah/Bible Commentary series has already produced some exceptional commentaries that have immensely enriched biblical scholarship, and Uriel Simon’s Jonah commentary is a worthy addition to this series. He concludes that the Book of Jonah was composed during the Second Temple period, mainly because of the late Hebrew language, but he does not find sufficient grounds to decide between a sixth-, fifth-, or even fourth-century date. Nor does Simon believe that the book offers evidence for reconstructing a particular social-political context that would help to define a special target audience. He concludes that, like the Book of Job, which was also composed in the Second Temple period and which also featured non-Jews among its cast of characters, the Book of Jonah was written during a period in which theodicy was a dominant concern within the Jewish community.

Simon begins with a search for the dominant theme/issue that the Book of

Jonah addresses, reviewing the four traditional interpretive answers to this puzzle (atonement vs. repentance, universalism vs. particularism, prophecy realization vs. compliance, and justice vs. mercy). Although the best-known figures within the Jewish interpretive tradition seem to be rather evenly spread among the four—some opting for combinations among them—Simon gives what he believes to be convincing arguments against the first three proposed answers. His decisive argument is that none of the first three themes is addressed in all parts of the story. Only the fourth theme—justice vs. mercy—accomplishes that (although Simon has to admit that it would have covered all four chapters much more clearly had 1:3 included something like “. . . to flee from the presence of the Lord, for he said in his heart, ‘I know that the Lord is compassionate and gracious, slow to anger, etc.’”). Although Simon makes an exceptionally strong case that “justice vs. mercy” is the dominant theme, he does not convince this reviewer that the other themes must somehow be subordinate to it. For example, one could argue that the “universalism vs. particularism” theme runs more consistently through every part of the story. Moreover, in a literary classic why cannot all four of these themes have an equal claim to the reader’s attention, even if some are more developed in some parts of the story than in others? One cannot assume that great writers begin their compositions by settling on a theme and then clothing it with a story.

Simon makes a near-convincing case that Jonah’s prayer in 2:3–10 was incorporated into the story at a later time. It was common to add songs and prayers into already-composed stories during the Second Temple period (e.g., 2 Kgs. 20:2; Isa. 38:9–20; LXX of Esther 4:17 and Daniel 3:23). Jonah’s prayer, moreover, does not fit smoothly into its narrative context. With our prophet in the belly of a great fish, we should have a prayer of entreaty rather than of thanksgiving. Further, if the prayer were part of the original story, we should expect Jonah’s repentance to accompany his vow to sacrifice after his safe return. Some later editor must have incorporated the psalm into the story, Simon believes, primarily because of its reference to drowning. This leaves the interpreter with two options: (a) reading 2:3–10 as a freestanding prayer that depicts a worshipper who was lost (drowning in Sheol) but who has found redemption (returned to God’s temple), and (b), reading Jonah’s psalm as part of the story. Although his heart does not seem to be in it, Simon chooses (b), (he must transform many perfects and *waw*-consecutive imperfects into Prophetic futures in order to make the psalm cohere with the narrative). Now we see that, although he still hasn’t repented, the silent prophet of ch. 1 has a lively faith that comes through as “no whit inferior to the idolaters of the crew” (p. 16). In fact, the anti-pagan polemic in 2:9–10 may be showing us that Jonah is superior to the crew (!).

Simon asserts that “any reconciliation of the psalm and the story obscures the unique meaning of each . . .” (p. 16). Agreed! Combining the two does indeed create an entirely different work of literature; and when one reads the plain meaning of the psalm, the resulting dissonance with the narrative framework produces satiric effects. Rather than risking interpreting the entire story based on the plain meaning of the psalm, however, Simon’s attempted reconciliation (option b, above)

forces the psalm to fit in smoothly with the rest of the story. He has thus given the psalm “second-class citizenship” in the Tanakh, and such an approach—long a part of the historical-critical method—must be challenged. If almost every book of the Tanakh is the result of a literary tradition that has evolved over many centuries, by what right does a scholar state that one part of the tradition (the so-called “original author,” for example) trumps later parts within the same text? Who, for example, is the “original author” of the Book of Genesis, and what parts of the text must then be given second-class status (e.g., Gen. 14 or 24)? Or, if a later scholarly consensus should some day decide that Jon. 4:6–11 was added secondarily, should the commentaries then disregard or downplay the Lord’s lesson with the plant as contributing to the meaning of the tale?

Since giving the psalm first-class status would bring the story’s genre close to satire, Simon’s approach could be justified if there were a general scholarly consensus that the story is virtually devoid of irony; but such a consensus is lacking. Simon admits that there is some irony in the story, but it is gentle and forgiving—far removed from satire and “irreverent jesting.” In fact, however, his reading of the story comes through as rather straitlaced, as we see in the following instances where Simon sees no irony or satire: (a) It is pathos, not irony, when the ship captain confronts the sleeping prophet who remains silent, despite the crew’s efforts and the captain’s appeal; (b) Jonah’s request to be thrown overboard is an example of his “moral grandeur” in saving the crew rather than a continuation of his self-isolation and death wish that run throughout the story; (c) There is nothing risible about Jonah’s being vomited (*qy*) back onto dry land (but cf. Prov. 26:11; Isa. 28:8; and esp. Jer. 48:26, where those who wallow in their vomit become laughing-stocks); (d) The scorn for idolaters in 2:9–10 (the interpretation of which Simon bases on Ps. 31:7–8, which begins “I *detest* those who rely on empty folly”) is a glorification of the Lord rather than self-exaltation or a put-down of the non-believers; (e) Jonah must have spoken more than five words in effecting such an amazing turnaround in Nineveh, even though Simon had earlier concluded that there was little attempt to give the story a realistic dimension; (f) Moses (Num. 11:15) and Elijah (1 Kings 19:4–5) request death when their prophetic leadership appears to be threatened. Thus Jonah’s request for death in 4:3,8 elevates him to their level, despite his having just achieved the greatest success of any prophet; and (g) Just as Jacob’s silence in response to Levi and Simeon’s rebuke over Dinah’s rape indicates his assent (Gen. 34:31, but cf. 49:5–7!), Jonah’s silence at the end of the story indicates that he agrees with God’s viewpoint.

This review has focused on points of disagreement, but I have learned so much from this commentary. For example, whereas most Jonah commentaries are full of “cf.”s that refer the reader to allusions and parallel passages, no one has done a better job of plumbing meaning through a sensitive exploration of the ties not only to Jeremiah, Elijah, etc., but also between the chs. 1–2 and chs. 3–4 parallels within the story itself. Simon is at his best in his interpretation of ch. 4, where he convincingly shows that the tone never goes above gentle irony. I still believe that chs. 1–3 are replete with satirical elements, but the story has such a “soft landing” that I wonder whether it can be designated as satire, when taken as a whole.

Despite the methodological questions I have raised regarding Simon's commentary, it is surely a book that belongs on the shelf of every biblical scholar.

James S. Ackerman
Indiana University
Bloomington, Indiana



Benjamin Uffenheimer. *Early Prophecy in Israel*. Publications of the Perry Foundation for Biblical Research. Jerusalem: The Magnes Press, 1999. 591 pp.

In this book (a translation of a revised version of the second Hebrew edition), the late Professor Benjamin Uffenheimer examines a variety of topics in the history of prophecy from the time of Moses until the time of Elisha. The book includes extensive discussions of all the prophetic figures in this period, focussing on the relation between preclassical prophecy on the one hand and magic, divination, and rationalistic or monotheistic trends on the other. Uffenheimer also devotes a lengthy chapter to alleged parallels to Israel prophecy among ancient Egyptians, Mesopotamians, and Northwest Semites.

Uffenheimer does not present one overarching thesis, but, rather, attends to particular issues and texts while returning to several central concerns. In particular, he repeatedly challenges the judgments of older scholars such as Wellhausen and Holscher, the basis of whose work has been undermined by new perspectives and evidence from the ancient Near East. This critique is salutary, since the influence of these older judgments has endured even though their foundations have fallen away. Uffenheimer strongly rejects the notion that prophecy arose in Israel around the time of Samuel and Saul, instead dating the origins of the prophetic movement to the era of Moses. In each chapter, Uffenheimer carefully reviews—and usually rejects—conclusions by older scholars; the very detailed treatment of older secondary literature renders this book crucial to specialists writing on any aspect of preclassical prophecy or texts in which they appear. (Uffenheimer discusses secondary literature not only pertaining directly to the history of prophecy itself but also regarding the composition and development of texts that mention preclassical prophets, especially in 1–2 Kings.) At the same time, these detailed treatments will make the book less interesting to readers who are looking for a historical overview of early prophecy.

Of particular interest is Uffenheimer's discussion of ancient Near Eastern prophecy. He takes pains to undermine the notion that many of the texts from Mesopotamia and Egypt associated with this rubric are in fact comparable to the Israelite material. While his conclusions will strike many readers as overly conservative (and, regarding Mari texts, even stretched), he raises important questions regarding the precise definition of prophecy in ancient Israel and the relationship between prophecy and divination. His analysis of so-called apocalyptic texts implies an appropriate warning against the facile discovery of parallels between Israelite culture and the cultures of Israel's neighbors. Also noteworthy is the last

chapter's description of the tension in early prophecy between a popular, magically-oriented substrate and a theologically rational trend. Uffenheimer shows that this tension exists both within the work of the prophets themselves and in the narratives which were passed down and recast by their followers and later tradents. Finally, the last chapter touches briefly on the movement from early to classical prophecy. Uffenheimer identifies the violent excesses of militant prophetism in the age of Elisha as well as the inherent tension between popular and rational elements as impelling prophecy in a new direction that becomes evident from the time of Amos onwards. One hopes that this issue will receive even more attention in a forthcoming volume on classical prophecy which Uffenheimer was completing at the time of his death.

The book contains very lengthy discussions of issues that do not strictly belong to the history of preclassical prophecy. For example, the chapter on Moses contains only about ten pages dealing narrowly with Moses as prophet. The other hundred pages of this chapter include a detailed discussion of the origin of monotheism, the light shed on the dating of the Sinai covenant by ancient Near Eastern treaties, and the traditions describing the revelation at Sinai. Similarly, the chapter on the period of the Judges devotes considerable space to the ark of the covenant, the sabbatical year, the Jubilee. The book contains two appendices, one on the redaction of the Book of Judges and the other on term *segullah*. Most of these discussions should be of great interest to specialists in the various subfields they treat. Unfortunately, it is likely that most scholars working on these issues will be unaware of Uffenheimer's arguments and his insightful analysis of secondary literature. In fact, one almost wonders whether the book might have been structured slightly differently and given a title like *Studies in the Early History and Religion of Israel*, which might have been more descriptive of its contents.

Any library with a biblical studies collection must buy this book, and researchers on a wide spectrum of issues not limited to prophecy will profit by examining relevant sections. I am less sure that many people will want to read the book from start to finish in order to gain insight into the broad trajectories of early prophecy. The book might be described as encyclopedic in scope rather than oriented towards the development of a single idea.

Benjamin D. Sommer
Northwestern University
Evanston, Illinois



Eugene Ulrich. *The Dead Sea Scrolls and the Origins of the Bible: Studies in the Dead Sea Scrolls and Related Literature*. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans Publishing Col., 1999. xviii, 309 pp.

Eugene Ulrich is John A. O'Brien Professor of Hebrew Scriptures at the University of Notre Dame. Since his graduate student days at Harvard in the early 1970s, he has been studying and writing about the biblical text, that is, the text of

the Hebrew Bible as transmitted and translated in antiquity. His primary claim to academic fame, and at one point public notoriety, is his ongoing leadership in editing and publishing the Dead Sea Scrolls. It is Ulrich's interpretations of these scrolls in the context of the history and development of the biblical text that form the subject of the first eight of his essays collected here. These essays, especially the first six, are also bound to be the most interesting to nonspecialists. (The remainder of the book is taken up with fairly technical discussions of the Septuagint and the Old Latin.)

By assembling these essays in one place, Ulrich intends, I think, nothing less than a paradigm shift in our understanding of the history of the biblical text. Up until now (and for many this is still the case), biblical scholars have tended to posit a sharp break between the period of the text's composition and its transmission and translation as Scripture. The former, characterized by often extensive literary and theological activity (the extent of this activity, although not its existence, is the subject of debate between conservative and centrist-critical scholars), is the domain of higher criticism. At some point, as early as the Persian period for some blocks of biblical material, composition comes to an end, and copying begins: This is properly the field of inquiry for textual or lower criticism. Ulrich urges us to scrap this dichotomy and to recognize that creative literary activity on the biblical text continued far longer than generally accepted, in some cases into the common era. Apparently there were scribes more adventurous than their fellow "copyists" to whom we are indebted for this extraordinary process.

As Ulrich sees it, the evidence for this activity, primarily in the form of double literary editions (i.e., extended literary units demonstrably changed from an earlier to a later form "to a sufficient extent that the resultant form should be called a revised edition"), was already staring us in the face in the Septuagint and the Samaritan Pentateuch. But before Qumran, it could be argued that Greek texts widely divergent from the Masoretic Hebrew were the result of manipulation by the translators and that almost all distinctive elements in the Samaritan Pentateuch represented tendentious sectarian (mis)handling of an already established text. In Ulrich's interpretation, the Scrolls provide incontrovertible evidence that double literary editions existed in the Hebrew throughout the Second Temple period and that they frequently circulated simultaneously and in the same circles. Such textual pluriformity was an accepted element among Jews, who would recognize certain books as "authoritative" without insisting upon a single, uniform "inspired" text for each of these books. In support of his argument, Ulrich lays out in detail evidence from Exodus, First Samuel, and Jeremiah, all of which (among others) exhibit substantial double literary editions in the Scrolls from Qumran.

Ulrich's presentation is a clear challenge to those fundamentalists who argue that there has always been *one* authoritative and recognized text of the Hebrew Bible/Old Testament. But a greater challenge to most scholars, especially those involved in Bible translation, arises from the implications of Ulrich's research on the already thorny question of *what* a version of the Hebrew Bible should be reflecting. Although Ulrich allows for religiously-sponsored or -centered translations that are based on a particular text, such as the Leningrad Codex (for *Biblia Hebraica* Quin-

ta and earlier editions) or the Aleppo Codex (for the Hebrew University Bible Project), he urges the creation of a critically established text, drawing systematically and without bias from all traditions and texts. Because this is the guiding principle of the Oxford Hebrew Bible, whose chief editor is Ron Hendel, we can imagine that in theory the resultant base text and translation of this project will please Ulrich. We will have to wait and see how it turns out in practice.

Although Ulrich describes the ancient era of pluriformity as something quite foreign to contemporary usage, it strikes me that, for most modern readers of the Bible who rely on translations, the situation today is quite similar to the older one. After all, a person who reads Jeremiah in the ArtScroll version comes away with a rather different understanding than the user of the JPS Tanakh. And the variations widen considerably if we bring in, for example, the New King James Version, the Contemporary English Version, or the Living Bible (which must be distinguished from Aryeh Kaplan's Living Torah!). The book of Jeremiah, all may agree, is inspired, but the actual words exhibit substantial variation. In essence, modern pluriformity!

The richness and subtlety of Ulrich's discussion are, I hope, clear to potential readers. It remains to ask whether the format adopted by this volume, a collection spanning two decades, is the best method of presentation. On this point, there is reason for ambivalence. Most users, it is clear, can discern and evaluate Ulrich's main points on the basis of one or two of these essays. Reading them seriatim exposes even specialists to considerable repetition and may lead to unnecessary confusion on the part of nonspecialists. But, taken as a whole, Ulrich's book is important, even essential, in the ongoing quest for greater understanding of the Hebrew Bible. For that, we should all be grateful.

Leonard J. Greenspoon
 Creighton University
 Omaha, Nebraska



M. P. Weitzman. *The Syriac Version of the Old Testament: An Introduction*. University of Cambridge Oriental Publications 56. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999. xv, 355 pp.

As Robert P. Gordon's foreword explains, Michael Perry Weitzman's *Syriac Version of the Old Testament* was originally projected as the first of two volumes on the subject. One can only concur with Gordon that Dr. Weitzman's recent death is a great loss to the academic community as well as to family and friends.

One is immediately struck by the presence of the "Old Testament" in the book's title. As explained in the Preface, the Syriac version of the Bible—known as the *Peshitta*—has historically been preserved and used exclusively within the eastern church tradition: thus Weitzman's use of "Old Testament" rather than "He-

brew Bible.” However, the book’s driving thesis is that the *Peshitta* was *not* originally produced anywhere within the early Christian community. Instead, Weitzman posits, an isolated, non-Rabbinic Jewish community produced the Syriac translation from a Hebrew *Vorlage* sometime before 200 CE; this community subsequently converted to Christianity, thus introducing the *Peshitta* to the eastern church by which it was eventually adopted.

After succinctly reviewing *Peshitta* research to date, Weitzman offers a fresh evaluation of the relationship of existing Syriac and Hebrew texts, all the while asserting that a now-lost Hebrew text served as base for both the *Peshitta* and the Masoretic text. Chapter Three compares the *Peshitta* with those biblical versions with which it most frequently agrees. Chapter Four examines translation technique more closely by “grading” individual books of the *Peshitta*: Some exhibit a conservative approach in their Syriac renderings of Hebrew words and phrases; some exhibit what Weitzman characterizes as a modern approach, primarily by appealing to the Septuagint; still others reflect their translators’ consultation of other passages within the *Peshitta* itself. Thus, though the notion that multiple translators produced the *Peshitta* is nothing new, Weitzman refines the theory by suggesting that there was a school of translators “working on the same greater project.” Chapters Five and Six address the book’s core issues: Weitzman’s arguments for the *Peshitta*’s Jewish origin, his suggestions concerning recovery of the *Peshitta Urtext* originally translated from the Hebrew, and the suggested historical background for the subsequent distribution of *Peshitta* manuscripts.

Overall, this is an extraordinary volume: its premise is innovative, its research exhaustive, its organization thoughtful. Though Weitzman’s arguments are persuasive throughout, there is ample and careful mention of scholars representing other schools of thought. Above all, the book’s approach is astoundingly comprehensive for a volume of this size. The reader is not only presented with examples from the entire Hebrew Bible to support Weitzman’s theses, but also with painstaking reconstructions—both written and graphic—of the proposed relationships among various biblical versions as well as among extant *Peshitta* manuscripts. It is worth mentioning that this is the only book of its type available in English.

With all this in mind, it must be noted that the book presents the reader with one significant problem. Where parallel passages are given in two or more languages or dialects—say, from the Masoretic text, the *Peshitta*, the Septuagint, and one of the Targumim—the presentation of the English translation is frustratingly inconsistent. Sometimes all the passages in question are translated into English; sometimes only the Syriac is treated, sometimes only the Hebrew or Greek, sometimes none of them. This is no doubt due to the book’s having reached proof stage only at Dr. Weitzman’s death, and one trusts it will be ironed out in future editions.

If one were to express any concern in terms of the book’s content, it would be a concern occasioned from time to time by many a great scholar: namely, that the elegance of Weitzman’s theories is occasionally allowed to overpower the evidence at hand. The most notable example of this is his discussion of theological “improvements” early Syriac translators may have introduced to the proposed Hebrew

Vorlage. Weitzman accurately identifies such themes as bodily resurrection and a personal Messiah-figure as being present in the *Peshitta* but absent in the Masoretic text. But then—having argued quite persuasively that the *Peshitta* of the Hebrew Bible did not originate in the Christian community—he reiterates on page 246 that the community in question “is of non-Rabbinic Jewish origin” and that its “translators seem to represent a closed community, estranged from the Jewish people as a whole.” While this scenario is perfectly acceptable, one might just as easily suggest that the nascent Christian movement itself was perceived as a non-Rabbinic Jewish sect by contemporary adversaries and adherents alike, and may have produced the *Peshitta* before the term “Christian” was widely used.

These decidedly minor complaints aside, we have here a landmark volume whose value to Semitists (and other linguists), historians, and biblical scholars cannot be overestimated. It serves as powerful testimony to Dr. Weitzman’s extraordinary abilities as scholar and writer.

John David Brolley
Hebrew Union College
Cincinnati, Ohio



Shaye J. D. Cohen. *The Beginnings of Jewishness: Boundaries, Varieties, Uncertainties*. Hellenistic Culture and Society, 31. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1999. xv, 426 pp.

This volume explores two major questions: “What is that makes a Jew a Jew, and a non-Jew a non-Jew?” and “Can a gentile become a Jew?” (p. 2). The term “Jew” was ambiguous because “there was no single or simple definition of *Jew* in antiquity . . .” and there were no “empirical or ‘objective’ criteria by which to determine who was ‘really’ a Jew. . . . Jewishness was a subjective identity, constructed by the individual . . . other Jews, other gentiles, and the state” (p. 3). Cohen points to Herod to demonstrate that one could be called a Jew and an Idumean at the same time (p. 23).

Cohen chose to explore Jewish identity in antiquity by collecting ten of his previous publications. Only Chapters One and Six, as well as the prologue and the epilogue, were written for this volume. Because Cohen did not significantly rework or add to these articles, his assertions, arguments, and conclusions are well known in the field. At the same time, the result of this approach is that, in place of a coherent, sustained investigation of Jewish identity in antiquity, we have ten detailed, but separate, examinations of topics and Greek words which help us understand what Jews and non-Jews meant by the term “Jew.” Only by doing the work that Cohen did not do and connecting the ten studies can one create a cogent line of reasoning, as follows.

In the Diaspora, Jews were not necessarily distinguished from non-Jews by

their looks, clothing, speech, names, residence, association, or even circumcision (p. 67). Although Judaeans, like all other ethnic-geographic groups, had a distinctive language and their own “customs, institutions, dress, cuisine, religion, and so on,” none of these was necessarily more important than any other in defining a “Judaeans” (p. 105), an *Ioudaios*. Before the second century BCE, *Ioudaios* referred to someone from Judaea or to someone who belonged to an association of those who originally came from Judaea (p. 104); it did not denote a “Jew.” Under the Hasmonians, *Ioudaios* lost its ethnic-geographic meaning. Now it named either a member of a “political community” that could grant citizenship to non-natives and/or a participant in a culture or religion centered on the God of the Judaeans (p. 105).

This change reflects the Hellenistic definition of *politeria*, “which means, among other things, both ‘citizenship’ and ‘public way of life’” and the Hellenistic meaning of Greekness as a function of language and culture (p. 136). Gentiles could be associated with the Jewish community on at least seven different levels, ranging from “admiring some aspect of Judaism” to “conversion to Judaism” (p. 141). Therefore, the Greek word *Ioudaizein* does not mean to become Jewish. At most, in Paul and later Christian texts it denotes someone who “adopt[s] the customs and manners of the Jews” (p. 184), according to the non-Jewish authors’ definitions of “Jewish” activity. Conversion to Judaism began in the second century BCE, but the conversion ritual outlined in Babylonian Talmud, Yebamot 47a–b, comes from the first two centuries CE. It was not an initiation rite, but was designed to regulate conversion, to ensure that the rituals were administered properly, and to ensure that a proselyte knew what to expect (p. 217).

The prohibition against Jews marrying non-Jews is post-biblical. This law may reflect the Roman law of persons, as well as the rabbinic prohibition against *kilayim*, the mixing of diverse kinds. The matrilineal principle first appeared in Mishnah, but in two distinct parts: Some texts note that the offspring of a Jewish father and a gentile mother is a gentile, while others claim that the child of a Jewish mother and a gentile father is a Jew (p. 278). The Palestinian Talmud suggests that the two “halves” were joined together in the second century, and Babylonian Talmud puts their conjunction in the late fourth century (p. 280). The earliest midrashic collections indicate that converts were different from native-born Israelites (p. 338).

The Appendices conclude that (1) the epigram discussing Martial’s slave does answer the questions of his being circumcised, (2) there is no evidence that Menophilus was a circumcised Jew, (3) it is not clear whether Trophimus was a Jew or a gentile, and (4) Timothy was not Jewish.

We see that one can uncover a line of reason from the collection; even so, as a book, the volume has some major shortcomings. Are the issues Cohen investigates pressing among current scholars? Few claim that Jews in the Diaspora were clearly distinguishable from other groups, and Cohen does not make a sustained comparison between the situation in Palestine and that in the Diaspora (p. 27). The author’s translations of *Ioudaios* and *Ioudaizein* are possible, but do they fit equally well in all of the examples, and are the dates at which the meanings “changed”

as clear-cut as Cohen suggests? Cohen's bringing this material together could have provided the occasion for a sustained examination of the processes of Judaism's move from an ethnic group to a religious community in all of its facets. A detailed discussion of the fact that the prohibition against intermarriage, the acceptance of converts, and the promulgation of the matrilineal principle all occur at about the same time would have been valuable, especially in light of the Jewish community's changes in its self-perception. His explanation for the prohibition against intermarriage is provocative, but it would have benefited from a closer reading of the vast literature on ethnicity and identity; prohibitions against marriage out of the group are typical of many types of ethnic communities. Cohen does not respond to many of the more recent investigations of conversion as a religious phenomenon, or as it occurred in the Roman world or in Judaism, nor does he enter into sustained arguments with those whose views differ from his. Deciding on the nature of an initiation ritual solely on the basis of Gennep's studies ignores a good deal of relevant current anthropological and sociological discussion.

While the material in this volume is interesting, informative, and provocative, Cohen missed an opportunity to move the discussions of Jewish identity in antiquity to another level.

Gary G. Porton
 University of Illinois
 Urbana-Champaign, Illinois



Marc (Menahem) Hirshman. *Torah for the Entire World*. Tel Aviv: Hakibbutz Hameuchad, 1999. 189 pp. (Hebrew).

Hirshman's cautious study promises a focus upon "a universalistic stream in the Tannaitic literature and its relationship to the wisdom of the nations." The "universalism" he hopes to identify is a modest one: the notion that the Torah of Israel is intended *ab origine* to be a possession of all human communities (with some pointed exceptions, such as the Amalekites).

On this score Hirshman delivers rather more than he promises. Not only does he identify a "universalistic school" of Tannaitic tradition. He locates it in a distinctive priestly point of view represented in the Tannaitic corpus by tradents associated with R. Ishmael (of priestly lineage), provides it with a Second Temple genealogy in such works as the Wisdom of ben Sira and the Testament of Levi, and traces its presence in a number of diverse Tannaitic *halakhic* concerns. These include, among others, the role of converts in Israel, the status of Gentiles who perform commandments, the validity of the Noahide Commandments, and the relevance of Greek wisdom to Jews. Hirshman selects his sources wisely and elucidates them with great sensitivity to literary, redactional, and historical contexts. While it is always possible to challenge attempts to disentangle redacted Rabbinic compositions into the traditions that fed them or the social groups that trans-

mitted them, Hirshman's claim to find an ideologically coherent "universalistic school" circulating behind the dominant "particularism" of the Tannaitic (in Hirshman's view, "Aqiban") tradition stands upon many different strands of evidence. It will, I suspect, prove convincing to many stubborn textual positivists—such as this reviewer.

Perhaps one of the most important contributions of Hirshman's isolation of this Ishmaelian "universalism" is the subtle way he unpacks its theological foundations. Tannaitic "universalism" is hardly of the "I'm OK, you're OK" variety. Precisely because the Torah was given to the entire world as well as to Israel, the world's rejection of the Torah places it under Divine judgment. This yields some interesting paradoxes. For example, converts and even non-converted Gentiles who study Torah or perform commandments are said to enjoy a priestly status; yet the validity of the Noahide Commandments is rejected, since non-Jews are invited, no less than Israel, to observe the entire Torah.

Hirshman's treatment of the second theme of his subtitle—the relationship of this Tannaitic universalism to "the wisdom of the nations"—is also stimulating in its theological sensitivity. Here he seems to have at least two goals in mind: to explain how the "universalists" viewed the relationship of the Torah to other traditions of human wisdom and to compare Tannaitic "universalism" to others in the cultural context of Late Antiquity.

Here Hirshman is more suggestive than exhaustive. He convincingly shows, for example, that the "universalistic" view of Torah as a human, rather than a distinctly Israelite, inheritance implied a rejection of "Greek wisdom" as an essentially illegitimate subject of study. Thus Tannaitic "universalism" did not translate into a curiosity about "human wisdom" per se. Here Hirshman pointedly distinguishes the Ishmaelian tradition from that promulgated by the Patriarchate, in which the cultivation of Greco-Roman rhetorical culture was regarded as a practical necessity with its own theological legitimations. Hirshman also points out an interesting distinction between Tannaitic "universalism" and that of another Judaically-inspired "universalism" found in early Christianity. Christian "universalism," of course, was eschatological—expressed primarily in the extension of Israel's covenantal privilege to all humanity, and grounded in the overcoming of the abiding validity of the Torah's commandments. By contrast, Tannaitic "universalism" remained this-worldly and anti-messianic, focusing on the incorporation of discerning individuals into the abiding covenant represented by the commandments. Thus, even in the context of its "universalism," Tannaitic tradition remained firm in its essentially priestly sense of the solidity of communal borders.

This review only touches upon the most readily summarized elements of Hirshman's work. The textual exegesis that yields his conclusions is itself of very great interest and justifies a speedy translation of the study into English.

Martin S. Jaffee
University of Washington
Seattle, Washington



Jeffrey L. Rubenstein. *Talmudic Stories: Narrative Art, Composition, and Culture*. Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1999. xvi, 435 pp.

Shulamit Valler. *Women and Womanhood in the Talmud*. Translated by Betty Sigler Rozen. Brown Judaic Series, 321. Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1999. xx, 139 pp.

Of the various genres of classical aggadic literature, the Talmudic “sage stories” are perhaps the most open to literary interpretation using contemporary methods. Other aggadic forms lack parallels in the conventional Western literary canon. Sage stories, in contrast, are short narratives that have much in common with those found in other, more well-studied, literary traditions. The tools of narrative analysis that have been developed by scholars of other literatures can thus be fruitfully applied to these rabbinic sage stories. It is therefore somewhat surprising that despite the proliferation of literary studies on *midrash* and *aggada* appearing in English in recent years, the analysis of sage stories has remained a relatively neglected field of inquiry among Anglophone scholars. This field has been dominated by Israeli scholars such as Jonah Fraenkel and Ofra Meir, whose work has appeared largely in Hebrew. Jeffrey Rubenstein’s *Talmudic Stories: Narrative Art, Composition and Culture* and the recent translation of Shulamit Valler’s *Nashim ve-Nashiut be-sipure ha-Talmud* (Hakibbutz Hameuchad, 1993) under the title *Women and Womanhood in the Talmud* are thus welcome and important additions to the world of English-language rabbinics scholarship.

Rubenstein’s book consists of analyses of six extended narratives from the Babylonian Talmud: “The Oven of Akhnai” (Bava Metsia 59a–59b), “Elisha ben Avuya” (Hagigga 15a–15b), “R. Shimon bar Yochai in the Cave” (Shabbat 33b–34a), “Rabban Yochanan ben Zakkai’s Encounter with Vespasian” (Gittin 55b–56b), “The Expulsion of R. Meir and R. Natan from the Academy” (Horayot 13b–14a), and “The Final Judgment of the Nations” (Avoda Zara 2a–3b). These stories are some of the richest and most famous in Talmud. This fact, in addition to the book’s lucid style, gives the book special value to specialists and non-specialists alike.

Rubenstein’s method of literary analysis owes much to the structuralist approach pioneered by Jonah Fraenkel. Rubenstein elucidates the various structures and symmetries of his Talmudic stories and demonstrates the Talmudic authors’ use of such literary devices as wordplay, key words, irony, and paradox. Like Fraenkel, Rubenstein is also attentive to the human elements of the stories. This sensitivity allows Rubenstein to give fresh insight into stories that have already been extensively discussed. Thus, in his interpretation of “The Oven of Achnai,” Rubenstein calls the reader’s attention away from the theological issues that have dominated previous discussions of the story and toward the themes of human violence and suffering. The centrality of these themes to the story explains its position at the end of a Talmudic discussion of “verbal oppression.”

Rubenstein moves beyond Fraenkel’s structuralism by integrating into his reading strategy the methods of Talmudic source and redaction criticism, as developed by David Halivni and Shamma Friedman. Rubenstein argues that editorial processes that shaped the legal *sugyot* of the Bavli were also crucial to the for-

mation of the Bavli's narrative sections: The imprint of the Stammaim, the anonymous post-Amoraic editors of the Talmud, is discernible throughout narratives of the Babylonian Talmud. It was the Stammaim who reworked the earlier Palestinian aggadic sources at their disposal through a process of "embellishment, expansion, and supplementation." The Stammaim thereby adapted the earlier sources to their new contexts in the Bavli and to the Stammaim's own sensibilities. Rubenstein shows how the editors of the Talmud altered stories not only to fit into the immediate conversation into which they are placed, but also to reflect themes and motifs present elsewhere in that particular chapter of the Mishna and Talmud. He also demonstrates how Babylonian stories function as exegeses of earlier historical traditions. For example, many of the details of the Bavli's extended account of the life of Elisha b. Avuya are shown to be explications of phrases from the Tosefta's terse account of Elisha b. Avuya's case. On the basis of his comparisons between parallel Babylonian and Palestinian narrative sources, Rubenstein also points to several potentially valuable distinctions between the narrative arts of the Bavli and the Yerushalmi. Among them are the Bavli's propensity for candidly portraying the faults and failures of rabbis of previous generations and the Yerushalmi's tendency to deviate from strict chronological order in narrating the events of a story.

Since in Rubenstein's view, the stories found in the Bavli are essentially the product of the Stammaim, it follows that these stories can be used as windows into the intellectual and spiritual world of the Stammaim. In particular, Rubenstein sees the world of the academy portrayed in these stories, with its intricate social structure and its emphasis on dialectic Torah study, as reflecting the conditions in the yeshivot of post-Amoraic Babylonia rather than earlier conditions in Palestine and Babylonia, as other scholars have argued. Rubenstein extends the essentially literary nature of his work by using the results of his studies to contribute to our understanding of the social and cultural history of Judaism at a critical juncture of history.

Shulamit Valler's book, as the title suggests, belongs essentially to the burgeoning discourse on gender in rabbinic literature. Valler's underlying assumption is that narrative material is a more useful source for discovering the rabbis' attitudes towards woman than Halachic or other discursive sources. She focuses her attention on rabbinic stories that deal with the status of women. Unlike Rubenstein, who concentrates on longer, more complex stories, Valler turns her attention to collections of brief, relatively simple stories whose primary purpose is to record legal precedents. Her study thus offers an important complement to Rubenstein's. While the stories that Rubenstein discusses are more interesting than those in Valler's book, Valler's selection is more representative of the genre of rabbinic sage stories. Brief accounts of legal cases and rulings represent the overwhelming majority of sage stories in the Talmud, whereas extended narratives are quite rare.

Valler's methodology is similar to Rubenstein's. She too seeks to combine literary criticism with the conclusions of twentieth-century American Talmud criticism. Her basic argument is that, through the careful editing and arrangement, the Stammaitic editors took earlier Palestinian materials and fashioned them into thematic story collections that are literary works in themselves. By organizing stories

in a way that creates a development of the common themes of the stories, the editors give these collective works meaning that transcends the messages of the individual narratives.

Valler also demonstrates how these aggadic compilations are often in tension with their Halachic contexts. For example, in Chapter Three, she shows how a series of stories brought in the *sugya* in Ketubot 8b–10b serves to undermine the Talmud’s previous statements that a husband is to be believed if he claims that he found that his wife was not a virgin on their wedding night. The story collection shows that this ruling is correct only in theory. In practice, the rabbis never annulled a marriage on the basis of such a claim.

Valler’s ultimate argument is that the implicit message of the Stammaitic editors is often more sensitive to the woman’s perspective than the explicit statements of the earlier Tannaitic and Amoraic sources of the Talmud. This is a bold claim that certainly warrants further study. If correct, it represents an important contribution to the study of rabbinic Judaism. However, we should be cautious of claims that rabbinic Judaism evolved along a trajectory that brought it more in line with modern values. Valler also suggests that aggada is somehow a more female-friendly mode of discourse than halacha. This is a difficult claim to back up. There is no shortage of halachic texts which show great sensitivity towards women and many aggadic texts fail to do so.

Finally, a note on the translation. While Betty Sigler Rozen shows herself to be an able translator of Valler’s modern Hebrew text, the same cannot be said with regard to her work on the rabbinic texts cited by Valler. In her renderings of passages from the *Bavli*, Rozen makes unattributed use of the Soncino translation. This is a potential source of confusion for the reader because the Soncino translation of the standard printed edition does not always correspond to the manuscript traditions presented by Valler. Rozen’s translations of the *Yerushalmi*, which appear to be original, contain numerous mistakes and inconsistencies. It is a pity that the translation does not live up to the high standards of the original work.

Moshe Simon
Boston, Massachusetts



Menachem Elon, Bernard Auerbach, Daniel D. Chazin, and Melvin Sykes. *Jewish Law (Mishpat Ivri): Cases and Materials*. Casebook Series. New York: Matthew Bender, 1999. xxiv, 746 pp., Glossary, Table of Authorities, Table of Cases, Index.

Jewish Law (Mishpat Ivri): Cases and Materials is a comprehensive and lucid analysis of Jewish law as it is used in the Israeli Supreme Court as part of Israeli secular law, exhaustively detailed and clearly written. It is designed to be used as an American law school textbook and is published by a law school publishing house—Matthew Bender—as part of its casebook series. The book begins with two questions: “How is it possible that a legal system bereft of territory and police power has not only persevered but flourished? Whence do the Jewish legal au-

thorities derive their tradition-embedded answers to what appear to be novel, contemporary questions?” The book seeks to answer these queries with an exposition on the nature and purpose of Jewish law, followed by a chapter-by-chapter integration of the uses of Jewish law into Israeli secular law.

The book is divided into five parts. The first two provide the essential structure and decision-making process of Jewish law (*halakhah*), as well as its ethical underpinnings. Parts Three through Five explore a small number of legal topics that arise in Jewish and secular law and the relevant texts for each. All of the chapters in each part have a series of notes at the end containing leading questions and information for further discussion or study.

Part One, entitled “Basic Characteristics of Jewish Law,” clarifies how *halakha* operates with respect to both “civil” and “religious” law. The authors point out that a sharp, modernistic divide between these types of law is not necessarily helpful in understanding Jewish law, where the lines of distinction are less clear. Elements of civil law like agency are present in matters of Jewish ritual law such as the slaughtering of sacrifices. Hence, a proper understanding of *halakha* must carry with it an appreciation for the interrelated nature of the civil and the religious. The book also uses this opening section to establish the absolute authority of the *halakhic* process (such that even God accepts it) and to explore the gap between law and ethics, remarking that a hallmark quality of Jewish law is its attempt to “juridify” ethics and morals whenever possible.

In Part Two, “The System of Jewish Law,” the book enumerates the legal sources of *halakha* and how these are used to render decisions in Jewish law. The authors identify six such sources, with the Torah as their touchstone: tradition (*kabalah*), interpretation (*midrash*), legislation (*takkanah* and *gezerah*), custom (*minhag*), case or incident (*ma’aseh*), and legal reasoning (*sevarah*). The first is described as static; however, the other five are “inherently dynamic, and in fact a significant aspect of their function is to continue the creativity and development of Jewish law” (p. 62). The authors then analyze each legal source, using textual examples of its methodology.

Parts Three through Five investigate a variety of legal topics, focusing heavily on human rights (Part Four) and bioethics (Part Five). The chapters therein share the same basic structure: The book explores the relevant *halakhic* texts on the subject in question, then proceeds to (secular) Israeli court cases on the same where Justice Elon’s opinions examine Jewish law’s view of the particular matter. Each chapter is crafted to display how *halakha*—a “religious” form of law—impacts on or relates to Israeli “civil” matters, be it property, contracts, or evidence. With some topics the need for a morally grounded form of law is more obvious—abortion and capital punishment are two such examples—but the book does an excellent job demonstrating that Jewish law can—and does—have a voice on nearly every imaginable legal subject. This casebook synthesizes *mishpat ivri* (Jewish law as it is used in Israel) with secular Israeli law. It is a very good—indeed, excellent—synthesis of Israeli law and *mishpat ivri*.

This summary of the book thus far has not addressed a crucial question: Is this work a successful casebook for an American law student? Defining what

exactly is a successful casebook for American law schools is no easy feat. Essentially, these writers sense that a successful casebook in any discipline taught in American law schools (which is not in an area of law obviously relevant to students) must seek to accomplish three difficult tasks. First, a casebook must seek to explain to students why this area of study should be relevant to them. Thus, a casebook teaching Jewish law, or space law, or law and literary fiction, must court the student's interest in ways that constitutional law, securities law, and property law need not. Second, a casebook must compare and contrast that which it wishes to teach with that which it expects the students already to know. Thus, when teaching Russian law to American law students one tends to compare Russian law to American law, as the compare-and-contrast process eases the pedagogic burdens. Third, a casebook should choose to present topics within its field for which American law students have a natural instinct because of their legal training, and natural questions about because of the flow of American law. Thus, when teaching Jewish law one should select topics that appeal to the natural curiosity of American law students, focusing on areas where American law is weakest, or where Jewish law speaks to the American legal mind or culture.

This question, a matter of pedagogy concerning what exactly a course entitled "Jewish Law" (or perhaps "*Mishpat Ivri*"?) should aim to teach, is a complex one that is worthy of greater discussion. Book reviewers, however, should not ask, "Why did the authors of this book not write the book following the pedagogic method that I wanted?" and thus discussions of methodology for teaching Jewish law in America will have to wait for some other forum.

In sum, this book, whose lead author, Justice Menachem Elon, is the senior scholar of *mishpat ivri* in Israel, is a brilliant work with thoughtful notes designed to address the use of *mishpat ivri* in contemporary Israeli law. It is a sign of the strength in the field that there is now a casebook in *mishpat ivri* in English. Hopefully this will open the gates for many other casebooks and teaching aids for Jewish law in American Universities.

Michael J. Broyde
Emory University School of Law
Atlanta, Georgia

Angela Riccetti
Emory University
Atlanta, Georgia



Jeremy Cohen. *Living Letters of the Law: Ideas of the Jew in Medieval Christianity*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1999. x, 451 pp.

Living Letters of the Law: Ideas of the Jew in Medieval Christianity traces the development of Jeremy Cohen's scholarship over almost two decades. Without

abandoning the thesis he espoused in *The Friars and the Jews* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1982), that is, that a paradigm shift occurred among thirteenth-century Christian mendicant theologians with respect to the role of the Jew in the divine economy, here Cohen attempts to respond to his critics with a more nuanced treatment. *Living Letters of the Law* examines adaptations to the “hermeneutical Jew”—the putative, ahistorical Jew created by Augustinian theology—as the cultural horizons of the medieval Latin world broadened. Cohen traces the contours of the “hermeneutical Jew” from Augustine through Gregory the Great, Isidore of Seville, and Agobard of Lyons before he turns to the twelfth century. Because he now finds more persuasive Amos Funkenstein’s contention that twelfth-century anti-Jewish polemics signal an important shift in medieval perceptions of Judaism, here Cohen pays much more attention to twelfth-century authors (e.g. Anselm of Canterbury, Gilbert Crispin, Odo of Cambrai, Guibert of Nogent, Peter Alfonsi, Peter the Venerable, and Bernard of Clairvaux) than he had done in *The Friars and the Jews*, and considerably less to thirteenth-century mendicants. Indeed, Cohen explains that “reactions to my thesis on the significance of the friars [in *The Friars and the Jews*] . . . quickly convinced me that a fair assessment of later medieval Christian ideas of the Jew demanded a more conscientious investigation of their antecedents. The present study constitutes my attempt to move backward . . . ” (p. 314).

Thanks to this move backward Cohen now proposes that the roots for the most dramatic modifications to Augustine’s model of Jewish witness, which had established a theological basis for toleration of Jewish communities in Christendom, appear in the twelfth century. But for Cohen these roots stem especially from Christendom’s encounter with Islam, an encounter that is responsible for new features in the polemical tradition. For example, it was largely this encounter with Islam, he avows, that necessitated Christian polemics *sola ratiōe*. An unanticipated outcome of the engagement with Islam, however, was that “the Jew ceased to function in Christian thought as the sole or even predominant ‘other’” (p. 156). Many churchmen reclassified Jews as a subset of a larger group of theological enemies alongside Muslims and heretics, which served “to disempower the hermeneutically crafted Jew of patristic theology, depriving him of that singularity which distinguished him and underlay his worth” (p. 159). As Cohen argued previously in “The Muslim Connection or On the Changing Role of the Jew in High Medieval Theology,” the traumatic encounter with Islam both altered traditional perceptions of Jews and also formed Christian views of Islam according to the image and likeness of Judaism.¹

At the same time, the Jews’ rejection of dialectical “proofs” of fundamental Christian doctrines raised disturbing questions of the Jews’ rationality (or even of their humanity) while a growing awareness in the twelfth century of the importance of the Talmud in Jewish religious life raised doubts about the Jews’ role as faithful witnesses to biblical religion. For Cohen these trends intensify during the

1. *From Witness to Witchcraft: Jews and Judaism in Medieval Christian Thought*, ed. Jeremy Cohen, Wolfenbütteler Mittelalter-Studien, 11 (Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz Verlag, 1996), pp. 141–162.

thirteenth century and, figuring prominently in the polemics of the new mendicant orders, result not only in more dangerous theological condemnations of the Jew but also in a corresponding shift in ecclesiastical and royal policies. Repeated attacks in the thirteenth century on the Talmud (consigned to the flames in Paris in 1242 by ecclesiastical decree, for example) or efforts to censor the Talmud by expunging from it anti-Christian sentiments, reflect the harvest of seeds planted in the twelfth century.

Throughout this work, Cohen engages in a reasoned dialogue with his critics, most notably Robert Chazan, who has repeatedly challenged his claim that a fundamental shift occurred in perceptions of Jews following the Christian “discovery” of talmudic Judaism. Although he acknowledges the ambiguity of some of the evidence, Cohen reaffirms that “As Christendom had come to scrutinize the Jews alongside other infidels and Christian heretics, churchmen in the thirteenth century voiced the conviction that Jewish behavior no longer comported with the construction of the Jew whom Augustine had intended to preserve. Belief in the oral torah was a Jewish heresy” (p. 333). *Qua* heresy, it could no longer be tolerated within the boundaries of Christendom, initiating a series of attacks—often encouraged or at least administered by the new mendicant orders—that demanded the conversion of Jews and culminated in the well-known expulsion of many European Jewish communities from the late thirteenth through fifteenth centuries.

In many ways, this study reiterates Cohen’s earlier findings. However, in this volume Cohen provides evidence that significant challenges to the Augustinian “hermeneutical Jew” appear already in the eleventh and twelfth centuries—even if these challenges became widespread and a genuine threat only after the appearance of the mendicant orders in the thirteenth century. The change may be subtle, but it helps fashion Cohen’s response to his critics while delineating more sharply the lines of the debate over the evolution of anti-Jewish doctrines of the high Middle Ages. *Living Letters of the Law* reveals a scholar in dialogue with contemporaries and, whatever shortcomings one may find in the work, the process is itself illuminating.

Irven M. Resnick
University of Tennessee at Chattanooga
Chattanooga, Tennessee



S. D. Goitein, *A Mediterranean Society: An Abridgement in One Volume*. Revised and edited by Jacob Lassner. Berkeley, Los Angeles, and London: University of California Press, 1999. xxii, 503 pp.

Ever since the appearance of the fifth and final volume (to be supplemented by Paula Sanders’ excellent and indispensable cumulative index volume in 1993) of Goitein’s magisterial reconstruction of Jewish social and economic life in the medieval Islamic Mediterranean world, there has been a general recognition of the

need for an abridgement that would make the work more immediately accessible to the educated lay reader and could be a useful text for college students of Jewish, Islamic or even general medieval history. After all, such useful epitomes have been made—and remain popular—for such voluminous masterpieces as Gibbon's *Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire*, Toynbee's *A Study of History*, or Frazer's *The Golden Bough*. Jacob Lassner's skillful one-volume edited abridgement has in part filled the need that was so sorely felt. I say "in part," because the editor explains in his engaging Foreword (pp. xi–xxii) that it was in his view insufficient merely to delete major segments of the original (as any such abridgement would require), nor was it enough to rearrange the order of the segments that he had selected (a perhaps debatable, but certainly justifiable editorial decision which this reviewer finds quite successful), but rather it was "deemed necessary" to go beyond pruning Goitein's style and occasionally "to rewrite entire passages for the sake of clarity." This latter editorial decision is somewhat unsettling since an author's voice, even when idiosyncratic or even flawed, is still his own. There is a slight echo of *fertaytsht un ferbesert* in such a tack.

In this abridgement, the editor has decided to focus on Jewish communal organization, family life and structure, and the interaction between the Jewish minority and the Muslim majority on all levels. Essentially, then, this is the essence of volumes two and three. Lassner demonstrates a good sense of narrative, and there is such a smooth flow that the reader feels that this is a homogeneous, seamless text. Having kept the abridgement uncluttered by Goitein's numerous technical annotations, he has judiciously provided a necessary minimum of notes that identify works specifically mentioned in the text, refer the reader to materials in the original that are alluded to or touched upon tangentially in the abridgement, or clarify some point or discovery which Goitein himself had made elsewhere (as for example, in his extensive research on the India trade, the bulk of which has yet to be published). Lassner has provided a brief addendum on Geniza studies in the United States (spelled Genizah on the title and headers for this chapter afterword alone) and "Its Past and Future Links to Near Eastern Historiography" (pp. 469–482) with the emphasis on the latter. There is a very detailed and useful general index (pp. 483–501). Goitein would have been particularly pleased by that; one of his pet peeves was the inadequate indexing of many scholarly books.

Jacob Lassner has made a very important contribution by bringing a part of Goitein's magnum opus to the wider audience it deserves. This abridgement will make a perfect text for college classes in medieval Jewish, Islamic, and Mediterranean history, anthropology, and sociology, as well as in adult education courses in the wider Jewish community. It is to be hoped that there may some day be an additional abridgement of the remaining volumes dealing with economic history, which has a vibrancy that demolishes any notion that the subject need be dull; with material-cultural history, which gives a palpable feel for the realia of everyday life in the same vein as, but with far finer detail than, the many books inspired by Carcopino's classic *Daily Life in Ancient Rome*; and with the analysis of the individual in which Goitein with deep sensitivity and insight painted a composite portrait of "the Mediterranean personality of medieval culture which emerges from the letters and documents of the Cairo Geniza" (*A Mediterranean Society* 5:1). Such a

volume would be a perfect complement to Lassner's work and would bring before the wider public the full scope of Goitein's majestic historical vision.

Norman A. Stillman
 University of Oklahoma
 Norman, Oklahoma



Abraham David. *To Come to the Land: Immigration and Settlement in 16th-Century Eretz-Israel*. Translated by Dena Ordan. Judaic Studies Series. Tuscaloosa: The University of Alabama Press, 1999. xiii, 360 pp.

Abraham David. *In Zion and Jerusalem: The Itinerary of Rabbi Moses Basola (1521–1523)*. Jerusalem: C. G. Foundation Jerusalem Project Publications, 1999. 148 pp. (English), 48 pp. (Hebrew).

The intensification of Jewish settlement in Eretz Israel in the wake of expulsions and messianic stirrings brought together outstanding figures whose individual and collective achievements left an enduring imprint on Jewish life. The renaissance in sixteenth-century Eretz Israel, particularly in Safed, produced one of the most remarkable and creative moments in Jewish intellectual, religious, and cultural history. Refugees from Spain and Portugal, as well as from Italian and German lands, wended their exile-weary way to the Holy Land. Fueled by a new, more favorable Ottoman administration and unprecedented economic opportunities, the conditions were set for the renewal of Jewish cultural life. Abraham David's book *To Come to the Land* is not primarily about the processes of immigration to the land, although a brief chapter is devoted to that subject at the beginning. It focusses on specific aspects of Jewish life in sixteenth-century Eretz Israel, primarily in Jerusalem and Safed.

Among the titanic figures of the sixteenth-century Jewish intellectual world Joseph Karo, author of the compendium of Jewish law *Bet Yosef* and the code *Shulkhan Arukh*, left an enduring imprint on the course of *halakhah*. Moses Cordovero, Isaac Luria, and Hayim Vital transformed the direction of kabbalah. Eleazar Azikri wrote *Sefer Haredim*, an eminent ethical-kabbalistic work, while he and Solomon Alkabetz contributed religious poetry that is recited in synagogues around the world to this day. The practices of the kabbalist *havurah* (fellowship) enriched Jewish ritual and devotional life. The attempt by Safed scholar Jacob Berab to revive the ancient practice of *semikhah*, apostolic ordination, with messianic undertones, aroused a controversy with Levi ibn Habib of Jerusalem. It pitted scholar against scholar, Jerusalem against Safed, Iberian exile against temporary marrano, and electrified rabbis around the world. Abraham David has eschewed virtually all discussion of the substance of these intellectual and spiritual turning points. Instead, he has chosen to explore the political, economic, and communal circumstances that enabled this moment to come about.

David is a leading scholar of "late" geniza material, particularly the docu-

ments dating from the fifteenth through seventeenth century. Over the past two decades, he has published dozens of these documents in studies which, in their aggregate, illuminate the world—of the Jewish Mediterranean and Middle East at a time of great turbulence and upheaval. David's intimate knowledge of the literature of the fifteenth- and sixteenth-century Mediterranean world—its chronicles, correspondence, and travel literature—forms the essential building blocks of his work. *To Come to the Land* represents a double achievement. It is a useful and coherent synthesis of the results of David's specialized publications, and it is rendered into accessible English.

The primary contribution of this book revolves around two poles: the economic activities, on the one hand, and the internal communal organization, on the other, of Jerusalem and Safed Jewry. In both realms, David sheds new light on fascinating and significant dimensions of this Jewish world. While support of institutions in the Holy Land helped maintain close ties with diaspora communities, charity was far from the only source of income in sixteenth-century Ottoman Palestine. The Ottomans placed few economic restrictions on Jews, and their economic activities spanned agriculture, manufacture, trade, and finance. Nevertheless, Jews were taxed at exorbitant rates, were subject to capricious local rulers, and sometimes suffered severe hardship. "As far as food is concerned, everyone is in trouble, because meat is not available daily in Jerusalem as it is in our land [Italy], nor are fish and fruits . . . apples and pears are imported from Damascus and are very expensive" (p. 43). This passage from an immigrant's letter describing the economic privation in early-sixteenth-century Ottoman Jerusalem can serve as an exemplar of the riches and strengths of *To Come to the Land*. David draws directly from primary sources so that every set of statistics, every larger pattern, is sustained by numerous citations, which add color and detail and bring the material to life.

Another excerpt from a primary source, however, hints at a tantalizing subject that David does not address. "Every man and every woman who works woolen fabric earns an abundant living" (p. 37). This description of economic opportunity in a letter from David min ha-Adummim raises important questions. Did Jewish women play any role in the textile industry that supported much of the economic boom in sixteenth-century Safed? Traditionally, this industry tended to be dominated by women in some sectors, such as design and weaving. Did the immigrants generally arrive in family units or as single men? In his appendix providing shipboard advice to travelers, Moses Basola made recommendations for travelling Jewish families. Basola's text commented on the large number of widows residing in Jerusalem (p. 82), but even this does not elicit from David any analysis whatsoever. In seventeenth-century Jerusalem there was such a dearth of marriageable women that a *takkanah* forbade Jewish men to live there unless they were married. Was this a problem in the sixteenth century too? A book devoted to economic and communal history should have addressed these questions but the lives and even existence of women find no place in this book.¹

1. This omission is all the more regrettable as David is cited as a resource person in other studies that focus on Sephardic women in this period. See Joel L. Kramer, "Spanish Ladies from the Cairo

The chapters on communal organization and education shed new light on these institutions of Jewish life. Where were the Jewish quarters situated? How did the many different diaspora groups govern themselves and relate with others? David's book excels at answering these questions. His picture of the universal scholarship of an entire population provides the context and framework for the celebrated cultural flowering in sixteenth-century Safed, whose *content*, however, is touched on only briefly. Ultimately, it is regrettable that David set such strict parameters for himself. Had he provided more material on the substance of the achievement of sixteenth-century Eretz Israel, this book could have provided the best one-volume introduction to the entire subject in English. A section of brief biographies appended at the end of the book is a handy reference, a "Who's Who" of sixteenth-century rabbinic figures in the Holy Land, but the space devoted to this catalogue could have been better used for a synthesis of the spiritual and intellectual component of Safed's rise.

In Zion and Jerusalem: The Itinerary of Moses Basola is the latest in a series of early modern chronicles or travel journals that David has edited and translated. His introduction and notes to Basola's itinerary form a natural complement to the more synthetic treatment in *To Come to the Land*. The itinerary provides an individual portrait of one traveller's impressions and motivations. David touches several times on the possible messianic motivations guiding Basola (p. 42). His discussion of the Jew from Cush whose description is similar to that of David Reubeni but who was apparently a different person, illuminates one aspect of a phenomenon that was recently called "The Jerusalem Syndrome" in its sixteenth-century variation. Basola's discussion of the "reliable" information he was able to gather concerning the Sambatyon and the Ten Tribes further illustrates the atmosphere of expectation that pervaded the Holy Land during Basola's time. Basola's rich text conveys both the texture and outlines of his personal experience as a pilgrim and the complexion of the communal life in sixteenth-century Eretz Israel as he saw it. It contains important information about the ritual and liturgy connected with the visiting of holy sites and venerated graves. Basola listed the *takkanot* current in Jerusalem during his stay, a primary source of great interest. Ultimately, however, one wishes for a better sense of the person, and the larger contours of his life.

Dena Ordan has provided felicitous translations of both volumes, free of the strained and stilted prose that often characterizes such endeavors. One quibble, however: Some sources cited by David that are available in English are not listed in the documentation in their English translation. For example, in citing Jacob Katz' pioneering analysis of the *semikhah* controversy, only the Hebrew citation is listed. The interested reader would not know that an English translation has been available for years.² In a book for serious readers, translated for those who do not

Geniza," in *Jews, Christians, and Muslims in the Mediterranean World After 1492*, Alisa Meyuhis Ginio, ed., (London: Frank Cass, 1992), p. 243, n. 23. On the Jerusalem *takkanah*, see my *The Pursuit of Heresy* (New York: Columbia Univ. Press, 1990), p. 41.

2. Jacob Katz, "The Dispute between Jacob Berab and Levi ben Habib over Renewing Ordination," *Binah* (1989) 1:119–141.

have access to David's original Hebrew, this type of omission should not have been overlooked.

Elisheva Carlebach
Queens College, CUNY
New York, New York



Moshe Hallamish. *An Introduction to the Kabbalah*. Trans. Ruth Bar-Ilan and Ora Wiskind-Elper. SUNY Series in Judaica: Hermeneutics, Mysticism, and Religion. Albany: SUNY Press, 1999. viii, 379 pp.

The challenge of writing a book on Kabbalah for the educated reader is to communicate the range of Kabbalistic experience, belief, and teaching without obscuring the subject or diluting its meaning. This book accomplishes that task with thoroughness and lucidity. The author draws upon a rich array of sources and presents a thorough panorama of Kabbalistic teachings in a clear and readable style despite the fact that it is a translation from Hebrew.

Although it is intended as an introductory text written for the educated public, the book is not an introduction geared for undergraduates or for a lay reader. It is densely packed and presupposes fluency in Jewish studies. It is, however, a valuable book that can be recommended to advanced undergraduates or for student research assignments. The book is a helpful and concise alternative to the interpretive sections of Isaiah Tishby's *Mishnat Ha-Zohar*. The author writes a readable synopsis of the basic teachings of the Kabbalah and draws on a wide historical array of sources. It has advantages over other introductions to the Kabbalah: It is comprehensive and includes references to the most recent scholarly research. While it does not break new ground in research on Kabbalah, it accurately reflects the state of the field.

The first part of the book focuses on the experience of the Kabbalist. Hallamish defines Jewish mysticism as the encounter with the divine presence, the deeper sense of being close to God. He explains that the more intense the effort to get to know God, the nearer one gets to the mystical level. The author, however, adds that Kabbalah is not otherworldly transcendentalism. He captures the heart of the Kabbalistic experience succinctly: "Here, then, is the secret of the Kabbalah's power: Man ascends to God, and thereby gains strength. He gains strength—not in order to stand equal to God but in realizing himself as a human being."

The author presents the conflicting tendencies within Kabbalah alternately to conceal mystical teachings and to circulate them. He explains how Kabbalah preserved religious conformity and fostered innovation at the same time. He explores the moral and intellectual qualifications of a Kabbalist and the conditions, criteria, and restrictions that have historically limited access to the Kabbalah. He traces the meaning of the prohibition on teaching the esoteric subject matter of *Ma'aseh Bereshit* and *Ma'aseh Merkabah* through Mishnah, Heikhalot literature, and

Kabbalah. He also stresses the Kabbalistic expectation that a student has been grounded in modes of rational thinking and discourse before turning to Kabbalah. The chapters on the preparations for the mystic ascent and techniques for achieving mystic revelation are among the best explanations available in English. Despite the author's focus on the experience of Kabbalah, he does not embrace Moshe Idel's evaluation of the ecstatic dimension in Kabbalah.

The second part of the book—on the basic Kabbalistic concepts—does not break new ground. It does, however, present a broad array of sources that are not otherwise available in English. He lets the sources speak in their own words. For the most part, he presupposes that the reader of the book is literate in Jewish concepts, sources, and history. Occasionally, he will make a scholarly aside or reference.

My major criticism of this study is that it often treats Kabbalah as a consistent movement with common patterns of life and values. He speaks of Heikhalot, Zohar, and Hasidism in the same breath and presents Kabbalah as one unified tradition. Can one draw conclusions from Nachman of Braslav's teachings on *hitbodedut* about Kabbalah's approach to solitude in general?

Two different translators rendered the original Hebrew text into English. The translation is generally accurate but there are occasional inconsistent transliterations (e.g., *şimsşum*, *şedek*) and weak copyediting (e.g., Neoplatonians, Neoplatonists).

Sometimes the author presents the material and lets it speak for itself. At other times he presents and analyzes the material from other perspectives, as when he describes Yosef Karo's *maggid* or heavenly messenger as the human unconscious or superego. Sometimes he raises major topics but then does not develop them, such as the Kabbalistic view of human sexuality in relation to the androgyny of the Sefirot or Kabbalistic messianism. At other times, he introduces but does not elaborate interesting themes such as the use of chant, divine names, and dreams. These are small omissions in an otherwise thorough and important contribution to the literature on Kabbalah in English.

David S. Ariel
Cleveland College of Jewish Studies
Beachwood, Ohio



Sarah Stroumsa. *The Beginnings of the Maimonidean Controversy in the East: Yosef Ibn Shim'on's Silencing Epistle Concerning the Resurrection of the Dead*. Jerusalem: Ben Zvi Institute for the Study of Jewish Communities in the East, 1999. xvii, 174 pp. (Hebrew).

Stroumsa publishes the medieval Hebrew version of Ibn Shim'on's *Silencing Epistle Concerning the Resurrection of the Dead* alongside the epistle in the original Judeo-Arabic, a fine modern Hebrew translation of the latter, and profuse an-

notations to both versions. Both text and translation are published for the first time. The translation is highly readable and the author's notes very instructive. The work is a major contribution to our understanding of the intellectual climate and fervor of the Near Eastern Jewish world of the twelfth and thirteenth centuries.

This review takes issue with Stroumsa's assertion that Ibn Shim'on's *Epistle* "clarifies some hitherto obscure issues concerning the Maimonidean debate, and throws new light on it" (p. xii). Stroumsa is referring to the controversy surrounding Maimonides' *Treatise on Resurrection*; the putatively uncharacteristic nature of Maimonides' *Treatise* led a number of modern scholars to question his authorship (see her note 29 in the introduction for a full citation).

Stroumsa argues that the *Epistle* "conclusively disprove[s]" (p. xiii) the forgery of Maimonides' *Treatise on Resurrection* by demonstrating that the *Treatise* is responding directly to his disciple's *Epistle*.

I believe that the *internal* evidence, specifically the close correspondence with both Maimonides' theological views and his writing style, is a sufficient guarantee of his authorship. The point under consideration, however, is whether Stroumsa's argument from *external* evidence is valid: I conclude that it is not.

Some of Maimonides' followers, as indicated in his *Treatise on Resurrection*, had begun to deny bodily resurrection on the basis of inferences from his own work. Such conclusions were rebutted in correspondence with followers. The controversy, however, continued as charges of heresy spread. The prominent head of the Baghdad academy, referred to as the *gaon*, composed an essay sharply critical of Maimonides' views which demanded a response. It is at this point that Ibn Shim'on takes up the defense of his teacher, Maimonides. Ibn Shim'on's *Epistle* is both apologetic, in that he redefines some of Maimonides' words and concepts, and polemical, in that he attempts to counter the *gaon's* arguments. Stroumsa speculates that the *epistle* found its way to Maimonides and that *it*, rather than the *gaon's* treatise itself, prompted Maimonides to respond in a lengthy and seemingly rambling essay, the aforementioned *Treatise on Resurrection*.

Stroumsa posits that we can authenticate Maimonides' *Treatise* if we can demonstrate that it is responding directly to the *Epistle* of his highly esteemed disciple (for whom he wrote the *Guide of the Perplexed*). She infers that Maimonides had in fact seen Ibn Shim'on's *Epistle* from a letter he sent Ibn Shim'on on the subject of his dispute with the head of the Baghdad academy (Y. Shilat, "Iggerot ha-Rambam," Jerusalem, 1987). My reading of Stroumsa's reference (pp. 297–298 in the Judeo-Arabic version and pp. 309–310 in the Hebrew translation) does not in any way support this inference. There is absolutely no indication in the passage that Maimonides ever received his disciple's *Epistle* along with the *gaon's* treatise: There is no mention of it, neither praise nor criticism. It is unlikely that Maimonides would have passed up the opportunity to comment on his disciple's work if indeed he had received it. Interestingly, Stroumsa points to one instance where Ibn Shim'on displayed the same ignorance of philosophic principles ascribed to the *gaon* (comments to paragraph 8, pp. 128–129) and another instance where he clearly misread or misunderstood his mentor's writings (comments to paragraph 31, page 134). Yet Maimonides remains strangely silent. Moreover, Maimonides also fails to correct Ibn Shim'on's misapprehension—that the notion that resur-

rection is to occur in the messianic era can be inferred from a number of passages in the Mishneh Torah. The most plausible conclusion is that Maimonides never saw Ibn Shim'on's *Epistle*.

Stroumsa supports her thesis that Maimonides was reacting to his disciple's *Epistle*, rather than directly to the *gaon*, with three pieces of evidence internal to the *Treatise on Resurrection*. The weakest internal evidence is the "bitter tone" found in Maimonides' words: "it discloses a certain disappointment with the close disciple, who having read the *Guide*, still remained, in a certain sense, perplexed" (pp. xii–xiv). There are, of course, a number of other explanations for this presumed bitterness, as Stroumsa acknowledges (page xiv, note 36).

Another suggestion—that Maimonides alludes to an expression found in the *Epistle*—is also unconvincing. In the *Epistle*, Ibn Shim'on quotes the *gaon* of the Baghdad academy responding to a question, "yes, indeed, there exists (some or someone) by us in Baghdad" (p. 108, par. 80; see comments on p. 147). In the *Treatise*, Maimonides mockingly refers to certain Arabic philosophical works composed "by them in Baghdad" (Shilat, p. 351). That Maimonides is alluding to the *gaon*'s expression is quite far-fetched.

A third suggestion is that when Maimonides mentions that the *gaon* draws on the work of Avicenna, he is referring to the *Epistle* in which an almost exact paraphrase of Avicenna appears. Since we possess only fragments of the *gaon*'s treatise, this line of reasoning amounts to an argument from silence that the *gaon* did not refer to Avicenna elsewhere. More important, Maimonides states quite clearly that it is the *gaon* who drew from Avicenna's work, not Ibn Shim'on, while the *Epistle* makes it clear that Ibn Shim'on is the one who refers to Avicenna to rebut a claim made by the *gaon* (who had, he claims, self-servingly truncated a passage from a philosophical work). There really is no reason to doubt Maimonides' explicit statement.

In summary, the internal evidence that Stroumsa has gleaned does not support the problematic inference from Maimonides' correspondence that he worked from his disciple's *Silencing Epistle*, which would by extension authenticate his own *Treatise*. While Stroumsa's contribution is extremely valuable, the *Silencing Epistle* by itself contributes nothing to resolving the age-old controversy regarding the authorship of the *Treatise on Resurrection*.

Albert D. Friedberg
Toronto, Canada



Y. Tzvi Langermann. *The Jews and the Sciences in the Middle Ages*. Variorum Collected Studies Series. Brookfield, VT: Ashgate Publishing Company, 1999 (pages not numbered consecutively).

Y. Tzvi Langermann and Snait Gissis, editors. *Science in Context* 10:3 (Autumn, 1997). Special Issue: "Judaism and the Sciences, Part 1: Medieval Period." Cambridge: Cambridge University Press. 202 pp. (391–592).

Steven Harvey, editor. *The Medieval Hebrew Encyclopedias of Science and Philosophy*. Dordrecht: Kluwer, 2000. 547 pp.

Interest in the tension between religion and science has become the focus of much recent scholarship not only in Christian but in Jewish circles as well. Perhaps nowhere is this attempt seen as clearly as in recent works dealing with cosmology. Many recent books have attempted to reconcile contemporary views of creation with accounts found in scripture: for example, Samuelson's *Judaism and the Doctrine of Creation* (Cambridge, 1994), Matt's *God and the Big Bang* (Vermont, 1996), Schroeder's *Genesis and the Big Bang* (New York, 1990), and analogous books from the non-Jewish perspective, such as Trefil's *The Moment of Creation* (New York, 1983), and Davies' *The Mind of God* (New York, 1991). What these books have in common is the desire to harmonize accounts of creation that result from two webs of belief: religious and scientific.

This struggle between "Athens and Jerusalem," between rational speculation and Torah-based study, has been replayed in every generation. At every stage in Jewish thought, Jews have tried to accommodate "secular" elements with their own thinking; these elements have included scientific paradigms, whether of Plato, Ptolemy, Aristotle, Copernicus, or of contemporary astrophysics. As a minority religion within the larger context of a majority culture, be it Hellenistic, Islamic, the world of Enlightenment Europe, or most recent examples of modernity (and post-modernity), Jews have both rejected and adopted various aspects of these majority civilizations. For generations of Jews the issue has thus been how to reconcile the content of the secular learning with that of religious knowledge.

The very desire for accommodation reflects a particular attitude toward the relation between religion and science. Late-nineteenth-century historians of science would have us believe that science has been persecuted by religion: more specifically, that western science has been persecuted by the Catholic Church. In his enormously influential work *History of the Conflict between Religion and Science* (New York, 1874), John William Draper argued that the Church "became a stumbling block in the intellectual advancement of Europe for more than a thousand years." On this model, the history of scientific development was presented as a war against a narrow-minded establishment that feared science; the conflicts between science and religion were seen as a one-sided affair in which the Church sought to suppress truth-seeking scientists. Jewish institutions were not castigated nearly as maliciously on this view (perhaps, the cynic may argue, because by this point in history Jews wielded so little power). It is important to remember, however, that Jewish examinations of the religion/science debate are—for the most part—elaborated in counter-position to a not unrelated issue, namely the impact of secular Christian culture upon Judaism. Hence, whereas for the Christian theologian the question is unfold, namely, how to accommodate Christianity and modern scientific outlooks, for the Jew the question becomes more complex: how to accommodate Judaism to secularism, which itself has been infiltrated by Christian influences. The accommodationist ground is reflected by the attempts of those serious Jews committed to their religious faith as well as the achievements of science to reconcile their faith with the secular learning surrounding them.

But can Judaism ultimately be reconciled with a web of scientific belief? This question underlies several recent edited collections by Langermann and Harvey. Of the ten essays appearing in Langermann's volume *The Jews and the Sciences in the Middle Ages*, all but three have appeared as earlier publications. By collecting the essays, and adding three hitherto unpublished studies, Langermann offers a multi-faceted survey of the history of science in medieval Jewish communities. In the first of the new essays (Chapter One), Langermann explores the Rabbinic opposition to the study of science and suggests that the opposition of religious authorities has to do in general with the aversion to secular studies that stands in the way of Talmud Torah. Concentrating first upon the works of Abraham bar Hiyya and Judah ibn Verga, Langermann highlights developments in medicine, mathematics, and meteorology, and their incorporation into Jewish thought. Langermann then turns specifically to how scientific knowledge is integrated into the work of particular Jewish thinkers, namely Bahya ibn Paquda, Judah Halevi, and Hasdai Crescas. Influenced by Saadya Gaon, Bahya draws upon science and technology for many of his arguments and examples. Langermann argues that from Bahya's perspective "the harmony of religion and science is not controversial, but rather commonplace" (chpt. 1, p. 42). Bahya's comments are indications of "the high status of the sciences" in Andalusian society. Turning next to Judah Halevi, Langermann argues that the *Cuzari* was composed as a response to "the very successful integration of science and philosophy into Jewish life" (chpt. 1, p. 44). As a response to the challenge of both science and philosophy, Halevi offers in the *Cuzari* a "Jewish cosmology" steeped in Neoplatonic and Neopythagorean ontology, thus replacing the philosophy of the Greeks with an Isma'ili science. Turning finally to Crescas, Langermann argues that, in contradistinction to the standard view promulgated by Wolfson and Pines, Crescas "has no interest in the scientific enterprise per se. He has no agenda for harmonizing the truths of science with sacred writ, nor does he hold to the dream of restoring the ancient, true, and unique Jewish science" (chpt. 1, p. 46). Hence it should not be surprising that his students did not continue in the area of science. Like the *mutakalimun* who also rejected Aristotelian science and replaced it with an occasionalist, atomist alternative, Langermann argues that Crescas was not interested in science for its own sake, but only for its theological implications (chpt. 1, p. 49).

The second new essay (Chapter Two) is devoted to Sa'adya's connection to the sciences, while the third new essay (Chapter Four) pertains to Maimonides' view of astronomy. In this work Langermann returns to a subject explored in great detail in an earlier piece published in 1991 ("The True Perplexity," in J. L. Kraemer, ed. *Perspectives on Maimonides*, Oxford, 1991), in which Langermann endorsed Pines' skeptical reading of a critical passage in Maimonides, *Guide for the Perplexed*, II:24. Langermann now wants to reject instrumentalist readings of Maimonides that claim that because it is impossible to determine which astronomical modeling devices are the true ones, therefore astronomy cannot hope to achieve anything more than useful computational instruments. Adapting the standard skeptical response to agnostic readings of Maimonides, Langermann argues that "if Maimonides' agnosticism is so thoroughgoing, how could he possibly be so sure that the motions of the heavens are uniform, circular and so forth" (chpt. 4, p. 4)?

Other chapters in this volume are reprints of articles published between 1988 and 1993. These articles deal with scientific concerns in the works of ibn Ezra (astrology), Nahmanides, Gersonides (action at a distance), Moses Isserles (physics, cosmology, and astronomy), and Mordekhai Finzi, as well as astronomical and medical manuscripts. These articles help to flesh out Langermann's overall thesis that Jews in the medieval and early modern period were very much engaged in areas of scientific discussion, and furthermore, that these scientific discussions were seen to be relevant to issues of Jewish belief.

The relevance of scientific discovery to Judaism is explored further in two recent issues of *Science in Context* (1997); Issue 10:3, edited by Langermann and Gissis, is dedicated to Judaism and science in the medieval period, while Issue 10:4 is devoted to the modern period. I will focus upon 10:3, in which articles by Charles H. Manekin, Tony Levy, Ruth Glassner, J. L. Mancha, and Y. Tzvi Langermann explore the interactions of medieval Jewish thought and scientific developments. Manekin discusses three medieval Hebrew translations of Peter of Spain's *Tractatus*, arguing that inasmuch as a grounding in logic was an aid for Jewish students wishing to become physicians and needing to interact with their Christian peers, this logical textbook became as popular among Jewish students as among Christians. Tony Levy provides a much-needed portrait of the transmission of mathematics by thirteenth- and early-fourteenth-century Hebrew translators from Arabic sources; the texts include the writings of Euclid and Archimedes, as well as treatises on mathematical astronomy. Of special interest are Levy's speculations as to why these translations were undertaken by individuals who for the most part were not themselves mathematicians. Levy suggests that the translators (e.g., Jacob Anatoli, Moses ibn Tibbon, Jacob ben Makhir, Qalonymos ben Qalonymos of Arles, and Samuel ben Judah of Marseilles) recognized the importance of these works in the Christian west and felt the necessity to make them available to a Hebrew reading public. More pointedly, for example, Jacob ben Makhir argued that Jews "have to learn from the example of the [other] nations . . . these nations revered science and scholars without any concern from their religion. Has any nation yet changed its religion through this?" (p. 445). It is to be hoped that in subsequent works Levy will detail further the use to which these translations were made.

Glasner's article on Yeda'ya ha-Penini's conception of the void suggests a reliance upon Christian sources for a peculiar view of void not found in Arabic-Hebrew sources. She positions Yeda'ya alongside the two "anti-Aristotelians" Nicholas of Autrecourt and Hasdai Crescas, both of whom rejected the traditional Aristotelian conception of the vacuum as being neither within, between, or outside bodies. She suggests that this unconventional position might be traceable to Yeda'ya's conversations with scholastic contemporaries; in a similar vein, others (e.g., Pines) have already noted, for example, Yeda'ya's theory of individual forms, which reflects Scotus's concept of *haecceitas*. Finally, Mancha traces the main stages of the Hebrew and Latin redaction of Gersonides' astronomical work *Sefer Tekhuna*, while Langermann introduces his analysis of Halevi, which is developed further in *Judaism and the Sciences*. All of these articles reinforce the fact that Jewish philosophers, clearly aware of developments in science, mathematics, and astronomy, made use of these developments and incorporated new scientific find-

ings into their own work. At the same time, these thinkers were very much aware of the implications of scientific advances with respect to maintaining the integrity of their religious worldview.

This awareness on the part of Jews of new scientific advances in the world around them is the focus of Steven Harvey's collection *The Medieval Hebrew Encyclopedias of Science and Philosophy*. This volume represents the proceedings of an international conference held at Bar Ilan University in January 1998. Although the focus of the conference was primarily upon Hebrew encyclopedias of the thirteenth century, several papers deal with twelfth- and fourteenth-century encyclopedias, while others focus upon contemporaneous Arabic and Latin encyclopedias. As Harvey notes in his introduction, Hebrew medieval encyclopedias first appear at the moment when Hebrew was beginning to replace Arabic as the scientific language of the Jews; in many cases they represented the first direct contact with classical and contemporary scientific and philosophical thinking.

It is not easy, however, to determine exactly what counts as an encyclopedia, since many of the authors did not present their works as such. For example, can an encyclopedia incorporate creative thought on the part of the author? How should an encyclopedia be read—as a reference, or from cover to cover? Must the encyclopedist necessarily be a popularizer? A tantalizing, but unanswered question, for example, is whether Maimonides' *Mishneh Torah* should be thought of as an encyclopedia. On the one hand, it is concerned primarily with Jewish law and not science and philosophy; on the other hand, as Woolf argues in his article, the comprehensiveness and “reader-friendliness” of the work underscores its close relation to other medieval encyclopedias. Perhaps the most we can hope for is a set of family resemblances among the various works that attempt, in one way or another, to systematize, survey and disseminate a large body of material to a largely non-technical audience. Surprisingly, however, there appears to be little influence of the thirteenth-century Latin encyclopedias upon their Hebrew counterparts. Both Voorbij and Albrecht discuss important differences between the two sets of works, the most important being that unlike Latin encyclopedias, Hebrew encyclopedias did not contain retrieval mechanisms such as headers and indices. Harvey is to be commended for including in the anthology several important articles (Voorbij, Albrecht, Biesterfeldt, and Butterworth) that help to situate the Hebrew works in the context of their scholastic and Arabic counterparts.

The earliest Hebrew encyclopedias of science and philosophy include the *Yesodei ha-Tevunah u-Migdal ha-Emunah* by Abraham bar Hiyya (see Rubio) and Levi ben Abraham of Villefranche's *Livyat Hen*. Zev Harvey provides a penetrating examination of this latter work, which may have been written in order to prepare readers to grasp the science necessary to understand Maimonides' *Guide for the Perplexed*. Several chapters are devoted to the three major Hebrew thirteenth-century encyclopedias written by Judah ben Solomon (see Fontaine), Shem-Tov Falaquera (see S. Harvey), and Gershon ben Solomon. Gershon ben Solomon's *Sha'ar ha-Shamayim*, analyzed in detail by Robinson, was by far the most popular encyclopedia of the three.

Other chapters consider more technical topics contained in the various encyclopedias. Manekin surveys logic in the encyclopedias; mathematical sciences are

discussed by Levy; Glasner analyzes the question of celestial matter; Freudenthal and Langermann deal with astronomy and astrology; and Ivry and Zonta turn to the treatment of the psychology of the soul and metaphysics in a number of encyclopedias. Following two articles on Hebrew encyclopedias of the fourteenth century (see Eisenman) and the Renaissance (see Melamed), Harvey includes as an addendum an annotated translation, prepared by Manekin, of Steinschneider's groundbreaking 1880s work on Hebrew encyclopedias. This study is still of enormous bibliographical interest, and scholars await with anticipation the translation of the complete work, which—thanks to Manekin's efforts—will include updated lists of the manuscripts mentioned by Steinschneider.

The importance of these encyclopedias to an understanding of the development of medieval Jewish scientific advancement cannot be overestimated. In many cases, they represent the full presentation of Aristotelian science to medieval readers; as Harvey argues, the encyclopedists saw their task as one of “gathering and combining all available scientific knowledge into a single book” (p. 25). Thus these works tell us much about the status of medieval science. Yet there is much scholarship still to be done. Harvey notes in his introduction that one issue, discussed at the conference but not covered in the present volume, has to do with the piety and religious agenda of the encyclopedists; one would hope that this issue will be examined in subsequent studies. Although some of the research has commenced already—works of Fontaine, Manekin, Jospe, and others—many of the encyclopedias await further editing and analysis. Both Langermann and Harvey have made an admirably convincing case that there is a wealth of riches to be uncovered in our continuing understanding of the relation between Judaism and medieval science.

Tamar Rudavsky
The Ohio State University
Columbus, Ohio



Renée Levine Melammed. *Heretics or Daughters of Israel: The Crypto-Jewish Women of Castile*. New York: Oxford University Press, 1999. vi, 256 pp.

The forced conversions of perhaps a third of the Jews of Spain in 1391 presented significant dilemmas for the Spanish Crown, the Spanish Church, and the conversos themselves. While the Church insisted that baptism, even by force, was irrevocable, instructing and assimilating so many converts was a major challenge. Conversos, too, were in a quandary: Some chose to relocate and revert to Judaism openly; others accepted their altered situation and not a few pursued new possibilities in Church and public roles; many married their children into Old Christian families. There were New Christians, however, who relinquished neither birthplace nor heritage, choosing to observe Judaism surreptitiously. By the last decades of the fifteenth century, when an increasingly anxious Church encouraged a reluctant Crown to establish an Inquisition directed at conversos engaging in Jewish practices, women had become a particular target. As Renée Levine Melammed ob-

serves in her detailed and well-argued analyses of Inquisition proceedings against women accused of judaizing, “The Inquisitors realized the unusual importance of the home in crypto-Judaism and understood that women willingly became the carriers of the tradition they viewed as inimical” (p. 15). Melammed’s delineations of the interactions between these women and their adversaries in the inquisitorial courts demonstrates the determination of some *conversa* women to subvert the teachings of the Church and risk prison or death to provide for the Jewish continuity of their families.

Melammed divides her analyses of Inquisition confession books and trial transcripts into three periods: the pre-expulsion era from 1391 to 1492, when *conversos* could still interact with Jews; the years immediately following the expulsion, from 1492 to 1550; and the end of the sixteenth century, when New Christians who had been born as Jews were gone but their descendants remained. She points out that the Spanish monarchs justified their 1492 edict of expulsion by accusing Jews of encouraging New Christians to participate in Jewish rituals, practices, and expressions of belief. Melammed finds that Jews did not, in fact, actively proselytize. Rather, *conversos* who were so inclined sought out and relied on Jews for moral, spiritual, and ritual support, such as providing kosher meat and *matzah*, and frequently visited synagogues. Moreover, New Christians sometimes provided funds to rebuild devastated Jewish communities and institutions. In one Inquisition proceeding, a *conversa* named Beatriz González of Toledo was accused of bathing, cutting her nails, wearing clean clothes, going barefoot, and asking forgiveness of others on Yom Kippur, “and some nights before the Great Fast, she went to the synagogue to see how the candles burned and how the Jews prayed and she heard them” (p. 28). Many confessions to similar acts by accused judaizers leave no doubt that by living in close proximity to Jews, New Christians who wished to continue Jewish practices could easily do so.

Melammed notes that following the expulsion, when the *converso* community lost its sole source of “Jewish” food, wine, and books, as well as active Jewish models, clandestine religious practice inevitably began to diverge from normative Judaism. It is in this period, she argues, that women’s domestic activities, including preparing Sabbath meals, putting on clean Sabbath garments, baking *matzah*, and observing dietary laws, became especially central to crypto-Jewish life as men were deprived of the public domain in which they had traditionally functioned. Indeed, the female commandments of kindling Sabbath lights, burning dough from the Sabbath loaves, and, to the extent possible, *niddah* observance, emerged as major symbols of crypto-Judaism as women became the primary bearers of Jewish culture.

Around 1500, a number of messianic visionaries of Jewish ancestry claimed to be prophets bearing a message of salvation specifically directed at *conversos*. At least two, Inés of Herrera and Mari Gómez of Chillón, were women, and both preached a return to Jewish practices so that God would take *conversos* out of captivity and transport them to the Holy Land. Melammed details how the Inquisition acted quickly to condemn and eliminate these visionaries and their supporters, successfully stopping a movement with obvious appeal to the New Christian community. She does not explore, however, whether exposure to Christianity, with its many

female saints and visionaries, might have set the stage for a degree of female empowerment otherwise all but unknown in Jewish messianic movements.

The *conversa* lived in an environment of suspicion in which virtually any encounter with an Old Christian could prompt the filing of an accusation with the local Inquisition. Servants who worked alongside *conversa* housewives had numerous opportunities to observe unusual food preparation and dietary behavior, while the nature of their subservient position often led to resentment towards their employers. In the second part of her book, Melammed analyzes several trials of accused judaizers, detailing the complexity of the legal system as well as the determination of inquisitors to quash any perceived judaizing proclivities. In the simultaneous trials of two women and one man from the same family, she shows how the social interactions of a small town were laid bare as a large percentage of the town's population became involved in or were mentioned in the proceedings. Since the accused were not told who had testified against them, they had to document any possible quarrel, employer-servant rancor, property feud, family vendetta, or sexual intrigue that might have led to their denunciation to the authorities. These *tachas*, long lists of individuals with possible grievances against the accused, were essential since a witness's testimony could be discredited if an ulterior motive was proved.

Melammed discusses the fascinating case of Beatriz Rodríguez, a Castilian midwife. The Inquisition persistently collected information about her over a period of fifty years and frequently summoned her to court. Melammed suggests that tensions between midwives and male authority figures, especially clerics, were as influential here as any judaizing by Beatriz. Noting attempts during this period to impose legal limitations on midwives in some Spanish cities, she asks, "Was this *conversa* midwife a heretic, or was she a strong, independent woman whose actions and attitudes might have perturbed the inquisitor even if she had not been a New Christian?" (p. 145). In 1550, after many years of harassment, Beatriz was forced to submit to a trial at the age of almost seventy. Although ultimately reconciled to the Church and permitted to go home, confiscation of all the property she had acquired over the previous fifty years effectively condemned her to an old age of poverty and shame. There seems little evidence that Beatriz herself was involved in any significant crypto-Jewish practices; however, Melammed's final chapter reveals how trial transcripts from late sixteenth-century Alcázar indicate that descendants of conversos in a remote part of Spain still retained a high degree of Jewish observance. While the community undoubtedly included knowledgeable crypto-Jewish men, Melammed points out that, "Alongside them, working in tandem or on parallel levels, were their sisters, nieces, mothers, and daughters" (p. 165).

Scholarly debates over such issues as how many conversos deliberately retained Jewish practices, the proportion of those New Christians denounced to the Inquisition who were actually guilty of knowingly judaizing, the real motivations of the Inquisition in targeting New Christians and the extent to which it did so, and the reliability of Inquisition testimony, much of it obtained under torture, have raged in recent decades. Melammed does not address these controversies directly but assumes that the inquisitors were sincerely looking for judaizers and that most of their accusations had a factual basis. She praises Isabel García, who was able to convince

the inquisitors of the sincerity of her Christianity, as “a conscious judaizer who beat the system” (p. 44). Yet Isabel’s transcript, which reveals a syncretistic merging of Jewish and Christian practices, indicates that the reality could have been more ambiguous. In some instances illiterate and ignorant defendants may have unthinkingly maintained traditional domestic and family customs alongside Christian beliefs. Nevertheless, the details Melammed painstakingly amasses indisputably demonstrate that some conversa women did play central and courageous roles in resisting the attempts of the Church and Inquisition to eradicate their Jewish identification and heritage. Her important and readable book, which includes several appendices of Inquisition documents, demonstrates the significance and usefulness of such records when carefully read and adds new substance and nuance to our understanding of the role of gender in one of the defining epochs of Jewish history.

Judith R. Baskin
 State University of New York at Albany
 Albany, New York



Yitzhak (Eric) Zimmer. *The Fiery Embers of the Scholars: the Trials and Tribulations of German Rabbis in the Sixteenth and Seventeenth Centuries*. Jerusalem: Mosad Bialik for Ben Gurion University of the Negev Press, 1999. xii, 355 pp. (Hebrew).

German rabbis of the sixteenth century, as Eric Zimmer remarks in his introduction, were not for the most part very distinguished; they published relatively little, and only one of them (Ḥayyim ben Bezalel) achieved even moderate fame. Nevertheless, Zimmer has lavished his attention on these forgotten figures—David of Fulda, Abraham Stang Dülken, Isaac Ginzberg, and others—and his thirty years of patient research of manuscript sources (some of which he publishes here) have culminated in this book. The book is less than a complete survey of the topic, and still shows some signs of having been published initially as separate articles and studies. Zimmer presents a series of snapshots, grouped around the theme of conflict; these German rabbis, distinguished or not, did not lack for quarrels.

The title of the work—from Pirkei Avot: “Beware the fiery embers of the scholars, for their bite is the bite of jackals”—signals the overarching theme. Zimmer leads his readers through the messy stories of rabbinic conflicts, such as the ugly quarrel of the Ginzberg family against the rabbis of Frankfurt, including the unsuccessful battles of David of Fulda against a certain Jewish doctor and the many conflicts over the reception of the *Shulhan Arukh*, whose foes were led by Ḥayyim ben Bezalel; disagreements over loans, over divorces, over *kashrut*, over prayer customs, over what sort of building may be built next to a synagogue; and conflicts over jurisdiction, over power, and especially over prestige, *kavod*. Writs of *herem* were sometimes issued; recourse by one or both parties to the non-Jewish courts was frequent; occasionally someone was thrown into prison; the rabbinic rhetoric (then as now) was heated.

Like Israel Yuval, to whose book on the fourteenth- and fifteenth-century German rabbinate this book is in some sense the sequel, Zimmer takes a prosopographic approach. That is, he illustrates his subject by the biographical treatment of selected representative figures. Zimmer focuses on fewer individuals than Yuval, and he is more successful in portraying them as individuals. More than Yuval, he focuses on the variations that separated the career of a village rabbi from that of a city rabbi, or a major scholar from a lesser one.

In the later Middle Ages, Yuval has argued, processes of professionalization and sacralization tended to make the rabbinate into a class of sacral functionaries, sharply distinguished from the lay leadership, whose power much exceeded theirs, and who to a great extent defined the rabbinate's duties and powers. Zimmer accepts Yuval's thesis and argues that during the sixteenth century, the German rabbinate, if anything, tended to lose power even further.

In such a situation, the stakes of some of these intra-rabbinic conflicts were therefore quite small. Zimmer's interest, however, is not in the stakes, but in the complex fault lines which these conflicts lay bare. He finds conflicts between rabbis, *kehilah* leaders, and (later) court Jews; between clans or patronage groups (such as the Ginzbergs and their clients); between the larger communities—Frankfurt, Worms, and Prague—and the smaller ones; between “qualified” (yeshiva-trained) rabbis and unqualified rabbis; between Polish (and Polish-trained) rabbis and German ones; and between regional rabbis and local rabbis. The overall picture is thus one of the complex interaction of multiple power centers, a picture that fits well into the larger picture of the infinitely complex power structure, lay and clerical, of the Holy Roman Empire.

It is a truism that historians are influenced by their times and their societies. Even if they are careful and judicious scholars, as Zimmer surely is, they may be influenced by contemporary concerns in their choice of topic or focus. In a sense, this is a very Israeli book. Zimmer chooses the theme of conflict as the lens through which to view his subjects, and in consequence produces an image of a highly contentious, highly politicized rabbinate of sacral functionaries. We would not be wrong, I would suggest, to see in this image the reflection of a certain view of the Israeli rabbinate.

Joseph Davis
Gratz College
Philadelphia, Pennsylvania



Don Harrán. *Salamone Rossi: Jewish Musician in Late Renaissance Mantua*. Oxford Monographs on Music. New York: Oxford University Press, 1999. x, 310 pp.

Salamone Rossi (c. 1570–c. 1630) is a fascinating but enigmatic figure. The man who epitomizes the Jewish participation in the Italian Renaissance left only

a few meager footprints in history. We know of Rossi only from his thirteen surviving publications and from the appearance of his name in the Mantuan archives. He was all but forgotten until 1876, when Samuel Naumbourg, Chief Cantor of Paris, published a modern edition of fifty-two of Rossi's compositions. For yet another hundred years Rossi would remain for the most part hidden in the shadows. Not until the past four decades has Rossi's music been extensively and seriously published, performed, recorded, and studied.

Rossi was a man who moved freely between two worlds. Because of his enormous talent, he was hired by the Gonzaga family to serve as violinist and composer for the ducal court. Vincenzo Gonzaga even exempted Rossi from wearing the yellow Jew-badge, and granted him the privilege of free passage between the ghetto and the ducal court. Rossi was an avant garde musician. He was the first composer to publish concerted madrigals (1600—five years before Monteverdi). He was the first composer to publish trio sonatas (1607—ten years before Marini). He was the only composer in Mantua to publish both instrumental and vocal music. His madrigals are based on texts by the ultra-modern mannerist poets.

But Rossi was equally at home in the narrower world of the Jewish community. He was active in the Jewish theater of Mantua as composer and performer. At the suggestion of Rabbi Leone da Modena, Rossi composed polyphonic settings of selected texts from the synagogue liturgy. Published in 1622/23, *Ha-Shirim Asher LiShlomo*, the first anthology of choral music for the synagogue, constituted a radical break with tradition. Bringing the styles of the madrigal, the *balletto*, and the church motet into the synagogue was a controversial move—one that incurred both approbation and censure. In an attempt to deflect the criticism, Rossi prefaced his publication with a lengthy responsum by Rabbi da Modena, justifying this radical practice.

But Rossi's music is not merely a historical curiosity, it's great art! Why has it taken so long for Rossi to be accorded his due? For several centuries after Rossi's death, as the Jews of Italy retreated into their ghettos, there was no context for his synagogue polyphony. Furthermore, in the non-Jewish world, for most of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries the styles of the pre-classical period were considered *passé*. But in the twentieth century there has been a growing understanding of and enthusiasm for "early music."

Harrán's recent monograph, the first full-length study of this innovative musician, is the culmination of nearly two decades of fastidious research and analysis.¹ Like a Sherlock Holmes, the author has pored over the sparse clues and immersed himself in his subject's environment. He expresses himself with authority in fields ranging from choreography, music, and poetry to Jewish history and practice. Harrán is a meticulous researcher: He has counted every measure in Rossi's oeuvre, sung every verse of Rossi's strophic canzonets, and analyzed every chord and contrapuntal device.

Harrán is careful about how he weighs his evidence. He will often suggest,

1. This publication coincides with the release of Harrán's equally fastidious edition of the complete works of Salamone Rossi in modern, scholarly editions.

but will rarely assert, a definitive conclusion. For example, the author states that it is a “reasonable possibility” that Rossi’s sacred music might have been performed in the setting of the Jewish confraternities (p. 217), and that Rossi “might have even tried out some of the songs in Sara [Copio]’s house” (p. 34). In response to a surprising document from 1645 in which Rabbi Nathaniel Trabotto asserts that his late wife had sung Rossi’s setting of the *Kedushah*, Harrán carefully posits, “But what if these sacred songs were *not* performed in prayer services?” (p. 24).

Harrán points out that the title of Rossi’s collection of synagogue music, *Ha-Shirim Asher LiShlomo*, is more than just a play on words. He reminds us of the well-established rabbinical convention of choosing titles which included the author’s name in a Biblical citation, such as Isaac Arama’s *Akedat Yitzhak* or Judah Moscato’s *Nefutsot Yehudah*. Harrán deduces that by identifying himself with this convention, Rossi hoped to balance his modernity with a grounding in tradition.

It is interesting to note the evolution in Harrán’s attitude towards Rossi’s innovations in synagogue music. In 1987 he wrote that Rossi and Modena “. . . wished to dispense with the conventions of Jewish prayer melody, replacing them by a music based on the best features of the Italian art music tradition.”² But in the present monograph he admits, “The polyphonic song . . . via the ‘Songs of Solomon,’ supplemented [the synagogue chant]—notice that I did not say ‘replaced it’, for Rossi’s intention was not to reform, but to expand the synagogue repertory . . .” (p. 254).

Given the exhaustive nature of this study, it seems odd to discover any lacunae. And yet Harrán misses a few connections between Rossi’s synagogue compositions and church music practice. In his analysis of Rossi’s use of triple meter (p. 226) he fails to mention that the *triplum* is often used in church motets to designate rejoicing and to refer to the trinity. Thus the shift to the quicker dance-like triple time in Psalm 128 underscores the joyous text, “your sons will be olive shoots around your table.”³ In *Adon Olam* the *triplum* appears twice, in both cases inspired by a quasi “trinity” of divine attributes: “And He was, and He is, and He shall be in glory” and “And He is my God, and my living Redeemer, and a Rock for my suffering in a day of distress.”

Harrán is fully cognizant of Rossi’s attraction to the *balletto*. It is curious that he misses the fact that the *Kaddish a5* is modeled on this popular Renaissance dance form. And while calling attention to Rossi’s unusually dark scoring of Psalm 137 (*Al Naharot Bavel*), he seems unaware that Rossi is merely following the accepted practice for composing church lamentations.⁴

But these are but a few tiny lapses in a work of careful and thorough scholarship. This is a fascinating study of a pre-modern Jew coping with the dialectic that we normally associate with modernity: preserving Jewish identity in a non-

2. Don Harrán, “Salamone Rossi: Jewish Musician in Renaissance Italy,” *Acta Musicologica* 59/1 (1987): 61.

3. Not, as Harrán suggests, reacting to the word “around” [saviv] to indicate circularity.

4. For a description of this practice, see Pietro Cerone’s 1613 handbook, *El melopeo y maestro*.

Jewish environment, communicating with both Jews and non-Jews, moving ahead with bold innovations in the context of ancient traditions.

Joshua R. Jacobson
Northeastern University
Boston, Massachusetts



Keith H. Pickus. *Constructing Modern Identities: Jewish University Students in Germany, 1815–1914*. Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 1999. 222 pp.

Given the centrality of education for all programs to transform Jewish society and ready the Jews for civic integration in Europe, the disproportionate use modernizing Jews actually made of non-Jewish education, and the particular zeal of German Jews for *Bildung*, Keith Pickus' book treats an important theme: the identity of Jewish students in German universities. It sets out to explore how young adults constructed a sense of self when loosed from familial moorings and grouped with non-Jewish peers in an era of unprecedented openness as well as continuing hostility, an important question in itself that is also significant because the university-educated elite were disproportionately likely to lead or speak for the German Jewish community in its main defense organization (the *Central Verein*, led overwhelmingly by men trained in law) in the rabbinate, in welfare institutions and in political groups.

Pickus uses some important archival sources: student publications and memoirs (particularly the holdings of the Leo Baeck Institute, New York). He makes a number of valuable observations: that organized anti-Jewish activity in German universities faced opposition, and not only from Jews; that despite the widespread hostility Jewish students faced, those who founded and joined Jewish student organizations were not simply responding defensively to Jew-hatred but were part of a broader, affirmative struggle to create a German-Jewish identity in this era. He looks at students who joined or founded a wide range of organizations, from dueling societies to academic ones, Jewish and nondenominational, and rightly grounds the impetus of Jews—men, and once they were admitted to universities, women—to found or join such organizations in the German proclivity, in and outside the university, in a desire for “active associational life” (p. 87, see too p. 145). Thus, even the founding of Jewish associations, far from demonstrating simple defensiveness or separateness, was an expression of acculturation, of “Germanness”—at the same time, Pickus insists, that it was a venue for asserting Jewishness. In this, he usefully applies categories of analysis developed by Shulamit Bolkov and David Sorkin.

The book as a whole has a number of problems. For most of it, we lack a sense of who Pickus' subjects are. He writes of many organizations without telling us about their founders or joiners: where they were from; what disciplines they studied; their religious affiliations, if any; or how, if at all, their student activism

carried over into their later lives. Except for the photograph that adorns the book, the groups largely lack a human face; the book is less about students and their identities than about organizations and their positions, treated in rather mechanistic progression. The lack of certain quantitative data is a persistent frustration: How many members did the various student groups have (especially the Jewish or Jewish-dominated groups, e.g., *Kartell Convent*, *Kadimah*, *Young Israel*, *Jewish National Association*)? Pickus provides some tables for years and associations in which the number of Jewish university students was minuscule but does not provide them for the main years and organizations of his study. One wonders what percentage of Jewish university students (per university, overall) joined Jewish or other associations, and how this compared with the membership rates of Catholics or Protestants or religiously unaffiliated students. Pickus tells us (p. 113) that more than fifty percent of the total student body remained “unaffiliated,” yet he does not tell us if the same statistic held true for Jewish students, explicitly avoiding the important question of whether Jews tended to affiliate more, less, or in the same proportion as non-Jewish students (p. 188, n. 1). Moreover, he tells us that Jewish students who did not join “Jewish fraternal” organizations tended to join “a scholarly association” (p. 128), leading this reader to wonder whether the distinction between type of organization was less important than the act of joining or creating some form of association.

There is a narrowness of focus that borders on the pedantic. Pickus discusses some student groups that had a heavy east European Jewish component and notes that “Jewish students from eastern Europe greatly contributed to the creation of the first national Jewish student association in Germany” (p. 104). Yet, astonishingly for a period when east European Jewish influence on German Jewish culture was so important, he ignores the eastern students—who were, after all, “Jewish University Students in Germany,” too—and proceeds to write about only the German-born ones (or, in the case of the Association of Russian Jewish Academics, one). He tells us that one student group in Berlin founded by east European Jewish students eventually became indigenous, but he does not explore why and how this passage came about. He mentions the important Biennese Jewish student organization, *Kadimah*, yet he does not study it as a parallel phenomenon or model. All this is an overly narrow approach to the question of German Jewish identity in the Wilhelminian era, which, despite the book’s announced timeline, is in fact about the Wilhelminian years. The memoirs he uses are analyzed consecutively in the fashion of *explication de texte*, rather than treated thematically or integrated into his narrative about the organizations, which might thereby have been humanized.

Pickus makes a number of assertions that his analysis has not supported and misses crucial connections. He repeatedly states that various student groups promoted Jewish identity, yet he himself illustrates how vacuous a sense of “Jewishness” many of these groups had. Indeed, the struggle to identify the *content* of Jewishness was much of what this era was about, for Germans as for all modernizing Jews. Rather than protest overmuch for his subjects by asserting that they had a clearer vision than they in fact possessed (or is, perhaps, fair to expect at that point), Pickus should have acknowledged and problematized this question and contextualized it in the larger struggles of modern German Jewish culture. Pickus

says (pp. 95–96) that the members of a Jewish student group in Breslau adumbrated a definition of dual German and Jewish identity that would later become the credo of the *Central Verein*, yet he does not elaborate on the significance of this connection. It is not even clear he is claiming there was one: Were the founders of the CV aware of and did they draw upon this precedent, or had this kind of thinking about German Jewish identity become broad currency in German Jewry by the time this student group as well as the CV were formed? Pickus does not even tell readers what the CV was. He notes but does not explore the similarity between the arguments of two student organizations about Jewish national identity and the split on this same question between the CV and the German Zionist Organization, thereby missing another opportunity to have shown the larger implications of his subject.

Pickus' writing is clear, although there are some hackneyed images that should have been cut. He asserts that "a social history of German Jewry is still lacking," (p. 108) a curious statement given the work of Jacob Toury, Monika Richarz, Steven Lowenstein, and Marion Kaplan, among others, as well as the recent multivolume series edited by Michael Meyer, which pays serious attention to social history.

In sum, there is value in this work and, at the same time, a need for its broader implications to be drawn so that we may come away not just with facts about Jewish university students but with new knowledge about German Jewry and Jewish modernity.

Shulamit Magnus
Oberlin College
Oberlin, Ohio



Henry Abramson. *A Prayer for the Government: Ukrainians and Jews in Revolutionary Times, 1917–1920*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press for the Ukrainian Research Institute and Center for Jewish Studies, Harvard University, 1999. xix, 255 pp.

Henry Abramson has chosen an appropriately ambiguous title for his study of the short-lived alliance between Ukrainian and Jewish nationalists, a rapprochement which owed both its hopeful beginning and its violent end to the fate of Ukrainian independence in the crucible of war and revolution that brought down the tsarist empire. Revising the pogrom paradigm prevalent in much of the scholarship on Ukrainian-Jewish relations, Abramson argues that following the fall of the Romanovs leaders of Jewish parties justifiably invested their hopes for civic and political emancipation in the autonomous regional government of the Ukrainian Rada, formed in 1917 under the liberal auspices of Russia's newly established Provisional Government. Ironically, the dream died a brutal death in the course of its own realization. The Russian withdrawal under the terms of the treaty of Brest-Litovsk opened a window of opportunity for the fulfillment of Ukrainian national

aspirations. The ensuing period between the German withdrawal and the defeat of the Ukrainian National Republic by the Bolsheviks saw the transfer of power to a conservative regime, increasingly beleaguered by the chaos of Civil War, socio-economic dislocation, and the excesses of local Cossack rule. In the duration of the short and troubled existence of the Republic, its new government, headed by Symon Petliura, a man whose name still carries its association with Ukrainian anti-semitism, proved unable to exercise effective control over the violence raging throughout the former Pale of Settlement.

Using new archival evidence, Abramson shows that Jews in Petliura's Ukraine had less to fear from the government than from a lack thereof. In a situation of almost total anarchy, contemporary Jews—unlike their conspiracy-minded descendants—associated the attainment of Ukrainian independence with the fateful absence of law and order rather than with an ideologically motivated and centrally planned program of mass murder carried out by Petliura's willing executioners. In 1917, Jews had every reason to pray for the fledgling government of a newly autonomous Ukraine. By 1919, they would find themselves directing their prayers for protection to a successor state which could hardly guarantee life and limb, let alone ensure the civic and political equality of its Jewish constituency.

Stressing the links between the politics of the Jewish-Ukrainian honeymoon of 1917 and the catastrophic turn of events in 1919, Abramson dislodges anti-semitism from its pride of place in the oft-recounted tale of the Ukrainian peasant as the perpetrator and the Jewish townsman as the victim of a self-perpetuating and unrelenting wave of pogroms. Abramson attempts instead to tell a different story, one in which the Ukrainian and the Jewish versions of an emblematic historical moment are inextricably intertwined. For Abramson, the rapid political mobilization of the *shtetl*—the proverbial sleepy backwater of Jewish Eastern Europe—marked an important moment in the democratization of Ukrainian national politics and in the “Ukrainization” of the Jews, a process cut short by the exigencies of war and the radicalization of nationalism from below. In his most compelling chapter, devoted to a painstaking assessment of the character and scope of pogrom violence, Abramson carefully distinguishes between pogrom rhetoric—almost exclusively political and aimed entirely at the “Jew-Bolshevik”—and the nature of the attacks. Motivated by the desire for plunder and often directed at non-Jewish communities that lay directly in the path of destruction, most pogroms were rooted in the particular pressures of local front-line conditions rather than in the malicious designs of Petliura and his government.

Abramson's impressive command of Ukrainian and Jewish sources lends itself to a critical shift toward the understanding of modern ethnic conflict as a radically contingent phenomenon rather than an escalation of venerable “historic hatreds.” However, the conceptual framework of the argument strains the reader's capacity to appreciate the nuance and detail that went into the making of this potentially groundbreaking study. The introductory chapter opens with a slice-of-life description of “Ukrainian” Jewish culture which seems to float in a kind of sociological haze. A breathless survey of Jewish politics follows, as if from nowhere. Evidence regarding linguistic orientation and economic structure remains similarly unintegrated into any larger claim that might contextualize the historical expe-

rience of so-called “Ukrainian” Jewry. This raises the most methodologically unsettling question left unanswered by Abramson’s study: Before the Ukrainian revolution raised the stakes attendant on the assertion of national identity, what was Ukrainian about Ukrainian Jewry? Notwithstanding the influence of Ukrainian aspect on Yiddish verb construction, Abramson’s evidence for the existence of an enduring Ukrainian self-consciousness among the Jews who lived for centuries along the west bank of the Dnieper remains thin. Compromising his own position on the embrace of Ukrainian national aspirations as a dramatic break in the history of the region’s Jewish political culture, Abramson foregrounds his thesis in categories of self-ascription, the stability of which his evidence thoroughly undermines. In fact, the book chronicles the failure of the Ukrainian revolution to transform the Jews of Ukraine—along with many of their non-Jewish neighbors—into Ukrainians. Abramson’s trenchant analysis of the pogroms of 1919 renders the tragic consequences of this failure painfully clear.

Olga Litvak
Princeton University
Princeton, New Jersey



Vicky Caron. *Uneasy Asylum: France and the Jewish Refugee Crisis, 1933–1942*. Stanford Studies in Jewish History and Culture. Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1999. 730 pp.

In this balanced and careful study, Vicki Caron examines the evolution of French policy toward central European Jewish refugees between 1933 and 1942 from three interrelated perspectives: governmental policy, public opinion, and Jewish organizational responses. For each of these themes, Professor Caron offers a comprehensive analysis and important new insights on the connections between policies and attitudes at the end of Third Republic and during the first two years of the Vichy regime, 1940–1942.

In their pathfinding 1981 book, *Vichy France and the Jews*, Michael Marrus and Robert Paxton charged that Vichy antisemitic legislation, and apparent public support for it, logically grew out of the hardening policies and attitudes toward refugees during the 1930s. While Caron’s portrayal of pre-Vichy policy and public opinion will hardly give comfort to defenders of the late Third Republic, she prefers the image of a twisted and open road. Pressed by an insistent economic campaign of middle-class pressure groups, the right-leaning Radical governments from 1933 to 1936 instigated a police crackdown on refugees. The government also placed occupational quotas on foreign artisans and implemented a ten-year waiting period before even naturalized citizens could practice law or medicine. Although not explicitly antisemitic, these measures targeted occupations practiced by Jewish refugees and reflected the attitudes of many that this “invasion” of Jewish refugees brought unfair and frequently corrupt competition.

After two years of the Popular Front government, the right-leaning Radical

government under Daladier resumed power in 1938 and the situation of Jewish refugees again deteriorated sharply. Caron has made excellent use of the Foreign Ministry archives to show the nefarious influence of Georges Bonnet, Daladier's xenophobic and antisemitic foreign minister. Confronted with a substantial increase of refugees in 1938, Bonnet and Daladier implemented harsh measures to stem the flow of these "waste products" from Germany, Austria, and Poland. Through an exhaustive examination of journals and the press Caron also demonstrates that the xenophobia and antisemitism that in the early 1930s had been the reserve of the extreme right now spread to broad stretches of moderate public opinion. This included much of the so-called moderate clergy, which some historians have argued had become philosemitic in the 1930s. Increasingly fearful of an impending war and encroaching socialism and communism, many Frenchmen saw foreign Jews as warmongers and Communists. "Better Hitler than Stalin" became the popular slogan of the day. When the war broke out in September, 1939, the French government ignored the opportunity to enlist the willing refugees into the army and instead interned tens of thousands as enemy aliens in over eighty internment camps. Nevertheless, Caron maintains, the path to Vichy was not direct. In early 1940, the French government, in response to foreign and domestic pressure, improved conditions in the camps; by May it had released all but a few thousand of the refugees. Tragically, the government re-interned the refugees when Germany invaded Western Europe.

Caron demonstrates, however, that there was another France, mostly on the Left, that was sympathetic to the plight of the refugees. Refugee supporters mounted public campaigns in 1934 and 1935 defending France's tradition of asylum, and when the Left came to power in May, 1936, the Popular Front government eased restrictions and promised new hope. Caron disagrees with those scholars who have argued that the Popular Front government offered much goodwill but little practical help. She maintains that the Popular Front government was unable to abrogate earlier restrictive legislation because of hostile public attitudes toward refugees and the vitriolic campaign against the Jewish Prime Minister, Leon Blum, which was organized by right-wing groups. Nevertheless, Caron demonstrates that the Popular Front government did significantly ameliorate the plight of refugees already in France. She also gives high marks for Blum's efforts to circumvent protectionist attitudes by promoting settlement of refugees in French colonies and in agricultural colonies in the southwest of France.

Caron positions herself between those who condemn native French Jewish organizations for not having helped Jewish refugees and those who argue that they did all that was feasible given public opinion, government policy, and the financial and administrative challenges resulting from the flood of refugees. Caron divides the French Jewish response into two periods: 1933 to 1936, when Jacques Helbronner and the *Comité National* directed and pursued a hard-line policy toward Jewish refugees; and 1936 to 1940, when the leadership—was replaced by Raymond-Raoul Lambert and the *Comité d'Assistance aux Réfugiés* (CAR)—which supported a far more compassionate policy. For the earlier period, Caron agrees with Maurice Rajsfus's charges that the native Jewish leadership failed to provide adequate philanthropy and refused to press the French government for a more liberal

refugee policy. She points out that Helbronner, at that time a member of the *Conseil d'état* and the government's representative to the League of Nations High Commission on Refugees, shared many of the negative stereotypes toward Jewish refugees and even pressed the government for a more restrictive refugee policy.

From the beginning, however, there were native Jewish leaders and organizations who supported a more tolerant government policy. When the Popular Front came to power, this more liberal leadership—under the sympathetic direction of Lambert and the newly organized CAR—replaced Helbronner as the spokespersons for the native Jewish community. Lambert represented a younger generation of Jewish leaders who sought a more even balance between their obligations to French national interests and concerns for their Jewish compatriots. Lambert and CAR increased aid to the refugees and immigrants, helped them to find jobs, and lobbied the government to regularize the status of those already in France. After the fall of the Popular Front government, they also campaigned against the policies of Daladier and Bonnet.

Caron claims that by 1940 the former ideological gap between the native Jewish leadership and the Gourevitch Committee, whose leadership came from foreign Jews in France, had been substantially closed. While these chapters on the Jewish response offer a more nuanced view of the Jewish leadership than earlier scholarship, I believe that Caron underplays the degree of tension that remained between native Jews and foreign Jews. Studies on French Jewry during the Holocaust by Jacques Adler, a moderate critic of the native leadership, and even Richard Cohen, a moderate defender, indicate that the distrust between native and foreign Jewish organizations persisted and inhibited rescue and relief efforts during the critical Vichy years.

In an important final chapter Professor Caron cautions against oversimplifying the parallels between Vichy and late Third Republic policies and attitudes. Third Republic policies toward refugees were not primarily or overtly anti-semitic, nor did Third Republic governments place occupational quotas on native Jews. Vichy even innovated when it came to the internment camps by explicitly targeting Jews, including many legal immigrants. Even in regard to public opinion, where Caron finds more continuity, she carefully distinguishes Third Republic opinion by pointing out that it always included strong public voices in sympathy with the refugees, and that even as late as the winter of 1940 majority opinion shifted in favor of more humanitarian policies.

While Caron is certainly right to indicate these differences, there is a curious paradox in her mitigated defense of the Third Republic in this chapter. For Caron, the period 1933 to 1945 marked the last battle in France's long civil war that began in 1789 over what kind of country it should be: a liberal, democratic, secular republic open to debate and economic modernization or an authoritarian, hierarchical, and Christian country opposed to modernization. She maintains that since Jews had become the most prominent symbol of the first model, the Jewish Question emerged as the central theme and barometer of that identity struggle in the 1930s and 1940s. Caron places herself in the middle, between those earlier post-war defenders of French republicanism who argued that Vichy was not the real France and more recent historians and critics who point to the continuities between

the late Third Republic and Vichy. Yet, the massive weight of Caron's evidence on public opinion, and to a lesser extent on governmental policy, leads one to conclude that France of the 1930s was gravely besieged by the forces of intolerance and reaction, if not captured by them entirely. Caron's important study shows, albeit sometimes grudgingly, that the step from the Third Republic to Vichy, while not inevitable, was shorter than many historians have been willing to acknowledge.

Sanford Gutman
SUNY College at Cortland
Cortland, New York



Eli Faber. *Jews, Slaves, and the Slave Trade: Setting the Record Straight*. Reappraisals in Jewish Social and Intellectual History. New York: New York University Press, 1998. xvii, 366.

First published in October, 1991, the Nation of Islam's anonymously authored *The Secret Relationship Between Blacks and Jews* has spawned a veritable cottage industry of scholarship addressing its central claim that Jewish merchants "dominated" the Atlantic slave trade.¹ One can only wonder whether, someday soon, there may be an essay or book refuting the Farrakhanites' tract for every Jew who ever traded a slave.

Eli Faber's *Jews, Slaves, and the Slave Trade* is the latest, least polemical, and arguably most important contribution to the new literature on Jews and the slave trade. An indefatigable researcher into the history of Anglo-American Jewry, Faber deploys his mastery of archival materials on both sides of the Atlantic to reinforce the conclusion, already reached by Jacob Rader Marcus over a quarter of a century ago, that the Jewish role in the trade was minimal. He breaks new ground by showing not only that British and American Jews were marginal players in the Atlantic slave trade, but that this odious traffic did not contribute significantly to the economic development of either old world or new world Jewry.

Faber's focus is on Great Britain's trans-Atlantic commerce during its pre-eminent period as a slave trading power. Between the late seventeenth and early nineteenth centuries, nearly half of the almost seven million slaves transported from Africa to the Americas were carried on British ships. Faber uses Spanish and Portuguese surnames on British merchant lists to identify Sephardim. He cross-checks less distinctive patronymics against synagogue rolls, naturalization lists, testamentary records, tombstones, and genealogical studies to confirm the Jewish identity of other, often Ashkenazic families. His comprehensive samples for both

1. See, for example, David Brion Davis, "Jews in the Slave Trade," *Culturefront*, 1 (Fall, 1992): 42–45; Davis, "The Slave Trade and the Jews," *New York Review*, 41 (December 22, 1994): 14–16; Seymour Drescher, "The Role of Jews in the Transatlantic Slave Trade," *Immigrants and Minorities*, 12 (1993): 113–125; Harold Brackman, *Ministry of Lies: The Truth Behind The Nation of Islam's "The Secret Relationship Between Blacks and Jews"* (New York: Four Walls Eight Windows, 1994); Saul S. Friedman, *Jews and the American Slave Trade* (New Brunswick, NJ: Transaction Publishers, 1998).

the home country and its colonies reveal the roles of Jews as investors in slave trading companies, owners of slave ships, slave retailing factors, and employers of slave labor. From Bristol to Barbados and Nevis to Newport, the general picture that emerges amidst regional variations is of very limited Jewish participation.

Jewish merchants in Great Britain were extensively involved in international trade in textiles, gold, silver, and diamonds, but not slaves. None invested in the Royal African Company until 1691, two decades after it was chartered. Subsequently, they preferred investing in the Bank of England and the East India Company. Jews do not seem to have been among primary owners of, or even consistent minor investors in, the slave fleets of London, Bristol, and Liverpool. Overall, Jewish involvement in Britain's eighteenth-century slave trade was "minute in the extreme."

In the western hemisphere, individual Jewish firms, such as Lindo, Aguilar & Dias in Jamaica, emerged as important slave retailers during the 1780s, but they were the exception to the rule. Between 1742 and 1769, of 149,705 African slaves imported into Jamaica, only 665—four tenths of one percent—were carried on ships owned by Jews. The Jewish role in the re-export trade of so-called "refuse Negroes"—ill or infirm slaves who were rehabilitated for resale to the Spanish Main—accounted for about six percent of such slaves sales during most of the eighteenth century. Yet it was enough to foster an enduring image of Jews as the "used car dealers" of the slave trade. In terms of slave ownership, the Jewish share on Britain's Caribbean islands varied between one and two percent. In the plantation economy, which employed over nine-tenths of the slaves, Jewish masters were almost unknown, though Jewish traders were accused of corrupting field hands by trafficking with them in stolen goods. In the cities, Jews were as likely or even more likely to own slaves as non-Jews, but Jewish owners typically owned fewer slaves than their non-Jewish counterparts. Jewish masters were also credited with giving their slaves Saturdays off in addition to Sundays.

In the mainland colonies that matured into the United States, the preeminent slaving entrepot, Newport, Rhode Island, ranked a distant fourth behind London, Liverpool, and Bristol, which sent in excess of 10,000 slave trading voyages to Africa during the eighteenth century. Jewish merchants, notably Aaron Lopez and his father-in-law, Jacob Rodrigues Rivera, were responsible for 34 of Newport's over 900 slave trading voyages—under four percent—between 1709 and 1807. Slave trading has left an indelible imprint on Lopez's reputation, but it should be borne in mind that only ten percent of his seaborne ventures involved slaves.

Faber does not address the question of motivation. Given their proficiency in Spanish and Portuguese, and their network connections with the New Christians of Latin America, why did the Jewish merchants of the British Empire and the budding United States fail to carve out a larger niche for themselves in the Atlantic slave trade? Were they inhibited solely by economic calculations of risk vs. reward? Or did ethical scruples also play a role? We know that by the 1780s the manumission societies of Philadelphia and New York attracted some Jewish support.

Despite unanswered questions, Faber's book is a methodologically innovative, exhaustively researched case study of Jewish participation in the most important national branch of the Atlantic slave trade. Future researchers can use it as a model for studying the involvement of ethno-religious groups in varied slave-trade con-

texts, with the caveat that the value of studies singling out Jews may have reached the point of diminishing returns.

Harold Brackman
Simon Wiesenthal Center's Museum of Tolerance
Los Angeles, California



Arthur A. Goren. *The Politics and Public Culture of American Jews: The Modern Jewish Experience*. Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1999. 274 pp.

This volume is a collection of ten studies previously published by the author. Its theme is the “unfolding communal life of American Jews—the way Jews transplanted, changed and invented their social institutions and ideologies and created over time an impressive organizational culture” (p. 9). Each chapter, originally conceived as an independent article, has substantial depth and a richness of historical detail. The volume is unified by a sustained, if prismatic, attention to two topics. The first is the internal (that is, Jewish communal) and external (that is, civic and American) politics of twentieth-century American Jews. The second is what the author calls their “public culture.” By public culture he refers to the large public events such as mass rallies, funerals, parades, and pageants that marked American Jewish life, particularly in New York, in the first half of the twentieth century. Public culture provided an expressive metier for socialist or Zionist politics. It gave expression to the collective identities of Jewish subgroups or, on occasion, to the entire community. The treatment of public culture is reminiscent of George Mosse’s work on the role of public rituals in European and Jewish nationalism.

The materials that the author treats are highly diverse. The first part of the book focuses on the politics and public culture of the immigrant and second generations up until World War II. The author explores how the immigrants negotiated their newfound “Americanness” through an analysis of the ideology of pluralism. He analyzes Jewish electoral politics in a case study of the congressional elections of 1908 and 1910, where a Socialist candidate, Meyer London, was elected from the Lower East Side. An especially engaging chapter considers the political orientation—and skills—of Orthodox Jews, as refracted through their Yiddish newspapers. Far from being political naifs, some Orthodox Jewish leaders were serious actors in national and municipal politics, had high-level access to the political echelon, including the president (at a 1912 fundraiser for the Daughters of Jacob Old Age Home, the guest of honor was William Howard Taft), and were trusted supporters of the Republican party. Although this chapter does not present itself as a background for current Orthodox and ultra-Orthodox political activism, it helps, at least inadvertently, to set it in context. In general, however, the subject matter of the first part of the book seems resolutely antique. Neither Jewish socialists nor the mass events carefully described in chapters on funerals and mass meetings have much resonance in post-war Jewish America. It is unclear whether Israel Day parades or the mass meetings that took place after the assassination of Yitzhak Ra-

bin descend from these early events or whether the political culture of American Jews has so changed that the comparison is at best superficial.

In the second part of the book, a political culture more akin to our own comes into view. Charting the post-war Jewish scene, the author considers how the early fragmentation of the community (over socialism, Zionism, religion, and class) gave way to greater cohesion, the latter brought about by the twin challenges of helping the survivors of the Shoah and supporting the State of Israel. The largely consensual nature of these urgent tasks called for a rational, professional, and managerial style. The great leaders of the prior half century gave way to effective administrators. The author suggests that vigorous partisanship is an existence condition for statesmanlike leadership. In a chapter on the “Golden Decade” of 1945–1955, the author analyzes the consolidation of the liberal politics that continues to characterize American Jewish political culture to the present. American Jews found an elective affinity between their own liberal inclinations and the “aggressive liberalism” (p. 188) rising in American political culture. Exactly what accounts for the presence of this liberalism among American Jews in the first place is, however, insufficiently explored. The closest we get to an answer is the assertion that “To a considerable degree, the Red Scare hastened the political integration of American Jews. It greatly weakened Jewish radicalism, fortified the liberalism of “the vital center” and drew American Jews, as never before, into a whirl of “American” issues” (p. 201). The book concludes with a fascinating look into the contentious inner workings of the American Jewish Committee over the limits of liberalism in the face of nascent multiculturalism.

This topical survey cannot do justice to the subtle interplay between the chapters or to the wealth of insight and perspective that the author brings to the Jewish experience of civic and political engagement. On a critical note, one might wonder why the author does not make use of the concept of “political culture” rather than the more ambiguous “public culture” or the somewhat over-extended “politics.” Unlike an empirical study of American Jewish political behavior such as we expect from a political scientist, this is really a book about norms, worldviews, symbols, cultural trends, and moods. These features are captured by the analytic concept of political culture. It is somewhat perplexing that the author did not make use of it.

Alan Mittleman
Muhlenberg College
Allentown, Pennsylvania



Eliezer Bashan, *The Anglican Mission and Moroccan Jewry in the Nineteenth Century*. Ramat-Gan: Bar-Ilan University Press, 1999. 204 pp. (Hebrew).

In the past three decades several scholarly books were written about Moroccan Jewry highlighting the impact of modernization during the nineteenth century until the inauguration of the colonial era. These studies concentrate on modern secular education propagated by the Alliance Israelite Universelle (AIU

hereafter), the Anglo-Jewish Association, European consular schools, and the Alliance Française. They focus on French and other European acculturation, Muslim-Jewish relations, and social stratification.¹ Most of these books mention briefly the *oeuvre* of the Franciscan Catholic and British or American Protestant missions. Few delve into the activities, agenda, and caliber of activists who managed their affairs,² dismissing these as marginal in the overall daily picture of Jewish communal life.

Eliezer Bashan's monograph on the Anglican Mission is the first attempt to lend some significance to the programs of its envoys among Moroccan Jews. It shows how in addition to their policies aiming at religious conversions, the missionaries emerged as agents of modernization. While missionary activities attributed to Catholics and Protestants were evident in parts of precolonial Morocco as far back as the early nineteenth century, important inroads became noticeable only since the 1870s. It was in 1875–1900 that schools, clinics, adult education, dissemination of the New Testament, and communal work became essential features of missionary zeal. Only in the wake of the AIU's expansion, as well as subsequent initiatives of European Jewry to improve social conditions in the Moroccan communities, did the missionaries' efforts gradually come to nought.

As Bashan demonstrates, the leading Protestant missions active in the Moroccan communities included the British and Foreign Bible Society, North African Mission, Southern Morocco Mission of Scotland, Midway Mission to the Jew, Presbyterian Church of England, and London Society for Promoting Christianity amongst the Jews. Whereas the Anglican trend among the Protestant missions emerged as the dominant one, the Methodists and Presbyterians, too, enjoyed some measure of influence. The main bases of operations and the places where the presence of the missionaries could be felt were the major cities of Essaouira, Rabat, and Casablanca on the Atlantic coast, Tangier near the Straits of Gibraltar, and inland communities of Fez, Meknes, Sefrou, and Marrakesh. The London Society for the Promoting of Christianity amongst the Jews, with its headquarters in Essaouira, is the focal point of Bashan's study. He is also highly informative about one of this Anglican Society's most controversial emissaries, James B. Ginsburg, who spent a total of eight years on the Moroccan Jewish scene.

Though not a full British citizen, the Russian-born Ginsburg enjoyed British consular protection when he engaged at missionary endeavors in Algeria and Morocco. Operating out of Essaouira beginning in 1875, Ginsburg extended his work to additional communities from the Atlantic coast to the Atlas Mountains. Like other heads of Protestant missions in the Maghreb who had converted to Christianity,

1. Among these studies see: Michel Abitbol, *Témoins et acteurs: les Corcos et l'histoire du Maroc contemporain* (Jerusalem: Institut Ben-Zvi, 1977); Pierre Guillen, *L'Allemagne et le Maroc de 1870 à 1905*. (Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 1967); Michael M. Laskier, *The Alliance Israélite Universelle and the Jewish Communities of Morocco: 1862–1962* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1983); Jean-Louis Miegé, *Le Maroc et l'Europe: 1830–1894*, 3 vols. (Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 1961–3); Daniel J. Schroeter, *Merchants of Essaouira* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1988); Reeva S. Simon, Michael M. Laskier, Sara Reguer (eds.), *The Jews of the Middle East and North Africa: The Modern Period* (New York: Columbia University Press [forthcoming]).

2. One of the rare exceptions is Jean-Louis Miegé's "Les missions protestantes au Maroc, 1875–1905," *Hesperis*, 42 (1955): 153–186.

Ginsburg attracted much attention among the Jews and incurred the wrath of local rabbis. Although there were few converts to Christianity in the communities, the Jewish masses, in part, evinced some interest in the London Society's programs. The poor of Essaouira and nearby towns frequented its boys' and girls' schools and solicited its medical and social services. One of Bashan's interesting points revolves around the cordial rapport between ordinary Jews and the Society's staff. The former appreciated the services rendered by the missionaries at a time when communal institutions and the affluent elite displayed indifference to their needs. On the other hand, most rabbis, albeit not all of them, sought to sabotage Ginsburg's efforts everywhere by fomenting anti-missionary activities that sometimes bordered on violence. Ginsburg himself was once expelled from Morocco owing to political pressure imposed on the British government by the local Muslim authorities and rabbis.

It is true that the British Minister Plenipotentiary at Tangier as well as the British consuls in Essaouira and elsewhere interceded to impose sanctions on Anglican and Presbyterian emissaries who alienated local rabbis and Muslim *ulama*. Nevertheless, Bashan reveals that these consuls often facilitated the work of the missions by teaching English and other subjects at their schools. Just as the AIU schools promoted French cultural influence in the precolonial and colonial periods, the same held true for the British missionary schools or the Franciscan missions. The British expressed eagerness to spread the English language by all means among the indigenous populations while the Franciscans with the aid of Spain's consular services extolled Spanish.

The work of the Anglican missionaries among Jews and Muslims reached its zenith at the beginning of the twentieth century before witnessing a precipitous decline. One of the reasons for rabbinical support of the AIU network had to do with the rabbis' concern over the missions' potential influence over the impoverished socioeconomic stratum. The rabbis were now inclined to tolerate girls' education at the AIU so long as the missionaries were prevented from placing them under their wings. As Morocco after 1900 was coming under French control, the AIU acquired a virtual monopoly over modern education in the communities. Notwithstanding, the missions will be remembered more as pioneering catalysts for modernization and social service rather than as forces seeking religious conversions.

This monograph is a vital contribution to the history of Middle Eastern and Maghrebi Jewry in the nineteenth century. Despite some unnecessary repetitiveness in contents and typographical errors, not to mention the erroneous claim on pp. 18–19 that Casablanca did not have a *mellah* (Jewish quarter), Bashan exploited his primary sources well, mainly the records of the British Foreign Office and the Protestant societies' bulletins. Furthermore, it would have been helpful for the Hebrew reader to translate the documents on pp. 145–178 into Hebrew, instead of presenting them with brief Hebrew summaries.

Michael M. Laskier
Ashqalon Regional College of Bar-Ilan University
Ashqalon, Israel

Moshe Pelli. *Kinds of Genre in Haskalah Literature: Types and Topics*. Israel: Hakkibutz Hameuchad Publishing House, 1999. xxv (English), 357 pp. (Hebrew).

Moshe Pelli, one of the major scholars of Hebrew *Haskalah* (Enlightenment) literature in our time and one of the major contributors to Hebrew culture in America, presents in this book the fruits of his twenty-five years of study of the major genres in this literature. Previously published articles have been rewritten by Pelli for this book.

One tendency of *Haskalah* literature was to adopt Judaic genres, such as the fable and the religious disputation, which existed in earlier Hebrew literature before the *Haskalah* and were continued by the *Haskalah*. Another trend was to use as a model genres that prevailed in European literatures in order to revitalize Hebrew belles lettres. Pelli presents an overview and a detailed discussion of the unique features of each one of these genres in order to present *Haskalah* as a modern, European-like phenomenon.

Each of the ten chapters of the book is dedicated to one genre—biography, autobiography, utopia, satire, dialogues of the dead, fable, religious disputation, the epistolary story, the imaginary dialogue and the travelogue—though it is clear that several genres may be traced in a single literary work. These genres helped to promote the aims and ideology of the *Haskalah* and provided new modes of literary expression.

Two works of Isaac Euchel present the genre of **biography**: his biography of Mendelssohn, published as a book in 1789, and his biography of Isaac Abravanel. Mendelssohn is portrayed as a model of the ideal modern Jew, embodying *Haskalah* and Judaism. Abravanel, who achieved balance between Judaism and the culture around him, is also presented as an exemplary figure for the Maskilim. The genre of **autobiography** is represented by Mordechai Aharon Ginzburg's *Aviezer*, written in the 1820s and published in 1864. Ginzburg employs a variety of literary devices such as parables, epigrams, digressions, anecdotes and didactic allusions in his story, and strives for truth and criticism that will benefit the society.

The genre of **utopia** attracted the *Haskalah* writers who wanted to draw a new, ideal type of Jewish society; the utopian genre made it possible for them to portray it as if it actually existed. Euchel's "Igrot Meshulam" and Isaac Satanow's *Divre Rivot* represents this genre. "Igrot Meshulam" is an epistolary story, satire and utopia. Euchel viewed the limited observance of the Marranos in Spain, the aesthetic aspects of the Catholic worship services, and the progressive life of Italian Jews as utopian models for secular Jewish life and alternatives to traditional Judaism. Satanow's *Divre Rivot* portrays a utopian society in which the king's reforms of Jewish life change human relations, economy, education, and society; the changes resonate with the *Haskalah*'s ideals.

Pelli meticulously presents the **satiric** modes of Saul Berlin's 1794 *Ktav Yosher*, including its structure, figurative language, and secularization of sacred idioms, as well as its use of irony, sarcasm, invective, obscenity, hyperbole, incongruity, reductio ad absurdum, caricature, wit, and humor. *Ktav Yosher* was written in defense of Naphtali Herz Wessely's treatise on education and displays the degenerating state of the Jewish society. When Pelli analyzes Erter's satire "Gilgul

Nefesh” he also offers a re-evaluation of Erter’s literary achievements. In this work the protagonist undergoes transformations into nine human characters and eight animals, through which the author relates to the problems of Jewish life.

The **dialogues of the dead** genre was adopted by several *Haskalah* writers who were attracted to its dramatic debate and search for truth of historical and contemporary figures in the afterlife. Pelli analyzes the satiric dialogue of Aaron Wolfsohn’s “Sihah Ba-Eretz Ha-Hayyim,” published in 1794, and Tuvyah Feder’s *Qol Mehatzetzim*, published in 1853 and 1875. In Wolfsohn’s dialogues, the discussion is between Maimonides, Mendelssohn, and a Polish rabbi. Wolfsohn presents contemporary topics, especially the controversies between the *Haskalah* and its opponents. The participants in Feder’s dialogue are historical figures and major figures of the *Haskalah*, who attack Mendel Lefin’s translation of the Book of Proverbs into Yiddish. The choice of Yiddish rather than German seemed to Feder an act of disloyalty to the *Haskalah*’s dedication to high standards of culture.

The didactic nature of the **fable**, its entertaining aspect, its search for truth, and its compactness explain why *Haskalah* writers liked this genre. In his 1793 or 1794 *Divre Rivot*, Isaac Satanow adapted the style of **religious disputation** of Judah Halevi’s *Kuzari* and used various literary devices to achieve dramatic tension. The first **epistolary fiction** writing in modern Hebrew literature is Isaac Euchel’s “Igrot Meshulam,” published anonymously in the Hebrew monthly *Hameassef*. It includes various fictional letters with different opinions but supports the ideas of the *Haskalah*. Pelli disagrees with the opinion that Euchel’s work is a “free translation” of Montesquieu’s *Lettres persanes* and substantiates his view that the author of “Igrot Meshulam” is Euchel, who followed Montesquieu’s use of the epistolary genre but expressed his own personal experience.

The **imaginary dialogue** is illustrated by Baruch Jeitteles’ 1800 dialogue between the year 1800 and the year 1801. The speakers are the two years and they both attack the mystical Frankist sect. The genre of **travelogue**, which aims both to teach and to entertain, is represented by Shmuel Romanelli’s 1792 *Masa Ba-Arav*, a travelogue of the author’s journey to North Africa. Pelli presents the literary conventions of the *Haskalah* travelogue and the life of North African Jews from the *Haskalah* point of view.

While the kinds of genre in *Haskalah* literature are the focal point of Pelli’s book, they are far from being its only subject matter. Pelli presents major authors, major literary works, major problems, developments and aspirations of the *Haskalah*, using his immense knowledge of this literature. He passionately and skillfully advocates and highlights its achievements. His extensive bibliography (pp. 328–351) is useful. The cultural and literary parameters of his discussion are expansive. His way of disagreement with other scholars is amiable.

Pelli’s erudition and inquisitive mind are evidenced in each chapter. His analysis is artful. Pelli raises one important question after another and answers each. For example, of the fable he asks and answers the following: Why was the fable such a popular genre? What transformation did it undergo? How does the definition of the fable genre by *Haskalah* fabulists stand in comparison with their European counterparts? In what ways was the affinity of the *Haskalah*’s fable to

the classical Hebrew fable expressed? How should *Haskalah*'s fables be classified? Were all the "original fables" original?

In his presentation of the unique attributes of each genre, Pelli applies literary theory, probes the affinity between the *Haskalah* genre and the European genre, and analyzes the literary qualities and merits and traits of each genre in *Haskalah* literature vis-à-vis its counterparts on the European scene. This is, in short, a most significant contribution to the research of *Haskalah* literature.

Lev Hakak
UCLA
Los Angeles, California



Hayyim Nahman Bialik. *Random Harvest: The Novellas of Bialik*. Translated by David Patterson and Ezra Spicehandler. Boulder, CO: Westview Press, 1999. Modern Hebrew Classics. ix, 299 pp.

Hayyim Nahman Bialik (1873–1934) is widely regarded—especially in Israel—as the national poet of the Jewish people. Bialik's poems express not only his own deeply conflicted emotions but also the ambivalence of a generation of Jews caught between the breakdown of traditional Jewish life and the call of a new Jewish world whose outlines could be but dimly perceived.

While these poems explore a wide range of subjects, almost all of them have the ring of Romanticism. Part of the appeal of Bialik's poems is that they speak the language of the heart rather than the language of the head. If Bialik is to be criticized in this regard, one might say that at times his pathos edges perilously close to bathos.

In their recent translation, *Random Harvest: The Novellas of Bialik*, David Patterson and Ezra Spicehandler have given the English reader an opportunity to hear Bialik speak in another voice. In the five short stories and one extended legend in this collection (none of them a novella, in my estimation), Bialik keeps a certain intellectual distance from his subject. The balance between head and heart has shifted from what we find in his poetry; in these prose pieces we have more head and less heart. In his prose voice, Bialik reveals a capacity for satire, humor, and a wry playfulness that is much less evident in his poetry.

This difference in voice is least apparent in the opening selection, *Random Harvest (Safiach)*, an incomplete work of autobiographical fiction written in stages between 1908 and 1923, when—oddly enough—Bialik completed Chapter 1. Much of this piece echoes his poetry. Already in the second paragraph one encounters imagery reminiscent of his poem *Levadi* ("By Myself"):

Like a forsaken fledgling, I wandered alone about my nest; my father and mother left me to myself and there was no one else to look after me. Then God in His mercy took me under the shelter of His wings . . . (p. 22).

By way of contrast, in *Behind the Fence (Me-achorey ha-Gader)*, the second story in the collection, we “hear” a Bialik who is more detached from his subject. He tells a modern version of Romeo and Juliet, star-crossed lovers separated by a physical fence which symbolizes the impossible barriers of different religions, different socio-economic classes, different cultures. With an almost chilling irony, Bialik concludes his tale not with a tragic bang but rather with a banal whimper. In the end, the “hero” Noah rejects his beloved *shikсах* Marinka and settles for “a proper virgin, the daughter of a tax collector” (p. 131).

Big Harry (Aryeh Baal Guf), written in 1898 when Bialik was still in his mid-twenties, satirizes a certain kind of rich but mindless boor who in our generation has been the butt of the acerbic wit of Philip Roth. Towards the end of this character sketch Bialik describes a “spread” which Harry and his social-climbing wife Hannah prepare for their housewarming; the scene is as familiar as those overdone wedding or bar mitzvah receptions in which the overriding *halakhic* question turns out to be: Is it kosher to eat like a pig?

The Shamed Trumpet (Ha-Chatsotserah Nitbayeshah) is a fictionalized account of the banishment of a Jewish family from the Pale as a consequence of the “Temporary May Laws” of 1882. Writing thirty-three years after the event, Bialik makes his story all the more tragic by telling it with a restraint made possible by the temporal distance of more than three decades. In endowing a Russian army trumpet with a sense of shame, Bialik demonstrates yet again the fecundity of his artistic imagination.

The fifth story in the collection, *Short Friday (Yom ha-Shishi ha-Katsar)*, which appeared in 1909, stands on the other end of the emotional spectrum from the oppressive sadness of *The Shamed Trumpet*. *Short Friday* is a light, zany farce that has the feel of a TV sitcom. Reb Lipka is not so much a character as a caricature of a country bumpkin rebbe. Readers can laugh at the twists and turns of the far-fetched plot because we do not invest our emotions in Reb Lipka’s self-inflicted predicament. Throughout the story Reb Lipka remains an object of our tolerant ridicule—never a subject demanding our sympathy.

The first five translations in *Random Harvest* are found under the rubric of *Sippurim* in the frequently reprinted Hebrew volume of Bialik’s collected works published by D’vir. The sixth and final translation, *The Legend of the Three and the Four (Aggadat Shloshah v’Arba’ah)* falls under the rubric of *Divrei Aggadah* and the sub-rubric of *Me’aggadot ha-Melekh Shlomo*. The text is the second version of this narrative, written in Germany in 1929. The Hebrew of *The Legend of the Three and the Four* differs markedly from the five preceding stories. Bialik invents an archaic quasi-Biblical style; he begins almost every paragraph of this fully vocalized text with a *vav*-consecutive and employs a spare and limited vocabulary. It is to the credit of our translators that they are able to capture something of Bialik’s deliberately artificial language. Like all legends, *The Legend of the Three and the Four* can be read on many different levels. At this time of continued strife between Jew and Arab, I am especially moved by Bialik’s prophetic call for making peace between ancient enemies. Near the very end of the story, he puts these words into the mouth of King Solomon, who is speaking at the wedding feast cel-

celebrating the marriage of Netanyahu, a diaspora Jew, to Ketziyah, the daughter of the King of Aram:

Our ancestors hated one another but are long since gone; their hatred and their jealousy have died with them. Shall we, their sons, maintain that enmity forever? See now, the joviality of friends and the happiness of love bursting all about you. . . . Hate is indeed deeper than the pit, but love is more powerful and stronger than hate and can overcome it! When love pours its spirit upon man, it returns him to his primordial state, as God created him. He no longer keeps petty accounts. (p. 281)

One test of a good translation is that the reader forgets that he is in fact reading a translation. For the most part David Patterson and Ezra Spicehandler pass this test with distinction. Unfortunately, the very first sentence of the entire collection misses the mark:

I cannot remember how many summers and winters passed from the earliest moments I can recall in my native village until the time when my family took me to live in a suburb of the nearby town. (p. 21)

To an American reader *suburb* seems out of place—conjuring up images of crowded shopping malls and oversized SUVs. For some reason Patterson and Spicehandler consistently render the Hebrew *parbar* as *suburb*, even though *outskirts* would be far more appropriate for the Ukrainian setting of small towns and villages. Later on in this same story, we bump into the following sentence:

At twilight on that happy day, when my joy overwhelmed me and I could not restrain it, I ran outside to noise my greatness abroad. (p. 47)

The Hebrew reads *levaser et gedulati ba-rabim*, literally, “to proclaim my greatness among the many.” Certainly in this context there are a number of choices less clumsy than “To noise my greatness abroad.” To be fair, an occasional awkward moment is to be expected within almost three hundred pages of translation. On balance David Patterson and Ezra Spicehandler deserve our praise and gratitude for enabling the English reader to listen to the strong and distinctive prose voices of Hayyim Nahman Bialik. A twenty-page general introduction, a short introduction to each of the six selections, a glossary, and a brief bibliography help round out our picture of the national poet of the Jewish people.

James B. Rosenberg
Barrington, Rhode Island



Ruth Kartun-Blum. *Profane Scriptures: Reflections on the Dialogue with the Bible in Modern Hebrew Poetry*. Cincinnati, Hebrew Union College Press, 1999. 97 pp.

In this slim yet analytically sophisticated volume, Kartun-Blum, professor of Hebrew literature at Hebrew University, seeks to elucidate the “noisy existence” of the modern Hebrew poet who is forced to contend with the echoes of traditional texts and the multiple, diachronic registers of the revived Hebrew language. The work consists of three chapters, the first of which, “The Prophet’s Tongue in Our Cheek,” serves as an introduction to the use made of the Bible in modern Hebrew poetry. Building on this framework, in the second and longest section of the book, she engages the motif of the Binding of Isaac, and in the last chapter she offers a reading of a poem by Yona Wallach. In her analysis, she incorporates the insights to be gleaned from the perspectives of intertextuality, deconstruction, and feminist criticism. This book is based on the Efroymsen Lectures delivered by the author at Hebrew Union College in 1995, although the core of the thesis developed in the chapter on the Binding of Isaac motif appeared in *Prooftexts* (September 1988).

In the introduction, Kartun-Blum points out one of the central paradoxes of modern Hebrew literature: Despite the iconoclastic stance of many Israeli poets vis-à-vis the traditional texts (“the sources”), they cannot *ignore* the tradition. In thus confronting the canonical works, they continue the long Jewish tradition of engagement with text, and specifically, the metatextual practice of *midrash*. However, while the rabbinic authors of *midrash* exult in their “belatedness” and are at pains to show how their readings emerge from the text, the relationship of the secular Israeli poet is typically one of subversion based on strong and often ironic or parodic “misreadings.” Kartun-Blum brings up Harold Bloom’s notion of the “anxiety of influence”—the oedipal struggle of strong poets with their precursors. She also highlights the special role the Hebrew language, with the productive morphology of its root system, plays in the generation of punning, intertextual connections.

Perhaps the biblical theme that has most preoccupied Hebrew writers is the Binding of Isaac. Over the centuries, as Shalom Spiegel demonstrated in his masterful work, *The Last Trial*, the biblical story has been interpreted typologically as prefiguring Jewish martyrdom, particularly during the persecutions of the Crusades. Kartun-Blum demonstrates the centrality of this martyrological motif within the formation of a Zionist master narrative that is in turn reflected and refracted in the treatment of this motif by Israeli artists in a variety of media. (Menashe Kadishman, who has returned repeatedly to this theme in his oeuvre, has provided the original illustrations that adorn this book.) In her chapter on this topos, Kartun-Blum traces the ways in which the deconstruction of the Aqedah myth can be read as a road map of the culture’s ideological shifts that “lays bear the secrets of the collective Israeli psyche” (p. 19). While the heroic image of self-sacrifice of the *halutsim* characterized the earlier literature of Zionist commitment (Yitzhaq Lamdan, “On the Altar”), much of the poetry up until the ’60s viewed this motif in the context of the Shoah: the initial anger, as well as the residual trauma and guilt (Natan Alterman, “On the Child Abram”; Haim Gouri, “Inheritance”; Amir Gilboa, “Isaac”). The move from the collective to personal trauma is exemplified by Yehiel Mar’s “Aqedah” and “The Fear of Isaac” by T. Carmi; similarly, a dehistoricized, existential fear is reflected in Tuvya Rübner’s “Voices” and David Avidan’s “Curriculum Vitae.” In many of these poems, the deconstruction of the psychological, moral, or ideological consequences of the biblical event is realized

through the manipulation of the roles or functions of the characters in the original drama—which is consequently deflated and ironized.

In the most recent work discussed in this section, Yehudah Amichai's "The Real Hero of the Aqedah" from 1982, the poet takes this to the extreme, noting that it was the ram that was actually sacrificed; this brings the "true hero" to the foreground, endows it with human qualities, and portrays it as the innocent victim of the conspiracy engaged in by the other characters. Exploiting the metaphoric resonances of the industry of memorial books produced for Israel's war dead, the poet levels a stinging, anti-heroic critique of Israeli militarism and the willingness of the society to offer up its young on the altar of the battlefield. As Kartun-Blum explains, this continues an anti-martyrological reading that the late playwright Hanoch Levin had provocatively raised in his 1970 musical revue, *The Queen of the Bath*. In the Aqedah sketch from this play (which includes the poem, "Dear father, when you stand over my grave"), Levin mocked the sacrosanct "cult" of bereaved parents of fallen soldiers, touching a raw nerve in Israeli society and igniting public furor. The discussion of the Aqedah motif could have been enriched by including poets from the 1980s and 1990s (post-Lebanon War) whose focus has overwhelmingly been on the "internal" victimization of Israel's young soldiers. David Jacobson has dealt with the recent use of this motif in Israel poetry in his 1997 work, *Does David Still Play Before You: Israeli Poetry and the Bible*.

The third and final chapter of the book is ambitiously titled "A Modern Mystical Experience: Intertextuality and Deconstruction in Israeli Women's Poetry," although Kartun-Blum restricts her discussion to a single poem by Yona Wallach, "The Troubles of Dona Teresa." Here she attempts to counter the prevalent perception that Wallach's poetry is self-contained or self-referential and does not engage canonical texts. Kartun-Blum argues that Wallach was a "strong" feminist writer who in fact daringly engaged these texts. In doing so, the poet served as a precursor for the revolution that has taken place in Israeli women's writing, a revolution whose impact can be gauged by the dramatic increase in the number and subtlety of allusions. Kartun-Blum invokes here the approach of Alicia Ostriker, who calls upon women writers to become "thieves of language": to appropriate the power of story-telling, to retell the myths from their own perspective in order to challenge the hegemony of patriarchal thought.

In her reading of the Wallach poem, Kartun-Blum isolates three separate intertextual connections that the poet draws upon. She elucidates the direct allusion to the poem's eponymous subject, the sixteenth-century Spanish saint and mystic, Teresa of Ávila, showing how Wallach valorizes Teresa as an autonomous—and autoerotic—figure. Kartun-Blum argues for a dialectic relationship across artistic media between Wallach's poem and one of Bernini's best-known sculptures, "The Ecstasy of St. Teresa" (itself based on a vision of God's angel described in Teresa's *Life*). The physicality and intense sensuality of the sculpted image of Teresa allows for Wallach's agonistic reading that reverses the power relationships of the male (angel) and female (saint). In the poem, it is the woman who possesses sexual control, wielding as she does the phosphorus-tipped dagger. Secondly, Kartun-Blum also shows how Wallach engages the "Woman of Valor" acrostic poem from Proverbs

31, “misreading” this paean to controlled female domesticity as an ode to armed power (חייל). The final intertext Kartun-Blum connects with the poem is the myth of Amor and Psyche. Here, Kartun-Blum demonstrates how the poem’s glowing, phosphorus-tipped knife (correlating with Psyche’s attempt on Amor’s life while holding a knife and a lamp) and the house of crystal and velvet in which Teresa erotically luxuriates (corresponding to the palace in which Psyche is “imprisoned”) highlight “the uncompromising fight against patriarchal, chauvinist love” (p. 84). While the intertextual ties here are subtle and veiled, reflecting Wallach’s more hermetic style, Kartun-Blum teases out enough evidence to support her feminist and post-structural decoding of this “difficult” poem.

Although the two case studies that comprise the core of this study are fascinating and stand well on their own, there is little to make them cohere. In the preface, Kartun-Blum states that she will be examining the use made by Hebrew poets of biblical allusion. While the author has demonstrated that Wallach does engage the Bible in her poem, it is done somewhat obliquely and is certainly not the primary intertext evoked. Perhaps a connection between them beyond the intertextual reading could have been established: for example, the motif of the knife, the sacrificial blade lodged in the heart of Isaac’s descendants and the autoerotically charged knife held by the “ruptured” Dona Teresa; alternatively an analysis of women’s writing on the Aqedah motif such as poems by Yehudit Kafri and Aliza Shenhar that, like the poem by Benjamin Galai which Kartun-Blum does treat, adopt the perspective of the biblically absent and silent Sarah; or perhaps the inversion of the roles of the *dramatis personae* in the evoked texts. At the very least, the chapter on Wallach’s poem needs to be more directly integrated with the framework established in the introduction. But none of this takes away from the overall erudition and insightfulness of Kartun-Blum’s exploration of the intertextual and linguistic echo chamber in which Hebrew writers operate. Kartun-Blum cites as an epigraph to the book the statement of the poet David Avidan: “The purpose of battle is dialogue.” This aphorism could just as easily be turned around and read to reflect the subversive and contentious engagement of contemporary poets with the tradition—and the ensuing impact on our reading of both the alluding and source texts—that Kartun-Blum has illuminated in this small gem of a study.

Marc Bernstein
Michigan State University
East Lansing, Michigan



Stephen Katz. *The Centrifugal Novel: S. Y. Agnon’s Poetics of Composition*. Madison and Teaneck, NJ: Fairleigh Dickinson University Press, 1999. 219 pp.

Agnon studies are still with us. The great modern Hebrew prose writer has been gone for nearly three decades, but new studies in Hebrew and even in English have made it seem as if he were still in our midst. They continue to increase

our understanding of his life and his oeuvre, obviously, but the immediacy of this Nobel prize laureate for his particular culture strikes me as unique among western literary figures. Speaking only of English, in this decade alone, Anne Golomb Hoffman and Nitzah Ben Dov have published full-length monographs, and scores of articles have appeared on subjects ranging from biography to intertextual exploration, and from language to folklore sources. All this is on top of an even more plentiful supply of materials from the '70s and '80s (some Israeli scholars, like Shaked, have even published in English), which followed on the heels of Arnold Band's indispensable *Nostalgia and Nightmare*. One has to assume that Dan Laor's comprehensive Agnon biography, *Hayyei Agnon*—which has just been published—will be translated into English and share its plentiful light with the purely English-speaking scholarly community. Laor's biography was not completed when Stephen Katz published *The Centrifugal Novel*, although several articles containing material intended for the eventual biography appeared over recent years.

It can be a pleasant surprise to see how classic belles-lettres are illuminated through new critical lenses and new combinations of lenses. Agnon can be turned and turned again, and—one hopes—the process won't stop soon. Of course, that turning is most relevant within Israeli scholarship, where a larger community understands the native cultural issues more fully, and many writers acknowledge their own literary obligation to the great Galician story teller. (Katz notes Laor's contribution to the discussion in his note 6 to Chapter One.)

Katz endorses the well-discussed notion of centripetal and centrifugal vectors in Agnon's longer prose work. "The centripetal approach to the formation of works of fiction reveals a process of creation by segments: pieces of narrative are joined, at times artificially, in a chainlike sequence of scenes having associative and causal connection with each other . . ." (p. 26). "The centrifugal novel, on the other hand, may be likened to the ideal sculpture imprisoned within a block of marble . . . awaiting the artist's act of releasing it by chipping away at all excessive matter, leaving intact only that which is the work of art. To gain their ideal balance, centrifugal works tend to undergo significant contraction leaving behind any number or combination of episodes or short stories . . ." (pp. 26 and 27).

I will leave it to Israeli critics to comment on whether Stephen Katz's work will be viewed as an original contribution within the Israeli community. It certainly represents a more complete study than has been available in English about one aspect of Agnon studies—a significant elaboration of the inevitable studies of variant texts of Agnon's work. Clearly his application of this notion to *Oreah Natah LaLun* ("A Guest for the Night") runs counter to the evidence of Band's original reckoning of the length of the novel's two primary editions.

Katz combines his concentration on *Oreah Natah LaLun* with the fascinating examination of the author's personal life and the relationship of that life to the fictive persona he created—as storyteller and chorus to the action on life's stage. Furthermore, Katz demonstrates how some of the themes in the works which have been built out of several units work themselves out in other fictions, so that one may trace both themes and character. For the English reader this is an especially

important contribution, but even Hebrew readers may gain from the diligence of Katz's analysis.

Katz has taken up the question of the literary persona of the storyteller-narrator whom Agnon created as an author, and draws upon his research within the Agnon Archives to demonstrate the self-consciousness with which the apparently manipulative storyteller, the "unreliable narrator," sets out to confound his reader as a part of the reading enterprise. For Katz, Agnon's narrator functions as a character within many of the novels and longer short stories. This in itself is not news to regular readers of Agnon; what is news is that there is support for this readerly conclusion within the archives and storage of manuscripts themselves. Eschewing the classical new critical concentration on the finished literary product, Katz has found evidence of a conscientious and determined use of rabbinic sources and sources from other stories within the Agnon oeuvre for the creation of new material. Thus, the study of manuscripts, pieces of paper, ostensibly random notes, and so forth adds to our understanding of the author's intention, and, more important, creates a kind of metanarrative to the narrative as it came to be completed.

The book begins with a quaint anecdotal introduction to Bet Agnon, in a sensitive description which captures the deceptive maneuvers of this author—tricky both in his life and as a fictional persona. The intimate opening invites visitors to the Agnon home and draws one into the experience of uncovering the evidence that Agnon created a fictional character out of himself through the artifacts he has left for us to discover. The life depicted in the museum's video tape and other organized curatorial presentations of Agnon (artful though all this is) are not nearly as satisfying, ultimately, as a careful piecing together of life and work. Katz contributes mightily to this piecing together, as does the epistolary presentation "Estherlein" which has been so popular on Israeli stages over the last couple of years.

My only substantive argument with Stephen Katz's book has to do with his effort to carry new critical thought to a "logical conclusion" which would deny us a scholarship of building our understanding of Agnon and his oeuvre out of the reality of text and life. The straw man of new criticism has already been discredited, even as the new critical legacy remains something to be heeded and utilized to enhance one's appreciation of an integrated literary text. Let all these flowers bloom, and we shall be able to continue in our literary progress on all fronts. Indeed, there are instances in Katz's study where one misses a discussion of the story itself, where the critic has let themes and meaning and intricate descriptions of story construction interrupt one's appreciation of the delights that await a reading of Agnon's stories. Katz's approach to the work would restrict the uninitiated Agnon reader from appreciating what made this writer such a pleasure to read as well as so weighty an artist. And so we welcome work on Agnon by some of our traditional close readers. Books like *The Centrifugal Novel* owe their importance to the new critical legacy.

On a less substantive level, "S. Y. Agnon's Poetics of Composition" needed considerably more editing than it received. The work is full of typographical errors, debatable calls about punctuation, and extended sentences that should have been re-composed. Antecedents need to be searched out, and sentences that ought

to have ended early extend into indeterminacy. I fear that this fine study may not get the attention it deserves because of these editing problems. Having said that, I can urge owning and using this important book, for its many ideas and for its diligent provision of notes, relevant appendices, and insights about composition.

William Cutter
Hebrew Union College-Jewish Institute of Religion
Los Angeles, California



S. Lillian Kremer. *Women's Holocaust Writing: Memory and Imagination*. Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1999. xi, 278 pp.

Kremer's recent book is an important contribution to the growing body of scholarship devoted to literary responses to the Holocaust. *Women's Holocaust Writing* joins studies such as Edward Alexander's *The Resonance of Dust: Essays on Holocaust Literature*, Lawrence Langer's *The Holocaust and the Literary Imagination*, Alvin Rosenfeld's *A Double Dying: Reflections on Holocaust Literature*, Alan Berger's *Crisis and Covenant: The Holocaust in American Jewish Fiction*, his more recent *Children of Job: American Second-Generation Witnesses to the Holocaust*, Sarah Horowitz's *Voicing the Void*, and Kremer's previous study *Witness through the Imagination: Jewish-American Holocaust Literature*.

The construction of Kremer's study meets the challenge of two widely debated issues in the area of Holocaust studies. The first relates to the fact that the book focuses on women's Holocaust writing; the second that it juxtaposes Holocaust fictional writing of women survivors with Holocaust fiction of American-born women writers. The group of émigré women living in America, as Kremer calls them, include Ilona Karmel, Elzbieta Ettinger, and Hana Demetz. The native-born American writers are Susan Fomberg Schaeffer, Cynthia Ozick, Marge Piercy, and Norma Rosen.

Aware of the continuing debate concerning the particularity of women's experience, Kremer eschews fruitless and inappropriate comparisons of suffering between the sexes, both of whom were targeted by the Final Solution. She explains the rationale for her exclusive focus on women writers in the fact that women's Holocaust experience was different due to their biological destiny and that their response to the Holocaust experience was different due to their patterns of socialization. The threat of sexual abuse and the dangers involved in motherhood were hardships directed particularly at women. The networks of bonding and cooperation as means of protection and resistance characterize women's response. Kremer grounds her argument in works by scholars such as Sybil Milton, Joan Ringelheim and Myrna Goldberg, and then sets to prove it in the novels under her examination. Kremer's readings of the novels corroborate the findings that "[m]ale writing laments the loss of children and addresses father's grief, but does not center on efforts to save the children" (p. 12). Her interpretations of the novels also reflect the notion that "[n]o doubt there were men who sacrificed themselves for one another

er, but the preponderance of testimony and creative writing suggests such activity was minimal compared with that reported by women" (p. 18). Kremer traces the theme of solidarity and bonding and finds that, in practically all cases, moral considerations have prevailed. Even in the single case of Karmel's characterization of Tola, who decides to cooperate with the Germans for her own protection, the collaborator eventually "forsakes physical safety for spiritual survival. . . . In risking her life to save another, Tola is redeemed" (p. 65).

The issue of Holocaust representations in art and especially in literary writing has been a longstanding debate among Holocaust scholars. Kremer places fiction grounded in the memory of the writer-survivor alongside works of fiction engendered in the imagination of American-born writers. The inclusion of the latter communicates the legitimacy of fictional representations of the Holocaust. The juxtaposition of literature of memory with literature of imagination places the outsider's fiction in the same rank as the survivor's. Kremer tells us that the intention of this construction was to extend the canon of literary study by including women's fiction. She is, however, aware of the inherent difference between the two bodies of fiction that she chose to examine, and pays close attention to the resources and the strategies the writers used in telling the story. The fiction of the émigré women is invariably grounded in their personal experiences. Thus, Karmel focuses on her Krakow ghetto experience and memories of the labor camps in which she was imprisoned. Ettinger draws upon her experiences in the Warsaw ghetto, and upon her activities as a resistance fighter in Aryan Poland (of special interest is the account of her protagonist's return to post-WW II Poland and her consequent disillusion with the communist regime there). Demetz represents a particular case of a child of "mixed race" in the reality of the Holocaust, an experience central to her novel. The fiction of the American-born women writers grounds itself in secondary sources. Thus, Schaeffer's *Anya* is based on interviews with survivors; Piercy's *Gone with the Soldiers* demonstrates thorough research and personal contacts with survivors. Ozick and Norma also draw upon contact with survivors as well as research of the Holocaust post-traumatic effects.

Kremer also tries to establish a thematic differentiation between the two bodies of writing. She claims that the American writers avoid as much as possible representations of ghettos and camps, that they refrain from criticizing the victims and their moral decisions, and that they focus on individual survival and the post-war social reintegration of the victim. These suppositions are not quite borne out in the fiction itself. Suffice it to mention Ozick's imaginary reproduction of the concentration camp and the murder of the child in "The Shawl," and the critical representation of the child's mother, Rosa, the Holocaust survivor, in the sequel named "Rosa." Here an essential differentiation between survivors and observers comes to the fore, exhibiting the Americans' limited comprehension of prewar Europe. This lack of understanding accounts for the inclination to judge pre-Holocaust European Jewry from the American post-Holocaust perspective, a perspective which categorically sees Jewish identification as the only possible response to the Holocaust. It seems to me that a more plausible interconnection between the two bodies of fiction lies in Norma Rosen's argument that the enormity of the Holocaust, "the malaise, the malediction of [Holocaust] knowledge has entered the psyche of

Jew and non-Jew alike” (p. 213), thus justifying preoccupation with the event and its aftermath and opening a variety of possible responses.

Kremer presents a detailed and thorough, thematically arranged summary of each novel. She locates her discussion in the socio-historical context of the writer’s biography and often verifies the fiction with historical factuality. As she herself admits, the intention of the study is “to unite literary explication with sociopolitical constructs, to show how the writers negotiated the complicated interaction among life story, history, and fiction” (p. xi). All in all, Kremer has delivered her promise: She has expanded the canon drawing our attention to important literary women’s representations of the Holocaust. I would suggest, however, that a discussion of the survivors’ writing in second-language English would have been of particular interest here. After all, writing in English as an émigré in a new country implies an intended readership quite unknown to the writer. This crucial decision certainly deserves an in-depth consideration.

Rachel Feldhay Brenner
University of Wisconsin, Madison
Madison, Wisconsin



Kadya Molodowsky. *Paper Bridges: Selected Poems*. Translated, introduced, and edited by Kathryn Hellerstein. Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 1999. 543 pp.

In recent years there has been much interest in the place of Kadya Molodowsky in the canon of Yiddish literature. At the same time, the translation of late nineteenth- and early twentieth-century Yiddish literature has become an imperative—fueled by the Holocaust, the quality and quantity of writing that occurred prior to and even after it, and a heightened awareness of many women writers heretofore underrepresented in translation. Nor can one ignore the tremendous fluctuations in the perceived viability and legitimacy of Yiddish, as either a language or a literary vehicle, that have taken place and are still taking place into the twenty-first century. Into this tumultuous set of circumstances, Molodowsky’s poetry has been reborn by virtue of an extensive translation.

Kathryn Hellerstein’s translation of Molodowsky’s selected poetry ably demonstrates one reason she has been canonized: Even the most chauvinistic or politicized of her contemporary male colleagues recognized that she was “a natural poet” with things of consequence to say.

Another reason Molodowsky is being canonized is more complex, since her poetry (and life) reveal a purposeful but anguished careening back and forth. She was the traditional Jewish woman imbued with biblical and rabbinical allusions, attitudes, and constraints, but she was also a socially-conscious political activist. She was a sophisticated early childhood educator, yet she was drawn to a more lyric and personal aesthetic. She had a depressed view of her right to be a poet during and after the Holocaust, but it was a period of intense interest in Zionism for her.

For a while she was unable to write at all, but she produced memorable children's poetry. By her tenacious hold on her Jewish identity *and* her efforts to become a modern woman writer, she tempts us to see her as an iconic writer.

Indeed she *is* that most iconic of all Jews, a "survivor," in the sense that her will to write persisted and matured through good, bad, and worse times: in Bereza Kartuska in Grodno Province; in the Pale of Settlement of the Russian Empire, where she was born in 1894; in Warsaw, Kiev; back home; again in Warsaw; precipitously in 1935 to Philadelphia and then New York; in Israel; and back in New York. Hellerstein makes a strong case for Molodowsky's ability to remain artistically and psychically intact despite geographic, political, and personal upheavals.

What happens to a world-class poet when iconic status is bestowed on him or her? Might it affect what is selected of their work to translate? Does it limit or simplify the perception of complexity in the writer's voice? Can it detract from an understanding of that writer's place in the larger canon of world literature?

I read the undertext of desperation and despair in many of Molodowsky's poems as a struggle to come to terms with her fear that her suffering is punishment for the "sin" of abandoning more traditional mores. Additionally, many of her poems dwell upon thwarted efforts to construct her identity as The Poet. Thus I am persuaded that her own absorption with these issues both sustained *and* maimed her poetic potential.

Whether she is the perfect icon or not, the reader will find the book compelling precisely because it is haunted by this issue. Molodowsky plays out the often tragic tension between Socialism and Zionism, between Yiddish and Hebrew, between Europe and America, between post-Holocaust traditionalism and the self, in poem after poem. One wonders where her "take" on the current bifurcations in Jewish life, and the general state of affairs in the world, would have led her poetically were she alive today!

The wonderfully appropriate title of the book, *Paper Bridges*, has been inspired by three separate poems containing that phrase—one published in the 1930s in Poland, another in the 1940s in New York, and the last in the 1960s in Buenos Aires. The second was even published by "The Paper Bridge Press." Obviously the legend that when the Messiah comes Jews will cross into Paradise over a paper bridge had deep symbolic meaning for Molodowsky. However, the differences in the three poems are compelling in light of the above comments.

In the first, titled "My Paper Bridge," the bridge leads Molodowsky back to halcyon times. (Indeed, in villages such as Bereza Kartuska, the road out into the fields did appear to meet and merge with the sky at the end of the shtetl.) But the poet encounters the poverty and despair of the Jewish condition in those times in the person of a homeless woman with whom she is forced to contend and with whom she in a sense merges or identifies.

In the second, titled "A Poem to the Paper Bridge," there is a post-Holocaust recognition of the endurance of the Jewish people, and hopes for manna in the desert and the dawn of a new day. Nevertheless, it is a bittersweet poem.

The third poem, "On the Paper Bridge," dances tauntingly, teasingly, back and forth between dutifulness and capriciousness, between her calling to write and the call of "women's work" and the world's work. In the end, she tries to resolve

this fundamental conflict in her life and work by using the learned metaphor of “Nutrikin” (or Notarikon), the mystical technique of interpreting letters of one word as initials of other words—i.e., by being a writer. This theme is further poignantly elaborated in poems such as “A Poem About Self” and “Leave Taking.” Of course, her ability to turn one metaphor over and over so differently is a tribute to her talents.

Hellerstein’s fine introduction fleshes out Molodowsky’s biography, simultaneously sketching out the complexities of a life in many ways emblematic of the whole of Jewish cultural, political, and linguistic history in the twentieth century. Her extensive endnotes provide readers with much food for thought. They are both scholarly and remarkably honest commentaries on the challenges and choices faced in translating a language as linguistically infused as Yiddish.

Wayne State University Press, long the publisher of a diverse ethnic catalogue, is to be commended for not stinting on the supportive material Hellerstein wished to include; they have created both hard and soft cover editions beautifully bound, illustrated, and papered.

Hellerstein’s translation style calls up some important issues, solves them with a consistent and deliberate aesthetic, and successfully provides readers with great access to Molodowsky’s poetry. We want translators to “understand” their authors; she does.

Mindful of Molodowsky’s generous use of rhyme, Hellerstein allows herself rather free rendering of these, particularly in the children’s tales, but less so in her more symbolic or visionary poetry. Some translators tend to sacrifice rhyme for other qualities. By and large Hellerstein is not willing to. Differences in the typical metrical foot in Yiddish versus that in English also color her translations.

Yiddish has no capitalization; it often uses the convention of beginning a line with “and.” In normal discourse the verb must be in second place. Hellerstein usually chooses to opt out of this pattern, which can sometimes change the semantic emphasis in a line. Hellerstein sometimes chooses the present participle when Yiddish gives her the option of the simple present tense as well. This is one of those nuances that poets know can subtly affect the impact or sense of immediacy of what is written. Hellerstein chooses to capitalize the first letter of each line. Mostly her punctuation end-stops lines. True, this is characteristic of an older/and or more formalistic poetry, but it can rein in the emotional intensity of a poem in English.

Much has already been written about the hazards of gerunds in English, and about the choice between Latinate and more Anglo-Saxon synonyms. For example, in one poem Hellerstein chooses the word “primordial” over “ancient,” possibly out of respect for its biblical undertones. English quantifies its nouns—a bunch of, a group of, etc.—this is not as typical in Yiddish. On the other hand, Yiddish has gender markers that can make for a certain cumbersomeness in English or create the alternative temptation of condensation.

Erudite and extensive as Hellerstein’s book is, it cannot be expected to fully explore the modernist movement in Yiddish poetry, nor to provide the full story of Molodowsky’s relationship with other great Jewish writers of her time on both sides of the Atlantic. It cannot possibly explore the full implications of Birobid-

jhan in one of her poems. About her relationship with her husband and his politics much has been left unsaid.

What the book will do is impel the reader to discover many other noteworthy Yiddish poets and prose writers now available in translation. They are from times and places when to write, think, and dream in Yiddish was to be a Jew.

After all, it was that anguished Jewish poet Paul Celan who said, "Only one thing remained reachable, close and secure amid all losses: language. . . ."

Leah Zazulyer
Rochester, New York



David Patterson. *Along the Edge of Annihilation: The Collapse and Recovery of Life in the Holocaust Diary*. Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1999. xi, 311 pp.

David Patterson's *Along the Edge of Annihilation: The Collapse and Recovery of Life in the Holocaust Diary* adds to the ever-growing collection of analyses of Holocaust literature by focussing specifically on diaries. Two obvious goals of a study such as this would be to give the diarists a voice (or, to put it another way, to give readers an introduction to a variety of diaries) and to develop a theory about the place of diaries in Holocaust literature. In the first matter, Patterson bases his study on more than fifty diaries written during the Holocaust by Jewish victims. The reader need only consult the primary sources in the bibliography for a listing of diaries available to be read in their entirety. (I will say more about this later.)

In the case of the second matter, Patterson offers a strict definition of the genre of Holocaust diary, which functions to include only those diaries that express their "love for the community of Israel" (p. x). Similar to other diarists, Patterson explains, a Holocaust diarist felt an impulse to record experience and to recover time and meaning, but in addition, was "accountable" to his community (p. 21). On its behalf, the diarist began and ended his writings with a "why" (p. 25). While the features of the genre Patterson establishes may be found in some diaries, they surely are not found in all. Ironically, his use of Etty Hillesum's diary, *An Interrupted Life*,¹ to explain that a diary "usually regarded as a Holocaust diary . . . in truth is not" (p. 25) reveals the arbitrariness of his taxonomy. It is therefore worth looking closely at his comments on this particular writer and her diary.

Hillesum's diary does not satisfy the genre Patterson creates because it does not, he claims, ask *why* or take the *other* to be of prime importance; yet various scholars of Holocaust literature refer to it positively.² In his brief analysis of Hille-

1. Etty Hillesum, *An Interrupted Life: The Diaries, 1941–1943*, trans. by Arnold J. Pomerans (New York: Henry Holt, 1996).

2. Laurence Kutler recommends *An Interrupted Life* as a source for teaching the Holocaust in *Holocaust Literature: A Handbook of Critical, Historical, and Literary Writings*, ed. by Saul S. Friedman (Westport, CT: Greenwood, 1993), p. 525. Earl M. Friedman refers to it along with other Dutch diaries and memoirs that provide "moving glimpses of life under the Nazis," also in *Holocaust Litera-*

sum's writing, Patterson fails to tell us that she was a Dutch Jew, a significant fact when comparing her diary—a recording of experience, as Patterson reminds us a diary is—because her experience differed from those of diarists from Poland, Germany, and France, for example. In fact, one might guess that Hillesum was Polish when Patterson queries her words, “Even if we are consigned to Hell, let us go there as gracefully as we can,” with “Is she suggesting that the mothers of the Warsaw ghetto should send their children to the flames of Treblinka with *grace*?” (p. 26). That Hillesum would not be thinking of the mothers of the Warsaw ghetto is both apparent and reasonable; she died in 1943 in Westerbork (Patterson mentions that Hillesum was confined in Westerbork), a transit camp that was the last stop before Auschwitz for Dutch Jews. Patterson does not take into account the material reality of Hillesum's life; thus he can project back onto her a concern we all share now—the experiences of the mothers of the Warsaw ghetto and countless other suffering individuals whose experiences we attempt to understand through the records they have left us—while he ignores the larger context of her writing.

Asserting that Hillesum's diary is not only not a Holocaust diary, but also that “although it is written by a Jew, it is not a Jewish diary” (p. 27), Patterson conflates “Holocaust diary” with “Jewish diary.” Thus he limits further the first term, as well as giving a special definition to the second—a diary must be concerned with others to be a Jewish diary. The few lines he selects in defense of this and his other disclaimers concerning Hillesum's diary are too few to prove his point, especially because diaries generally reveal greater inconsistencies in the inner life than do memoirs or autobiographies. By the same token, it is not possible here to give sufficient quotation to demonstrate that Hillesum was connected to others. Eva Hoffman writes in her introduction to the diary that it “grew out of the intimate experience of an intellectual young woman—it was idiosyncratic, individual, and recognizably modern” (Hillesum, p. vii). With this in mind, even readers who accept Patterson's taxonomy, were they to read Hillesum's diary might decide that Etty's commitment to what she terms an “inner preparation” is not at odds with her claim that when she prays it is “always for others” (both Hillesum, p. 183).

Several of the points made so far explain why Patterson positions his study against James Young's *Writing and Rewriting the Holocaust*.³ Young not only accepts the differences amongst what he terms the “figures and narrative mythoi” (Young, p. 36) that governed the lives of the diarists, but he insists that these distinctions are central to our understanding of diaries and to our estimation of them as historical documents. His interest in the way narrative produces interpretation and how explanations of events may have affected the course of these events themselves suggests the reciprocal relationship between event and story (teller). Because Young is concerned with the constructed nature of evidence—“the kinds of events, the time and the recording” (Young, p. 25)—surely Hillesum's identity as

ture, p. 367. Mary Felstiner cites it as an example of the sort of document that “get[s] valued as a human emblem rather than as historical evidence,” in “Charlotte Salomon's Inward-turning Testimony,” in *Holocaust Remembrance: The Shapes of Memory*, ed. by Geoffrey Hartman (Cambridge: Blackwell, 1994), p. 104.

3. James E. Young, *Writing and Rewriting the Holocaust: Narrative and the Consequences of Interpretation* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1988).

a Dutch Jew would warrant his attention. In fact, it is just this sort of focus that troubles Patterson when he criticizes Young for contrasting the diaries of Moshe Flinker and Anne Frank on the basis of language, themes, and preoccupations. For Young, the different experiences of these adolescents led to their differing conclusions about what was happening to them. Patterson claims that Young is mainly concerned with “the tainted nature of the testimony” and thus takes “epistemological flight from responsibility” (p. 8). Finally, Young’s argument that diaries should not be elevated over all other forms of literature as a truer form of testimony conflicts with Patterson’s assertion that we should find our way into Holocaust diaries by “find[ing] our way into our own souls” (p. 9).

As I mentioned earlier, the reader may well want to examine more of these diaries. I would suggest that one *needs* to know more about each diary in order to evaluate Patterson’s analyses. We are given very brief quotations from the diaries, generally less than a line, in support of his arguments. While the chapter titles in the book are provocative—for example, “The Measure of Time,” “Meaning Undone,” “The Assault on the Feminine”—the reader may have difficulty deciding from the short excerpts whether the diaries emphasize these themes and whether they conform to Patterson’s genre definitions. Perhaps because his ideas about what constitutes a Holocaust diary are rigid, Patterson may not have wanted to invite us to make our own analyses, even though that process of engagement would offer us a better chance to “find our way into our own souls” and into *Along the Edge of Annihilation*.

Linda Raphael
George Washington University
Washington, D.C.



Nahma Sandrow, ed. *God, Man, and Devil: Yiddish Plays in Translation*. Syracuse: Syracuse University Press, 1999. xii, 321 pp.

Robert Skloot, ed. *The Theater of the Holocaust*. Vol.II. Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1999. viii, 407 pp.

It has been a quarter century since the last collections of Yiddish plays were published in America: Joseph Landis’ *Great Jewish Plays* and David Lifson’s *Epic and Folk Plays of the Yiddish Theater*. As Sandrow informs us in the “Appendixes,” translations of a few individual plays are found in scholarly journals or mostly out-of-print books. For this reason alone, the beautiful new volume from Syracuse is a welcome arrival. Another reason is Sandrow’s insightful introductions to the five plays featured: Jacob Gordin, *God, Man, and Devil*; Peretz Hirshbein, *Green Fields*; H. Levick, *Shop*; David Pinsky, *The Treasure*; and Osip Dimov, *Bronx Express*. Her remarks touch on the works’ stage history detailing who played what role, and how the plays fared on various European and American stages.

Landis’ governing principle in selecting plays was popularity; Lifson’s was

a particular dramatic genre. Sandrow's mix, on the other hand, seems to be aiming for variety. Thus, we find serious drama dealing with complex religious/existential questions (Gordin, Pinsky), plays about the working-class immigrant experience (Dimov and Levick), and a folk romance (Hirschbein). Some works are set in Eastern-Europe (Hirschbein, Pinsky, Gordin), while others depict the American milieu (Levick, Dimov).

These plays, as Sandrow indicates, do exist in other English translations, in some cases versions used only for a particular production and thus never properly published. Overall, Sandrow renders the Yiddish in more idiomatic, present-day American English than her predecessors, which may make the plays more attractive to interested directors or producers. Sandrow's inclusion of *Green Fields*, however, is rather puzzling since the play is readily available in the Landis anthology. One wishes that more unknown plays would be made accessible in English. (*The Dybbuk*, for example, is available in no fewer than four different translations: Landis, Morris Engel, Golda Werman, and Joachim Neugroschel.)

This said, Sandrow's selection, like Lifson and Landis' choices, shows the richness of the Yiddish stage. What sets this anthology apart is the inclusion of *Shop and Bronx Express*, two excellent examples of artistic representations of early immigrants' struggle to make it in America, to become so-called *allrightniks*, successful Jews in the new land, *di goldene medine*. The American public is familiar with these difficult times for newly-arrived Jews from the prose of such immigrant writers as Abe Cahan and Anzia Yezierska and the moving poetry of such giants as Moshe-Leib Halperin and A. Leyeles. I suspect that of the five plays, these two will attract the most attention, as they touch directly on American history. It would be wonderful if producers recognized the greatness of all these plays, especially Gordin and Hirschbein's classics, and took a chance by staging them. After all, superstars like Maurice Schwartz, Rudolph Schildkraut, Jacob P. Adler, Celia Adler, and Ida Kaminska have all played in them to great success.

In 1982, Robert Skloot published the first English-language anthology of plays on the Shoah, *The Theater of the Holocaust*. Soon after, Elinor Fuchs edited another volume, *Plays of the Holocaust—An International Anthology*. In 1996, I published my own edited book of Israeli plays, *Israeli Holocaust Drama*. In this 1999 volume, Skloot features six plays similar in theme and style to the four included in the 1982 volume. Skloot was also the first to write a critical study of this slowly emerging dramatic genre, *The Darkness We Carry—The Drama of the Holocaust*. Ten years later, Edward Isser wrote *Stages of Annihilation—Theatrical Representations of the Holocaust*; this year, Claude Schumacher, the editor of *Theater Research International*, put out a collection of seventeen essays by various drama scholars and theater practitioners, *Staging the Holocaust—The Shoah in Drama and Performance*.

In his introduction to the 1982 volume, Skloot listed five objectives of "serious playwrights who are drawn to this forbidding part of recent history: honoring the victims, teaching history to audiences, evoking emotional responses, discussing ethical issues, and suggesting solutions to universal, contemporary problems" (p. 14; also quoted in *The Darkness We Carry*, p. 10). Clearly, Skloot's criteria for judging Holocaust plays is a mixture of educational and moral values.

Fuchs, on the other hand, argues that a good Holocaust play is one that “showed catastrophic historical events as collective catastrophe . . . dramatic interest focused on the fate of the community . . . arousing disturbing emotions of rage, revulsion, helplessness” (Introduction, p. xii). Fuchs contrasts this type of play with unnamed family melodramas, supposedly American works, where the focus is on the individual or family. I imagine she is thinking of such works as Barbara Lebow’s *A Sheyne Meydl*, Jon Robin Baitz’s *Substance of Fire*, or Emily Mann’s *Annulla, An Autobiography*.

The majority of plays in Skloot’s edited volumes are the type that Fuchs prefers; the one exception in Vol.II would probably be *The Model Apartment*, a Donald Margulies piece about the fate of a couple of Brooklyn Holocaust survivors trying desperately to rid themselves of their troublesome daughter. For some reason, most of the plays are British: Howard Brenton, *Hess is Dead*; Christopher Hampton, *The Portage to San Christobal of A.H.* (based on a story by George Steiner); Bernard Kops, *Dreams of Anne Frank*; and Roy Kift, *Camp Comedy*. The Margulies play and Lenny Sack’s *The Survivor and the Translator* are the only American works.

As noted, most of these plays treat the Shoah, in Fuchs’ words, as a “collective catastrophe”; stylistically, they are surrealist, absurdist dramas. Their subjects include work about a fake Rudolf Hess in the famous Spandau prison, a ninety-year-old Hitler found by Israeli intelligence agents in the Brazilian jungle, and an Anne Frank who acts as a critic of her diary and fantasizes about life beyond the attic. Margulies’ play, the most commercially successful of the group, has stirred up a great deal of controversy by its use of comedy and the grotesque in depicting such serious Shoah issues as the relationship between first- and second-generation survivors.

Style and structure aside, these plays engage us in a variety of interesting and stimulating ways. Given the recent scholarly and media wranglings over the Anne Frank diary and its various stage and screen reincarnations, Kops’ *Dreams of Anne Frank* is particularly intriguing. One of the hotly debated points is whether the reworkings of the diary in American culture have, as Cynthia Ozick argued in *The New Yorker* (October, 1997), done more bad than good for Holocaust memory and history. There and elsewhere in print, Ozick criticizes writers, directors, and Broadway producers for stripping the diary of its Jewishness, sanitizing the Holocaust, and treating the public to what *The New York Times* critic Frank Rich calls “a sentimental, generic slab of postwar optimism exemplified by Anne’s curtain line: ‘I still believe, in spite of everything, that people are really good at heart’” (November 23, 1997). To be sure, Kops’ play is a different kind of Anne Frank play from the ones Ozick so passionately rejects. Not only is this a very Jewish play, but it is also one that manages to demystify its main character. In Kops’ own words, *Dreams of Anne Frank* accomplishes this by “taking another route, finding that specific human being, stripping away the deification and bringing her down to earth” (quoted by Skloot in his “Introduction,” p. 23).

Roy Kift’s *Camp Comedy* is an exploration of the sensitive and controversial question of Jewish collaboration in the camps and ghettos. This is a moving account of the real-life experiences of Kurt Geron, a Jewish actor and director, a

prisoner at Theresienstadt. In the summer of 1944 he is given the task of producing a propaganda documentary about the ghetto for Nazi public-relations purposes, essentially implicating him and his crew in a big deception game. However, this game—immoral as it may have been—had one very beneficial side to it: It made survival more tolerable for both the shooting crew and the subjects filmed. Kift's treatment of collaboration (some prefer the term "cooperation") invites comparisons with Joshua Sobol and Motti Lerner, two Israeli dramatists who have dealt with this theme in *Ghetto* (1984) and *Kastner* (1985), respectively. Hopefully, Skloot's volume will generate more scholarly interest in this fascinating subject.

It seems that Kops, Kift, Sobol, and Lerner are trying very hard to respond to what they perceive as the mystification of Holocaust victims. By showing them as human beings complete with admirable qualities but also with weaknesses and shortcomings, these victims become people with whom we can more easily identify. At times, choosing—between bad and worse, never between good and bad—meant resorting to less than honorable actions, but as these dramatists see it, when survival is at stake, honor and morality have to wait.

Michael Taub
SUNY Purchase
Purchase, New York



Daniel R. Schwarz. *Imagining the Holocaust*. New York: St. Martin's Press, 1999. 353 pp.

If good scholarship is supposed to be disciplined, detached, and objective, the study of the Holocaust has taught us that mental, emotional, and physical reactions—even when experienced from a temporal and spatial distance, and consciously or not—condition our conceptualized or poetic responses to the Shoah. This unarticulated psychic involvement in our recent past is perhaps the place that generates intellectual, political, ideological, and imaginative expressions. Moreover, this location signifies the meeting point of ethics and aesthetics that makes any verbal or visual attempt to convey the unspeakable and unimaginable possible, while at the same time being the very site that causes the collapse of the boundaries between objective and subjective response. How can it be otherwise? The impact of this recognition is such that even general literary, cultural, and philosophic writing, mostly influenced by Holocaust studies, has begun to consider ethics as an analytic category.¹ Daniel Schwarz's *Imagining the Holocaust* is positioned at the core of this ethical-aesthetic matrix.

Schwarz combines two uneven points of references. At the center of his study is a focus on specific Holocaust fictional works—the most discussed in contemporary studies—whereas in the margins Schwarz situates each work in the context

1. See, for example, Howard Marchitello, ed. *What Happens to History: The Renewal of Ethics in Contemporary Thought* (New York and London: Routledge, 2001).

of its Western and Jewish literary and philosophical traditions. This structural discipline is one of the book's main achievements, for it prevents the works discussed from being universalized or trivialized. On the other hand, the intellectual periphery provides its own insight in two major ways. It reveals that, despite the burden of content and the need for linguistic and imaginative inventions to express the horrors of the Holocaust, the writers of these narratives created their works within already established ethical and aesthetic traditions, and, most important, they made their own choices, intentionally or otherwise, regarding which of the available legacies to adopt. Schwarz, as others before him, tries to understand and evaluate these intellectual and poetic preferences, which brings us to the problem of the limits of representation, a term frequently used by scholars of the Holocaust but unfortunately not mentioned by Schwarz. The phrase was coined by Saul Friedländer and discussed in its diverse dimensions (historical, philosophical, literary) in his *Probing the Limits of Representation: Nazism and the "Final Solution."*² Before dealing with the association between the two works, it is necessary here to provide some examples relating to Schwarz's method of linking Holocaust fiction to modern European tradition.

On Primo Levi's *Survival in Auschwitz*, Schwarz notes that the narrator (the author's surrogate) reflects the archetype of the figure who descends to hell and returns. The description of European physical and moral destruction is textured with allusions to a glorious past of securely founded civilization so that "at times [this erstwhile world] proposes an alternative context that looks toward values of a different, more stable, and presumably more noble era" (p. 84). The works of modern poets and novelists such as T. S. Eliot in *The Wasteland* and James Joyce in *Ulysses* propose the employment of the same method. Moreover, Levi alludes to Dante's Ulysses and Virgil and their shared experience in *Inferno* as well as to Homer's Odysseus, so that this subtext establishes the archaic, heroic, and humanistic tradition by which Levi judges events in Auschwitz. Schwarz concludes his discussion of Levi's works with the observation, "Levi is a modern Dante who will read the hermeneutics of history" (p. 98). A similar phenomenon can be traced in other fictional works whose thematic texture or structural arrangement call at times for ethical judgment.

For example, Schwarz links Jerzy Kosinski's *Bildungsroman*, *The Painted Bird*, which he defines as a historical allegory for the victimization of the innocent, to Joseph Conrad's *Heart of Darkness*, for Marlow, too, descends into a world of horror and returns to question all values and beliefs in light of his experience. Yet *The Painted Bird*, according to Schwarz, is saturated with violence, perversion, pornography, sadism, and a vengeful tone, which does damage to "a sympathetic reading" (p. 192). On the same note, Schwarz traces the metamorphosis of Elie Wiesel's *Night* from its original Yiddish version founded on the prophetic tradition of the Bible and on Jewish literature into the French *La Nuit*. He agrees with Naomi Seidman's observation³ that this change—transpired through Francois Mauri-

2. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1992.

3. In "Elie Wiesel and the Scandal of Jewish Rage," *Jewish Social Studies: History, Culture and Society* 3:1 (Fall 1996): 1–19.

ac's modifying introduction—alters the text's thematic center, which is grounded in the parochial European tradition of the suffering, frustrated, and outrageous Jew, transforming it into the Christian theology of rebirth and resurrection. Schwarz judges this type of thematic appropriation to be an ethical transgression.

Especially interesting is Schwarz's association of Aharon Appelfeld's parables, *Badenheim 1939* and *The Retreat*, with Thomas Mann's *Death in Venice* and *The Magic Mountain*. These writers describe European civilization and Jewish-European culture as a hermetic world undergoing a process of moral decay and social and political disintegration. But, asserts Schwarz, Appelfeld draws upon Kafka's objectivity and the language of the absurd as much as he is inspired by Jewish folk tradition so that in these stories, as well as in others, the semantic and semiotic texture embodies allusions to both Hasidic tales and Kafka's *Metamorphosis*. Although Appelfeld's stories exhibit close association with modern literature, at the same time, the fragmentation of characters signifies the use of post-modern technique, as Gila Ramras-Rauch notes and Schwarz concurs.⁴ Needless to mention that, as this concise outline suggests, *Imagining the Holocaust* reflects on the dialogic relations between classical, modern, and postmodern themes and modes, on the one hand, and narratives of the Shoah, on the other. The universal texts and the Holocaust fiction express mutual thematic and stylistic concerns that include: the crisis of European civilization and the rethinking of humanistic values; the quest for a father and home; the relation between art and life; or writing as self-reflection, creation, and affirmation; the sense of the (dis)integrated self; linguistic and artistic experimentation; primitivism and modernity; and so on.

If in both European and Jewish traditions the thematic configuration of Holocaust narratives is directly related to the ethical problems emerging from such conceptual correlations as those between human beliefs and behavior, the idea of history and its teleological principle, civilization and the utilization of technology, the merit of logic and the significance of myth, the valuable weight of tradition in the face of modernity, or moral choice, sociopolitical pressure, and the ontological limits of resistance, then for Schwarz the coordination between ethical and aesthetic parameters in Holocaust fiction is embedded in the choice of genre. There is no groundbreaking novelty in this insight; the ongoing controversy over the limits of representation is epitomized by this very issue. However, Schwarz's argument for accepting new poetic boundaries in Holocaust narrative form is innovative. Before elaborating, let me briefly outline his method.

Schwarz distinguishes genres that offer a teleology from those suggesting a different structural and textual design. Books of fiction such as Tadeusz Borowski's *This Way for the Gas, Ladies and Gentlemen* or Gerald Green's *Holocaust* (both the TV production and the novel), including diaries and memoirs, are signified as realistic writing even when containing parabolic features. On the other hand, Andre Schwarz-Bart's *The Last of the Just* or Cynthia Ozick's *The Shawl* and *Rosa* are defined as parable or fantasy respectively. For example, Schwarz emphasizes the humanistic teleology suggested in *The Diary of Ann Frank*, Sophie Goetzl-

4. Gila Ramras-Rauch. *Aharon Appelfeld* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1994) pp. 18–19.

Leviathan's *The War from Within*, and John Hersey's *The Wall*, and their representation of the Jew as an ideal and universal humanist. This kind of delineation makes these books available to both Jews and non-Jews in America as much as it explains their success with a heterogeneous audience. Arguing against Sidra DeKoven Ezrahi,⁵ Schwarz notes, "She fears that redefining the Holocaust in terms of Western humanism corrupts the Holocaust . . . but whether we can say that one way of presenting the Holocaust is better than another . . . is moot. In fact . . . there are many diverse traditions" (pp. 144–145). Indeed, Schwarz moves on in search of other modes of Holocaust representations, but before doing so he examines some more complex problems emerging from the ethic-poetic junctures in realistic novels.

A case in point is William Styron's *Sophie's Choice*. Defining it as a docu-fiction and a realistic novel, Schwarz investigates the narrative as a story that, by allowing the various speakers to tell their true or invented autobiographies, illustrates the connection between memory and narrative in a comparative manner. Still, the disputable aspect of this writing resides not in the chosen theme as it is inherent in the overall structure of the story and the imbalance created between its narratological segments, and this in addition to the author's use of a problematic technique in characterization. In Schwarz's words, "That Styron asks us to think of Southerners as victims of prejudice in a Holocaust novel seems limp to some readers. . . . Moreover, we notice that within Styron's novel it is the Jews . . . who are at times stereotyped if not travestied. . . . The narrator is doing what he says he will not do, that is *draining* the Holocaust of its substance by using it as contextual rather than essential role. . . . Styron is not beyond insensitivity if not anti-Semitism" (pp. 203–204).

Narratological mechanisms of structuring and characterization are also applied by Thomas Keneally to his realistic novel, *Schindler's List*, and by Steven Spielberg to the epic film by the same name. In this case though, those elements missing or distorted in the novel, that is, the misrepresentation of Jewish tradition and the confused and misleading depiction of Jewish values, are visually corrected and appropriated in the film. For one, the diachronic and synchronic arrangement of episodes in the movie reflects the technical disposition of events in the Bible. As Erich Auerbach describes biblical style in contrast to the Homeric epics in his *Mimesis: The Representation of Reality in Western Literature*, crucial events in the Bible are foregrounded while others less significant are either relegated to the background or missing altogether, and only implied at times through dialogues. Spielberg utilizes this very narratological technique. Although in principle the ocular image of Schindler is based on the written text that indirectly delineates his character through the Jews' reaction to his behavior, which imbues him with magic power, the weaving of the visual incidents in the film enlarges his figure to the epic-biblical proportion of a miracle worker who can suspend history. Moreover, the camera, which reflects community conscience, creates an optical dialogue with familiar visual and textual mythopoetic representations of the Holocaust, so that the images on the screen mirror our collective knowledge of Holocaust events.

5. *By Words Alone: The Holocaust in Literature* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1980) p. 2.

Most important, Spielberg is aware of European Jewish culture, and he stresses Jewish customs and traditions. By ending the pictorial story in Israel, Spielberg structures the film on the teleological principle of universal history, that is, drawing a movement from the Shoah to the State of Israel, thereby underscoring Jewish survival and continuity.

Leslie Epstein's *King of the Jews* is considered by Schwarz a breakthrough in Holocaust representation for its abandonment of the realistic form. It suggests a further development in style and tone from Tadeusz Borowski's *This Way for the Gas*, which in itself offers a movement away from the representation of naturalistic verisimilitude through grotesque images and cynical tone. Both writers have sensed that the realistic form is problematic in the way it depicts Holocaust experience. Hence, the fantasy and surrealism that control the parabolic *King of the Jews*, its humoristic and satiric tone, its grotesque imagery, and its vaudevillian narrating style enable Epstein to deal with the complex ethical issues regarding the behavior of the Judenrat during the Holocaust. Relying on Jewish traditional narrative style and sensitivity, and in contrast to Borowski's cynicism, Epstein is concerned with the helplessness and powerlessness of the Jews. By making the Elder (based on the controversial figure of Rumkowski, the head of the Judenrat in the Lodz ghetto) an ambiguous individual, Epstein avoids a restricted negative moral diagnosis of the Judenrat, preferring instead to draw a positive line of hope and survival for future generations.

A wider extension of the parameters of representation is suggested in Art Spiegelman's *Maus*, which offers a postmodern examination of the impact of European history, including its eventful terror and anxiety as well as its artistic traditions and imaginative inspiration, on the private history of two generations, a survivor and his son. The experimental mixed form of verbal and visual narrative, which includes, for example, the exposure of the characters' psyches and the use of the comic mode for humanizing and artistic expressions, allows us to identify with the victims on a humanistic universal ground.

Schwarz takes a cue from Barbara Foley's assertion that "those narrative forms—both factual and fictive—that rely upon an informing teleology, generally prove inadequate to the task of encompassing the full significance of Holocaust experience" (p. 207).⁶ For Schwarz, "Much of Holocaust narrative is quite conservative and traditional. . . . The paradox is that perhaps at this distance of years the Holocaust may be better grasped within the human ken of understanding rather than when isolated as a sacred event apart from human history" (p. 302). This requirement for a human treatment of the Shoah is fulfilled in Cynthia Ozick's *The Shawl* and *Rosa*. Schwarz ends his book by presenting two primary ethical questions raised by Bruno Schulz's *The Street of Crocodiles* and *Sanitarium Under the Sign of the Hourglass*, on the one hand, and Cynthia Ozick's response to Schulz in *The Messiah of Stockholm*, on the other: the ethical difficulty encountered through invading the past and creating and (re)inventing oneself in the context of its histo-

6. In "Fact, Fiction, Fascism: Testimony and Mimesis in Holocaust Narratives," *Comparative Literature* 34:4 (Fall 1982): 353.

ry and the moral dilemma of forgery. The major complication then, as Schwarz puts it, is the mode we choose in our quest for truth about the Holocaust and about ourselves. One possible response to these problems is reflected in Schwarz's own book, and here we reach full circle, confronting Schwarz's own identity as a humanist in his worldview, scholar of modern literature, and Jew.

In Schwarz's own words, "As a humanist, I want to show how these narratives are about humans, by humans, and for humans" (p. 4). Reflecting on his academic career after publishing books that include *The Humanistic Heritage: Critical Theories of the English Novel from James to Hillis Miller*, *The Transformation of the English Novel, 1890–1930*, and others written more or less in a similar vein, Schwarz notes, "For several decades, Jewish scholars passionately taught and still teach Anglo-American literature, but now how many are rethinking whether these professional interests have repressed ethnic concerns" (p. 17). For him, as for his readers, *Imagining the Holocaust* provides an epistemological ground, painful, controversial, and complex as it is, for the establishment of self-identity through an imaginative and intellectual journey into Jewish recent history and its collective responses, which also entails, as he so eruditely demonstrates, a quest for universal Jewish and European history, culture, and traditions.

Schwarz's style is fluent and direct. Instead of presenting historical and philosophical abstractions, he prefers to found his thoughts on the fictional works themselves. Through a close reading of the narratives, Schwarz develops an intellectual dialogue not only with the authors of selected fictional works but with other scholars of the Shoah as well, and he does so without suppressing his own views on highly controversial issues. As a contemporary *darshan*, he asks many questions and is courageous enough to try to deal with the most grievous and difficult dilemmas, engaging along the way his rich knowledge of Western and Jewish artistic and literary traditions. For this, and because he encourages the expansion of the boundaries in Holocaust representation, the appearance of Schwarz's book is a significant event in Holocaust studies.

I cannot help but try to close another circle that touches upon the roots of my own identity as an Israeli. Schwarz considers Hebrew literature of the Shoah and its Zionist context in his examination of the writing of Appelfeld, whose works are perhaps the most discussed outside Israel. But there are other fictional works worth mentioning that demonstrate complex responses in addition to thematic and stylistic trajectories in Israeli discourses on Jewish and Israeli identity (cultural as well as ideological) and its interconnection to the changing perceptions of what constitutes exilic (*galut*) and Israeli mentality (psychologically and ideologically)—a problem explained, illustrated, and mapped by Yael Feldman in her essay, "Whose Story Is It, Anyway? Ideology and Psychology in the Representation of the Shoah in Israeli Literature."⁷ Significantly associated with Schwarz's presentation is Yoram Kaniuk's *Adam Ben Kelev* (*Adam Resurrected*) and its carnivalesque-dialogic link to Epstein's *King of the Jews* and David Grossman's *'Ayen 'Erech 'Ahavah* (*See Under: Love*) and its imaginative correspondence to the works of

7. In Friedlander, ed. *Probing the Limits of Representation*, pp. 223–39.

Bruno Schulz and Cynthia Ozick. Perhaps a comparative work on similar and different developments in Holocaust fiction as it has evolved in the two continents still awaits its realization.

Yona Shapira
Tulane University
New Orleans, Louisiana



Allison P. Coudert. *The Impact of the Kabbalah in the Seventeenth Century: The Life and Thought of Francis Mercury van Helmont (1614–98)*. Brill's Series in Jewish Studies. Leiden: Brill, 1999. xx, 418 pp.

Allison Coudert is not the first historian to underscore the importance of the seventeenth century as a critical moment in the history of Jewish-Christian relations in Western civilization. Scholars engaged in Spinoza's thought have focused for some time now on the rich converso culture of Amsterdam and its mediating role between Judaism and Christianity.¹ More recently, the messiahship of Shabbetai Zevi and the crisis his apostasy precipitated in the Jewish world have been scrutinized within the broader context of Jewish-Christian interactions.² Coudert is the first, however, to study closely the circle of Christian thinkers and their fascination with the Kabbalah at the court of Sulzbach, especially Francis Mercury Van Helmont, the son of a famous Paracelsian physician, and his close colleague, Christian Knorr von Rosenroth, the compiler of the greatest Latin collection of Kabbalist writings ever published, the *Kabbala denudata*.

Gershom Scholem, among others, held a high regard for Van Rosenroth's accomplishments,³ and Frank Manuel begrudgingly acknowledged the influence of Van Helmont on Henry More, Ann Conway, Gottfried Leibniz, and some of the Quakers,⁴ but neither undertook a systematic examination of the political and intellectual worlds of these remarkable thinkers. Coudert has accomplished this task in a careful and intelligent manner. She has read extensively the writings of each of these principal thinkers and more; has studied the political context of their interactions based on impressive archival research; and has not only availed herself of the most recent work of intellectual historians working on the seventeenth century, especially those associated with the work of Richard Popkin, but has also attempted to read widely in the recent work of historians working on Jewish culture in early modern Europe. The result is an impressive reconstruction of a relatively

1. I refer here generally to the many volumes edited and written by Richard Popkin, Yosef Kaplan, David Katz, E. G. E. Van der Wall, and many others.

2. See, for example, the work of Yosef Kaplan, Jacob Barnai, and Elishevah Carlebach.

3. See, for example, his *Kabbalah* (Jerusalem, 1974), pp. 416–19.

4. See his *The Broken Staff: Judaism Through Christian Eyes* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1992), pp. 143–47.

neglected subject whose importance lies beyond the field of Jewish-Christian relations, touching on the history of science, the origins of the Enlightenment, and the notion of political and religious toleration in the modern era.⁵

Coudert's point of departure is clearly the work of her distinguished teacher, the late Frances Yates, who had vigorously argued more than thirty-five years ago for the significant role of occultist thinking in the shaping of modern science and culture. Although Coudert is well aware of the excesses of some of Yates' grandiose claims and the specific revisions offered by her thoughtful critics over the years, she is, nevertheless, quite convinced of the overall legitimacy of Yates' thesis. Her rich intellectual biography of Van Helmont is merely the launching pad to canvass the larger intellectual links he established with his illustrious contemporaries, Christian August, the count of Sulzbach, Von Rosenroth, More, Conway, Leibniz, George Keith, the Quaker theologian, and even John Locke. What emerges is a clear demonstration of the centrality of the Kabbalah in the consciousness of Christian thinkers very much engaged in the critical religious and political issues of their age, in many ways analogous to the uses of the Kabbalah two centuries earlier in the work of such thinkers as Pico della Mirandola and Johannes Reuchlin. Unlike these fifteenth-century figures, however, Coudert's subjects, through the masterful translations of Von Rosenroth, assimilated especially some of the principal themes of the Kabbalistic system of Isaac Luria, as transposed into a neo-Platonic key by such Jewish writers as Israel Sarug, Abraham Herrera, and Joseph Delmedigo.

What emerges, according to Coudert, is an enthusiastic appropriation of Lurianic notions by these Christian intellectuals, especially their use of his view of transmigration (*gilgul*) and his radical optimism as reflected in the notion of *tikkun*. Although mixed with other forms of gnosticism found in Hermetic, Neoplatonic, and alchemical sources, their new infusion of Lurianic ideas is significant for several reasons. In the first place, these thinkers adopted a vitalistic philosophy of perfectionism and universal salvation at the expense of rejecting partially or completely the traditional Christian notions of predestination, original sin, and the eternity of hell, while at least minimizing the role of Christ in the redemptive process. Second, by de-emphasizing these dogmas, they promoted a more tolerant and open version of Christianity that blurred the boundaries between Catholics and Protestants and between Christians and Jews. Third, by privileging the Jewish notions of theodicy and progress, they reveal their great indebtedness to Jewish and converso thought at a critical moment in the reshaping of Western culture. Finally, these individuals exemplify the religious roots of the process of secularization and the Enlightenment and the intimate connections of Jewish and Christian gnosticism and messianism with science, toleration, and progress.

These are not small claims and, if correct, they call for a major re-evaluation of much previous thinking about the origins of the Enlightenment, on the one hand,

5. In some interesting ways, her work converges with that of the Italian historian Sylvia Berti. See especially her "A World Apart? Gershom Scholem and Contemporary Readings of 17th Century Jewish-Christian Relations," *Jewish Studies Quarterly* 3 (1996): 212–24; and her "At the Roots of Unbelief," *Journal of the History of Ideas* 56 (1995): 555–75.

and the place of Jewish ideas in the shaping of early modern European culture, on the other. Especially noticeable is Coudert's plea directed at the Scholem school calling for the integration of the Kabbalah into the cultural history of Christian Europe. By her careful study of how Lurianic notions were not merely translated into Latin but integrated into the Christian thinking of Van Helmont and Von Rosenroth, and through them, a circle of other associates, Coudert has made her most important contribution. No doubt her own readings of these thinkers will be challenged and refined by future researchers, particularly regarding the weight she attributes to Kabbalistic ideas in the evolution of their theologies. Nevertheless, her well-researched and stimulating book has significantly advanced our understanding of both the history of modern thought and its ecumenical underpinnings.

David B. Ruderman
University of Pennsylvania
Philadelphia, Pennsylvania



Norman Lamm, ed. *The Religious Thought of Hasidism: Text and Commentary. Sources and Studies in Kabbalah, Hasidism and Jewish Thought*, vol. 4. New York: Yeshiva University Press, 1999. xlix, 711 pp.

For half a century the Buber-Scholem debate over the essence of Hasidic teachings and literature defined the parameters of scholarly discussion of Hasidism. A new generation of scholars has taken the discussion of Hasidism in new and fruitful directions in recent years. One result of this new research has been an interest in making the theological literature of Hasidism available to English readers. This volume is a welcome addition to this growing body of literature. Relying only on Hasidic stories instead of the theological writings of Hasidism, particularly as they were selected and edited by Martin Buber, has led to a distorted and reductionist understanding of Hasidism and its place in the Jewish mystical tradition. The theologically and intellectually sophisticated aspects of Hasidism were not taken into account in popular descriptions of the movement. On the contrary, Hasidism was seen as an anti-intellectual populist folk movement and even a break with the rabbinic tradition in some respects. Correcting this misconception and acquainting the reader with the intellectual and spiritual foundations of Hasidism is a primary goal for Norman Lamm, the editor of this volume.

His second aim is to show the intellectual creativity and diversity of Hasidic thought. Though sharing common foundations, the Hasidic masters were often original and creative thinkers. Lamm concentrates on the teachings of the masters of the first three generations. The first generation of Hasidism was the Baal Shem Tov (Besht) and his contemporaries, such as R. Gershon of Kutly and R. Pinehas of Koretz, figures seen as colleagues of the Besht rather than as his disciples. The leading masters of the second generation were the Besht's immediate disciples, most notably R. Jacob Joseph of Pollnoye and R. Dov Baer, the Magid of Mezhi-

rech. The third generation were primarily the disciples of the Magid of Mezhirech. The leading figures of this generation include R. Shneur Zalman of Liadi, R. Levi Yizhak of Berdichev, R. Elimelech of Lyzhansk, and many others. R. Nahman of Bratzlav and R. Moshe Hayyim Ephraim of Sudilkov, though not disciples of the Magid of Mezhirech, were also considered to be in the third generation. Lamm has chosen to concentrate on these teachers for pragmatic reasons including the limitations of space, and not because, as has been argued in the past, Hasidic creativity declined after this period. There were original and creative Hasidic thinkers throughout the nineteenth century and well into the twentieth century. Two later figures that Lamm quotes often are R. Elimelekh of Dinov and R. Zadok ha-Cohen of Lublin. Their inclusion is a personal preference, their teachings having a particular interest for Lamm.

The writings of the Hasidic masters are not systematic theological treatises, but collections of sermons delivered on sabbaths and festivals. The notable exception is R. Shneur Zalman of Liadi's *Likkutei Amarim (Tanya)*. Lamm has culled the theological "nuggets" from the more extensive sermons in which they are embedded. His selections are well chosen and convey not only the ideas but also the style and methodology of Hasidic writings to the nonspecialist.

The book is organized thematically rather than by individuals. In that way it is easier to see how different Hasidic masters have approached basic theological concepts. The teachings are divided into eighteen chapters. They include basic theological concepts such as God and Providence, the Soul, Faith, Torah Study, Love and Fear, Prayer, Evil and Suffering, Life and Death, Exile and Redemption and others. Other topics more specific to the kabbalistic and Hasidic traditions, such as *Devekut*, the *Zaddik*, Worship through Corporeality, Joy and Dejection, and Smallness and Greatness, are also considered. The last chapter is on women in Hasidic thought.

Each chapter begins with an introduction that puts the topic of the chapter into the larger context of Jewish thought. This is followed by a selection of excerpts from a variety of Hasidic masters. The source of each extract is noted and the passage is carefully annotated, making it more accessible to the general reader. The number of selections in each chapter varies from under ten to more than forty. Not surprisingly, the chapter on the *Zaddik* has the largest number of excerpts, forty-three.

This volume is the most comprehensive anthology of Hasidic theological teachings in English to date. It is a most welcome addition to the literature on Hasidism in English and is an excellent introduction to the theology of Hasidism. It can be highly recommended as an entry to the riches of Hasidism for the nonspecialist and would make an excellent text for a course on the teachings of Hasidism.

Morris M. Faierstein
University of Maryland
College Park, Maryland



Eugene B. Borowitz and Frances Weinman Schwartz. *The Jewish Moral Virtues*. Philadelphia: JPS, 1999. xxii, 360 pp.

Aaron Levine. *Case Studies in Jewish Business Ethics*. The Library of Jewish Law and Ethics, Volume XXII. Hoboken: KTAV and New York: Yeshiva University Press, 2000. xviii, 419 pp.

Byron Sherwin. *Jewish Ethics for the Twenty-First Century: Living in the Image of God*. Syracuse: Syracuse University Press, 2000. xxvi, 203 pp.

While each of these three books is about Jewish ethics, they take very different approaches to the topic, serve different purposes, and speak to different audiences. If nothing else, they—and a number of other books about Jewish ethics published in recent years—collectively demonstrate that Jews are paying serious attention not only to the theological, legal, historical, social, and cultural aspects of Jewish identity, but also to the Jewish tradition's moral import.

In doing so, methodology has become a key underlying issue: How should we access the Jewish tradition for its moral application to our times? Answering that critically depends, in turn, on how one understands such subjects as revelation and the authority of Jewish law. Clearly, if one takes a Reform approach, for example, individual conscience and autonomy will play a much larger role than they will if one takes a Conservative or Orthodox approach, where Jewish law is considered binding. Similarly, if one sees Jewish law as developing over time, as the Conservative Movement does, the substance of the law to which we are bound may well be different from what is construed to be the law in Orthodoxy.

But the methodological problem goes beyond these familiar denominational differences, for even if you assume that we should follow God's will exactly as it has come down to us in the various codes and responsa—the Orthodox position—on many issues you will have a hard time discerning what God wants of us in our time because technological, social, and political changes have significantly changed our reality from that of our ancestors. Indeed, ancient and medieval sources did not even contemplate current realities, let alone deal with them. One must therefore be open to the possibility that the Jewish tradition may have nothing on point to say about a contemporary problem, although, with proper attention to methodology, situations like that, I think, are rare. (For ten approaches to this methodological issue, see *Contemporary Jewish Ethics and Morality: A Reader*, Elliot N. Dorff and Louis E. Newman, eds., New York: Oxford, 1995, chpts. 6–15.)

It is precisely the lack of attention to methodology that bothers me most about Aaron Levine's book, *Case Studies in Jewish Business Ethics*. Typical of Orthodox writers, Levine pays no attention at all to the writings of people who come from the other movements in Judaism. At some point, I would hope, it may dawn on the Orthodox that they constitute less than ten percent of North American Jewry and that they at least need to consider the approaches of the other denominations, even if only to disagree with them. One can even demand that their disagreements take the form of reasoned arguments. Who knows? Maybe Orthodox

writers who bother to read the other movements' materials may even learn from them!

Moreover, Levine's methodology prevents him from considering whether Jewish law ought to be changed to meet the business conditions of our times. That is, he reports and applies Jewish law to specific cases—often deftly—but he never asks whether modern conditions would suggest that Jewish law be changed altogether.

So, for example, Levine describes how Jewish law forbidding Jews to charge other Jews interest can accommodate modern commercial conditions through adaptations of the sixteenth-century document that gives “permission to do business” (*heter iska*). But the prohibition applies only to Jews doing business with other Jews, which is now a rarity. The very case that Levine uses to illustrate this law involves an encyclopedia salesman by the name of Henry Blackwell and his potential clients, the Fishers. Is Blackwell Jewish? Is the company for which he works Jewish? Levine never deals with the fact that the vast majority of companies these days are conglomerates, and even companies that used to be family-owned businesses have now generally “gone public,” so that they are owned by members of the family and other stock holders. Minimally, I would have expected Levine to mention whether these laws apply at all to observant Jews engaging in business with such companies (including banks and stock brokerages). But even in the minority of cases in which Jews are dealing directly and solely with other Jews, can such business be conducted ignoring contemporary market assumptions and conditions? The very institution of the *heter iska* was intended to take into account the new market conditions of its time, in which interest was just assumed, so that Jews would have permission to do business (the literal meaning of *heter iska*) in those times; now, when Jews are much more involved in the general marketplace, and when that marketplace is truly global, one would expect that Jewish law might have to change yet again to accommodate the Torah's laws against charging interest. So, for example, perhaps the scope of those laws needs to be narrowed to apply only to transactions of very specific types so that observant Jews can indeed do business in our time. Such a possibility, and even the underlying problem, are not even mentioned.

The first chapter, on moral education, is by far the least satisfying; Levine does much better when he gets to the area he really knows—namely, business. He describes a number of traits that it would be desirable to inculcate in our children and ourselves, but only once does he talk about how—specifically, that parents should not lie to children. A chapter entitled “Moral Education” demands a much more sophisticated understanding of the nature and methods of education generally and of moral education in particular. Carol Ingall's award-winning book on the subject, *Transmission and Transformation: A Jewish Perspective on Moral Education* (New York: Jewish Theological Seminary of America, 1999) is a much better resource for a Jewish theory of, and practical guide for, moral education.

Still, Levine's book has much to recommend it. Beginning each chapter with a specific case, like secular textbooks in business ethics, helps to focus and clarify the discussion even for those not accustomed to business terms and modes of

transaction. It would have been better, though, to list the issues of each chapter in the Table of Contents rather than the name of the case. Levine includes helpful glossaries of terms in American and Jewish law, and his summaries of, and comparisons to, American law clarify where Judaism differs from contemporary assumptions and where it is similar. These comparisons also give the discussion a distinctly contemporary ring. Moreover, Levine clearly summarizes the relevant concepts and precedents of Jewish law—of which he clearly has encyclopedic knowledge—before applying them to the modern case. For all these reasons, this is a book worth reading. It is also a book worth using in classes on Jewish business ethics, provided that students are repeatedly warned about the Orthodox limitations of this book and exposed to other Jewish approaches to the same issues.

The Jewish Moral Virtues, by Eugene Borowitz and Frances Schwartz, is, in contrast, quite clear about its methodological assumptions, describing them in the very first chapter. The authors tell us that they will call upon a plethora of Jewish sources, including not only Bible, Talmud, and Midrash, but medieval and modern writers, and even Yiddish, Ladino, and Iraqi Jewish epigrams spoken by ordinary people. They note the problem of selecting some virtues and not others, correctly saying that in a finite book “There is never a fully satisfactory response to that charge” (p. 7), and then explain that their selections are based on the twenty-four virtues discussed by the first author of a well-received book on Jewish virtues, the late-thirteenth-century Roman Jewish scribe, Yehiel b. Yekutiel b. Binyamin Harofe. One can surely argue whether that is a good basis for deciding which virtues to include or exclude, but at least the authors have revealed their method of selection and the grounds for it. They also note that while Yehiel could simply cite biblical verses for each virtue and presume that his audience would immediately see the compelling nature of that virtue, biblical verses do not have that power in our time, and so the authors have expanded on each virtue with more contemporary arguments and applications.

They are also clear about their organizational pattern. They note that through Chapter 19 they have grouped the virtues loosely into five sections and then “tackle the difficult process of converting learning to doing” (p. 8) in chapters on Torah and observing the commandments, repentance, and prayer (chpts. 20–22). Finally, at the end of the book, they discuss God, “Our Ground, Our Guide, Our Goal.” Thus they have gone from the concrete to the abstract in the way that people are likely to experience these virtues.

The chapters on each virtue are written in a light, contemporary tone that belies the considerable research that went into writing this volume. It includes a delightful mix of ancient, medieval, and modern wisdom, including, in some cases, stories that come from the authors’ own lives. Moreover, their suggestions for how we should live by these virtues are often poignant and even funny, especially in the chapter on common decency. They also balance the virtues against each other. So, for example, they argue for compassion with justice, religious zeal but not zealotry.

I have some quibbles about specific issues in the book, together with one disappointment. In their chapter on trustworthiness, I wish that Borowitz and Schwartz had spoken about its role in business, where it is absolutely critical. As a college student, I once accompanied my father, a civil engineer, to the lumberyard, where

he ordered lumber for a building he was constructing with just an oral agreement and a handshake. Given that both he and the salesman could lose a lot of money if either one of them reneged on the deal, I asked my father how they could do that. He shrugged his shoulders and then told me that even a detailed contract with a person you do not trust is not worth the paper it is written on, but people regularly do business with those they trust on the basis of oral agreements alone. Similarly, the chapter on embarrassment (*boshet*) has no reference to the important discussion in *Bava Kamma* 86b on the elements of embarrassment—a personal sense of shame, degradation in the eyes of others, and dishonor of one's family.

On page 36, I have problems with two decisions that the authors claim demonstrate trustworthiness. In one, they endorse lying to a patient rather than scaring him or her with the doctor's grim diagnosis. There is some support for that approach within the Jewish tradition, but I frankly find it highly problematic. The family and patient dance around each other as they pretend that they do not both know that the prospects are bad. Under those circumstances, the patient cannot openly cry with those near and dear, express worry about what is to come, or gain comfort from them. Moreover, lying infantilizes the patient. Tact is obviously in order, and visitors should focus on what the patient can still hope to do in his or her life, but ultimately honesty enables far more effective caring.

On that same page, the authors recommend keeping a promise to cremate a parent. Here the Jewish tradition actually gives the opposite instruction, maintaining that both parents and children have the duty to obey God and so Jewish law supersedes what our parents may want (*Sifra* on Lev. 19:3; B. *Yevamot* 5b). At the least, I wish that the authors had explained their arguments against that logic.

The least satisfying chapters in the book are the most theological ones at its end. The light style that works throughout the book does not work well when it comes to God, law, and prayer. Moreover, the topics require a much more thorough analysis than the one provided; I honestly felt cheated. I also wish that the authors had made the point that living by the virtues they describe is one of the Jewish tradition's paths to knowing God. Still, on balance, this book includes a wonderful discussion of a number of Jewish virtues and is well worth the read. It may even change some behavior!

Byron Sherwin's *Jewish Ethics for the Twenty-First Century* consists of eight chapters unified by the theme of creation in the image of God, which Sherwin discusses in the first chapter. The topics include health and healing, euthanasia, genetic engineering, parent-child relations, reproductive technologies and cloning, *zedakah*, and repentance. The truly special thing about Sherwin's treatment of several of these topics—especially genetic engineering and reproductive technologies—is his use of the Golem legends in addition to other Jewish sources. Throughout his book Sherwin evidences not only mastery of the wealth of Jewish materials and ideas that can reasonably apply to modern issues, but also the analytic skills to identify important comparisons to American and Christian approaches and the creativity to suggest new resolutions. So, for example, he makes a sharp distinction between Calvin's understanding of poverty as punishment and Judaism's view of poverty as tragedy. In what is bound to be a controversial chapter, he argues on the basis of Jewish sources for the permissibility of active euthanasia, thus challeng-

ing the mainstream position of the past and present. He also is scrupulously honest about the variety of approaches within Judaism to a number of topics—e.g., the moral status of the body and the identity of the image of God within us. In the end, the moral lesson of this book is that in an age of increasing technology, we must strive ever harder to become intensely human (e.g., p. 87).

Sherwin finds genetic engineering for purposes of creating more fruitful plants and animals as well as life-saving pharmaceuticals unequivocally good, indeed “both obligatory and desirable” (p. 122). I am currently serving on a federal commission to review and revise the government’s guidelines on research on human subjects, and much of our work is to insure that people do not suffer serious harm through such research. Some healthy volunteers have even died. And genetic engineering of plants and animals carries the risks of leaving only one species of tomato, for example. What happens when that species is decimated by some organism? Biodiversity, in other words, is critical for human existence. In humans, animals, and plants, in other words, our enthusiasm for new genetic breakthroughs must be tempered with great caution. Still, Sherwin’s judgments and arguments are, in general, sound, with clear attention to the methodological issues I raised at the outset, and his book, although not easy reading, is well worth the effort.

Elliot N. Dorff
University of Judaism
Los Angeles, California



David R. Blumenthal. *The Banality of Good and Evil: Moral Lessons from the Shoah and Jewish Tradition*. Washington, D.C.: Georgetown University Press, 1999. vii, 326 pp.

The Banality of Good and Evil, by David R. Blumenthal, a scholar/rabbi of Judaic Studies at Emory University, is a welcome addition to the understanding of good and evil. What makes this work unique is that Professor Blumenthal has been able to combine the research from social and experimental psychology, philosophy, education, literature on the Holocaust and rescuers during the Nazi era, and religious teachings from the Jewish tradition.

In his fourteen chapters, Blumenthal manages to present a body of knowledge which is accessible not only to college-level students, but also to the general public. The first chapter deals with a Jewish-Nazi he knew who possessed rigidity, hatefulness, and dictatorial approaches in his relationship to others. In Chapter 2, he comprehensively reviews the study of altruism in the fields of social and experimental psychology. Focusing on the Staub, the Milgram, and the Stanford prison experiments, Blumenthal illustrates hierarchical authority, which leads ordinary people to commit extraordinary evil. In the Staub experiment, a task was assigned to three groups; one group was permitted to leave the room, another was given no instruction about leaving the room, and the third was prohibited from

leaving the room. Cries of distress were then simulated in an adjacent room. In the experiment using children, the children followed authority in the no-instruction group and the group prohibited from leaving the room. However, when adults were the subjects, they followed authority only in the “prohibited” group, while the no-instruction and permitted-to-leave groups got involved in helping. Blumenthal maintains that authority can permit ethically correct behavior; that is, authority can function, as authority, to justify and permit pro-social, as well as evil, behavior toward one’s fellow being. Focusing on Milgram’s Yale experiment, he shows that hierarchical authority can lead people to commit acts of cruelty, as demonstrated by people’s predisposition to obey authority.

Blumenthal conducted an experiment in his own class in order to examine students’ response to no authority or direction. He concluded that the students expected authority and direction; without it there was some confusion, and some students even walked out. He gives other examples in hierarchical rule where some individuals help because they have learned caring norms from leaders and society, which encourage them to help. A number of examples are given from Dutch and Polish rescuers, where caring norms and the role of moral leaders prompted them to risk their lives on behalf of Jews.

Blumenthal speaks about the importance of teaching and praxis. Teaching can have racial and authoritarian content, or caring in the pro-social behavior. Additionally, Blumenthal believes personal competence and commitment to intelligent moral judgement could help prevent immoral acts. He discusses the role of *extensivity*, proposed by the Oliners, to explain such traits as inclusiveness, attachment, connectedness, openness, acceptance, and diversity. These factors help facilitate pro-social attitudes and behaviors.

Blumenthal emphasizes the importance of childhood discipline and personality development. Describing Alice Miller’s book on authoritarian childhood upbringing and obedience, he states that frequently children who are humiliated and abused become good candidates as adults for authoritarian racist hate groups. He also discusses the Freudian notion of repression, idealization, identification with strong leaders, projection, displacement of aggression, scapegoating, xenophobia, and a rigid adherence to conventional values, which are building blocks of Nazism/fascism. Similarly, the modeling of goodness and caring imprints itself into a kind of behavior that has been demonstrated in the rescue activity of Jews in Nazi-occupied Europe.

In Chapters 6 and 7 Blumenthal addresses the valued-concept of pro-social life, which consists of *commitment to intelligent moral judgement, intellectual perseverance, moral strength, righteous anger, moral courage, love, compassion, respect, honor, devotion, friendship, justice, caring, inclusiveness, extensivity, bonding, attachment, empathy, critical consciousness, empowerment, and protest*. These, he feels, can result in “manufacturing” goodness in society.

Blumenthal sees a need to identify the authority that is demanding obedience as well as the authority that is demanding resistance; to establish contact with victims; and to learn and listen to their suffering by making person-to-person contact with them and identifying one’s feelings with theirs.

Another important contribution of this work is the voice of Jewish religious tradition and how it helps to understand and buttress social justice. Blumenthal thoroughly examines the relevant social processes such as justice, charity, compassion, obligation to one's neighbor, and many others that come from centuries of Jewish moral and ethical teachings on the obligation that human beings have toward others.

This book would have benefited from discussion of economic and political forces that frequently add to social instability, which in turn permit evil to arise and cause hurt to groups. For example, during times of high unemployment, immigrants and foreigners are frequently blamed for lack of jobs.

In sum, Blumenthal's work has a twofold purpose. The first is to explain what conditions are associated with caring, social responsibility towards one's fellow human being, as well as what forces contribute to evil. The second is to identify teachings and moral precepts from the Jewish Tradition that could prevent the banality of evil. *The Banality of Good and Evil* is an important book, appropriate in classes on theology, ethics, altruism, the study of the Holocaust, genocide, literature, history, and Judaic studies, as well as for the general readership.

Samuel P. Oliner
Humboldt State University
Arcata, California



Elliot N. Dorff and Louis E. Newman, editors. *Contemporary Jewish Theology: A Reader*. New York: Oxford University Press, 1999. xvi, 522 pp.

It is arduous to review an anthology that has the ambition of presenting the large spectrum of movements and schools of contemporary Jewish religious thought. Limits of space prevent us from discussing individually the many authors selected in it. Instead, we must consider the criteria by which the authors have been chosen and how the editors have organized the anthologized materials. Such criteria are reducible to the idea that is expressed by the editors in the brief preface. In these last decades of the twentieth century, the Jewish world has experienced an extraordinary flourishing of thought that produced an enormous quantity of works of theological, philosophical, and ethical reflection, whose development was unthinkable right after World War II. This production was especially widespread in the Anglo-American area, where the English-speaking Jewish communities emerged as the most learned, wealthy, and pluralistic communities in the diaspora. Nobody can deny this sociological fact, which is also a cultural phenomenon. This anthology objectively reflects this situation. Nonetheless, it also shows the great open-mindedness and the vivacity with which the Jewish thinkers of this century have tried to answer the questions posed by history.

Perhaps this is the right key to comprehend the phenomenon of such a large, variegated, and high-quality intellectual production. The many, often tragic, unprecedented foundational events of contemporary history touched the Jewish peo-

ple so deeply that they were stimulated and sometimes forced to elaborate new responses to the new problems of meaning and interpretation that the events entailed. The re-flourishing of Jewish thinking during the last hundred years is also fruit of what Emil Fackenheim called “the return of the Jewish people into history.” Such a return forced Jewish thinkers to face, on the one hand, the problem of continuity and/or discontinuity with the past, and, on the other hand, the challenge of imagining and creating the conditions of a less traumatic future.

Dorff and Newman have organized the volume in the following manner. After Byron Sherwin’s introduction discussing the historical-epistemological status of the controversial category of “Jewish theology,” the editors present some excerpts from the most significant oeuvres of philosophers who are already considered classics: Hermann Cohen, Franz Rosenzweig, Martin Buber, Abraham I. Kook, Mordechai Kaplan, and Abraham J. Heschel. A third and larger part is dedicated to basic themes and includes essays by authors who belong almost completely to the second part of the century. The themes are classical chapters of all “Jewish theologies of history”: God, creation, revelation, redemption, covenant/election, and the law. A fourth part is an exploration of the two fundamental experiences of the Shoah and the rebuilding of the State of Israel and their different—often conflicting—interpretations. The last part sets up a debate on the future of Jewish theology, especially the developments that neo-Hasidism, Jewish feminism, and postmodern hermeneutics can offer. In all, thirty-nine authors are presented, plus brief introductions for each of the five parts, and some final bibliographical suggestions. I dare say that the volume is the best anthology on this subject because it is a very accurate panorama of this old-new branch of Jewish philosophy, that is, Jewish theology.

As the editors honestly admit, the major problem of the volume is the treatment of Zionist thought. Certainly, Zionism is also a philosophical phenomenon (we must remember Ahad Ha’am or Aaron Gordon, for example, who are completely absent from the anthology). As well, the theme of the return to Zion and Jewish nationalism is partially absorbed into the reflection on the theological meaning of the rebuilding of a Jewish state. Notwithstanding, classical Zionism (at least in its most significant exponents) is a secular, anti-religious response to the problem of the economic alienation of the European Jews and to persecution. The difficulty thus becomes finding a place for this essential current of contemporary Jewish thought inside a theological anthology. I think an exception could be made for Eliezer Schweid, who is already well known in the United States for his outstanding research on Jewish thinking of this century. But, as I stated at the beginning, it is arduous to judge the criteria of selection, always subjective, of the included and the excluded.

The anthology is thought of in continuity with a previous book, *Contemporary Jewish Ethics and Morality* (Oxford, 1995), also edited by Dorff and Newman. It is offered to academics and scholars, and to educators and religious leaders in search of new perspectives and insights. It shares a special space on the bookshelf together with two other anthologies essential for a holistic vision of current Jewish thought: *Contemporary Jewish Religious Thought*, edited by Arthur Cohen and Paul Mendes-Flohr (New York, 1986), and *The Zionist Idea. A His-*

torical Analysis and Reader (first edition, New York, 1959), edited by Arthur Hertzberg.

Massimo Giuliani
Washington, D.C.



Norbert M. Samuelson. *A User's Guide to Franz Rosenzweig's Star of Redemption*. Curzon Jewish Philosophy Series. Surrey, UK: Curzon Press, 1999. xxv, 386 pp.

Ernest Rubinstein. *An Episode of Jewish Romanticism: Franz Rosenzweig's The Star of Redemption*. SUNY Series in Judaica: Hermeneutics, Mysticism, and Religion. Albany: SUNY Press, 1999. xiii, 306 pp.

While *The Star of Redemption* is widely recognized as a great work, if not the single greatest work of modern Jewish thought, it has persistently had difficulty finding its readers. Written in an almost private language for a circle of friends and relations, it has taken almost a century to gain an audience that can find a way into its imposing architecture. The situation began to change in 1982 with Stéphane Mosès' *System and Revelation*, which offered a detailed reading of the whole text. I, for my part, tried to offer a philosophical interpretation of the methodology of each of the three parts in 1992, in *Correlations in Rosenzweig and Levinas*; Richard Cohen's *Elevations* offered a set of readings that linked Levinas and Rosenzweig in 1994. Yudit Kornberg Greenberg contributed a reading that emphasized the relation to the Kabbalah in her *Better Than Wine*, in 1996. The decade ended, however, with the two books under review here—both impressive, novel, and complex readings of *The Star*. Norbert Samuelson has given us a paragraph-by-paragraph paraphrase—or perhaps we need a new term, for Samuelson's book is a real commentary, leading us through the text and offering insight continuously, as well as pausing at key moments to guide us into richer connections. Ernest Rubinstein, for his part, has offered a demanding and challenging book that interrogates *The Star*, reading it not once but twice, and each time not only introducing the various key concepts and developments, but also measuring Rosenzweig against a rich theoretical framework.

Many readers, when confronting *The Star*, have concluded that despite its reputation, the text is intractable. Rosenzweig did not simply present an argument or describe Jewish reality of his time. On the contrary, *The Star* itself is a special kind of writing, a kind of performance, in which the reader is not only confused, but is led, questioned, exhorted, and commanded. It leads through different kinds of thinking (and so kinds of writing), and switches the reader's perspective boldly. It demands a great deal of its reader, but offers to us a real teaching: about God, about ethics, about art, about being Jewish, and finally about the meaning of our existence. Its complexity requires not just one reading, but several, and not just one

reader but several. That is why with the publication of these works (and a few others of similar worth), we only now can really begin to form the set of readings that will allow us to plumb this great text.

Samuelson's paraphrase/commentary is itself a group enterprise, as he explains: He was the editor and scribe based upon line-by-line readings done by graduate students at Temple University over an extended period of time. Samuelson's interest in contemporary science and in the relation of Jewish thought to such science illumines much of Rosenzweig's book—the paradigms of quantum mechanics, differential equations, and biological processes, to say nothing of infinitesimal calculus, all contribute to our understanding of the reasoning of *The Star*. In Samuelson's work, we see a Rosenzweig who can speak to contemporary American philosophy and who forges a way of bridging traditional Jewish thought and modern science. This reading of Rosenzweig allowed Samuelson to write *Judaism and the Doctrine of Creation* (1994). Its greatest insight for new readers comes in the discussion of creation (Part II, Book 1) and in its ongoing clarity on the role of mathematics as organon of thought. The text, moreover, pays careful and rigorous attention to the epistemological level of *The Star*, an attention that brings wonderful light into some of the murkier places; even in the more accessible passages it teaches us a sobriety about the way that Rosenzweig is interpreting experience, love, prayer, and so on. Samuelson discerns just how rigorously philosophical the whole book is.

Moreover, there is another level of his reading that demands mention: the careful attention to the Jewish texts upon which Rosenzweig is drawing. Samuelson is not simply providing another list of sources; rather, he identifies the specific words and phrases (and transliterates them in brackets), to show how much Rosenzweig is thinking in Hebrew. His long quotation of the *Alenu* (pp. 265–266) stands out, for Samuelson has re-thought both the traditional prayers and the question of Rosenzweig's interpretation of them. His reading allows us to see Rosenzweig connecting to traditional Jewish texts (prayers, biblical texts, talmudic passages, and medieval philosophical texts). As interesting as it is to find Rosenzweig engaging contemporary philosophy, it is still more rewarding to begin to see him reinterpreting the Jewish tradition, focusing on words that everyone prays in Shul. Samuelson's voice sounds in the text, displaying in Rosenzweig's book his own unique combination of philosophical interests and Jewish life.

Rubinstein offers a quite distinct and important vantage point, exploring the romantic dimension of Rosenzweig's work. Starting from Leo Baeck's essay "Romantic Religion," Rubinstein first assesses how well *The Star* fits its characterization of romantic. The trip is long and demanding, more valuable than the result, which is a qualified "no." But he then sets sail again, with the question of whether Schelling, in *The Philosophy of Art*, was a Baeckian romantic, for which the answer is still more clearly, "no." And so only one more voyage is undertaken: but is *The Star* a Schellingian romantic text? If I tell you that again we have a sort of "no," you will not yet have been to sea. For no simple identification or refusal of identification works because the voyages penetrate Rosenzweig's work with such subtle acuity and bring back such great treasures, that we really begin to see how com-

plex the relation of romanticism and idealism is, and how Rosenzweig's aversion to idealism depends precisely on a flirtation with and an inversion (a romantic trope, as Rubinstein explores) of it.

What Rubinstein manages to achieve in this complex set of readings is to interrogate *The Star* in relation to romanticism and to find a place for Rosenzweig in the context of German intellectual history. The position of Baeck, by the way, ends up reduced to a heuristic, because its polemic against his contemporary Christian culture is not explored in its context, and his essay is not flexible or rich enough to fit Schelling, or even Rosenzweig. But in Rubinstein's exploration of Schelling, and in particular in the last voyage with Rosenzweig, we are given not only a much richer interpretation of their relation than heretofore, but also great insight into the way that romanticism can be entertained.

More important still is the doubled reading of Rosenzweig that Rubinstein offers on that last voyage, first in terms of philosophy and then in terms of art. This is not merely a clever way to distribute Schelling's *The Philosophy of Art*; it also gives the best reading we have of what Rosenzweig is doing with aesthetics in *The Star*. For both philosophy and art offer in Part I a language prior to language, a prophecy of what happens in the experiences of speaking in Part II, and so they remain underlying structures throughout Part II and Part III. Rubinstein persists in interpreting the changing role of aesthetics in *The Star* until he reaches the zenith in the discussion of dance and the gesture. Here, Rubinstein's own book breaks out of its rich and careful negotiating of German philosophical and theological conceptuality, as he turns to literature (Keats, Proust, Cather: p. 254) to make his point about the power of minute gestures to connect with whole worlds.

Yet, both Samuelson and Rubinstein miss a truly wondrous irony in Rosenzweig's text, for the zenith of dance is the Hasid's dance and both readings could intersect. At the climax of Christian aesthetics, Rosenzweig writes about the dances on Simhat Torah, saying: "here the dance too could develop as a cultic act, to wit in the dance of the Hasid, who 'praises God with all his limbs.' Dance thus finds a place in the religious service itself only among us . . ." (Hallo trans., p. 373). Regardless of how Rosenzweig must then move on to the Corpus Christi processions into the town from the church, we might well pause to see how Jewish aesthetics interrupts this account of art and Christianity. That interruption is flagrant here, for the image of a hasid dancing is not merely foreign to German Jewry, but it is the very image for German culture of the aesthetic poverty of Judaism. Rosenzweig notes that Christians cannot really dance in their service, so they substitute baptism and processions, but Jews reach the high point of aesthetic vision.

As a devoted student of Rosenzweig's *The Star of Redemption*, I must honestly admit that there are few sentences in it that do not open onto whole dimensions of reflection, like an intellectual hologram. This pair of clauses about the hasid dancing is one of hundreds, even thousands, of windows. I mention it here not as a rebuttal of either the commentary that had to hurry past it (despite Samuelson's ability to enhance our understanding of the Jewish sources of the book), or of the complex exploration of art that did not take note of this interruption of Christian aesthetics by a counter-icon of beauty, but only to underscore how our work of interpreting Rosenzweig is far from complete. This one sentence intersects the

perspectives of our two authors, but also crosses it with reflection on the cultural rhetoric of Rosenzweig's time, as well as offering further reflection on the two religions and even on the German Jewish attitudes toward the Eastern European Jews.

Each of these books offers a new valuable reading of this truly great and difficult book, helping to draw readers into it and through it. No reading will be conclusive, and some may appear that will be better attuned to *The Star*, but Rubinstein's ultimate conclusion stands and justifies not only his hard work in building his argument and also the serious labors of reading by Rubinstein, Samuelson and his students: Rosenzweig's *Star of Redemption* deconstructs itself in order to prevent achieving romantic closure. *The Star* as a text holds itself open, and these two readings help open it to new readers.

Robert Gibbs
University of Toronto
Toronto, Canada



Alvin Goldfarb and Rebecca Rovit, editors. *Theatrical Performance during the Holocaust: Texts, Documents, Memoirs*. Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1999. xiv, 350 pp.

When Hannah Arendt wrote, in *Eichmann in Jerusalem* (1963), that “the holes of oblivion do not exist. Nothing human is that perfect, and there are simply too many people in the world to make oblivion possible,” she was referring to the survivors of the Holocaust who would live to tell the Shoah's many “forgotten” stories. Nearly forty years after, there are fewer survivors to do the job. And scholars have taken up the burden of witness to help us fill in the gaps.

Professors Rovit and Goldfarb have compiled a collection of essays and documents that focuses on the specific issues of Jewish artistic creativity and theatrical performance during the Holocaust years. Their book has three sections, the third of which attends to the extraordinary performance events associated with the concentration camp at Theresienstadt, where the arts flourished under terrifying conditions of deprivation and loss. It is a story that has been told often, not only in memoirs and historical studies, but in the theatre itself, as can be seen in Ulrike Migdal's *Grüsse aus Theresienstadt* and Roy Kift's *Camp Comedy*, which attempt to push the problems of survival and death, creativity and complicity into the faces of contemporary audiences. (Kift's play is included in my anthology, *The Theatre of the Holocaust*, vol. 2.)

The editors' purpose, however, is resolutely past-centered. The usefulness of this volume lies in its careful gathering of a number of critical essays, official pronouncements, theatrical texts, personal remembrances, and epistolary fragments to create a picture that is at once astonishing and appalling. Professor Rovit eschews an analysis of the autobiographical material, preferring to let it speak for itself as testimony. She is content to provide a context for us, in interviews or

mini-essays, so that we can “hear” clearly the voices of the “actors” in this tragic drama.

Rovit’s critical essay in Section One, along with two others by Alan Steinweis and Volker Kuhn that deal with the Jewish *Kulturbund* and the career of its Nazi overseer, Hans Hinkel, provide a solid historical basis for understanding the Jewish artistic world in central Europe in the 1930s until its final destruction a decade later. These three essays are much stronger in analysis and imagination than those in Section Two (“Containment”), which deal with artistic performance in Jewish ghettos and concentration camps. In fact, the weakest essays in the book seem suffused with a tone of congratulation that can be expressed as: “Isn’t it wonderful that the Jews were able to do all that while the Nazis were killing them!”

The occasional examples of flaccid writing find support, if not their origin, in the editors’ understanding of the performance activity itself, one they see as proving the indomitability of the human spirit amid even abominable degradation and murderous threat. Rovit’s introduction speaks to this appraisal: “We of a later generation can rely only on the testimony of ‘those who were there’ to imagine the ‘unthinkable.’ We understand creativity as being born from spirit and thus we are inclined to grasp onto the evocative, yet vague notion of a kind of ‘spiritual resistance’ and find it attractive” (p. 9). She closes her essay: “This book is dedicated to a tenacious affirmation of spirit even as the flesh so cruelly perished” (p. 10). The danger of this critical and psychological perspective is that “we” may be tempted toward too much celebration while evading difficult ethical and artistic questions, such as how creative people can also write and perform hateful, even dangerous things.

My own preference for this volume would have included the addition of a fourth section that dealt with the contemporary legacy of this performance activity. Aaron Kramer’s essay in Section Three alludes to this subject in the discussion of his translation (which premiered in 1977) of Viktor Ullmann’s Theresienstadt opera *The Emperor of Atlantis*. He writes: “Obviously, objective judgment is not easy, and it may take a long time before *The Emperor of Atlantis* can be accurately gauged as art; but there is no question of its uniqueness as an affirming of the human spirit in the face of physical obliteration” (p. 189).

The difficult question of “objective judgment” needs constant asking. Absent that inquiry and its companion question: “Should these works be produced today?,” the strengths of these concentrationary texts could be reduced or overlooked by sentimentality and uncritical admiration. Such dialogs are, in fact, ongoing in communities and theatres that are attracted to “Holocaust performance,” as was the case in Madison, Wisconsin, in the spring of 2000, when a community opera company chose to produce Krasa’s famous children’s opera *Brundibar* (the subject of Joza Karas’s essay in section three) in the presence of one of the few surviving members of the original cast. The issues of how to advertise the performance (to say nothing of dealing with the audience response) are important to our contemporary understanding of the ethical issues of post-Shoah production. This kind of discussion, as well as an essay on the reception of the musical made of Jura Soyfer’s songs in Vienna in the late-1980s and of Migdal’s play in the late-1990s, would have rounded out a useful and caring volume and extended its range into the issues

of performance and representation that are dealt with in the most interesting and important writing being done today about art after the Holocaust. (There is a historical error on p. 68: the German official assassinated at the start of Kristallnacht was vom Rath; Grünsplan (or Grynszpan) was his murderer.)

Robert Skloot
University of Wisconsin
Madison, Wisconsin



Vivian B. Mann. *Jewish Texts on the Visual Arts*. Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2000, xviii, 236 pp.

Catherine M. Soussloff, editor. *Jewish Identity in Modern Art History*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1999. x, 239 pp.

The study of art in Judaism now takes center stage, as works of considerable intellectual ambition appear from year to year. The ones before us, a topical anthology and a coherent collection of essays, some of them groundbreaking, and all of them remarkably fresh and interesting, signal the advent of a new field within Jewish studies. The books complement one another, the one illuminating, the other argumentative, and both of them exceedingly interesting.

Jewish Texts on the Visual Arts assembles fifty items, divided among seven basic subjects, each given an introduction and set into context, then given in translation, with notes, bibliography, and index. On the basis of a collection of primary sources, ancient, medieval, and modern, a course on art in Judaism can be offered.

Professor Vivian Mann, of The Jewish Museum and the Jewish Theological Seminary of America, has established herself as a principal voice in the study of Jewish art and the art of Judaism. Her most recent major article, "Art and material culture of Judaism: medieval through modern times," in the *Encyclopedia of Judaism* (Leiden, 1999: E. J. Brill), 1: 1–13, with sixteen figures, impressed many as a model of concision and mastery of the subject. Here she has collected a variety of texts pertinent to the same matter and presented them in translation; the translations of Rabbinic texts by Dr. Eliezer Diamond, Professor of Talmud at the Jewish Theological Seminary, are clumsy and not very accurate, scarcely reaching the level of scholarly reliability set by Dr. Mann herself.

The texts begin with passages of Scripture, proceed to the Mishnah and Talmuds, medieval authorities, and on to modern times. Each unit of the book then takes up a topic that is presented in the same temporal order, ancient, medieval, and modern.

Mann's collection deals with seven subjects: iconoclasm, the art of the other (meaning, Jews' use of art produced by gentiles), the synagogue and its decoration, Jewish ceremonial arts, artists and their practices, and collecting Jewish art. Iconoclasm takes up a passage of Scripture, another of the Mishnah, an essay of

Maimonides (“which images are permitted?”), and statements of Don Guzman and Rabbi Moses Arragel, Joseph Caro, Moses Sofer, and Abraham Isaac Hakohen Kook. The art of the other starts with a passage of Tosefot to Bavli Abodah Zarah, a responsum of Ephraim of Regensburg, another of Meir of Rothenburg, Asher ben Jehiel, Judah ben Asher and David Amado, Joseph Karo, David ibn Abi Zimra, Samuel Aboab, Jair Hayyim Bacharach, Ezekiel Katzenellenbogen, and Joseph Saul Nathanson; and so throughout.

The movement from ancient to modern times tracks the changes in the situation of the Jews over time. For example, the ancient and medieval issue of using gentile art for Judaism raises the question of prayer rugs; for modern times, the issue is, “may a church building become a synagogue?” So too, Jewish ceremonial art begins with “lists of silver and precious textiles belonging to the synagogues of Old Cairo in the eleventh and twelfth centuries” and ends with Moshe Feinstein, “the star of David in the mid-twentieth century: is it a Zionist symbol?” When it comes to artists and their practices, the modern predominates: Buber, Roditi, Rosenberg, and Donald Kuspit “identity in modern art.” Nearly all the chapters on collecting art deal with modern and contemporary figures. Apart from the wooden translations by Professor Diamond, the book is consistently engaging, start to finish.

Jewish Identity in Modern Art History succeeds in proving what many doubt: that one can investigate Jewish-ethnic traits of mind and do so rigorously, not merely subjectively. Such traits can be alleged to respond to a situation common to Jews and different from that experienced by others. That is the thesis argued in the essays on how modern art critics, collectors, and artists worked out the experience of Jewishness through the media of art. Many assume what these essays rigorously argue, and that makes this collection a huge step forward in Jewish studies, the mark of the coming age of a new venture in the field.

Beginning at a session of the College Art Association in 1996, the book of essays edited by Professor Catherine M. Soussloff, University of California, Santa Cruz, proposes to “introduce Jewish identity to art history”: the meaning of anti-Semitism for art history, the significance of Jewish émigré art historians to the discipline, above all, the effects of Jewish ethnicity on the interpretation of art. Art historians have “wanted to avoid the notion that their religion or ethnicity had anything to do with their art criticism,” let alone establish the possibility of “a historiography of Jewish identity in art history.” But that is precisely Soussloff’s intent, and the book accomplishes her goal.

The essays divide into two parts. Some adopt a postmodernist language, e.g., requiring “that the multiple subjectives of the interpreter be considered in historical critique.” Others work within the familiar frame of art-historical study. Soussloff, in her Introduction, bridges the gap between the two distinct modes of discourse; she makes the book work as a whole, not just as a collection of essays. She even makes postmodernist jargon plausible, intelligible, and necessary—a truly remarkable achievement of clarity and lapidary thinking.

The descriptive-analytical essays of an essentially historical character prove uniformly compelling. In that category are Margaret Olin, “From Bezalel to Max Liebermann: Jewish art in nineteenth-century art-historical texts,” Kalman P.

Bland, "Anti-Semitism and aniconism: the Germanophone requiem for Jewish visual art," a brilliant essay, one of unusual power of persuasion; Lisa Saltzman, "To figure or not to figure: the iconoclastic proscription and its theoretical legacy," devoted to Theodor Adorno and others; Larry Silver, "Jewish identity in art and history: Maurycy Gottlieb as early Jewish artist;" Robin Reisenfeld, "Collecting and collective memory: German Jewish identity, and the emigration of iconology;" Louis Kaplan, "Reframing the self-criticism: Clement Greenberg's 'Modernist painting' in light of Jewish identity;" and Charlotte Schoell-Glass, "Aby Warburg: forced identity and 'cultural science'."

The post-modernist modes of discourse predominate in Lisa Bloom, "Ethnic motions and feminist strategies of the 1970s: some work by Judy Chicago and Eleanor Antin;" and Donald Kuspit, "Meyer Schapiro's Jewish unconscious." The latter works well with the more conventional papers; I cannot say I understand how the former fits into the book, except in a fairly general way. The two essays of a post-modernist character tend to a certain subjectivity, but both illuminate their subject.

These essays do cohere, and reading them in sequence shows the unfolding of a continuous line of thought and argument through illustrative cases. Soussoff accomplished that in her editing and spells it out in her introduction. This brief account conveys little of the intellectual vitality of the essays. It suffices to say I learned from all of them and can agree with the editor that she has pointed to a new field of learning, one which promises more than merely subjective results: how Jewish ethnicity enters into aesthetics.

With these two books, a new standard is set, and the promise of their subjects begins to be kept.

Jacob Neusner
Bard College
Annandale-on-Hudson, New York



Steven J. Zipperstein. *Imagining Russian Jewry: Memory, History, Identity*. Seattle and London: University of Washington Press, 1999. 139 pp.

David G. Roskies. *The Jewish Search for a Usable Past*. Bloomington and Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 1999. 217 pp.

As one century, not to mention one millennium, passes into the next, the past obsesses us. We are beset by fears of forgetting it or twisting it out of recognition. Polemics about what to remember and what to forget divide societies all over the world. One of the most fruitful academic perspectives on this anxiety was initiated in the 1980s with the work of the French historian Pierre Nora. Nora formulated a "fundamental opposition" between *memory* ("the remnants of experience still lived in the warmth of tradition, in the silence of custom, in the repetition of the ancestral") and the "problematic and incomplete . . . reconstruction" that is *histo-*

ry.¹ He then launched the encyclopedic project of documenting the “memory sites” (*lieux de mémoire*) of French consciousness, those sites, both material and symbolic, located “between memory and history,” which had become invested with historical meaning in modern France. His original purpose had been to deconstruct such sites, in modern scholarly fashion to reveal their mythic nature, but, as the reviewer of an English translation of part of the resulting 5,600-page collective work points out, at its completion Nora conceded, that as a consequence of the speed with which even these constructed sites were passing out of popular memory, “commemoration ha[d] overtaken” his project and it had become “a sort of scholarly *lieu de mémoire* in its own right.”²

For Jewish history, the corresponding theoretician has been Yosef Yerushalmi, whose *Zakhor: Jewish History and Jewish Memory*, which appeared at the same time as Nora’s work, is a meditation on the chasm that separates pre-modern Jewish memory, covenantal and cyclical, from modern Jewish historiography.³ In the contemporary world, however, as Nora has copiously demonstrated, history and memory, collective if not covenantal, engage in a complex interplay. Tracing some of the results, specifically in relation to the fabled “traditional” Jewish world of Eastern Europe, is the subject of the two books under review. Both are the work of scholars who have made major contributions to their respective fields, Steven Zipperstein in Jewish history, David Roskies in Jewish literature. The present works are both collections of essays linked by common metahistorical themes. These themes require the authors, each in their own way, to distance themselves from the normative scholarly voice and assume a much riskier stance. In both cases, the results are more than worth the risk.

Zipperstein’s purpose, he forthrightly states in his prologue, is “to challenge some of the barriers between professional and popular knowledge of the world” (p. 3). The first of his essays traces the image of the shtetl in American Jewish consciousness. He makes use of literary works by writers such as Abraham Cahan, Anzia Yezierska, Isaac Rosenfeld and Philip Roth, not to mention *Fiddler on the Roof*, in order to touch upon “moments of Jewish life that fall between the cracks of the more standard historical narratives about American Jewry” (p. 19). He uncovers a fantasy shtetl framed by the hopes and fears of the postwar Jewish migration to suburbia. This essay is still conventional cultural history. But in the following two essays the narrator increasingly breaks through his narrative. In both cases, the occasion is an encounter with newly opened Russian archives. In “Reinventing Heders,” Zipperstein discovers in the transcripts of Russian Jewish teachers’ meetings at the turn of the century a clear consensus toward the rehabilitation of the traditional heder in the interests of “national” education. Earlier research, including Zipperstein’s own, largely based on the writings of political activists, had suggested a scenario of “assimilationist” teachers “brought around” by the ideologues. What emerges through the new archival window is a sense that more “national”

1. “Between Memory and History: *Les Lieux de Mémoire*,” *Representations* 26 (Spring 1989), 7–8. The essay was first published in 1984.

2. Tony Judt, “A la Recherche du Temps Perdu,” *New York Review of Books*, December 3, 1998, 54. *Les Lieux de mémoire* was first published in seven volumes between 1984 and 1992.

3. Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1982.

perspectives were not simply the product of ideological struggle, but of widespread unease about the speed with which *Haskalah* objectives were being fulfilled and the old Jewish world vanishing. The new cultural strategies were therefore “at one and the same time, self-consciously conservative yet modern, traditional yet progressive, and nationalist yet different from the nationalism of the well-known, ideologically preoccupied political parties” (p. 60). For these Jews, in other words, the *heder* had begun to function as a *lieu de mémoire*.

In the following chapter, Zipperstein engages his own past work even more directly by focusing on his changing understanding of his reasons for studying Jewish Odessa.⁴ Having relied in his research chiefly on maskilic texts, Zipperstein believed “until recently” that he was sifting them for “what could be learned about the city’s economic and social life, its high, as well as its popular, culture.” But after exposure in newly accessible archives to “far more archival material on Odessa Jews than could be absorbed in ten lifetimes,” Zipperstein is led to re-evaluate his relationship to his subject (p. 78). What he realizes is that all along, what had most fascinated him about Odessa was less its hard-headed commercial core than its margins, as exemplified in the problematic lives of the authors—Mendele, Dubnow, Bialik, Ahad Ha-Am—whose writings he had studied. It was their collective memory, as codified by their disciples, that had been “imposed on twentieth-century Jewry.” But these influential ideologies, Zipperstein concludes, were conceived in an urban environment that was totally indifferent to them. They were conceived, that is, “against [a] backdrop of abiding loss,” and it is this loss that is Zipperstein’s true subject (pp. 82–83).

Appropriately, the last chapter is about writing Jewish history in the shadow of the Holocaust. In flight from modern Jewish “folk memory,” that collapses Jewish history into a narrative of escalating destruction, Zipperstein and other academic historians had sought “to implode collective memory, to juxtapose as starkly as possible the differences between history and myth, scholarship and error” (p. 95). But another experience in the post-communist world, that of visiting Eastern Europe and perceiving these lands, inescapably after all, as “killing fields,” leads Zipperstein to a changed stance as a historian. As an example of fine recent history-writing that gains from the commemorative urge that informs it, Zipperstein cites Theo Richmond’s book *Konin: A Quest*, a monumental and loving attempt, rooted in oral testimony, to document the life of a shtetl down to its out-houses.⁵ And in the past, he rediscovers in his predecessor Dubnow, who invented Russian Jewish history, “demands for a sober historiography” coexisting with “[a] powerful authorization of history as an answer to the needs of the folk” (p. 91).

That a Jewish scholar should address “the needs of the folk” is something David Roskies takes for granted. But how to address such needs at the start of the twenty-first century? First of all, with a healthy dose of irony. Roskies calls his book a map to “a vacation in Jewish lands. Alternatively, every chapter treats a different subject, in a kind of scavenger hunt with multiple prizes. . . . Rousseau has

4. *The Jews of Odessa: A Cultural History, 1794–1881* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1986).

5. New York: Pantheon Books, 1995.

taught that the life story of each individual is utterly unique. But the Torah teaches that the life of each Jew is essentially the same. One map serves all” (p. xi). Here are ironic echoes of Mendele’s anxiety a century ago about representing the Jewish “ant-hill.” But the stops on Roskies’ tour are rather up-to-date; following Nora, Roskies calls them “memory-sites.” They are what remains when the covenantal narrative has collapsed; at best what is left of the past is “isolated, segregated, repackageable” (p. 9).

The tour begins with a bird’s eye view of the terrain ahead, from Haskala to the March of the Living. From this perspective, Tevye emerges as a unique and exemplary marker, a figure capable of neutralizing, in his own person, the contradiction between memory and history. “Sholem Aleichem,” writes Roskies, “did precisely what Yerushalmi thought to be impossible: he recast the historical predicament of the modern Jew into the language of fatalism and faith” (p. 11). But for the other tour sites, loss is a given. From the Oyneg Shabes Archive of the Warsaw Ghetto, to literary and popular images of the shtetl and the rabbi, to Jewish popular song, to the Honor Row of the Workmen’s Circle Cemetery in Queens, to the Montreal Yiddish school system, to the figure of the *talush*, the wayward seeker who “has come to define the moral center and moral angst of present-day Israel” (p. 167), Roskies traces what he calls “a dialectic of loss and retrieval,” the construction of memory-sites “fashioned from the prior awareness of loss” (p. x). Even as Jewish small town life, for example, was riven by change and Jews began to feel their past slip away, Jewish writers turned the shtetl into their key protagonist. “The shtetl was dead. Long live the shtetl!” declares Roskies (p. 49), and traces successive versions of the shtetl from Mendele, Sholem Aleichem and Peretz through Sholem Asch, Bashevis Singer and Agnon to Theo Richmond, Steve Stern and Allen Hoffman. In the hundreds of yizkor books commemorating Jewish communities obliterated during the Holocaust, the movement Roskies traces comes full circle: The shtetl again becomes “a covenantal landscape” (p. 64). Similarly with song. The theater music of the maskil Abraham Goldfaden, who first had men and women sing together on the stage, becomes “traditional” in the New World, while Moshe Nadir’s “Az der rebe Elimeylekh,” written in New York to parody hasidim, “made it to the top of the neoHasidic hit parade on both sides of the Atlantic” (p. 114).

Zipperstein’s book is about writing history; Roskies’ is about that and also something else. For if in fact “the moment the past is finally laid to rest is the very moment that it reasserts its claim upon the living” (p. 59), we may legitimately question the present, however impoverished, in the name of the future. Indeed, the lessons Roskies learns from “the brief sojourn in utopia” that was Montreal Yiddish culture is that, first, “all Jews live after the *hurban beit hamidrash*, the destruction of traditional faith, but out of that loss, a new and viable culture can be reinvented,” and, second, indispensable for doing so is a sound ideology (p. 157). Yet, of all the memory sites Roskies visits, only the Zionist one offers hope for further renewal because, according to Roskies, “Zionism is protean, inclusive, and heteroglossic. Within the discourse of Zionism the language of exile coexists with the language of covenantal space” (pp. 170–171). Meanwhile, in the exile itself, the milk can that held the archives of the Warsaw Ghetto, now on exhibit at the

Holocaust Museum in Washington, resembles something that “might just as well have dropped from another planet,” and “the literary-historical canon it protected from destruction” remains unknown (p. 40). Second Avenue, that “folk repository of Jewish collective memory” has been exchanged for “‘Sunrise, Sunset,’ glitzy, sentimental, mass-marketed ethnic pop.” The klezmer revival is “born-again” and the Yiddish folksong revival arrived “a generation too late.” The Second Avenue star Aaron Lebedeff’s tri-lingual patter, with which Roskies closes his essay on popular song, expands beyond this context as an epitaph for the redemptive possibilities of the diaspora as a whole: “*Vot ken you makh? Es iz Amerike! Amerike un bol’she nitshevo* [What can you do? It’s America! America and nothing more]” (pp. 117–19). In other words, sometimes dead is really dead. What begins to resonate here is the old-fashioned Zionist discourse about the emptiness of the galut, a particularly odd turn though when the context is the creativity of the East European Jewish diaspora. Never again? Sitting in exile, one is tempted to respond with a sentence from that hoch-diasporist Walter Benjamin: “Like every generation that preceded us, we have been endowed with a *weak* messianic power, a power to which the past has a claim.”⁶

Michael Steinlauf
Gratz College
Philadelphia, Pennsylvania

6. *Illuminations* (New York: Schocken Books, 1969), p. 254; emphasis in the original.