

Book Review

Fine, David M. *The City, The Immigrant and American Fiction, 1880-1920*, Metuchen, N. J. and London: The Scarecrow Press, 1977. x, 182 pp. \$8.00

Berkow, Ira. *Maxwell Street: Survival in a Bazaar*, Garden City, New York: Doubleday & Co., 1977. xiv, 532 pp. \$14.50

These two books are best set aside for some attention as projects undertaken, in part, to recover the authors' personal urban origins, as well as to record specific history. Their modes are very different: David M. Fine, Director of the American Studies program at California State University, Long Beach, has written a genre study, a history of ghetto fiction written in English with a definite cultural focus. Excluded here are not only the literature of rural immigrant enclaves, but the writing from or about the various urban Chinatowns. Fine's interest lies in that mass immigration from Eastern and Southern Europe which settled in cities on the East coast, whose numbers precipitated the legislation restricting immigration in 1921 and 1924. The majority of the newcomers were Italians, but those who lived in the urban slums, and who recorded that experience in fiction sometime between 1880 and 1920 were overwhelmingly Jewish. (Wayne Miller's *Comprehensive Bibliography for the Study of American Minorities* corroborates Fine's assertion.) So Fine's material and intention are interesting to the historian of American Jewish culture. By granting Abraham Cahan a full chapter, Fine's organization argues that the Yiddish editor was the period's major ghetto fictionalist, and he concludes his study quite personally: "As we recover a part of our history through these novels and stories, we realize that we are not so far removed from the past they record as we sometimes think."

A genre study derives its energy from the record of the conflict between literary convention and personal innovation. The honesty of personal composition was championed between 1880 and 1920 as "realism," for along with the great bulk of popular nineteenth century fiction, tales of the tenement had been romanticized, and

the hard facts of poverty sublimated to issues of moral idealism. Fine's account of the origins of the genre in the nineteenth century British and American novel is conceptually the strongest section of his book. He summarizes the attitudes of that middle-class narrative which has traditionally presented urban poverty to readers of fiction. The power of literary convention is especially striking in the career of a former immigrant, then outside observer, like Jacob Riis: *How the Other Half Lives*. Riis's collection of articles on slum neighborhoods takes a reformer's measure of the hardness and degradation of urban poverty; but his fictional sketches, on the other hand, collected in *Out of Mulberry Street* (1897), impute a gentle faith and moral purity to their ghetto protagonists. Nor were Jewish writers themselves exempt from the pressures of literary sentiment. Aben Kandel's "Outline for a Jewish Opera," published in the *Menorah Journal* in 1928, includes this stage direction: "Fannie Hurst, Bruno Lessing and lesser writers enter slowly wheeling a pushcart upon which rests a tub of pickle juice. Upon their backs they carry large typewriters equipped with automatic tear glands. Solemnly they take down the typewriters, lift them up and lower them into the tub of pickle juice, and get the full flavor of the East Side into their machines. Then, heaving with alternate sobs and chuckles, they disguise themselves as natives and clamber aboard the carousel." Fine makes the point more temperately through concise plot summary, and by a comprehensiveness which oddly excludes Fannie Hurst. Among those who treat their material with more originality, he would include Mike Gold (Irwin Granich) and Henry Roth; but only his consideration of Cahan is more than summary.

The book's value is as a descriptive catalogue. Here, in one volume, are all the early types of the genre: the toughs, paupers, and prostitutes with hearts of gold; the Italians with stilettos; the clever street arabs; the villainous Fagins, sweatshop owners, and landlords; the gamblers, drunkards, and con-men; the idealistic labor organizers; the comic partners in the garment business. And the themes of estrangement between old-world fathers and new-world sons; hostility between uptown and downtown Jews; and the spiritual ordeals of Americanization. Fine shrewdly observes that many "ghetto" novels written by immigrants tend to affirm the values of acculturation, because the activity of fiction-writing is itself already an "adjusted" behavior.

For all the importance of its contribution as a register, Fine's book has serious shortcomings with respect to the conceptualization and mode of presentation of its material. The repetitions of plot-summary and contrast-and-compare criticism here do not finally distill to a single coherent argument. In a concluding section, Fine is unable to push us beyond the obvious and very familiar generalizations about acculturation. The problem seems to be that he has not accepted the limitations of his inquiry, wanting a certain genre of fiction to bear the burden of social history, which it cannot. So his competent introductory chapter on xenophobia and immigration restriction seems out of scale, if not out of place. And his thumbnail histories of the Settlement House and the Jewish labor movement sit awkwardly as the proper frame for his literary material. Fine also offers summaries of the non-fiction of Riis, Jane Addams, and several others. One can only wonder about his principle of selection on so large a topic. Are these writers' positions truly representative of certain popular attitudes towards immigrants, as Fine's argument suggests?

Popular fiction implicitly carries the history of the popular imagination of the time, and it carries the history of its authors' imaginations, which may be read from it to the extent that any given book is something more than purely popular. Fine misses some of what may be read by assuming forty historical years to have the thematic coherence ascribed to a literary genre. So he does not give appropriate weight to the cultural ironies of the biographies of figures like Henry Harland and Ludwig Lewisohn. For social history—for urban or Jewish history—one needs documents other than fiction as primary sources. Fiction has only certain kinds of stories to tell.

Maxwell Street is by Ira Berkow, a syndicated sports columnist, and is not a work of critical scholarship, but of journalism. It is a Chicago book, concerned with the old Chicago ghetto called "Jew-town" by Blacks—who have been the majority there for the last thirty years. It is a Chicago book in that its conception owes a lot to the oral histories of American folk collected by Chicago-based Studs Terkel. But Berkow lacks Terkel's art as editor and interpreter at this point in his career. The seams of composition are too visible here. Human nature is too tough and too sentimental. So is the prose, when it is not absolutely malformed by the rococo of feeling, as in Berkow's introduction.

The fascination of this book lies in the material itself. It is astonishing how many significant careers were begun in the few blocks surrounding the old Maxwell Street market. Paul Muni grew up there, as did prizefighters Jackie Fields (né Finkelstein [the Fields is from Marshall Fields]) and Barney Ross (Rosofsky); Barney Balaban, the executive director of Paramount Pictures; Jacob Arvey, chairman of the Cook County Democratic Committee; actor Irving Jacobson; Benny Goodman; Meyer Levin; Admiral Hyman Rickover; Arthur Goldberg; Jack Ruby; William S. Paley; and Tene Bimbo, the Gypsy king. It is a large book, and there are numerous interviews with ordinary people that evoke the trials of immigrant passage and of keeping shop in a bazaar. Among recent inhabitants, we read the words of the hooker on the corner and the cop on the beat. The excitement and violence of the place is the emergent landscape. Politicians once knew the ward as the "Bloody Twentieth"; and in 1924, when his pious father was murdered by hoodlums in his grocery store, Barney Ross knew where to find Capone.

The transcripts of just-talk and the talk of the famous about their pasts are wonderful. But the book is not consistently good: Where his subjects, one supposes, would not grant him interviews—as Rickover and Paley did not—Berkow pieces together a cursory biography from secondary sources. The whole is punctuated by a Dos Passos montage of newspaper articles recording the career of the area itself; but the weakest aspect of composition is the intrusion of Berkow's personal intention to recover his own past. As a boy he sold women's nylons and men's belts in the area, and distressingly we find the chapter on Jack Ruby to be as much about Berkow's maternal grandparents who lived on the same block as the Rubinsteins, as about the events of November 25, 1963.

What is finally valuable here? The book is excellent on underworld figure Jake "Greasy Thumb" Guzik, the syndicate's business manager, and Joseph René "Yellow Kid" Weil, master con-man. It's also fine on fighters Ross, Fields, and King Levinsky. There's a marvelous description of his trade by Ray Novick, who used to be a puller for a clothing store on Maxwell Street; and John L. Keeshin (of German Jewish origin) and Meyer Laser describe the growth of their respective trucking and feather operations. Dr. Beatrice Tucker, former director of the Chicago Maternity Center located since the thirties in the Maxwell Street area, tells her story

here, as do the black street troubadours Hound Dog Taylor and Arvella Gray. The chapter on Paramount's Balaban is good; as is the one on Arvey; the one on Donjo Medlevine, the talent agent; the one on Benny Goodman. This book about a street tells street stories best, but for the biographies of those in the learned professions, and for a concise and readily accessible history of the Maxwell Street district as an urban area rather than a neighborhood, one must go elsewhere.

ELINOR GRUMET

Ms. Grumet, a literary historian and translator, is completing her doctoral dissertation, a history of the *Menorah Journal*, at the University of Iowa.

Brief Notices

Baron, Salo W., and George S. Wise, Edited by. *Violence and Defense in the Jewish Experience*. Philadelphia: The Jewish Publication Society of America, 1977. xii, 362 pp. \$12.00

"Remarkably," states Professor Salo W. Baron, in the *Introduction* to this volume, "despite the great importance, even urgency, of understanding the varying attitudes to war, those of the Jewish people, in both theory and practice, have never been satisfactorily examined."

The purpose of this book, which emerged from a seminar on violence and defense in Jewish life held at Tel-Aviv University in 1974, is an attempt to deal with the problems posed by Professor Baron. Sixteen authorities discuss violence and defense in the Jewish experience during the ancient, medieval, modern, and contemporary periods. Among the authors in this book are Salo W. Baron, Harry Orlinsky, Uriel Tal, Ben Halpern, and David Schers. The latter two authors deal with violence and defense in the American and Latin American Jewish experiences.

Borowitz, Eugene B. *Reform Judaism Today: Book Two: What We Believe*. New York: Behrman House, Inc., 1977. 201 pp. \$2.45

In June, 1976, the Central Conference of American Rabbis issued a document which expressed its view of the "spiritual state of Reform Judaism." It was the first time in nearly forty years that the group had made such a formal declaration. The document, *Reform Judaism: A Centenary Perspective*, has taken the form of a three-volume work. *Book Two: What We Believe* articulates the Reform vision of God, Torah, and Israel as it is defined in the contemporary sense.

Chametzky, Jules. *From the Ghetto: The Fiction of Abraham Cahan*. Amherst, Massachusetts: The University of Massachusetts Press, 1977, xiv, 161 pp. \$10.00

For over half a century Abraham Cahan devoted himself to making the *Jewish Daily Forward* the most widely-circulated and most influential Yiddish-language newspaper in the United States. Cahan's contributions to American Jewish immigrant life are legend: his introduction of the *Bintel Brief*, a general advice column, which has become a notable source for the study of the Americanization process; his introduction of human interest stories with a mass appeal; his encouragement of an Americanized Yiddish, among others.

There was another side to Cahan's achievements which has not been the subject of critical evaluation. Cahan was an author of considerable talent, whose works, including the classical *The Rise of David Levinsky*, mark him as one of the founders of a Jewish-American school of literature. Professor Chametzky's book is the first attempt systematically to analyze Abraham Cahan's fiction. According to the author, Cahan "was a pioneer explorer in the duality of Jewishness and Americanism—a subject that was to occupy every consciously Jewish writer in this century. . . ."

Churba, Joseph. *The Politics of Defeat: America's Decline in the Middle East*. New York: Cyrco Press, Inc., 1977. 224 pages. \$10.00

In 1976, Dr. Joseph Churba was a Special Advisor to Air Force Intelligence at the Pentagon, and the Air Force's senior Middle East intelligence estimator. When, in that same year, the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, General George S. Brown, publicly characterized Israel as a military "burden," Dr. Churba felt it necessary to criticize Brown's comments. It was the second time in as many years that Brown had made disparaging remarks about American Jews or the Jewish state. He had, in fact, been reprimanded by President Gerald R. Ford for his first statement about the American Jewish community and its relationship to United States support for Israel.

A short time after his criticism of General Brown, Churba was stripped of the special security clearances necessary for his intelligence duties and forced to resign. This mix of events was not an isolated one. It demonstrates, among others, Churba's argument that segments of the Pentagon and State Department are out to "get" Israel by consistently and deliberately downplaying Israel's role as a factor in America's overall military strategy. The existence of these elements in our foreign policy planning institutions has led only to an unbalancing of the power equation in the Middle East—to the detriment of the United States. Churba's thesis does not augur well either for America's role in international affairs or for the continued existence of the Israeli state. Both issues are of the utmost importance to American Jewry.

Cohon, Beryl D. *Come, Let Us Reason Together: Sermons Presented in Days of Crisis*. New York: Bloch Publishing Company, 1977. xii, 75 pp. \$5.95

The sermons in this volume were delivered by Rabbi Cohon, the founding rabbi of Temple Sinai, Brookline, Massachusetts, during the early days of America's entry into the Second World War. Many of his congregants had sons who were drafted or who had volunteered for active service. It was to them that Cohon delivered a group of sermons whose appeal was to "reason and faith in a moral Providence presiding over our human destinies."

Davis, Moshe, Edited by. *World Jewry and the State of Israel*. New York, Arno Press, 1977. xix, 372 pp. \$12.00

The contents of this volume are part of the papers and discussions which formed the Continuing Seminar, a conference of distinguished Jewish thinkers who met under the auspices of Israel's president, Ephraim Katzir, and whose chairman was Professor Moshe Davis, head of the Hebrew University's Institute of Contemporary Jewry.

Three issues concerned the participants in the Seminar: "current manifestations of anti-Jewishness" in the world; the state and nature of Jewish identity and identification; the centrality of Israel and the interaction of the world's Jewish communities. Among the participants represented in this book, both as authors and as discussants, are Emil Fackenheim, Salo W. Baron, Marie Syrkin, Michael Meyer, Abraham Karp, Alfred Gottschalk, Ezra Spicandler, and Irving Greenberg.

Dawidowicz, Lucy. *The Jewish Presence*. New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1977. xiii, 308 pp. \$12.95

In this volume of essays written over a period of fifteen years, Lucy Dawidowicz

has attempted to assess what she terms the "Jewish presence." To Professor Dawidowicz the term implies "the preoccupation of Jews with themselves and with the nature of their Jewishness." Beyond this, she means also "the space that Jews occupy in the minds of non-Jews and the ambience that Jews have created in the non-Jewish world."

Professor Dawidowicz has examined all these phenomena in a series of essays that demonstrate her exceptional grasp of the many areas of Jewish history. There are several interesting essays that deal with American Jewry, among them a case study of the American Jewish "way of life," a critique of the early Reform movement, and a discussion of the Jewish labor movement in America.

Dinnerstein, Leonard, and Frederic Cople Jaher, Edited by. *Uncertain Americans*. New York: Oxford University Press, 1977. x, 325 pp. \$4.00

This collection of readings in ethnic history is a new and revised edition of *The Aliens: A History of Ethnic Minorities in America*. It contains an essay by Professor Leonard Dinnerstein on East European Jewish migration.

Drinan, Robert E. *Honor the Promise: America's Commitment to Israel*. Garden City, New York: Doubleday and Company, 1977. xi, 250 pp. \$7.95

Is there something "fundamentally anti-Semitic in (the) Catholic and Protestant versions of Christianity?" Can, therefore, an overwhelmingly Christian America really carry out a long-term commitment to the survival of Jewish Israel? These are but two of the many questions that Congressman Robert F. Drinan, the first Catholic priest ever elected to Congress, asks in a book that analyzes the theological and political bases of America's relationship with the Jewish homeland.

Drinnon, Richard and Anna Maria, Edited by. *Nowhere at Home: Letters from Exile of Emma Goldman and Alexander Berkman*. New York: Schocken Books, 1975. xxiii, 282 pp. \$6.95

Emma Goldman and Alexander Berkman were Jewish immigrants from Eastern Europe who came to America in the 1880's. Neither one ever began the long process of attempting to reconcile a Jewish spirit with an American one, the major pre-occupation-beyond survival—of so many of their fellow newcomers.

Instead, both began to speak out against big business, big government, and the evils of bourgeois, capitalistic society. Goldman and Berkman were anarchists, believers in a form of libertarianism or humanistic communism which violently disagreed with the compulsory communism introduced by Lenin shortly after the Russian Revolution in 1917. Yet this made no difference to J. Edgar Hoover and other authorities, who viewed the pair's intense revolutionary activities during the First World War as the precursor of a Marxist attempt to overthrow the American government. In 1919 both anarchists were deported, first to the Soviet Union, which they detested and left in 1921, and then to a life of exile. They lived apart, but remained devoted to each other.

The letters in this volume chronicle the loneliness of exile, but they also attest to the intensity of Goldman's and Berkman's ideals, which remained unshakable to the end of their lives. There is little in these letters to suggest a sense of Jewishness on the part of the correspondents. It is fair to assume that both Goldman and Berk-

man were in the tradition of what Isaac Deutscher has termed the "non-Jewish Jew" who, according to Deutscher, ". . . went beyond the boundaries of Judaism. They all found Jewry too narrow, too archaic, and too constricting. They all looked for ideals and fulfillment beyond it. . . ."

Feingold, S. Norman, and William B. Silverman, Edited by. *Kivie Kaplan: A Legend in His Own Time*. New York: Union of American Hebrew Congregations, 1976. viii, 258 pp. \$8.95

For anyone who ever received a card with the words "Keep Smiling" on it from the cheerful, heavy-set man who made a profession out of distributing them, Kivie Kaplan was a character not easily forgotten.

A year after his death, those who knew and admired him have taken the time to write personal statements expressing their feelings about the man and his work. Kivie Kaplan was many things to many people: a staunch supporter (and national president) of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People, a dedicated member of the Reform Jewish movement, a generous contributor of money and advice, and a great friend of the State of Israel. Above all, Kaplan was a decent and righteous man living the kind of life which indeed made him a legend in his own time.

Holli, Melvin G., and Peter d'A. Jones, Edited by. *The Ethnic Frontier*. Grand Rapids, Michigan: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1977. 422 pp. \$7.95

This volume of writings about ethnic group survival and identity in Chicago and the Midwest includes an essay by Victor Greene on the role of Jewish communal leaders, and one by Edward Mazur on the history of "Jewish Chicago" to 1940.

Kluger, Richard, *Members of the Tribe*. Garden City, New York: Doubleday & Company, 1977, 471 pp. \$10.00

Rarely has the American Jewish community witnessed a more brutal display of unfettered anti-Semitism than with the lynching of Leo Frank in 1915. Vigilante violence against the Jew, unlike its Eastern European counterpart, the *pogrom*, had never played a major role in the relations between Jew and Gentile in America. With the killing of Frank, many Jews wondered if all that had changed. Frank's defense attorney described his client's death as "the most horrible persecution of a Jew since the death of Christ."

Richard Kluger has based his novel upon the Leo Frank case. While the names of most of the actual characters have been changed, Kluger has retained the tension, blind bigotry, and injustice of an incident which remains a low point in the history of Jewish-Gentile relations in the United States.

Lavender, Abraham D., Edited by. *A Coat of Many Colors: Jewish Subcommunities in the United States*. Westport, Connecticut: Greenwood Press, 1977. xiii, 324 pp. \$17.95

To be a white, middle-class, Jewish male of German or East European background and living in an urban area in the northeast part of the United States is to be a composite of the American Jewish community. It is precisely this generalization that *A*

Coat of Many Colors attempts to overcome with a series of essays dealing with numerous Jewish "subcommunities" in the United States. The "subcommunities" under discussion are small-town Jews, Southern Jews, poor Jews, Hasidic Jews, Black Jews, Jewish women, and Sephardic Jews.

Magnes, Beatrice L. *Episodes*. Berkeley: Judah L. Magnes Memorial Museum, 1977. 124 pp.

Early in her life, Beatrice Lowenstein, of the New York Lowensteins, decided that she would not remain within the confines of her New York, German-Jewish, upper middle-class background.

It was this streak of rebelliousness in her character, perhaps, which attracted her future husband, Rabbi Judah L. Magnes, whose own nonconformist attitudes drove him to resign the pulpit of Temple Emanu-El of New York, the most coveted position in the Reform rabbinate.

Episodes is a small volume, filled with the memories of a life spent at the side of one of the more remarkable individuals in modern Jewish history.

Menendez, Albert J. *Religion at the Polls*. Philadelphia: The Westminster Press, 1977. 248 pp. \$5.95 (Paperback)

The author is interested in assessing the influence of religious beliefs and affiliations upon the voting behavior of the American populace. He does this with a historical examination of the voting behavior of major and minor religious groups in the United States, an examination of the influence of religion in Congressional legislation, and a case study of the religious aspects in the Carter-Ford campaign. The book is enhanced by several appendices filled with statistical information on the relationship between religious beliefs and voter behavior.

Nelson, Walter Henry, and Terence C. F. Prittie. *The Economic War Against the Jews*. New York: Random House, 1977. xiv, 269 pp. \$10.00

The politicization of petrodollars, which began with the great Arab oil embargo in 1973, prompted Nelson and Prittie to publish in detail the efforts of certain Arab states to prevent all countries, including the United States, from having any business dealings with Israel.

In all fairness to the Arab nations, this book should not be compared with or looked upon as a sequel to Lucy Dawidowicz's *The War Against the Jews, 1933-1945*. Arab rhetoric aside, no "final solution" in mass-murder terms seems to be part and parcel of this "economic war." Instead, certain aims, such as Israel's withdrawal from Arab areas captured in 1967 and the creation of a Palestinian state, appear to motivate the instigators of the economic boycott. Nevertheless, if we accept the fact that the term "anti-Zionist" is merely a clumsy attempt to disguise the avowal of one's anti-Semitism, then any organized attempt to destroy the economic, and hence the nation-state, basis of the Jewish state cannot be tolerated. History can be repeated and the enemy, as the saying goes, does not always have to enter through the same door.

Norton, Wesley. *Religious Newspapers in the Old Northwest to 1861: A History, Bibliography, and Record of Opinion*. Athens, Ohio: Ohio University Press, 1977. xi, 196 pp. \$12.50

Among the newspapers discussed in Professor Norton's book are Isaac M. Wise's *The Israelite* and *Die Deborah*. Norton presents Wise's views on America, Catholics, the Republican Party, slavery, and several other antebellum issues.

Polner, Murray. *Rabbi: The American Experience*. New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1977. vii, 244 pp. \$8.95

According to Murray Polner, "this book . . . is a popular social history of a group of people functioning as religious specialists in a particular time and place." There are many kinds of rabbis in American Jewish life, and they function in varying degrees of success and failure. Polner is almost certainly correct when he states that the American rabbi, although ". . . stripped of his traditional authority, censured by his legion of critics, discarded in growing numbers by the ultra-Orthodox, ignored by millions of secular Jews . . . nonetheless continues to play a central, if reduced, role in American Jewish life." It is unfortunate that such a centrality is now predicated upon a number of factors which threaten greatly to diminish the religious vitality of the American Jewish community.

Rose, Peter I. (with the assistance of Liv Olson Pertzoff). *Strangers in Their Midst: Small-Town Jews and Their Neighbors*. Merrick, New York: Richwood Publishing Co., 1977. xiii, 224 pp. \$12.95

Sociologist Peter Rose has been interested in small-town Jewry since the late 1950's, when he was a doctoral candidate at Cornell University. His dissertation provided him with material for several articles, some of which became classics in the sociological study of American Jewish life in the non-urban environment.

Eighteen years after its completion, Professor Rose has finally published his dissertation along with a follow-up chapter on the children of the small-town Jews he had interviewed nearly two decades earlier.

Rosenfeld, Lulla. *Bright Star of Exile: Jacob Adler and the Yiddish Theatre*. New York: Thomas Y. Crowell Company, 1977. xv, 368 pp. \$12.95

For Lulla Rosenfeld, a granddaughter of Jacob P. Adler, this book was no doubt a labor of love. In it she has produced a brief history of the Yiddish theatre, portraying the lives of the great stars of the Yiddish stage, both in Europe and America. More importantly, she has reconstructed the life and career of her grandfather, the great Yiddish actor, Jacob P. Adler. It was Adler, more than anyone, who made the Yiddish theatre in America an important part of the nation's cultural life.

Rosenthal, Gilbert S., Edited by. *The American Rabbi*. New York: Ktav Publishing House, 1977. x, 200 pp. \$10.00

Each of the essays in this volume deals with a different aspect of the role of the American rabbi. The rabbi is portrayed as scholar, educator, Zionist, theologian, among several roles. Some of the rabbis who have contributed essays are Gilbert S. Rosenthal, Judah Cahn, Alvin Cass, Chaim Rabinowitz, and Mordecai Waxman.

Samuelson, Myron. *The Story of the Jewish Community of Burlington, Vermont*. Burlington, Vermont. 1976. 187 pp.

The author has consulted numerous primary sources for this study. It would have enhanced the scholarly worth of this book if he had made reference to those sources in a documented form. Nevertheless, he has illustrated his book with numerous photographs, which in themselves are valuable pieces of visual documentation.

Sandrow, Nahma. *Vagabond Stars: A World History of Yiddish Theater*. New York: Harper & Row, Publishers, 1977. xi, 435 pp. \$20.00

This is an impressive book. Dr. Sandrow has attempted to show through fourteen well-written chapters that Yiddish theater is inexorably bound with Yiddish language, that both are expressions of the Jewish people and can be understood only in that context. She employs a useful, comparative analysis, demonstrating that the history of the Yiddish theater, its development and impact, were parts of larger cultural movements, yet were able to retain a sense of uniqueness. Added to the narrative are over one hundred illustrations of Yiddish posters, portraits of actors, sheet music covers, and other pieces of visual documentation.

Seixas, Gershom Mendes. *A Religious Discourse: Thanksgiving Day Sermon, November 26, 1789*. New York: Jewish Historical Society of New York, 1977. xvi, 16 pp. \$2.00

Although he has been dead for over one hundred and sixty years, the Reverend Gershom Mendes Seixas, spiritual leader of the Spanish and Portuguese Congregation Shearith Israel, remains a revered name in American Jewish history. This *Discourse* was delivered only a few months after George Washington had been inaugurated in New York City as the first President of the United States of America. As if to solidify the great impact of that historical event and its meaning for the Jews of America, Reverend Seixas defined the role which his coreligionists would have to play as responsible and emancipated citizens of a nation which embodied a great new experiment in human freedom.

Sheehan, Edward R. F. *The Arabs, Israelis and Kissinger*. New York: Reader's Digest Press, 1976. xii, 287 pp. \$8.95

Subtitled "A Secret History of American Diplomacy in the Middle East," this book is written by a journalist who, because he was briefed by State Department officials, had access to secret information regarding Henry Kissinger's diplomatic activities in the Middle East.

Siegel, Seymour, Edited by. *Conservative Judaism and Jewish Law*. New York: Ktav Publishing House, 1977. xxvii, 337 pp. \$15.00

This book is a reader in Conservative Judaism's approach to *halachah*, or Jewish law. It attempts to demonstrate the diverse approaches to *halachah* within Conservative Judaism, yet seeks to show that all approaches are "rooted in the notion expressed by Solomon Schechter that Jewish law expresses the 'collective conscience' of 'Catholic Israel.'" This is a 'conscience' which, according to Professor Siegel, "is formed by tradition and yet grows within the world." Among the authors whose articles appear in the volume are Mordecai M. Kaplan, Abraham Joshua Heschel, Louis Finkelstein, and Boaz Cohen.

Silver, Samuel M. *Mixed Marriage Between Jew and Christian*. New York: Arco Publishing Company, 1977. 107 pp. \$5.95

In this primer for couples contemplating an interfaith marriage, Rabbi Samuel M. Silver offers a bit of realistic advice: "If you're smart, you'll marry someone in your own group."

Yet one need only check the society column of the Sunday *New York Times* to realize that many couples have not been realistic (or smart) in their choice of marriage partners. Marriages between Christians and Jews are on the rise. Rabbi Silver is aware of this phenomenon, and has fully accepted it as an unalterable (for the time being) part of American life. The remainder of his little book is devoted to advising such a couple and their present and future families on the best manner in which to help the marriage succeed.

There is another aim, however, in his acceptance of the reality of interfaith marriage. Rabbi Silver is not unaware that the changing social mores of our society have brought the whole concept of institutionalized marriage into question. His purpose, then, beyond stating the pros and cons of intermarriage, is to build a line of defense against those that challenge the holy state of matrimony. Intermarriage, it seems, is better than no marriage.

Spalding, Henry D. *A Treasure-Trove of American Jewish Humor*. Middle-Village, New York: Jonathan David Publishers, 1976. xvii, 429 pp. \$12.50

One of the finest characteristics that can be attributed to a people is the ability to laugh at itself. Jews have been known for this quality, especially during times of danger and uncertainty. American Jews, too, have possessed such an ability, and the stages of New York, Las Vegas, and other entertainment centers have always contained their share of stand-up Jewish comedians who were able to make sport of family and friends.

Henry D. Spalding has collected many of these gems, including stories dealing with such unlikely characters as Bret Harte, Felix Frankfurter, Stephen S. Wise, Louis D. Brandeis, and others. Heard the one about Haym Salomon?

Stein, Leon, Edited by. *Out of the Sweatshop: The Struggle for Industrial Democracy*. New York: Quadrangle/The New York Times Book Co., 1977. xvi, 367 pp. \$12.50

For most of the immigrant Jewish women who came from Russia to America at the end of the nineteenth century, the art of sewing was as much a part of their lives as the arts of cooking and baking. People who are poor do not discard items of clothing very readily, and they will often patch and repatch garments as long as they remain in one piece. Sitting by the light of a candle or gas lamp, such women would spend long hours mending clothing for their families. It was, however, a labor of love, a Jewish mother caring for the needs of her family.

After their immigration to America, therefore, when there arose a need for such women to find employment in order to survive, they were prepared to enter the world of the garment trade with skills learned long ago. What they were not prepared for was the world of the sweat shop. The sweatshop, according to this volume, "is a state of mind as well as a physical fact. Its work day is of no fixed length; it links pace of work to endurance. It demeans the spirit by denying to workers any part in determining the conditions of or the pay for their work."

Out of the Sweatshop tells the story of this industrial ordeal, and portrays the struggles of working women to achieve a sense of self, to articulate their needs as workers. From the first hesitant efforts to organize arose finally the International Ladies' Garment Workers' Union, an important contributor to the development of the labor movement and industrial democracy in America.

Vida, George. *Some Comments on the Passover Haggadah*. Berkeley, California: Congregation Beth El, 1977. 33 pp.

Rabbi Vida, scholar in residence at Congregation Beth El, offers some interesting theories on various problems connected with the traditional text of the Haggadah. He introduces this small work with the translation of an introduction to the Passover Haggadah written in Hungarian by Emil Roth, a Hungarian rabbi (and a cousin of Rabbi Vida), who perished at the hands of the Nazis.

Wallerstein, Morton L. *The Public Career of Simon E. Sobeloff*. Richmond, Virginia: Marlborough House, 1975. xvi, 139 pp. \$2.95

This is a small volume written to recount the public career of Judge Simon E. Sobeloff, who served as Solicitor General of the United States, as Chief Judge of Maryland's Court of Appeals, and as Chief Judge of the United States Circuit Court for the Fourth Circuit.

It describes with sensitivity and an obvious knowledge of jurisprudence some of the more important legal activities and court cases involving Judge Sobeloff during his distinguished career.