
Review Essay
From Image To Presence:
Literary Merit and Social Value in
Twentieth-Century American Jewish
Literature

Daniel Walden

Harap, Louis. *Creative Awakening: The Jewish Presence in Twentieth Century American Literature 1900–1940's*. Westport, Conn.: Greenwood Press, in cooperation with the American Jewish Archives, 1987.

Harap, Louis. *In the Mainstream: The Jewish Presence in Twentieth Century American Literature 1950's–1980*. Westport, Conn.: Greenwood Press, in cooperation with the American Jewish Archives, 1987.

Harap, Louis. *Dramatic Encounters: The Jewish Presence in Twentieth Century Drama, Poetry, and Humor and the Black-Jewish Literary Relationship*. Westport, Conn.: Greenwood Press, in cooperation with the American Jewish Archives, 1987.

For several generations American Jews have written about themselves, have written imaginatively of their acculturation to or assimilation into the American fabric. For most people the pursuit of truth in literature or in essays began in the late nineteenth century. In fact, as Louis Harap made clear in *The Image of the Jew in American Literature: From Early Republic to Mass Immigration* (Philadelphia, 1974), the very stuff of American Jewish history goes back to the early seventeenth century, while the analyses of ethnicity, religions, labor, socialism, proletarian literature, and literature date mainly from the 1920s and 1930s on. True, anti-Semitism is still a subject much studied, but the definitive work, the comprehensive and authoritative study, is still to be written. Thus it was a pleasure to receive Louis Harap's new books, a trilogy, under the rubric *The Jewish Presence in Twentieth*

Century American Literature 1900–1940s, the first volume titled *Creative Awakening*; the second volume, *In the Mainstream*, held the title with the dates now 1950s–1980s; the third volume is called *Dramatic Encounter: The Jewish Presence in Twentieth Century Drama, Poetry, and Humor, and the Black-Jewish Literary Relationship*.

We have here a trilogy with a shifting all-over title and shifting subtitles. No matter, the fact is that *The Image of the Jew in American Literature*, was so presciently presented by Harap in 1974, with a second edition in 1978, has blossomed into this extraordinary “trilogy.” An image, of course, can be a less than real apparition, a figure seen in a mirror, a vague and unformed figure. Or, as Louis Harap presented it, we had a full treatment of the still-to-be-formed Jewish presence as it appeared in literature from sources as diverse as Emma Lazarus, Adah Isaacs Menken, and Sidney Luska and from such an extraordinary talent as Abraham Cahan.

The Jewish Presence, on the other hand, chronicles the Jew in America, after the early years of the great immigration, within the context of literature viewed as a social manifestation whose meaning extends beyond the “literary” in the specialized sense, essential as this literary aspect is to the total grasp of the work. Thus, as Harap makes clear, the Jewish presence includes the material and social status of Jews as well as the mode of life in which Jews appear “within that expression by both Jews and non-Jews.” In short, the presence that Harap intends is “the literary rendering of the acculturation process, the making of the texture of American Jewish social life in the specific historical circumstances of this period of mass immigration and its aftermath.”

As is well known, the Jew in America at the turn of this century came out of an Eastern European background, and took part in the phenomenal expansion of industry at the same time as discrimination waxed and waned. A few Jews from Abraham Cahan on wrote about the processes of acculturation and assimilation while non-Jews and Jews argued about the Melting Pot and Cultural Pluralism. Cahan, a socialist who learned to adapt, wrote *The Rise of David Levinsky*, on the impact of the American Dream—of Success, as it was then being defined. Other novels less well known, like James Oppenheim’s *Dr. Rast* (1909) and *The Nine Tenths* (1911), and Arthur Bullard’s *Comrade Yetta* (1913), were insightfully but not persuasively written. Anzia Yezierska’s *Hungry Hearts* (1920), however, was a path-breaker,

because it began that long upward climb of stories and novelists, to include Edna Ferber and Fanny Hearst, who in the face of hostility to women writers created, to use Harap's words, "the new place of the Jewish woman" in radical and elitist and popular fiction. Just as much a break with the past arose when Samuel Ornitz published, at first anonymously, *Haunch, Paunch and Jowl* (1923), possibly the first attempt by a Jewish author to depict the dirty wash along with the clean. The story of a Jewish Tammany politician's rise from the Lower East Side gang, by hook or by crook, Meyer Hirsch's life was a microcosm of East Side life in the first decades of this century.

Most but not all acculturation took place on New York's Lower East Side, or in the boroughs. Myron Brinig's *Singermann* (1929), a departure, showed the growth and the internal conflicts of several generations of a Jewish family in "Silvery Bow" (Butte), Montana. In another departure, Ludwig Lewisohn's *The Island Within* (1928), preceded by and followed by several transparently autobiographical novels, pictured the growing up and maturing of a German Jew, brought up in Charleston, South Carolina, who was an academic and who suffered discrimination before it became possible for more than a token few to enter the professoriat, who thought of himself briefly as a Christian, who wrote his life again and again. The background, however, made up of the work of the celebrated T. S. Eliot's *Waste Land* (1922), of Hemingway's *The Sun Also Rises* (1925), and Fitzgerald's *The Great Gatsby* (1925), made for a fabric of literary anti-Semitism that reflected the enviroing culture. Possibly, as E. Digby Baltzell has written, this was the last decade of WASP hegemony in America, but it was also a decade of ferment, racism, and anti-Semitism that were central themes in much of the writing of the major authors. To their credit, Edmund Wilson and Sinclair Lewis did not resort to stereotypes.

In the 1930s, during the Great Depression, as the John Reed Clubs emerged and small magazines like the *Comrade*, the *New Masses* and *Liberation* came into being, American Jews read and joined, but also moved toward the *Partisan Review*, founded in 1934 but from 1937 on, under William Phillips and Philip Rahv, a non-communist, progressive journal. In 1934 Henry Roth's *Call It Sleep* was published, possibly the best acculturation novel of the 1930s, along with Daniel Fuchs's *Williamsburg Trilogy* and Meyer Levin's *The Old Bunch*

(1937). Meanwhile, in the novels by Faulkner, Dos Passos, and James T. Farrell, stereotypes abounded in about the same degree as they had in the 1920s. What was new was the frankness, the lack of ambivalence about anti-Semitic stereotypes that was now seen. What was also new was the appearance of Jewish anti-Semitism, the problem of self-hate—in Ben Hecht's *A Jew in Love* (1928), and in Jerome Weidman's *I Can Get It for You Wholesale* (1937). It seems to me that Nathanael West, included by Harap here, is a more complicated case, more that of a Jew manqué than a self-hater. On the other hand, it is clear that Budd Schulberg's *What Makes Sammy Run* (1941) and Jo Sinclair's *Wasteland* (1946) are excellent examples, specifically mentioned, of self-haters trying to find themselves, not gratuitous examples of an author's personality and attitude.

I have spent this much time and space on volume 1 of the trilogy so that it is possible to savor the detail, the research, and the variety of Harap's work. He has read and thought about almost everything. That he is by training an historian writing about the social manifestations of part of a society in literature is his preference. And, it seems to me, his strength. Unlike those who say at full voice that literature has nothing to do with a culture, or history, or a past or present, Harap—correctly, to me—proceeds from an assumption that what Jews and non-Jews write and think is a result of a process inextricably connected to an historical and cultural and religious context. In volume 2, for example, the explication of the threads of influence from *Menorah Journal* to the *Partisan Review* and *Commentary* makes up a tale of its extraordinary talents, like Elliot Cohen and Norman Podhoretz, editors; Lionel Trilling, Leslie Fiedler, Delmore Schwartz, Saul Bellow, Tess Slesinger, Kenneth Fearing, and so on, critics and writers, who shepherded the Jewish sensibilities in thought and literature from an image to a definite presence. In this context, Trilling, in 1966, wrote that the Jewish present was as respectable as any other group's present—but also as foolish, vulgar, complicated; in this context, Will Herberg wrote that Judaism was now one of the “three communions,” Protestant, Catholic, and Jewish, and was equal in every way, with essentially the same “moral ideals” and “spiritual values.”

With the founding of *Commentary* in 1945 came a realization of Herberg's projections. As became clear in 1948 in a symposium on “The State of Jewish Writing,” the Jewish writer helped mediate for American literature the conflicting claims of an allegiance to Europe

and to the American scene. At the same time, as Irving Howe argued, most of the New York Intellectuals in the 1940s and 1950s abandoned their quest for a renewed basis for a socialist politics and joined in the "American celebration" of postwar prosperity. A new image of America emerged, as a *Partisan Review* symposium in 1952 showed, in its military-economic-protector-capitalist sense, that led many writers to reject alienation, rebellion, and exile as an artistic and intellectual imperative. In C. Wright Mills's words, "the leveling and the frenzy-effects of mass culture" were not due to the effects of democracy but to "capitalist commercialism which manipulates people into standardized tastes and then exploits those tastes and 'personal touches' as marketable brands," a sentence that still resonates in 1988.

Of course, there were some other dissenters—Mills did not stand alone! Mailer, Howe, Schwartz, for example. Yet it had to be said that by 1961, as Norman Podhoretz admitted, Jews had found a place in the establishment. What more ironic statement could one read than Elizabeth Hardwick's lament, in 1979, that when she was in college in the South, "my aim was to be a New York Jewish intellectual."

From the 1950s on, as the *London Times Literary Supplement* put it, American Jewish writing had emerged as a dominant force in American letters. As Harap's essays on Saul Bellow, Bernard Malamud, Philip Roth, and Norman Mailer show, the acculturation novel continued to be written but also the novel of critical realism. Paced by this trio of greats, Edward L. Wallant among others depicted, in *The Pawnbroker* (1961), Sol Nazerman's passage from a traumatized anesthetic relation with fellow human beings to the opening up of the possibilities of love for others; and I. B. Singer excelled in the mystical, neo-medieval tale; and, in the religious trend now so evident, Chaim Potok's *The Chosen* (1967) evoked the tension within Orthodox and ultra-Orthodox Judaistic society, in an American ambience, while Cynthia Ozick, in works from "The Pagan Rabbi" to *The Messiah of Stockholm* (1987), argued that the Jew must follow history, not nature, that is, Jewish historical practice rather than pagan naturalism. Literature for its own sake, says Ozick, is idolatry. In a break with the mostly secular American Jewish literary tradition, Ozick insists on authenticity, on the centrality of the moral and religious in literature.

Of course, as Harap explains in *Dramatic Encounters* it is not enough to look at how Jewish writers reflected their concerns; non-Jewish writers, especially Blacks, must also be studied. The special

literary relations between Blacks and Jews, beginning in the nineteenth century, but beginning to mature literarily in Richard Wright's *Native Son* (1940), through James Baldwin's, Ralph Ellison's, and Lorraine Hansberry's works, and others, are a pioneering effort in exposition and literary history. As always, there was anti-Semitism, from Jews and from Blacks, even in Saul Bellow's late novels; but it seems clear that the special relationship enjoyed by Jews and Blacks in earlier decades, as Harap shows, has been impaired, though in some cases "the healing process has begun and some signs of return should appear in literature as they have in social life itself." Meanwhile, a rich Jewish tradition in drama vied with an anti-Semitic stereotype, especially from the nineteenth century on. In the twentieth century we celebrate the plays of Elmer Rice, George S. Kaufman, Lillian Hellman, Sidney Kingsley, Clifford Odets, Arthur Miller, Arthur Laurents, Herman Wouk, and Neil Simon—but don't forget Mark Medoff, Wendy Wasserstein, Harvey Feuerstein, and David Mamet. We also owe much to poets Karl Shapiro, Stanley Kunitz, Louis Simpson, Howard Nemerov, and Denise Levertov. True, many of the above, Jewish playwrights and poets, wrote out of a "distinctively Jewish manner of thought and feeling"; they did not all write about Jewish life past or present. As I explained when I wrote about Nathaniel West, it was inconceivable to me that he could have written as he did, including his occasional anti-Semitism, had he not been Jewish.

There is so much to Louis Harap's three volumes, this extraordinary trilogy, that a reviewer can only hint at the depth, penetrating intelligence, research, and insight of the author. This is a monumental work. Assuredly all major libraries will acquire the books. It is my fervent hope that some day in the not-too-distant future *The Jewish Presence in Twentieth Century Literature . . . Drama, Poetry, and Humor* will appear in a relatively inexpensive paperback. Harap's work is a significant contribution to American Jewish literary studies.

—Daniel Walden

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Book Reviews

Feldman, Jacob S. *The Jewish Experience in Western Pennsylvania: A History 1755-1945*. Pittsburgh: Historical Society of Western Pennsylvania, 1986. 331 pp.

This study of the emergence and development of Jewish communities in the city of Pittsburgh and in the small towns of Western Pennsylvania from the middle of the eighteenth century until the conclusion of World War II is an extension, in time as well as territory, of Jacob Feldman's earlier book, *Migration and Settlement of Jews in Pittsburgh, 1754-1894* (1959). As indicated by the table of contents and a brief preface, the aim of this work is to provide a comprehensive factual account as well as an interpretation of the demographic, economic, religious-cultural, and institutional processes that informed the historical evolution of Jewish communities in the region over two centuries. Thus, the fifteen chapters comprising the volume are arranged chronologically and, within this scheme, by recurrent topics. The opening two chapters identify the earliest Jewish residents in the area (mostly transient) from Colonial times until the Civil War, and depict the process, slow and impermanent during that initial period, of forging a Jewish community in Pittsburgh, composed at first mostly of immigrants from England, and then increasingly from Germany. Chapters 3 and 5 account for the changing "ethnic" composition and the religious affiliations of the emerging stable Jewish community in the city toward the end of the nineteenth century, transformations similar to those elsewhere in America where Jewish immigrants settled, and related to the arrival of growing numbers of Jews from different parts of Eastern Europe. The intermediate fourth chapter sketches the demographic and institutional development, and economic profile of the satellite Jewish communities in small towns throughout the region during the second half of the previous century, and chapter 11 follows up on the same theme in the four decades preceding the Second World War. Two separate chapters, 6 and 9, are devoted to the occupational pursuits of Pittsburgh Jewry, first in the nineteenth, and then in

the twentieth century; chapter 10 deals with their residential patterns in the city; and the remaining six chapters, 7, 8, 12, 13, 14, and 15, reconstruct the most important and various other forms of religious and organizational activities and collective initiatives of the Jewish communities in Pittsburgh and the surrounding towns from the middle of the nineteenth century until 1945.

The Jewish Experience in Western Pennsylvania is certainly a welcome addition to the growing body of data in the history of American Jewry, as it takes up for study a region of the country which has not attracted much attention from Jewish historians, and—a particularly valuable contribution—because it investigates the situation in small towns where the research lacuna in American Jewish scholarship has been especially striking. The book is the result of twenty years of dedicated, painstaking labor in gathering facts and data, to the most detailed available in the newspaper reports, charter and deed books, synagogue and organizational records and personal accounts, on Jewish religious, community, and business leaders in the area, the founding and splintering of the congregations, the forming and institutional activities of Jewish societies and associations in Pittsburgh and the surrounding towns. A devoted (although not an academic) historian, Mr. Feldman is the real expert and probably the best authority in the area on the who, what, and when in local Jewish history, and I myself have more than once profited from his reliable consult in the course of my own parallel research on the Jewish communities in the region before World War II. It is indeed in the historiographic aspect that the volume achieves its best, and should be recommended as an exhaustive and informative sourcebook to all interested, for comparative or simply educational purposes, in the religious and institutional gestae of Western Pennsylvania Jewry and in the origins, pursuits, and careers of its most prominent members. (The only readily “eye-catching” errors here are the use of the term *Reformed* [Judaism] instead of *Reform* throughout the book, and the repeated misspellings of Chaim Weizmann’s last name.)

As for the concomitant purpose of the book, that of capturing and interpreting general processes resulting from individual undertakings and group activities, the study has rather set the groundwork for further research than actually fulfilled the promise. Especially in the chapters devoted to Jewish occupational patterns and organizational

developments, the author's clear preference, both in the use of sources and in the mode of presentation, for the reconstruction of particular cases over that of general characteristics and tendencies, has left "underused" a good part of the material evidently at his disposal. For instance, the discussion of the occupational profiles of Jewish immigrants in Pittsburgh and the surrounding towns during the last decades of the nineteenth century until and including 1900, would have significantly gained in "weight" and insight by providing summary statistical data calculated from the available population census schedules and business guides (as indicated in notes, both kinds of sources were used by the author, but only for individual illustrations). Instead, undocumented (although not necessarily erroneous) "perhaps"-guesses are given of shares of particular occupational groups within Jewish communities. The R. G. Dun business credit ratings, likewise and skillfully used in the study for illustrative purposes, could have been also presented in some generalized fashion in order to demonstrate the overall characteristics and the directions of changes in the economic well-being of Jewish merchant families in the area. Similarly, the account of Jewish educational accomplishments (discussed in parts of chapters 6 and 9), by and large limited to the enumeration of the most prominent members of professions, would have furnished broader knowledge and allowed for more in-depth interpretation were the sources—such as the alumni books of the University of Pittsburgh and Carnegie Institute—also utilized to provide more systematic comparative estimations, calculated at some selected intervals covering the period under investigation, of changing Jewish college enrollments (only two, for 1916 and 1920, are provided) and professional preferences.

Another, related direction of research which Mr. Feldman's study leaves marked rather than realized, is the question of the relation of Jewish and non-Jewish history. Concentrated predominantly on the internal group developments, with the exception of general statements in the introductions to particular chapters about the "demographic growth" and "industrial expansion" of the region, the book does not pay much attention to the broader contexts of the evolution of Jewish communities in Pittsburgh and surrounding towns, such as the changing ethno-religious composition, economic and occupational opportunity structures, political and cultural climates, and even less to the

collective Jewish "responses" to these conditions. Likewise, the issue of Jewish-Gentile relations is virtually absent: a few comments are devoted to the religious institutional contacts (pp. 133-135), followed by enumeration of persons active in larger community organizations and politics (pp. 245-255). The encounter of Jews with, and their reception by, the dominant Anglo-Saxon group and institutions, and its impact on Jewish adaptation in the area is not discussed, and neither are the relations of Jews with representatives of other ethnic groups present in Pittsburgh and vicinity beside whom they lived, conducting business with them as merchants and professionals, or working together in manufacturing and service establishments. Brief passing comments about the existence of anti-Semitism in the Christian churches (p. 134), in Gentile clubs and associations (p. 245), and in educational and professional institutions (pp. 175, 252), and, at the conclusion of the study, about the local Jewish organizations' special efforts to "confront problems among Jews and other groups" and to "better Jewish relations with other ethnic and religious groups" (p. 286), indicate that, as elsewhere in the country, mutual understanding and coexistence of Jews and Gentiles in Western Pennsylvania was indeed an issue before the Second World War, and as such should have been treated more extensively in a study dealing with "the Jewish experience" in the region.

Overall, while perhaps somewhat tiresome for a reader impatient with minute details and factual narration or looking for a more general, interpretative, and contextual exposition of the problems discussed, Mr. Feldman's book does provide a valuable source-base on the history of Western Pennsylvania Jewry. It should be profitably used both as a reference and as a "springboard" for further studies to fill-in "open spaces." Such use could be achieved either by focusing on particular problems left under- or uninvestigated, or by complementing the approach offered by other kinds of analysis, guided by differently posed questions and differently handled data.

—Ewa Morawska

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Holzberg, Carol S. *Minorities and Power in a Black Society: The Jewish Community of Jamaica*. Lanham, Md.: North-South Publishing Co., 1987. xxx, 261 pp.

With the exception of the community in Curacao, the Jews that have inhabited the Caribbean islands since the arrival of Columbus have been largely ignored by historians and social scientists. The first volume of Jacob Marcus's *Colonial American Jew* and Stephen Fortune's more recent *Merchants and Jews* are the exceptions, and both concern themselves with the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. The modern era—a period of cultural assimilation and demographic decline—remains unexplored.

For this reason alone, Carol Holzberg's new work on Jamaican Jewry is most welcome. By the eighteenth century Jamaica was both the pearl of the British West Indies and the center of Jewish life in the region, a distinction that the few remaining "Jewmaicans" share to this day. In Barbados, Trinidad, and the rest of the Anglophone Caribbean, the Jew is extinct; but in Jamaica an endangered species survives, supports a synagogue, and participates actively in the economic life of this new nation. It is this first aspect, the role of the Jew in the political economy of Jamaica, that captures Holzberg's attention and will stimulate the interest of not only Caribbean scholars but also social scientists concerned with the economic activity of ethnic minorities in contemporary Asia, Africa, and Latin America.

Minorities and Power in a Black Society yields several rewarding results—essentially the same conclusions, however, that the author earlier formulated in her Boston University dissertation and in published articles. In contrast to "social marginality" and "status-gap" theorists, Holzberg offers a more three-dimensional model for Jewish entrepreneurial success in modern Jamaica. Self-help, phenotype, religious-based ethnicity, hard work, family bonds, and "economic integration as middlemen," we are reasonably told, account for Jewish upward social mobility (p. 121). Based upon the annual reports, directorates, and shareholder lists of over sixty-five leading Jamaican companies (primarily those quoted on the Jamaica Stock Exchange), Holzberg calculates that Jews, who account for a mere .025 percent of the island's population, comprise about 23 percent of the "national entrepreneurial elite" (defined as those individuals serving on at least three company directorates). The sections dealing with the

origin and development of several Jewish dynasties also make for interesting reading.

The author is far less successful in her other principal aim: the examination of “the history, religious separation, cultural traditions, social activities, occupational roles, and political behavior of Jamaica’s Jews” (p. 230). Holzberg’s historical account sheds no new light, and is, rather, a sketchy borrowing from the existing patchwork historiography. The reader catches glimmers of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries but is left in the dark thereafter. As for the cultural and social life of Jamaican Jewry, the author details the various self-help organizations and community institutions. Yet without historical context, thematic progression, or connection with the more significant and more scholarly chapters on the Jewish fraction of the national entrepreneurial elite, the first 115 pages appear tangential and at times pointless. Why does the reader, Jew or non-Jew, need to know how the festival of Chanukah or Pesach is celebrated? All the author need do is state that religious worship contributed to the cohesiveness of the community. Surely, if the reader wishes to find out about Jewish ritual, the *Encyclopaedia Judaica* would better serve that purpose. Then too, why did the author and especially the editor consider important or noteworthy the decimalized donations netted from fashion shows sponsored by the Jamaican chapter of the Women’s International Zionist Organization? This sort of gossipy chronicle absorbs far too much of the book’s weight and undermines the serious work the author earlier accomplished in her dissertation.

It was the laudable intent of the author to demystify her subject—i.e., to free the Jew from stereotype. It is the common perception in Jamaica, as in many parts of the world, that all Jews are wealthy, shrewd, and good in business. More recently, Jews have been identified with the “Twenty-One Families” who allegedly rule Jamaica. While it is true that the Jews of Jamaica are disproportionately wealthier and more influential vis-a-vis the rest of the local population than in most other countries, it is important to recognize, as Holzberg does, that not all Jamaican Jews are wealthy. In fact, the author devotes several pages to the Jewish Home which cares for the elderly and indigent. She also notes (p. 117) that 10 percent of the Jewish population is lower middle class, though we are never told what it means to be lower middle class nor are we provided the evidence that would

warrant such a statement. A key weakness of the book is precisely this sort of ill-defined approach to social structure. That the Jewish community is wealthy *by Jamaican standards* is not at question. Rather the reader needs a more detailed picture of that community. What percentage qualifies as upper, upper middle, lower middle, and working class? On what basis is an individual associated with a particular class? These are questions that the author of such a study cannot ignore.

Minorities and Power in a Black Society lacks historical perspective. True, the author is not an historian but an anthropologist trying to explain the economic success of Jamaica's Jews in terms of group cohesiveness. The problem with that, however, is that group cohesiveness is historically determined. Surprisingly little is said about kinship, family structure, marriage patterns, rites of passage, assimilation, and acculturation—all themes one would expect a cultural anthropologist to deal with at considerable length. Reference is made to intermarriage, for example; but does not the reader need to know when in time this occurred, with whom, and how this phenomenon has evolved in time? Did Jews intermarry with all minorities comprising the national entrepreneurial elite? Are Jamaican Jews as likely to wed Chinese or Lebanese/Syrians as they are whites and browns? Do Jamaican Jews share the same private sphere with other ethnic groups? These are important issues to discuss in any study of an elite, which by definition is self-limiting.

Specific assertions by the author will raise objections. Holzberg argues (p. 64) that the rivalry between Sephardim and Ashkenazim was so great that the two communities needed separate places of worship but came together by the twentieth century. In actual fact what was historically unusual about these two communities was not their rivalry—separation after all was the norm—but rather that the two communities ultimately did unite. Or further on, the author asserts (p. 79) that “the Jewish community is always alert to any public manifestation of anti-Israeli, anti-Zionist, or anti-Jewish activity.” Later (p. 235), Holzberg seemingly contradicts herself: “The Jews believe that invisibility is security.” My own recollection supports the latter statement. When the noted anti-Semite Louis Farrakhan arrived in Jamaica in 1986 and addressed a large gathering at the National Arena, the Jewish community was both invisible and inaudible. When I asked a

director of the congregation why no statement had been issued condemning his visit or objecting to his past record, I was told that the community was too preoccupied with the burial of one of its more illustrious members.

Other examples of assertions made and later contradicted by the author's own evidence or opinion could be spotlighted. Criticism of this sort, however, would only detract from the real worth of Holzb erg's study: the Jewish fraction within the national entrepreneurial elite. Unfortunately, the initial part of her book only vaguely complements this truly valuable contribution. Had the material contained in the first three chapters been properly historicized, tightly compressed, and fully integrated into chapters 4 and 5, thereby emphasizing the group cohesiveness factor that explains Jewish economic prominence, this review would have been much shorter and, alas, more enthusiastic.

—Thomas G. August

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Sandberg, Neil C. *Jewish Life in Los Angeles: A Window to Tomorrow*. Lanham, Md.: University Press of America, 1986. 211 pp.

As early as 1950, with 300,000 residents, Los Angeles Jewry emerged as an alternative population center to New York. Now with 500,000 persons, it has far surpassed Philadelphia and is the second largest Jewish enclave in the world. Yet this is its first published sociological study. As a document identifying major trends and suggesting human policies, the book succeeds. The author, the western regional director of the American Jewish Committee, displays a generous concern for segments of Jewry often ignored by institutional spokesmen. Dr. Sandberg's assertion that Jews, regardless of income, should have as their "birthright" membership in a religious assemblage, resurrects the communal vision of Mordecai Kaplan. But the book is less satisfactory when trying to explain the community's structure or the relationship of Jewishness to the other ideals and interests of its members. And

hovering over Dr. Sandberg's shoulder as an analyst of American Jewry is the specter of Charles Silberman's *A Certain People: American Jews and Their Lives Today* (1985). Dr. Sandberg builds his study around problems identified by communal leaders everywhere—declining religious observance, disaffiliation from institutions, the revolution in family forms and in intermarriage, anti-Semitism, and the search for a proper relationship with Israel. He gathers data from a questionnaire administered to a representative sample of local Jews. He infers differential exposure to American influence by dividing the sample into “generations” and occasionally into age groups. Most of his conclusions verify the findings of recent communal studies from Philadelphia to Denver and Phoenix. Most Jews now define themselves as members of an “ethnic group,” not as practitioners of a religion, since ritual observance and knowledge of Hebrew have declined. Perhaps because of its large size and its attractiveness to new immigrants from Israel and the Soviet Union, Los Angeles, as compared to Phoenix or Denver (or even Philadelphia), retains a surprising concentration of Jews in the older Fairfax neighborhood. Nevertheless, intensively ethnic neighborhoods have largely disintegrated, with different generations dispersed to different sections of the region in familiar conformance to rapid upward social mobility. The new ethnic ties, Sandberg convincingly argues, depend not so much on neighborhood intensity as on familial and organizational networks. “Organizational programs constitute the ideologies of the community, and organizational culture becomes the embodiment of Jewish identity” (p. 64). The great majority of Jews still report that their closest friends are other Jews. And common interests like the defense of Israel and politicized responses to residual anti-Semitism provide the causes around which the community rallies.

Following Silberman's efforts to balance individual achievements and institutional strengths with the anxieties of communal leaders, Sandberg also notes social and ideological changes which seem to be pulling the community apart. Over half the individuals are unaffiliated with any Jewish institution, and only 25 percent of the families consist of the mythic norm—two parents and children under age eighteen. The birth rate is low, divorce and single-parenthood are common, and, of course, intermarriage has reached unprecedented proportions—43 percent among young people in the fourth genera-

tion. Sandberg here disagrees in part with Silberman and Steven M. Cohen, that most such people at least bring Jewish influence to their children. But he advises that to neglect the intermarried portends a demographic disaster. Equally disturbing, and unique to Sandberg's study, is the high proportion (31 percent) of Jewish families with low incomes. He portrays lonely, elderly people lacking the income and incentives to affiliate and who have been neglected by communal leaders. Sandberg's overall theme, that institutional leaders must reach out to the unaffiliated, sets his work apart from the maddeningly noncommittal reports for other cities.

Apart from sociological jargon and redundant and often contradictory references to outdated generalizations by Herbert Gans or Marshall Sklare, three analytical problems stand out. First, Sandberg has no theory and little data to explain what is unique about Los Angeles Jewry. Because his study follows standard lines of inquiry about "problems" faced by communal institutions, the reader is shown similar trends, not a community with a special history. More pointed comparisons with new Jewish enclaves like Denver and Phoenix (each one-tenth the size of Los Angeles Jewry), or an older rival community like San Francisco, would suggest whether a "western" way of being Jewish has evolved. The possibility of western differences can be shown in many ways. For example, Sandberg briefly compares Jews with other European immigrants, but Los Angeles was built by middle-class, middle western Protestants. For this city comparison should be made with them, not with Italians and Poles.

Second, Sandberg notes that Los Angeles Jews identify themselves "ethnically," but he offers only the vaguest notion of the concept. He fails to refer to recent scholarship, much of it by non-Jews, on how ethnicity functions as a cultural tool in the adjustment of migrants to new, usually industrial, locales. Often, he treats it as a set of activities that Jews perform with one another, a quite legitimate anthropological observation. But at other times he presents ethnicity as a "heritage" from which people illegitimately decline. No doubt the religious connotation of Jewish folk practices lends a special moral tone to any change in social habit. But in trying to placate institutional spokesmen, Sandberg abandons cultural anthropology to evoke noblesse oblige. The unaffiliated are not "bad Jews," we are told, and the elders must make allowances as they reach out to assist them.

Third, Sandberg creates a lineal picture of communal change based on a questionable theory of the “natural history” of generations. Relying on Mordecai Kaplan’s three realms of Jewish identity—religious, cultural, nationalistic—he suggests that the secularization of education, the integration of Jews at work, and indifference to ritual have spawned new generations with an “ethnic” rather than a “religious” mentality. But Sandberg then refers to Chaim Waxman’s view that common experiences in the 1960s affected *all* generations, a theory verified by the massive change in attitude among the middle-aged toward intermarriage compared with their own negative opinions as youths. Furthermore, Sandberg also notes that young people (what proportion we are not told) show renewed interest in religious ritual, again for unexplained reasons. Could it be that religion and ethnicity have a complex and continuing relationship across the generations? For example, while intermarriage has greatly increased, so has conversion to Judaism. As Silberman noted, born Gentiles see Judaism as a religion, and this group, especially converts attuned to the ethics and ritual of Judaism, confront a community which allegedly identifies itself “ethnically.” What are the dynamics of this interchange?

Modern Jews have separated dimensions of social and personal reality which their ancestors presumably saw as an integrated whole. Sandberg, like prior analysts of American Jews, reports only on the Jewish aspects of personality and not on those other dimensions which must also be catalogued if we are to see the Jews of Los Angeles “whole.” The sociologist Claude Fisher notes that the higher the level of education for *all* Americans, the more extensive the friendship network, which, however, is also segmented by function. For Jews, being Jewish is only that part of their reality shared with other Jews focusing on Jewish themes. Sandberg’s work provides useful data for one segment of individual personalities, but the integrated person and the full image of the community are missing.

—William Toll

William Toll is the author of *The Making of an Ethnic Middle Class: Portland [Oregon] Jewry Over Four Generations* (1982) and is currently writing a biography of Horace M. Kallen.

Brief Notices

Brinner, William M., and Moses Rischin, Edited by. *Like All the Nations? The Life and Legacy of Judah L. Magnes*. Albany: State University of New York Press, 1987. 241 pp.

This volume grew out of an international symposium held at the University of California—Berkeley in 1982 to commemorate the twentieth anniversary of the Judah L. Magnes Memorial Museum, one of the most important cultural institutions in American Jewish life.

For the past forty years since his death in 1948, and even during his lifetime, Judah L. Magnes (1877–1948) remains, as Moses Rischin describes him, “the most enigmatic, original and controversial figure in American Jewish Life.” Many have felt that Magnes was the missing American Jewish leader who, if he had not left for Palestine in 1922, could have coalesced American Jewry into a community more able to help their European brothers and sisters caught in the Nazi vise. A distinguished group of scholars evaluate Magnes’s life and legacy and help us to understand more about this “giant” of American Jewish life.

Fierman, Floyd S. *Roots and Boots: From Crypto-Jew in New Spain to Community Leader in the American Southwest*. Hoboken, N.J. Ktav Publishing House, 1987. xiii, 241 pp.

This volume is a sequel to Dr. Fierman’s interesting and valuable *Guts and Ruts*, which dealt with early Jewish life in the American Southwest. In *Roots and Boots*, Fierman has not lost his “historian as detective” ability and presents new, fascinating, and important information on the history of the “Crypto-Jews” of Old Mexico as well as examining a number of important pioneering Jewish families in Arizona, Texas, and New Mexico.

Gitenstein, R. Barbara. *Apocalyptic Messianism and Contemporary Jewish-American Poetry*. Albany: State University of New York Press, 1986. xiv, 137 pp.

Barbara Gitenstein’s book is the first serious effort to examine the influence of apocalyptic messianism on contemporary American Jewish poetry. Gitenstein feels that the development of these Jewish messianic and apocalyptic influences must be understood in terms of the new American Jewish identity that has developed in post-Holocaust America as well as a serious interest in the lives of earlier Jewish mystics, such as Abraham Abulafia, Isaac Luria, Shabbati Zevi, and Jacob Frank and the Frankists. She discusses these influences in the works of such contemporary American Jewish poets as Jack Hirschman, Jerome Rothenberg, and John Hollander, among others.

Hutchison, William R. *Errand to the World: American Protestant Thought and Foreign Missions*. Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press, 1987. xii, 227 pp.

More and more research into the early history of American Jewish institutional life has shown that much of that organizational and institutional structure developed in response to the threat of the Christian missionary movement in early-nineteenth-century America. There is also a fairly large body of research that has demonstrated the link between the concept of an American “mission” idea in foreign policy operations, beginning with the notion of an American manifest destiny, and the underlying set of ideas which helped formulate the manner in

which American Jews sought to alleviate the suffering of their co-religionists in Europe and Asia. Finally, a small but important group of American Jewish historians has begun to examine the role of the "mainline" Protestant Christian missionaries in the history of Zionism, Palestine, and the State of Israel.

Errand to the World is thus a most welcome addition to the field of American Jewish history. William Hutchison's brilliant analysis of the complex set of identities which shaped the American missionary movement and the American Protestant thinking that served as the foundation stone for this movement will help to illuminate those areas of American Jewish history which deal with the mission concept and the role of the Protestant missionary movement.

Kabakoff, Jacob, Edited by. *Jewish Book Annual* (Volume 44). New York: JWB Jewish Book Council, 1986-87. 314 pp.

The latest volume of this distinguished publication is, as always, a literary delight. It includes important articles by Joseph Lowin on Herman Wouk, by Carole S. Kessner on Emma Lazarus, as well as bibliographic essays on American Jewish literature by Solomon Faber, Linda P. Lerman, and Nathan M. Kaganoff, among others.

Mendelsohn, Ezra, Edited by. *Studies in Contemporary Jewry III*. New York: Oxford University Press, 1987. 345 pp.

Studies in Contemporary Jewry, the scholarly annual of the Institute of Contemporary Jewry of the Hebrew University of Jerusalem, has quickly established itself as one of the most important yearly publications in the world of Jewish scholarship. The present volume is devoted to the theme "Jews and Other Ethnic Groups in a Multi-Ethnic World" and includes articles by Yossi Lapid on "Ethnic Political Mobilization and U.S. Foreign Policy: Current Trends and Conflicting Assessments" as well as Peter Y. Medding on "Segmented Ethnicity and the New Jewish Politics." Also important are essays by Stephen J. Whitfield on "The American Jew as Journalist," and by Lloyd P. Gartner on "Paths to Jewish Social History."

Rischin, Moses, Edited and Introduced by. *The Jews of North America*. Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 1987. 279 pp.

For most American Jews, thinking about Canadian Jewry is not a major problem. Indeed, it is simple to subsume Canadian Jews and American Jewry under the term "the Jews of North America," and view the Canadian Jewish experience as indistinguishable from that in the United States. This volume is a step in revising such a simplistic and wrong-headed notion. A number of very distinguished American and Canadian Jewish historians present precise and carefully researched articles in this volume which are important contributions not only to understanding the comparative approaches to Canadian and American Jewish history but also to understanding the historical development of North American Jewry and its relationship to modern Jewish history.

Trolander, Judith Ann. *Professionalism and Social Change: From the Settlement House Movement to Neighborhood Centers, 1886 to the Present*. New York: Columbia University Press, 1987. x, 300 pp.

In this very fine historical analysis of the American settlement house movement, which celebrated its centenary in 1986, Judith Ann Trolander traces the evolution of the settlement house of immigrant times into the contemporary neighborhood center.

Much has changed in the organizational and staffing structures of the settlement house movement. Male settlement workers have replaced females, minority workers have replaced whites, and more of the staffs have professional qualifications.

And the community which was served by the settlement house has changed as well. Where once immigrant Jews, Irish, and Italians looked upon the settlement house as a means by which to adjust to American life, today's neighborhood centers cater to the needs of a mostly Black and Hispanic clientele, a group which has historically not been allowed into the mainstream of Anglo-Saxon American life.

Critics of this program charge that the neighborhood center exerts a form of "social control" on those that it serves, stifling their efforts to express their indigenous cultural and social values, and attempting to change those values toward a more middle-class orientation. Such charges are not new. Poor East European Jews of the early twentieth century, too, felt that the native American settlement houses were patronizing at best and agents of linguistic and cultural genocide at worst.

Yet Professor Trolander finds that such indigenous neighborhood centers remain more responsive to the needs of the community than any other national social service organization, although it was "simply one social agency among many down in the slums."

Walden, Daniel. *Studies in American Jewish Literature* (Volume 6). Kent, Ohio: Kent State University Press, 1987. 180 pp.

This volume of *Studies in American Jewish Literature* is devoted to the American Jewish writer, Cynthia Ozick.

For nearly twenty years, Cynthia Ozick has invited the American reading public to join her in "Jewish dreaming." To share an Ozick dream is to plunge into the passion that possesses Cynthia Ozick, a passion that strives, in the words of Eve Ottenberg, "to struggle, suffer, perform bizarre feats, even go mad as a result of remaining or finding out what it means to remain—culturally and above all religiously—Jewish in a world that for most part is hostile."

A number of distinguished literary scholars, including Sanford Pinsker, Joseph Cohen, and Sarah Blacher Cohen, contribute interpretations of Ozick's work and her place in the field of American and American Jewish literature.

Weatherford, Doris. *Foreign and Female: Immigrant Women in America, 1840-1930*. New York: Schocken Books, 1986. xvi, 288 pp.

Foreign and Female is an important contribution to recreating the "World of Our Mothers," the story of the American immigrant woman and the social history which she created. Doris Weatherford has drawn her research from the diaries and correspondence of these immigrant women—among them a number of Jewish ones—and has given us a clearer understanding of the American immigrant experience as women perceived it and as they lived it.