

Deborah D. Moore



## REVIEW

ChaeRan Y. Freeze, Sylvia Fuks Fried, and Eugene R. Sheppard, eds., *The Individual in History: Essays in Honor of Jehuda Reinharz* (Waltham, MA: Brandeis University Press, 2015) 558 pp.

This mammoth *festschrift*, honoring modern Jewish historian and former president of Brandeis University, Jehuda Reinharz, includes thirty-one essays and covers over five hundred pages. No review can do justice to such a volume's many virtues, except in a most general way. The scholars invited to participate hail largely from the United States and Israel. Most of them work in the field of Zionist history, some in modern Jewish history and the history of the Middle East, and a few in American Jewish history. The thematic focus on individuals in history, reflecting concerns of Reinharz's scholarship, especially his magisterial biography of Chaim Weizmann, slants the volume toward "great men." Three essays examine women. In fact, only twenty percent of the contributors are women. Most articles focus on various Zionist leaders.

The volume is organized into five sections: Ideology and Politics (13–164), the longest section with ten essays; Statecraft (165–268); Intellectual, Social and Cultural Spheres (269–364); Witnessing History (365–446); and In the Academy (447–532), the shortest section with only three essays. Ideology and Politics examines major Zionist figures, such as Herzl, Ahad Ha'am, Louis Brandeis, and Stephen Wise, alongside less well-known Zionists such as Jessie Sampter and Me'ir Ya'ari. Many of the essays present synoptic overviews, drawing upon previously published scholarship. However, Aviva Halamish's article on Ya'ari and Hashomer Hatza'ir and Meir Chazan's essay on Jessie Sampter and Givat Brenner derive from original research. Both Halamish and Chazan reclaim individuals whose actions and opinions complicate and enrich Zionist narratives. David Ben-Gurion understandably dominates the section on Statecraft, although Asher Susser devotes his contribution to Wasfi al-Tall. Tall was an important leader of Jordan and an architect of "Black September" until his assassination by Palestinian gunmen in 1971. The material in the third section ranges broadly, from a discussion of a Talmudic statement by Moshe Halbertal to a consideration of spatial coherence in relation to sovereignty by

Arnold Band. The fourth section on Witnessing History starts off with a fascinating article by Steven Zipperstein on the Kishinev pogrom, comparing the simultaneous reportage by two very different men sent to cover the violence: the Hebrew poet Haim Nachman Bialik and the Irish Republican leader and journalist, Michael Davitt.

But let me begin with the shortest section, "In the Academy." Two of its three essays consider men at Brandeis University. Stephen Whitfield writes a lively tribute to political scientist and American Studies scholar, Lawrence Fuchs, who spent his entire academic career at Brandeis. Fuchs combined that career with significant stints as a political activist, beginning with work done on behalf of then Senator John F. Kennedy. Whitfield connects Fuchs's scholarship on the political behavior of American Jews with his own liberal politics and offers a fascinating glimpse into how Fuchs moved seamlessly between academia and activism, taking insights from his experiences in one arena into the other. Whitfield's colleague, historian David Hackett Fischer, who has also spent his academic career at Brandeis, examines several university presidents, including Reinhartz. He writes candidly, based not only on the record but also on his own experiences. Fischer uses his article to try to identify what makes for a successful university president, starting with Abram Sachar, the founding president of Brandeis. Fischer stresses the importance of openness to varied leadership styles and characterizes Reinhartz's seventeen-year tenure as president as transformative. He credits Reinhartz with reviving the university during a turbulent era of booms and busts (1994–2010), renewing its founding vision as a Jewish secular nonsectarian university, raising more money than all previous presidents combined, and recruiting a new generation of leaders.

Two of the most surprising and intriguing pieces come from Steven J. Zipperstein and Daniel R. Schwartz. Lest one think that academic politics exists only in an ivory tower bubble, Schwartz demonstrates forcefully how the rise of antisemitism to intellectual legitimacy through the German historian Heinrich von Treitschke's important contribution to what became known as the "Antisemitism Conflict," resulted from a rather minor academic feud. Schwartz's title, "On a Desperate Postdoc and the Emergence of German Antisemitism," points to the significance of Max Lehmann. A non-Jewish postdoc in medieval history, Lehmann was orphaned when the scholar with whom he had aligned himself in a controversy committed suicide. As a result, Lehmann switched fields to modern German history and sought out Treitschke as his new patron. Lehmann had written a negative review of the eleventh volume of Graetz's *History of the Jews*, which covered Jewish integration in modern Germany. Treitschke

took Lehmann's copy of the book and the review, and echoed it as his own, thus launching the two-year "Antisemitism Conflict" that subsequently had profound effects on German politics.

A similar close reading of Michael Davitt's reports and notebooks on the Kishinev pogrom by Zipperstein uncovers a truth behind Bialik's attack on the cowardice of Jewish men in his famous poem "City of Slaughter." By examining Bialik and Davitt together, Zipperstein portrays the mood of fear and cowardice that prevailed after the pogrom, as well as what undoubtedly was common knowledge regarding widespread rape. This knowledge translated into the moral failings of Kishinev's Jewish men even more than the suffering of its Jewish women. Bialik's poem thus recounts an important truth as it attempts to capture and convey the pogrom's terrors, with rape and cowardice as key features. Ironically, these truths do not govern the historical record. Instead, Kishinev enters into historical consciousness as being planned and set in motion by high government officials rather than by the editor of a violently antisemitic local newspaper. Many other details of the pogrom are minimized, with the effect of transforming Bialik's poem into a polemical work. Both Zipperstein's and Schwartz's brilliant micro-histories illuminate, through thoughtful reconstruction of events, the role of important, but often overlooked, figures, in conjunction with the making of larger movements and interpretations of history.

Most of the essays eschew such close readings. Rather, they approach major topics and leaders from a synoptic view. Beginning with Derek Penslar's excellent discussion of the historical contingency of charisma and leadership through an examination of Herzl, many articles reframe accepted historical knowledge in compelling fashion. Thus Shlomo Avineri writes effectively on Ben Gurion's responses to three wars: World War I, World War II, and the Sinai campaign of 1956. In this comparative study, Avineri argues that Ben Gurion correctly read unfolding political events and, when he did not, recognized when he had to change his mind and set off on a different path. Itamar Rabinovich also takes a comparative approach with fruitful results. He looks at three Israeli Prime Ministers—Menachem Begin, Yizhak Rabin, and Ariel Sharon—who went against the grain of their own political pasts to risk bold decisions. All three chose steps in the aftermath of war to pursue possibilities of peace. Anita Shapira opts for a different comparative lens by contrasting Weizmann with Ben Gurion. She does not take sides but sees them both as types of leaders, powerful and effective, who could not countenance rivals or superiors.

In an overview of recent and past scholarship, Yehuda Bauer offers a masterful rebuttal of charges against both American Jews and President Franklin D. Roosevelt for their failure to rescue

European Jews during the Holocaust. Seeing these interpretations of history as fundamentally politicized, Bauer contends that a reexamination of the historiography is critical. He writes, “To accuse the Roosevelt administration, or the mainstream Jewish organizations, for not acting on scattered and unconfirmed information in the midst of a war in which their country was not (yet) involved, appears to be a typical case of ahistoric pseudoanalysis” (p. 245). Bauer’s essay reminds readers of the misuses of history for political ends.

Of the three coeditors, only ChaeRan Y. Freeze contributed a separate article. She focuses on the wife of a Jewish liberal politician in Imperial Russia. Freeze indicates how difficult it is to study the wives of politicians, even when they leave memoirs, in part because they apparently see their lives as extensions of their husbands. Freeze’s essay draws extensively on the memoir of Roza Georgievna Vinaver, contextualizing and contrasting her largely carefree upbringing and unconventional courtship and marriage with her life as a political wife and mother.

Since this is a *estschrift*, the three editors provide an engaging biography of Reinharz in their introduction, as well as a select bibliography of his extensive scholarship. Although they do not comment on it in their biographical introduction, Reinharz apparently excelled at working together with other scholars. Most historians do their work alone, even when they use research assistants. Reinharz regularly collaborated, coediting many volumes—including the important collection of primary sources, *The Jew in the Modern World: A Documentary History*, which has become a standard text for the teaching of modern Jewish history. He also coauthored books in both Hebrew and English. In part this may reflect his desire to balance his administrative duties as president of Brandeis with his passion to continue his scholarship. Irrespective of motivation, such collaboration is both impressive and instructive.

In their introduction, the three editors movingly portray the making of a modern Jewish historian. Reinharz came to study three intersecting subjects: Zionism, German Jewry, and antisemitism. His path represents a classic immigrant story. Born in Haifa, growing up in Germany, Reinharz acquired his education in the United States, although he arrived as a teenager knowing no English. The account of his life journey is inspiring and illuminating. *The Individual in History* makes perfect sense as homage to an extraordinary man and scholar.

UNIVERSITY OF MICHIGAN

doi:doi:10.1093/mj/kjw016