Hasidism: Writings on Devotion, Community, and Life in the Modern World. Edited by *Ariel Evan Mayse* and *Sam Berrin Shonkoff*. Tauber Institute Series for the Study of European Jewry. Edited by *Jehuda Reinharz* et al.
Waltham, MA: Brandeis University Press, 2020. Pp. xxx+306. $90.00 (cloth); $26.00 (paper); $24.99 (e-book).

Hasidism, a pietistic movement that had its origins in the southeastern provinces of the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth in the mid-eighteenth century, continues to flourish in the twenty-first century as one of the most vital branches of Orthodox Judaism. The movement has fascinated scholars for over a century, some of whom saw in it a form of religious renaissance that might inspire more modern movements of renewal. More recent scholarship, while not denying the spiritual originality of Hasidism, has argued that the movement was an outgrowth of earlier pietism, which it revised but did not entirely overturn.

One of the most original features of Hasidism was its social structure: an often far-flung network of adherents (called *hasidim*) loyal to a charismatic leader (called, in Hebrew, *tsaddik*, and, in Yiddish, *rebbe*). The courts of these tsaddikim were unique in Jewish history and constituted an alternative source of religious authority to more traditional rabbis. Some of these courts were opulent and drew thousands of adherents; others were more modest and even impoverished. This social structure and its leadership continue today to shape the world of Orthodox Jewry.

Earlier scholars of Hasidism—Simon Dubnow, Martin Buber, and Gershom Scholem (among others)—believed that the spiritual creativity of Hasidism had exhausted itself by the early nineteenth century. But the more recent scholarship has seen the nineteenth century as the golden age of Hasidism when it became a mass movement. Equally significant is the remarkable renaissance of Hasidism since the end of World War II, when most of the Eastern European Jewish communities were decimated. The movement was able to reconstitute itself in the state of Israel, North America, and elsewhere in the world, constituting today something like 750,000 adherents to different rebbes.

Earlier anthologies of Hasidic thought, such as those by Louis Jacobs and Joseph Dan, focused primarily on the eighteenth-century generation of founders. Mayse and Shonkoff's masterful collection of texts recognizes that there is a wealth of literature extending into the nineteenth, twentieth, and even twenty-first centuries. As such, it is the most comprehensive of all the anthologies published to date and the most diverse in terms of the different schools of Hasidism.

Every anthology naturally reflects the interests of its collectors. Ariel Evan Mayse has already published an excellent study of the linguistic philosophy of Dov Ber, the Maggid of Mezeritch, a disciple of one of Hasidism's putative founders Israel Ba'al Shem Tov and himself the progenitor of many later Hasidic courts. In this volume, we find some fascinating examples of the relationship between divine language and human language in the Maggid's thought and that of his disciples. We also find the critical Hasidic attitude toward the invention of modern spoken Hebrew in texts by Shalom DovBer Schneersohn and Joel Teitelbaum in the first part of the twentieth century. This rejection of Hebrew as a vernacular was a product of the unremitting hostility of almost all Hasidic leaders to Zionism, a movement they believed was usurping the traditional role of the Messiah.

This rejection of Zionism was part and parcel of the rejection of secular modernity. While many of the Hasidic thinkers whose writings are reproduced here ignored the modern world, there were also many who attacked it directly. From the nineteenth century on, Hasidism came to see itself—as it was also seen by others—as a bulwark against modernity. Following recent trends in scholarship, the authors point out in their superb introduction that this rejection of modernity was itself a dialectical product of modernity.

One of the most welcome contributions of this anthology, reflecting both of the editors' interests, is the incorporation of women's voices or, at least, stories about women in Hasidic texts. Although Hasidism started out as an entirely male enterprise in the eighteenth century, women did visit the courts of the tsaddikim. And there were some unusual wives or daughters of Hasidic dynasties who functioned, at least partially or temporarily, as female versions of the tsaddikim. The authors also include some of the most recent voices of Hasidic women, especially from the Chabad-Lubavitch branch, whose seventh rebbe, Menachem Mendel Schneerson, gave them a central role in the messianic drama. The texts brought here show that, at least in some Hasidic groups, women are no longer just "wives of hasidim," but also hasidim (or *hasidot*, to use the feminine plural) in their own right.

No reviewer can resist the temptation to point out texts that he or she might have liked to see in such a collection. One of the most striking early texts is a letter from Israel Ba'al Shem Tov to his disciple/companion, Jacob Joseph of Polonye, in which he criticizes Jacob Joseph for engaging in excessive fasting, much like many other holy men of the time. The correct way of worship should be rather with joy, a teaching that is, in fact, represented by a different text in this anthology from Jacob Joseph's *Toledot Ya'akov Yosef*. The Ba'al Shem Tov's letter appears to be authentic and gives more direct evidence of his original thought.

The editors include one lengthy story from the hagiographical *In Praise of the Ba'al Shem Tov* (1814) about the wife of Abraham the Angel, the ascetical son of the Maggid of Mezeritch. This is, indeed, a very rich story and one that reveals a side to the Hasidic attitude toward holy women, even in an age when women took little direct part in the movement. But there are other stories that delve into the magical powers of the tsaddik, an aspect of the movement rightly emphasized by Moshe Idel. A few examples of these kind of tales might have been desirable. There is also a rich literature of "tales of the tsaddikim" from the 1860s and 1870s that the editors could have also mentioned.

Following earlier scholars, Mayse and Shonkoff focus on Hasidic thought and not Hasidic tales. But, as Martin Buber pointed out, the tales are integral to the thought. Since Shonkoff has written brilliantly on how Buber interpreted the tales, perhaps an example or two of that dynamic would have revealed much about not only the Hasidic tale but also its modern appropriation. With that said, this reviewer can only applaud the remarkable erudition and discernment of these two scholars, so early in their careers.

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You Say You Want a Revolution? Radical Idealism and Its Tragic Consequences.
By *Daniel Chirot*.
Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2020. Pp. xii+174. $29.95 (cloth).

Daniel Chirot's book offers a comparative study of revolutions. While he engages extensively with revolutionary history, the thrust of the book lies elsewhere, in the realm of political sociology. His work brings to mind Crane Brinton's classic *Anatomy of Revolution* (1938), which also served as an inspiration. Like Brinton, Chirot seeks to identify the main "stages" of modern revolutions, ultimately identifying four (as Brinton had, though they do not completely align). Unlike other political sociologists working on the comparative studies of revolutions (e.g., Jack Goldstone), Chirot does not purport to discover invariable laws that determine all revolutionary outcomes. He acknowledges exceptions and variations to his pattern. And he pays close attention to historical differences and details.