Dorot

DOROT: The McGill Undergraduate Journal of Jewish Studies

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The opinions expressed herein are solely those of the authors included. They do not necessarily reflect those of the Department of Jewish Studies or the Jewish Studies Students' Association.

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Preface

Dear students,

At this moment when we are all getting ready to engage in a very unusual semester – to sit in front of zoom screens, rather than amidst each other in real classrooms – this Dorot publication brings me great joy and comfort.

It shows the high level of dedication and intelligence brought here by the students who take our courses, and conversely, of the professors who create the courses that produce these and similar essays. The opening article was written for a special class in which we had the opportunity to read representative works about Jewish Studies written by McGill faculty members, whom we then interviewed about their background stories, choice of topics, scholarly methods, and audiences.

Assembled in this volume are a wide range of excellent articles on modern and ancient times, dealing with music, history, Jewish thought and literature. This testifies to the fun breadth of subjects typically available in our department and the warm reception that is given to it by inspiring students.

Thank you for producing such fine work and for being part of our world.

Yael Halevi-Wise, Chair
Department of Jewish Studies
Associate Professor of Jewish Studies and English

Introduction

It is a great honour to present the 2019-2020 edition of Dorot: The McGill Undergraduate Journal of Jewish Studies.

I had the privilege of compiling this journal with some of the brightest students in the department, so I would like to extend my gratitude to Arly Abramson, Maya Abramson, Mettannah Jacobson, Teddy Neuman, Aviva Ripstein and Rebecca Turner for their work as editors. I would also like to thank our talented illustrator, Isabella Xiao, for her beautifully realized cover art; the pomegranate, a Jewish symbol for wisdom and fruitfulness, is an appropriate motif for Dorot. Even under the extraordinary strain wrought by the pandemic, this team managed to assemble an academic journal that we will all take pride in for many years to come. Again, thank you all - I'm kvelling.

This year has been one of many challenges, but it has reminded us that knowledge is a powerful tool in the face of uncertainty, and perhaps most importantly, that our connections with one another are precious and not to be taken for granted. In our Jewish Studies courses, old friends came together, new friendships were born, and there was mutual respect and admiration between student and teacher. As I move on from McGill, I will cherish my time in the classroom with my Jewish studies peers and professors.

In this journal you will find five undergraduate research papers: a meta-examination of what it means to "do" Jewish Studies, by Abigail Luddy-Dunn; an overview of two major Jewish

composers and their experiences with antisemitism, by Sophie Sklar; an assessment of the relationship between Hasidic women and feminism, by Keira Kenny; an analysis of Vladimir Nabokov's 'Signs and Symbols' as Holocaust literature, by Asa Brunet-Jailly; and a historical exploration of Jewish slaves in Rome, by Jesse Moss. Thank you to these students for sharing their work with us, and congratulations!

This is the reality of Jewish Studies: it is a field that demands breadth, but one that remains rich and fascinating in every corner. How lucky are we, then, that the Jewish Studies department is one of McGill University's finest. I would like to thank Department Chair Yael Halevi-Wise for her guidance and support. We are indebted to our wonderful professors for sharing their wisdom and preserving the spirit of Jewish education, *l'dor v'dor*.

Please enjoy,

Jenna Benchetrit
Editor-in-Chief

Is Jewish Studies Inherently Interdisciplinary?

Abigail Luddy-Dunn

Jewish studies as an academic subject area was recently developed and defined, and questions of definition and identity are still part of the subject. In this manner, scholars define themselves or are externally defined by their position in Jewish studies or in other traditional academic disciplines such as history, political science, literature, and so on. The relationship between scholarship and scholarly self-identification in the case of Jewish studies supports the point that Jewish studies is an inherently interdisciplinary field of study, because the history of Jews and Judaism is international, intercultural, and interdisciplinary. Even when scholars are not associated with the field of Jewish studies, they can and often do contribute to Jewish studies through their work. Examining a selection of academic articles written by professors from McGill University, I will attempt to answer these questions of definition, and prove that it is only natural for research in Jewish studies to be interdisciplinary, reflecting its varied objects of study. Indeed, the key to viewing Jewish studies as inherently interdisciplinary is in answering what it means to do Jewish studies, because to do Jewish studies is to critically engage with scholarship and information from across disciplines and subject areas and to discuss Jews, Judaism and/or Jewish issues in order to do justice to these complex subjects. Therefore, to do Jewish studies is to have an inherent engagement and knowledge that transcends traditional academic boundaries, regardless of self-identification and academic affiliation.

To answer the question of the interdisciplinary nature of Jewish studies, it is first necessary to define what Jewish studies is. Jewish studies, as academic research on the subject discusses, is a relatively recent addition as a formal department or field of study in colleges and

universities in North America and around the world. Furthermore, courses categorized as "Jewish studies" are also located in other departments and organizational structures in universities, depending on the institution. Generally speaking, Jewish studies is either located in a larger department or faculty of religion, or within its own department of Jewish studies. However, even while many universities have formalized departments and certificate and concentration programs, there is a lack of consensus by scholars both within the discipline and outside of it as to how to define Jewish studies. An example of this is the challenge faced by the editors of the *Oxford Jewish Handbook*, who aimed to create a collection addressing this precise challenge. The *Handbook* acknowledges that "[e]nthusiasm, conflict, and diversity are indeed characteristic of the subject in its present state, and it will be the task of this Handbook not to resolve but to reflect this state," showing the many different conceptions of what Jewish studies is.[1] Further discussion, not the creation of boundaries or an attempt to resolve the discussion once and for all, characterizes the view of The *Handbook* on how to discuss Jewish studies. Another example of this is the fact that even the topics of discussion which can be included under many general definitions of Jewish studies are "exceptionally disparate, ranging not only over a long period of time and all the countries in which Jews have lived, but also over a plethora of different aspects of Jewish culture—literature, history, theology, law, sociology, the fine arts, and more."[2] This illustrates that a definition of what Jewish studies is must be broad, as to include a fuller wealth of knowledge. A broad definition of this type serves to better merge individual conceptions of what Jewish studies means, and will attempt to create a more concrete definition to help both outsiders and those within the subject to better understand it.

While the *Handbook* does not claim to define what Jewish studies is or should look like today, it does argue that the history of Jewish studies can be viewed through the history of Jewish people worldwide. Most importantly, this argument acknowledges the fact that until relatively recently, all academic posts of Jewish culture in universities outside of the study of theology – a domain controlled generally by Christians – were all Jewish. The *Handbook* points out that historically "lecturers and professors in rabbinics and Jewish studies in places like Oxford, Cambridge, University College London, Paris, Harvard, and Columbia were all Jews before the late 20th century, whereas teachers of Arabic were rarely Arabs, and teachers of Chinese were not Chinese."[3] Therefore, Jewish studies has been, in the past, a field dominated by both Christians and Jews, with a historical reliance on Jews to discuss what were perceived to be Jewish fields. Today, while Jewish studies is not thought of as being an academic discipline solely for Jews, most Jewish studies scholars work in different academic faculties. The *Handbook* asserts that, for example, "most members who attend and speak at the World Congress of Jewish Studies will be faculties of history, sociology, religious studies, oriental languages, politics, and so on—that is, almost any faculty in the humanities and social sciences—and it will be to those disciplines, rather than to their Jewish material, that these scholars may feel their primary allegiance."[4] However, I argue that the strength in Jewish studies is that there is no true "primary allegiance" of scholars to any particular discipline, as scholars write and publish on topics of their interest, and are able to choose and mediate the relationships between their individual faculties and subjects and Jewish studies in differing degrees. This is also reflected in the fact that the scholars examined in this paper work both within the Jewish studies department and in other departments, and maintain different relationships to their smaller

disciplines and the larger sphere of Jewish studies. Both the historical reliance on Jews to teach and study Jewish studies after it emerged from Christian religious studies, and the many different academic affiliations of contemporary scholars who work within Jewish studies point to another part of our developing definition, that to do Jewish studies is to do justice to the topic of research. This is accomplished by including both Jewish and non-Jewish scholars in the subject, as their different perspectives and origins provide varied viewpoints on their research areas, pushing the field of knowledge even further.

Jewish studies, then, seems to be less of an academic discipline in the traditional sense and more of a collection of different scholarly perspectives which are combined in a shared perspective on Jewish life, culture, languages, and so on. The *Handbook* argues that Jewish studies does not conform to the traditional academic structures of what a discipline is, as it shares no common method, as opposed to the study of classical languages, or history, each sharing a common history of knowledge and a common methodology. Jewish studies is united in subject matter, not in method, and united also by an acknowledgement of the history of the body of knowledge that has led to the present day. While the *Handbook* contends that it is simplistic to view Jewish studies as relating to Jews, Judaism, or Jewish issues, as these topics have branched off into other areas of study—such as Israel, the Holocaust, and the position of the religious study of Judaism—I believe that to use this definition for Jewish studies as an overarching term is not erasure. Instead, this term serves to mirror how subjects and courses are typically taught in universities, for the sake of clarity and simplicity. However, there are certainly different disciplinary perspectives within Jewish studies, just as Jewish studies is beholden to the typical disciplinary structures in the humanities. As well, there are subsets and overlaps between Jewish

studies and other areas of study, such as Israeli studies and Holocaust studies, where inevitably each subject is influenced by the other. For the sake of this paper, then, Jewish studies is defined as an academic subject area that encompasses work relating to Jews, Judaism, or Jewish issues, and is structured in the university either formally via department or program affiliation, or defined in the desires, interests, and self-affiliation of the researcher. Jewish studies then, is not a discipline, but is a subject area which encompasses other disciplinary traditions and subjects within its construction. Viewing Jewish studies as an inherently interdisciplinary academic subject area helps to clarify the confusion surrounding the definition of Jewish studies. The focus is moving from defining Jewish studies by a rigid set of guidelines, requirements, or even a set academic tradition—characteristics which define traditional academic disciplines—and instead concentrating on broad relation to an area of study. This includes Jews, Judaism, and other related issues discussed by the writer, the researcher, the reader, and others in the academy.

Viewing Jewish studies as inherently interdisciplinary helps to explain how such varied works of research can fit into the same broad subject and work together. In this regard, it is important to situate our broad definition of Jewish studies within definitions of interdisciplinarity. The Merriam-Webster dictionary defines the term interdisciplinary simply as "involving two or more academic, scientific, or artistic disciplines,"[5] which, based on the articles discussed in this paper, Jewish studies certainly adheres to. Definitions vary from their adherence to a specific framework or not, but for the purposes of this paper, interdisciplinary is simply defined as something which is created across boundaries. This definition is important because it situates Jewish studies within the larger whole of interdisciplinary studies. I would like to complicate this definition by adding that interdisciplinarity can be applied to both subject and

method, in that a work of scholarly literature can be viewed as interdisciplinary if it is created with the influence of two or more academic methodological traditions – such as literary analysis of a particular period – or if it discusses two or more traditionally separated academic subjects.

In a broader view, *Introduction to Interdisciplinary Studies,* by Allen F. Repko, Rick Szostak, and Michelle Phillips Buchberger, defines interdisciplinary studies in respect to other fields and provides an in-depth analysis of what interdisciplinary studies is and is not. They write that "interdisciplinary" can be used as an adjective to describe academic work, the research process, the knowledge produced, the change in how knowledge has been produced, and the process of integrating knowledge.[6] For the purposes of this paper, for an article to be characterized as interdisciplinary it must contribute to both the broader scope of Jewish studies as well as its parent discipline, if written and defined by the author as existing in another discipline. This definition is intentionally broad so as to encompass as many different works as possible, including articles that are written by academics outside of the formal bounds of the Jewish studies department.

An assessment of articles written by professors both from McGill's Department of Jewish Studies and other departments provides examples for the argument that Jewish studies is inherently interdisciplinary. Each article has been written across boundaries of different disciplines, methods, and expectations, and ultimately contributes to the field of Jewish studies in different ways and with different perspectives. These articles expand our knowledge and understanding of what Jewish studies is, and can help support the importance of interdisciplinary studies in academia, as Jewish studies can be viewed as an interdisciplinary subject area that consists of many different topics, areas of study, and approaches.

Beginning with what is potentially one of the most traditional articles for analysis, Lawrence Kaplan's article, *Maimonides and Mendelssohn on the Origins of Idolatry, the Election of Israel, and the Oral Law,* provides an example of Jewish studies that is interdisciplinary in both method and subject. Kaplan approaches the study of "Maimonides-and-Mendelssohn" which he refers to as "a study on Mendelssohn's attitude toward, use of, resemblance to, and divergence from Maimonides."[7] Immediately it is clear that the topic of Kaplan's analysis is interdisciplinary as both Maimonides and Mendelssohn can be claimed by different cultural traditions outside of Judaism, such as Mendelssohn's German identity and position in German philosophy. Furthermore, even Maimonides, who is an integral thinker in Jewish philosophy, was Spanish born and his work was disseminated across the Jewish world in the Middle Ages and beyond. As Maimonides worked in Egypt and Morocco and his work was known in that general area, he is also integral to the history of those regions. The structure of this article is also interdisciplinary because it is influenced by Kaplan's training in a *yeshiva*, as the analysis is philosophical and influenced by Talmudic method. While close reading and text analysis are not methods limited to the study of religious texts and can be seen in the study of literature and history, the context and topic of Kaplan's analysis combined with the clear and systematic analysis he puts forth situates it in the context of the Talmudic method. Furthermore, the inclusion of this article in an academic book dedicated to the memory of Professor Alexander Altmann situates this article in the context of the academy, and very much in the academic study of Judaism. Kaplan's article, then, while at first glance appears to be discussing solely Jewish philosophy and Jewish issues, is actually linked to other cultural

traditions outside of Judaism, the larger studies of philosophy, and brings the skills of textual analysis used to analyze the Talmud into an academic analysis.

Christopher Silver's article, "The Sounds of Nationalism: Music, Moroccanism, and the Making of Samy Elmaghribi" in the *International Journal of Middle East Studies,* discusses the music of Samy Elmaghribi, a Jewish-Moroccan musician who was active in the 1940s and 50s. Silver discusses Elmaghribi in the context of the development of Moroccan nationalism, as the country became independent from France in 1956. Elmaghribi created nationalist music which was met with critical commercial success in Morocco, and Silver writes that the man "and his music have eluded the historiography of Moroccan nationalism."[8] This article's stated goal is to change the dialogue about Moroccan nationalism by including the contributions of individual actors, instead of a focus on "an elitist, pan-Arabist, and reformist Islam-oriented nationalism."[9] In order to accomplish this, Silver discusses Elmaghribi's life, his music, and his reception. An important point, and one which situates this article to a certain extent within Jewish studies, is that Elmaghribi wrote critically successful nationalist music, and was Jewish. As Silver writes, the fact that he was Jewish "should not be overlooked by scholars" as other research has shown that Jews in other Middle Eastern and North African nations in the 20th century actively participated in anti-colonial nationalist movements.[10] In this regard, the article also "aims to enter into conversation with scholarship on nationalism, popular culture, and mass consumption in Egypt" which shows further parallels between nationalist movements in Middle Eastern and North African (MENA) countries.[11] Silver's explicit dialogue with other scholars who discuss the emergence of nationalism in the MENA region in the twentieth century, and Silver's belief that Elmaghribi's story is important in these studies, proves that situating this discussion within

Jewish studies helps to do justice to the complex and layered issues which are involved in this research. As Silver draws from history, political science, musicology, and a knowledge of Judaism, these disparate subjects are drawn together and situated within Jewish studies to indicate that the article can be relevant for different disciplines, but is unified by the interdisciplinary structure of Jewish studies.

Ula Madej-Krupitski's article "#PolishRighteous, Presentism, Populism, and Holocaust Memory" published in the ISEEES Newsletter in 2018 presents an example of the interdisciplinary position of Jewish studies due to its subject matter. Madej-Krupitski discusses the position of Holocaust memory in contemporary Poland through an investigation into *The Ulma Family Museum of Poles Saving Jews in World War II* located in Markowa, Poland, seeing how the museum fits into the larger national narrative of the position of Poles and their relationship with Jews during the Second World War.[12] Her discussion is interdisciplinary on several levels, namely that it relates to Jewish history, Polish history, Holocaust studies, media studies, memory studies, and the contemporary experiences of remembrance in Poland. While this article could be discussed or shown in several different academic settings, Madej-Krupitski selected it to be examined within the context of Jewish studies, as she is a professor within that department and selected it as an exemplar work. While the article can be classified as Jewish studies because it relates to Jews, Jewish issues, and Judaism—returning to our broad definition of Jewish studies—it also relates to the other subjects listed above. For this reason, its position as an example of research in Jewish studies shows the importance of Jewish studies as a field where interdisciplinary research is accepted and promoted, as research of this nature does not need to be narrowly categorized into more conventional academic subjects. Instead, it can be created and

published on the margins of convention. In this regard, similar to Silver's article, situating this article within Jewish studies does justice to the research which may not have occurred otherwise. If this article fits within a conception of Jewish studies as inherently interdisciplinary, then it benefits from dialogue and interactions with other scholars and research that only tangentially relate to it, if at all.

Eric Caplan's article "What Does It Imply? How Does It Imply?: Holiday Editorials in *The Reconstructionist*, 1935-1955" provides another example of research in Jewish studies that is interdisciplinary in both method and subject, given that it could be easily situated in a variety of academic contexts. Caplan provides a systematic assessment of the editorials published in the American magazine *The Reconstructionist* between 1935 and 1955 in response to current events, attempting to learn more about the Reconstructionist movement and gain a better understanding of Mordechai Kaplan's method of interpretation and belief that constituted Reconstructionism. As the magazine was the mouthpiece of the Reconstructionist movement, Caplan's assessment is a work of history that shows how the movement viewed its development over time, and from the contemporary point of view, can track how the movement came into its own. In this regard, the subject of Caplan's article is relevant to the world outside academia, as Reconstructionism is a movement within Judaism that is active today. In addition to the importance of this article in discussing the history of Reconstructionism, Caplan approaches it methodologically with a systematic assessment of texts, which ties into media analysis and history, as mentioned previously. In this regard, while Caplan's article—like Madej-Krupitski's—could fit within the academic contexts of other subject areas, including it in Jewish studies does further justice to the content of his research by merit of its place and situation in larger dialogues. Furthermore,

research gains more meaning by placing it in conversation with other articles and scholars as it can be discussed within Jewish studies along lines of method, topic, and theme, and can provide help to other scholars in Jewish studies who may not have found this type of research otherwise.

John Hall's article "Jewish Conditions, Theories of Nationalism" edited by Shana Cohen and Hall, and written with Liliana Riga of the University of Edinburgh in a special issue of the *International Journal of Politics, Culture, and Society* (June 2017), discusses the "complex conditions and dilemmas facing thinkers with Jewish backgrounds"[13] mainly in East Central Europe in the late 19th and early 20th century, in their relationships to nationalism. This article aims to enable this discussion because of the unique positions and views Jewish thinkers developed, which ranged wildly from individual to individual and often progressed over the course of a lifetime. From the perspective of the authors, this paper touches on many different traditional academic subjects, such as sociology, political science, studies of nationalism, antisemitism, European history, Jewish history, and philosophy. Namely, Hall and Riga are both sociologists by training, and they bring that perspective to their analysis in the structure of the article, as they select thinkers to illustrate "four general theoretical frames" that resulted from Jewish negotiations in the development of nationalism.[14] Most importantly, Hall and Riga emphasize that these theoretical frames are just that—they are meant to be viewed as frames and choices, not as cages which narrowly parse off the thinkers discussed. Instead, thinkers often moved between the perspectives of "assimilation and erasure," "wider worlds," "liberalism and the nation-state," and the struggles of "authenticity and essentialism."[15] These themes can be seen in other academic research in Jewish studies on literature, philosophy, and political science, and are themes present in Jewish history and life. What makes Hall's article all the more

interesting to view through the perspective of an interdisciplinary Jewish studies is that it forms a new perspective, using information from across different fields and subjects such as history and political science, as mentioned above, to create a cohesive theoretical whole. While such integration of knowledge is possible in any discipline in the humanities, Hall and Riga's decision to examine Jewish perspectives of nationalism brings their discussion into Jewish studies and helps to better address these complex questions, as an interdisciplinary perspective is necessary in order to do it justice.

Brian Trehearne's book chapter "The Poem in the Mind: The *Integritas* of Klein in the Forties" discusses Montreal Jewish poet A. M. Klein, and his position within the poetry scene of Montreal in the 1940s. Klein's poetic works entered a period of silence following a mental breakdown that was paralleled by other poets in the literary scene in which he travelled, including P. K. Page, and Trehearne attempts to discuss the problems that faced the modernist poets of the 1940s. Namely, that Klein's individual experience, although influenced by his Jewish identity, shows that "the problem of unifying intense images of the world, to create poems, or of one's self, to achieve identity and authenticity, was broad and deep and can help us to understand the complexity of literary culture in this period."[16] Trehearne's chapter fits into our conception of Jewish studies then, as although he is a professor of English who specializes in literary analysis, his discussion of Klein and his identity as a Jewish poet helps to progress knowledge in Jewish studies. Specifically, Trehearne takes an outsider's perspective; Klein's poetry was linked to his Jewish identity and his experience after the Holocaust, but Trehearne approaches the subject from a background in Canadian literature, not one in Jewish history or studies of genocide, or even psychology. This chapter is written across boundaries because it

brings to light the fact that Klein's work can be viewed through different lenses: literary studies (due to its discussion of Klein's poetry, its subjects, and its structure), Jewish studies (Klein's Jewish identity and the discussion of Jewish subjects in the poetry), Holocaust studies (due to the proximity and importance of the Holocaust for Klein), history (Montreal in the 1940s), sociology (experiences of immigrants in Canada), and even psychology and psychiatry, (due to Klein's mental breakdown in the 1950s). Trehearne's article is interdisciplinary in content due to its relation to many varied fields of study, and fits within the broad definition of Jewish studies as Klein's poetic oeuvre related to his own Jewish identity in Canada over the course of his literary career.

These articles show the strength of Jewish studies as an interdisciplinary mode of academia, in that situating them in a discussion of what Jewish studies is as a subject or discipline helps to create linkages and connections between scholars who may otherwise be separate. For example, while Lawrence Kaplan and Brian Trehearne both have written articles that can be viewed within Jewish studies because of their topics, they approach their subjects with different disciplinary perspectives and belong to different academic departments. While Kaplan's work is influenced by his training in the *yeshivah* and knowledge of religious texts, Trehearne draws on his extensive knowledge and training as a scholar of literature to assess A. M. Klein's poetry, while also addressing the poet's Jewish identity and his place in the Montreal literary scene. These two articles are only united by their relation to Jewish issues, Jews, and Judaism, and not by a similar methodological perspective, field of study, or even department. However, by including both articles under the umbrella term of Jewish studies, they can inform

each other, and enable scholars to be exposed to perspectives and approaches that are perhaps outside of their comfort zone.

Jewish studies, then, as an inherently interdisciplinary field of study, allows scholars to fully discuss all issues relating to Jews and Judaism. As a new field, it is not bound by traditional academic conventions. It is eclectic and global, fusing multiple disciplines in the humanities and the social sciences. Even for scholars who create works of research that discuss diverse subjects and can benefit many different fields or subfields of academic research that are not interdisciplinary in method, placing their work within an interdisciplinary field of research helps to contextualize and expand their work for the reader, and enables one to view it in a relationship with a broad and extensive body of work, regardless of self-categorization. This interdisciplinary view gives strength to the legitimacy of Jewish studies as an academic subject, as interdisciplinary perspectives and methods are necessary to adequately understand such complex issues. This is the strength of Jewish studies, and the reason for its success.

Endnotes

1 Martin Goodman, "The Nature of Jewish Studies," in *The Oxford Handbook of Jewish Studies*, ed. Martin Goodman, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004), 1.

2 Ibid.

3 Ibid, 4.

4 Ibid, 6.

5 Merriam-Webster.com Dictionary, s.v. "interdisciplinary," accessed May 22, 2020, https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/interdisciplinary.

6 Allen F. Repko, Rick Szostak, and Michelle Phillips Buchberger, *Introduction to Interdisciplinary Studies* (California: Sage Publications Inc., 2019), 9.

7 Lawrence Kaplan, "Chapter 19: Maimonides and Mendelssohn on the Origins of Idolatry, the Election of Israel, and the Oral Law," in *Perspectives on Jewish Thought and Mysticism*, ed. Alexander Altmann et al, and the Institute for Jewish Studies London, (Australia: Harwood Academic Press, 1998), 423.

8 Christopher Silver, "The Sounds of Nationalism: Music, Moroccanism, and the Making of Samy Elmaghribi," in *International Journal of Middle East Studies* 52, no. 1 (2020): 24.

9 Ibid, 24.

10 Ibid, 26.

11 Ibid, 25.

12 Ula Madej-Krupitski. "#PolishRighteous Presentism, Populism and the Holocaust Memory," in *ISEEES Newsletter* (Spring/Summer 2018): 3-6.

13 John A. Hall and Liliana Riga, "Jewish Conditions, Theories of Nationalism," ed. Shana Cohen and John A. Hall, in a Special Issue of *The International Journal of Politics, Culture, and Society* 30, no. 2 (2017).

14 Ibid, 276.

15 Ibid.

16 Brian Trehearne, "The Poem in the Mind: The Integritas of Klein in the Forties," in *The Montreal Forties: Modernist Poetry in Transition*, (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1999), 105.

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Jewish Identity as Reflected in Musical Compositions: An Analysis of the Music of Gustav Mahler and Arnold Schoenberg

Sophie Sklar

ABSTRACT. During the rise of antisemitism in the 19th century, Jewish artists in Europe faced both de facto and legal discrimination. Across many fields and mediums, their accomplishments were undercut and dismissed, simply because of their Jewish faith. Wagnerian thinking promoted the idea that Jews in music specifically were not in possession of the superior Germanic "hero-spirit" and many advocated against their inclusion within the artistic spheres of European society. As a result of this discrimination, Jewish composers had to confront their religious identities in new and challenging ways. This paper analyzes the work of Gustav Mahler and Arnold Schoenberg and investigates how their respective struggles and interactions with their Jewish identity translated into the music they created.

In the 19th century, discrimination and antisemitism suppressed and undercut the talents and skills of Jewish artists in Europe. Antisemitic thought promoted the notion that the ethnic makeup of Jews permanently prohibited them from matching the talents of their non-Jewish counterparts. In the European context, one prominent example of a field in which this discrimination was a common occurrence was music. This notion was famously explained by German composer Richard Wagner. He sought to foster the rebirth of what he referred to as the Germanic "hero-spirit," a racial characteristic he believed to be possessed by only the Germanic branches of the Aryan race.[1] In his opinion, Jews were racially inferior to those who possessed this characteristic.[2] In his 1850 paper, *Jewry in Music*, Wagner expressed dismay that the Jews were able to succeed in the musical sphere despite their inferiority. He writes, "The Jew, who is innate incapable of announcing himself to us artistically… has nevertheless been able in the widest-spread of modern art varieties, to wit in Music."[3] Additionally, he writes, "The cultured Jew has taken the most inducible pains to strip off all the obvious tokens of his lower co-religionists: in many case he has even held it wise to make a Christian Baptism wash away

traces of his origin," rebuking Jews who attempted to assimilate into Christian culture in order to distance themselves from their identity.[4] Wagner's words are representative of many others in European society during this time period, and his view of Jews as inferior and as infiltrators of European Christendom were commonly held beliefs.[5]

It is within this context of rising notions of racial antisemitism that Jewish musicians had to confront challenges to their identity. Jewish artists questioned and grappled with their Jewish sense of self, and this inner turmoil was depicted in the artistic works they created. Vienna in particular was a significant context for Jews throughout the 17th and 18th centuries, as they were proportionally over-represented in fields such as law and medicine, and were eager to seize opportunities outside of the traditional Jewish fields of trade and commerce.[6] This rapid Jewish advancement in society caused Wagnerian theory of racial antisemitism to gain prominence as Austrian citizens felt intimidated by the Jewish presence in these fields.[7] Two examples of Viennese figures whose struggles with their Jewish identities and sense of self were reflected in their work are composers Gustav Mahler and Arnold Schoenberg. These figures were both born Jewish, came from similar cultural backgrounds, and actually interacted during their time as composers. This paper will demonstrate that both Mahler and Schoenberg serve as examples of Jewish composers from this time period whose Jewish identity and sense of self was reflected in the music they composed. Despite their similar backgrounds, however, the confrontation with their Jewish identities in their work took vastly different forms.

Gustav Mahler, born in Austria in 1860, is a primary example of a figure whose unique Jewish identity was reflected in their music.[8] Mahler was an incredibly assimilated Jew, and ended up converting away from the religion.[9] He viewed his Jewish identity as a hindrance to his

career, and felt his Jewish identity was a burden on his life. Despite his tremendous effort to distance himself from his religion, in greater European society he was always and forever labeled as a Jew. In this time of racial antisemitism, Mahler was constantly attacked and had his success undercut because of his religion.

Mahler's background and life story point to various key moments that translated into the identity struggle displayed in his later works. At this time, Jewishness was constantly linked to an individual's identity, even if they tried to distance themselves from it.[10] Throughout his early life, Mahler proved to be an exceptionally assimilated Western Jew. He lived in a German town and spoke German (as opposed to Yiddish), his family was not observant, and he had little connection with his religion.[11] Within his letters, he scarcely referenced Judaism outside of the context of his desire to assimilate further. As Mahler gained recognition as a composer, de facto, rather than legal discrimination, riddled his career. This air of discrimination can be found surrounding every one of his accomplishments. His music was viewed as strange, even in his own country, and his character was attacked as a result of this. In the spring of 1885, when Mahler was chosen over an Austrian Christian to be a second composer at the Vienna Opera, he was attacked and criticized in the media for being a Jew.[12] He was viewed as racially inferior and as a contamination of the pure German race. Despite converting in 1897, Mahler was forever labeled as an opportunistic infiltrator in European society.[13] Mahler's wife, Alma, explained her husband's feelings on this matter when she popularized his oft-cited quotation, which read, "I am thrice homeless… as a native of Bohemia in Austria, as an Austrian among Germans, and as a Jew throughout the world; everywhere an intruder, never welcomed."[14] These notions of discrimination are further exemplified in criticism of Mahler in relation to his style of musical

composition. Mahler introduced the style of treating massive orchestras with singular, soloistic sounds.[15] He replaced strings with winds as the feature instruments, which altered the emotional quality of his pieces.[16] He received criticism that his music was too "modern" for the time, and in turn was informally known as *ein hypermodern dirigent* ("an ultramodern conductor").[17] Additionally, Mahler was attacked by critics on the basis of his conducting style. Mahler was known for his rigid movements while conducting, and was viewed as unnerving, unlike the calmer and more restrained method of his predecessors.[18] Naturally, society and the media linked their feelings of discomfort with Mahler to his Jewish identity. Racial antisemitism led to claims that Mahler's conducting style was different because his body was fundamentally different and inferior to that of a "true" German.[19] Overall, his unconventional and unorthodox performances created a sense of fear and suspicion around him, and he increasingly drew religious-based attacks from his critics.[20] His performances were viewed as "not indigenous and authentic" and people believed that as a marginal man he could not create "native" music.[21] To summarize, despite distancing himself as much as possible from Judaism and being completely assimilated into European culture, Mahler was still never fully accepted into society on the basis of his religion and of racial antisemitism. This created a sense of wandering his life, as he never truly fit in anywhere. In one letter, he described himself as a "wayfarer," and in another, he expressed his desire to go to America in the hopes of finding "a spiritual home."[22] This theme of homelessness would follow him and characterize his works throughout his career.

Mahler's identity struggle, societal exclusion, and the sense of homelessness that characterized his life evidently had an impact on his musical compositions. It is to be noted that Mahler cannot be used as an example of a composer of "Jewish music," as this has been defined

as "that which is made by Jews, for Jews, as Jews."[23] Mahler was not Jewish in any religious sense and did not identify as such. However, his musical compositions contain some elements that seem to be reminiscent of Jewish folk songs.[24] Mahler was known for blending multiple aesthetics into his work and venturing outside of the traditional molds of musical compositions at this time. Within this framework, he never fully escaped the Jewish elements that snuck into his music.[25] This theory is especially plausible when considering that Mahler came from an area heavily populated with Jewish citizens.

While Mahler's works may provide listeners with slight allusions to his encounters and struggles with faith and spirituality, they are not transparent statements of religious belief.[26] For example, melodies and inflections of Jewish folk songs are scattered throughout the many movements he composed, as exemplified in the Third movement of his First Symphony.[27] Additionally, some uses of pathos, irony, and intense emotionalism in his music were also linked to his Jewishness.[28] More specifically, his Second and Third symphonies can be seen as an understanding of Judaism and its relationship to compassion.[29] In movements within both of these symphonies, a single voice emerges from multi-vocal "chaos" and struggles against the opposing voices that embody resistance to the individual's integration into the musical whole.[30] Otherness was depicted in both text and tone using an outlying soloist attempting to integrate into the greater choir. In the later movements of his symphonies, one interpretation is that the allusion to the human voice articulates the need for compassion.[31] Overall, these techniques can be viewed as reflections of Mahler's Jewish identity within his musical compositions. Albeit subtle, these unique examples of Mahler's confrontation and struggle with his Jewish identity and his feelings of being a "wayfarer" are an important aspect of his work.

Arnold Schoenberg is another artist from the Austrian context and is an example of a Jewish composer whose identity was reflected in the music he created. In contrast to Mahler's subtle allusions to Judaism in his work, however, Schoenberg's compositions, specifically his piece "A Survivor from Warsaw," provide a clearer and more obvious example of Jewish identity reflected in musical compositions. Schoenberg's early history and his confrontation with his Jewish identity was a complex and ever-changing process. Born to a lower-class family in a Vienna ghetto, he was a self-taught composer.[32] In 1898 Schoenberg converted to Christianity, partly to strengthen his attachment to Western European cultural traditions, and partly as a means of self-defense in a time when Wagnerism was a prominent intellectual ideology.[33] In 1933, he returned to Judaism, as he sought to take up an unmistakable position on the side opposing Nazism.[34] The rise of the Third Reich and Nazism took a toll on Schoenberg. He had previously placed great importance on assimilating into European culture, but was confronted with the fact that, like other Jews, he would never be truly accepted into the society he sought to be a part of. This caused him to move from Europe to America in 1933.[35] This uprooting of his life left Schoenberg with a sense of homelessness similar to that of Mahler, as exemplified when he wrote in his letters, "I parted from the old world not without feeling the wrench in my very bones, for I was not prepared for the fact that it would render me not only homeless but also speechless."[36] The rise of Nazism and the sense of homelessness he experienced deeply impacted Schoenberg and his Jewish identity.

Schoenberg was immensely appreciative of the freedom allocated to him while in America. He was free to live both as a citizen and as a Jew for the first time. He thought of America as a paradise and felt that he could stand tall and proud in this country, as opposed to

Europe where he had to crawl.[37] This spiritual and emotional transformation is evident in his later works. Schoenberg's newfound commitment to Judaism while in America caused him to combine his Jewish emotion and background with compositions of Western art music, thus pointing out a feasible way of bridging one of the gaps between the Jewish and Western cultural heritage.[38] Perhaps the most notable example of Schoenberg's newfound pride in his Jewish identity is his work, "A Survivor from Warsaw." This 1947 composition was created in memory of the victims of the Holocaust. The main narration is spoken, not sung, with a singular narrator recounting the story of Nazi authorities beating a group of Jews in the Warsaw ghetto during a daily roll call . The narrator does not move a pitch and somberly recounts the story for almost the entirety of the work. In the fourth and final section of "A Survivor," the choir begins singing *Shema Yisroel*, changing the language of the song from English to Hebrew, and changing the vocal style from *sprechstimme* to choral singing.[39] Through this, Schoenberg clearly imparts the concluding section with a liturgical quality and a clear reference to his Jewish identity.[40] Schoenberg preserved the melodic and rhythmic contour of this traditional synagogue chant, and is referencing the Jewish use of this prayer to sanctify the name of God in the face of death.[41] The movement ends with "and when thou liest down, and when thou riseth up," a passage from Deuteronomy 6:7. This work demonstrates how the Holocaust greatly impacted the sense of self of assimilated Jews like Schoenberg, and caused them to confront their Jewish identities head-on.[42] When writing about what "A Survivor" meant to him, Schoenberg said, "It means a warning to all Jews, to never to forget what has been done to us, never to forget that even people who did not do it themselves, agreed with them and many of them found it necessary to treat us this way."[43] Overall, Schoenberg's reflection of his Jewish sense of self was significantly more

clear and evident than Mahler's subtle references. This was due to Schoenberg's comfort with and acceptance of his Jewish identity during his time in America.

In summary, it is quite evident that both Gustav Mahler and Arnold Schoenberg are examples of Jewish composers whose identity was reflected in their musical compositions. Both of these figures' identities were formed as a result of societal exclusion and criticism on the basis of their Judaism, and both experienced feelings of "homelessness" due to their struggles. Elements of Judaism were significantly more subtle in Mahler's work, as opposed to the blatant inclusion of Jewish elements in Schoenberg's "A Survivor." Nonetheless, it is most interesting to trace the origin stories of these figures and their respective struggles for acceptance within the elite Viennese artistic circles, and to note how these experiences shaped both of their musical compositions during their illustrious careers.

Endnotes

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24 Ibid.

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26 Kita, *Jewish Difference*, 37.

27 Lea, "Gustav Mahler," 231.

28 Ibid.

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30 Ibid, 43.

31 Ibid.

32 Philip V Bohlman, *Jewish Music and Modernity* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008), 34.

33 David M. Schiller, *Bloch, Schoenberg, and Bernstein: Assimilating Jewish Music* (New York: Oxford University Press New York, 2003) 76.

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36 Arnold Schoenberg, *Letters*, ed. Erwin Stein (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1987), 191-2.

37 Schiller, *Assimilating Jewish Music*, 79.

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39 Ibid.

40 Ibid.

41 Ibid, 121-122.

42 Ibid, 116.

43 Schiller, *Assimilating Jewish Music*, 123.

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Anti-Feminists Using Feminist Language: Responses to Feminism in Hasidic Judaism

Keira Kenny

ABSTRACT. This paper explores the subtlety of feminisms among women in the Hasidic Jewish community and *Ba'alot Teshuvah* (women who "returned" to ultra-Orthodoxy). Many Hasidic women espouse values that mirror those of cultural feminists, yet they specifically reject feminism, or what they perceive it to be. As such, a feminist analysis of Hasidic women must take numerous factors into consideration, rather than a sole focus on gender, when analyzing their actions and behaviours. Hasidic women highlight the fact that activism, female empowerment and change take shape in different forms in every community.

Hasidism, a spiritual revival movement with roots in 18th century Eastern Europe, is distinct for its religious conservatism, self-isolation and gender segregation. Contemporarily categorized under ultra-Orthodox Judaism, it is a movement that provokes enduring fascination and critique from both the non-Hasidic Jewish and gentile worlds. Over the past couple of decades, the subordinate role of women in particular has attracted much attention due to the influence of feminism on other denominations of Judaism. The influence of Jewish-American feminism, which arose in the early 1970s, resulted in the embracing of gender equality, including the opportunity to participate in all aspects of religious life in Reform, Reconstructionist and Conservative Judaism; even within Orthodoxy, progress has been made. On the other hand, Hasidism has been the most resistant to change. This paper will explore Hasidic women's perceptions of and interactions with feminism through the perspectives of women in the community and *Ba'alot Teshuvah* (women who "returned" to ultra-Orthodoxy). While these women specifically reject what they perceive as feminism and don't seek to overturn the patriarchal system of Hasidic Judaism, they espouse values that mirror those of cultural feminists. These Hasidic women are a paradox; they are anti-feminists using feminist language, working within the structure of Hasidism to find agency, enact change and express female empowerment. In order to understand the circumstances under which they reject feminism while still espousing certain feminist ideals, it is necessary to consider their ethnic and religious identity, self-perception of their role in the community and activism within it.

Second-wave feminism, oftentimes synonymous with the term "women's liberation movement," encapsulated a myriad of issues put forth in the late 1960s and 1970s by American women in their struggle for equality. These women fought for issues such as abortion rights, access to contraception, sexual freedom, economic independence and the expansion of women's roles outside of the home. One surprising outcome of the women's liberation movement was that it prompted a number of women to turn to Hasidism, revealing the strength of these women's connection to their Jewish identity. Feminist scholars such as Bonnie Morris, Deborah Kaufman and Lynn Davidman have studied *Ba'alot Teshuvah* in an effort to understand why such women willingly accepted a culture of rigid gender segregation, unequal opportunity and strict rules regarding modesty.[1] In each of their interview-based studies published in the late-1980s and 90s, the authors found that *Ba'alot Teshuvah* were motivated to "return" due to a search for meaning, moral guidelines, dignity and sense of community. They rejected gentile culture and feminism's individualist bent, many having interacted with liberal feminism themselves, viewing them as a threat to Jewishness and the family. After all, Ellen Willis argues that radical feminism played a key role "in subverting traditional values and destabilizing the family" as feminism succeeded in making it "socially acceptable for women to want a life outside the home."[2] According to Benita Roth, various grounds of identity need to be accounted for when assessing how the social world is formulated.[3] Yet, as Morris points out in examining Hasidic separatism, scholars have largely ignored the ethnic context when examining Hasidic women's religious activism and self-image.[4] Their rejection of feminism is rooted not in a dislike of women but in an aversion to non-Jewish frameworks.[5] Because of the Holocaust, advocating for population control and contraception was lambasted for promoting the restriction of Jewish population growth, which many deemed to be antisemitic.[6]

The view of gentiles as opponents in Hasidism also highlights the tensions between female and ethnic identity that Roth speaks about in *Separate Roads* regarding Black and Chicana feminists. Throughout history, the primary hindrance to Jewish freedom was not gender but religious or ethnic identity.[7] Just as women of colour often saw feminism as competing with racial justice movements, Hasidic women saw feminism as competing with their own ethnic survival;[8] their loyalties lay with Jewish tradition, not with feminism, which was primarily white

and Christian.[9] *Ba'alot Teshuvah,* like the cultural feminists described in Alice Echols' *Daring to Be Bad*, sought a revalued motherhood and domesticity that many feminists did not address or were opposed to.[10]

Strict gender segregation and control of sexuality are defining characteristics of Hasidism, which these women uphold by ascribing their own positive meanings and values. Both are components of *tzniuth* (modesty) laws that govern Hasidic women and men, which include the covering up of their bodies. Exposure to erotic stimulation, whether it be from movies, the internet or incidental body contact in the street, is "perceived as a threat to religious observance."[11] Thus, men are taught to avoid anything perceived as lascivious and women are to be humble, discreet and speak quietly.[12] *Ba'alot Teshuvah* were also advocates of separate spheres for men and women, having no intention of challenging the religious patriarchy because they felt that Orthodoxy accorded them a new dignity with regards to their femininity which contemporary feminists devalued and disregarded. Estelle Freedman's concept of equal worth, as opposed to equality for women, directly relates to the experience of Hasidic women. Traditional female tasks are valued as highly as the work that men have historically performed according to equal worth, especially childbearing and childcare.[13] Whereas in the secular world, Hasidic women's differences were viewed as weak and inferior, they were a source of strength in the religious world.[14] Their view of gender reflects that of the cultural feminists who celebrated femaleness and emphasized the difference between males and females as intractable.[15] Just as the cultural feminists, Hasidic women celebrate gender difference, valuing feminine qualities mostly associated with motherhood and the family as a source of strength and power for themselves and the community as a whole; many believe it is they who "will prepare the world for the coming of the Messiah."[16] They also stress the positive functions of *niddah* (two weeks of sexual separation between wife and husband during her menstrual cycle) which was highly criticized by feminists as demeaning and controlling of women, stating that it placed control in the woman's hands because the husband could not take them for granted.[17]

Despite feminist critiques of women's limited roles in Hasidism, female participation in the public sphere has seen an increase in the past couple of decades. In the Lubavitch community, distinct in Hasidism for its openness to actively proselytizing other Jews, Rebbe

Menahem Mendel Schneerson, the group's leader, gave women an equal role with men as missionaries and urged them to gather in devotional groups in the 1980s; the commandment to light Sabbath candles was also expanded to young girls.[18] However, the Rebbe's invitation for women to take a more active role in the missionary campaign was paired with the denouncement of contemporary feminism and "a defence of the traditional role of women as helpmates for their husbands whose proper place was the domestic sphere."[19] Thus, while the Lubavitcher women's sphere was expanded, there was no subsequent liberalization of women's religious rights in the community.[20] Moreover, in the Lubavitcher Women's Organization's publications in the 1970s and 1980s, writers actively criticized feminism, stressing that Jewish women were already liberated and had fulfilling roles.[21] This view is aided by the fact that many *Ba'alot Teshuvah* associated feminism's stance on work with the women's liberation movement's emphasis on equal pay as the most pressing issue.[22] Hasidic women have always worked outside of the home, which historically meant nothing more than a means of economic survival for the family as it allowed their sons and husbands to pursue their religious studies, the primary concern of Jewish men; as such, the discussion of women's career rights must be viewed relative to the lack of career orientation for Hasidic men.[23] Working outside the home was never an enhancement to female status and is very much the norm.[24]

Rachel Freier's activism represents another case of women's expanding participation in the public sphere while at the same time supporting distinct gender roles. Hailing from the Bobov community in Borough Park, Brooklyn, she became the first female Hasidic lawyer in 2006 and in 2016, with her election as a judge to the civil court, became the country's first female Hasidic elected official.[25] Further, Freier started her own all-female ambulance service in 2014 after the male-run service refused to accept female volunteers in 2011. As Roth notes, different ethnic communities have different issues surrounding ascribed identities.[26] Freier rejected the label of "feminist" as it would imply that she wished to reject Hasidism's gender boundaries.[27] Rather, her position was due to her belief and adherence to traditional gender roles and her wish to reclaim the "traditional role of women to help in their own God-given way.[28] She expressed no wish to become a rabbinical court judge or pray in the men's section of the synagogue. Hasidic women have also pushed for an increase in education, exemplified by Freier

and the establishment of the "Machon L'Parnassa" branch of Tuoro College in Borough Park in 1998 which offers classes for both men and women, held separately in different buildings, to prepare them for the workplace.[29] For such women, the idea of expanding their participation in the public sphere does not have to overstep existing gender boundaries; rather, they specifically denounce feminist critique which insinuates that they should want to do so.

Feminism is an issue that has prompted Jewish women to "return to Orthodoxy," seeking out strict gender segregation and clearly differentiated roles, and pushed Hasidic women to define their actions against it. *Ba'alot Teshuvah* and Hasidic women's responses to feminism reveal how they work within the structure of the community to negotiate their place in a patriarchal religious society. Embracing Hasidic ideology constrains women's options for equal religious opportunity but also enables them to act as agents in disseminating religious ideals and to defend, preserve, and help the community. Focusing on the factors that influence the ideals of Hasidic women reveals their agency within the appropriate community context. It would be inappropriate to assume that all Hasidic women have been brainwashed or conditioned to accept distinct gender roles and their secondary status in regards to religious involvement. Not only do these women promote such views, the experience of *Ba'alot Teshuvah,* who specifically sought in Hasidism a sense of ethnic community, spiritual fulfillment and celebration of womanhood that was lacking in the secular world, confirms this. Although female participation still needs to be sanctioned by Hasidic leaders (all male), women like Rachel Freier embody the potential they have to become actively engaged in the public sphere while defending Hasidic tradition at the same time. These women highlight the fact that female empowerment, activism and change does not look the same in every community; factors such as ethnic and religious identity, self-perception of their place in society, and their actions within their community need to be taken into account as well.

Endnotes

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3 Benita Roth (2004), *Separate Roads to Feminism: Black, Chicana, and White Feminist Movements in America's Second Wave* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004), 13.

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5 Morris, "Agents or Victims," 171.

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16 Debra Kaufman, "Patriarchal Women: A Case Study of Newly Orthodox Jewish Women." *Symbolic Interaction* 12, no. 2 (1989): 299-314, (305).

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20 Morris, *Lubavitcher Women,* 137.

21 Ibid, 116.

22 Kaufman, "Patriarchal Women," 303.

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24 Ibid, 168.

25 Otterman, Sharon, "Judge Ruchie, the Hasidic Superwoman of Night Court," *The New York Times,* (Nov. 17, 2017), https://www.nytimes.com/2017/11/17/nyregion/judge-ruchie-the-hasidic-superwoman-of-night-court.html.

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Shadows of the Holocaust in Nabokov's "Signs and Symbols"

Asa Brunet-Jailly

"She thought […] of the incalculable amount of tenderness contained in the world; of the fate of this tenderness, which is either crushed, or wasted, or transformed into madness".[1] Nabokov's "Signs and Symbols" has baffled critics and academics alike since it was first published in 1948. A large amount of literature has been produced on Nabokov's short story, but a clear answer to the enigma has yet to be confirmed. The very analysis of "Signs and Symbols" can often feel futile: Nabokov's delusional character with an obsession and fear of all signs and symbols has been equated with the over-analyzing reader who is missing the point completely.[2] The short story's year of publication, 1948, sheds light on the mystery as it followed both the Second World War and the Holocaust. In a world so deeply stricken by incomprehension of the horrific acts that came to pass, the world itself becomes indecipherable, especially to Jewish refugees who have lost everything they know and hold dear. Nabokov's short story focuses on this very grief and disbelief—it does not try to explain the unexplainable, but rather represents the consequences of something so unimaginable. Indeed, it is the very enigma of the story that says the most, and, although the story is filled with "signs and symbols," they lead to no clear message. In this essay, I will argue that by centering the story on a Russian Jewish family living in a world that is indecipherable to them, Nabokov depicts the hopelessness and anxiety felt by many in a post-Holocaust world: a setting that is meaningful yet empty, and most of all, dangerous to them. The world around the family constantly echoes the horrors they escaped, and they, in turn, project their trauma onto the world around them.

Although "Signs and Symbols" has been analyzed by many, it is only in more recent years that critics have taken a closer look at the historical setting of the novel: the post-World War II and post-Holocaust America that the family lives in. Alexander Drescher's article, "Arbitrary Signs and Symbols," is fundamental when studying the various references to the Holocaust in the short story. The implied Jewishness of the parents is indicated by the Yiddishisms mixed into Nabokov's otherwise literary prose: the parents had been married "[already] for a long time," the mother's hair "was done [anyhow]," the rich brother is a "real American," all which mirror Yiddish syntax and idiom rather than English.[3] Both Drescher and John Lane, in his article "A Funny Thing About Nabokov's Signs and Symbols," pick up these narrative slips in the couple's focalization, but only Drescher connects them to the Holocaust.

In a complex argument, Drescher asserts that the number of paragraphs of the story (4, 7, and 19) is an implicit reference to the year the story is taking place, 1947, thus paralleling the boy's life with the rise of Nazism in Germany and positioning the family's immigration from Europe to 1937—a narrow escape from the concentration camps. The rest of their family was not so lucky, illustrated by a photo the mother glances over: "Aunt Rose, a fussy, angular, wild-eyed old lady, who had lived in a tremulous world of bad news […]—until the Germans put her to death, together with all the people she had worried about".[4] Lastly, subtle clues in the language itself reveal a connection to the Holocaust. Drescher points to the father's misspelling of "beach plum" to "beech plum," recalling "Buchen, beech trees," while "plum associates to *Pflaume* and *Pflaumenbaum*, literally flame and burning tree."[5] This alludes to the Buchenwald concentration camp and demonstrates the hold that the Holocaust has on the father.

The Holocaust affects not only the father's spelling but impacts the mother, the father, and the son in dramatic, life-altering ways. The son's "referential mania" is perhaps the most pronounced, but the mother and father are also shown to be deeply scarred by their escape, and the very environment around them is imbued with their grief and confusion. In many ways, the son's fear of "phenomenal nature" mirrors a deeply internalized paranoia and fear of the Nazi regime and the growing antisemitism in Germany: "some of the spies are detached observers" such as puddles and mirrors, "others, such as coats in store windows, are prejudiced witnesses, lynchers at heart," "others again […] have a distorted opinion of him and grotesquely misinterpret his actions[6] [...] He must be always on his guard."[7] The boy's insanity transforms the fear that his parents and many other Jews had into something natural and uncontrollable: every object and element of the world is plotting against him in some way, and are just steps away from doing him harm. The diction employed to describe the son's insanity aligns with the Holocaust: there are murderous spies everywhere, even one's neighbours—perhaps even the German maid Elsa and her "bestial beau," who Drescher claims is a Nazi. Many of the "spies" are "prejudiced" and have "distorted opinions," just as many had distorted, hate-fueled, yet baseless opinions of Jews before the Holocaust.[8] The boy "is unable to decipher secret messages" and only knows their "malicious" intent, leaving the danger just out of sight, much like in the world the parents escaped from.[9]

For the son, who is first described as "incurably deranged," life has become a never-ending source of paranoia and horror: he wants "to tear a hole in his world and escape," as his insanity makes him fear and despise the world around him.[10] However, this same explanation applies to the son's insanity, which works as an escape from reality. Whether his insanity is an

escape from the terror of the real world or a representation of that terror in the boy's mind, his condition takes over his life and alienates him even more from a world in which he is already a pariah alongside his parents. Indeed, as a result of his mania, the world becomes a "veiled reference to his personality and existence,"[11] making him "totally inaccessible" to others .[12] To the boy, "everything is a cipher and of everything he is the theme."[13] There are various ways of explaining this self-centered delusion: Rita M. Brown's article "Signs and Symbols and the Holocaust" treats it as a reference to the destructive belief that Jews conspire on a "cosmic scale to control and destroy Western civilization," which the son would have internalized.[14] Another potential explanation is the son's grotesque interpretation of the Jewish notion of "chosenness," in which the Jewish people are God's "chosen people."[15] This idea was contested and shunned by many after the Holocaust, as "chosenness" became associated with unfathomable suffering and an uncaring or inexistent God. In the story, the son becomes the "chosen one" and is left to suffer alone, misunderstood by all.

The father may demonstrate the clearest example of survivor's guilt among the family, and hints of this guilt are found throughout the text. The first example of this is the relationship between the couple and the father's brother Isaac. The father is "wholly dependent" on his brother, a "real American" and the one who undoubtably aided the father and his family in their escape from Europe. Despite the brother's help, the couple calls him "the Prince," shedding light on the resentment, rather than gratitude, that they feel for him. Drescher calls the brother's help a "favor too great to repay or to forgive"; the family owes Isaac their lives. Yet, the family can offer nothing in return, nor can they forget the many people that Isaac did not save and that they themselves chose to leave behind. The father lives a life of complete silence and discomfort—he

wears an uncomfortable dental plate—as though, burdened by his guilt, he refuses to be happy in his new life across the ocean. Only when the father decides to take the son out of the sanitarium does he finally speak: "We must get him out of there quick. Otherwise we'll be responsible. Responsible!" For the father to redeem himself, he must save his son from death, and the sanitarium becomes a concentration camp leading his son to his death.[16] For the father to be happy again, he must rescue his son, and symbolically save the millions of Jews for whom he feels responsible and for whose deaths he blames himself. Indeed, only after deciding to take his son from the sanitarium does the father begin to enjoy and desire life again: the couple enjoys a "festive midnight tea," and the father "[sips] noisily" with a flushed face as though he relishes every sip.[17] Only by choosing to save his son can the father come to terms with his own guilt and begin a new life unhindered by the shackles of the past.

Furthermore, while the mother wishes for a better future, she unfortunately is, much like her son, trapped in delusions and the past, unable to escape her grief. Indeed, this grieving for her past life has so encompassed her that it manifests physically: "She wore a cheap black dress. Unlike other women of her age […] she presented a naked white countenance to the fault finding light of spring days."[18] Here, Nabokov's choice to mention the colour of the dress, her nonexistent makeup and her "drab gray hair" depicts the mother's perpetual state of mourning, whether or not she realizes it herself.[19] Despite being extremely restrained in her emotions, the mother is just as affected by the past as her son is. When she herself feels "the mounting pressure of tears," she stops and sees another passenger on the subway weeping, causing her to feel "soft shock, a mixture of compassion and wonder."[20] She is both shocked and amazed by such an open expression of grief because it is something she does not allow herself. Despite this

self-constraint, everything around the mother reminds her of the past. This is seen in the older woman comforting the weeping girl, reminding the mother of a certain "Rebecca Borisnova".[21] Every part of the mother's surroundings reminds her of the past and she is part of an inescapable circle of grief.

More than just people awakening memories for the mother, an eerie sense of dread and misfortune also follow the mother and her husband throughout their day. Signs of death are present throughout the story and even the most regular things, like the subway, are imbued with discomfort. The subway loses "its life" in between stations, the bus is "crammed" with people—both a reminder of the crammed and impossibly uncomfortable death trains of the Holocaust.[22] The couple learns that their son tried to commit suicide for the second time, and on their way home they come across a "tiny half-dead unfledged bird helplessly twitching in a puddle," mirroring both the son's near-death and the father's own twitching hands.[23] Even trash cans remind the mother of the past: battered "ash" cans, a hint, like the beech plum, of burning—the Holocaust itself meaning "whole" and "burnt".[24] The mother stares out at the ash cans before closing the blinds and opening her photo album, creating a subtle link between the mother's memory-pregnant surroundings and self-provoked trips down memory lane.

The quote that begins this essay is of great importance in understanding the mother: she believes in the "incalculable amount of tenderness" in the world but declares it is destined to be crushed.[25] This mindset points to the "endless waves of pain that for some reason or other she and her husband had to endure."[26] Despite escaping the Holocaust, she and her family are subjected to unimaginable horrors and grief that remain unexplained, and cannot *be* explained. There is no explanation for the suffering that the mother and her family have gone through nor

for the world that they have been completely cut off from and the friends and family that they have lost forever. To the mother, life is losing one happiness after another, and watching helplessly, like "beautiful weeds that cannot hide from the farmer," as the "monstrous darkness approaches."[27] Although the family has escaped the Holocaust, the mother feels that she can only wait until this same darkness, left behind in Europe, closes in on them again. The dreary setting of the story proves this mentality: not only is everything bleak and "drab," but the mother feels that things are bound to get worse.

Although the pervasive atmosphere of death has often been understood as foreshadowing the final and successful suicide of the son, it may point to something very different. By surrounding the characters and the reader with ominous signs, and leaving the controversial ending open to interpretation, Nabokov incites the reader to think in the same way as the mother: that the world is destined to end in "monstrous darkness" and death. By expecting the ending to be one of death, and so mirroring the mother's dark form of fatalism, the reader chooses to kill the son, whose fate was previously undecided.[28] Drescher and Brown both argue that the boy is not dead at all,[29] and has escaped the sanitarium on his own to start anew.[30] That could be the final answer to Nabokov's code, or not at all—there is no way to know, and that very lack of knowledge is what gives the most away. Just as the world around the family is puzzling and ominous, the end of the story leaves the reader with discomfort, confusion and anxiety, immersing the reader in the mentality of the story's characters for a brief moment. Neither the family nor the reader are allowed closure. Indeed, there cannot be any closure at the end, just as there can never be any closure for the Holocaust—it is too incomprehensible to be tied up into a neat bundle of meaning.

Endnotes

1 Vladimir Nabokov, "Signs and Symbols," in *The Norton Anthology of Poetry*, ed. Margaret W. Ferguson (New York City: W.W. Norton & Company, 2005), 1168.

2 Alexander Dolinin, "The Signs and Symbols of Nabokov's 'Signs and Symbols'," in *Anatomy of a Short Story: Nabokov's Puzzles, Codes, "Signs and Symbols*", ed. Yuri Leving (New York: Continuum International Publishing Group, 2012).

3 Nabokov, "Signs and Symbols," 1165.

4 Ibid, 1168.

5 Ibid, 1169.

6 Ibid, 1166.

7 Ibid, 1167.

8 Ibid, 1168.

9 Dolinin, "The Signs and Symbols of Nabokov's 'Signs and Symbols.'

10 Nabokov, "Signs and Symbols," 1166.

11 Ibid.

12 Ibid, 1168.

13 Ibid, 1167.

14 Rita M. Brown, "Nabokov's Signs and Symbols and the Holocaust," *Explicator*, vol. 73, no. 2 (2015): 103.

15 Ibid.

16 Nabokov, "Signs and Symbols," 1168.

17 Ibid.

18 Ibid, 1166.

19 Ibid, 1165.

20 Ibid, 1166.

21 Ibid.

22 Ibid.

23 Ibid.

24 "holocaust, n." OED Online, Oxford University Press, September 2019, www.oed.com/view/Entry/87793. Accessed 2 December 2019.

25 Nabokov, "Signs and Symbols," 1168.

26 Ibid.

27 Ibid.

28 John B. Lane, "A Funny Thing About Nabokov's 'Signs and Symbols'," *Russian Language Journal / Русский Язык*, vol. 40, no. 136/137 (1986): 151.

29 Alexander N. Drescher, "Arbitrary Signs and Symbols'" in *Anatomy of a Short Story: Nabokov's Puzzles, Codes, "Signs and Symbols",* ed. Yuri Leving (New York: Continuum International Publishing Group, 2012).

30 Brown, "Nabokov's Signs and Symbols and the Holocaust," 101–104.

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Slaves at Rome Captured in the Jewish War

Jesse Moss

That there was a Jewish presence in Roman Italy from the 3rd century BC onwards is generally accepted; this community's existence warrants an exploration of its interactions with Rome's most notorious institutions—slavery. Given the overabundance of scholarship relating to Roman history, Jewish history, and the events in the Mediterranean around the emergence and development of Christianity, it is surprising that not a single monograph exists of contemporary scholarship which explores Jews *as slaves* at Rome. This is something that is conspicuously lacking given that Jewish slaves are taken as a given at almost all levels—in the sources and in the historiography, there are no questions that there were Jewish slaves, but there are no questions regarding their lived experience. As perhaps the largest slave society that ever was, this facet of Ancient history requires more work to be done on the lives of peoples impacted by Rome's empire. Regardless, although the historiography may be lacking a work specifically dedicated to Jewish slaves at Rome, there is enough extant evidence and tangential scholarship to attempt to reconstruct the lived experience of these people. This examination will be restricted primarily to the Flavian period, when Jewish slaves at Rome are most widely accepted as having existed, are well documented, and the historiography offers the most insight for a synthesis of the material and literary sources to explain how Jews were able to maintain their Jewishness in slavery—something that is incontrovertibly attested to in stone. That Jews were able to maintain their cultural and religious affiliation while enslaved at Rome is revealed by the funerary inscriptions of *Jewish* freedpeople. If the Arch of Titus represents the start of this journey as slaves at Rome, the epitaphs of freed people mark their end.

The Jewish community at Rome did not necessarily begin with manumitted slaves; this scenario is likely, but historians have merely been able to speculate on the first Jewish arrival in Roman Italy as nonpermanent groups who did not seek nor enjoy the benefits of citizenship. Recent scholarship has argued that "[t]he attraction Rome had for the Jews during the second century B.C. [the earliest that sources attest to a Jewish community] cannot be compared to that of the Imperial period. In [Silvia Cappelletti's] opinion the Jewish presence was sporadic."[1] The makeup of this smaller, pre-Imperial community, would not have been composed mainly of manumitted people. Rather, this early community would have been seen and likely classified as *peregrini* [foreigners], with certain legal rights but ethnically distinct from the Latins.[2] The inherent status under law [either permitted or not] of Jews in Rome is especially pertinent when one keeps in mind the fact that Jews in Rome prior to the conquest of Judea were allies of Rome, not yet a conquered peoples[3]—although this is not to paint a picture of a community without hardship. The main source for this initial Jewish community is an edict of expulsion from 139 BC.[4] [5] But

> [i]t seems reasonably certain that the [edict] refers not to a settled community but rather to a small group of temporary sojourners, whether they were merchants, [etc.]… These were requested to "go back home" (*repetere domos suas*), a phrase hardly applicable to permanent residents.[6]

The nature of this edict allows for the conception of *different* groups of Jews with *different* statuses at Rome—or at the very least, under Roman law. This is what makes the condition of Jewish slaves brought after the fall of Jerusalem in 70 AD so different: there was no longer a place to return to.

The scholarly consensus is that given the specific language used, this edict could imply that Jews holding citizenship in Rome not be expelled, attested to by the proclaiming authority:

"Hispalus, the Preator Peregrinus."[7] The legal classification of *these* Jews [addressed in the edict], not citizens but as specifically *peregini*, lets on the nuance and stratification of Jewish coreligionists under Roman rule. It leaves the door open for a conception of Jewish *citizens* remaining in Rome who would have been unaddressed by the edict of expulsion. Cappelletti makes this claim when speculating on the possibility of a Jewish community at Rome who descended from the prisoners "captured and taken to the city after the end of the Syrian war… [possibly] includ[ing] Jews after Judea had been conquered by Antiochus III in 199 B.C."[8] This is speculation that Erich Gruen also engages in, pointing out "that Jews [fighting] in the cause of Antiochus is logical, even inevitable. And some surely found themselves in Rome and Italy as captives, slaves and eventually freedmen."[9]

The legalism of the Roman system, and the importance of linguistic analysis in reconstructing historical reality, in addition to the overall lack of sources from this period, allow for the possibility of Jews "as *servi*, [who] should have become *liberti* in a few years and were not subjected the *iurisdictio* of a preator pregrinus."[10] The stratification of the Jews under Roman control is revealed in the fact that

> Rome seems to maintain a steady policy towards the Jews, dealing separately with Eretz-Israel and with each community of the Diaspora, whose behaviour often made this policy easier. The Western Diaspora [Spain] apparently does not react to the dramatic fall of Jerusalem in 70 C.E. and to the revolt of Bar Kochba; consequently, the Empire does not carry out any reprisal towards these peripheral areas. The Roman community is not an exception…[11]

This lack of solidarity, if you will, amongst Jews throughout the Mediterranean world is further complicated when one projects this reality on the lived experience of Jewish slaves taken after 70 AD—another layer of competing identities within a Jewish Diaspora framework is added to the picture.

> We know from the Acts of the Apostles that Jerusalem had a Synagogue of the Libertines, that is, of the Freedmen… The Name of one of the congregations in ancient Rome is to be understood in precisely the same way. The Vernaclesian Synagogue comprised the descendants of *vernae*, or home-bred slaves, who had all or nearly all grown up as freedmen. The name of the congregation was retained, as was the case in Jerusalem, long after its members were all free born.[12]

It is clear then, from within an internal-Jewish communal perspective, that Jewish slaves and their descendants formed a subgroup within the Jewish community. This phenomenon is further attested to by the many Jewish slaves who "endeavoured to remain faithful to the customs of their fathers', and where such people existed in sufficient numbers [in the Diaspora] congregations for that purpose tended to come into being."[13]

Margaret Williams gives the example of the "congregation (*synagogai*) of the Augustesians and Agrippesians… thought to have originated among Jewish slaves and freedmen in the households of Augustus and Agrippa."[14] Although Leon takes issue with the veracity of this conception,[15] the fact that the names of the synagogues reflect a myth of origin in slavery, and that these names were continued for centuries after the initial founding, by generations of freeborn Jews, reveals that Jewish Diaspora identity grounded in slavery and manumission was a potent communal force. But at the same time, the conception of Jewish slaves and former slaves as unique or as an 'other' needs to be tempered with the counter-evidence of an overall Jewish cohesion at Rome within communal structures. Williams rejects "the collegiate[16] model [as] seriously deficient as an explanation for the structure of the Roman Jewish community,"[17] pointing out how the language used to describe the community by Josephus and Philo, as a single entity, reveals a high degree of centralized structure, as does, Williams points out, the interactions and legal record or the Roman authorities in dealing with the Jewish community.[18] The unity of the "Jewish community" in Diaspora contexts in the Ancient Mediterranean is also

revealed in relations with Jewish slaves—this is patently found in the stipulations that a Jewish community aid "their fellow-Jews… by providing the money needed to purchase their freedom"[19] when it was discovered that a Jewish slave had appeared in a given locale.

This image of Jewish slave experiences changes with the First Jewish War and the rise of the Flavian dynasty: the nature of Jewish enslavement shifts from incidentally Jewish (i.e. in the above cases regarding the Jewish allies of Antiochus) to overtly so with the Roman conquest of Judea.

> We find no effects of [the Jewish War, and the later Bar Kochba Revolt] upon the Jewish community at Rome, though they could not have remained unaware of the huge number of Jewish captives that streamed into the city, of the sufficient increase of the Jewish slave population, of the mass destruction of captive Jews who were compelled to amuse the Romans in gladiatorial combats and wild beast hunts.[20]

This invective on the part of Vogelstein against the Jews of Rome also has the consequence of separating, within a historiographic perspective, the Jews of Rome from *Jewish slaves* at Rome in Flavian times. For Vogelstein [albeit in translation from the German] these new Jewish slaves represent an element *outside* of the "Jewish community at Rome"—something this community fails to, or cannot, reconcile with. The moral peril of othering Jewish slaves at Rome by Jewish citizens is epitomized in the only Jewish literary source of the event—Josephus's chronicle of the *Jewish War* and the triumph. Mary Beard offers insightful analysis into the problems this influx of Jewish slaves could have posed for Jewish citizens, foremost among them Josephus.

> Anyone who had read the rest of the *Bellum Judaicum* would have known exactly where in this procession [the Triumph] its author belonged. But for the grace of Titus, Josephus himself would have been on display, re-enacting his own capture; not writing the show up from a (no doubt) ring-side seat.[21]

Although Beard's analysis is coming from the perspective of evaluating Josephus as a literary source, she also conveniently reveals the communal strife that the influx of slaves and captives

from the Jewish War might have had on the not-enslaved Jews of Rome [painfully clear in Josephus's case, given that he was a Palestinian Jew who indeed took up arms against Rome].

Given all this, one can begin to conceive of the lived experience of Jewish slaves at Rome taken as captives as a result of the Jewish War. These individuals can be found in three inscriptions dating coeval to the Jewish war. The inscriptions' explicit mention of manumission or capture, and the subjects' Jewishness are the most incontrovertible evidence of the phenomenon of Jewish slavery at Rome, as they explicitly link, as a summary of the commemorated's life, their Jewishness and slavery. As Mary Beard points out in her analysis of Josephus's quality as a source given his objectively unlikely manumission, prisoners captured in the Jewish War knew of their likely gruesome end—this made continued survival in slavery and later manumission all the more gratifying in the course of an average person's life. Of the three epitaphs extant that David Noy reproduces of freedpeople in his *Jewish Inscriptions of Western Europe* (v.1), inscription 188[22], of "Alucius Roscius, freedman of Gaius," is the most tenuous to assert as a captive from the Jewish Wars. Nonetheless, the approximate dating does not rule out such speculation. The fact that the epitaph is in Latin, and was found in Villamesías, Spain, situates Alucius's life as one othered from the established Jewish diaspora communities, who, on the whole, seemingly lived in Greek.[23] [24] All of this points in the direction consistent with our understanding of natal alienation and the severing of social ties—especially in the context of a conquered peoples, and the Roman desire to find stability in dispersing a homogenous group of slaves lest they become a corporate entity tempted to revolt based on ethnic ties.[25] It is not too much of a stretch to entertain the idea that, having been captured in the Jewish Wars, Alucius Roscius found himself at a slave market in Rome, bought and sold under the auspices of Imperial

policy to dispense with these captives throughout the empire. In a survey of war captives taken as slaves, K.R. Bradley accepts that the "subsequent history of all these people is not certain, and it should not be automatically assumed that all were imported to Rome and Italy"[26]—applying this to the captives of the Jewish War in conceiving of some kind of imperial policy to dispense with slaves in the Flavian period; it is not unbelievable that a Palestinian Jew could end up in Roman Spain. That the inscription makes known that Alucius Roscius was a Jew, and that this is the only other information after the man who manumitted him, reveals that these two facets of his life were most important to be conveyed in stone for posterity. Given the relative rarity of slavery and manumission on Jewish epitaphs—according to Leon's earlier survey "[t]here is not a single mention in our catacomb inscriptions of either slaves or freedmen,"[27] and in Noy's later compilation there are only three [the three used for this paper's dataset], the inclusion of the status of the person as a freedman must be reconciled with, as it sets apart the lived experience of Alucius Roscius from his contemporary coreligionists. The Jewish dynamics of an enslaved [and eventually manumitted] Jew in the world of post-Roman conquest of Judea would have made existence in the community difficult. What would this have meant to a Jew enslaved as a result of this insurrection, living in the midst of an influential Diaspora population of citizens and freedpeople? Given the rarity of slavery and manumission being mentioned on Jewish inscriptions, and the overall trends in the literary sources and historiography to downplay or leave unexplored the experience of Jewish slaves, the pointed mention of manumission in the context of Jewish funerary epigraphy can be seen as a shaking off of the injustices felt by those who survived the consequences of the Jewish War. Given the rarity of Jewish inscriptions which make mention of enslavement, in contrast to myriad Jewish inscriptions that make mention of the

position of *archon* of the Jewish community [synagogues], in the intra-Jewish context the inclusion of both one's religion as a Jew and social/economic status as a manumitted person seems to reject social convention that was unavailable to Jewish slaves captured in 70 AD.

Social rejection from the broader Jewish community on account of one's status as a former slave taken in the Jewish War can also be found in the funerary epitaph of Lucius Aiacius Dama, from around Aquileia in Northern Italy near present day Venice.[28] Noy dates this epitaph more concretely to the 1st century BC in the entry, but concedes that a "1st century A.D. date cannot be entirely ruled out."[29] Running with the latter dating, one can situate Lucius Aiacius Dama's life contemporary to the Jewish war and the Flavian period. Of the information that Aiacius Dama leaves behind we have: "freedman of Publius, Jew, customs house worker, made (the tomb) while he was alive (or happily fulfilled his vow)."[30] Here again there is the isolating factor that Aiacius Dama includes his status as a former slave, as well as his occupation as customs house worker. According to Leonard Rutgers, who engages in quantitative analysis of Jewish inscriptions,

> [o]ne of the most striking features of Jewish funerary inscriptions from Rome is the contrast between the relatively-frequent occurrence of references to community-related functions and the absence of other types of reference, such as references to occupational status.[31]

The fact that Aiacius Dama then includes his job at the port, and the information that he is Jewish without a position in the community, makes his epitaph somewhat subversive given the overall trend in Jewish funerary epigraphy. There seems to be a vindictiveness in the inclusion that Aiacius Dama made the inscription himself [or even more so with the interpretation that he "fulfilled his vow"], which bolsters his lived experience as conveyed in the epitaph: he wanted those who looked at his grave to know that he was manumitted, that he was Jewish, that he

engaged in commerce, and that he approved this message. In contrast to the many Jewish epitaphs that focus on more staid aspects of life -archon of the synagogue, the word "peace"—Aiacius Dama's epitaph can almost seem quarrelsome. But the root of this argument lies in Aiacius Dama informing us that he is *a Jew*.

Similar to the inscription of Alucius Roscius above, Aiacius Dama's epitaph is in Latin. This uniqueness needs to be read into the fact that

> Greek lent itself more than did Latin to the formation of the 'typically-Jewish' epithets we encounter in these inscriptions; Greek was valued perhaps because it was used in the liturgy… Greek perhaps also reminded Jews of their home-country…[32]

Rather than attesting to the distance these two Jewish slaves had from their homeland and culture, it demonstrates the opposite when we read their experience into the institution of Roman slavery. It seems more likely that someone captured after the Jewish War would more aggressively be made to give up their culture and native tongue than those Diaspora Jews born as free Roman citizens. As explored, these Jews were clearly Romans first—paradoxically they would have experienced communal life in Greek in Rome, by virtue of their unquestionable Romaness—the same could not be said for a Jewish Slave taken in 70 AD. These Jews were the enemies of Rome—and thus their epitaphs reflect their lived experience in slavery—one possibly of desired cultural erasure. A pattern begins to emerge from these two epitaphs that reify the differences among the Jewish slaves taken in 70 AD and established Diaspora Jews as reflected in the literary sources and historiography.

The third epitaph in the dataset available from Noy of Jewish slaves at Rome in the Flavian period is also the most exact:

> Claudia Aster, prisoner from Jerusalem. Tiberius Claudius Proculus (?), imperial freedman, took care (of the epitaph). I ask you to make sure you take care that no-one casts down my inscription contrary to the law. She lived 25 years.[33]

In a certain sense, and for lack of a better word, this epitaph is the most 'authentic' evidence of Jewish slavery at Rome given that there is no mention that Claudia Aster was manumitted—only that she was captured. Found near Naples, Noy expounds on the complexity of interpreting this inscription, albeit paradoxically given the bounty of information it conveys relative to partial inscriptions and those without the ability to be more accurately dated. Noy points out that "Aster" is likely a latinized version of "Esther," and she "would have acquired her Roman name from the Imperial freedman… if he was her owner and then patron too;" it is also possible that Proculus was Jewish, which is not beyond the pale given that [Noy citing Philo] "there were many Jewish freedmen in Italy at this time."[34] In speculating that they were husband and wife, Noy considers that Claudia Aster was "under the minimum age of manumission established by the *Lex Aelia Sentia*, and marriage was a valid reason for manumission;"[35] but from a Jewish legal perspective, "the rabbis were opposed to marriages with slaves. They did not consider marriages between slaves and freeborn Israelites valid marriages and declared all offspring of slave mothers slaves."[36] Similar to the Roman perspective Jewish authorities viewed "sexual relations with [slave women] to have been taken for granted but were nevertheless viewed with disdain."[37] In contrast to the information provided in the epitaphs of Alucius Roscius and Aiacius Dama, it is obvious, given the credit taken for the epitaph on the part of Tiberius Claudius Proculus, that Claudia Aster's experience as a slave likely involved [possibly unwilling] physical intimacy. The tone of ownership apparent in the epitaph makes clear Claudia Aster's lack of autonomy in life; this can be contrasted to the willfulness of Aiacius Dama's epitaph, which he informs us he made for himself.

Regardless of the nature of Claudia Aster's relationship to the Imperial freedman, similar analysis as done above for the two male Jewish freedmen can be conducted to reconstruct Claudia Aster's personal experience as one that likely deviated from the Jews of the established diaspora community. In contrast to inscriptions of other Jewish women, there is similarly no mention of involvement with Jewish communal institutions of the city. That the inscription is also in Latin—like the other two Jewish inscriptions above—speaks to her likely alienation from the broader Jewish community: this is compounded given the fact that Naples was also a centre of Greek culture in the Roman world.[38] Whether or not Claudia Aster lived life in Greek or Latin, her master—the patron of her epitaph—thought it fitting to convey her life in Latin with her epitaph.

When taken together, these three epitaphs reveal a profound difference in lived experience from the wider Jewish community; they are the only epitaphs that include information about their statuses—former or until death—as slaves, and as Jews, among extant Jewish inscriptions. That all three inscriptions are also in Latin, the non-normative language of Jewish inscriptions in the Roman world, further delineates these three people as separate from their coreligionists.

In the historical sources and the historiography there is an aversion to exploring the lived experiences, to concede on a humane level that there were Jewish slaves. Josephus too was "much besotted with the Flavians"[39] to really harp on about the "standard butchery in the Roman arena… with the slaughter of more than 2,500 Jewish prisoners with the usual mixture of hand to hand fighting, wild beasts and human torches."[40] Philo too suffers from an elitism, ensconced in the Greek philosophical tradition;[41] it would also be unfair and anachronistic to expect a human

suffering-oriented take on Jewish slavery at Rome from these elite authors. In contrast, the material sources offer insight into the lived experience. Jewish slaves at Rome of the Flavian period would have been constantly reminded of their humiliation and their otherness in relation to freeborn Diaspora Jews. The extensive minting of *Iudaea Capta* coins would have been an ever-present image to all who traded of "the Jewish captive, the subordination and otherness of the conquered."[42] Furthermore, monumental architecture that pertained to the Jewish defeat -

> the temple of Peace, completed in 75, where the spoils from the Temple were stored; the posthumous Arch of Titus on the Via Sacra, with relief sculptures on either side of the passage depicting the triumphal procession; another, no longer extant, in the Circus Maximus, erected in 80[43]

all would have likely been talked about, if not personally seen, by those enslaved after the conquest of Judea and with whom they interacted. These signs of Palestinian-Jewish humiliation, on top of their own personal enslavement, would have separated them from the free born Diaspora Jews who did not participate in the conflict in the homeland against Rome. The subsequent sense of alienation is attested to in the outlier epitaphs of Jewish slaves as discussed above. In multiple ways these epitaphs are unapologetic—one does not put things they are ashamed of on their own epitaph. By proclaiming their status as captured or freedpeople *and* Jews, they demonstrate that their unique suffering did not alter their personal religious identity, especially as seen in contrast to normative contemporary Jewish epigraphy. They were regardless able to obstinately, maybe even subversively, maintain their Jewishness while enslaved.

Endnotes

1 Silvia Cappelletti, *The Jewish Community of Rome: From the Second Century B.C. to the Third Century C.E.* (Boston: Brill, 2006), 40.

2 Myles Lavan, *Slaves to Rome: Paradigms of Empire in Roman Culture* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2013), 32-35.

3 Cappelletti, *Jewish Community of Rome*, 41.

4 Herman Vogelstein, *Jewish Community Series - Rome,* trans. Moses Hadas (Philadelphia: The Jewish Publication Society, 1940) 9.

5 Cappelletti, *Jewish Community of Rome*, 33.

6 Harry J. Leon, *The Jews of Ancient Rome* (Peabody, Massachusetts: Hendrickson Publishers, 1995), 3-4.

7 Vogelstein, *Rome*, 10.

8 Cappelletti, *Jewish Community of Rome*, 41.

9 Erich S. Gruen, *Diaspora: Jews Amidst Greeks and Romans* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2002), 17.

10 Cappelletti, *Jewish Community of Rome,* 41.

11 Cappelletti, *Jewish Community of Rome*, 39.

12 Vogelstein, *Rome*, 16-17.

13 Margaret Williams, "Jews and Jewish communities in the Roman empire" in *Experiencing Rome: Culture, Identity and Power in the Roman Empire*, ed. Janet Huskinson (New York: Routledge, 2000), 310.

14 Williams, "Jews and Jewish communities in the Roman empire," 310.

15 Leon, *The Jews of Ancient Rome*, 141.

16 The argument being that "no umbrella council was ever possible for them, basically, because the collegiate nature of their synagogues (i.e. the fact that they were private, club-like, and above all, autonomous institutions) precluded the emergence of a body of that kind. Such is the conventional view of the structure of Roman Jewry." (Williams in Goodman, 215).

17 Margaret Williams, "The Structure of the Jewish Community in Rome," in *Jews in a Graeco-Roman World*, ed. Martin Goodman (New York: Oxford University Press, 1998), 216.

18 Williams, "The Structure of the Jewish Community in Rome," 224.

19 Leon, *The Jews of Ancient Rome*, 237.

20 Vogelstein, *Rome*, 46.

21 Mary Beard, "The Triumph of Flavius Josephus," in *Flavian Rome: Culture, Image, Text*, eds. A. J. Boyle and William J. Dominik (Boston: Brill, 2003), 551.

22 David Noy, *Jewish Inscriptions of Western Europe* 1, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993), JIWE 188.

23 Leon, *The Jews of Ancient Rome*, 75.

24 Leonard Victor Rutgers, *The Jews in Late Ancient Rome: Evidence of Cultural Interaction in the Roman DiasporaI* (Leiden: Brill, 2000), 176.

25 Thomas Weidemann, *Greek and Roman Slavery* (New York: Routledge, 1989), 199-200.

26 K. R. Bradley, *Slaves and Masters in the Roman Empire* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1987), 86.

27 Leon, *The Jews of Ancient Rome*, 237.

28 JIWE 7.

29 Noy, *Jewish Inscriptions of Western Europe,* 12.

30 Noy, *Jewish Inscriptions of Western Europe,* 11.

31 Rutgers, *The Jews in Late Ancient Rome,* 199.

32 Rutgers, *The Jews in Late Ancient Rome,* 202.

33 JIWE 26.

34 Noy, *Jewish Inscriptions of Western Europe,* 45.

35 Noy, *Jewish Inscriptions of Western Europe,* 45.

36 Katherine Hezser, *Jewish Slavery in Antiquity* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2005), 197.

37 Hezser, *Jewish Slavery in Antiquity*, 198.

38 Oxford Classical Dictionary, s.v. Neapolis.

39 Beard "The Triumph of Flavius Josephus," 558.

40 Beard "The Triumph of Flavius Josephus," 553.

41 Oxford Classical Dictionary, s.v. Philon.

42 Jane M. Cody, "Conquerors and Conquered on Flavian Coins," in *Flavian Rome: Culture, Image, Text*, eds. A. J. Boyle and William J. Dominik (Boston: Brill, 2003), 110.

43 E. Mary Smallwood, *The Jews Under Roman Rule* (Boston: Brill, 2001), 329.

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KEIRA KENNY graduated with a B.A. in History and Minor in Jewish Studies in February of 2019. She is particularly interested in modern Jewish history, the Second World War, and Communist/post-Communist history. After briefly moving to New York City, she is currently back in Montreal and working in finance. She enjoys learning about the daily impact of macro news flow events on the economy and is considering pursuing Concordia's part-time grad school program in History alongside her job.

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