

- 32 The most recent account of the belated American reaction to the Holocaust is Richard Breitman and Allan J. Lichtman, *FDR and the Jews* (Cambridge, MA: Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2013.)
- 33 Thomas Doherty, *Projections of War, Hollywood, American Culture and World War II*, Revised Edition (New York: Columbia University Press, 1999), 36–59, 122–133.
- 34 Lowell Mellett quoted in K.R.M. Short, “Hollywood Fights Anti-Semitism, 1940–1945,” 159.
- 35 Steven Casey, *Cautious Crusade: Franklin D. Roosevelt, American Public Opinion, and the War Against Nazi Germany* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2001), 56–72; Michaela Hoenicke Moore, *Know Your Enemy: The American Debate on Nazism, 1933–1945* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2010), 131–152, 193–197.
- 36 For additional scholarly reviews not cited in my essay, see Vincent Brook, “Collaboration without Corroboration Is Tyranny,” *Mediascape: UCLA’s Journal of Cinema and Media Studies*, October 28, 2013, <http://www.tft.ucla.edu/mediascape/blog/?p=2157> (accessed October 30, 2013); H. Hoberman, “Business as Usual,” *London Review of Books* XXXV:24 (December 19, 2013): 25–26; Mark Horowitz, “The Myth of Jewish Hollywood’s Collaboration with the Nazis,” *Tablet: A New Read on Jewish Life*, December 20, 2013, <http://www.tabletmag.com/jewish-arts-and-culture/156539/jewish-hollywood-collaboration> (accessed December 21, 2013); Jon Wiener, “Hollywood, Hitler, and Harvard,” *The Nation*, September 30, 2013, <http://www.thenation.com/blog/176424/hollywood-hitler-and-harvard#> (accessed December 20, 2013.) For a review that shares Urwand’s concern over the moral implications of Hollywood’s acquiescence to Nazi demands in the 1930s, but recognizes that his factual case is overstated, see Joel Rosenberg, “The Good, the Bad, and the Fatal: Ben Urwand on the Hollywood Moguls and Hitler,” *Jewish Film and New Media* 1:2(Fall 2013), 190–214.

REVIEWS

Amos Oz and Fania Oz-Salzberger. *Jews and Words*. New Haven: Yale University Press, 2013. 248 pages. Hardcover \$25.00. ISBN 978-0300156478.

A Jewish book is inevitably an argument, or at least one side of an argument. From the Torah to this most recent fulmination by Amos Oz and his daughter, Fania Oz-Salzberger, argument has been the Jewish way of making sense of the world: responding to questions with questions, to propositions with counter-propositions, to error with reason, and to reason with counter-reason. “Jewish literature, from scripture to stand-up,” write the authors of *Jews and Words*, “displays a recurring love of the counter-proposition, the answer-back, the chutzpah.” (41) That is why the Talmud looks the way it does, with Gemara nested within commentaries, which are still further nested in commentaries. To penetrate these nests of commentary can take a lifetime. *Jews and Words* is a response situated along a chain of responses, and while the book’s internal dramatics are themselves muted, we can be sure that it issued from a debate between father and daughter. Father and daughter, did I say? How heterodox is that? This is half the book’s *raison d’être*. Father, the novelist, and daughter, the historian and professor at Haifa University, have produced a discourse on the text basis of Jewish history and culture, but who can doubt that the extended discourses, including an entire chapter on women in the Bible, and in contemporary Jewish life, are essentially the daughter’s contribution?

The authors are secular Jews whose claim to full citizenship in the Jewish nation—they do not mean exclusively Israel here—needs defending and defining against those who claim authentic Jewish citizenship for themselves alone. They mean in particular the *haredim*, against whose claims to exclusively define the Jewish way of thought this book is written. Curiously, the duo fail to cite the issues—crucially important in Israel—of the Orthodox hegemony over civil law, including marriage and divorce, and hegemony over where, and in what company, women may pray at the Western Wall. Recently there were stories in American newspapers about wives hiring gangsters to threaten and torture their husbands into giving them a Get for a Jewish legal divorce. Such matters are absent from the book, which revolves around abstract questions of legitimacy: who may call him- or herself a Jew, and with what authority.

Because they adhere to the view that the Jews are a civilization and not a religion, the authors are adamant about the full citizenship of seculars, such as themselves, quoting the Israeli writer Yizhar Smilansky, who signed his books with the pseudonym S. Yizhar. “Secularism is not permissiveness, not

is it lawless chaos. It does not reject tradition, and it does not turn its back on culture, its impact and its successes... Secularism is a different understanding of man and the world, a non-religious understanding." (4) And yet, though they do not take part in rabbinic Judaism or lead observant lives, Oz and Oz-Salzberger insist that textual learning and inquiry are the life's blood of Jewish civilization and the source of Jewish strength and uniqueness in the world. They quote Mordecai Kaplan saying, "No ancient civilization can offer a parallel comparable in intensity with Judaism's insistence upon teaching the young and inculcating in them the traditions and customs of their people." (7) They go on to say, "Teacher and student, rabbi and *talmid*, are the mainstay of postbiblical Jewish literature up until modern times." (9) And,

What kept Jews going were the books... Incessant reading, whether purely collective or freshly interpretive, was the only act that retained, rebooted and re-consecrated the texts. There was collective reading and individual reading, wielding the scroll-pointer and orally reciting, knowing-by-heart and reading-in-the-heart, *nigun*-humming and melody-chanting and voice-raising and soundless lip-moving. There was reading as prayer, reading as ritual, reading as messaging, and reading as reasoning. (39–40)

It is a stirring litany of ways to pray, but in what way does it distinguish secular Jews like the authors from any observant Jew who involves himself in any or all of these practices (and commonly it is *himself*) and does so in the full spirit of worshipping God? One answer is that the authors are celebrating the historical culture and its devotion to the holy text as the source of its strength, which can be done without *davenning*. They are not *davenning*; they are celebrating the *daven*. Though their hearts are planted firmly within the culture, their role is close to that of anthropologist, but anthropologist-celebrant. It is an odd hybrid position, but *Jews and Words* is first and foremost a polemic: they are defending a moral position. The position in this case is the right to be who they are and to claim their own identity—that much-misused word—for themselves and not have it imposed on them, such as apostate, *apikoros*, *converso*, *goy*. It is their own textuality as writers and scholars that identifies them, or rather through which they elect to identify themselves: "Like our ancestors, we are texted. And—if one further liberty with the English language is permitted—we are texted to our ancestors. We are the *Atheists of the Book*." (42, emphasis added.) I call the word *identity* misused because its meaning is not self-evident outside of the particular context in which it is used. Indeed, we might think of *Jews and Words* as essentially a struggle over what a Jew shall be called and who has the authority to name him or her.

So where does this leave God? Is the Lord who is named in every prayer and every story and Midrash out in the cold? The authors put it this way: "Our story 'does not need this hypothesis' as Pierre-Simon Laplace once told Napoleon. Nor do we need the hypothesis of God's existence (actually this is what Laplace was talking about), or of the divine guidance of Jewish fate. *Our story is not about the role of God but about the role of words. God is one of those words.*" (52). But then, in another turn of the screw, even if God is a fable,

"fables can tell a truth. Fiction is not a fib. Job existed, whether or not he 'truly' existed. He exists in the minds of countless readers, who discussed him and argued about him for millennia. Job, like Macbeth and Ivan Karamazov, exists as textual truth." Thus sayeth the novelist.

This might lead to one of those stock conclusions—stock at least since Sigmund Freud's *The Future of an Illusion*—that the Jewish nation (the authors refuse to use the term "Judaism") is built on foundations of fiction that have acquired, over the course of millennia, a culture, a priesthood, a polity, a ceremonial life, a collective memory, and an army. That is a founding premise of any atheist's credo system, after all, but that is not where the authors wish to leave us. They want to point us rather to text and education, to law and disputation, to the deep institutional patterns of Jewish life that go back millennia and have given Jewish life its unique manners and morals, its principles, its resilience, and its stability in the face of persecution. They wish to point us to the culture of disputation, analysis, and deep understanding that the Jews developed around their stories through the commentary of the Tannaim, the Amoraim, the Savoraim, and the Geonim, somewhere around 1120 C.E., in building up an intellectual structure that was unparalleled in the world, until maybe, the modern university or the internet. Modern Jews have inherited a text line so vast and so varied that one can live entirely within it, as hundreds of thousands do. Even God himself may find a home in the capacious Beit Midrash. "Consider the following story, this time of Midrashic origin: Moses goes up Mount Sinai only to find god busy studying. Moses does not actually see the Creator but he hears him uttering the text orally, as Jewish scholars love to do. 'Why should God be studying? Well, why not?' 'Isn't He a *yid*? That is what one does. One studies.'" (131)

As befits a Jewish polemical treatise, *Jews and Words* is uncompromising and is anything but a plea for an atheist's inclusion in a theistic world: Far from it. The authors claim for themselves a centrality to the Jewish tradition, a tradition that has always advanced through argument and disputation and has always been open to foreign influence, "that adopts reciprocal channels, borrow and loan relationships, with other cultures." (157). The ultra-orthodox, whom they repeatedly call into question, have shut the doors to the house of Jewish philosophy, preferring an education of obedience to the Rebbe and a refusal of outside influence. Oz and Oz-Salzburg prefer a brand of Jewish thought that continually renews itself through its philosophers, through Baruch Spinoza to Franz Rosenzweig, Mordecai Kaplan, Gershom Sholem, Emmanuel Levinas, and Ahad Ha'am. It is a vital tradition of heterodox and revisionary thought that by its very exploratory nature extends and validates the main line of Jewish philosophy. At the very end of the book the authors ask, "Can any civilization survive as a museum, or does it only live when it wears the garb of dramatic improvisation?" (201) It is a rhetorical question, of course, to which all that came before supplies the answer.

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Michael Kimmage. *In History's Grip: Philip Roth's Newark Trilogy.* Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2012. Pp. 216. Cloth \$50.00. ISBN 9780804781824.

"For literary criticism to have any kind of political application today, literature must first have cultural currency," Michael Kimmage argues in his review of Adam Kirsch's 2011 book, *Why Trilling Matters*. Kimmage goes on to say that, "The critic lives the drama, creating heroic readers in the process, and it is these readers who unite author, text and audience in a prospering literary culture." Kimmage, the author of a previous book on Trilling, *The Conservative Turn: Lionel Trilling, Whittaker Chambers, and the Lessons of Anti-Communism*, unwittingly seems also to describe himself. In his most recent book, *In History's Grip: Philip Roth's Newark Trilogy* (an excellent new addition to Stanford Studies in Jewish History and Culture), Kimmage presents Newark as a synecdoche for the tumult of America in the post-war years (as Roth has helped us to do) and in so doing, illustrates how good fiction and criticism can be both politically applicable and culturally current.

As Michael Kimmelman recently said of Newark for the *New York Times*, "Perhaps few places in America represent the urban trauma of the 1960s more than this city. Deindustrialization, corruption, suburban flight and calamitous planning gutted its core, tore up neighborhoods, and helped fuel rebellion in the streets." (July 20, 2013) The insight could just as well come from reading what Kimmage refers to as "The Newark Trilogy," the three novels Roth published in the late 1990s that pointed to resurgence in his already productive career: *American Pastoral* (1997); *I Married a Communist* (1998); and *The Human Stain* (2000). Referring to these three novels as "The Newark Trilogy," Kimmage introduces a slight deviation in how they are usually described in Roth Studies, which is as "The American Trilogy." This trilogy is a designation to signal our understanding of Newark as at once the birthplace of the most profound Roth novels and the very proof of the downfall of the American city.

When I first read *In History's Grip*, I was on a flight out of Paris's Charles de Gaulle airport after a dazzling week in the City of Light spent at a Philip Roth symposium. On the plane on my way home, on a flight bound for Newark International airport, I found myself immersed in the history of Newark's decline as seen through the eyes of Philip Roth—a fact made more depressing as I departed one of the greatest European cities, bound for one of the so-called worst American ones.

My view of Newark, of course, changed slightly the following March when Mr. Roth appeared there to celebrate his 80th birthday at a gala hosted by the Newark Museum. Clearly, Mr. Roth still holds strong feelings for Newark as evidenced by a simultaneous commitment to propping up his birthplace and a kind of shrinking from the place he would never revisit for more than an evening. Charles McGrath's *New York Times* coverage of the event focused less on Newark as an actual setting than on Newark as a backdrop, a cultural icon, and a fantasy of a previous life. According to McGrath, "Michael Kimmage pointed out in a presentation on Monday, Mr. Roth's Newark—like Atlantis—isn't really there. Yet there are still traces of it: the Essex County Courthouse

and its statue of Lincoln, which figures in 'I Married a Communist'; the Riviera Hotel, where Mr. Roth's parents, Herman and Bess, spent their wedding night." (March 20, 2013)

Kimmage turns out to have been an excellent resource during the birthday gala of Mr. Roth, as for the past several years he had been at work on this Newark book focused on history—the history of Newark as represented in Roth's later novels. Here he argues that, "Regardless of our literary taste or our philosophy of history, we are all in history's grip...a stranglehold that can easily be murderous. History's grip can also be subtle and brutally generous, bestowing illusions of stability and permanence on those who wish to believe in them." (6)

The grip of history on what many argue to be the most important novels of Roth's career has also become, in Kimmage's reading, the grip of the history of Newark on Roth's characters. Rather than position Roth as he is usually interpreted—as a member of the Greatest Generation that came of age during the World War II years on the one hand, and as the most famous Jewish prodigal son on the other hand—Kimmage's book uniquely calls attention to the under-theorized and therefore undervalued place of Newark in Roth's great works. In this book, we come to know the city, the setting of Newark itself: a character as alive as Roth's protagonists or supporting cast.

In History's Grip is organized as a triptych with three chapter headings entitled, "Newark," "Leaving," and "At History's Mercy." The "Newark" chapter details a city in rapid decline through readings of Roth's American trilogy as well as documented histories of the time. This first section ends with the idea of escape, which is where the second begins; here, Kimmage explains that, "The history of Newark, as exposed in the Newark trilogy, reveals a city that wishes, if such a thing were possible, to leave itself behind." (62) The "Leaving" chapter also provides insight into the power of the city for Roth, who famously left Newark after one year at Rutgers University–Newark and never came back. Kimmage writes, "For all the symbolism and metaphysical meaning encoded in the act of leaving, these novels of departure also trace a hard historical fact." (69)

One primary reason for leaving, at least for the Rothian character, is ambition. But it is also what Kimmage alludes to in the opening chapters in terms of "white flight" and the corresponding "brain drain" of postindustrial U.S. cities. As Kimmage notes, the flight of Roth's characters out of Newark is more than the symbolic departure of the hero of a *bildungsroman*; it is not simply like Stephen Dedalus, who must leave his native Ireland in order to emerge as the true and honest writer he is destined to become. The Rothian departure, as introduced as early as *Goodbye, Columbus*, through the flight of the Patimkin family, has to do rather with escape to a better place in search of an American dream that such cities as Newark appear not to offer.

The third section, "At History's Mercy," reveals the ways in which Roth's trilogy presents history as a "collective destiny"; here, Kimmage argues that, "By placing Newark at the center of his American trilogy, Roth...is exploiting the organic tension between Newark's difficult history and a perplexing, many-sided American century. Newark's difficulties are extreme without being unusual." (98)

These three engaging sections are bookended with a lucid introduction, outstanding in part for Kimmage's ability to balance historical perspective

and literary criticism, and a conclusion that links Roth's work inevitably with Kafka and argues, in the tradition of the best post-modern critics, that "history is absurd; its irrational power is absurd; its never-ending injustice is absurd." (155) And therein lays the unfortunate grip of history. Less an affirming grasp than a strangler's hold, the history of the twentieth-century American city—epitomized in many ways by Roth's vexed Newark of the twentieth century—seems incapable of seeing itself through the twenty-first century.

After reading this book several times—and let me say here that the book stands up to that kind of scrutiny—I have come around to Kimmage's organizational structure. In the beginning, however, I wondered about the possibility of other chapter headings around thematic concerns such as Newark in Transition; Newark and Trauma; and Newark in Roth's Fiction. Or even for the reader not well versed or confident in his/her reading of these dense literary histories, perhaps a chapter could be dedicated each to *American Pastoral*, *I Married a Communist*, and *The Human Stain*. But I realized, upon further reading, that in order to communicate how a great novelist writes of a city in decline, the author of this book would need more than simple categories and a chronological time line. He would need the power of literary language and a broader conceptual basis in order both to convey the cultural landscape of the time and to boast political application.

In this way, Kimmage's book for me reads like some of Charles Baxter's great short stories about the decline of postindustrial Midwestern cities. In "The Disappeared," for example, when a man from Sweden visits Detroit on business, he asks his hotel doorman about places to "Relax. See your city," to which the doorman responds: "You're seeing it....Ain't nobody relaxed, seeing this place. Buy some postcards, you want sights. This place ain't built for tourists and amateurs." (181) The same could be said of Newark, New Jersey, of Green Bay, Wisconsin, and of Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania. It is through great authors such as Roth that we are able to witness the decline of the great American city of production. And it is through authors such as Kimmage that we are able to discern the ways in which politics and history come together in Roth's work. As with sightseeing in Detroit, or Newark for that matter, such work "ain't built for...amateurs."

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Laura Jockusch. *Collect and Record! Jewish Holocaust Documentation in Early Postwar Europe*. New York: Oxford University Press, 2012. 320 pages. Hardcover \$74.00. ISBN 135798642.

In this meticulously researched monograph, Laura Jockusch provides a much-needed reminder that efforts to document the Holocaust, including "history from below" initiated by Jews, began during the war itself and has consistently occurred since. Jockusch notes that discussions dealing with his-

toriography were occurring simultaneously as well. Ghetto chronicles, diaries, letters, and documents, foremost among them the Ringleblum archives of the Warsaw ghetto, are the most obvious. Before the war was fully over, in liberated territories, Jewish lawyers, doctors, academics, including some professional historians, and others, were forming historical commissions to document the events they had just experienced. Jockusch notes among their rationales were prosecuting the perpetrators; "bearing witness for the sake of the dead" (8); providing information for future historians from multiple Jewish perspectives and political agendas; and even revenge.

Jockusch's introduction outlines the questions she addresses in the chapters that follow. She succeeds not only in providing answers but in analyzing them from several perspectives. She also contextualizes her findings within the historiographical debates, both past and present, in Holocaust studies. Holocaust historian Yehuda Bauer noted in *Rethinking the Holocaust* that not only did the Nazis intend to murder every Jew, but that they "tried to murder the murder—prevent Jewish documentation." (24) Jockusch provides the evidence that this effort did not succeed. She also effectively argues, and documents throughout the book, that the supposed postwar silence of survivors is clearly a myth.

Chapter one documents the foundation upon which Jewish World War II efforts to record events was based. Writers in the Yiddish press during World War I, and the accompanying and subsequent pogroms, exhorted the public to record their own history or risk falsification. (25) This formed the basis of *Khurbn-Forschung*: "History Writing as a Jewish Response to Catastrophe," the chapter's title. Chapters three, four, and five deal with recording efforts in France, Poland, and Displaced Persons' camps. It is particularly striking that many of the arguments Jockusch documents that occurred in the late 1940s, among these early history writers and history gatherers, are the same ones that contemporary scholars are engaged in: the inadequacy of German documents; the limits of language; the importance of the voices of child survivors; and concerns with accuracy. Chapter four and the accompanying footnotes also include an excellent analysis of postwar population statistics, particularly those of Jewish survivors.

As noted in the subtitle of Chapter five, it documents efforts to "Establish a European Community of Holocaust Researchers," beginning with efforts in May 1945. (160) Jockusch thoroughly analyzes the variety of approaches, methods, and goals of leading individuals as well as those of the institutions with which they are affiliated. This chapter includes the history of the transition of many of these efforts into the formation of the early archives of contemporary institutions: Yad Vashem (Israel), Centre de Documentation Juive Contemporaine (Paris), YIVO (New York), Institute for Jewish Research (Warsaw), Wiener Library (London), and the Simon Wiesenthal Center (Vienna). The concerns of those involved echo those that continue today: the comparative value of perpetrator and victim documentation; the dearth of documentation of "the most dreadful acts" (190); the use of euphemisms; and the reliability of memory.

The conclusion presents Jockusch's examination of the national and political contexts in which these early documentation efforts occurred. This provides us with a nuanced and more accurate lens through which to view these materials, leading seamlessly to her discussion of the "myth of silence," which

largely resulted from these national and political contexts. Her analysis of the occurrence of a hiatus of “more than fifty years” (193), during which many early efforts were ignored, provides valuable insights into the history of the history: the attitudes of scholars and historians during that period.

By focusing on France, Poland, and the Displaced Persons’ camps, Jockusch did not include information concerning efforts to gather documents and information elsewhere. Four thousand eight hundred and seventy-two testimonies collected in Hungary in 1945 by DEGOB (The National Relief Committee for Returnees) were not included in this book and doubtless there are others. It would be impossible, however, for one person to learn of every early Jewish source, some of which have yet to be discovered, and some of which may never be.

I have been struck at recent conference presentations by scholars who purport to demonstrate new research and theories that, in fact, are not new at all. I attribute the phenomena to their ignorance of these early Jewish collections. Jockusch reminds us that our generation was not the first to mine the memories of the Jewish victims to write their history. They themselves did this from the beginning, and it is a loss to scholarship and a fuller understanding of this history that they have been largely ignored. *Collect and Record!*, including the appendix, footnotes, and bibliography, provides a single source for much of the early historical work, documents, archives, and those people who compiled them. It is dense, in the best sense of the word, yet often elegantly written. It will be at our own peril if we do not incorporate the work presented in this thorough, thoughtful, and foundational work into contemporary Holocaust studies.

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Harry Brod. *Superman is Jewish?: How Comic Book Superheroes Came to Serve Truth, Justice, and the Jewish-American Way*. New York: Free Press, 2012. Pp. xxviii, 208. Cloth \$25.00. ISBN 9781416595304.

As a lover of comics, I thoroughly enjoyed this engaging book, which chronicles the remarkable history of Jews in the comics industry. Within, Brod offers some suggestions about why this might be so, along with insights on comics ranging from Superman to *Mad* magazine to graphic novels such as Joe Kubert’s *Yossel*, Will Eisner’s *A Contract with God*, and Art Spiegelman’s *Maus*. *Superman is Jewish?* is not a scholarly book written in academic prose, nor did Brod intend it to be. Rather, published by a commercial press, ten short, sometimes-conversational chapters are written in an accessible style without a plethora of footnotes, and certainly not any expository ones. I did regret the absence of an index and more notes to guide the reader to past

scholarship, limitations likely imposed by a mainstream press. For example, a number of recent books have taken up the same material, including Paul Buhle’s *Jews and American Comics: An Illustrated History of an American Art Form*, Danny Fingeroth’s *Disguised as Clark Kent: Jews, Comics, and the Creation of the Superhero*, Arie Kaplan’s *From Krakow to Krypton: Jews and Comic Books*, Simcha Weinstein’s *Up, Up, and Oy Vey: How Jewish History, Culture, and Values Shaped the Comic Book Superhero*, and my own co-edited volume with Ranen Omer-Sherman, *The Jewish Graphic Novel: Critical Approaches*. Other recent books look more specifically at Superman, and more broadly than in a Jewish context, such as Larry Tye’s *Superman: The High Flying History of America’s Most Enduring Hero* and Rick Bowers’s *Superman Versus the Ku Klux Klan*. Even if there is some overlap in material and interpretation, Brod’s pleasant excursion into the connections between the origins and evolution of comics and the history of American Jews is a welcome addition to this flourishing avenue of investigation.

Brod’s story of popular culture’s intersection with American Jewry begins with an attempt to define what it means to dub a comic “Jewish.” In different incarnations, this question has preoccupied scholars. As early as the Fifth Zionist Congress in Basel in 1901, Martin Buber mounted a special exhibition of Jewish art, which explicitly aimed to identify and define Jewish elements in visual art. Like Brod, other critics have argued over whether Jewish cultural contributions (art, comics, literature, and so on) should be limited exclusively to any work made by a Jew, independent of content, or whether both the artist and the artwork must be identifiably Jewish, expressly engaging the Jewish experience, religious or worldly. Brod believes that the designation “Jewish” must come from the work, either explicitly or implicitly, rather than solely the identity of the creator, and throughout, he aims to flesh out how some of the less obviously “Jewish” comics in his book are in fact Jewish. To that end, Brod accurately characterizes his project as “an exercise in reclamation.” (xxvi)

As the book’s title suggests, Superman’s oft-parsed Jewish identity provides impetus for a longer study of Jews and comics. For this reason, and logically considering that Superman initiated the superhero craze in the United States, and was famously created by two sons of Jewish immigrants, Jerry Siegel and Joe Shuster, the opening chapter focuses on the first superhero. Indeed, chapter one chronicles the road to Superman’s appearance in 1938 in *Action Comics*, various links to Judaism and American Jewish life, and the caped crusader’s connection to Moses, the boy dispatched by his parents in a small vessel, much like Superman’s mode of transport to America. Brod points to, among other details, Superman’s birth name, Kal-El, translated in Hebrew as “all is God,” and Superman’s arrival as an “immigrant” from an old world about to be destroyed to the safe haven of America. Most interesting is Brod’s discourse on masculinity and the perception of Jewish men as physically weak and nebbishy (a subject of Brod’s past scholarship), and this tie to Superman’s formidable physique and powers. Clark Kent, Superman’s alter ego, afforded a fantasy, Brod asserts, for the all-too-mortal, bookish, and stereotyped sons of immigrants: “Jewish men had only to tear off their clothes and glasses to reveal the surging superman underneath, physique fully revealed by those

skintight blue leotards, and flaunted by that billowing cape.” (7)

Particularly admirable is Brod’s attention to both the visual and the textual, not privileging one element over the other. This approach is especially evident in his chapters on Eisner and Spiegelman, where he keenly describes visual storytelling by elaborating on form, rhythm, structure, and style, addressing specific techniques the artists used to move stories forward. Unfortunately, and this is a problem throughout, a book about images needs to reproduce the images; there are only four reproductions in the book. Without images, for instance, when Brod describes how Kirby’s characters explode from the page or elegantly elucidates the construction of a page of *Maus*, the reader blindly gropes in the dark without guidance.

Space limitations do not allow much more elaboration, but Brod also discusses *Mad* magazine, founded, published, drawn, and written by Jews. Brod relates *Mad*’s wit and mockery to a celebrated legacy of Jewish humor as endemic to the outsider experience and the richness of the Yiddish language and sensibility. Later Brod tackles the Jewishness of other superheroes and/or their creators, including Captain America, Spiderman, the X-Men, and the Fantastic Four, with World War II playing an important part in this conversation. In addition to chapters on the graphic novels mentioned at the outset, a single chapter on Joann Sfar and Israeli graphic novelists provides the reader with an introduction to recent international contributions. A brief final chapter connects Michael Chabon’s Pulitzer-Prize winning novel, *The Adventures of Cavalier and Clay*, with the Jewish roots of superheroes.

All told, this appealing survey offers another example of why—and how—comics can be used as a tool for investigating the Jewish American experience and Jewish culture as well as a paean to the importance of what these artists and writers have accomplished through a marriage of text and image.

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Daniel Greene. *The Jewish Origins of Cultural Pluralism: The Menorah Association and American Diversity*. Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2011. 278 pages. Hardcover \$24.95. ISBN 978-0253356147.

In the fall of 1906, a group of Jewish students at Harvard formed a club. Known as the Harvard Menorah Society (HMS), this group was not religious in nature, nor was it political. It was not a Zionist organization, though most of its members were proud Zionists. It was not socialist, though that was the ideology of many Jewish intellectuals of the time. It was not Yiddishist, though that was the language of so many of its members’ co-religionists, if not the members themselves. Instead, the Harvard Menorah Society represented the latest, most sophisticated attempt for educated Jews in the United States to be simultaneously Jewish and American.

In his excellent book, *The Jewish Origins of Cultural Pluralism: The Menorah Association and American Diversity*, Daniel Greene tells the story of that group, which spread from Harvard to campuses across the country and became the Intercollegiate Menorah Association in 1913 and produced a magazine, *The Menorah Journal*, the most important intellectual Jewish publication of its day. But beyond that, Greene tells the tale of the birth and development of cultural pluralism, the idea that undergirded the Menorah Association. Cultural pluralism, emerging out of a small Jewish student movement, would shape the way Americans understood their diverse nation, and provide the intellectual basis for modern multiculturalism.

To Greene, cultural pluralism represented a twin effort. First, it sought to develop a more tolerant American society that would allow many cultures to coexist and flourish. At the same time, the Menorah Association advocated for a cultural Jewish identity—which they called Hebraism—as opposed to a religious or political one, and thus one that would fit more easily within the American framework.

As an intellectual historian, one of Greene’s chief contributions is methodological. The men who developed the idea of cultural pluralism did not simply write about it as an abstract principle. They lived it. Greene considers cultural pluralism a “lived experience” that cannot be divorced from its creators and the context of its creation.

Among the Jewish students who attended Harvard in 1906, several studied under philosopher William James, a father of philosophical Pragmatism. For Pragmatists, truth emerged from action and experimentation rather than from rigid principles. From this came Jamesian pluralism—the notion that truths are multiple, that the universe itself thrives on diversity. Greene rightly points to Pragmatism as a key source for cultural pluralism. The experiential nature of the philosophy coalesces perfectly with Greene’s notion of cultural pluralism as lived experience.

The book contains a colorful cast of characters who lived cultural pluralism. Mostly the descendants of eastern European Jews who escaped the sweatshops of their co-religionists, they looked for inspiration to *Wissenschaft des Judentums* (the science of Judaism), the nineteenth-century German movement. Their experiences interacting with non-Jewish peers and professors shaped their goals for the Menorah Association.

Putting their ideas into practice like good Pragmatists, they organized lectures, occasionally plays, and eventually the *Menorah Journal*. They also encouraged universities to offer academic courses in Jewish studies. Their high-brow Hebraism, inspired by Ahad Ha’am’s cultural Zionism, promoted the “Jewish humanities.” Ha’am saw Jewish culture, emanating from Palestine, as equal to other great world civilizations; the members of the Menorah Association believed American Jews could contribute their own unique culture to the United States.

Three figures loomed largest: the philosopher Horace Kallen, and the editors Henry Hurwitz and Elliot Cohen. Kallen, who coined the term “cultural pluralism” in 1924, had been a graduate student present at the first HMS meeting in 1906. He took inspiration from his mentor James and envisioned

an organic, dynamic Hebraism that would lay the foundation for cultural pluralism. Hurwitz, an undergrad also in attendance at that first meeting, went on to lead the Menorah Association and become the editor-in-chief of the *Menorah Journal* for most of its existence. Cohen, a Yale alumnus born in Iowa and raised in Mobile, Alabama, was the journal's managing editor from 1925 to 1931, and was responsible for its most divisive and controversial content.

Between the three of them, they managed to alienate numerous potential allies and donors. The Menorah Association proved too secular and Zionist for most prominent Reform rabbis and for the conservative American Jewish Committee, who insisted that Judaism was a religion, not a culture. At the same time, the Menorah Association was not Zionist enough for many of the most committed Menorah members, who sought more political engagement in their Jewish extracurricular pursuits.

But the real problem, according to Greene, was the Menorah Association's "stubborn obsession with intellectualism" and its refusal to "tak[e] into account the students' desires." The Menorah Association offered Spinoza and Schechter, but the students, sick of studying, sought bagels and lox. In 1923, Hillel emerged. Sponsored by B'nai Brith, the campus organization catered to students' religious and social needs. The Menorah Association was out-funded and out-funneled, and by the 1930s mostly vanished, as Hillel had "captured the field."

The *Menorah Journal*, meanwhile, limped on. In its heyday, it printed pieces by Jewish and non-Jewish intellectuals alike, from Mordecai Kaplan to John Dewey. After World War II, it could not compete with better-read and better-financed magazines like *Commentary*, edited by Elliot Cohen. Hurwitz died in 1961, the *Menorah Journal* the following year.

Despite the failures of the Menorah Association and the *Menorah Journal*, as Greene concludes, the ideas behind them must be deemed a success. Their legacy lives on in colleges and universities across the country that offer a wide variety of high-level Jewish studies courses, majors, programs, and even entire departments. A national organization, *The Association for Jewish Studies*, sees hundreds of scholars converge at its annual academic conference. The Menorah spirit is alive in various publications like *Commentary*, *Tablet*, *Jewish Ideas Daily*, and *The Jewish Review of Books*.

Most important, it lives on in America's understanding of itself as a diverse nation. The Melting Pot became the Salad Bowl; cultural pluralism became multiculturalism. Subtle differences between these terms bespeak the same principle: being American means being equal, but not being the same.

David Weinfeld, Temple University



Laura Arnold Leibman. *Messianism, Secrecy, and Mysticism: A New Interpretation of Early American Jewish Life*. Portland: Vallentine Mitchell, 2012. Pp. 388. Hardcover \$32.95. ISBN 978 0 85303 833 7.

Laura Leibman's book is a welcome account of the understudied colonial period in American Jewish history. Utilizing the tools of material cultural studies, Leibman argues that kabbalah and post-Sabbatean messianic anticipation were central to the embodied religious lives and cultural productions of Jews in what she terms the "Jewish Atlantic World" (5) of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. This "world" was a product of the transatlantic trade that sent Jews to port cities like Amsterdam, Newport, Curacao, and Paramaribo. It was populated largely by *conversos*, who had converted to Catholicism under the Inquisition but returned to Judaism upon leaving the Iberian Peninsula. Examining the spaces, bodies, and artifacts of these interconnected Jews, Leibman argues, not only reveals their shared religious impulses, but shows them to be committed revitalizers of traditional Judaism.

Having survived the Inquisition by hiding their Jewish loyalties, Leibman argues, these *conversos* expressed through their objects and practices "a poetics of secrecy" (14) that was marked by kabbalistic understandings and multiple meanings. Residing in a new world that seemed to confirm the messianic portent occasioned by the failed messiah Shabbetai Zevi, they also lived in anticipation of a glorious redemption. Theirs was largely a "quotidian messianism" (13) marked, however, by everyday practice rather than radical disruption. Through *mikvah* use, kosher food consumption, and worship in synagogues built to resemble Solomon's Temple, they yearned for and actively worked for the coming of the messiah.

Mikva'ot, synagogues, food, gravestones, Afro-Jews, itinerant preachers, masonic regalia: these all interacted with contemporary trends and tastes, usually incorporating them into Jewish religious practices in ways that comported with the larger culture while secretly fueling messianic hopes. *Mikva'ot* benefited from association with contemporary water cure trends, while allowing women to contribute to the redemption of the world. Sephardic cuisine adopted sugar, a newly available Caribbean product, while remaining deeply committed to *kashrut* and its sanctification of the mundane. Masonic pavement patterns were used by Jews, but redeployed as markers of boundaries rather than of centers.

Leibman's close readings of these materials—many of which are helpfully shown in images throughout the book—are carefully done and often illuminating, and her comparisons to evangelical Christianity and engagements with European Jewish sources are important additions to our understanding of the multiple contexts of Judaism in early America. But while material culture has much to bring to the study of American Judaism past and present, it is not without its blind spots. Because it is hard to know what individual people were thinking or saying about the materials they used and produced, Leibman occasionally relies on what a decontextualized "Judaism" says to

explain meaning and relies largely on normative texts like guidebooks to buttress her material sources. She ultimately paints a harmonious picture in which she presumes most subjects to be “good” Jews. Even their questionable predilections for graven images and an inclusive afterlife are ultimately authorized by kabbalah. And yet, clearly there were also those who had a more complicated relationship to traditional Judaism, who were unmoved by the Temple-like synagogue architecture, or who occasionally ate nonkosher food. There are hints of this in Leibman’s telling, but her reading of these relatively opaque sources presents an everyday Judaism that strikes this reader as much too coherent and tidy.

This is why in many ways the most compelling chapters are “Black Jews” and “The Secret Lives of Men,” both of which start to gesture toward the messiness of lived religion. In the first, Leibman shows that despite available Jewish traditions for including them within households, slaves, and their offspring with Jewish masters, were treated differently within Jewish communities depending on local customs. While Leibman argues that this is the only chapter in which local practices prevail over Jewish ones, her chapter on the Masons provides complicating evidence. Masonic lodges, she argues, provided a space in which Jewish men could reclaim the value of secrecy, with which they had been negatively associated as spies and renegades. Through masonic secrets, they could be fully Jewish while participating in their larger communities. This image of painless balance is challenged, however, by the establishment of exclusively Jewish lodges, which are mentioned but not explained, and by the implicit possibility of replacing masonic identities for Jewish ones. While masonic regalia and gravestones with imagery from both traditions may display perfect cohesion, reading between the lines and reinserting human agency change the picture, revealing possible tensions and strains that are largely silent in Leibman’s interpretation.

Despite these limitations, Leibman’s book is a highly creative, impressively researched, and thought-provoking addition to American and European Jewish histories as well as to American religious history. She convincingly shows that whatever the level of engagement of individual Jews, messianic yearning, kabbalistic knowledge, and notions of secrecy were important themes to be reckoned with in early American Jewish life.

Shari Rabin, Yale University



Tomer Levi. *The Jews of Beirut: The Rise of a Levantine Community, 1860s–1930s*. New York: Peter Lang, 2012. Pp. Xiv + 230. Cloth \$82.95. ISBN 9781433117091.

Among the Jewish communities of the modern Eastern Mediterranean, that of Beirut is probably the least known and researched. *The Jews of Beirut:*

The Rise of a Levantine Community, 1860s–1930s by Tomer Levi takes on the challenge of filling this gap, investigating the emergence of what he defines as a Levantine Jewish community in the period from the 1860s to the 1930s.

The first chapter gives a historical overview of the Levant and of the Jews of Alexandria, Izmir, and Beirut in the late Ottoman era. Levi clarifies that starting from the mid-nineteenth century these three cities shared a phenomenal economic expansion, which in turn prompted the migration of Jews—and of many other people, too—from neighboring areas, leading to the formation of cosmopolitan and largely middle class Jewish communities.

In the second chapter, the author focuses on the communal organization of Beirut Jews, noting that until 1908 a small and unorganized Jewish community lived in the city. It was only in the aftermath of the Young Turk Revolution, with the development of the port of Beirut, that the Jewish community increased in size and underwent a significant restructuring. With the advent of the French mandate over Lebanon in 1920, the Jewish leadership further consolidated its position, entering a period of prosperity and socio-political stability that continued into the late 1940s.

As explained in the third chapter, during the French mandate the Jews of Beirut encountered three different ideologies: the French model of assimilation proposed by the *Alliance Israélite Universelle*, Zionism, and the reformism of the *B’nai B’rith*, the American-based Jewish fraternal organization, that managed to become the most attractive one to Beirut Jews, thanks to its ideals of community progress and social activism.

In the fourth chapter, Levi analyzes the scarce success of the *Alliance* and the attempts to merge its schools with the communal Talmud-Torah in the 1920s. The *Alliance* did not gain the favor of Beirut Jews for many reasons, in particular because of its hostility to Zionism. The local Jews tended to support Zionism and the *yishuv* even as Zionism adapted with some difficulty to an environment such as Lebanon in which the Jews lived as full citizens and as one among many different religious minorities.

The final chapter investigates forms of charity and poor relief. Levi analyzes the financing of the Talmud-Torah school and the influence of the *B’nai B’rith* on the communal welfare system. He argues that in the period under study, the Jews of Beirut elaborated a secular model of philanthropy that substituted the older, religious-driven charity. However, the author aptly underlines that Eastern Mediterranean Jewish philanthropy retained both religious and secular components and eventually became a crucial factor in the socio-political evolution of the Jewish community of Beirut.

While *The Jews of Beirut* makes a welcome addition to the field of Middle Eastern Jewish Studies through significant research on an understudied topic, the work contains several weak spots. First, in the introductory pages the author understands Levantine Jewry and that of Beirut in particular as a distinct kind of community, characterized by its middle class identity, influenced by European colonialism and the socio-economic dynamics of Eastern Mediterranean port cities and by a history that was, by and large, “different and unique.” (xii) But is this really the case? What about the many similarities that

Beirut Jews had with fellow Jews not living in Eastern Mediterranean port cities, like Tunis, Cairo, or even Baghdad? And what about the interconnections with the non-Jewish middle class of, for example, Aleppo or Istanbul?

When addressing his object of study, the author seems to ignore the most recent advancements of Mediterranean and late Ottoman historiography. I am thinking in particular of seminal studies by Lois Dubin and David Cesarani on the notion of port Jews; by Keith Watenpaugh on the Arab middle class; by Toufoul Abou-Hodeib on taste and class in late Ottoman Beirut; by Mine Ener on hospitals and the management of the poor in khedival Egypt. A discussion of at least some of these works would have proved deeply beneficial to this book—its bibliography is in fact rather deficient—and made its argument more compelling.

Much of *The Jews of Beirut* is dedicated to education and philanthropy, which were among the few fields in which Jewish women could play a role. Yet, Levi does not take women or gender issues into any consideration, not even when dealing with the schools of the *Alliance*—at the core of whose curricula stood (European Jewish) notions of gender and bourgeois respectability. Similarly, he does not discuss how the models of bourgeois identity displayed by Beirut Jews through philanthropy and other public activities might relate to Middle Eastern ideas of manhood and to the so-called *effendi*, a topic that in the last years attracted the attention of a number of scholars from Reuven Snir to very recently Orit Bashkin.

In conclusion, *The Jews of Beirut* starts to shed light on a small yet vibrant Jewry that until now was largely understudied. It is to be hoped that this book will pave the way for other research on a topic worthy of further and more in-depth investigation.

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Elaine Saphier Fox, ed. *Out of Chaos: Hidden Children Remember the Holocaust*. Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 2013. Pp. xxiv, 293. Cloth \$50.00. ISBN 9780810129115.

“You say we are not survivors.” Thus begins Marguerite Lederman Mishkin’s poem, “Child Survivors.” Marguerite was born in 1941 and survived the Holocaust as a hidden child in rural Belgium. Her poem rebukes claims that discredit the experiences of children like her as marginal. In just a few verses, she conveys the tragedy of Jewish children during World War II. The types of hiding places, the modes of survival, and the events children witnessed, as well as the ways they adjusted and coped, the range of emotions they felt, and the scope of their losses all testify to the complexity and multitude of hidden children’s experiences and the validity of their stories. Marguerite’s

poem opens the anthology *Out of Chaos: Hidden Children Remember the Holocaust*, a compilation of forty-eight texts written by twenty-four child survivors from throughout Europe, superbly edited by Elaine Saphier Fox. What unites the writers, apart from their shared experiences, is their current place of residence—Chicago, Illinois, and their membership in the Hidden Children/Child Survivors Chicago group.

Out of Chaos brings to light the full spectrum of hidden children’s lives during the Holocaust. Divided both thematically and chronologically, these histories represent the vast array of Jews’ wartime experiences in a host of European countries and settings. Written about childhood experiences, these texts add to our understanding of how gender, age, prewar social and religious factors, geography, and timing affected young people’s lives and their survival. The biographical information and timeline at the end of the book complement survivors’ texts and place their personal stories within a broader historical context. Additional sections supplement the histories by explaining terms and places mentioned in them.

As the authors assert in their introduction, “this book speaks in different voices because each of us has different experiences as a witness and a survivor.” (xv) Theirs are individual stories that, read together, speak in a uniform voice about the tapestry of Jewish children’s lives in Nazi-occupied Europe. It gives the writers an opportunity to speak for themselves as individuals, but also as a distinct group of child survivors and hidden children, and ultimately as part of the larger circle of Holocaust survivors. The texts differ in length, form, and narrative structure, allowing individuals whose voices have been silenced for all too long to express their own memories, perspectives, and experiences in literary styles of their own choosing. Specific incidents, or scraps of memory, serve as points of departure for elaborating upon that which was lost: family, home, community, identity, sense of belonging, and notions of security and continuity.

Out of Chaos comprises part of a growing collection of literature written by child survivors and of audio-video recordings in which they narrate their stories. In the introduction, the authors bemoan the little research conducted about them as a group. Why then do we need another compilation of testimonies instead of a scholarly analysis of Jewish children’s wartime experiences? To be clear, *Out of Chaos* is not just another compendium. Seamlessly connected, the texts in this collection illuminate larger themes of how the Holocaust evolved in different places, the ways in which Jews responded to the onslaught, how gentiles reacted to the plight of their neighbors, and the impact of the war and the Holocaust on young people and families in the aftermath of violence. We learn about these topics from those who witnessed it and lived through it, thus allowing the stories to speak for themselves, rather than through the historian’s lens.

This book widens our view of the Holocaust. In recounting their wartime experiences, some authors weaved in information about their prewar lives, revealing a picture of Jews in Europe as a diverse and vibrant social, religious, and cultural entity. Such an approach shows that we cannot study the Holocaust in isolation from its antecedents. The strength of the book lies, too,

in that it traces the children's (and their families') paths of persecution and survival. Survivors' stories offer a glimpse into Jews' existence in ghettos and camps, life on the move interspersed with efforts to hide and avoid discovery, all while evading death. This anthology also contributes to our understanding of varied efforts to rescue children. Leaving their homes by themselves, with their families, or on organized transports, children trekked through mountains and sailed across waters. They received help from diplomats and international organizations. They were smuggled or sneaked out to live on false papers or completely hidden from public view. They hid in cities and on farms, staying in gentile homes, and in convents. Some children made connections with the resistance, others received assistance from Jewish rescuers, and some took refuge with partisans. Yet, as their stories reveal, the Holocaust did not end with liberation. Children came out of the chaos alive, but their lives changed radically. Few families emerged intact, and many child survivors were placed in orphanages or lived with relatives they barely knew. Being reclaimed after the war and thrust into an often-unfamiliar Jewish environment also comprised part of their Holocaust experience. In an atmosphere of post-war chaos, children strived to understand their Jewishness, coped with their losses and uncertainty about the future, and were torn by feelings of fear and shame, while often locked in emotional isolation. Even though child survivors managed to continue with their lives, the war scarred them and, as a result, their experiences and memories affected their own children. Never fully able to reconstruct their lives, child survivors searched for their roots, lost relatives, and tried to piece together their memories. While, for some, their efforts led to reunions and yielded fruitful results, others were left with mere snippets of information and never-ending quests.

Out of Chaos: Hidden Children Remember the Holocaust is an essential read for both scholars and general audiences. The testimonies of hidden children offer a lens on Jewish children's lives during the Holocaust and its aftermath by transmitting stories that would have otherwise slipped into oblivion.

Joanna Sliwa, Clark University