
Review Essay
Double Burdens, Double Pleasures:
On American Jewish and Other
Intellectuals
Steven Weiland

Bloom, Alexander. *Prodigal Sons: The New York Intellectuals and Their World*. New York: Oxford University Press, 1986 461 pp.

Pells, Richard. *The Liberal Mind in a Conservative Age: American Intellectuals in the 1940s and 1950s*. New York: Harper & Row, 1985 468 pp.

Whitfield, Stephen. *A Critical American: The Politics of Dwight Macdonald*. Hamden, Conn.: Archon Books, 1984 179 pp.

Reflecting on their own history, intellectuals prefer to stress their independence, the unique point of view each expects to bring to ideas, events and texts. Indeed, according to Daniel Bell in *The End of Ideology* (1961), while the scholar strives to add to the accumulated knowledge of a discipline within the routines of tradition, the intellectual “begins with *his* experience, *his* individual perceptions of the world, *his* privileges and deprivations, and judges the world by these sensibilities.” By insisting on the personal dimensions of intellectual work, Bell invites us to think about its motives as well as its products and impact.

It was, presumably, just such an intention that prompted Nathan Glazer’s recent account (in the fiftieth-anniversary issue of the *Partisan Review*, [1984]) of Jewish intellectual life a few decades ago. He wonders why so few literary and social critics wrote directly about Jewish themes. In Glazer’s view the absence of Jewishness in the *Partisan Review* in its heyday during and after World War II, for example, derived from many writers’ taste for “universalism against particularism.” They wished to display intellectual cosmopolitanism through

allegiance to forms of radical political belief, including in some cases in the 1930's, to communism.

In the 1940's and 1950's, of course, most Jewish intellectuals combined loyalty to cultural modernism with what came to be called "liberal anti-communism" in politics. The question of Jewish identity remained an allied but subordinate theme (despite its popularity in fiction), at least until some of the most influential critics of the period found in its neglect one source of the next decade's social and cultural turmoil. Hence, speaking in the late 1960's of the scholarly and intellectual consequences of the emerging counterculture, Irving Howe made this angry comment:

The new sensibility is impatient with ideas. It is impatient with literary structures of complexity and coherence . . . It wants instead works of literature—though literature may be the wrong word—that will be absolute as the sun, as unarguable as orgasm, and as delicious as a lollipop . . . It is weary of the habit of reflection, the making of distinctions, the squareness of dialectic, the tarnished gold of inherited wisdom. It cares nothing for the haunted memories of old Jews . . . It breathes contempt for rationality, impatience with mind, and a hostility to the artifices and decorums of high culture. It despises liberal values, liberal cautions, liberal virtues.

Appearing as it did in 1968 in an essay on "The New York Intellectuals," Howe's outburst signified yet another struggle among the generations. And it expressed characteristic resentments from intellectuals who had come after the war to be identified as a group that was—in the manner of today's academic faculties—by turns collegial and combative. Such was their impact in setting out the main themes of intellectual debate, especially the complex relations of culture and politics, and in providing models for thinking about them, that recovering the history of the New York Intellectuals is now an important part of the writing of postwar American history. The study of these mainly Jewish intellectuals, and their colleagues, also has much to tell us about the status of their successors and the prospects for reconciling *their* conflicting cultural and political interests.

By inquiring into "the world" of his subjects, Alexander Bloom in *Prodigal Sons* is willfully parochial, at least as indifferent as the New York Intellectuals themselves to what America was like beyond the

boundaries of Saul Steinberg's famous map reducing the states west of the Hudson River to geographic marginalia. It was not range that the New York Intellectuals were after but depth in the matter of cultural and political affairs, especially those reflecting European sources. That meant, of course, devotion to "modernism" in the literary and visual arts and in music. And it required accounting for the development and consequences of this century's forms of totalitarianism. Their principal vehicle was, of course, the *Partisan Review*. Accordingly, Bloom's study is essentially a chronicle of that journal's role as a forum for the cultural and political program of its main contributors, as well as the debates that shaped their writing and finally divided them on matters of taste in the arts and ideology.

Bloom provides a detailed and well-paced chronological account of how the ideals and practices of the New York Intellectuals alternately brought them together and drove them apart. The key issues were ethical, ethnic and editorial. They argued over political ideology and over the ratio of politics to culture in defining the direction of the *Partisan Review* and of the intellectual vocations. And they disagreed, more in private than in public, about the priority of Jewishness as a personal and public theme. Alfred Kazin characterized the theme of Jewish life as "the pariah versus the central position—a constant mystery to other people."

Bloom's account, and Kazin's relations with his colleagues, illustrates not only how this theme defined the relation of Jews to American culture generally but how it also defined the internal style of intellectual life. That is, at different times leading figures came together on behalf of one issue and then fell out with one another over a subsequent one. The process began with the staking out of positions on the matter of the Popular Front of the late 1930's and was followed by intense debate on American entry into World War II, on postwar relations with the Soviet Union, on the apparent cultural and political consensus that dominated American life in the 1950's, on the values of the counter-culture in the 1960's and 1970's, and finally on the emergence of neo-conservatism as an influential position of the 1980's.

Within this succession of intellectual dramas Bloom identifies the recovery of Jewish identity as a crucial if heretofore insufficiently recognized turning point. Having established intellectual authority in the war years, and a community of discourse, however fractious at times,

the New York Intellectuals still felt themselves to be isolated, not quite at home in a culture they felt compelled to view skeptically by virtue of their roles as intellectuals. According to Bloom, such feelings prompted strong, though often submerged, feelings of ethnic and religious identification: "The more these intellectuals understood their relationship to their parents, the less 'rootless' they would become. Although the world of their fathers was disappearing, personal foundations remained." Yet according to their own testimony, their restored affiliations carried a predictable amount of ambivalence. Hence in 1950 the art critic Clement Greenberg summarized his circumstances this way: "What we might ask of our new Jewish self-consciousness is that it liberate rather than organize us . . . What I want to do is accept my Jewishness more implicitly . . . I want to overcome my self-hatred in order to be more myself, not in order to be a good Jew."

Others would admit later to similar problems of integration, to the difficulty of being a forthrightly Jewish intellectual with claims on a general academic audience. Thus Bell acknowledged in 1961, "I was born in *galut* and I accept—now gladly, though once in pain—the double burden and the double pleasure of my self-consciousness, the outward life of an American and the inward secret life of a Jew." Bloom appears to be skeptical about such claims, preferring in effect Howe's candid affirmation of his colleagues' roots: "For all their gloss of sophistication, they had not really moved very far into the world. The immigration milk was still on their lips." Having only the evidence of their own testimony, Bloom's argument is as personal as the point he is trying to make.

Little effort is made in *Prodigal Sons* to demonstrate the Jewishness of intellectual life—manifest or nascent—through analyses of texts that might reveal Jewish features of the rhetorical and moral structure of their arguments. Glazer himself noted of Howe's popular *The World of Our Fathers* that it displays "the marriage of historical and sociological materials with that high seriousness, that grasping for brilliance, that is the special mark of the New York Jewish intellectual tradition." In other words, scholarship abetted the instincts of a particular kind of intellect. While most of Bloom's "prodigal sons" appear to have been qualified to produce such work few actually did. Except for Lionel Trilling's *The Liberal Imagination* (1950), he does not ex-

plain why this was so nor how the few other major books that did emerge from this unique milieu—Leslie Fiedler's *Love and Death in the American Novel* (1960), Richard Hofstadter's *Anti-Intellectualism in American Life* (1963), or the essays of Harold Rosenberg, for example—constitute a tradition in which today's scholars might work. By concentrating instead on texts like Norman Podhoretz's *Making It* (1967), Bloom certainly satisfies Bell's criteria for identifying the personal dimensions of intellect but at the expense of actually making a place for the New York Intellectuals in the history of the complex ideas they themselves professed to favor.

So too is it difficult to discern in *Prodigal Sons* how Jewish tradition aided or constrained intellectuals in their efforts to find new roles when the work of advocating modernism was well advanced and many critics secure in academic posts. As Bloom puts it,

The revolutionary modernists had abandoned their cultural style while carrying their cultural ideas to prominence. No longer seeking to undermine the established, bourgeois order, they could no longer support a cultural approach subversive of that order. No consensus on a new function for the avant-garde or a new role for modernist criticism could emerge. It became more difficult to fashion a theory of modernism based on a defense of cultural standards than one based on a critique of them.

This is in fact precisely the dilemma that Richard Pells explores in *The Liberal Mind in a Conservative Age* where the *Partisan Review* writers play a key if not dominating role in defining the classification proposed in the book's title. Like Bloom, Pells admires them for their ideals and techniques, the latter more often a matter of performance than the mere presentation of ideas. "They abhorred specialization," Pells says, "so became specialists in every subject."

In asking "What are the most appropriate and productive forms of intellectual work?" Pells pursues a subject that also was central to his widely cited *Radical Visions and American Dreams: Culture and Social Thought in the Depression Years* (1973). He demonstrates that since World War II liberal intellectuals have again struggled to define their vocation as part of their political beliefs. The very gap between the two—imposed in part at least by the institutional consequences of the Cold War—was itself part of the problem, especially in the 1950's. Mindful of their colleagues' experience in the 1930's, most intellectu-

als adapted to the postwar cultural ethos by providing scholarly support for political, economic, and social stability, the famous “consensus” promoted by influential historians as the distinguishing feature of American history.

In Pell’s view the key texts were Arthur Schlesinger’s *The Vital Center* (1949) and Bell’s *The End of Ideology* (1960), both of which encouraged the neutralization of political commitments. “Realism” (nee “patriotism”) came to be seen as indispensable to a scholarly career. Pells, typically, sees both sides of the question:

Though the denigration of ideology helped free intellectuals from the shibboleths of Marxism, it also made them indifferent to questions about the ultimate worth of capitalism and the underlying values of American life . . . Few intellectuals were able to give up their faith in older radical doctrines yet continue to subject American institutions to systematic analysis and criticism. Within this “diminished perspective” a crucial transformation relieved many of the “prodigal sons” of the burdens that had shaped their entry into intellectual life.

By minimizing the need for alterations in America’s political and economic institutions, by insisting that the country’s most serious predicaments were cultural and psychological, by focusing almost exclusively on the possibilities of inner rejuvenation in an otherwise stable society, the majority of post-war intellectuals had obscured the links between the social order and personal discontent.

An exception, and the hero of *The Liberal Mind in a Conservative Age*, is the sociologist C. Wright Mills. In Pell’s view, Mills unified the disparate ideas of his time and found a suitable scholarly voice for reaching across the disciplines and audiences. Anathema as he is to many mainstream social scientists (though usually not to the humanists who read him), we are left to wonder about the consequences of singling out Mills as the model intellectual. But critic as *he* is of the realism and accommodation of Mills’s forebears and contemporaries, Pells could hardly have chosen anyone else.

As Pells takes the story into the 1960’s, intergenerational struggles compounded the difficulties faced by the “prodigal sons” in managing their roles now as established figures in intellectual life and as models for that period’s version of what Trilling called “the adversary cul-

ture." A onetime ally of Mills who came to find him not quite independent enough (at least in his prose style) was Dwight Macdonald, who is portrayed by Stephen Whitfield as "the New Left's ancestral voice." Whitfield's brisk and perceptive account of Macdonald's career shows why this intellectual jack-of-all-trades, by turns genial and irascible, had such fitful relations with his New York colleagues in political and literary journalism. It was, in Whitfield's view, the unity of Macdonald's ideas that fortified his polemical goals and the program of his short-lived but influential magazine *Politics* (1944-49). Whitfield's summary captures Macdonald's idealism and anticipation of the themes of succeeding decades: recognition of the insidious threat of depersonalization; repudiation of the belief in progress or salvation by science; abhorrence of a political economy girded by weaponry; moral outrage against the claims of Communism; disparagement of liberalism; advocacy of decentralization and nonviolent direct action viewed as alternatives to both the class struggle and the two party system; and an emphasis upon the individual conscience rather than mass organizations as the catalyst of radical action.

Macdonald was, as Whitfield says, the prototype of the independent radical, yet in *The Root of Man* (1946), his most ambitious work, he sounds like the liberal intellectual he resisted becoming: "We must emphasize the emotions, the imagination, the moral feelings, the primacy of the individual human being once more." Macdonald's burden can be found within the same intellectual generation gap that irritated Irving Howe: squaring radical politics with bourgeois cultural habits. In 1967 he chastised his younger colleagues of the New Left to "go to a library . . . and look up all those big dull books . . . sort of smarten up a bit."

For the non-Jews Mills and Macdonald, of course, Jewish identity was only an observable quality of intellectual work. Yet they shared with their Jewish colleagues the vocational dilemma ably summarized by Whitfield in an essay on the legacy of radicalism: "Some radicals were slow to realize that even idealism, for all its attractiveness, is a quality that ought to be judged not merely by its intensity, but by its consequences, by its scope, and by its compatibility with the sense of discrimination and proportion" (*Voices of Jacob, Hands of Esau: Jews in American Life and Thought* [1984]).

No one can now doubt the utility of explaining Jewish intellectual

history as part of the history of politics and ideology in America. The *Partisan Review* is an essential part of that story. By incorporating it, however, into the larger themes favored by Pells and even Whitfield in his brief study, the question of Jewish intellectual influence is more problematic. Are there distinctly Jewish ideas and critical habits that have defined secular intellectual life generally? Pells finds in Alfred Kazin's characterization of literary and social critic Paul Goodman—" [He] radiated authority in all branches of learning"—a trait that was "virtually a prerequisite within the New York Jewish intelligensia." Such omniscience—real and presumed—was a burden that reflected the Jewish style while perhaps obscuring what was distinctly Jewish in it. The rapidly growing list of autobiographical and historical accounts of the postwar period suggest that for today's generation of inquirers, discovering the ratio between these elements of recent American intellectual history amounts to a burden all its own.

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Book Reviews

Haron, Miriam Joyce. *Palestine and the Anglo-American Connection, 1945–1950*. New York: Peter Lang, 1986. 209 pp.

Miriam Joyce Haron's *Palestine and the Anglo-American Connection, 1945–1950* is forceful diplomatic and political history. It is an exploration of "Realpolitik" and, as such, will not appeal to those who are easily disillusioned by expediency, deceit, or both. Her thesis is clear (pp. 156–162): There was a moment in history after World War II when peace was possible, at least in a limited way, in the disordered Middle East. It was a brief period in which Great Britain and the United States had opportunities to lessen certain rivalries and antagonisms, thus creating a suitable atmosphere for negotiation. They didn't, the moment passed, and the situation in the Middle East was left unresolved.

No one is blameless, the author declares, but in this study England is treated somewhat more gently than the United States. Following the first chapter, which is a review of well-worn ground—State Department isolation, British irresolution, and helpless American Zionists confronting intractable governments poised for war—Professor Haron arrives at the crux of the matter. In the years immediately following the German surrender, the British were in a critical situation at home and abroad. Therefore, the ministerial and cabinet response to the Palestine crisis may have been careless, even callous, but it was the result of preoccupation, not malice: "The Foreign Office was sensitive. Because of Britain's experience in the Middle East, London had expected to put forward policies that Washington would accept and carry out" (p. 164). With the exception of Chapter 5, in which sources from the Harry S. Truman Library and the National Archives predominate, there is a critical emphasis on those British primary materials which sensitize the reader to this theme. These include *Hansard's Parliamentary Debates* and a variety of correspondence from the Public Record Office, especially the latter. All the proposals championed by

the British are given attention—the Anglo-American Committee of Inquiry, the Cabinet Committee, the London Conference, and the Bernadotte Plan—and it appears, from the research, that Britain attempted every conceivable alternative in relatively good faith before abandoning Palestine to the United Nations partition plan. Indeed, Prime Minister Ernest Bevin made ill-advised, inflammatory anti-Semitic remarks, but he was provoked (pp. 30–34, 76); perhaps Her Majesty’s Government favored the Jordanian over the Israeli position from 1948 to 1950 (p. 164) but, given the status of Britain’s depleted empire and general retreat from power, it was the practical way to hang on to what little remained.

What about the United States? Though Dr. Haron is careful to advise that both “great western nations” were preoccupied (pp. 142–143), the author is much more aggressive in assigning a negative role to America. “The United States was in the best position to . . . solve the Palestine problem” (pp. 164–165), she ventures, and it is from this perspective that the reader must view her discussion of the “Anglo-American Connection.”

For the unschooled, United States actions regarding displaced persons (DPs) appear to be perfectly in line with all of this country’s legendary idealistic heritage. President Truman favored a recommendation of investigator Earl G. Harrison and the Jewish Agency permitting 100,000 DPs entry into Palestine. Morally outraged, “right-thinking” Americans applied public pressure upon Great Britain to acknowledge and amend the error of her ways. Dr. Haron refocuses the story, placing Washington’s concerns in a rather harsh light. Essentially, she says, Americans pressured—virtually blackmailed—the Labour government (by threatening to withdraw a sizable loan, p. 33) in order to avoid having to participate in solving the problem here, via the lifting of immigrant quota laws. Casting our former ally in a bad light was easy to do, since Britain, immensely vulnerable, could not and would not deal with Ernest Bevin’s damaging public statements and the tragic episode of the ship *Exodus* 1947 (pp. 38–42). As a matter of fact, England appeared so devilish as to render the United States lily-white by comparison. And, of course, the Democrats loved it, since election-time was near and the need to look appealing for American Jewish voters was paramount.

Further on in this carefully documented and generally well-written

book, Dr. Haron avers that, in 1946, the British Cabinet was “short-sighted” (p. 66) but Truman was calculating^s in his desire to draw maximum political capital from his pre-congressional election pro-Zionist statements (pp. 71–72). By Chapter 4, the reader finds Washington’s obstructionism extending into 1948 when Great Britain desperately—albeit futilely—sought a way out of the Palestine imbroglio while Truman and the State Department measured the election-year “fall out” of each and every official or unofficial public pronouncement. It is almost a case of “Nero fiddling while Rome burned.”

Following the establishment of the Israeli Provisional Government in May 1948, the efforts of London and Washington in mediating the Arab-Israeli conflict were anticlimatic, with Britain assuming a pro-Jordanian stand, compatible with her self-interest and conception of honor, while American policy makers were most interested in having their respective parties “look good” to and “get right” with Jewish ethnic voters during a presidential election year (pp. 114–115, 127).

By February 1949, “Israel had British recognition, at least de facto, and . . . the United States extended *de jure* recognition both to Israel and Transjordan” (p. 130). But neither England nor America dealt with the ambitions of Abdullah, the growing confidence of Ibn Saud, or the dissolute character of Farouk. However, the author primarily takes America to task with her frequent statements to the effect that “Washington was unwilling” (p. 139), or “Washington was opposed” or Truman “was unwilling” (p. 165), or Secretary of State Acheson “was opposed” (p. 157).

And it is true. Professor Haron has cast in deep shadow—rightfully so—the often ambiguous mix of American idealism and self-interest which shapes this country’s Middle Eastern policy. But if the United States acted selfishly and often in bad faith, so did Britain. After all, it was she who, during the course of a harrowing quarter-century, assumed legal responsibility for administering a volatile region; it was she whose noncomprehensive, patchwork placebos failed to bring order, and it was she who sacrificed Arab and Jewish peoples on the altar of self-interest; it was she who prepared the unpalatable repast of 1945–1950 with years of commissions, “White Papers,” memoranda, “Round Table” conferences, and assorted anti-Jewish enterprises which successfully compromised the Balfour Declaration and the spirit of the Palestine mandate. If the United States, as bystander, is culpa-

ble—which she indeed may be,—Britain, as perpetrator and active collaborator, is no less so. Rather than assigning responsibility, sharing it equally seems a more devastating response in a world where many are willing to attend the birth of victory but few are willing to adopt defeat.

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Steinmetz, Sol. *Yiddish and English: A Century of Yiddish in America*. University, Ala.: University of Alabama Press, 1986. x, 172 pp.

The title of this book promises much, but the delivery leaves a good deal to be desired. Insofar as the story is presented, much of the material is interesting and even accurate, but hardly complete. The biographical sources, too, could have been fuller. The author of course had the eternal problem of trying to summarize technical research results for the presumably interested but nonspecialist layman. I am not sure that he has really succeeded, except to repeat a good deal of data that are already well known. What bothers me most, however, is the amount of inaccuracy that has been included as well.

After Acknowledgments and Introduction, Steinmetz gives us five chapters, a short conclusion, two appendices, notes, and a "select bibliography." The chapters are entitled: "The Appeal of Yiddish," "A Brief History of Yiddish," "Yiddish in the United States," "The Americanization of Yiddish," "The Yiddish Influence on English," "Jewish English in the United States," and "Conclusion." At the end of the book, Appendix I discusses "the romanization of Yiddish and Yiddish-origin words;" and Appendix II contains a "Jewish [*sic*]-English Glossary."

Since on the whole I do not find this book a successful effort, I believe it is important to point out its shortcomings. Although the various chapters do give an overall picture that is accurate in the main, there are certain infelicities of expression and errors that require comment. The Jewish-English glossary is perhaps the worst feature of the book. It is difficult to see on what basis the particular words were included or indeed why such a glossary was needed at all. But especially, given the fact that word-stress is phonemic (= significant and unpredictable), even though it falls very frequently on the penultimate syllable, there would have been a very practical reason—since the glossary is presumably intended for those innocent of much Yiddish—to mark the stressed syllable on every entry, since there are a number of items from Modern Israeli Hebrew where the stress is often on the

last syllable. How can the normal reader know this if there is no stress indicator?

What follows now are comments on specific statements or entries. The numbers given are the page numbers.

13: “The fusion of these three elements, German, Jewish, and Romance—a fusion clearly represented by words like *bentshn* and *leyenen*—marked the emergence of Old Yiddish.” Why not also give the analysis of these two cited words to demonstrate the several components? And why not use the terms “Germanic, Hebraic” parallel with “Romance?”

Again on page 13, we are told about the earliest Yiddish texts, such as the Worms Makhzor of 1272 and a Cologne manuscript of 1396. But there is no mention of the extremely important Cambridge Codex of 1382 that was found in the Cairo Geniza.

19. “Abraham Cahan’s insistence on the need to learn English eventually led to the demise of the great daily which he helped establish.” It hardly seems necessary to blame Cahan’s philosophy of Americanization for what happened to the *Forverts*. The process of linguistic assimilation that has affected every immigrant community in the United States was much more important than what Cahan may have believed. Even if he had held the exact opposite view and had insisted on the retention of Yiddish, the closing down of the immigration doors in the twenties and the overwhelming attitude toward Americanization among Jewish Yiddish-speaking immigrants (as in all other immigrant groups) would have produced the same result. Incidentally, it will be interesting for future students to note to what extent the linguistic assimilation process in the United States is contravened, if at all, fifty years from now by the recent upsurge in Spanish language loyalty.

22. “*Kokhaleyns* (bungalows with cooking facilities, lit., ‘cook alones.’) Not at all. *Kokhaleyn* means “a place to cook by oneself,” i.e., a rented room, apartment, or bungalow where the tenant could cook his own meals and not incur the expense of eating out.

27: There is mention of “*Di goldene keyt*, a quarterly edited by Avrom Sutskever.” But his name is *Avrohom*, and there should have been mention of the fact that this very important and high-quality periodical is published in Israel.

Now I would like to take up a number of mistranscriptions. This is not an exhaustive list by any means.

34: *Der shop* “the shop” should be *der shap*. Then in a footnote comment to the plural *sheper*: “This curious plural was formed by analogy with such Yiddish forms as *lokh* ‘hole’, plural *lekher*, *dorf* ‘village’, plural *derfer*.” Why is this curious? Analogy often works its wondrous ways. How about Hebrew-origin *ponem* “face” and its plural *penemer*? It strikes me as curious to focus on *sheper* as “curious.”

37: The list of Yiddish neologisms created by “linguists, writers, and journalists” is totally artificial. I cannot ever recall seeing or hearing them in any authentic Yiddish context. My late dear friend and colleague, Uriel Weinreich, once coined the word *blezl-bod* for “bubble bath” in my presence while driving in his car because I had just brought his little daughter a gift that contained the item. But I suspect that the life of the word was very short. I also recall an incident at a Yiddish studies conference at Columbia University in June 1964 when a very inventive Yiddish linguist used the word *blits-shlesl* for “zipper,” which he had evidently invented. I suggested to him that he might have done better to inquire among Yiddish-speakers in the garment industry and he would have discovered that *ziper* was the word that had long been used.

39: “. . . American Yiddish *nekst*, assuming the function of a noun, acquired the meaning ‘turn,’ as in *s’iz mayn nekst* ‘it’s my turn.’” But this noun function already existed in English and was certainly not a Yiddish development. It is quite common in any American barbershop or bakery or grocery store where there is no Yiddish influence whatever to hear the barber or salesperson ask “Whose next is it?”

50: *hamus* “a policeman or detective” is traced back to Yiddish *shamus* “a synagogue caretaker or watchman, a beadle.” However, a number of dictionaries also refer to a possible origin in the Irish form of the name “James.” Both sources may well have been at work.

52: There is constant reference throughout the book to the “proper spelling” in English of Yiddish loanwords. I find this a general waste of time and an interesting influence of the importance that literate Americans ascribe to the fetish of correct spelling in general. The generally accepted YIVO transcription for Yiddish which the author invokes contains forms that are cumbersome and inconsistent. I personally prefer (though I know that there is little chance that my preferences will be accepted) the symbol *x* instead of *kh*, among others. In

addition, as mentioned above, I believe that stress should be indicated in all polysyllabic words in Yiddish. Furthermore and even more seriously, the phonemic distinction in Yiddish between [i] and [I] ought to be marked and is nowhere indicated in the YIVO system. For example, in Steinmetz's glossary we find the word *kile* "hernia". But this is phonetically [kIlle]; whereas the very same transcription could be interpreted as standing for [kile] with the higher front vowel, even diphthongized as [kiyle], and means "cool ones." An apt minimal pair.

59: Modern Hebrew *kibbutz* (why not *kibbutts* to be consistent in the author's own terms?), *hora*, *sabra*, *aliya* did not begin to enter English, as Steinmetz claims, after the 1948 birth of the State of Israel. They were widely used in the English of Zionism long before 1948.

68: The author cites the modern advertisement: "Sanka coffee—We got where we are on pure ta'am." And then he adds in parentheses the "correction" to *tam* "taste", thereby ignoring a very apposite minimal pair that shows the contrast in Yiddish between long and short /a/. To be sure this is not a phonemic distinction that carries with it a heavy functional load, but it is there nonetheless. Indeed, the word for taste is /taam/ or /ta:m/. The form *tam* means "a fool," and the Sanka form is more accurate.

Finally, there is an egregious error on page 153, footnote 8 (at the bottom of the page), which lists only the existence of a Yiddish Studies Program in Israel at Haifa University and one that opened at Bar-Ilan University in 1982. To overlook the Department of Yiddish Studies at the Hebrew University in Jerusalem is a bit much. The Jerusalem program has been in existence since the early 1950's and is without a doubt the best and most productive in the world.

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Wolff, Egon, and Frieda Wolff. *Judeus nos Primórdios do Brasil República: Visto Especialmente pela Documentação no Rio de Janeiro*. Rio de Janeiro: Biblioteca Israelita H. N. Bialik-Centro de Documentação, 1979. 384 pp.

It is only recently that the modern history of the Jews in Latin America has become the subject of serious academic study. Most works have tended toward the impressionistic (Beller, 1969) or have concentrated on the colonial era (Novinsky, 1972; Wiznitzer, 1960). In the last fifteen years, however, several scholars have conducted and published serious historical studies of Latin American Jewish communities. Recently produced works have been either generalist in nature, such as Elkin's *Jews of the Latin American Republics* (1980), or have dealt with the large Argentine Jewish community (Avni, 1973; Sofer, 1982; Weisbrot, 1979). Virtually ignored by historians, Brazil's modern Jewish group since Independence (1889) demands careful study.

Egon and Frieda Wolff's *Judeus nos Primórdios do Brasil República: Visto Especialmente pela Documentação no Rio de Janeiro* [Jews in the early days of the Brazilian Republic: Concentrating primarily on documents in Rio de Janeiro] begins to establish a basis for serious historical study of the modern community. This volume, which follows the couple's publication of *Judeus no Brasil Imperial* [Jews in Imperial Brazil], makes little attempt to analyze the history of the Jews in Brazil during the first years of republican government. Rather, the Wolffs have set out to exhaustively catalogue and briefly discuss leading members of Brazil's Jewish community from November 15, 1889, the date of the establishment of the Brazilian Republic, through 1904, when the first Jewish agricultural colony in Brazil was founded. By dividing the book into sections based on family (the Reés, the Nothmans, and the Amzalaks, for example) or on occupation (doctors, dentists, kosher butchers), the Wolffs are able to present a survey of Brazilian-Jewish life and activity in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries.

The Wolffs' concentration on brief narrative biographies, along with occasional general chapters on "Jewish Communal Life," "The

Participation of Jewish Women in the Economic Life of Rio,” or “Anti-Semitism,” gives the reader a good sense of what it meant to be Jewish in those formative years of Brazil’s republican era. *Judeus nos Primórdios do Brasil República* concentrates on the large communities in Rio de Janeiro and São Paulo while dealing less extensively with other geographical areas. Important crises which faced Brazilian Jews, such as the rise of anti-Semitism in Para (northeastern Brazil) and France’s Dreyfus Affair, are briefly discussed as a prelude to the concluding comments on the founding of the ICA (Jewish Colonization Association) agricultural colonies of Philipson and Quatro Irmãos in the state of Rio Grande do Sul.

One of the most fascinatingly suggestive chapters of *Jews in the Early Days of the Brazilian Republic* concerns “Social Life in Rio.” By dividing the chapter into three sections based on national origin, “Alsatian Jews,” “English [including Jews],” and “Germans [including Jews],” the Wolffs suggest that Jews were very much separated among themselves. Implicit is the idea that Brazilian-Jewish self-conceptions in this era were based in part upon place of residence prior to immigration. The major English club in Rio during the latter part of the nineteenth century, for example, was the Clube Laranjeiras (“Orange Tree Club”), in which the Hime family was a leading member. According to the Wolffs, English Jews were accepted as English by Brazilians of British descent because “the first concert [at the club] in 1899 featured the young Frank W. Hime on piano.” It is a shame that the Wolffs have chosen not to present the Himes’ participation in the non-Jewish Clube Laranjeiras as an example of specific integration patterns among English Jews in Brazil, but the recounting of the situation alone suggests valuable research possibilities for the future.

All new fields of history must build upon already set foundations. Thus, although the Wolffs’ descriptive approach to modern Brazilian-Jewish history is analytically unsatisfying, such careful collection of documents is a critically important step for the field. The book, in its sixty-four chapters, suggests an overwhelming number of personalities, issues, and events which demand further research in order to better understand the Jewish community in Brazil. As important for continued scholarship is the Wolffs’ careful documentation of their research material, which was garnered from such varied sources as the Archives of the Jewish Cemetery Society in São Paulo and oral-history

interviews with descendants of Brazilian Jews in Portugal. The use of newspapers and magazine articles on Jews and Jewish issues, ranging from Rio's *Jornal do Commercio* to London's *Jewish Chronicle* and Leipzig's *Allgemeine Zeitung des Judenthums*, also points to important sources for future research. In addition, the recognition by the Wolffs that although anti-Semitism was far less virulent in Brazil than in Argentina, "changes in the regime have [always] caused apprehension in the Jewish community," begins to point to one of the major factors which dominates Brazilian-Jewish history in the modern era. The distinction between the rhetoric of Brazil as a religious/cultural democracy and the perception of Jews that such may not accurately reflect reality continues to play a major role in Brazilian-Jewish life.

Critical in the development of modern Brazilian-Jewish history is the movement away from the biographies which the Wolffs emphasize to a more carefully constructed social/cultural form of research. Immigration patterns and how they reflect class and social distinctions among Jewish immigrants is one area in which the information presented in *Judeus nos Primórdios do Brasil República* can be used to great advantage. Issues of class, national origin, language, and method of religious practice were to divide Brazil's Jewish community in the three decades following World War I. In order to understand the lives of later immigrants, such factors must be taken into account in precisely constructing a picture of the Jewish community in the early days of the Republic.

Egon and Frieda Wolff have chosen one of the most important eras in modern Brazilian history for their study. The Jews who lived and worked in Brazil during the first twenty-five years of the Republic set the tone, especially in Rio de Janeiro and São Paulo, for the massive Eastern European immigration to Brazil following 1917, and the large refugee migration from Italy and Germany which began in the mid-1930's. By setting out names, issues, and archives on which to basis future research, the Wolffs have provided an important academic service for scholars examining modern Brazilian-Jewish history.

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Brief Notices

Davis, Moshe, Edited by. *With Eyes Toward Zion—II. Themes and Sources in the Archives of the United States, Great Britain, Turkey and Israel*. New York: Praeger, 1986. xxvi, 408 pp.

Professor Moshe Davis, long a giant in the world of Jewish scholarly pursuits, has once again succeeded in organizing a collection of papers presented by distinguished scholars in 1983 in Washington, D.C., into a first-rate and important volume.

As with the first volume to bear this title, *With Eyes Toward Zion—II* attempts to develop a new and exciting scholarly view of the Holy Land. The book is part of a wide-ranging effort waged by Professor Davis to create a new subdiscipline, namely, America–Holy Land Studies. As Davis understands it, the project has at least two levels: “to study the nature and continuity of the relationship between the American people and the Holy Land in historical context, from colonial times to the birth of the State of Israel in 1948,” and to assure that methodologically, America–Holy Land Studies emerge as a “unified field in which American history meets the Jewish and Christian traditions.”

Given the quality of the presentations in this volume, too numerous to mention, and the richness of the sources cited within them, Professor Davis has achieved his aims with brilliance.

Edelheit, Joseph A., Edited by. *The Life of Covenant: The Challenge of Contemporary Judaism (Essays in Honor of Herman E. Schaalman)*. Chicago: Spertus College of Judaica Press, 1986. xvii, 263 pp.

One of the “five Germans,” young students at Berlin’s liberal rabbinic seminary, the Hochschule (Lehranstalt) fuer die Wissenschaft des Judentums, who were rescued by the Hebrew Union College in 1935, Rabbi Herman E. Schaalman retired in 1986 after a forty-five-year rabbinate, most of them as rabbi of Emanuel Congregation, Chicago.

This volume is a *Festschrift*, but it is also a deep and revealing exploration of the central element in Schaalman’s “monumental faith,” namely, the theme of covenant.

As Rabbi Schaalman’s successor at Emanuel, Joseph A. Edelheit, describes it, “covenant remains the descriptive context within which humans and God encounter one another. It is within the covenant that Torah and *mitzvot* have meaning.”

Herman Schaalman’s “monumental faith” (the phrase is his daughter’s) was recognized and honored in 1981 by his election as president of the Central Conference of American Rabbis. Distinguished contributors to this volume include Eliezer Berkovits, Emil L. Fackenheim, Eugene B. Borowitz, Alfred Gottschalk, Joseph Glaser, Irving and Blu Greenberg, Eugene S. Lipman, Elie Wiesel, John Pawlikowski, Jacob J. Petuchowski, Alexander Schindler, W. Gunther Plaut, David Polish, and Ellis Rivkin.

Friedlander, Henry, and Sybil Milton, Edited by. *Simon Wiesenthal Center Annual (Volume 3)*. White Plains, N.Y.: Kraus International Publications, 1986. 386 pp.

The third and largest volume to date of this outstanding Holocaust Studies annual contains a number of articles which reflect on the American Jewish experience. Henry Friedlander and Earlean M. McCarrick discuss “Nazi Criminals in the United States: Denaturalization after

Federenko"; Efraim Zuroff analyzes "Rabbis' Relief and Rescue: A Case Study of the Activities of the *Vaad ha-Hotzala* (Rescue Committee) of the American Orthodox Rabbis, 1942-1943"; Haim Genizi profiles "Philip S. Bernstein: Adviser on Jewish Affairs, May 1946-August 1947"; and Bat-Ami Zucker investigates the little-known area of "Black Americans' Reaction to the Persecution of European Jews."

There are also important and related reviews by George O. Kent, Leonard Dinnerstein, Stephen E. Ambrose, and Guy Stern.

Gerber, David A., Edited by. *Anti-Semitism in American History*. Urbana and Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 1986. 428 pp.

"It could happen here," has been a distinctive watchword employed by American Jewish defense organizations whose purpose has been to make certain that America never took the path traveled by Nazi Germany toward the extermination of its own and ultimately much of European Jewry.

The fact is, however, that it has not happened here, and seems to have less and less of a chance to do so.

Anti-Semitism has been a part of American history, but until the appearance of *Anti-Semitism in American History* we have never really understood just how much and exactly for what reasons. The volume contains thirteen essays by some of the finest historians working in the area of the American Jewish experience.

Jonathan Sarna, Richard D. Brietman and Allan M. Kraut, Robert Singerman, David A. Gerber, Marcia Synnott, Leonard Dinnerstein, Arthur Liebman, and Egal Feldman, among others, have all contributed important books and articles to the field.

They have now turned their talents to examining various problems within American anti-Semitism under the rubrics of Mythologies, Images, and Stereotypes; Demagogues, Ideologies, Nativists, and Restrictionists; Social Discrimination; Intergroup Relations in the City; Radicals and Reformers; and Toward Christian Reevaluation and Interfaith Dialogue. The majority of the articles are well-researched, well-written, and present original contributions to an area of American and American Jewish history that has long needed such a volume and such a group of active scholars. David A. Gerber's long introductory overview of anti-Semitism in American history is beautifully done and is perhaps the best existing essay written for such a purpose.

Still there are some deficiencies in the volume which are obviously the result of space restrictions and lack of historians capable of righting them. One such area, and one emphasized by Gerber, is the apparent debate over the continuity of American anti-Semitism and the degree to which it resembled, at least in its ideological, social, economic, and political stages and functions, the growth of anti-Semitism in other countries, both in the Western Hemisphere and in Europe, including Germany. Hence, there seem to exist "marginalist" versus "continualist" schools of thought regarding the place and continuity of anti-Jewish thought and action in the American experience. Yet authors such as Louis Harap, Michael H. Dobkowski, and Morris U. Schappes, who can be grouped under the "continualist" school, are not represented in the volume.

A second area, and ultimately a most valuable one, is the results that would be gained through a comparative study of anti-Semitism in the histories of a number of countries, including the United States and Germany. We could gain clearer insight into the similarities and differences between the national anti-Semitisms and their historic stages and thus understand more clearly why it didn't happen here and does not seem likely to in any foreseeable future.

Greene, Victor R. *American Immigrant Leaders, 1800–1910. Marginality and Identity*. Baltimore: John Hopkins University Press, 1987. xii, 181 pp.

One of the major sources of Jewish identity in America has been the often subtle, sometimes more obvious, sense of tension between being an American and being a Jew. Victor Greene's extremely interesting volume attempts to analyze the forces that developed such a tension not only for Jews, but for the Irish, Germans, Norwegians/Swedes, Poles, and Italians who came as immigrants to these shores and emerged as marginal ethnic groups in American life.

Greene's effort is diverted toward rejecting the widely held historical notion that the first generation of immigrants came to this country as an endangered species—that the forces of assimilation began almost at once to transform them into Americans, jettisoning their Old World culture and linguistic loyalties and identities, and that by the third generation, we had only one hundred percent Americans.

Not so, argues Greene. His brief but careful study of first-generation immigrant leaders, "ethnic mediators or brokers," as he calls them, shows a group of men (only) who made it a point to interpret the plan of their ethnic and religious backgrounds within the American ideal. Most of these leaders, who Greene feels have never been "integrated into America's past," felt that America "protected its ethnic diversity from total and rigid assimilation."

This was the strong belief of the Jewish ethnic mediators identified by Greene: Kasriel Sarasohn, David Blaustein, Alexander Harkavy, and Abraham Cahan. All four men, despite differing views of Jewishness and Judaism, believed that Jewish ethnicity could thrive within American society. And so it has, for over a century since the beginning of Eastern European Jewish immigration.

Yet what was perceived as a balance between group identity as Jews and as Americans has always retained a tension that has never receded into the background of American Jewish life, and does not seem likely to do so in our lifetime.

Kaufman, Stuart B., Edited by. *The Samuel Gompers Papers. Volume I: The Making of a Union Leader, 1850–86*. Urbana and Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 1986. xxxvi, 529 pp.

The journalist Benjamin Stolberg described Samuel Gompers (1850–1924), a year after the great American labor leader had died, as the Moses of labor's "forty years in the wilderness, its daily struggle for manna, its defence against inner rebellion and outer attack."

The first volume of this projected twelve-volume series focuses on Gompers's birth into a London Jewish family with strong Dutch antecedents, his childhood, his immigration to New York City in 1863, his growing participation and influence in the American labor movement, and finally, on his election in 1886 as the first president of the American Federation of Labor.

Rockaway, Robert A. *The Jews of Detroit: From the Beginning, 1762–1914*. Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 1986. xi, 162 pp.

No one knows Detroit Jewry in a scholarly sense as Robert A. Rockaway does. Despite his having lived and taught in Israel for a number of years, Detroit and its Jewish community have never released their grip on him.

This study is a revised and expanded version of his doctoral dissertation, completed at the University of Michigan. In it, Professor Rockaway examines the Jewish community of Detroit from its earliest Jewish settler, Chapman Abraham, in 1767, until the onset of the First World War.

The volume is beautifully illustrated, and Rockaway's narrative is both readable and scholarly. Because the purpose of the book is to "acquaint the Detroit Jewish community of today

with its 'roots,' this direction has not allowed the author to delve fully into the history of Detroit Jewry utilizing the kinds of questions and methodologies employed by various scholars working on the "new" urban history. Yet Rockaway's sources show his awareness of the latest research in this area, and it is therefore quite likely that the second volume of this history, from 1914, will take advantage of Rockaway's obvious familiarity with the kind of Jewish communal history that is now emerging in America.

Sarna, Jonathan D., Edited by. *The American Jewish Experience*. New York: Holmes & Meier, 1986. xix, 303 pp.

That American Jewish history has at long last achieved a widely agreed upon sense of respectability within the historical discipline is in no small part due to the scholarship and energy of Jonathan D. Sarna. *The American Jewish Experience* is simply the best college-level reader available to professors and students alike. Sarna's careful choice of the best scholarship in the field, complemented by his informed and insightful introductions to each piece, have produced a volume that must be on every university syllabus concerned with the history of Jewish life in America.

Weisser, Michael R. *A Brotherhood of Memory: Jewish Landsmanshaftn in the New World*. New York: Basic Books, 1985. xiii, 303 pp.

Michael Weisser's book, beyond being the first literary effort to examine the phenomenon of the landsmanshaftn since Isaac Rontch's WPA-supported survey on the organized immigrant Jewish societies in New York (1938), is a challenge to historians of the American ethnic experience.

It is a challenge because Weisser claims to have developed a new form of historical methodology, one he calls "*Bubbe mayse* history." What is *Bubbe mayse* history? It is "a mixture of facts, anecdotes, fairy tales, fables, innuendos, truths, half-truths, memories, experiences, and even outright lies."

It is a direct challenge to historians and sociologists of the scholarly school to salvage the "human dimension" of the immigrant experience. Weisser objects to terms such as "assimilation" and "mobility", catchwords of the Academy, which he feels obscure the "strength and effort" required to translate those phrases into human terms.

Weisser's goal is to capture the great reading audience of American Jews, so eager to understand their own immigrant experience. He feels his *Bubbe mayse* history is the answer to bringing to fruition the successful re-creation of the Jewish immigrant experience in America.

What effect, then, will this new methodological challenge have upon scholars such as Victor Greene, who has examined the myth of "instant assimilation" of East European Jewish immigrants and who has probed the tensions of the American Jewish identity? What will it do to the research of Arthur Goren, who is examining the transition of Jewish social traditions from Europe to America? How much damage will it do to the theories and conclusions of Hannah Kliger, who has spent years studying the landsmanshaftn and attempting to clarify the changing meaning of ethnic community for these groups in their process of acculturation?

The answer, of course, is none, nothing, and none at all. *Bubbe mayse* history may make us feel warm with nostalgia, may present us with quotable quotes from a memory long complicated by a lifetime of other experiences, and may be of some use to scholars in evaluating their sources and testing their hypotheses. But it will remain in the starting gate of methodological steeds of inquiry while the legitimate scholarly questions and answers sprint toward the finish line of historical truth.

Woocher, Jonathan S. *Sacred Survival: The Civil Religion of American Jews*. Bloomington and Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 1986. x, 244 pp.

Sacred Survival is the culmination of many years of research and thinking that have shaped Jonathan S. Woocher's understanding and definition of "Civil Judaism" in America.

Civil Judaism is "the religion of America's Jewish federations [over 220 of them] and the powerful communal system of which they are the heart." It is a part of the American Jewish religious experience in a way that few have understood until the appearance of this volume.

There is one striking statement in Woocher's volume that reflects the reevaluation of Jewish values inherent in the "Civil Judaism" notion: American Jews, according to Woocher, "can be a *kehillah kedoshah*—a holy community—but only by blending their Jewish impulses with their American know-how." The modern Jewish quest has never been defined better, nor with more reason to ponder the future of Jewish spirituality and belief in an age when the rabbi and the synagogue have been relegated to "viable" alternatives.