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For the Enrichment of Jewish Thought

The Merchant of Venice and Skylock's "Christian Problem"

2000 Brown Lecture

The following article is excerpted from the lecture presented by Dr. Jack D. Spiro for the 15th Selma and Jacob Brown Lecture held last March. This annual lecture is sponsored by the Center for Judaic Studies and the Friends of the Library of Virginia Commonwealth University (VCU). Dr. Spiro holds the Harry Lyons Distinguished Chair in Judaic Culture at VCU and edits this publication.

William Levingston, a merchant in 18th-century Williamsburg, Virginia planted the seed for the first legitimate theater in the colonies. In May 1752, the Hallams, a theatrical company from London, electrified the theater-goers of Williamsburg by transforming their stage into the first truly legitimate theater of the New World.

What an evening that must have been! Read all about it in the Virginia Gazette of August 21, 1752:

"We are desired to inform the Publick, that as the Company... lately from London, have obtained His Honour the Governour's Permission, and have with great Expense, entirely altered the Play-House of Williamsburg to a regular [i.e., legitimate] Theater, fit for the reception of Ladies and Gentlemen, and the Execution of their own Performances, they intend to open on the first Friday in September next, with a Play call'd 'The Merchant of Venice,' (written by Shakespeare). ... The Ladies desired to give timely notice... for their places in the house, and on the Day of Performance to send their servants early to keep them in order to prevent Trouble and Disappointment."

The opening was dynamite. Not one empty seat, the house packed with excited first-nighters including the Royal Governor and his official family. Shakespeare came to a legitimate theater in the New World for the

first time with the most controversial play he ever wrote.

It is possible, although unverified, that the one Jew who we know was living in Williamsburg at the time also was in attendance that night. He was a Sephardic Jew whose family came from Portugal during the Inquisition. John de Sequeyra was born in London in 1716, came to Williamsburg when he was 29 and died there at the ripe age of 79. During 22 of those years he was the visiting physician at the "Lunatic Asylum," which is now called Eastern State Hospital. He was also one of the most respected physicians in early Williamsburg. And something as glittering as opening night of the first legitimate theater may have enticed him to occupy one of its seats.

De Sequeyra could have been motivated also by the major lead in the play—a Jew named Shylock who may have been of Sephardic descent since he lived in Venice. Did the play make him uneasy and uncomfortable? Did the play agitate the non-Jewish audience? Of course we don't know but chances are it did in some way because it has been agitating audiences since its initial performance at the end of the 17th century at the Globe Theater in London.

It is not only a play that agitates. It also confuses and bemuses people; it mixes them up and baffles them; it provokes and embarrasses them. Categorized as a comedy, it's not at all amusing.

But in May 1943, it delights its audience at the Burgtheater in Vienna. The Holocaust has been raging for 17 months; the city on the Danube is *Judenrein*; Viennese Jews have been transported in cattle cars to the eastern death camps. Members of the Nazi party in Vienna consider it a perfect oppor-

tunity to celebrate their achievement with a production of *The Merchant of Venice*. Werner Krauss, a Nazi himself, plays Shylock as something revoltingly alien, greasy, dirty, repulsive—crawling across the stage.

Now it is June 1999 at the Shakespeare Theater in Washington. Hal Holbrook plays Skylock as a tall, straight-backed, proud man who speaks with authority and dignity.

A revolting Shylock in Vienna. A noble Shylock in Washington. Who the Williamsburg Shylock was we may never know.

But what we do know is that with only 400 lines, on stage for only five of 20 scenes—there is no character in Shakespeare's repertory who can run the gamut of diverse and contradictory interpretations like Shylock. Ay, there's the rub! Is there any way that we can possibly know Shakespeare's Shylock—the Shylock that his peerless creator wanted to present? Has any of his plays provoked as much passionate contention as *The Merchant of Venice*? Indeed, no. Through the decades and centuries, critics have been so at odds with each other that you might think we were reading a vast assortment of different plays altogether.

One of the reasons for this is that Shakespeare ingeniously creates a profusion of equivocal signals to the point where the play is always urging us, as the famous critic Hazard Adams put it, to "look again." No matter how many times I see and read the play, I always seem to be looking again and again.

But before anything else, I must put aside the idea heard so often—that Shakespeare was anti-Jewish. Let me give you a quick example of why he was not by referring to another source. One of his great tragedies, as you know, was *Othello*. Actually, the full name of the play is *Othello, the Moor of Venice*, just as our play is *The Merchant of Venice*. In *Othello* there are at least 15 references to the color of Othello's skin, which is black, and 67 times he is referred to as being a Moor, which is equivalent to an ebony hue. The references are all racist remarks—especially by Brabantio, Desdemona's father, and by Iago, Othello's unknown antagonist. Does the racism in the play mean that Shakespeare himself was a racist? And similarly, do the defamatory

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remarks about Shylock's Jewish identity indicate that Shakespeare was anti-Semitic? Yes, you can say he was both a black hater and a Jew hater; you could say that if you were not familiar with the concept of "negative capability."

One of the most amazing characteristics of this artist has been described as "negative capability," an idea first developed by William Hazlitt and then by John Keats. But even Shakespeare himself seems aware of this, one of his special gifts, when he wrote in Sonnet 111: "...my nature is subdued to what it works in, like the dyer's hand."

What did he mean? His very being is subdued in what the artist happens to be working. Probably that he possesses "negative capability;" that is, the creative, unparalleled genius of giving mutually conflicting notions full imaginative development—opening the mind to all kinds of possibilities, letting "the mind be a thoroughfare for all thoughts." The negatively capable artist is one who can get out of himself and his environment, subdue his own ego totally, and get into the persons and worlds his imagination creates. To enter the minds and worlds of others completely. Hazlitt said that Shakespeare saw life through the minds of others, representing both the good and the evil, the noble and the base in the 250 three-dimensional characters he created.

Now back to our play. Shakespeare could imagine himself into other human beings, into other places, other cultures and also into a world where anti-Semitism was pervasive and endemic. Shakespeare held the mirror up to the nature of anti-Jewishness as it truly existed in Venice and throughout Europe—the mirror reflecting the real nature of the negative, pernicious and ultimately perilous interconnections between Jew and Christian—the centuries of irrational animosity beyond understanding; the persistence of substituting the label "Jew" for human being; the unwillingness to engage in genuine dialogues; the literal, unquestioning acceptance of the anti-Jewish portions of the New Testament as absolute truth; the imposition of a Christian world of unmitigated torment on the tiny minority of Jews wherever they lived; the hostile posture of Christendom; and the refusal to communicate with the other because the other is either "insider" or "outsider."

Every character in the play we are examining is an insider except for the major role of Shylock, the minor role of Tubal and the dubious role of Shylock's daughter, Jessica, who tries to get inside by converting to Christianity—but doesn't seem to succeed. Shylock is presented as an unattractive, invidious person—but the same can be said for all the characters. Every insider—Antonio, Bassanio, Portia, Nerissa, Gratiano—all they all have countless flaws. They're all hypocrites, they are all absorbed in the influence and power of money, their conversations are

preoccupied with financial metaphors and the entanglements of money, love, and power and justice. Nothing is left to the imagination with regard to the highly questionable integrity of every individual. In this realm, Shylock is not alone.

But in every other way, he is alone. ...reaching a point in his life when he is agonizingly and, then, intolerably alone, rejected, maligned, dehumanized—more than ever, ever before. We will get to that critically unbearable moment soon. But first, look at Shylock in his world—the world of Venice where his primary confrontation is with a Christian merchant named Antonio. What is Shylock's experience with Antonio—several encounters validated by Antonio himself and verbalized by both men.

Shakespeare held the mirror up to the nature of anti-Jewishness as it truly existed in Venice and throughout Europe...the centuries of irrational animosity beyond understanding...

When Bassanio brings the two together for a business deal, Shylock reminds Antonio that he, Antonio, has embarrassed him in public, he has called him a cut-throat dog, a misbeliever; he has spat on Shylock and kicked him, calling him a dog. And what is Antonio's response? I'll do it again to you! "I am as like to call thee so again, to spit on thee again, to spurn thee too" ...and then Antonio accentuates his loathing by saying that "if we are going to do business, then it will be done only as enemies."

Repeatedly, Shylock is not referred to by his name but by his religion—called "the Jew" 72 times throughout the play, a usage meant to have the same offensive connotations as "nigger," "wop" and "spick." In other words, in his world, Shylock is classified pejoratively by his religious identity and is never perceived in terms of his humanity. Always the outsider—but more so, always the inferior, subordinate pariah—spurned, humiliated, disgraced at every turn, wherever he goes. And what is Shylock's response? Well, it is his way of life in Venice, as it is throughout Europe. His response is, "*Sufferance is the badge of all our tribe*. Humiliation is what we Jews must endure; we know it and we live with it—and we try to befriend those who hate us anyway." He says to Antonio: "I would be friends with you, and have your love, forget the shames that you have stained me with, supply your present wants and take no doot of usance for my money. ...I'll lend you the money with no interest." And the only thing Antonio can say in response to Shylock's kind offer is: "The Hebrew will turn Christian, he grows kind." That is, how can a Jew

be kind and generous rather than mean-spirited and villainous? If he behaves kindly, Shylock **must** be Christian. Such is the only logic available to a soft-spoken bigot like Antonio—but such is Antonio's world. The world in which Shylock and his people have endured; it is their badge, the fate of the outsider, whose possibility of being let in is beyond the imagination.

Being the outsider is keenly dramatized when Shylock is in court. Venetian society appears to permit Shylock a legal standing and yet the legal protection, supposedly his, is undermined by the process of one law subverting another, the law as applied to him—the Jew, the stranger, the alien, the outsider—is a sham.

Just as the trial scene is a satire on a court of justice, Portia's speech on mercy is also a satire in terms of her own hypocrisy in demanding more than justice. It turns out to be nothing more than the exertion of power by the insiders against the impotence of the outsider, having nothing to do with justice or due process or the evidentiary standards of a court trial. The image here is of individuals who believe in one form of justice for themselves and another altogether for the mere alien or outsider. Instead of a court of law; Shylock is sequestered in an enemy camp of urbane vigilantes.

Portia refers to Shylock as an "alien" (4.1.345), which, incidentally, indicates yet another contradiction since she also told him earlier that "the Venetian law cannot impugn you as you do proceed." (4.1.174) There is a different justice for the alien, the outsider. But he lives his entire life, not just his hours in court, as an alien. Wherever he goes, whatever he does, others treat him this way. He lives in an alien world, facing alienation of Venetian (a.k.a., English) citizens. His life is merely tolerated only because he can at least engage in his business of making loans, which chose him more than he chose the vocation itself because, like Jews throughout Europe, he was not permitted to engage in many other kinds of business. In the feudal economy, he was prevented from entering all guild organizations, from owning land, from engaging in any of the "normal" occupations. Because of unpredictable expulsions and other forms of persecution, he had to be ready to leave his home at a moment's notice. So investing in money, jewelry and pawnbroking was practical and necessary because it was portable.

Shakespeare created a world in which Jews were outrageously abused in the name of Christian teaching. The primary speech exemplifying Shylock's sense of his own relentlessly assailed humanity is the famous "Hath not a Jew Eyes." "Am I not a human being just like you?" Shylock says to those who taunt and ridicule him. He has the courage to repudiate the Christians who want to stereotype the outsider, expressed clearly by the Duke in speaking to Shylock: "Thou

shalt see the difference of our spirits," (4.1.368) showing the Duke's "us-them" mentality.

Shylock is not only, specifically, a Jew but, generally, an outsider as all non-Christians are outsiders. But the Jew is the quintessential outsider, the "archetypal other," in the English imagination since he was officially expelled in 1290 and didn't return until 1655 as a result of negotiations between Oliver Cromwell and Menasseh ben Israel, leader of the Amsterdam Jewish community.

More generally, perhaps, everyone is an outsider who is not included in, or who differs from, the category of White Protestant "Englishness." This word "Englishness" is elusive. But if you have it, you know what it is and you know what it isn't. It is similar to the difficulty of defining "pornography," but you know it when you see it. And you certainly know that Shylock the Jew is "not one of us."

Shylock makes the insiders reflect on their own values and beliefs. They are discomfited because the outsiders, by their very presence, provoke questions about ideals and morals that the insiders have always taken for granted. The insiders' identification with a particular tradition or group invites them to turn their back on outsiders who question the ways of the group. Their values are incommensurable with the values of outsiders. They are to be understood only by brothers and sisters within their own closed, cozy circle. People like to retreat inside a thick, comfortable, traditional set of folkways and not worry too much about their structure, or their origins, or even the criticisms they may deserve. Reflection opens the avenue to criticism and the folkways may not like criticism. In this way, ideologies become closed circles, primed to feel outraged by the mind that's different. *The Merchant of Venice* makes the insider feel alienated because the alien asks too many questions. Shylock asks more questions than anyone else in the play.

And with all the insults and epithets heaped on this outsider—he's called an old carrion, a Jew dog, an inhuman wretch, fiend, wolfish, bloody, starved and ravenous, cruel devil, curish Jew, villain with a smiling cheek, a goodly apple rotten at the heart, even when "all the boys in Venice follow him, crying his stones, his daughter, his ducats" (2.8.23f)—despite all the expressions of personal demonization, Shylock maintains a self-control beyond comprehension, even while being tormented by Jew-baiting streeturchins. We do see that Shylock can hate and hurt as any human despite being stripped of his name, his dignity, his humanity. But still he holds on to an admirable degree of reticence until... Until when?

When does he cross the Rubicon, becoming irrevocably obdurate in his wrathful commitment to physical revenge? Is there

one particular moment when Shylock turns into a monster of rage and vengeful violence?

Yes, the moment when he discovers that his daughter Jessica has betrayed him: from leaving his keys with her to lock and secure the house (a symbol of his trust in her) to the moment when he learns that she has done just the opposite—moving from open trust to slippery betrayal, conspiring with Lorenzo's friends and being used by them to deceive her father so she could escape from his house, rather than protecting it with the money bags of his prescient dream and her heedless defection from Judaism. Betrayal! Robbery! Apostasy! Isolation!

In the entire play, Shylock breaks only at this tragic moment. When he learns that his daughter has robbed him, run away to marry a Christian and forsaken her heritage—the legacy he has tenaciously upheld at the risk of his dignity and his life, as so many of his "sacred nation" before him.

At that moment when Shylock reaches the zenith of his vehemence, Antonio recognizes the futility of opposing Shylock's passion with reason. You might as well argue with a wolf, he says, tell the tide not to come in or command the pines not to sway in the wind. The metaphors reveal his intuition that what he is dealing with is no ordinary human feeling within Shylock but elemental forces that have swept in to take complete possession of him. It is elemental in character because it comes out of something much greater than the individual wrongs Shylock has suffered: it is the injustice suffered by his ancestors over many generations.

Shylock is the consequence of the centuries-old hatred of Jews. He is wearing his tribe's badge of suffering. And what is the recompense for that suffering? No money but the right to dignity as a human being. Slowly but surely, he is robbed of his humanity, climaxed by the treachery of his daughter who forsakes the centuries that her people have struggled and sacrificed everything, life itself, to hold on to their faith and legacy. Shylock's Jewish future is killed by Jessica's apostasy. For Shylock and his late wife Leah, Jessica's womb will not be a home for Jewish children; and therefore, for

them, there is no Jewish future. Morris Carnovsky, who acted the role of Shylock, said that she is "really a little bitch, who willingly changes her religion to have a good time." What Shylock's people have died for to keep alive, she has killed in one reckless evening. It was not just goodbye to Shylock but goodbye to his Jewish heritage.

How well he knows the suffering of his nation! A cankerous wound festering not just in one Jew's lifetime but for hundreds of years, a palpably never-ending tragedy of opprobrium that he never felt in its deepest dimensions, as he says, "until now."

My name is John de Squeyra; I'm the Jewish doctor in Williamsburg, and I've just left the theater after seeing the play for the first time. I have read Marlowe's, which portrays my fellow-Jews pretty much in the loathsome ways they have been depicted for centuries. In this play, however, the comfortable prejudices and stereotypes of my fellow Virginians have been called into question in a shattering way. Maybe they, too, feel an indistinct sickness like Portia's "daylight sick," because I realize with a heavy heart, as I make my way home, that this so-called comedy is not meant to have any winners. In a warped world of intolerance and segregation, there are no winners. "When malice [of bigotry] bears down truth," (4.1.210) there are no winners. There can be no winners in Belmont, in Venice, in Williamsburg.

There is something else I feel: a sinking, apprehensive feeling about Act Five in its entirety—that opulent, handsome suburb of Belmont. Shylock has vanished but his presence is still eerily powerful; Jessica is there, but she is no longer Jewish. This Christian paradise of Belmont is exclusive; Jews are kept out with no external signs needed. It is a "Judenrein" world just like the world of England for three centuries.

Throughout Act Five, a metaphor in and of itself, it is impossible to dismiss the image of Shylock as the Belmontese banter away until dawn. His presence is commanding in its very absence. What a great tour de force: A striking metaphor is created out of his nonappearance. As we go about our business in London or Stratford, our playwright seems to be telling us, through his usual genius of masterful metaphor, that the Jewish image continues to haunt us in the Judenrein world of England.

And, once more, what of the Christians? Have they been true to themselves? If they have, as Portia puts it, "then chapels had been churches and poor men's cottages princes' palaces" (2.2.12). But "the world is still deceiv'd with ornament" (3.2.80). Have we, the audience and readers, allowed ourselves to be deceived by "outward shows" of love, mercy, charity and friendship?

"In religion, what damned error but some sober brow will bless it, and approve it

MISHLO'ACH MANOT

Purim Gift

The rabbi danced me round our kitchen cluttered with Purim preparations as if escaping Hamans slaughtering so long ago

were joy today and under all the food—chopped boiled and baked—were blessings getting ready to feed us comfort startled into joy.

—Richard Sherwin

with text, hiding the grossness with fair ornament? There is no vice so simple, but assumes some mark of virtue on his outward parts...." (3.2.77f)

What is the seeming truth that can "entrap the wisest," and what is the real truth? (3.2.100) In *Shylock's business*, ostensibly one based on the motive of greed, all that is expected in return for a loan of money is more money with clear boundaries. The imprecision of Antonio's generosity, ostensibly based on love, makes Bassanio's indebtedness ambiguous and unresolved. When introducing Antonio to Portia, Bassanio says: "This is Antonio to whom I am so infinitely bound" (5.1.134f). To be "infinitely bound" is to be boundlessly obligated.

What is appearance and what is reality? The caskets' exteriors can be deceptive. Shadows are misleading.

Haltingly, I make my way home, not at all, as the play puts it, "satisfied with these events to pursue their fantasies, and I am left outside with Shylock stirring about alone at the end of Act Four and with Antonio stirring about alone at the end of Act Five.

The Merchant of Venice conveys a haunting message of the Jew as alien—a deep-rooted tradition in Christianity, solidly and densely embedded in its own scriptural roots, continuing to the present and undoubtedly beyond since the anti-Jewish passages of the New Testament are not going to vanish. Although Shakespeare depicted the constricted, obdurate world of his own age, centuries of indisputable evidence persuade us that abhorrence of the Jew is not a transitory phenomenon. It is a dogged perversion that can surface at any time, in any place, especially where the New Testament continues to hold uncritical dominion over the minds and hearts of its readers. For centuries, its reading and its influence have turned the Jew into a symbol of whatever defines a "less-than-human" dog or a "more-than-human" devil. Deeply ingrained in the mind-set of Christendom, the Jew is a perennial stereotype, a complex caricature—not necessarily a three-dimensional, unique person. The Venetian world could not understand Shylock as a human being. Relentlessly construed by everyone in the play as outsider, alien, and pariah, he reflects the broken humanity of Jewish existence through 20 centuries in the distorted mirror of Christian antipathy, stemming from the earliest scriptural sources of this fragmentation. Shakespeare's portrayal has proved to be true for all ages, which compels us to be dissatisfied "of these events in full."

Shakespeare was not anti-Semitic like Antonio and Gratiano nor was he a racist like Portia and Brabantio nor a sociopath like Richard III nor cynical like Jaques nor craven like Parolles nor disdainful like

Coriolanus nor a lonely adolescent like Juliet nor a green-eyed oddity like Leontes nor a hypocrite like Angelo. He may have been all these or none of these, or much more or much less in the creation of 250 three-dimensional characters. One thing, however, is certain: He was subdued to this art "like the dyer's hand."

He was the pre-eminent master of representing the world as he—the master artist—saw it, as no one else before or after him could possibly see it—always holding his celebrated mirror of truth not only up to nature but to the nature of humanity and community. It is a mirror into which we must always be willing to look, even when it hurts, for the sake of our own humanity.

Jews and Slaves

Jews and the American Slave Trade
by Saul S. Friedman
New Brunswick, NJ: Transaction Publishers

A Review Essay
by Matthew Schwartz

Let us set parameters for a discussion on Jews and the American slave trade by paraphrasing a most pertinent passage from Maimonides' *Code* (Avadim 9:8). A Jewish master must treat even a Canaanite slave with proper kindness and wisdom. He must not work the slave excessively and must provide him good food and drink. He should not embarrass him nor show much anger. He should listen carefully to the slave's complaints. Cruelty and a lack of compassion are found, Maimonides says, only among idol-worshippers. But Jews, the descendants of Abraham, to whom God commanded the mercy and justice of His Torah, are merciful and just to all. God has commanded the Jews to be merciful even as He is and to remember that the slave is a human being just like anyone else.

Essentially, the slave bears certain limitations of status, but he is not to be demeaned or mistreated by capricious owners. Other passages set careful guidelines as to the acquisition and manumission of slaves and dictate that an owner who kills a slave shall himself be put to death. Nor is there any suggestion in Jewish literature that slaves are inherently different or inferior to masters, as Aristotle argues in his *Politics* (1.5).

Slavery is an unpleasant fact of world history, and I could never comfortably read this book, *Jews in the American Slave Trade*, at a public library table where Black passers-by might silently wonder what I was finding in it. Likewise sensitive to such feelings, Professor Saul Friedman discusses his pur-

poses in writing this book.

In the last few years, he writes, certain pseudo-scholars and hate-mongers, largely of the radical group associated with Louis Farrakhan, have raised the charge that Jews dominated and propelled the slave trade and are, therefore, guilty for having caused many of the sufferings of Blacks today and for centuries past. Even the Spanish Inquisition, they claim, was in part an attempt to restrict the widespread Jewish slave trade. Sunday Blue Laws in early America resulted from Jews trading in slaves on Sundays (they really do say these things).

Professor Friedman's response is this carefully researched, scholarly tome. Friedman questioned whether he should include certain information that might give his opponents more fuel. Out of respect for scholarly truth, he decided to include it. Certainly, the book would be less complete without it. In any case, the claims of his opponents are based on their own emotional needs, not on data. Facts or lack of facts will be ignored or twisted to suit. There is some support for Friedman's approach in Rabbinic thought as well. Why should we, as the Mishna in Avot suggests, know what to answer the heretic? Because, explains the Maharal of Prague, we have an obligation to help truth prevail over falsehood.

Nevertheless, Jews have usually sought to avoid inter-communal debates through the ages, and for good reason. Neither losing nor winning such a debate ever did much to lighten the burdens of the Jews whether one thinks back to the quarrels with the Greek Judeophobes of ancient Alexandria or the forced debates of the High Middle Ages. Friedman feels there is a need to refute the calumnies of these new pseudo-historians and to let the truth be known. Perhaps his information will be helpful, at least, to honest people who have lacked the weapons with which to respond to the false accusers.

Several charges, he writes, have been circulated: (1) The suffering of millions of Afro-Americans constitutes a Black holocaust that dwarfs the Jews' experience in Nazi Europe; (2) The chief villains in all the degradation of the Black slaves were Jews, while the Jews have falsely but successfully painted themselves as chronic victims; and (3) The Jews not only masterminded the slave trade to and in America but have continued to exploit Blacks down to the present. This point of view is expressed in a book published by the Nation of Islam and in speeches and articles by Louis Farrakhan, Leonard Jeffries, Khalid Abdul Mohammed and others. Farrakhan has been quoted as saying that Jews owned 75 percent of the Civil War in the South on the eve of the Civil War. It should be recognized that the lines on this matter are drawn not so much between Blacks and Jews or between Blacks and Whites generally. Serious Black scholars of this topic, like Professor John Hope

Franklin, also find Jews' role in American slavery wholly insignificant.

Is it suitable to blame people today for misbehaviors of their ancestors or predecessors? Not necessarily. The Talmud avers that the descendants of Haman taught Torah in Bnei Brak. Karl Marx's daughter devoted herself to helping Jewish immigrants in the poor neighborhoods of London, and a grandson of Richard Wagner is today an active philo-Semite. Yet, if the Farrakhanists are to cast blame for the slave trade, they should know well that slaves were traded in Africa before Europeans came. Both Black Africans and Arabs traded in African slaves long before and long after those slaves became part of the Western way of life. African traders, often kings, raided their own villages for people to sell to foreign buyers, and they often killed prisoners whom they could not sell. Slavery and slave trading were important in Africa's economy. The role of Arabs in the Black slave trade was large, as is noted in sources going back at least to the seventh century. Arabs and local Blacks often cooperated in raids.

Captives and slaves were typically treated heartlessly, and their numbers reached many millions over the centuries. The famed Dr. David Livingstone has left a chilling description from the 1860s of Nyassa villages depopulated by slave trade, with contorted human skeletons lying in every direction. Other travellers of that time also wrote of unbelievable horrors. As bad as slavery was in the American South, it did not often reach such large-scale utter brutality. Perhaps most incredible is the continuation of slavery, with all its evils, well into the 20th century in some parts of Africa and, until this moment, in the Sudan.

Slavery did exist in ancient Israel, as in all ancient societies, and was accepted in Jewish law. However, the treatment of slaves was regulated by the law to provide at least some standard of well-being and respect for the slave. The Talmud goes so far as to caution in this regard that whoever acquires a slave, acquires himself a master.

For Jews in early America, slavery was part of the environment. A few participated in the slave trade, including well known merchants like Aaron Lopez, Moses Lindo and maybe even Haym Salomon. Some Jews owned slaves although this was limited largely to house slaves. Only a few Jews owned large plantations and almost none were numbered among the planter aristocracy. On the eve of the American Civil War, there was much debate among Jewish spiritual leaders, including Isaac Mayer Wise, David Einhorn, Bernard Illowy and Morris Raphael, as to the legitimacy of slavery.

There were fewer than 3,000 Jews in the colonies at the time of the American Revolution, and their impact on the society, the economy and, of course, the slave trade was negligible. Through much of this time they

were themselves hardly accepted. Massachusetts did not harbor a Jewish community until the 19th century. The famed 18th-century Jewish settlement in Newport, Rhode Island never numbered more than a few dozen. Maryland's handful of Jews had no real political rights until the famous Jew Bill of the 1820s.

Jews in South America and in the Caribbean Islands in the 17th century formed a larger percentage of the European population and were more involved in agriculture. As might be expected, they owned more slaves. Again by the standard of the times, none of this seemed unusual and the Jews played no disproportionate role in the slave trade. What is more surprising and is neglected by those determined to find fault with the Jews is the fact that many free American Blacks owned slaves, even as early as the 17th century. By 1830, 3,700 free Blacks owned slaves, some as many as 100. Mulattos, too, owned many slaves. A statistic of 1820 shows U.S. Jews owning only 701 slaves out of more than 1.5 million in the country. Cherokees and other Native Americans owned far more Black slaves than Jews did. Three Cherokees in 1835 are listed as owning more than 50 slaves each. By 1861, Choctaws and Chickasaws owned 5,000 slaves with one Choctaw chief owning more than 400.

Matthew Schwartz is professor in the department of history at Wayne State University and a contributing editor.

Lambs and Wolves?

Against All Hope: Resistance in the Nazi Concentration Camps, 1938-1945

by Hermann Langbein
New York: The Continuum
Publishing Company

On the Road to the Wolf's Lair: German Resistance to Hitler
by Theodore S. Hamerow
Cambridge, MA: Harvard
University Press

A Review Essay
by Paul R. Bartrop

In the immediate aftermath of the Second World War, a frequently asked question of Holocaust survivors was, "Why did you allow yourselves to be led like lambs to the slaughter?" The offensiveness of such a question was often compounded by the survivors' silence, a silence imposed through numbness and the overwhelming trauma of their experience.

Hermann Langbein, a veteran anti-Fascist and survivor of Dachau and Auschwitz, has now composed the definitive study of resistance in the Nazi concentration camps, in a study that puts the lie to the assertion that the incarcerated victims of the SS state did nothing to alleviate their condition. Not only does he consider the ongoing battle between the so-called "Reds" and "Greens"—respectively, the Communist prisoners and the common criminals who were placed in the camps for the purpose of brutalizing others—but he also looks at the ways in which the multitude of different ethnic groups in the camps interrelated and found common cause in their struggle to stay alive and combat the Nazis.

Langbein is concerned to point out that, contrary to much earlier scholarship of the "lambs to the slaughter" variety, there was resistance in the concentration camps. This was, moreover, effective in numerous ways—particularly in smashing through the image of the SS as an invincible terror organization against which the prisoners had no power. A resistance "attitude," even where a fully-fledged movement did not exist, was of importance; it showed both the prisoners and the SS that the issue of humanity remained alive regardless of Nazi ideology or prisoner degradation. However one measured success, the very fact that resistance took place at all was an effective measure of the prisoners' faith in the future.

Langbein's is perhaps the most comprehensive study of resistance in the Nazi concentration camps and, for this, it deserves respect. While most of his analysis addresses resistance as a physical action in which the prisoners actively confronted their persecutors, he does from time to time examine issues pertaining to what might be termed moral or spiritual resistance; those areas in which a prisoner's "no" was enough to reinforce his or her sense of humanity and, thereby, endow them with the strength to keep going for yet another day.

Another issue is that of the heterogeneous nature of the prisoner population, and Langbein looks in depth at the national and political groups of which it was comprised. In separate chapters on Germans, Communists, Social Democrats, Austrians, Poles, Russians and others, Langbein demonstrates the differences in response between each group to their persecution and draws a picture of an extraordinarily active resistance culture throughout the Nazi camp system. Although he does not specifically address the issue of Jewish prisoner *per se*, preferring to subsume them under their national groupings, he nonetheless also addresses key issues related to the Holocaust.

All in all, Langbein's is a definitive account of prisoner resistance in the Nazi concentration camps. It deserves to be read, and will take its place among the key literature of all resistance to the Nazi state.

Theodore S. Hamerow has adopted a different approach to the question of resistance though he too can be described as definitive. He looks at resistance on the national level, focusing specifically on the single case of Nazi Germany itself.

All countries occupied by the Nazis have their martyrs and resisters. Memory of such resistance has been primarily necessary in countries where collaboration played a role in helping the Nazis into power or keeping them there. Thus, France has its heroes of the Maquis, the Soviet Union its Red Army and Italy, Yugoslavia, Poland and other countries their Partisans. The Catholic Church has its priests incarcerated in Dachau, Czechoslovakia has the assassins of Reinhard Heydrich and Denmark has the example set by King Christian X.

Germany and Austria, the Nazi countries themselves, have had difficulty claiming resistance heroes, notwithstanding the fact that there were many people of good will opposed to the Nazi dictatorship. As evidence of this, we need look no further than the examples of Klaus von Stauffenberg and the other conspirators of the Bomb Plot in July 1944 or to the ecclesiastical figures of Dietrich Bonhoeffer and Martin Niemöller.

What of the German people themselves? It has long been my contention that about the only resistance movement of any kind they can claim was the minuscule White Rose group, a small collection of students and academics from Munich University who in 1943 distributed leaflets against the Nazi regime. They lost their lives in their efforts to resist Nazism. The purity of their motives and the innocence of their methods demonstrates a genuine attempt by a group of citizens to do something about the evil they saw in their midst.

Curiously, Hamerow makes but a single reference to the White Rose group in a book that otherwise explores a wide variety of expressions of opposition and resistance to the Nazi phenomenon. The military, the bureaucracy and the Churches form the essential motifs against which this book has been written, and smaller manifestations of resistance do not, therefore, receive much consideration. This is a pity.

In any book of this kind, the defining issue must be the notion of "resistance." Are we discussing, for instance, only examples of physical force against the Nazi regime? Can we include cases of intellectual or spiritual opposition? If so, how may such issues be measured? These matters are resolved by Hamerow through his adoption of a fairly narrow definition that focuses essentially on both conspiracy to resist and the activities of those doing the conspiring. The result is an excellent reconstruction of the triumphs and tragedies that beset the opponents of Nazism in the Third Reich.

He also shows the difficulties found in organizing resistance in a totalitarian dicta-

torship, such as Nazi Germany, where informers permeated every level of society and communication between resisters often proved impossible.

Right from the start the Nazi regime had its opponents, but it was only as the Third Reich developed its stranglehold on power that anything resembling a resistance "movement" appeared. Even then, it only began to have any sort of credibility once defeat in war seemed likely. The emergence of mature and effective resistance was a slow process that took place only after those with an interest in Germany's future—the armed forces, the bureaucracy, the Churches, big business—sensed things were not going the way Nazism had at first promised.

Hamerow's book is therefore both an explanation for the lack of more resistance and a celebration of what resistance there was. Above all, he points out that Germany was a country in which resistance played a role in keeping the honor of the country alive at a time when everything else seemed to be collapsing.

In this sense, Hamerow's arguments should be seen as a counter to those of Daniel Goldhagen, whose popular and controversial book *Hitler's Willing Executioners* paints an altogether different picture of German complicity with the Nazis. Hamerow shows convincingly that not every German was a Nazi and that some actually offered their lives to bring about Nazism's defeat. This should always be borne in mind when we judge Nazism and the society from which it came.

Paul R. Bartrop is an honorary Research Fellow in the Faculty of Arts at Deakin University, Burwood, Australia, and a contributing editor. He also teaches in the Jewish Studies Department at Bialik College, Melbourne.

GD'S GRACE, GD'S RAIN

The moon engraves
its image on the gum tree wind
winding through my blood.
How shall I escape this light
this glory carved into bone.

O yes I say it is
not Gd, it is not more
than matters bubbling
oxygen and chalk inside
where graven images live.

It does not answer such answers.
The smell of eucalyptus rain
between March storms consoles me
moonlight's absence of idols.

—Richard Sherwin

Rabbinic Authority in Babylonia

The Geonim of Babylonia and the Shaping of Medieval Jewish Culture

by Robert Brody
New Haven, CT: Yale University Press

A Review Essay
by Leon J. Weinberger

The author makes a convincing case that a fresh survey of the literary and intellectual achievements of the Geonim is overdue because of the rich yield of relevant sources coming to light from the Cairo Geniza. The dominance of the Abbasid power centered in Baghdad and, extending from Spain and North Africa in the west to the Indus River in the east, enhanced the prestige and influence of Babylonia's Jewish leaders. Along with their peers in Palestine, they exerted a decisive moral and intellectual authority over other parts of the Diaspora in the Mediterranean world. Brody divides his study into sections dealing with the historical setting of the Geonim, noting that the origins and development of their authority is not easily dated and that the transition from Savora'im to Geonim is difficult to pinpoint. The author corrects an earlier view, based largely on Abraham Ibn Daud, *Sefer Ha-Qabbalah*, that the Geonic period ended abruptly with the death of Rav Hayya Gaon in 1038 and the closing of the Pumbedita academy, and argues for a protracted process prompted by a shift in Jewish demography and intellectual prominence from Palestine and Babylonia to North Africa and Europe.

When dealing with the sources for the inner workings of the Geonic period, Brody cautions against relying on Muslim writings, which rarely concern themselves with internal Jewish affairs. On the vexing question concerning the correct reading in the Epistle of Sherira Gaon dealing with the redaction of the Mishna and Talmud, Brody, contra B.M. Lewin, argues for the Sherira reading: "And as for what you [Jacob b. Nissim ibn Shahin of Qayrawan] wrote, 'How were the Mishna and Talmud written?' The Talmud and Mishna were not written but redacted and the Rabbis are careful to recite them orally and not from [written] copies." Brody notes that Sherira's invaluable data is slightly flawed in his bias in favor of the Pumbedita academy that he headed although there is no reason to suspect him of fabrication.

The second primary source for this period, the two-part version of Rabbi Nathan the Babylonian, Brody considers plausible

in its account of the contest between Seadyah Gaon (926) and David ben Zakkai but suspect in its folkloristic telling of the conflict involving the Exilarch Uqba, the Gaon Kohen Zedek ben Joseph of Pumbedita (926) and a group of prominent laymen from Baghdad. Of special interest in Rabbi Nathan's source is the "coronation" of the Exilarch and the activities of a Geonic academy during the *kallah* month of Adar.

Before the Cairo Geniza discovery, the Sherira and Nathan accounts and Abraham Ibn Daud's work were the primary sources for Geonic history. In recent years, knowledge of the period has greatly expanded thanks to the publications of the Geonic responsa from the Geniza by J. Mann, S. Assaf and S.D. Goitein. These shed light on the workings of the Babylonian academies and their relationship with other Jewish centers in the Diaspora. The Geniza also helps give new focus to the influence and power of the Babylonian academies as the address for the resolution of academic or practical issues arising in distant Jewish settlements. Also, it is now known in greater detail that the academies were supported by taxes imposed on the Jewish community, on voluntary contributions from Jews throughout the world and on investments in real estate in a kind of endowment fund.

Although the function of the Exilarch was primarily political, he was at times involved in the operation of the Geonic academies. Some Exilarchs even maintained lesser known academies operating under the shadow of the great school at Sura. Brody suggests that in light of the Geniza responsa the reference in Geonic literature to the "two academies" referred to by the Suran Geonim might well include their own and that of the Exilarch. The Suran responsa also refer to "The House of our Master in Babylon," likely a synagogue annex to the academy with its own liturgical practices. Such practices had not been standardized in the Geonic period, and it is likely that the disarray in the liturgy prompted Seadyah Gaon to compose his *Siddur*.

The routine of study in the academies is now better known thanks to the Geniza responsa. It appears that only during the *kallah* months of Adar and Elul did the academies function at full strength. During the rest of the year only senior scholars and staff were present whereas the others studied at home and worked on their farms. It is likely, Brody suggests, that no urgent agricultural work needed to be performed during Adar and Elul.

The multi-faceted role of the Gaon emerges from the sources. In addition to his academic role as head of the academy and chief examiner of its students, he was also its principal fundraiser—much like the president of a modern university—president of the Gaon's court (judicial decisions required his confirmation), chief executive officer

and administrator of the academy, and author of responsa and other literary works.

The system of the Exilarch's authority developed by Iranian monarchs and adopted by the Abbasid caliphs was designed to mediate between the government and the Jewish minority. Relations between the Exilarchs and the Geonim were amicable for the most part when the former focused on temporal matters and the latter on intellectual and spiritual issues. Conflicts arose when their separate jurisdictional boundaries became indistinct, as when the Exilarch Uqba attempted to usurp revenues that were earmarked for the academy at Pumbedita. Disputes among the Geonim also would result from disagreements over the allocation of funds to their academies. In addition to these intramural arguments, the Geonim had to contend with the formidable sectarian challenge of the Karaites to the Rabbinic tradition and the authority of the Oral Law.

The author makes a convincing case that a fresh survey of the literary and intellectual achievements of the Geonim is overdue because of the rich yield of relevant sources coming to light from the Cairo Geniza.

In his account of the Karaite opposition, Brody traces its history from Anan b. David and his followers and cites Qirqsani's wry comment, "of those present day Karaites [10th century]...you will hardly find two of them who agree on anything." Feeling a need to place limits on excessive individualism, Karaites like Judah Hadassi (12th century) and Elijah Bashyatchi (c. 1420-90), both from Constantinople, used the "burden of inheritance" (*sevel ha-yerushah*) or "tradition" as a legal standard binding Karaites to non-Biblical oral traditions. Brody (p. 90) suggests that this Karaite formulation was "apparently adapted from the Muslim doctrine of *ijma*." It also may be that the above Karaites from Byzantium relied on a comparable Rabbanite standard "the practice of their forefathers that they upheld" (lit. "in their hands"), *minhag 'avoteyhem bi-ydeyhem* (bEruv. 104b).

Brody lists the several polemical works of Seadyah Gaon against the Karaites, including those recently published from the Geniza. The author's statement that Seadyah's Prayer Book contains "an argument against the use of Biblical texts as prayers" (p. 98) is misleading. What the Gaon intended to say (*Siddur*, p. 10) is that the Bible cannot be the exclusive source for prayer—contrary to the view of Anan—and, therefore, Rabbinic prayers are needed. There are numerous examples in Seadyah's

Siddur of the use of Biblical texts in prayer (*Siddur*, pp. 47-58).

Added to their conflicts with the Exilarchs and their struggle against Karaites as well as other sectarians, the Babylonian Geonim had to face competition from the Palestinian center. The latter's eminence derived from their greater antiquity and their location in the Holy Land. Disputes between the two academies arose regarding the establishment of the Jewish calendar. The calendrical calculations of a Palestinian Gaon in 921, presumably Aaron ben Meir, differed from those of his Babylonian counterparts. After some initial variations between the two communities on when Passover in the Spring 922 was to be celebrated, the Babylonian practice was ultimately adopted by all.

The independence of the Babylonian Geonim also asserted itself in matters affecting the synagogue liturgy. One of their decisions was to adopt an annual Torah reading cycle, in contrast to the triennial cycle prevailing in Palestine from Talmudic times. Brody mentions this Babylonian ruling in passing but fails to note its implications. The decision led to dramatic changes in those parts of the synagogue liturgy that were related to the weekly Scripture lesson, primarily the *qedushta* and *yotzer*. The *qedushta* of Yanna'i, a leading Palestinian poet, designed for the triennial cycle had to be refashioned in hybrid formations combining the practice of both communities. In some cases, the hymnist, mindful of the tolerance limits of his congregation, would have to drastically curtail the *qedushta* to four short strophes, interspersed with lengthier *pizmonim* (choral refrains). This practice of emasculating the *qedushta* led to further abuses of the genre with the hymnist constructing his hybrid from works of several classical Palestinian poets and using *pizmonim* by different authors. The new construction also led to a pattern of composition in strophes and refrains in other genres and force large revisions in the synagogue liturgy in Palestine and Babylonia.

During the Palestinian Geonate of Elijah Ha-Kohen in 1062-83, the Palestinian academy was exiled to Tyre and later to Damascus. This weakened its authority as the academy of the Holy Land and exposed it to attacks from other centers, which led to its eventual decline. Despite their lesser clout, the influence of the Palestinians can be seen in the wide use of liturgical poetry adopted by Babylonian Geonim for their synagogues. This happened despite Pirqoy ben Baboy, a disciple of Yehudai Gaon of Sura (c. 750), who argued in the name of his master that "it is forbidden to recite any benediction which is not found in the Talmud, and it is forbidden to add [to the liturgy] even one letter."

Following his section on the historical setting of the Geonic period, its academies and its ties with other communities, Brody

continues with an overview of the intellectual world of the Geonim, their responsa literature and legal codes, and concludes with the career of Seadyah Gaon and his influence. The author correctly focuses on Seadyah's sense of mission and his desire to bring his teachings to the widest possible audience. Brody's assessment of Seadyah as being fiercely loyal to tradition even as he was able to "leave scope for creativity and individual expression of the highest order and for assimilation of all that seemed best in the surrounding culture" is in the best tradition of historical-critical evaluation.

The author gives but a cursory treatment to Seadyah as poet and fails to mention his pioneering changes in rhyming patterns that were to be imitated by cantor-poets in Spain, central Europe and Byzantium. The prevailing rhyme pattern in the classical period, be it the Qillirian type of rhyming two root letters or its modification of one rhyming root letter, allowed for only an end rhyme in the strophe, thus, *aaaa, bbbb, cccc*, etc. However, in the work of Seadyah, a pattern of multiple rhymes in one strophe can be seen, as in the *abab*, from his 'avodah for the Day of Atonement:

Ba'adonay yitzdequ we-yoduhu;

Penimah hokhmah lifnay

'Emunato yed' u wi-yahaduhu;

'Omrey yes' adonay.

The strophes that follow in this 'avodah are constructed in *bcbc*, *babd*, and *bebe* comprising a 16 cola unit for the letter 'alef. Seadyah continued the pattern for the remaining 23 letters of the alphabet. Of equal interest is Seadyah's use of anadiplosis (*shirshur*) not as a means of linking strophes, as was the practice in the classical period, but as the opening and closing units (*ba'adonay...adonay*) in each strophe, as in the sample above.

Sa'adyah's innovations in a flexible rhymed strophe influenced later hymnists from Babylonia, such as the 10th-century Nehemiah b. Solomon b. Heman Ha-Nasi in his prayer for rain in seven parts (*shiva'ta'*) with full alphabetic acrostic. Brody notes that the *piyyutic* activities of Hayya, the last Gaon of Pumbedita and a disciple of Seadyah were "quite revolutionary" (p. 330) without giving a reason for this claim. Hayya (939-1038) was the last of the prominent post-classical poets. He composed mostly *rahatim* and an occasional 'adonay *Malkenu* hymn in strophes and refrains. He also is the author of two sets of uncommon *selichot* for the ninth day of 'Av. In the first set of six, Hayya dispenses with rhyme in a manner reminiscent of the pre-classical poets. Yet, unlike them, he signs his name in an acrostic spanning the full alphabet. The sets are unusual in theme as well as form: The poet does not focus on Israel's sins or beg for forgiveness, as is common in the *selichah*. Instead he presents a list of complaints and charges addressed to God:

Whom have You abandoned eternally that You should cast us off forever?

With whom have You always been indignant that You should be angry with us forever?...

Have You not allowed an escape from every snare and have I not seen a limit to each travail?

Why then is the time of my exile extended and widened, encompassing me from length to length?

The bitter rhetorical questions increase in boldness as the poet pursues his argument:

He who remembers in mercy the alienated, why does He refuse to pity his intimates?

He who is gracious and kind to strangers, why is He not compassionate with his own?...

Seeing His children slaughtered before His eyes, how can He remain indifferent and restrained?

Even more remarkable is Hayya's argument that Israel has not failed in her obligations under the covenant and is being punished unjustly:

Come [O God] and see that we have been steadfast in observance,

Even as our troubles have increased.

To be sure, most of these conceits have their parallels in Ps. 44 and 74. Even Hayya's outcry, "Woe, who is the hard-hearted Father who has been like an enemy to his children?" is based on Lam. 2:5, "The Lord has become like an enemy; He has destroyed Israel." However, it is the poet's effort in choosing and editing for his own rhetorical purposes the several scriptural verses that set these *selichot* apart and tempt a reader to characterize them as "revolutionary."

Despite these minor issues, Brody's book is a comprehensive contribution to understanding a crucial, albeit underrated, period in the growth of Jewish culture and is worthy of serious study.

Leon J. Weinberger is research professor of religious studies at the University of Alabama in Tuscaloosa and a contributing editor.

GOLDEN BLUFF BOULDER

the army wants the latest toys
the mothers want their grown up boys
the nations want the land returned
that they and Gd required we earn
by sending boys to war to grow
into the corpses and the men
their mothers know and do not know
when they returned the land again
the time had come has come when Gd
or men or both put up shut up
or let he world spin on its flawed
and wobbly way a leaky cup.

—Richard Sherwin

Is an Art and Literature of the Holocaust Possible, or Does It Violate a Strict Taboo?

Caught by History: Holocaust Effects in Contemporary Art, Literature and Poetry
by Ernst Van Alphen
Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press

The author, Director of Communication and Education at the Museum Boijmans van Beuningen in Rotterdam, is a non-Jew born in the Netherlands in 1958. This book emerges from his experience of being taught about the Holocaust in the Dutch school system, with little effect, but later encountering the Holocaust in another manner: "Whereas the education I received failed to make the Holocaust a meaningful event for me, Holocaust art and literature finally succeeded..."

This struck the author as ironic, for eyewitness testimony, the approach used in Dutch schools, has been viewed as the effective means of remembering the Holocaust while it has been an "unassailable axiom" that utilizing the imaginative discourse of art and literature "violates a strict taboo." This volume is Van Alphen's struggle with his own experience concerning that taboo.

Van Alphen's work is rich and complex, capable of being read on several levels. On one level it can be viewed along with its 38 illustrations as a study of four artists whose work has responded to the Holocaust. These artists—Anselm Kiefer, Charlotte Salomon, Christian Boltanski and Armando—are interpreted as developing a variety of strategies of reenactment, performative "Holocaust effects" and "indexical languages," that confront the unbearable and unrepresentable horror of the Holocaust. The offered interpretations of specific works as well as the broader program of each of these artists is reason enough to read this volume in pursuit of some understanding of the struggle necessary as artists have sought to respond to the Holocaust without trivializing the event or replacing its pain with some hint of aesthetic pleasure.

But *Caught by History* is not structured around the four artists so much as around a series of issues raised by the popular preference for history-centered testimony or documentary over any possibility of imaginative discourses responding legitimately to events so horrific. Van Alphen questions the dichotomy that contrasts historical discourse and imaginative discourse. Numerous re-

NOTEWORTHY BOOKS

Editor's Note: The following is a list of books received from publishers but, as of this printing, have not been reviewed for Menorah Review.

- Torah and Constitution: Essays in American Jewish Thought.* By Milton R. Konvitz. Syracuse, NY: Syracuse University Press.
- The Jews: History, Memory and the Present.* By Pierre Vidal-Naquet. New York: Columbia University Press.
- Spinning Fantasies: Rabbis, Gender and History.* By Miriam B. Peskowitz. Berkeley: University of California Press.
- In the Shadow of Catastrophe: German Intellectuals Between Apocalypse and Enlightenment.* By Anson Rabinbach. Berkeley: University of California Press.
- The Logic of Evil: The Social Origins of the Nazi Party, 1925-1933.* By William Brustein. New Haven, CT: Yale University Press.
- Lionhearts: Heroes of Israel.* Edited by Michael Ba-Zohar. New York: Warner Books Inc.
- Self-Portrait of a Hero: From the Letters of Jonathan Netanyahu, 1963-1976.* By Jonathan Netanyahu. New York: Warner Books Inc.
- Alchemy of the World: Cabala of the Renaissance.* By Philip Beitchman. Albany: State University of New York Press.
- Stalin's Forgotten Zion: Birobidzhan and the Making of a Soviet Jewish Homeland.* By Robert Weinberg. Berkeley: University of California Press.
- For the Future of Israel.* By Simon Peres and Robert Littell. Baltimore, MD: The John Hopkins University Press.
- Fresh Wounds: Early Narratives of Holocaust Survival.* Edited by Donald L. Niewyk. Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press.
- The Coming Age of Scarcity: Preventing Mass Death and Genocide in the Twenty-First Century.* Edited by Michael N. Dobkowski and Isidor Wallimann. Syracuse, NY: Syracuse University Press.
- Western Jewry and the Zionist Project, 1914-1933.* By Michael Berkowitz. New York: Cambridge University Press.
- The Terezin Diary of Golda Redlich.* Edited by Saul S. Friedman. Lexington: University of Kentucky Press.
- When Memory Speaks: The Holocaust in Art.* By Nelly Toll. Westport, CT: Praeger Publishers.
- Jews: The Essence and Character of a People.* By Arthur Hertzberg and Aron Hirt-Manheimer. San Francisco: HarperSanFrancisco.
- Belsen: The Liberation of a Concentration Camp.* By Joanne Reilly. New York: Routledge.
- Views in Review: Politics and Culture in the State of the Jews.* By Avishai Margalit. New York: Farrar Straus and Giroux.
- Lost Landscapes: In Search of Isaac Bashevis Singer and the Jews of Poland.* By Agata Tuszyńska. New York: William Morrow and Company Inc.
- On God, Space and Time.* By Akiva Jaap Vroman. New Brunswick, NJ: Transaction Books.
- From Catastrophe to Power: Holocaust Survivors and the Emergence of Israel.* By Idith Zertal. Berkeley: University of California Press.
- Smothered Words.* By Sarah Kofman. Evanston, IL: Northwestern University Press.
- Traditions of the Bible: A Guide to the Bible As It Was at the Start of the Common Era.* By James L. Kugel. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.
- The Israelites in History and Tradition.* By Niels Peter Lemche. Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press.
- Ghetto Kingdom: Tales of the Lodz Ghetto.* By Isaiah Spiegel. Evanston, IL: Northwestern University Press.
- Abraham's Heirs: Jews and Christians in Medieval Europe.* By Leonard B. Glick. Syracuse, NY: Syracuse University Press.
- The Hebrew Novel in Czarist Russia: A Portrait of Jewish Life in the Nineteenth Century.* By David Patterson. Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield.
- From Boycott to Economic Cooperation: The Political Economy of the Arab Boycott of Israel.* By Gil Feiler. Portland, OR: Frank Cass Publishers.
- The Politics of Yiddish: Studies in Language, Literature and Society.* Edited by Dov-Ber Kerler. Walnut Creek, CA: AltaMira Press.
- A Drizzle of Honey: The Lives and Recipes of Spain's Secret Jews.* By David Gitlitz and Linda Kay Davidson. New York: St. Martin's Press.
- Divided Memory: The Nazi Past in the Two Germanys.* By Jeffrey Herf. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press (Greenwood Publishing Group).
- Anatomy in the Extreme Situation: Bruno Bettelheim, the Nazi Concentration Camps and the Mass Society.* By Paul Marcus. Westport, CT: Praeger Publishers (Greenwood Publishing Group).
- Holocaust Scholars Write to the Vatican.* Edited by Harry James Cargas. Westport, CT: Greenwood Press.
- Israel and Europe: An Appraisal in History.* By Howard M. Sachar. New York: Alfred A. Knopf Inc.
- Jews Against Prejudice: American Jews and the Fight for Civil Liberties.* By Stuart Svonkin. New York: Columbia University Press.
- The Holocaust: A German Historian Examines the Genocide.* By Wolfgang Benz. New York: Columbia University Press.
- Reading the Holocaust.* By Inga Clendinnen. New York: Cambridge University Press.
- Man of Ashes.* By Salomon Isacovici and Juan Manuel Rodriguez. Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press.

lated questions are explored: Can we any longer believe in a testimony that is not an interpretation? Do obstacles to the remembering of traumatic events further undermine our privileging of testimony over the artist's construction? Was an emphasis on the historical "archive" an element in the very violence of the perpetrators of the Holocaust, and so an element better used ironically by the artist than by the interviewer or testifier?

Finally, Van Alphen turns to the issue of using an imaginative approach to memory in the case of the Holocaust. The coming together of survivor and listener in the pursuit of an emerging truth is explored. Does the listener, in fact, become the Holocaust witness before the narrator does? An emphasis on language, not in its referential capacity, but as constitutive of subjectivity, as an experience of the "hidden," is offered. One seeks to "know the unknowable" through an ongoing conversation that is not "about it but with it." One seeks, with the artist, to be an exiled "master of amazement," to keep alive the effect the past has had on us. Art and literature are not to be divorced from testimony and documentary in their shared promises and failures. Art and literature can, in fact, reverse our individualistic repression in the presence of the unbearable and allow us to "touch the ungraspable, the unattainable, of the Holocaust."

Cliff Edwards is chairman of the Division of Religious Studies, Virginia Commonwealth University, and editorial consultant of Menorah Review.

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Invisible Walls: A German Family Under the Nuremberg Laws. By Ingeborg Hecht. Evanston, IL: Northwestern University Press.

Not the Germans Alone: A Son's Search for the Truth of Vichy. By Isaac Levendel. Evanston, IL: Northwestern University Press.

The Emergence of American Zionism. By Mark A Raider. New York: New York University Press.

Zionism and the Creation of a New Society. By Ben Halpern and Jehuda Reinharz. New York: Oxford University Press.

Thinking About Creation: Eternal Torah and Modern Physics. By Andrew Goldfinger. Northvale, NJ: Jason Aronson Inc.

Mothers, Sisters, Resisters: Oral Histories of Women Who Survived the Holocaust. Edited by Brana Gurewitsch. Tuscaloosa: University of Alabama Press.

A Thousand Kisses: A Grandmother's Holocaust Letters. Edited by Renata Polt. Tuscaloosa: University of Alabama Press.

While America Watches: Televising the Holocaust. By Jeffrey Shandler. New York: Oxford University Press.



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Editor: Jack D. Spiro

Editorial Consultant:

Cliff Edwards

Production Manager: Kay W. Brill

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