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AN ANNOTATED BIBLIOGRAPHY OF AUTOBIOGRAPHIES OF AMERICAN JEWS

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Thesis submitted in partial fulfillment
of the requirements for Ordination.

Hebrew Union College-Jewish Institute of Religion

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Referee, Dr. Stanley F. Chyet

DIGEST

The purpose of this thesis is to list and comment upon in detail autobiographies of American Jews living in the nineteenth and/or twentieth century. While the American Jewish Yearbook and Jewish Book Annual have listed autobiographies published in any given year, the annotations are rather sparse. This work should be viewed as an initial attempt to annotate the more than two hundred autobiographies already published.

Because of the tremendous number of volumes available, a selection was necessary in order to fit into the format of a rabbinic thesis. The books were arbitrarily selected and represent Jews in theatre, art, journalism, education, social work, the rabbinate, law, and politics. They represent divergent political, religious, and philosophical attitudes along with different positions on the social ladder.

Each autobiography was read and annotated with an eye to Jewish content. Did the author associate himself/herself with the Jewish community and if so what was the nature and extent of his/her association? Did the author illuminate any issues--anti-Semitism, immigration, economic life, or Jewish identity in the United States? The commentary also attempts to provide information as to the character of the times which the volumes cover. Care was taken to be objective and to note prejudices of the authors.

It is hoped that this thesis can be used by the student of history as a tool to locate relevant material for specific investigations in nineteenth- and twentieth-century American Jewish history.

Dedicated to my parents and grandparents

Gertrude Provis Alpert
Sidney Alpert

Mollie Warschauer Provis

and

Isadore Jacob Provis ל"ז

Anna Berman Alpert ל"ז
Jacob Alpert ל"ז

PREFACE

It seems to me that there are several questions which must be asked before preparing an annotated selective bibliography of autobiographies of American Jews. Does man shape history or does history shape man? Undoubtedly, man and history mold each other, but what is history? History is inquiry, the study or record of personalities, events, and phenomena, but what is its purpose? The goal of history is to better understand the nature of man and the influences which act upon him such as economics, politics, society, culture, etc. There are multitudes of approaches and tools which the historian can utilize. In this thesis I wish to develop more fully autobiography as a tool for the historian in general and the American Jewish historian in particular.

Why use autobiographies? What are their advantages and disadvantages? Autobiographies are eye-witness accounts and personal reminiscences of people, events, and phenomena which the author has seen or experienced in his/her lifetime. The disadvantage is that all too often the author cannot or will not be totally objective in order to present himself/herself in the best possible light. Further, the autobiographer may change names and locales or be ambiguous in order to protect individuals or memories of individuals. Despite these disadvantages, autobiographies are primary sources which depict the contemporary world of the author. The styles, values, mores, likes, dislikes, state of the economy, intellectual and social life of a given period emerge as well as the personality

of the author. Backed up with materials in other autobiographies, biographies and histories, the autobiography is an excellent source of documentation. Also in and of themselves most autobiographies are intrinsically interesting.

Generally, students of American Jewish history begin their studies with the use of secondary materials such as encyclopedias and general histories and examine the ever abundant bibliographies closely. Then for further study, if one wanted to read autobiographical books of American Jews for further study, he/she could consult the Jewish Book Annual and find lists of autobiographies of American Jews which, however, have scant annotation. If the student did not know the particular personality he/she might ignore him/her. Tus, it is the purpose of this thesis to bring some American Jewish autobiographies to the attention of those interested in American Jewish history and for use as a reference work. The annotation of each autobiography is designed to provide succint essential features of the book.

It must be noted that this is a pioneering work. Due to the scope of the thesis, twenty-five individuals and thirty-one books were selected on an arbitrary basis from over two hundred such autobiographies in print. It is hoped that eventually the other volumes will be included.

Based on twenty-five individuals, it is difficult to come to any real conclusion about the American Jewish community other than to note its diversity. What is quite striking is that many appear Jewish only in that they were born so. There is not a single writer who could be considered Orthodox.

Outside of the rabbis, if Judaism has a central meaning for them, it is largely or mainly by association with the Jewish people.

Lack of Jewish content in some of these autobiographies (and in Jewish autobiographies in general) offers many difficulties. Unless one is familiar with the author, it may not be ascertainable whether he/she really identifies with Judaism as a religion, system of ethics, or the Jewish people. Many times autobiographers only desire to present their roles in their work whether in law, medicine, education, politics, art or any other field. It may still be possible that the author may worship in a synagogue with some regularity, be a Zionist, or contribute to Jewish causes. Thus, it becomes important to read all available sources of information either written about or by these people in order to attempt to understand them as fully as possible.

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In any work there are always people in the background who contribute in a significant way to that work. Often these people remain in the background but it is my intention to bring some of these people to the forefront. I would like to do so now.

First I would like to thank all those who encouraged me while at Hebrew Union College-Jewish Institute of Religion. I have been inspired by my teachers, especially Rabbi Samson H. Levey--a true saint and scholar in Israel. His tutelage and friendship have been and will continue to be a source of inspiration.

Next, the staffs of the Hebrew Union College Klau Library and the American Jewish Archives who were most helpful in locating materials used in this work. The staff of the Archives--Jeanette Weiss, Fannie Zelcer, Reva Rolnick, Marion Goldberg, and Rose Doty--were always cheerful and encouraging.

Finally, I wish to acknowledge a debt of gratitude to two people who were vitally essential to the completion of this work--my thesis advisor Dr. Stanley F. Chyet and my wife Anna. Undoubtedly this thesis was inspired by Dr. Chyet's love of history, literature, and most important, people both past and present. Translating an inspiration into the written word is not an easy task. Throughout the entire process, from formulation to finished product, Dr. Chyet was there full of interest and enthusiasm. His suggestions were most helpful and provided me with a real educational experience. After working with Dr. Chyet, I hold him in the highest respect as a man, rabbi and scholar.

As for my wife Anna, this thesis is covered by her love for me and for learning. Her perceptiveness was most helpful. I relied upon many of her suggestions at every stage of writing. Further, she sacrificed many hours of her time and effort to read, re-read, type, and proof-read the thesis. She was always there with her interest, enthusiasm, and encouragement. I only hope that I may be able to help her as much as she has helped me--may we live to one hundred and twenty so that I may have enough time!

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CYRUS ADLER (1863-1940)

I Have Considered the Days (Philadelphia: Jewish Publication Society, 1941)

Cyrus Adler was a giant on the American Jewish scene. From the late nineteenth century through the first third of the twentieth century, he seemed to be involved in all things Jewish. He had important roles in the American Jewish Committee, Dropsie College, the Jewish Theological Seminary of America, the Jewish Publication Society, the American Jewish Historical Society, Jewish Quarterly Review (New Series), American Jewish Year Book, etc. Further, Adler gained the reputation of being a first rate scholar. He was the first person to receive a degree of Doctor of Philosophy in Semitics from an American university (Johns Hopkins). Because of his scholarly skills he found positions with the promoters of the Chicago Exposition of 1893, and the Smithsonian Institution. Adler's prominance as a scholar secured for him the presidency of Dropsie College and the Jewish Theological Seminary. Throughout his lifetime he published numerous scholarly articles and books.

Adler writes well in the style of his times. His autobiography is full of interesting episodes. However, he is not prepared to provide the details which would give us a better understanding of his time period. Perhaps he was living too close to the events which he was writing about.

Adler comes across as a bit stuffy but relatively modest. His autobiography, while not terribly illuminating, is nonetheless important because it shows Adler as he wanted to present

CYRUS ADLER (Continued)

himself. He is the nineteenth century patrician gentleman who is firmly committed to both secular modernity and tradition-oriented Judaism.

CHARLES ANGOFF (1902-)

When I was a Boy in Boston (New York: The Benchurst Press, 1947)

It is difficult to determine if When I Was a Boy in Boston is an autobiography veiled in the form of fiction or outright fiction. This book is a collection of episodes in the life of the young son of a recent immigrant from Russia. Unlike his father, the boy is Americanized. He goes to a co-educational public school where he encounters children from all different backgrounds. It is in the school, where he learns and plays with the other children, and after school, when he continues to play with his friends, which help him to adjust to the ways of the new world. To his father's horror the boy developes interests in baseball, boxing, and going to the movies. He'll eat such new world food as ice cream, ketchup, lettuce, and even chew gum.

The book is useful in describing the lives of recent and not so recent East European Jewish immigrants in America. Angoff inserts enough individuals to refute the picture of a stereotyped Jewish immigrant.

CHARLES ANGOFF (1902-)

The Tone of the Twenties (South Brunswick, New Jersey: A.S. Barnes & Co., 1966)

The Tone of the Twenties is a description of the fabulous nineteen twenties when art and culture were in their heyday. Charles Angoff participated in the flowering of literature as a writer and editor. It was chiefly in his capacity as an editor for the American Mercury that he came into contact with the great and the not-so-great writers of the twenties. Angoff divides his book into chapters based on personalities of that era such as H. L. Mencken, Robert Frost, Sinclair Lewis, William Saroyan, Dorothy Thompson and others. He also provides an introductory and a closing chapter. These selections are well written.

Angoff discusses very few Jews in this book. The men he points to are nominally Jewish, e.g., George Jean Nathan, Philip Goodman, and Mike Gold. The Hearst columnist Sokosky was a Zionist at heart, intellectually Reform, and emotionally Orthodox. While Angoff was impressed by the famous Rabbi Joshua Liebman as a preacher, he was not moved by the early manuscripts of Peace of Mind (Liebman's book). In fact, Angoff states that the finished product, which was to become a best seller, was rewritten by someone other than Liebman.

Angoff says little about himself as a Jew. He keeps kosher to some degree and likes Yiddish. He generally likes Jews and defends Judaism as a religion which is opposed to oppression. Finally he makes the important observation that rabble rousers while claiming Jews are communists, at the same

CHARLES ANGOFF (Continued)

time claim Jews are the big bankers who are controlling the United States.

MARY ANTIN (1881-1949)

The Promised Land (Boston & New York: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1912)

The Promised Land is a moving account of one of the millions of Jewish immigrants who made the journey from Eastern Europe to America in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century. While not being the archetypical immigrant, the author, Mary Antin, who was just thirty, must nonetheless have been representative of many such newcomers.

Antin's description of the Pale of Settlement is one of the best ever written (pp. 2-162). She depicts the difficult conditions under which the Jews were forced to live. She blames the Russian government and the church for such conditions and for inciting the ignorant peasants against the Jews. She is also careful to point out that there were some gentiles who befriended the Jews. The Jewish community itself remained medieval. It was extremely orthodox and adhered to the strict rules of Jewish law. If anyone had doubts about God or Judaism, he or she kept silent.

Antin's family moved to America to begin life anew. Her father, like many others, preceded the rest of the family there in order to set up a home. She describes the agonies her mother, brothers, and sisters endured during that period. Even the trip to join the father was filled with peril.

In the new country there was change. To avoid being looked down upon as "greenhorns", the immigrants shed the Old World clothes and anglicize their names. They tried to learn English as soon as possible and adopt American mannerisms.

MARY ANTIN (Continued)

Mary Antin's autobiography is a story of a successful Americanization in that she feels herself to be completely accepted by all those around her as an American. Despite the fact that her family lived in poverty in the Boston slums, she advanced quickly in school and even had a poem published in the newspaper while still in grammar school.

For the American Jewish historian or the American historian in general, this autobiography gives important insights into the "melting pot process." Antin describes the changes made in clothes, language, manners and even food by the immigrants in their effort to become Americans. The parents usually couldn't make it, but sacrificed everything so that their children could. She further describes the disintegration of the home. For many Jews the external forms of Jewish orthodoxy were done away with even though most fundamentals were kept. While this volume emphasizes the "melting pot ideals," it is nonetheless important in understanding East European Jewish immigrants before and after their coming to America.

As a historical footnote, The Promised Land was enormously successful and catapulted Mary Antin to national prominence. However, her later works were not received as favorably, her fame diminished, and she eventually suffered financial hardships. The Antin of later years retracted from some of her positions especially on religion.[1]

1 Abraham Cronbach, "Autobiography," American Jewish Archives XI (April 1959): 40-43.

BERNARD BERENSON (1865-1959)

Sketch For a Self-Portrait (New York: Pantheon, 1949)

Many times it appears that autobiographies are written by their authors for themselves rather than any possible readership. Such is the case of Sketch For a Self-Portrait by the famous art historian and critic Bernard Berenson. He is a private man at home with the best of art, literature, music and philosophy to which he devotes considerable space in this volume. He feels out of touch with the present. His world is in the past; he does not seem to relate well to the living. Yet, he is very much alive and striving to learn more about the totality of life.

It is difficult to learn much about the Berenson who lives in the outside world. He is rarely direct. Born in Lithuania, he spent his childhood in an "aristocratic republic" under Russian rule (p. 50). Later he moved to Boston and then attended Harvard. There was some type of Judaism practiced at home. He is very familiar with the Bible and somewhat familiar with rabbinic literature. However, he calls himself a "Christianity graduate" and feels that Christianity is the best form of religion for whites.

Berenson is introspective. A good deal can be learned about the inner world of the man Berenson in this book, but there is next to nothing to shed light on history per se or on Jews and Judaism.

BORIS BOGEN (1869-1929)

Born a Jew written in collaboration with Alfred Segal (New York: The Macmillan Company, 1930)

Born a Jew is an excellent account of the life of the Eastern European Jew both in the old country and in America in the late nineteenth and twentieth century. Boris Bogen is in an unique position to understand his people because he had been at the highest and lowest rungs of the Jewish social ladder. Further, his work as educator and social worker gave him the opportunity to see East European Jewish problems on a day to day basis.

As a member of Moscow's privileged Jews (those permitted to live outside the Pale and have residence in Moscow), he was not very close to the other Jews. It was only in his late adolescent years, after years of anti-Semitism, that he developed a loyalty to Jews--but not to Judaism. After the birth of his first child, he finally concluded that it was hopeless for Jews to remain in Russia. When he chose to come to America, friends and family tried to discourage him because America, they contended, was the refuge of the lowest elements of society.

When Bogen and his family arrived in America, they found themselves at the lowest rung of the socio-economic ladder. Like other immigrants, he was poor, not conversant in English, and without a trade, trying to find work both inside and outside New York City. Life was further complicated because he didn't know Yiddish--the language of most of the newcomers and the language in which English classes were taught. He quickly learned Yiddish and English. His escape from poverty was through

BORIS BOGEN (Continued)

his knowledge of Russian which allowed him to be an instructor and student at New York University.

After New York University, he became a reporter, then a teacher at the Baron de Hirsch Trade School in New York, and finally the principal of the Baron de Hirsch Agricultural School in Woodbine, New Jersey. In a short time, he learned the attitude of the philanthropists toward the immigrant--they were children who had to be kept in their place because they didn't know what was best for them. Disagreement with superiors led him to resign and eventually take an active role in Jewish charitable work.

Bogen first enters organized Jewish social work with the United Jewish Charities of Cincinnati and subsequently with the Joint Distribution Committee. In Cincinnati he instituted a series of programs in which poverty-stricken Jews could not only receive help but also help themselves. Soon those programs were serving as models for other cities.

Bogen's work in the Joint Distribution Committee covers the period both during and after World War I. In response to the plight of the East European Jews, various segments of the American Jewish Community set up relief organizations. In order to promote efficiency, Orthodox, Zionists, Reform, and Radical groups combined to form the Joint Distribution Committee. Bogen vividly describes the problems the Committee encountered, including the political in-fighting of the Jewish community both in America and Europe and a lack of support by the United States

BORIS BOGEN (Continued)

government. The Committee found conditions in Poland to be terrible, while in the Soviet Union they were inconsistent. Some of the problems in the latter arose because of persecution of Orthodox Jews. These Jews claimed that, while they were being fed, they were dying of spiritual malnutrition.

For the Jewish historian of the late nineteenth and early twentieth century this book helps one to understand Jewish life both in Eastern Europe and America. For the American Jewish historian, Bogen describes the sociological conditions of the Jews and important personalities in the Jewish community. Among others he highly esteems Judah Magnes, Felix Warburg, Bernard Flexner and Israel Friedlander. Sociologically, there is a good deal of material which shows the difficulties in unifying the American Jewish Community. Distrust reigned between Reform and Orthodox, religious and socialists, philanthropists and recent immigrants.

HOWARD FAST (1914-)

The Naked God (New York: Frederick A. Praeger, 1957)

The Naked God is Howard Fast's confession of being a member of the American Communist Party from 1943-1957. The book is not so much an autobiography as it is a description of the American Communist Party during the years he was a member. He describes the structure of the party, its philosophy, and its power to control the thinking of its members. Fast makes interesting comments about two of his works which the party did not completely appreciate--My Glorious Brothers (1949) and Spartacus (1952).

Fast says nothing about the fact that he is Jewish. However, he is disturbed by anti-Semitism in general and communist anti-Semitism in particular. It was Khrushchev's denunciation of Stalin with the revelation of communist anti-Semitism which helped drive Fast out of the party.

ABRAHAM FLEXNER (1866-1959)

Abraham Flexner: An Autobiography (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1960)

Abraham Flexner: An Autobiography is an important account of education, particularly medical education, in the United States. Abraham Flexner was a man who passionately pursued excellence and sought to instill this ideal into American education. In his work with the Carnegie Foundation and the General Education Board, he directed the expenditure of millions of dollars to improve education in general and revolutionize the training of American doctors. After retiring from the General Education Board, he established the Institute for Advanced Studies at Princeton.

Flexner does not devote much time to Jews or Judaism. His parents immigrated to America from Germany in the eighteen fifties. The parents were "pious Hebrews, attending the synagogue regularly and observing religious feasts." (p. 8) For the children, science replaced religion and they drifted away from Judaism. The parents never forced their religious beliefs on their nine children many of whom went on to become eminent doctors and lawyers. It is strange to note that Flexner doesn't mention anything about his brother Bernard who was active in Zionism.

This volume is useful in trying to understand American education in the first part of the twentieth century. However, it contains very little Jewish content.

FELIX FRANKFURTER (1882-1965)

Felix Frankfurter Reminisces. Recorded in talks with Dr. Harlan B. Philips (New York: Reynal and Company, 1960)

Felix Frankfurter Reminisces concerns itself with the events in the life of the distinguished scholar, teacher, lawyer, public servant, and jurist from boyhood until his appointment to the United States Supreme Court in 1939. This book grew out of Columbia University's Oral History Research Office to gather reminisces of distinguished Americans through the medium of tape-recordings. The historian Harlan Philips directed questions to Frankfurter based on Philip's research on the jurist. Arrangements were made to verify dates, names, places, and other bits of information to guarantee accuracy. While the questions are good, Frankfurter's replies and digressions are more interesting when he is given abundant time to speak.

Most of the book deals with Frankfurter's secular life, although there are some chapters of Jewish interest. He discusses the Paris Peace Conference (which concluded World War I) and the Zionist movement. He describes the different attitudes and temperaments of Brandeis and Weizmann who were destined to clash.

Frankfurter was not a synagogue goer. In fact, he called himself an "unbelieving believer" (p. 290). Also he states, "...I was not a Jewish professor at the Harvard Law School, but a Harvard Law School professor who happened to be Jewish." (p.37)

FELIX FRANKFURTER (Continued)

Nonetheless, Frankfurter was very interested in Palestine and did not allow himself to be affected by anti-Jewish or anti-Semitic sentiment. Upon graduation from the Harvard Law School he applied to an important New York law firm knowing full well the firm had never hired Jews nor did it plan to.

MOSS HART (1904-1961)

Act One (New York: Random House, 1959)

In this engrossing autobiography, Act One, Moss Hart traces his life from birth and days of poverty to the opening of his first successful play, Once in a Lifetime, written in collaboration with George Kaufman. The autobiography focuses on the process of writing a Broadway "hit"--a long and arduous task.

Act One is without any Jewish content. We learn that Hart's maternal grandfather and his father immigrated to America from England (p. 9). In this volume he has little or no association with Judaism and in fact celebrated Christmas (pp. 23-25). As a Broadway office boy, as director of small theatre groups, and as social director of the "Borscht Belt", he obviously had contact with Jews, however he doesn't allude to anyone being Jewish--not even George S. Kaufman and Dore Schary who was later to become national chairman of the Anti-Defamation League.

This book is valuable to a student of drama. It is well written and provides an intimate view of the toil and some of the glory of playwriting.

BEN HECHT (1894-1964)

A Child of the Century (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1954)

Ben Hecht's autobiography is interesting because he is not only a good writer but is also a colorful person. In dealing with his childhood, Hecht lovingly describes his parents, aunts, and uncles. It might be interesting to note that the men of the family were all involved in the garment industry in one form or another. The family was not particularly religious in their home, and Hecht forgot that he was Jewish after he left home. In 1910 the sixteen-year-old began his career as a journalist in Chicago. He remained there for fourteen years with only one interruption from 1918 to 1920 to cover Germany during World War I. It is very interesting to note that Hecht encountered no anti-Semitism there. He spends most of the rest of his life in New York and Hollywood.

For the Jewish reader, the last section of this book is important. Hecht awakens to the fact that he is a Jew when Hitler comes to power. Prior to 1939 he wasn't interested in Palestine or Jews per se. With his new interest in Jews he begins writing columns about them. Members of the rightist-terrorist Irgun contact Hecht in 1941 to help them raise money. From that point on, the Irgun keeps him informed as to the "true picture" of the status of the Jews in Europe and Palestine. He is not overly effective in aiding European and Palestinian Jews because of the opposition by some and apparent indifference by other influencial American Jews and Jewish organizations. In response Hecht attacks Stephen S. Wise,

BEN HECHT (Continued)

the American Jewish Committee, Felix Frankfurter, Weizmann, and Ben Gurion. Hecht's observations and point of view of the events of the Holocaust and the establishment of the State of Israel are heavily influenced by his association with the Irgun.

BEN HECHT (1894-1964)

Gaily, Gaily (Garden City, New York: Doubleday and Company, 1963)

Ben Hech's Gaily, Gaily is an amplification of some of his Chicago exploits which are included in his major autobiography A Child of the Century. Here he paints a colorful picture of Chicago from 1910 to 1919 from the eyes of a young newspaper reporter. Hecht's only comment about Judaism: "I forgot that I, myself, was a Jew, and remained forgetful of that oddity for thirty years." (p. 152)

LILLIAN HELLMAN (1905-)

An Unfinished Woman (Boston: Little, Brown, and Company 1969)

Lillian Hellman is not a conventional woman. She experiences life to the fullest. She was in Spain during the Spanish Civil War and in Russia during World War II when it appeared that the Germans would conquer Russia. She has written numerous successful movie scripts and plays. In her book she pulls no punches. She talks about her abortion, her days of heavy drinking, the seedy sides of the publishing business, Hollywood, and Broadway. Among her friends she writes a good deal of Dorothy Parker and Dashiell Hammett.

Unfinished Woman is void of almost any Jewish content. About the only thing we learn is that one set of Hellman's grandparents were German Jews who came to the United States in the late eighteen forties. Their daughter, Hellman's mother, was taught religion from the black help. Lillian Hellman says that she was born a Jew, but that's her only comment about Judaism.

LILLIAN HELLMAN (1905-)

Pentimento (Boston: Little, Brown, and Company, 1973)

Pentimento is the second volume of Lillian Hellman's autobiography. The term pentimento comes from the lexicon of the artist. It is the original lines of a picture over which the painter has painted but which after some time reappear. Lillian Hellman wishes to go back to the original lines of her life and reexamine her thoughts about people and places in her past. Her style of writing is straightforward and at times blunt. Like An Unfinished Woman, Pentimento is full of interesting people, episodes, tangents and anecdotes which surrounded her life. Here she adds new information about herself which did not appear in An Unfinished Woman. She spends more time describing her plays from the writing stage to the transition into living theatre.

There is slightly more Jewish content here than in the first volume. She relates three episodes which concern Jews. In the first, she smuggles money into Germany which she eventually finds out is to help Jews and Hitler's political prisoners. The second episode concerns an actress who quits one of Hellman's plays because she doesn't like Jews. Hellman wryly comments that in the theatre you can't take anyone seriously. Finally she tells about distant relatives who leave Germany in 1938 and do not want to admit they are Jews or even related to her. Lillian Hellman regarded them with bitterness.

MORRIS HILLQUIT (1869-1933)

Loose Leaves From a Busy Life (New York: The MacMillan Company, 1934)

Loose Leaves From a Busy Life is the story of the socialist movement in the United States from the eighteen eighties through the nineteen twenties through the eyes of Morris Hillquit. Apart from Socialist ideologies and practice and labor problems, there is little else that the author wishes to discuss.

Morris Hillquit was born in Latvia and immigrated to America at the age of seventeen with his mother, younger brother, and sisters after his father and older brother established residence in New York. The Hillquit family was poor and Morris was forced to work. Eventually he works for the socialist movement which proved to be a life time job. He went to law school, became a member of the New York Bar and married. These facts are all the details Hillquit gives us about himself outside of his socialist activities.

Hillquit makes few comments about the Jews. When he first arrived in America, he spent the summer evenings discussing radical politics with immigrants who were mostly Jewish-born but culturally Russian. They had prepared for professional careers in Russia but because of language difficulties and economic hardships, they were unable to pursue their career plans. Because they had no trade skills, they ended up as frustrated, unskilled laborers. In another comment Hillquit says most Jewish workers were "...long suffering, meek, and submissive." (p. 130)

MORRIS HILLQUIT (Continued)

Also, Hillquit makes the claim that for the first time Jews evolved into a solid proletarian block. (p. 17)

This book is extremely valuable in dealing with radical politics and ideologies, labor problems and union activities, evolution and organization of socialistic and labor groups in the last part of the nineteenth century and first part of the twentieth. Only a limited amount can be learned about Jews in the time period covered by this volume. It is important to note that Hillquit, as well as many immigrants who were born Jewish, was totally involved in Socialism. It became his religion and way of life.

HORACE KALLEN (1882-1974)

What I Believe and Why--Maybe, Edited by Alfred Marrow (New York: Horizon Press, 1971)

What I Believe and Why--Maybe is the title of a collection of essays by Horace Kallen along with an interview with Ira Eisenstein. Autobiographic details only form the interview and the essay "What I Have Learned, Being My Life."

Kallen, the son of an Orthodox rabbi, came to Boston with his family when he was five years old. He received an Orthodox Jewish upbringing and experienced some anti-Semitism. He was not happy with Orthodoxy. In his studies in high school and at Harvard he rejected halacha, Jewish ritual, and most Jewish theology without denying that he was Jewish. At Harvard he was influenced by Barrett Wendell, William James, and George Santyana. He became a secularist but discovered that he couldn't reject his Jewishness. He formed an idea of cultural pluralism where all men were equal to be diverse and be true to themselves. The value of the autobiographic details is in how Kallen can reconcile his role as a distinguished modern educator and philosopher with being Jewish. There is only scant mention of his involvement with Zionism which is not enlightening.

ALFRED KAZIN (1915-)

A Walker in the City (New York: Harcourt, Brace , and Company, 1959)

New York's Brownsville "ghetto" is the setting for the walks of Alfred Kazin in A Walker in the City. The "ghetto" of Brownsville was inhabited by Jews and it was the sign of success to move away from it. Kazin's autobiography is very insightful about the Jews of that area.

Kazin was a son of Polish immigrants. His father was a house painter and his mother was a dressmaker. They were poor but never starved. The mother was religious and saw to it that Alfred had a Bar Mitzvah. The father was a Social Democrat who was tolerant of religion. Sabbath was a special day to the Kazin family but they were not orthodox and allowed themselves certain liberties during that day.

Kazin comments about the family unit. The word "love" was rarely used. "Marriage was an institution people entered into--for all I could ever tell--only from immigrant loneliness, a need to be with one's own kind that mechanically resulted in the family. The 'family' was a whole greater than all the individuals who make it up, yet make sense only in their untiring solidarity." (p. 55)

Immigrant parents were somehow ashamed of what they were. According to Kazin, they "...looked upon themselves only as instruments toward the ideal 'American' future that would be lived by their children." (p.56) The youngster was not only expected to shine and make a good impression for himself but also for his parents. Foremost, he had to know English which was paramount for success.

ALFRED KAZIN (Continued)

Among other insightful observations he states: "...we were a people; I was of that people. Unthinkable to go one's own way, to doubt or to escape the fact that I was a Jew. I had heard of Jews who pretended they were not, but could not understand them. We had all of us lived together so long that we would not have known how to separate even if we wanted to." (p. 60) Further he debunks the myth that all Jews are rich and to be found in commerce and banking. All the Jews that he knew were exceptions to this myth--they were all workers.

Many of the immigrants became socialists and communists and rejected the Jewish religion but they still were part of the culture. Fathers would introduce their sons as their "Kaddish," the prayer which they would say for the parents after they died. It was a scandal for a Jew to date a non-Jew. These Jewish immigrants feared and disliked Gentiles but it was the goal of the Jews to become similar to the native American Gentile.

In this very well organized and written book much can be learned about Jewish sociology and psychology. This is one of the best books that deals with early twentieth-century Jewish life in America.

ALFRED KAZIN (1915-)

Starting Out in the Thirties (Boston: Little, Brown and Company, 1962)

Starting Out in the Thirties is a sequel to Walker in the City. Kazin has matured. He is no longer the kid who lived in the world of the Brownsville Jewish ghetto. His world has expanded. His concern for Jews and insights into their character which he displayed in A Walker in the City have sharply dissipated. He writes now about college, the literary world, radical politics, and the new writers of the thirties. He includes, among others, Otis Ferguson, John Chamberlain, Malcom Cowley, James T. Farrell, William Saroyan, V. F. Calverton, Max Eastman, Sidney Hook and Mary McCarthy as important personalities.

In his attempt to break into the literary world, Kazin entices Otis Ferguson, the Assistant Editor of the New Republic, to have an exotic evening with Jewish people and their food. Ferguson is not impressed with the exoticness of the Jews. This is a blow to Kazin who feels Jews are at the center of all events. Their sufferings would create a new future and save the world.

Later on it appears that the radical politics becomes a substitute for religion. He is in the new world of writers and critics; religion plays a minor role. When he marries he does so not in the synagogue but in the court. His wife is Russian, but he doesn't indicate whether or not she's Jewish.

ALFRED KAZIN (Continued)

At the end of the book Kazin is bitter. He sees the thirties as the end of an era with no new one in sight. He is disillusioned when the Communists join forces with the Fascists. The Depression comes to an end, but the price for economic recovery is enormous. The war puts people back to work, but it deprives them of their humanity. Kazin closes the book with an account of a newsreel which shows the liberation of a concentration camp. The inmates are no longer human beings. The audience watching the newsreel is embarrassed and in its embarrassment laughs.

MEYER LEVIN (1905-)

In Search (New York: Horizon Press, 1950)

From the very beginning of his autobiography, Meyer Levin characterizes his book as being about a Jew. He is always searching to find a balance between being an American and being a Jew. From childhood memories of fear and shame of being a Jew to the establishment of Israel, he travels through and observes the three major centers of Jewish life--America, Israel, and Europe.

As a writer, Levin wanted to express his Jewishness. He was flatly told that books about Jews or containing Jewish characters would not sell. Many times he was urged to change his name to avoid being identified as a Jew. However, he refused to do this or do away with Jewish themes or characters.

As a Jew, Levin had many problems. He wasn't a religious Jew in the traditional sense; in fact his first marriage was with a non-Jew. He asked himself the question whether he was an American or a Jew and came to the conclusion that he was both. This question of "dual loyalty" i.e. American and Jew, was unreal and unnecessary because everyone has many different loyalties. Levin is a Jew by his identification with the Jewish people. He accepts the folklore and folkways of the Jews even without a god. He is at ease with his Jewish identification. It is a given fact that he is an American by birth, language and education.

MEYER LEVIN (Continued)

In Search is an extremely important work for the American Jewish historian for the first half of the twentieth century. Levin is important because he was an eye-witness to most of the important events concerning Jews during this period. He had been to Israel as early as 1925 when he covered the opening of the Hebrew University as a reporter. He was later a member of a kibbutz situated around Mt. Carmel. As a reporter during World War II, he covered the European theatre looking for stories of Jewish interest. Shortly after the Normandy Invasion he joined the American forces which eventually defeated the Nazis and liberated the death camps. Further he reported on the illegal Jewish immigration to Palestine and the establishment and growth of Israel.

In dealing with Israel, it is interesting to note that Levin takes Ben Hecht to task for his propaganda on behalf of the Irgun which he viewed as self-defeating. Levin takes a pro-Hagannah stand that violence should be used only when absolutely necessary as opposed to the view of what he considered terrorist organizations: Irgun and the Stern Gang.

In Search is an autobiography which is at the same time personal and historically important.

LUDWIG LEWISOHN (1882-1955)

Up-Stream, An American Chronicle, (New York: Boni and Liveright, 1922)

Ludwig Lewisohn is a most unusual man. In the late nineteenth- and early twentieth-centuries most Jewish immigrants came from Eastern Europe, sailed in cramped quarters, and landed in New York only to find themselves in the Jewish ghettoes. The Lewisohn family, on the other hand, were from Germany and had never known flagrant anti-Semitism or government pogroms. They were thoroughly German and in Berlin celebrated Christian as well as Jewish holidays (pp. 18-19). When they sailed to America they went first-class and ended up in a small village in the South. In "St. Marks" (St. Matthew) they were helped by both Jews and gentiles, and learned the American language and mannerisms (pp. 37-56). He was so successfully integrated into American life that he considered himself "... an American, a Southerner, and a Christian." (p. 77).

Later, the family moved to a larger town, "Queenshaven" (Charleston), where social barriers kept the Lewisohns isolated. They were not accepted on an equal footing with the Americans, yet they refused to associate with declasse Germans and Jews. He states that his parents:

> ...saw no reason for associating with North Germany peasants turned grocers (although they had the kindliest feelings toward these sturdy and excellent people), nor with rather ignorant, semi-orthodox Jews from Posen. They had not done so in Berlin. (pp. 58-59)

Ludwig Lewisohn did well in school and continued up the

LUDWIG LEWISOHN (Continued)

educational ladder until he learned that as a Jew he could not take the last step--that of being a professor of English literature (p. 146). Further, his literary works were rejected because he was a Jew. Through the help of Charles Town the editor of Smart Set and Theodore Dreiser he finally was able to publish a novel which was a critical success but failed to sell because it was denounced as not being "wholesome". (pp. 141-145) His assimiltation did not help him, yet he couldn't return to being a Jew. When he finally became a professor, it was after a tremendous battle, and even then it was German studies--not English--he was given access to.

In his first autobiography, he traces his life from birth to his less than enthusiastic support for World War I. The book's chief value is not for its Jewish content, because he ceased being Jewish after living in America for a few years. Later in his life he rejected the concept of assimilation and instead strongly identified with Jews and Jewish content. What is important is the discrimination he encountered because he was born Jewish, especially in higher institutions of learning. His comments on American society and education of his day are important to the American social historian.

Lewisohn sees American education as woefully inadequate. He finds the professors cowardly and trivial, especially in institutions of higher learning. The students are not interested

LUDWIG LEWISOHN (Continued)

in bettering their minds. Their only interest is to become skilled so as to achieve economic success.

Finally Lewisohn, who at first assimilated quite readily into the American environment, rejects Americanization. He questions to what newcomers can assimilate. American culture is too new and narrow-minded. It needs expansion, it needs to accept ideas and literature from other cultures.

Upstream is well written and is especially useful when read with its sequal Mid-Channel. There is one problem which the reader may be unaware of--Lewisohn changes the names of persons and places and at times leaves out interesting detail. For instance, the College of Queenshaven is the College of Charleston, his teacher, Ferris, is Lancelot Minor Harris and his teaching positions in Monroe and Central City were in actuality the University of Wisconsin and Ohio State University in Columbus respectively.[1]

1 While reading Upstream, it is helpful to have the following acticle in order to discover the proper names of people and places: Stanley F. Chyet, "Ludwig Lewisohn: The Years of Becoming," American Jewish Archives XI (October 1959): 125-156.

LUDWIG LEWISOHN (1882-1955)

Mid-Channel (New York: Harper and Brothers Publishers, 1929)

In Mid-Channel, a sequel to Upstream, Ludwig Lewisohn continues to reject Americanization and assimilation of the Jew into any culture whereby he loses his own identity. In even stronger words he rejects the ethos of America and repudiates his previous years of being an assimilated Jew.

Mid-Channel deals with Lewisohn's life in the early post-World War I era. The book begins with him as an associate editor and drama critic for The Nation. However, a greater part of this volume goes on to depict his self-imposed exile in Europe (pp. 79-229). The reasons for this exile are not stated explicitly, but Lewisohn implies that disillusionment with America and legal difficulties involved in living with the woman who ultimately was recognized as his second wife were major contributing factors (p. 145). In Europe he visits Italy, Austria, and Germany before taking up residence in Paris. He discusses Jews and their contributions to the above-mentioned countries.

In Upstream, he rejected assimilation, but could not fall back on Judaism. Here, however, he evinces a strong emotional tie to the Jewish people and their mores but is not consistent in his practice of Judaism. He writes:

> Our house, Thelma's and mine, is a Jewish house, wherein appropriate symbolical tokens--hard enough to find, alas, so far have these things fallen into neglect--of our history and its memories and its pieties are plain for all men to see. We try to avoid over-emphasis and even the shadow of going beyond our needs and convictions. So we have placed no mezuzah at our door, though we might easily have done so...Nor do we, like the Italian ritornati,

LUDWIG LEWISOHN (Continued)

> practise the mitzvoth, the good acts of obedience to the halakoth, the decisions of the sages. But we are very sure that the spirit of the decisions of the sages, profoundly applicable to modern life as it happily is, is the dominant spirit of our house. (p. 244)

The transformation from assimilationist to Jew is not elaborated upon. Perhaps this is so because 1) Americans would not let him forget his Jewishness and subsequently he began to study Judaism to see who and what he was and 2) his growing involvement with Zionism (pp. 56-57). He spends much time in describing his studies of the Torah and rabbinic literature (pp. 267-303).

The book is valuable to students of literature who wish to see the mind of a great man of the arts in his struggles to find his identity both as a writer and as a human being. For The American Jewish historian or an American social historian in general, this volume serves as a balance to those writers who saw assimilation as a panacea to complete acceptance.

CHARLES REZNIKOFF (1894-)

Family Chronicle (New York: By the Author, 1963)

Family Chronicle is Charles Reznikoff's presentation of his parents, Sarah and Nathan Reznikoff, to the reading public. The book is divided into three sections: "The Early History of a Seamstress" by Sarah Reznikoff, "The Early History of a Sewing Machine Operator" by Nathan Reznikoff, and "Needle Trade" by Charles Reznikoff himself.

There are very few dates given in this book but it is evident that we are dealing with America of the eighteen eighties up to the nineteen twenties. The parents' autobiographies deal primarily with life in Russia. Sarah left Russia because she felt stiffled, Nathan left to avoid military service. Further, they were attracted to America where everyone had an opportunity to become rich. In the new country, the language was difficult and the immigrants, who seemed all to be tailors or in the garment industry, worked ten to fifteen hours a day, six days a week for six dollars or less.

Despite the difficult times there was hope for Sarah and Nathan which is reflected in their writing. They are both strong and inventive. Sarah Reznikoff's style is more dramatic than her husband's and she gives greater detail. She apparently was more religious than he in the old country. She didn't want to work on Saturday, but finally does work on the Jewish Sabbath. Whereas religion played a somewhat important role in their lives, the longer they stayed in New York, the less important religion seemed to become.

CHARLES REZNIKOFF (Continued)

This book is valuable in showing young Eastern European Jewish immigrants with the dreams of the future, hard work in the present, and memories of their families who still remained in the old country (and to whom they sent money to help them out). It also is interesting to see the change in religious habits. When Sarah and Nathan get married by a rabbi, some of their friends make fun of them. Perhaps it is peer group pressure and the working conditions in America which brought about a profound change on the Jewish religion. Jews lived with Jews and helped each other not for religious reasons but rather for survival.

Charles Reznikoff continues his parents' story with their success in finally owning a business. However, the success is precarious and full of pitfalls. Fashions change, seasons are either busy or slack which doesn't allow much security. Further, the dream of America dims for the immigrants. For the majority, life was better in America than in the old country, but the "rags to riches" story was not often repeated. The true picture might well be summed up in the last few lines of the book by Charles Reznikoff after the death of his mother. "A week or so after the funeral, I was taking a walk. When I came to where the Artistic Millinery Company had been the buildings were gone: torn down to make room for a wider, but no less dingy street." (p. 311)

ELMER RICE (1892-1967)

Minority Report (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1963)

Why was Minority Report written? Elmer Rice states he wrote the autobiography for himself "...to attempt a modest contribution to the study of certain aspects of American life in the twentieth century, particularly the state of the theatre and the relation of the writer to it, and the function and status of the political and social noncomformists..." (p. 462). Rice's attempt is most successful. He skillfully interweaves his life history with actual events, descriptions of his plays, and social and political commentary. While not presenting a psychological study of himself, Rice seems to be fairly open and accurate in his descriptions of the twentieth century.

Rice doesn't say much about Judaism. There wasn't much religion in the Rice home. His father, who had a German-Jewish background, looked down upon the recent Jewish immigrants from East Europe. Rice changed his name from Reiznstein for professional reasons. He states: "I have never paraded my origin, but I have never tried to deny it either." (p. 164). Like many Jewish intellectuals of the twentieth century the Jewish religion played a very small role in his life.

RICHARD RUBENSTEIN (1924-)

Power Struggle, (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1974)

For a lifetime, Richard Rubenstein has been struggling with himself and the outside world. These struggles and the searches for identity and integrity are reflected on almost every page of his autobiography, Power Struggle. The book is loaded with a great deal of Jewish content and written in a style which commands admiration.

Rubenstein's childhood in various sections of New York was unhappy. There was always tension in his home between his parents, both native Americans. His mother Sarah had a college education which was unusual for women in the early twentieth century. She wanted the status which education bestowed, but was never able to achieve it because of her husband's meager income. As a boy Richard Rubenstein had to compensate for his family's poverty by being better than anyone in school.

Rubenstein had little religious education. While his grandmother was still orthodox, both of his parents rejected traditional Judaism. They even served him ham and bacon to liberate him from religion. Rubenstein wanted a Bar Mitzvah like other boys not only for gifts but to mark his passage to manhood. He didn't have a Bar Mitzvah, which bothered him for a good deal of his adult life.

Rubenstein was apparently never a stable individual. When he was intimidatd by Irish police after being attacked by Anti-Semitic Irish drunks, his father was silent. Thereupon by his

RICHARD RUBENSTEIN (Continued)

father's silence and seeming impotence he saw Judaism as also being impotent. He then turned to the Unitarian Church where he became active and wanted to become a minister. He wanted the power and magic of the priest for his own internal needs. However, he returned to Judaism because not to do so required too much self-rejection and deception. Still needing the power and magic of the clergy, he trained to be a rabbi first at the Hebrew Union College (1942) and then the Jewish Theological Seminary where he was ordained in 1952. While at the seminary he discovered Orthodox Judaism and lived an Orthodox life for a decade.

An unhappy childhood and an unhappy marriage molded him into a pessimist. That along with the influence of Paul Tillich, psychoanalysis, and the Holocaust led him to espouse "death of God" theology which few Jews could accept. Finally he feels the pressure to leave the active rabbinate and become a full time theologian at a secular college.

Power Struggle is a most disturbing book. Rubinstein was and possibly is a sick man. He is courageous in writing this book and opening himself to public ridicule and rejection. He is one of the few autobiographers who uses psychoanalysis to explain himself to himself and the readers. His observations of the American Jewish community are not comforting. American Jews are impotent and their rabbis are even worse. By becoming a university theologian, he can believe and practice his ideas of Judaism without being restrained by the Jews of money.

RICHARD RUBENSTEIN (Continued)

This book is extremely valuable for a study of the middle twentieth century. He has many good insights into the rabbinate. He, like Philip Roth, is critical of American Jews. He is unable to be an Orthodox Jew but not quite comfortable with non-Orthodoxy. He represents the world of the Jewish intellectual who has difficulties in personal and group identification and can find relief only in psychoanalysis and psychotherapy.

MAURICE SAMUEL (1895-1972)

Little Did I Know (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1963)

Maurice Samuel was born in Rumania, moved to England as a child and then immigrated to America in order to avoid military service in World War I. As it turned out, he joined the American Army and at wars' end was assigned to the Morgenthau Pogrom Investigation Commission in Poland. Samuel's sojournings and "change of mind" are typical. He is a citizen of a highly Jewish world which nonetheless is cosmopolitan. From this one of his autobiographical volumes, the reader feels that Samuel is somewhat opinionated and almost prone to be dogmatic but at the same time is open and at times very flexible.

Little Did I Know concerns itself with Israel and the galut, especially England and Rumania. A good deal of his autobiography is intensely personal. He wrestles with the conflicting views and attitudes of the Jewish and non-Jewish world. About the time of his Bar Mitzvah he made an abrupt change to socialism and atheism. In stages he returns to Judaism which, while not being Orthodox, is somewhat traditional. Samuel feels that Judaism regards peoplehood--the group-cultural personality--as an expression of religion.

For the twentieth-century Jewish historian, this book is a treasure mine. Samuel includes remarks about his numberous works and translations. He devotes a great deal of time to remarks on three important personalities of this century: Chaim Weizmann, Shmarya Levin, and Chaim Nachman Bialik. He demonstrates

MAURICE SAMUEL (Contined)

the importance of Yiddish and how it was the alter ego of the Yiddish-speaking Jew. He seems to have captured the spirit of the Shtetl both in its romance and harshness. Samuel can be objective because he is both of the Shtetl as well as the secular world.

Samuel in this volume makes only a few observations on the American Jewish scene. He notes that after fifty years, American Jews are not troubled by the question of dual loyalty. The "Melting Pot" ideal has been replaced by cultural pluralism. As a response to depersonalization, the Holocaust, and the emergence of the State of Israel, Jews are taking a greater interest in things Jewish.

MARTIN SIEGEL (1933-)

Amen: The Diary of Rabbi Martin Siegel edited by Mel Ziegler. (New York: World Publishing Company, 1970)

Amen: The Diary of Rabbi Martin Siegel covers the period from December 12, 1968 through September 29, 1969, with an epilogue written in 1970. This volume provides us with revealing insights into American Jewry, American Jewish institutions and organizations, and the rabbinate.

At the time of publication in 1970, Siegel's career had covered the Marine Corps, West Virginia, and finally Long Island. He still could not fully understand himself as rabbi or man. Indeed part of this book is his search for his own identity.

The entries in the diary are varied in length, mood, and attitude. The diary records his frustrations, his belief that he hadn't been too successful, weak points and good points in his character as well as his idealism. The tone of the book is bitter primarily due to the nervous breakdown and hospitalization of his wife which he blames on himself. His activities in and out of the synagogue are all-consuming. Unlike Wheeling, West Virginia, there is little sense of community on Long Island--religion is a business. Consequently, Martin Siegel is the professional Jew. Outside the synagogue, the Siegels are somewhat isolated and lonely. When his wife is going through a breakdown no one from the congregation really helps him. Siegel has a love-hate relationship with his profession. Yet, despite all the frsutrations and difficulties he still want to continue in the rabbinate.

MARTIN SIEGEL (continued)

He makes very interesting comments about American Jews. He divides his suburban Long Island congregants into two categories: old guard and newcomers. The old guard consists of the senior business executives, lawyers, doctors, and garment manufacturers with strong Jewish identification. Their children are well educated and somewhat more ostentatious. Members of this category are wealthy but don't flaunt their wealth. The second category is that of the nouveaux riches who "...have lost their Jewish humanity, and haven't yet achieved their Anglo-Saxon polish." (p. 87) The two groups do not mix.

Siegel further divides the Jewish community into three generations. The first generation, the grandparents, believed in the traditional idea of God. Their reverance for God helped them to be humanitarians. The children (second generation) were humanitarians like their parents but had problems in believing in God. They accepted the Jewish religion externally but not internally. Finally there is the youth who don't see the need to accept Judaism even externally. It is this same youth which Siegel feels provide all the things in life and beyond life which God used to provide.

Siegel sees American Jews as being afraid. They feel that everyone is persecuting them. They haven't forgotten the Holocaust or anti-semitism throughout the ages. This fear is exploited by individuals and Jewish organizations for their own purposes.

MARTIN SIEGEL (Continued)

On the whole Siegel has little use for Jewish institutions and organizations including the synagogue. He feels their main concern is to perpetuate themselves. They have lost touch with reality and need to change or be eliminated.

Amen: The Diary of Rabbi Martin Siegel is useful in securing a counter-balance to the rosy (pre-October, 1973) pronouncements of the rabbinate, American Jewry and American Jewish institutions and organizations. It is extremely valuable in contemporary Jewish studies to try to understand the American Jewish Community or segments of that community. One should be extremely careful, however, not to be overawed by Siegel's bitterness and frustration.

RAPHAEL SOYER (1899-)

Self-Revealment (New York: Random House, 1969)

Self-Revealment seems to be two books in one. The first book is a collection of paintings and sketches of the noted American artist Raphael Soyer. The second is his diary from 1966 through 1968 with memories stretching back to the beginning of the twentieth century.

When Soyer was a youngster, his father brought him, his mother and four brothers and sisters to America. Avrohom Soyer, who achieved some renown as a Hebrew and Yiddish writer, left his family in Philadelphia while he looked for a job as a Hebrew teacher in New York. All of the Soyer children were entered in a public school which angered Raphael who had already begun a Russian gymnasium. The new language (English) provided difficulties for Soyer who still retains a Russian accent even to this day. The Soyer family eventually moved to New York where Isaac, Raphael and his twin brother Moses became distinguished artists.

In his lifetime, Soyer joined several schools and clubs including the Jewish Art Center which included Abraham Walkowitz, Jennings Tofel, and Benjamin Kopman. Later, Soyer joined socialist oriented clubs.

While Soyer left the impression that his art wasn't Jewish (p. 69-70), he nonetheless painted his parents in a Jewish setting at least twice. Soyer doesn't say whether he is religious or not but he is interested in Israel partly because his father, a lifetime Zionist, brought his children

RAPHAEL SOYER (Continued)

to all the Zionist meetings. In Israel, Soyer introduces himself to S. Y. Agnon, the recipient of the Nobel Prize for literature, as the son of a Hebrew writer. Thus, from his family background, he has retained at least some roots in Judaism.

ISAAC M. WISE (1819-1900)

Reminiscences Translated and Edited by David Philipson (Cincinnati: Leo Wise and Company, 1910)

The early struggles in America of the leader of American Reform Judaism is the subject matter of Reminiscences. This volume deals with the events in the life of Isaac M. Wise from his arrival to New York in 1846 to 1857 as it was published in numerous issues of Die Deborah (Wise's German-language newspaper) in the eighteen seventies. Wise records such important events as his arrival in America and his struggle to be a rabbi here, his election as rabbi of Albany, the many Christian attempts to convert the Jews, his move to Cincinnati, the beginnings of the newspapers The Israelite and Die Deborah, and the publication of Minhag America. He paints interesting pictures of cities he visited in during the decade such as New York, New Haven, Syracuse, Baltimore, Washington D.C., Charlestown, Chicago, Detroit, Cincinnati, Louisville, Milwaukee, St. Louis and others. He registers his shock as to the low cultural and educational level of American Jews as well as the absence of all Jewish public institutions except the synagogue. He discusses his attempts to educate American Jews by running more schools and writing books and articles. He reports the bitter opposition of Orthodox Judaism to his idea.

This book is a must for American Jewish historians. Wise not only paints a picture of ante-bellum American Judaism but also a portrait of America.

ISAAC M. WISE (Continued)

Reminiscences is also a saga of a great religious leader. Wise shares with us his loves and dislikes, frustrations and successes, confidence and self doubt. The Wise of Reminiscences is complex and human.

ISAAC M. WISE (1819-1900)

The World of My Books Translated by Albert Friedlander. (Cincinnati: American Jewish Archives, 1954)

This little volume is based on a series of articles of the same name ("Meine Bucherei.") which appeared in Die Deborah in 1896 and 1897. World of My Books contains the material in Reminiscences in an abridged form along with short descriptions of Wise's life before and after the events of the previous autobiography. Wise describes his life in Europe and provides us with information about three organizations with whose founding he was associated: Union of American Hebrew Congregations, Hebrew Union College, and Central Conference of American Rabbis.

This work was written some twenty years after Reminiscences. Wise is somewhat less vivid here because of the abridgment which allows for few details, and his advancement in years. Nonetheless, he retains a sense of humor and is still a dynamic individual who commands respect.

STEPHEN S. WISE (1874-1949)

Challenging Years (New York: G. P. Putnam's Sons, 1949)

No twentieth-century American Jewish history can be complete without including Rabbi Stephen S. Wise, certainly one of the most important American Jews of this century. Not only was he a great Jew, but also a great American. He was listened to by both the masses and the important people of his day. The power and personality of Wise, which have the aura of a biblical prophet, are very much in evidence in his autobiography Challenging Years.

Wise's involvement in the Jewish and non-Jewish world grows from his roots in Judaism and in his faith in America. He is a representative of the new American Jew who is at home with both his fellow Americans and fellow Jews. The abundance of material in this volume demonstrates the impossibility of trying to compartmentalize hime.

Wise was a leader of social justice in Portland and New York. In particular chapters one, four, and six deal with his work in this field. Among activities in Portland, he participated in crusades against gambling and prostitution (pp. 8, 9), protested the Mitchell-Kahn Bill which was flagrently anti-Japanese and anti-Chinese (p. 110), and fought for child labor laws (pp. 56, 57). In New York he worked for the right of women to vote (p. 110), and helped to found the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (p. 117). He also traded jabs with Tammany Hall as well as trying to end corruption in city government in New York (pp. 10-22). He supported

STEPHEN S. WISE (Continued)

organized labor and social reform to alleviate the terrible conditions of the working man who was being exploited by the bosses (pp. 56-81).

Wise's devotion to speak the truth as he saw it and the ideals of democracy followed him throughout the years. He refused to become rabbi of New York's Temple Emanu-El because Louis Marshall and his Associates insisted that the rabbi could not be allowed complete freedom of the pulpit (pp. 82-94). For the principle of freedom of the pulpit and the desire to serve the newer immigrants from Eastern Europe, Wise founded the Free Synagogue in 1906 (pp. 95-108). In 1922, he founded the Jewish Institute of Religion to serve as an alternative rabbinical seminary to that of the Reform, Conservative, and Orthodox which he considered dogmatic and narrow-minded (pp. 129-142). Both these institutions, the Jewish Institute of Religion and the Free Synagogue, are discussed in great detail in this volume.

Wise was one of the earliest political Zionists in this country. He describes the difficulties of the Zionist movement in America and the attacks on that movement and its adherents by other American Jews. In 1898, he helped to found the Federation of American Zionists (later reorganized as the Zionist Organization of America), and that same year attended the first of many Zionist Congresses. At subsequent Congresses, he met such leading Zionists as Herzl, Weizmann, Nordau, and Ben Gurion. He was impressed by the manner in which these Congresses were run and succeeded in maintaining this democratic format over the years (pp. 307, 308).

STEPHEN S. WISE (Continued)

Along with others, Wise was unhappy with the control that the earlier German Jewish immigrants exercised over the American Jewish community. With Brandeis, Mack, Lipsky, Frankfurter, Rutenberg, and Nathan Straus, he founded the American Jewish Congress to deal with questions of World War I, and the plight of the Jews in Central and Eastern Europe, and Ottoman-ruled Palestine. The first Congress was a temporary body which was to disband after the Versailles Peace Treaty. In 1922, the permanent Congress convened its first meeting. From its inception the Congress worked to help Jews both at home and abroad. In spite of opposition by most respected Jews of German antecedents and American Jewish organizations--the American Jewish Committee, for instance--the Congress quite early protested against Hitlerism.

Wise had a great deal of contact with American presidents, especially Wilson and Franklin Roosevelt. These two, seen by him as believers in the American ideal of decency and fairness, did much to help the Jewish people in Wise's opinion. He defends Roosevelt against the claims that he allowed millions of Nazi-threatened Jews to die without lifting a finger. He writes:

> It pains me as a Jew to tell that while Roosevelt, from the beginning and even before the actual beginning, saw and understood what was happening, influences were at work to blur his vision and to confuse his understanding. Chief among such influences, one is grieved to admit, were some German Jews of status and wealth who constantly sought to reassure Roosevelt that things 'are not as bad as Wise and others describe them,' seeking thus to counteract not 'the atrocity tales' but the atrocious facts that shook Roosevelt. (p. 238)

In placing the blame for the lack of American humanitarian con-

STEPHEN S. WISE (Continued)

sideration, he cites Henry Morgenthau's indictment of State department bureaucrats in cooperation with the British Foreign office (pp. 276-279). In addition, Wise is disappointed with the Christian community which as a whole did so little.

This book is extremely valuable to the historian of twentieth-century Zionism, American Jewry, and the United States. Since Wise was well informed, participated in most important events of Jewish and American history from 1900-1948, and was acquainted with the leading personalities of those years, he has much to contribute. However, one is disappointed by vagueness and lack of details at times. Wise states, for example:

> The groups that had always opposed a democratic Jewish body withdrew from the Congress at the 1919 session. Since that time, they have for the most part continued resolutely to oppose and sabotage every effort to establish a representative Jewish body for the democratic management of the internal affairs of the Jewish community. (p. 208)

Who these groups are and how they oppressed and sabotaged the establishment of a "representative Jewish body" is not made clear. This vagueness is evident throughout the sections of the book concerned with Zionism and the American Jewish Congress.

ANZIA YEZIERSKA (1885-1970)

Red Ribbon on a White Horse (New York: Charles Scriber's Sons, 1950)

Anzia Yezierska's autobiography might have been a "rags to riches story." She came from Poland to New York with her family. Her father was a talmudic and biblical scholar who constantly studied and never brought home money thus leaving his family in poverty. For the father poverty went hand in hand with being a Jew. In raising his daughter, he would quote from the Midrash--Leviticus Raba 35:6: "Poverty befits a daughter of Jacob like a red ribbon on a white horse." Yezierska rebels against her father and his attitudes, leaves home, and tries to become a writer. She writes the novel Hungry Heart (1920), which becomes a critical success. When Hollywood wants to buy her book, she has to pawn her mother's shawl for bus fare to get to her agent. Hollywood buys her book and she goes to the West Coast where she will become wealthy. However, she cannot accept Hollywood and instead of being "successful" she becomes less prosperous and finally with the Depression she is povertystricken again. With work in the WPA and an inheritance from a friend, she is ready to begin to climb again.

Red Ribbon on a White Horse is not a "rags to riches" story but it is a story of a search for identity. It is not only the story of Anzia Yezierska but of many young Eastern European immigrants of the early twentieth century. Many of the parents never "Americanized" in terms of customs and mores of the new country. Children rebeled not only against parents,

ANZIA YEZIERSKA (Continued)

religion, Judaism, which seemed to prevent entry into American Society.

Many times Yezierska discovered "Jews need not apply." As a result of the discrimination she became aloof from the rest of the world--afraid to be hurt. She hides her identity as a Jew. Finally at the end of the book she is able to accept herself as a human being and a Jew and finds peace of mind.

This well written book is an important statement about the Eastern European Jewish immigrant of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. It provides a picture of anti-Semitism on a day to day level. Finally it paints a picture of the United States and her people who allowed immigration but made little attempt to understand the new immigrants or their children.