

THE BLACKWELL COMPANION TO
**JEWISH
CULTURE**

From the Eighteenth Century to the Present

Edited by GLENDA ABRAMSON

Advisory Editors
DOVID KATZ
NICHOLAS DE LANGE
CHAIM RABIN
EZRA SPICEHANDLER

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DOVID KATZ

Nikel, Lea (b.1916) Israeli painter. Born in the Ukraine, Nikel arrived in Palestine at the age of two years and later studied with Hayyim Gliksberg, and in the late 1940s with Streichman and Steimatzky. She is probably the most dynamic, and the only true abstract, painter in "The Goup of Ten" which dominated the modernist Israeli art scene until the mid 1950s. She traveled to Paris regularly and worked in Paris, Rome, and New York, exhibiting during the 1950s in Paris and Amsterdam, and gaining the acclaim of international art critics. In the 1960s she won the *Migdal David* prize, and represented Israel at the 1964 Venice Biennale. In 1972 she won the Sandberg prize, and exhibited extensively in Canada, New York, Rome, and Milan. Her art is highly individualistic in its use of thick impasto, brush strokes, totally uninhibited and free in movement and shapes, and vivid color. With time her forms moved from the linear to more elaborate and controlled compositions but still with highly saturated colors brilliantly juxtaposed. Unlike most Israeli abstract painters, Yosef ZARITSKY for instance, her abstractions do not derive from the figurative or landscapes, but are pure geometrical abstractions. Because of the energetic qualities of her brush strokes and colors, her art cannot be grouped with the rest of Israeli lyrical abstraction. She has exhibited in the Netherlands, Rome, Milan, Paris, London, and New York.

FURTHER READING

Tal, M.: Three women artists. *Ariel* 21 (1967–8)

NEDIRA YAKIR BUNYARD

Nissenson, Hugh (b.1933) American novelist and short story writer. Nissenson, a

descendant of Polish Jews, was born and grew up in New York City but was educated at Swarthmore and Stanford. *A Pile of Stones* (1965), his first collection of stories, won the Edward Lewis Wallant Award. It was followed by a second collection, *In the Reign of Peace* (1972). Both volumes explore the difficulties of maintaining religious belief in the modern age. Other stories, especially those set in Israel, analyze conflicts between a modern, secularist, pragmatic sense of survival at any cost, and a traditional but often complex, personal piety and faith in providentially ordained values.

In his longer fiction, Nissenson considers the problem of survival from a different perspective – the moral and emotional costs to witnesses and victims. His first novel, *My Own Ground* (1976), set in 1912 on the Lower East Side, is a violent tug-of-war between a pimp and a socialist intellectual for the body and soul of a rabbi's daughter, seen through the eyes of a 15-year-old boy. *Tree of Life* (1985) is a novel in the form of a diary for 1811–12 kept by a man who forsook his Protestant ministry after the death of his wife and moved to the Ohio frontier. He and his neighbors struggle to preserve their lives, their sanity, and their values amidst personal doubt and despair, physical hardship, child mortality, and sadistic brutality committed by both Indians and American settlers and soldiers.

The same issues inform some of Nissenson's journalism. In 1961 he covered the Eichmann trial in Jerusalem for *Commentary*, while *Notes from the Frontier* (1968) is a memoir of visits to a kibbutz on the Syrian border before and during the Six Day War.

FURTHER READING

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MICHAEL SHAPIRO

Noah, Mordecai Manuel (1785–1851) American journalist, playwright, politician, and diplomat. Born in Philadelphia, and orphaned at the age of seven, he also lived in Charleston, and for most of his life, New York City. He was the best known American Jew of his day, lived

both as an American and as a Jew, and sought to mediate between both of his worlds.

In his youth Noah published journalistic pieces, a political pamphlet, two plays (*The Fortress of Sorrento*, 1809, and *Paul and Alexis, or the Orphans of the Rhine*, 1812), and a sophomoric critique of Shakespeare (*Shakspeare [sic] Illustrated*, 1809) – all before being appointed consul to Tunis in 1813.

Recalled in 1815 in the wake of a scandal, he published *Correspondence and Documents* (1816) in his own defense, followed by *Travels in England, France, Spain and the Barbary States in the Years 1813–14 and 15* (1819), his most important book, and the first of its kind by an American diplomat. It describes his experiences abroad, and contains valuable information on early nineteenth-century Tunisian Jewry.

Thereafter, he concentrated on journalism, editing such important New York newspapers as *The National Advocate*, *The New York Enquirer*, *The Evening Star*, and *The Sunday Times and Noah's Weekly Messenger*. He also wrote several plays, most significantly, *She Would Be A Soldier* (1819). He is, however, best remembered for notable published addresses, including one dedicating his proposed Jewish colony ("Ararat") on Grand Island, New York (1825); another arguing that the Indians were the "lost ten tribes" (1837), and a third, frequently reprinted, entitled *Discourse on the Restoration of the Jews* (1845).

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Sarna, J. D.: *Jacksonian Jew: The Two Worlds of Mordecai Noah* (New York and London: Holmes & Meier Publishers, 1981)

JONATHAN D. SARNA

Nordau, Max [Simon Maximilian Suedfeld] (1849–1923) Zionist leader, social philosopher, and journalist. Nordau was born in Hungary. The son of a rabbi, he ceased to be an observant Jew in his late teens. He pursued a career in journalism, at the same time as studying medicine, and settled in Paris as a practicing doctor in 1880. Nordau wrote books of social, artistic, and literary criticism, many of which



Max Nordau with his daughter Maxa in Spain

became international best-sellers which aroused great controversy (he has been called "the most brilliant philistine of his day"). His output also included plays and short stories.

In the 1890s Nordau met Theodor HERZL, another Hungarian-born Jew. The two men, both Paris correspondents for German-language newspapers at a time when anti-Semitism was a major issue in French affairs, discussed the Jewish question and found an immediate rapport: "Each took the words right out of the other's mouth. I never had such a strong feeling that we belonged together", wrote Herzl in his diary. In 1895 Nordau was one of Herzl's first converts to the idea that the solution was a Jewish state. In spite of his seniority to Herzl in years, and his greater fame, Nordau played a supporting, though major, role in the Zionist

philosophy of Abraham ibn Ezra). In 1853 he received his rabbinical diploma and shortly after his ordination was appointed, on the recommendation of Heinrich GRAETZ, as a preacher to the progressive German congregation in Warsaw.

In Warsaw Jastrow immediately became involved in political activities. His first political work, *Beleuchtung eines ministeriellen Gutachtens über die Lage der Juden im Königreich Polen veranlasst durch Kaiserlichen Willen und bürokratische Willkür*, (1859) was published anonymously, and supported the cause of the Jews in Poland. He then continued to preach and write in favor of Polish nationalism. After participating in the political demonstrations of the Polish revolutionary movement (1860-1), he was arrested in November 1861, thus becoming the hero of a Polish legend and a poem. As he was a Prussian citizen, and with the help of the Prussian Ambassador, he was released in February 1862, but was forced to leave Poland.

Jastrow published several articles and books on the corruption of the Russian bureaucracy and the underlying causes of the Polish revolution. One of these, *Die Vorläufer des Polnischen Aufstandes* (1864) was published anonymously and initially appeared as a series of newspaper articles. Hoping to return to Warsaw but needing to earn his living, Jastrow was appointed as a rabbi first at Mannheim and then for two years at Worms, at the same time publishing works on rabbinic history. When his Prussian passport was canceled, he realized that he would not be able to return to Warsaw and he emigrated to the USA in 1866.

Jastrow settled in Philadelphia as rabbi of Rodfei Shalom Congregation, becoming deeply involved in public life and one of the leaders of the Conservative movement in the USA. He founded a new synagogue, opposed the Reform and its leaders, primarily Isaac M. WISE and Samuel HIRSCH. He also taught philosophy of religion, Jewish history, and biblical exegesis at Maimonides College. A few years before he died he was forced to limit his public activities due to poor health, but he continued his scholarly activities. His major work *Dictionary of the Targumim, the Talmud Babli and Jerusalemi, and the Midrashic Literature* (1886-1903), which is un-

doubtedly his main contribution to scholarship, was completed during those years. At the same time, he was co-editor of the *Jewish Encyclopedia* and editor-in-chief of a new translation of the Bible into English.

DEBORAH SCHECHTERMAN

Jerusalem, Wilhelm (1854-1923) Austrian philosopher. Born in Drenic, Bohemia, Jerusalem studied at Prague, and subsequently became a schoolteacher, while he continued his interest in the psychology of speech and the education of blind deaf-mutes. In 1891 he began lecturing in philosophy at Vienna, and from 1903 in pedagogics. In 1920 he was appointed professor in both. From 1894-1902 Jerusalem also taught at the *Jüdisch-theologische Lehranstalt* (Jewish Theological College).

Jerusalem held a positivist viewpoint, opposing the neo-Kantians, Husserl, and much of the thought of Brentano. His friends included Ernst Mach and Josef POPPER-LYNKEUS. One of his major works is available in English: *Einleitung in die Philosophie* (1899; *Introduction to Philosophy*, 1910).

His collection of essays, *Gedanken und Denker* (1925; *Thoughts and thinker*) shows Jerusalem's close identification with what he saw as the Jewish tradition. He was the son of very traditionalist Jews and, although he later went through a materialist phase, he came to accept a non-anthropomorphic idea of God, and the life-oriented teachings which he saw as the basis of Judaism. For Jerusalem Judaism was a form of "ethical monotheism" which was entirely compatible with a scientific view of the world. Thus, although he disagreed with Hermann COHEN's aprioristic approach, he shared his views on Judaism.

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STEVEN BELLER

Jewish Publication Society Founded in Philadelphia on 3 June 1888, this was American

Jewry's third attempt to establish a publication society. Earlier efforts (1845, 1871) had ended in failure. From the start, the Society committed itself "to publish works on the religion, literature, and history of the Jews; and . . . to foster original work by American scholars on these subjects" (1888 constitution). Membership dues and contributions funded its operations, and members received books in return. Well over seven hundred different titles have been published to date. The Society's history may be divided into four periods.

1888-1916

Led by Judge Mayer Sulzberger, and by Henrietta Szold, who from 1893 to 1916 acted as editor, the Society established itself, and by extension the entire American Jewish community, as a major force in Jewish cultural life. It published important works by Heinrich GRAETZ, Israel ZANGWILL, Solomon SCHECHTER, Moritz LAZARUS, Louis GINZBERG, and Simon DUBNOW, as well as Helena Franks's pathbreaking translations from Yiddish literature. In 1899 it issued the first volume of the *American Jewish Year Book*, an annual it now co-publishes with the American Jewish Committee. In early 1917 it released a major Anglo-Jewish translation of the Bible, under the chief editorship of Max MARGOLIS.

1917-1935

Despite reverses, the Society, led by Cyrus ADLER, and editors Benzion Halper (1916-24) and Isaac Husik (1924-39), continued to publish significant books. The 17-volume Schiff Library of Jewish Classics (1923-36) stands as the chief contribution during this period. The Society also placed into operation a new and highly innovative Hebrew press, making it the foremost printer of quality Hebrew books in the USA. The press was transferred to private hands in 1950.

1936-1949

Under the leadership of Maurice Jacobs, with Solomon Grayzel as editor (1939-65), the Society rapidly expanded. Its list now focused on history, biography, literature, and children's books, and featured works by leading Jewish writers and thinkers. The Society and its press

were particularly active in meeting the literary needs of Jews during the Second World War.

After 1950

Recent editors of the Society have faced new challenges accompanying the changing needs and interests of the American Jewish community, and the increasingly competitive character of the American Jewish book trade. In 1973 in a departure from past policies, the Society published the highly successful *Jewish Catalog*. In 1983 after three decades of effort, it completed its new translation of the Bible, issued in one volume in 1985 under the title *Tanakh*.

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JONATHAN D. SARNA

Jewish women, education of Jewish education in its original form was purely religious education, the constant and unchanging study of *Mikra* and *Mishnah*, the written and oral law. As study for its own sake it was restricted entirely to males. Women, because they were not obligated to observe most of the laws, were not obliged to study them either. The training offered to all girls was deliberately role-specific and took place for the most part in the home, where the mother acted as the role-model. Through her example and instruction the girl was taught the duties of the Jewish woman as wife and mother. She might learn to read and write some Hebrew, but, in Europe, rather more Yiddish than Hebrew, she would learn the laws of menstruation (*niddah*) of keeping a kosher home (*halah*) and observing sabbaths and festivals (*Had Rakat haner*). This was linked with explicit teaching of modesty, chastity, and charity. There were instances of very learned women, of girls attending the lowest level of *heder*, but, on the whole, there were no