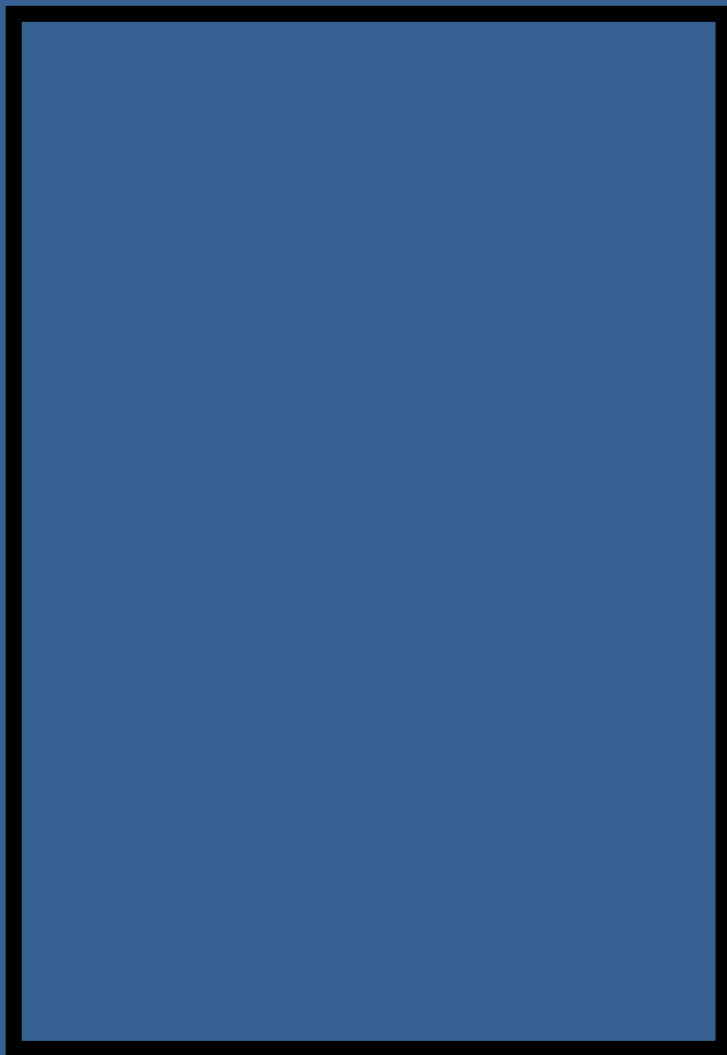


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ÒRussifyÓ the Jews living in the Soviet Union. Lauren Kranc, finally, takes a critical look at the role of women in 20th century Yiddish literature.

I have learned from and greatly enjoyed the insights that these five young student-scholars provide into the vibrant research going on in the many fields of Jewish StudiesÑ from politics and sociology to literature and history. I am confident that you will enjoy t

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Defining Jewishness:
Civil and Religious Tension in Israeli Politics
Lara Rodin

The question of "Who is a Jew?" is a cause for popular debate and is a source of significant tension in Israel's political and social ethos. Israel, the political expression of the Jewish nation, was built on the foundational values of Jewish peoplehood, land, and religion. The question of who is a Jew is fundamental to populating the land, its political leadership, and preserving the state's Jewish character. Since achieving statehood, the definition of who is a Jew has evolved in accordance with these often competing values.

In 1948, when Israel achieved statehood, the question of which aspects of halakhah Jewish religious law, should characterize the Jewish identity of the state was considered. David Ben Gurion, the first Prime Minister of Israel and leader of the prominent labour party, Mapai, sought to establish a relationship with the religious political parties. He hoped to achieve a compromise with these parties that would allow Israel to function as a civic, democratic state but continue to be a Jewish state by nature, made up of Jews and governed in some aspects by Jewish religious law. Unfortunately, Ben Gurion's vision of the compromise between religion and state proved difficult to achieve and impossible to maintain.

This paper will explore how competing interests between religion and state Israel has resulted in strict and incongruent definitions of who is a Jew. The

independence, similar to that which they possessed in Ottoman and Mandate Palestine.³

Though initially drafted in 1947, before the establishment of the state of Israel, this "Status Quo Agreement" letter signified the influence that would be maintained by the religious authorities and their rabbinic court systems regarding matters of personal status, Shabbat, education, and kashrut.⁴ The agreement stated that Shabbat should be the clear, state-wide day of rest. This clause meant that, in accordance with halakha all state-run institutions would be closed on this day. Additionally, autonomy over a state-supported religious education system was granted to Orthodox parties, and the government guaranteed that all state institutions would uphold the Jewish dietary laws of kashrut.⁵ With regard to personal status, Ben Gurion vowed to "prevent the

character.¹⁵ According to religious Zionists, who ground their understanding in halakha Judaism is both a religion and a nationality.¹⁶ Meanwhile, secular Israelis focus their attention on immigration and settlement building and have historically defined Jewishness more liberally. They understand Judaism to be a declaration of culture, ethnicity, religiosity, and nationalism. The Status Quo Agreement's regulations regarding personal status (ishut) of citizens in Israel compared to the revised Law of Return depict the tension inherent in the differences between halackic and civil definitions of Jewishness!¹⁷

Though automatic citizenship in Israel defines Judaism relatively liberally under the Law of Return, the institutions of marriage, divorce, conversion, burial, and other matters regarding personal status in Israel have been consigned to religious law.¹⁸ This has effectively resulted in two separate understandings of who is a Jew in Israel.¹⁹ However, it is evident in certain cases of enhanced public pressure that the application of religious law can be mitigated through the Supreme Court, which does exercise authority above the rabbinic court.²⁰

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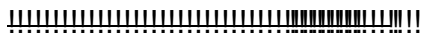
¹⁵ Liebman and Don-Yehiya, "The Status Quo," 1.

¹⁶ Arian, Politics

Civil -Religious Tension in the Political Arena

Issues of personal status have characterized the debate between the secular and religious camps in Israel.²¹ This debate has been framed in terms of the nature of public life versus private rights, in light of the principle of democracy.²² There is a general consensus among Israelis that Israel should be a Jewish state, but the extent to which religious authority should affect civil life is a conflict that has plagued the nation since statehood.²³ In the realm of Israeli politics, it has been difficult to achieve a compromise with regard to the place of religion within the state without either the religious or secular parties feeling that their rights are being infringed upon. The difficult problem of defining Jewishness in Israel illustrates this tension between religion and state.

The nature of Zionism, rooted in the concept of emancipation and autonomy for the Jewish people, could not separate Jewish character from Israeli nationality. ²⁴ Though retaining Jewish qualities is crucial to maintaining a Jewish state, religion poses a threat to democracy when it holds a stake in public policy. ²⁵ In order to safeguard democratic values, individuals in Israel are free to live as they please in their private lives, yet laws are created to promote freedom of all religions and protection of religious rights. ²⁶



²¹ Cohen, "Changes in the Orthodox Camp" 83.

²² Charles S. Liebman, *Religion, Democracy and the Israeli Society* (Amsterdam, Netherlands: Harwood Academic Publishers, 1997), 80.

²³ Arian, *Politics in Israel*, 349.

²⁴ Shimshoni, *Israeli Democracy* 36.

²⁵ Liebman, *Religion* 20.

²⁶ Israel First Knesset, *The Debate on a Constitution in the Middle East: Documents and Readings on Society, Politics and Foreign Relations, 1948 to the Present*, ed. Itamar Rabinovich and Jehuda Reinharz (Hanover and London: 2008), 96.

The Ministry of Religions was created in order to protect the affairs of each major religious group within Israel, guaranteeing the commitments made by leading secular parties to the religious parties.²⁷ The democratic system set up by the provisional government of the Yishuv is highly criticized for having given orthodox institutions political space to impose matters of religious interest on the nonreligious citizen.²⁸

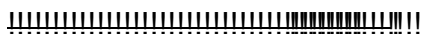
Ben Gurion's leading labour party often made concessions to meet the desires of the religious parties.³⁴

include the 1952 Law of Citizenship, which granted citizenship to every Jew, his or her spouse, children and grandchildren, as well as the 1953 law, which established the authority of rabbinical courts with regard to matters of marriage and divorce.³⁸ Israel's gates were open to all ritual (ethnic) Jews—the Law of

if only by nationality. ⁴⁷ According to halakha,

Jewish Israeli army officer who had married a non -Jew outside of Israel.⁵² After Shalit's return to Israel, his children were not considered Jewish by halakha⁵³. Shalit, wanting to register his children as Jewish citizens of Israel, struggled against the court system, whose definition of Judaism at the time required halakha legitimacy. Shalit's children obtained Jewish national registration but were still withheld Jewish religious registration.⁵⁴ This granting of registration caused tension between religious parties and the Knesset, which then amended the law to read that a Jew is one born of a Jewish mother or converted [Orthodox].⁵⁵ After this distinction was made, Shalit's third child was denied citizenship on these grounds. Once again, the Israeli court system struggled to define Jewish national identity against Jewish religious identity.

The Shalit case made a significant impact on policy regarding the Law of Return. After strong reconsideration, in order to compensate Israeli secular nationalists like Shalit who suffered under the restrictions of the rabbinic court, the Law of Return was amended in 1970 to grant automatic citizenship rights to Gentile spouses, to the children of mixed marriages, even to the adult descendants of mixed marriages.⁵⁶ However, the Rabbinate continued to reserve to itself the purely religious questions of marriages and divorce.⁵⁷ This created many challenges for non-halakhic Jews granted citizenship in Israel, as



⁵² Sachar, A History of Israel, 607.

⁵³ Arian, Politics in Israel, 354.

⁵⁴ Shindler, A History of Modern Israel, 87.

⁵⁵ Arian, Politics in Israel, 354.

⁵⁶ Sachar, A History of Israel, 607.

⁵⁷ Ibid.

they were unable to seek marriage, divorce, or burial rights under the Israeli Rabbinate.

Currently, the Orthodox Rabbinate's interpretation of who is a Jew is politically binding for all Jewish citizens, secular or religious, as they have a monopoly over Jewish marriage and divorce within the state.⁵⁸ In the past, not only did the Rabbinate control marriage, divorce, and burial within the state, but they also had a monopoly over conversion within the state, which was limited strictly to the Orthodox stream. The 1998 Conversion Law, espoused by the Neeman Commission, attempted to resolve the lack of clarity regarding the acceptability of Reform and Conservative conversion in Israel. It was decided

identity card.⁶² Despite these important steps toward a trend in denominational cooperation and recognition, the second-class status of non-Orthodox expressions of Judaism is an ongoing problem in Israeli politics with regard to conversion, marriage, death, and burial.⁶³

Defining Jewishness: Civil and Religious Tension in

to gain the support of religious parties. This has meant that religious parties have had a great deal of influence over government policies and laws.

Though religion is a crucial aspect of the internalization of social virtues and civic responsibility in Israel, it has the capacity to impose on individual freedoms.⁸⁰ It is clear that religion, when unmitigated by civil politics, poses a challenge to state democracy and to personal rights and freedoms. However, separating religion from politics completely in Israel would jeopardize the Jewish nature of the state as well as the religious rights of Mizrahi and ultra-Orthodox party members.

The widespread problem of defining Jewishness and the consequent challenges that have faced many Israelis has resulted in the need for civil marriage in Israel. The civil rights movement in Israel has seen a decline in in-state marriages since the Chief Rabbinate,

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Antisemite Skeches

Antisemite Sketches Joan Meyer

Jean Paul Sartre's *Portrait of the Antisemite* (1945) offers an astute analysis
of anti-

Semitism remains the same seventyyears after he wrote

administration, eventually forced its way into our classrooms reveals the continuing need for writing like that of Sartre to be widely read.

One event rid me of my illusions about anti-Semitism. Our class had a substitute teacher and she allowed us to play a game called "Celebrity" after we had finished our lesson. The rules, similar to charades, state that each player writes down a celebrity's name. In the following rounds, pairs draw a slip of paper from a hat and work together to guess the person based first on a word and an action. This game was intended to be innocent fun. However, three separate individuals placed the name "Hitler" into the hat, one of whom I had considered my friend. I vehemently protested, stating that Hitler was an infamous historical figure, by no means a celebrity like everyone else's choice of actors, musicians, writers, and artists. Furthermore, it was offensive and incredibly insensitive to Jewish students to include it.

pleaded with the teacher to put a stop to this and, once again, she refused to do so.

My experience with this game of charades was a textbook demonstration of Sartre's assertion that "if he has become an antisemite, it is because one cannot be antisemitic"

perhaps I met the Russian standards of beauty particularly well, until I engaged in a revealing conversation with my host, who was the mother of my roommate at boarding school. Unprovoked, she commented on my hair, stating "You have curly hair." I agreed, as this was a statement of fact, and I attributed her abruptness to Russian speech patterns until she went on to remark that "white people do not have curly hair." I knew immediately she was implying that the only people with fair skin and curly hair are European Jews. She was saying to me: you are Jewish. My well-intentioned roommate later tried to explain: "She is confused by you because you look Aryan and Jewish at the same time. You have fair skin and light eyes but your forehead is high and wide, your nose is well defined and there's a certain curve to the corners of your mouth. She is trying to categorize." Suddenly, all the comments I had heard during my visit came back to me with a stark clarity, contextualized in all the racism I had witnessed in Russia.

The comments that I heard throughout my time in Russia often came from my host family. They insisted that Russian Jews had betrayed their motherland by immigrating to the United States, asserting that such a supposedly treasonous action is only justifiable if one's life is endangered. They repeatedly claimed that this was never the case for Russian Jews. Apparently, they had incorrectly assumed I was of Russian extraction and these comments were targeted specifically at me. With the knowledge that these interactions were motivated by a specifically malicious and anti-Semitic intent, I felt targeted by my hosts and

sexually preyed upon by men whom I met in the street. My appearance confused my host, but it was fascinating to these men. I was simultaneously foreign and familiar to them. "You look like how Russia used to be," they told me, apparently assuming I was a relative of Jewish émigré women. They seemed to think my "return" to Russia was only for their enjoyment. I was lucky to avoid physical harassment, but I returned to the United States with a new relationship to the historical persecution of Russian Jews and Jewish women, especially as aligned with the discussion of the eroticization of the Jewess Sartre provides in *Portrait of the Antisemite*

While written before the invention and widespread use of the Internet, Sartre's writing also applies to harassment that I have received online. This is unsurprising, as Sartre composed *Portrait of the Antisemite* under the specter of Nazism and my abusers were British and Irish skinheads. After posting a single innocent comment on a YouTube video, these skinheads flocked to me thanks to Google Plus's policy of displaying their users' full names. They recognized "Meyer" as a Hebrew surname and bombarded me with messages under fake usernames. Usernames such as "Ziedick Bagelstien" combined stereotypes about Jews with common Jewish suffixes; accompanying profile pictures displayed obviously photographically manipulated, prominent hooked noses. The skinheads first attacked my name, and then attacked Jewish people in general. Common statements expressed sentiments such as, "people should know who is responsible for the destruction of Europe and the ruin of the white race." Behind

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story, "One of the most frightening books ever written" according to The New York Times Book Review, which delighted children and terrified adults.⁹³

The answer might lie in the connection between religion and the genres of horror and fantasy within which Gaiman works. While Gaiman is a secular author and does not promote any particular religion in his works, he is also a writer of modern fairy tales, stories that draw from several religious and mythological traditions. Many readers, myself included, are likely drawn to *Coraline* by its eponymous strong female protagonist, who serves not just as a source of inspiration but also as a savior figure. In this paper, I will first examine Gaiman's Biblical and Grimm fairy tale influences and explore the connections between the two storytelling traditions. Second, I will discuss how *Coraline* specifically incorporates religious material. Finally, I will argue that the religious and fairy tale elements of *Coraline* have the effect of casting the main character as a messiah figure. While Gaiman does not promote any specific attitude towards religion in *Coraline*, he does utilize religious motifs and ideas that are characteristic of the Grimm fairy tale tradition within which he works. Specifically, he uses Mosaic and Christian messianic rhetoric to create an empowered modern heroine distinguished by her vulnerability, selflessness, and bravery.

⁹³ Ibid., ii.

upon the children by the serpent/witch: Hansel will be fattened for killing, Gretel will be forced to do hard labor and then she too will be killed.⁹⁹ Similar to the witch in Hansel and Gretel, the Other Mother constantly feeds Coraline delicious food in order to prime the girl for her own consumption. Coraline and the siblings are both redeemed by their wits. Coraline tricks the Other Mother into opening the door that leads her back home and Gretel fools the witch into opening the oven so she can push her in. Both stories also emphasize the importance of familial love. Coraline is motivated to defeat the Other Mother by her love for her parents. In Hansel and Gretel, the children's love for one another and their mutual fidelity as an escape from their situation echoes medieval Christian tradition.¹⁰⁰

figure with his disguise. In Hansel and Gretel the witch lures the children into her home in order to trap and eat them. Similarly, the Other Mother lures Coraline into the Other World with delicious food, beautiful clothes, and interesting, attentive neighbors, doing all she can to tempt Coraline into forsaking her life in

her parents and stay with the Other Mother. The Other Mr. Bobo asks Coraline, ÒAnd what if you do everything you swore you would? What then? NothingÓ changed. YouÓll go home. YouÓll be bored. YouÓll be ignored. No one will listen to you, not really listen to you. YouÓre too clever and too quiet for them to understand. They donÓt even get your name right.Ó⁷ CoralineÓs parents also contribute to this sense of alienation by being too busy with work to play with her. They do not really care what she does as long as she does not bother them or Òmake a mess.Ó⁸ Her motherÓs refusal to buy her a pair of bright green gloves emphasizes her crushing CoralineÓs desire to stand out, indicative of CoralineÓs special status in the book:

Coraline saw some Day-Glo green gloves she liked a lot. Her mother refused to buy them for her, preferring instead to buy white socks, navy blue school underpants, four gray blouses, and a dark gray skirt. ÒBut Mum, everybody at schoolÓs got gray blouses and everything. NobodyÓs got green gloves. I could be the only one.Ó⁹

At the end of the book, Miss Spink marvels privately at Coraline, ÒWhat an extraordinary child,Ó not once, but twice.¹⁰ This reinforces the fact that Coraline has a special quality or status. The fact that this extraordinariness is a kind of messianism is referenced by Mr. Bobo after Coraline sends the Other

“The mice tell me all is good,” he said. “They say that we are our savior,
Caroline.”¹¹ This notion of being a savior is reminiscent of messianism.

Another general messianic quality Gaiman bestows on Coraline is the nature of her quest – she literally saves the souls of three other children, in addition to her parents, from an evil figure. When Coraline demands her parents back, the Other Mother traps Coraline in a room behind a mirror as punishment for her supposed insolence. In this room, Coraline meets three ghost children who have been forgotten there. When she explains to them that she is looking for her real parents, one of the children pleads, “Peradventure [É] if you could win your mamma and your papa back from the beldam, you could also win free our souls.”¹² The concept of a messianic figure being respon

“So that’s why you’re going back to her world then?” said
the cat. “Because your father once saved you from wasps?”
“Don’t be silly,” said Coraline. “I’m going back ~~for~~
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ÒYou Are Our Savior, CarolineÓMessianism in Neil GaimanÕsCoraline

give people tools. Mind tools that they can use to deal with real problems.Ó¹²⁴ In writing a modern fairy tale/horror story with Biblical roots and an empowered female lead character, Gaiman taps into the original appeal of these kinds of stories. Summed up in the epigraph that precludes the novel: ÓFairy tales are more than true: not because they tell us that dragons exist, but because they tell us that dragons can be beaten.Ó⁵

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Yiddish -Language Schools in Soviet Russia

Rhiannon Turgeon

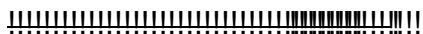
The Jewish population in Russia has been subject to a variety of regimes and governments throughout history, including during the rise of the Soviet Union. By the time of the Soviet Union's emergence, Jews in the Russian territories had already experienced centuries of tumult, beginning with the Pale of Settlement under imperial rule. This tumult continued with the new Soviet regime. After the October Revolution in 1917, the Soviet government tasked itself with the creation of a whole new education system that pushed Soviet Jews to undergo Russification through Yiddishization. The birth of Soviet -Yiddish language schools was an important step in the history of Russian Jews. This paper will demonstrate the importance of these schools to the Jewish people and will examine the goals of this new type of educational system.

Through an analysis of the institutional goals of the Soviet -Yiddish schools, the curriculum they followed, and the Jewish experience between the October Revolution and the mid -1930s, this paper will try to determine the schools' degree of success in terms of strengthening Jews' ties to the Soviet Union. This will be achieved through the study of different sources from scholarly books, government reports, newspaper articles, and testimonies. Government reports are difficult to use because of their discrepancies and biases. Government records at the time were twisted in order to make the Soviet Union look better. Additionally, the government did not collect statistics on a regular

basis. Scholarly books are a helpful alternative to government records and reports due to their relative neutrality in describing and analyzing Soviet Yiddish -language schools. Newspaper articles are also a good alternative when read critically; it is important to keep i n mind that the Soviet Union controlled the newspapers. Lastly, testimonies are a difficult source to use because of personal biases. Testimonies are often given in hindsight, which leads to an increased chance of distorted memory. Additionally, they only give the view and experience of one person and his or her family, rather than reflecting a larger populationÕs thoughts and experiences. This being said, for the purpose of this paper, testimonies are analyzed as part of an attempt to meaningfully understand how Jews viewed the Soviet school system.

Context: A Brief History of Making Jews Russian

Tsar Nicholas I was the emperor of Russia from 1824 to 1855. Nicholas I viewed nationality as the coming together of three elements: autocracy, orthodoxy, and nat ionality. ¹²⁶In 1840, the Russian government consciously embarked upon a policy aimed at bringing the Enlightenment to Russian Jews. ¹²⁷Russians seemed to believe that Jews lacked guidance. In order to help them, the minister of national enlightenment, Sergey Semionovich Uvarov, established new schools for them. At this time, the Russian governmentÕs main purpose in creating these schools was to enlighten Jews and make them more Russian: Òthe



¹²⁶ Nicholas V. Riasanovsky, ÒNicholas I, ÒEncyclopedia Britannica, <http://www.britannica.com/biography/Nicholas-I-Tsar-of-Russia>

¹²⁷ Michael Stanislawski, Tsar Nicholas I and the Jews (Philadelphia: The Jewish Publication Society of America, 1983), 59.

son Alexander III, who ruled as the emperor of Russia from 1881 to 1894!³⁴

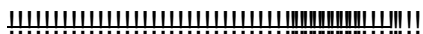
Unlike his father, Alexander III was not liberal. He believed in the Russian national identity and spent his reign trying to turn his subjects into so-called true Russians. His political ideal was a nation containing only one nationality, one language, one religion, and one form of administration; and he did his utmost to prepare for the realization of this ideal by imposing the Russian language [É] by persecuting the Jews, and by destroying the remnants of German, Polish, and Swedish institutions in the outlying provinces.³⁵

Alexander III oppressed the Jews and put an end to the new class of Russian Jewish intelligentsia that had emerged three decades earlier. He persecuted them through rural expulsions, wholesale expulsions from Moscow and St. Petersburg, exclusions from civil service positions, quota limitations in secondary and higher education and repeal of residence licenses outside the Pale.³⁶ With these draconian reforms, the Jewish people of the Pale of Settlement were reduced to their status as an oppressed minority. By the turn of the twentieth century, the founding of the first Yiddish secular school in 1898 in the province of Minsk signaled a shift in fate for Russian Jews.¹³⁷

Yiddish -Language Schools in Soviet Russia

education could shape a new generation of society.¹⁵⁰ Before the October Revolution, Lenin wrote that "Jewish national culture is a slogan of the rabbis and the bourgeoisie, a slogan of our enemies [É] Whoever, directly or indirectly, puts forward the slogan of a Jewish national culture is an enemy of the proletariat, a supporter of the old and of the caste position of the Jews, an accomplice of the rabbis and the bourgeoisie."¹⁵¹ His view did not change after the revolution. Once in power, he believed that the only answer to the Jewish question was Jews' total assimilation into the majority population of each territory of the Soviet Union. ¹⁵² This view helped prompt the creation of the Soviet Yiddish-language schools.

Later, Stalin found that the best way for the Russification process to succeed was through the Yiddishization of the Jews. The government believed that it was important for the Soviet Jewish population to avoid speaking Hebrew because it was a religious and sacred language; the government preferred that Soviet Jews speak Yiddish. Yiddishization was to be largely achieved through the Soviet school system.¹⁵³ These schools were primarily aimed at turning Jewish children into strong Russian communists. All secular courses were taught in the children's mother tongue (Yiddish) and the curriculum was based on



Soviet atheist values.¹⁵⁴ Around 1931, the Soviet Yiddish-language schools underwent a reform. After the reform, the schools' main goal was still to produce communist children, but also to teach students to become industry workers.¹⁵⁵ The importance of the creation of workers was one of the main reasons why the schools placed a strong emphasis on science and technology. The Soviet Yiddish language schools made use of the polytechnical principle of education. This type of learning environment called for the combination of education with industrial production.¹⁵⁶ The government believed that students should learn about the fundamentals of agricultural and industrial production through the study of theory and its application. Through this type of education, the Soviet Union hoped that children would easily reach an informed decision on what they planned to achieve in terms of their careers.¹⁵⁷

An additional change by the government was to divide the school year into three sections. The first section ran from September 1 to June 1 and was characterized as regular school time. The second section ran from June 1 to July 1, during which the school curriculum operated outside of the classroom, in open air. The last section of the school year ran from July 1 to September 1 and was simply full vacation.¹⁵⁸

deprivation of cultural freedom. Notably though, the curriculum still recognized the Jewish question. There was a brief yet straightforward description of the Soviet Union's Jewry and of their social position. For the era, this was a liberal way to teach Jewish history and identity.

After 1931, the school system officially abandoned progressivism.¹⁷⁰ The new aim of the Soviet Yiddish-language schools was to produce trained workers who would become good communists. This meant that students needed both a political and technical education.¹⁷¹ There was a change in the schools' curriculum, in which focus shifted from social science to more explicit forms of political propaganda.¹⁷² Soviet Yiddish

These leading questions meant for students to read the stories with a pro-communist point of view. ¹⁸²

There was a clear change in the Soviet Union's view on education before and after 1931. However, it is unknown exactly why this change happened. One can assume that if there were changes made, it was because the government must have been unsatisfied with the results that they were getting before.

Around the same time as the curriculum reform there was a change in the government's goal for the Soviet Union as a whole. The first five-year plan and the government's desire to industrialize quickly led to this large-scale change in goal, which required trained manpower. This explains the aforementioned 1931 proclamation in which the new main goal of Soviet Yiddish -language schools was to teach students to operate machinery.¹⁸³ In addition to primary and secondary schools for native Yiddish speakers, Ukraine had an extensive system of Yiddish -language industrial technical and professional schools in the early

The Jewish Experience

How did the Soviet Yiddish -language schools actually impact Jewish students as well as the larger Jewish community? Did the schools successfully make the Soviet Union's Jewry more Russian and more communist? These questions can be difficult to answer because most reports and literature on the subject are not entirely reliable. 2013, TJ E'

culture.¹⁹³ In his analysis, Dardak claims that the Soviet education system promoted the quality of languages by instructing children in their mother tongue. He also criticizes the Jewish schools of Poland for making their pupils study in Polish, which he sees as compulsory Polonization.¹⁹⁴ Ironically, he sees the Soviet Yiddish schools as inclusive and does not seem to make a link between the school system and its goal of Russification. Articles like that of Dardak can be used to demonstrate that what

food and hot soup for children under the fourth grade, even during times of famine.¹⁹⁶

These positive experiences and memories of the Soviet Yiddish schools do not mean that the institutions were successful in their Russification mission. According to a 1924 report, a Yiddish Communist writer had conducted a campaign to find out if Jewish pioneers were truly communists in their homes. The writer was upset to discover they were not truly communist; he finds among the children an appalling ignorance of Communism and an absolute indifference to what it stands for.⁹⁷

began in the mid-nineteenth century during the rule of Nicholas I. His first somewhat successful attempt at bringing the enlightenment to the Jews in 1847 involved the creation of secular Russian schools for Jews. However, as years went by and imperial Russia collapsed, new forms of government still sought to make Jews more Russian. After the October Revolution in 1917 and the rise of the Soviet Union, the Soviet government attempted to turn Jews into perfect communists who would contribute to the growth of the Soviet economy through industrial work. This attempt was carried out through Soviet Yiddish -language schools. These schools' curriculum was extremely propagandistic - everything from literature to geography courses became symbolic of the Soviet Union's power. Throughout the 1920s and early 1930s, there was an expansion of these types of schools throughout Russia, Ukraine, and White Russia. Whether the schools were truly successful in achieving their goal and in making Jews move upwards in the class system is still debatable. Upon reviewing testimonies and journal reports, I suggest that even if they were not successful, at the time many Jewish students and parents believed that the Russification through Yiddishization program was a true means to social mobility.

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Yiddish -Language Schools in Soviet Russia

Stanislawski, Michael. Tsar Nicholas I and the Jews Philadelphia: The Jewish

Reduced to Symbol: The Role of Women in Twentieth Century Yiddish Literature

Lauren Kranc

Isaac Bashevis Singer's *Satan in Goray* and Shalom Asch's *Uncle Moses* feature female protagonists Rechele and Masha who both symbolize unfulfilled promises in Jewish history. Rechele's village Goray is susceptible to the promises of redemption by means of false messianism after its destruction in the Chmielnicki Massacres. Similarly, Kuzmin's impoverished Jewish community to which Masha belongs is susceptible to the promises of the American dream, which for them is represented and controlled by wealth at the hands of Uncle Moses.

Despite different historical settings, messianism and the American dream both represent unfulfilled promises in Jewish history. Rechele and Masha symbolize these failures in the texts, each sacrificing their body to powerful men in exchange for what they believe will bring prosperity to their communities in difficult times. Although their levels of agency and ultimate fates differ, both young women ultimately sacrifice their lives for their communities. The twentieth century American setting of *Uncle Moses* gives Masha a sense of agency and confidence as a woman that Rechele, who lives in seventeenth century Poland, lacks. Due to the evolution of women's rights over time and the Western setting, Masha experiences a slightly less tragic ending than Rechele. Yet, despite the disparity in socioeconomic contexts, societies, and periods of Jewish life, Rechele and Masha both portray the role of a sacrificial figure and both

symbolize unfulfilled promise. Drawing on Satan in Goray's Rechele as a parallel, this paper will illustrate how Asch's Uncle Moses allows Masha to embody the twentieth century Yiddish literary traditional view of women as weak and powerless.

Rechele is a product of horror, brought up in superstition and fear during the seventeenth century messianic era following the Chmielnicki Massacres, thus lacking agency and moral grounding. Lacking a formal education or proper home and paranoid because of her cruel upbringing, Rechele never learns how to distinguish between right and wrong, and she is therefore susceptible to [...] the promise of redemption that begins to penetrate the town of Goray in the form of false messianism.¹⁹⁹

affianced to Uncle Moses.²¹⁴ However, as she ages, she [begins] to feel that she [will] have to pay for all this good fortune.²¹⁵ Even before Moses's marriage proposal, Masha considers herself a sacrifice to the welfare of her parents, her sisters, her relatives and all the townsfolk, realizing that she will have to suffer through a relationship with Uncle Moses to keep her family proud and comfortable.²¹⁶

In both seventeenth century Goray and twentieth century New York, a powerful male figure appears to be in control of an entire Jewish community's well-being and good fortune at the expense of a young girl's bodily agency and freedom. However, while Rechele is helpless and listless, Masha is cognizant of her sacrifice on her community's behalf. While this difference in awareness and agency showcases the divergent sociohistorical settings and roles of women in the texts, Masha and Rechele are both ultimately subject to the will of powerful men and community influence in very similar ways. Uncle Moses is the "New Pharaoh" to whom "Kuzmin [is] a faithful slave," as the entire European village is reduced to a factory in America after it emigrates from Poland.²¹⁷ Similarly, Reb Gedaliya becomes Goray's spiritual and political leader in the chaos of false

does not resist Uncle Moses's fondling, allowing him to claim ownership over her both emotionally and physically.²²³ Masha's impending marriage, which deprives her of her youth and happiness, is a shroud of gloom and silence over her refined, maidenly being, which makes her feel positive that she [is] to die [...] in a few weeks.²⁴ Uncle Moses's dominance and control over her is like an

rob them of their little share of happiness.²²⁷ Not only has her marriage to Uncle Moses never been doubted or questioned, it is considered a blessing. Masha's desire to have a normal childhood instead of abundant wealth is incomprehensible to them, as they act as slaves to the capitalist machine and as blind worshippers to the idol that is Uncle Moses, who represents the American dream. For Masha's family, her change of heart is misfortune itself as they now [stand] again upon the brink of [the] abyss that is poverty.²²⁸ Her parents have nothing in life – no self-confidence, no determination – nothing except Uncle Moses' favor [...] bought at the cost of [their] daughter's happiness.²²⁹ Masha's happiness, youth, and body seem a worthy and completely acceptable sacrifice for the obtainment of wealth and the fulfillment of their own vision of the American dream.

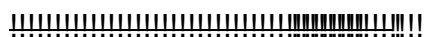
Despite her unwillingness and unhappiness in marrying Moses, Masha sees herself as a sacrifice for the greater good of her community, thus diminishing her value as an individual and as a female. Uncle Moses acknowledges that Masha's willingness, her free consent [Éwill] be absentÓ from their marriage, ironically reverting to a place where her agency matters to him, after years spent believing that Óshe [will] idolize him [...] if he shower[s] her with favors.²³⁰ Due to her parents' fear of Óthe vision of poverty that [is] before [them],Ó Masha marries Moses against her desire in order to provide for

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²²⁷ Ibid., 146.
²²⁸ Ibid., 147.
²²⁹ Ibid., 162.
²³⁰ Ibid., 70, 158.

her family.²³¹ Masha understands then that she has been brought up with a rope around her neck that she [was] sold when a child, for the benefit of her parents and the whole family [...] that she no longer has any right to happiness.²³² She understands her duty to sacrifice herself for the wealth and prosperity of her family, so despite her scorn and disgust, Masha goes through with her marriage.²³³

Masha's affair with Sam, Moses's right-hand man, and her illegitimate child by him is less of a rebellion than it is a further enslavement of herself, as she is given into [Sam's] hands as part of Uncle Moses' legacy.²³⁴ Thus, her child is also a result of her serfdom, of the pressure that [has] been exerted upon her [...] the product of an error, of her weakness.²³⁵ Despite sacrificing herself through marriage to ensure her family's good fortune, she hates herself and resents her family for being enslaved in the shop of Uncle Moses [É] that has passed into Sam's power, slaves to capitalist society and the American dream.²³⁶ Masha herself is but an employee of Uncle Moses's likewise a slave of the firm Moses Melnick and Company.²³⁷ Similarly, Rechele lives in fear, at first in the power of her Granny, then Reb Gedaliya, until she eventually is in the power of demons, who take over her body until her eventual death.²³⁸ Satan in Goray's medieval setting allows for a pre-modern, superstitious version of the same



²³¹ Ibid., 162.

²³² Ibid., 173.

²³³ Ibid., 174.

²³⁴ Ibid., 215.

²³⁵ Ibid., 226.

²³⁶ Ibid., 215.

²³⁷ Ibid., 219.

²³⁸ Singer, Satan in Goray, 68.

narrative, in which the female protagonist is overtaken and used for the sake of what is thought to be the prosperity of the community. Masha's forced slavery to capitalist America embodied by Uncle Moses at the hands of her family until she is co

References

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Editor Profiles

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Rayna Lew is a U3 Political Science student minoring in North American History and Jewish Studies. She has had a particular interest in exploring the intersections of her three areas of study and has strived to do so whenever she could. She has a particular fascination with Israel's political culture and system and the Vietnam War's place in American identity and memory. She is very much looking forward to graduating this spring, particularly so she can unashamedly watch the Edmonton Oilers' playoff games.

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