11

DAVID W. BELIN LECTURE IN AMERICAN JEWISH AFFAIRS

Before "The Holocaust"
American Jews Confront Catastrophe
1945-1962

Hasia R. Diner

The Jean & Samuel Frankel Center for Judaic Studies
University of Michigan

Before "The Holocaust"
American Jews Confront Catastrophe
1945-1962

David W. Belin Lecture in American Jewish Affairs

11

Presented March 17, 2004
at the
Jean and Samuel Frankel Center for Judaic Studies
The University of Michigan

Before "The Holocaust"
American Jews Confront Catastrophe
1945-1962

Hasia R. Diner

Ann Arbor
Jean and Samuel Frankel Center for Judaic Studies
The University of Michigan
2004

Jean and Samuel Frankel Center for Judaic Studies
3032 Frieze Building, The University of Michigan 48109-1285

Printed in the United States of America.

Diner, Hasia R.
Before "The Holocaust": American Jews Confront Catastrophe, 1945-1962

ISBN 1.881759.10.5

$5.00

Foreword

The David W. Belin Lectureship in American Jewish Affairs provides an academic forum for the discussion of contemporary Jewish life in the United States. It was established in 1991 through a generous gift from the late David W. Belin of Des Moines and New York. Mr. Belin, a graduate of the College of Literature, Science, and the Arts, the Business School, and the Law School of the University of Michigan, had a distinguished career in law and public service. He also served the American Jewish community in a variety of leadership positions at the national level. It was his concern with the future of American Jewry that led him to endow this annual lectureship.

The Belin Lecturer this year is Hasia Diner, the Paul S. and Sylvia Steinberg Professor of American Jewish History at New York University. Although currently teaching and residing in New York City, Professor Diner is a product of the Midwest and the Big Ten, having received her B.A. at Wisconsin and her Ph.D. at Illinois. She is a leading figure in the history of American ethnicity and immigration, having published books on remarkably diverse topics, including black-Jewish relations in the early twentieth century, Irish immigrant women in the nineteenth century, the role of food in the lives of immigrant Jews, Italians, and Irish, and the mythic place of the Lower East Side in the American Jewish immigration. She transformed the landscape of nineteenth-century American Jewish history with her innovative contribution to the four-volume set *The Jewish People in America*, reconfiguring what had been known previously as the "German" period or migration. Her most recent book, published by the University of California Press in 2004, is a one-volume history of the Jews in the United States, a work both synthetic and analytical in character.

Todd M. Endelman
William Haber Professor of Modern
Jewish History
Director of the Jean and Samuel Frankel
Center for Judaic Studies

I. Introduction

In the decade and a half following the end of World War II, that global conflagration which brought about the death of one-third of the Jewish people and the destruction of much of European Jewish communal life, American Jewry found many times, places, and modes of expression to articulate its intense reactions to that calamity. While historians may find it difficult, if not nearly impossible, to recreate the ways in which individual Jews talked about this catastrophic event in their homes or how they incorporated direct references and analogies to it into the discourse of their private spheres of everyday life, Jewish institutions—synagogues, schools, summer camps, publishing houses, magazines, and newspapers—left an easily recoverable paper trail that reveals a community that felt itself obliged to remember and commemorate. These formal institutions of American Jewish life, spanning a spectrum of ideologies and political positions vis-à-vis the concerns of the day, wove the details of the catastrophe into their rhetorical repertoires and used references to it to shape their political projects.

The ways in which they "used" the calamity of European Jewry, referred to consistently in the copious material produced in Yiddish as the *hurban*, or destruction, reflected the concerns and sensibilities of their times. From the perspective of the early twenty-first century with its ubiquitous invocations of the Holocaust and the widespread highly public impress of that European event on the American landscape, the post-war references and performances of American Jews may seem oblique and wan. Such comparisons, however, should be seen as ahistorical and lacking any kind of sensitivity to the project which confronted American Jewry in the years after the war.

At the most simple level of analysis, the post-war memorial texts reflected the concerns, language, and sensibilities of the post-war period, while the memorial activities that predominated a half century later took on the vocabulary and values of a very different time. The two Jewries differed in so many other ways that looking for consistency in Holocaust memorial practice would be akin to looking for consistency in their treatment of gender issues.

The Jews of the United States emerged in 1945 from the trauma of World War II confronting a new reality. The United States had become *the* only large, organized, functioning center of Jewish life as a result of the brutal liquidation of six million Jews in Europe. The memorial texts and per-

formances that American Jews created for their schools, synagogues, and community centers, as well as those that they crafted to share with their non-Jewish neighbors, represented experiments in expression.

These post-war American Jews had to create a culture of commemoration from scratch in the context of a global Jewish world which through the early 1960s lived with the aftershocks of the catastrophe. They had no precedent or example to follow as they took the first steps towards creating ceremonies, texts, graphic images, and music to remember what had just transpired. At school, synagogue, and community board meetings, they struggled to find the best, most appropriate, and most effective means by which to remember the victims, confront the perpetrators, and salvage the lives of the survivors. They made direct linkages between the memorial objects and practices that they fashioned with some of the political events that continued to rattle world Jewry as a result of Nazi brutality. As such, comparisons, positive or negative, between the Holocaust projects of the early twenty-first century and those of the mid-twentieth century do little to further historical understanding of how a group of people—American Jews—at a particular moment—the years 1945 through 1962—went about the process of shaping their public response to an event—the mass murder of six million European Jews—that affected them deeply but which few of them had lived through.

In the years from the cessation of hostilities and the defeat of Nazi Germany in 1945 until 1962, when the capture, trial, and execution of Adolf Eichmann made the Holocaust a matter of broad political commentary beyond the confines of the Jewish community, the Jews of the United States created works of liturgy, pageantry, drama, imaginative literature, sermons, pedagogical material, graphic arts, and scholarship to describe the catastrophe that had so recently engulfed their people. The testimonies of those who had endured the Nazi onslaught found their way into the pages of Jewish publications, onto the airwaves of Jewish radio programs, and into books, including those designed to memorialize the towns and regions of Europe where Jews once lived but no longer did so. American Jews from across the political, denominational, class, and geographic spectrum wrote about the tragedy of European Jewry and its implications for the Jews of the United States in newspapers, magazines, newsletters, books, articles, press releases, and the publications of Jewish organizations, written in English, Yiddish, and Hebrew. They used the mass media, radio and television, to broadcast to themselves and to their American neighbors, aspects of their recent tragic history.

In the process of creating a series of texts, both in print and on the air in which they described themselves to other Americans, they felt impelled to invoke the mass murder of the Jews of Europe. Although they themselves had lived so far from the scenes of suffering, they used the details of those horrific years to narrate their own American story. They also used imagery of the Nazi horrors to make a number of political points about their place in America, about the Jews as a global people, and about America as a civilization, which they, at one and the same time, embraced but sought to change. Their uses of the details of the slaughter, as specific fact and as analogy, went beyond the boundaries of the Jewish community. Their rhetorical repertoire of those years as they addressed the larger American public, including those who held the reins of power as well as the public at large, included references, direct and indirect, to the Nazi assault on Jewry.

In the late twentieth century Americans, Jews and non-Jews, became familiar with and accustomed to films, books, plays, museums, memorial markers, and other kinds of cultural works dealing with the Holocaust. The terminology of the Holocaust entered the contemporary lexicon and came to be used by advocates of many causes for a multitude of political and cultural purposes. Within the ranks of American Jewry, the Holocaust served as a powerful icon representing group membership, and leaders of nearly all its many segments marshaled it in hopes of achieving some particular end. What came to be called "Holocaust-consciousness" continues in the opening years of the twenty-first century to function as a key element in the culture of American Jews, intended for general consumption as much as for identity-building enterprises within.

An American Jewish culture, shaped, in part, by this Jewish tragedy and current political concerns, emerged in the immediate years after World War II, especially in the 1950s. In politics, religion, the arts, philanthropy, and pedagogy, post-war American Jews set the terms for the contemporary memorial culture. From the late 1940s through the early 1960s, when the term "Holocaust" had not yet become the conventional way to name this tragedy and when American Jews did not see it as history but as the past present, they began the process of creating a culture of memory, which has grown with time but which has not changed substantially.

Yet, according to the regnant scholarship and indeed to a broad American Jewish consensus, none of this happened. Historians and other commentators, from within the Jewish world and from without, have with

near-unanimity agreed that American Jews, in the aftermath of the war, did not articulate any deep sense of anguish nor engage in acts of public mourning. They did not, according to this unquestioned assumption about the past, use the Holocaust in the 1950s in the pursuit of their political and social agenda, in particular, except, according to one group of historians, to invoke the horrors of Nazism in order to fit into the culture of cold war American anti-communism. The leaders of the major defense organizations, specifically, twinned the evils of Nazism and Communism, creating these historians have asserted, a rhetorical trope depicting a generalized kind of totalitarianism without specifically Jewish victims, a move that allowed American Jews to participate in the anti-communist frenzy of the post-war period.[1]

The silence of American Jews, their unwillingness, disinterest, or inability to talk about the Nazi catastrophe in their communal institutions and in the rhetoric they crafted for the broader American public, functions as one of the key "truths" of the overall narrative of American Jewish history. Scholars have attributed great significance to the fact that post-war American Jews did not include the Holocaust in their communal culture. That silence, they have claimed, revealed much about the particular political position and cultural project of American Jewry.

Few have found this silence particularly impressive. Statements about American Jews' refusal to memorialize the European catastrophe or their embarrassment about invoking it in public have been cast in decidedly negative terms, laden with direct or implied condemnations of those who went about their lives in the emerging affluence of the 1950s without any nod whatsoever to the recent horrors. The assertion that post-war Jews kept silent, speaking only privately and furtively about the tragedy, is not just a scholarly paradigm but also a broadly accepted communal belief spanning otherwise deep political divides within the American Jewish world.[2]

Were it in fact true that American Jews in the postwar period failed to remember, recall, and invoke the European tragedy of their people, they would indeed merit the opprobrium of later generations. Had they not fused the legacy of that event with a series of political actions, later generations would be justified in viewing the behavior of their predecessors of a half century earlier as tellingly significant.

But the widely accepted belief that a culture of memorialization did not develop in the postwar period and the sweeping interpretations attached to this belief have been built on sand. The conclusions of histori-

ans, as well as popular beliefs, rest on little evidence—in stark contrast to the troves of empirical data to be found in archives, newspapers, and other primary sources, which historians, at least, must consult before interpreting what happened and how.

American Jews, in fact, as creators of texts and leaders of institutions, produced a large corpus of projects in nearly every medium available in those years referring to, representing, and lamenting the horrors of the Nazi era. In these works, in words and images, in artistic endeavors and political projects, they made amply clear that Jews had been the victims, that the Germans had perpetrated a crime upon the Jewish people, the chief victims, although millions of others had suffered as well, and that the implications of the slaughter had left an indelible mark on world Jewry. Every segment of Jewish opinion or ideology, every language group—Anglophones, Yiddish-speakers, and committed Hebraists—used its tongue of choice to articulate its anguish and its sense of the obligation to remember. While each group expressed its feelings differently and derived particular lessons from the horrors, they agreed on what had happened—the Germans and their allies had slaughtered millions of Jews, about one-third of the Jewish people—and that that wholesale liquidation destroyed full communities and cultures and violently brought into being a new era in Jewish history.

How can we account for the vast chasm between the reality that American Jews created a staggeringly large repertoire of works invoking the catastrophe and the thrust of scholarship and commentary maintaining that such acts of memorialization never took place? What forces have operated to blind historians to the existence of such material, available in plain sight, ready to be analyzed?

The fullest explanation of the disjunction between the easily retrievable evidence and the prevailing orthodoxy, which takes for granted that such sources do not exist, requires two scholarly projects. One, the larger, must uncover, array, and analyze the broad range of Jewish texts created in the period 1945 to 1962 that fully or partially dealt with the European catastrophe. These texts include those constructed of words to be read or heard in American Jewry's three languages, English, Yiddish, and Hebrew, directed at adults and at children. Some texts that depicted the concentration camps and ghettoes, the victims and the villains, used graphic images, ink on paper, paint on canvas, black-and-white photographs, stained glass, marble and granite, while yet others relied upon music, composed for use

in synagogues, community centers, schools, and concert halls. All these must be displayed and analyzed as evidence to demonstrate that America's Jews in the post-war era did not feel obliged or able to refrain from paying respect to their recent calamity. The second aspect of the project asks why this body of material disappeared. Why did historians from within and without the Jewish world, from the left and from the right, as well as communal activists, construct the truth of American Jewish post-war "Holocaust-avoidance"? This second focus then must probe the historiography and the evolution of the communal commentary and explain how and why a particular rendition of the past —one that in fact deviated radically from the empirical evidence—triumphed in airbrushing out of existence the cultural works of American Jewry in the crucial years between the end of World War II, with its ghastly revelations, and the execution of Adolf Eichmann in 1962.

II. Experiments In Expression

American Jews in these years produced a mountain of texts highlighting the European Jewish calamity. Some circulated exclusively, or nearly so, within the confines of the Jewish world. While they would have eluded the eyes of non-Jews, they infused American Jewish life. Because writers, journalists, radio program producers, and performers created much of this material in Yiddish, the memorial culture served a distinctly inner Jewish purpose. These years saw a massive journalistic outpouring in the Yiddish press, in Yiddish memoirs, fiction, and essays, all consumed by a Yiddish-reading public. The late 1940s saw the first publication of *yizkor bikher* — memorial books—compiled by both the survivors of the calamity and their compatriots who had left their towns and cities before the storm. Published by committees of those who had experienced the *hurban* themselves and those who had sat out those grim years in the United States, Canada, South America, South Africa, and Palestine, the memorial books of the post-war period included vignettes of life before the catastrophe, black-bordered pages listing the names of the murdered, as well as photographs of notable places that had been leveled and of the men and women who had lived there and went to their deaths at the hands of the Nazis. These volumes circulated almost exclusively among Jews with ties to the particular place being memorialized. But Jewish books that circulated nationally, like the *American Jewish Yearbook*, published by the American Jewish Committee, and the *Jewish Book Annual*, listed the names of newly published *yizker bikher* and thus disseminated information about the memorial projects to American Jews who might otherwise not even have known the names of these towns being mourned.

Some Holocaust texts functioned exclusively within the boundaries of the American Jewish world, although written in English. Starting immediately at the end of the war, Holocaust material found its way into prayer books and material fashioned for synagogues, Jewish community centers, Jewish youth organizations, and religious schools. A good deal of this material served a memorial purpose. As liturgy or pageantry, as physical marker or printed memorial book, these documents recalled to memory the Jewish people slaughtered by the Germans and their allies. They resembled Jewish memorial materials created out of other earlier catastrophes in Jewish history and invoked images and metaphors of the Jewish past of suffering and bravery.[3]

At the same time, though, American Jews created texts for the consumption of a broader audience, including non-Jews as well as Jews. Books of fiction and non-fiction, which were published by mainstream publishing houses and marketed and distributed like other books, made it possible for the idiom of the destruction to filter into the larger American world. A few examples of this will have to suffice. In 1954, Viking, one of the country's largest and most prestigious publishers, brought out Irving Howe and Eliezer Greenberg's *A Treasury of Yiddish Stories*, which bore the dedication "To the Six Million." To Greenberg and Howe the history of Yiddish literature as represented by these stories could not be disassociated from the fact that "the world of the East European Jews came to its end in the ashes of Maidenek and Auschwitz –at the time and place, that is, when Western civilization collapsed," nor, they declared, could the stories be read without an awareness that "Zionism and Socialism came to attract the best young minds; and then came the century of Maidenek and Auschwitz." For each short story written by a victim of the Nazi horror, Howe and Greenberg duly noted the horrific fate of the author.[4]

Philip Bernstein, like many rabbis of the postwar period, wrote brief introductions to Judaism for lay audiences, Jews and non-Jews. He peppered his *What the Jews Believe*, published by Farrar, Straus and Young in 1951, with dozens of references to the Holocaust. In describing the fall holiday of Sukkot, for example, he noted that "the Nazis, according to the survivors of the concentration camps, derived exquisite joy from cruelty." Yet, Bernstein wrote, survivors he encountered at a displaced persons camps in Babehausen, Germany, told him that they found ways to celebrate. Bernstein described a memorial service at Feldafing, another DP camp, where "nearly every worshipper grieved for the loss of most of his family. The rabbi, himself a mourner, offered no easy consolation." And in praise of American Jewry and its response to the catastrophe, Bernstein detailed its financial assistance, which in 1948 saw the United Jewish Appeal raise more money than the Red Cross. The purpose of the money—to save the survivors of the Nazi onslaught—made it clear that in Bernstein's mind the events of the Nazi era had become inextricably bound up with the project of explaining "what the Jews believe."[5]

More dramatically, Leon Uris's blockbuster novel *Exodus* dominated best seller lists for weeks, reaching a far larger public. While the book focused on the struggle of the Jews in Palestine for a state of their own, it also devoted attention to the experiences of the death camp survivors,

whose blistering encounters with "the memories [that] would never leave" transformed them into recruits for the nationalist enterprise. Much of the *Exodus* narrative emerged from the memories of Dov Landau, who sitting in a displaced persons camp in Cyprus asked himself, "When had he been outside of barbed wire? It was so very long ago it was hard to remember. Barbed wire, guns, soldiers—was there a real life beyond them?" From this point on the novel needed Dov's story of the dehumanization of the Jews in sites of Nazi brutality in order to tell that of the heroic battle for the Jewish state. As Uris told his millions of readers about Dov, "As he looked at his arm with the blue tattooed number he relived the grotesque second when the doors of the gas chamber were flung open. Time and time and time again he saw his mother and his sister Ruth being removed from such a chamber at Treblinka. Time and time again he held that flickering candle close to the smothering bodies in the bunker in the Warsw ghetto.... Over and over again he saw the skulls the Germans used as paperweights as his mother and his sister."[6]

Texts like these operated in a two-fold manner, addressing both Jews and non-Jews in the same document, and linked private Jewish mourning with the larger reading public. They demonstrated that Jews, creating cultural works in the post-war period, did not necessarily shy away from invoking the European calamity, even when those books were issued by major publishing houses.

While much of the material produced in the decade and a half after the end of World War II served to recall and to remember, other texts on the Holocaust served more complicated, political ends linked to the exigencies of the post-war moment. American Jews produced vast amounts of Holocaust-related material to help raise money for refugees and assist in their resettlement, to pressure the governments of the United States, the Federal Republic of Germany, and other European nations to provide financial restitution and reparations to the Jewish victims of the Nazi crimes, to monitor the resurgence of Nazism in Germany and elsewhere in the world, to ensure that Nazi perpetrators were brought to justice, to facilitate family reunification and the return of Jewish children who had been placed in Christian institutions to save them and who had not been restored to their families, even ten years after the war, and finally to support the creation and sustenance of Israel. American Jews spent the decade and a half following the end of World War II picking up the pieces in the wake of the Holocaust, and in doing so told and retold what happened. They did

not fail to note how much this event represented a tectonic shift in Jewish history. For example, every volume of the *American Jewish Yearbook* published in these years told in great detail about projects and programs of American and world Jewry vis-à-vis the political aftershocks of the Holocaust. These annual reference works, which the American Jewish Committee sent gratis to public officials around the country, described pointedly how the destruction of European Jewry had created a set of political crises —in the United States, Western Europe, Eastern Europe, South America, and Israel—and the reference books, dry as they might seem from their covers, made abundantly clear to anyone who read them that into the early 1960s the Holocaust continued to reverberate in the lives of the Jewish people.[7]

Additionally, as American Jews participated in some of the momentous events of the late 1940s, 1950s, and early 1960s, most notably the flowering of the American civil rights movement and the frightening unfolding of the Cold War, they produced and used texts that foregrounded the cruelties of the Nazis and their systematic slaughter of the Jews of Europe. As they confronted a series of political events in the United States, for example, the battle over prayer in public schools and the nagging issue of the need to reform immigration policy, American Jewish organizations and publications invoked events in Europe in the 1930s and 1940s as relevant metaphors and analogies.

Assembling this material has been for me an exhilarating detective process and one that is far from complete. Seeking the ways American Jews referred to the Holocaust in these years and invoked it for one purpose or another has taken me into nearly every possible corner of the American Jewish world of the middle of the twentieth century. It has allowed me to look into the texts and practices of Orthodox, Conservative, Reform, and Reconstructionist Judaism. It has brought me into Hebrew, Yiddish, and English materials created by secular as well as religious groups, intellectuals and communal workers, pedagogues and youth group leaders. I have looked at material from the American Jewish left and the Zionist movement, as well as that produced by establishment groups like the American Jewish Committee. I have looked at national and local bodies, at individuals acting on their own and those representing formal organizations and institutions. Let me offer just a few examples of the places where American Jews talked about, performed, and used the Holocaust in these years.

American Judaism of the late 1940s, 1950s, and early 1960s func-

tioned as a complex of denominations, synagogues, and seminaries. This era in fact represented the high point of synagogue affiliation, and although many rabbis and intellectuals decried what they considered the shallowness of the "religious revival" of these years, much of organized American Jewish life revolved around the congregations. These years saw the creation of new texts linking the practice of the Jewish religion to the horrors of Nazi Germany. In 1948, the Reconstructionist movement published its first high holiday prayer book while the Conservative movement issued its in 1951. Both *mahzorim* used the Yom Kippur martyrology liturgy to memorialize the Jews who perished in Europe. In the Reconstructionist *mahzor*, the editors, who considered themselves free to tamper with traditional texts, replaced the conventional Hebrew words of the *eleh ezkerah* (these I shall remember), a lengthy paean to ten rabbis tortured and executed by the Romans for their refusal to obey a ban on the teaching of Torah and the ordaining of disciples, with a poem by Hannah Sennesh, a young Hungarian Jewish woman who had emigrated to Palestine but then parachuted back into Hungary as a soldier. Captured and killed by the Nazis, Senesh and her poetry lived on in this prayer book. Additionally a "Tribute to the Martyrs of the Bialystok Ghetto" became part of the Yom Kippur prayer cycle in the Reconstructionist text.[8] The Conservative *mahzor*, in a way typical of the movement's attitude toward liturgical innovation, kept the *eleh ezkerah* but in English appended a poetic reading, "To Our Six Million."[9]

In the fall of 1958, proponents of modern Orthodoxy, associated particularly with Yeshiva University, launched a new publication, *Tradition: A Journal of Orthodox Jewish Thought*, edited by Norman Lamm. Lamm justified the enterprise ("The Need for Tradition") with its double meaning in terms of "changes on the world scene that have caused, particularly in America, a perceptible reorientation vis-à-vis Orthodoxy in the total Jewish community. The horrors of the Hitler era have profoundly shaken man's confidence in the beneficent use of the power he has gotten. The creation of the State of Israel has done more than give all Jews a collective pride in their people. It has also given them a sense of rootedness in the long history which gave birth to the little bit of Middle Eastern geography." Not only did *Tradition* present itself as growing out of a new Jewish world shaped by the Holocaust, but it filled its pages with articles, book reviews, and references to the Nazi horrors. As befitted an Orthodox journal that took Jewish law as fundamental, it notified its readers of rabbinic rulings that reflected

Jewry's ongoing encounter with the Holocaust. In 1960, for example, it reported on a *halakhic* ruling involving human skin. *Tradition* told of "a *Kohen* [a member of the priestly class] who has received books from Germany which are bound in the skin of concentration camp victims." The ruling, delivered by Rabbi Mosheh Feinstein and discussed in the journal, stated emphatically that the recipient "may not bring them into his home because he is not permitted to defile himself by contact with any part of a corpse. He is also not permitted to sell them to anyone. He must bury the binding because it is part of a human body."[10]

Within the world of Orthodox Judaism, the sermon was a relatively recent innovation. Historically the absence of English-language sermons functioned as a hallmark of traditional congregations. In the 1940s, American Orthodox congregations began to incorporate what they previously viewed as a modernist deviation, and in the middle of World War II the Rabbinical Council of America began to publish annual collections of exemplary holiday and Sabbath sermons delivered by its members. Distributed presumably so other rabbis could draw on this material for their own sermons, the sermon anthologies referred repeatedly to the details of the recent calamity. Rabbi Solomon Roodman referred to it in his Purim *drash* (homily) of 1957, "Why the Jew Laughs," noting that "the most trenchant example of the true spirit of Jewish humor and unyielding faith which it motivates was confirmed by the many discoveries made in the ghettoes and extermination centers of Nazi Europe. Search teams which had visited those areas after the Nazis were brought to their knees discovered thousands of capsules containing manuscripts left by the victims of Nazidom." In a 1952 Passover sermon, "Here the Child Asks," Rabbi Moses Mescheloff stated: "The ancient Talmud legend of the salvation of the Jewish children is more than a hoary episode out of the past of our people. We, we in our own time have witnessed its repetition. Is it not the identical act that the Nazis committed against our youth? Did not the Nazis pursue our youth bereft of parental protection throughout Europe seeking their extermination? Did not our children hide in forests and caverns to escape their brutal persecutors?...With my own eyes have I seen such children. There are tens of thousands of them in Israel this very day. There are those with blue tattoo marks, mementos of the concentration camp, and those who escaped even this stamp of modern Egypt. They have been gathered together out of the impossible, impassable wastelands in Europe... brought back to Israel."[11]

The Reform movement did not issue new prayer books in these years, but in 1948, when the Hebrew Union College opened its School for Sacred Music, the first school founded in the United States to train cantors, it declared that its creators grew out of the movement's awareness that "the disappearance of the great centers of Jewish culture and learning in Europe during the occupation by the Nazi horde has posed many serious problems for world Jewry.... Among other things, the inspiration for Jewish sacred music has dried up in Europe, and we must look to other centers of Jewish life to fill the void."[12] This creative use of the destruction reverberated in Reform congregations through the 1950s. In 1957, Rabbi Louis I. Newman of New York's Reform congregation Rodeph Shalom published a book of plays and cantatas that he had written and staged in his congregation. *Pangs of the Messiah: A Play of World War II* won second place in a national contest sponsored by AZA (Aleph Zadik Aleph), the B'nai B'rith Youth Organization. It explored the reactions of a group of Jews in the Eastern war zone as the Nazis entered their town. The trapped Jews debate among themselves what to do—to fight, to submit, to pray—in the face of the Nazi menace and the play comes to a close with an impassioned oration of the rabbi, who links the particular Jewish crisis faced by his townspeople with some universal human dilemmas:

> Every people, all humanity must learn to be its own Messiah.... And we...are the people who must labor also for the coming of the Messianic days. The torments and horrors we are enduring—these may truly be the pangs of the Messiah.

Another play in the Newman anthology, *Ein Breirah: No Alternative*, declaimed that "out of the camps of desolation, the flaming Ghettos of the cities, was born the saga of fortitude unto death." Newman's member chorus then sang the "Song of the Partisans," a "Vilna Ghetto song."[13]

The linking of the *hurban* with the practice of Jewish ritual took place outside of strictly denominational projects. In 1957, for example, Meyer Waxman, Sulamith Ish-Kishor, and Jacob Sloan collaborated to produce a gift book, *Blessed Is the Daughter*, for girls on the occasion of their bat mitzvah. The book graced the shelves of Jewish bookstores and was widely advertised in Jewish magazines. In it the authors depicted the cycle of the Jewish year. They included "The Day of Carnage," that is, the tenth day of the month of Tevet, a day that linked the beginning of the siege of Jerusalem by the Babylonians in 588 B.C.E. to the slaughter of six million

Jews by the Nazis during the second World War. The destruction of the great Eastern and Central European Jewish civilizations was the culminating tragedy of the process begun by the Babylonians 2,600 years ago. The text describing *Assarah be'Tevet* included a photograph of the Israeli Chief Rabbi, Dr. Isaac Herzog, planting the first tree in the Forest of the Six Million Martyrs. For Simhat Torah, the fall holiday marking the end of the liturgical year and the start of a new cycle of the reading of the Torah, Waxman and the other editors offered a story, "The Last Dance," depicting the last Simhat Torah in Warsaw, which came from an already published Holocaust memoir, the diary of a young boy, Hillel Seidman. They also included a reading about two girls, Chajke and Frumke, who served as couriers for the Jewish underground, their life stories drawn from Emmanuel Ringelblum's "monumental contemporary record" of the Warsaw ghetto, published by McGraw Hill; a portrait of Hannah Szenes; and an historical account of the "Catastrophe in Europe" when "six million Jews of Europe—more than one-third of all the Jews in the world—had been slaughtered by the Germans under Hitler." Finally, despite the brevity of the volume and the festive occasion for which the authors intended it, they also included a poem by Marie Syrkin, an American Zionist leader, "The Silent Army," focusing on the newly created State of Israel, in which she exhorted:

> Do not believe that we are few
> Though few the figures on the hill;
> A host ascends the mountain-side
> Whose solemn ranks are marching still.
> Among the waste six million trudge
> Up to the Negev's burning rim;
> The bodies seared at Maidanek
> Can bear the flame at Nitzanim.[14]

A few more random examples of Holocaust memorialization from the enormous corpus will have to suffice here, perhaps as tantalizing foretastes of what will be a book-length study. Song books, designed for community sings in youth groups and at Jewish centers, routinely included songs like "Ani Ma'amin" and "The Song of the Partisans," music associated with the ghettoes and concentration camps. All the songsters made clear in introducing the songs that the words and music had been drawn from the Jewish repertoire of the Nazi era. Ruth Rubin's *A Treasury of Jewish Folksongs* (1950) included these same songs of the partisans, described them in detail,

and placed them in their Holocaust-era context. In her introduction she told her readers—and singers—that "in the dark years of the Nazi domination of Europe, a host of songs arose that record the heroic struggle of the Jewish people against the German overlord."[15]

In 1954, a number of popular books on American Jewish history appeared that connected the history of American Jews with the recent calamity. Elma Ehrlich Levinger's *Jewish Adventures in America: The Story of 300 Years of Jewish Life in the United States*, for example, found multiple ways to link the story of the catastrophe with her larger, celebratory narrative. In a biographical treatment of the philanthropist Nathan Straus, for example, she noted: "He gave large sums for the relief of those who suffered from the First World War. His death spared him the knowledge of the horrors of the Hitler persecution and of another conflict even more terrible than the last." She devoted a lengthy section to the efforts of American Jews to rescue the Jews of Europe as the shadow of Nazism fell over them—"American Jews to the Rescue"—and an equally full one to the post-war philanthropic juggernaut of American Jews. "There had never been such an appeal before." Likewise, she described Rabbi Stephen Wise as someone "who lived to see the persecution of Hitler which doomed six million Jews to death." Her popular historical account of American Jewry made it clear that in the mid-1950s, in a book published by a Jewish publishing house and intended for a primarily Jewish readership, American Jewish history, however upbeat and positive, could not be disassociated from the history of an era in which "six million Jews, not only those of German birth but... from German-conquered territory, perished in cattle cars, in concentration camps and crematoria."[16]

When American Jewry celebrated its tricentenary in 1954, it also took steps to commemorate the Holocaust. That year a committee formed in New York to create a Passover reading, entitled "A Seder of Remembrance." Initiated by the American Jewish Congress, the committee, which was headed by the writer and communal activist Rufus Learsi, became independent, and over the next few years annually distributed thousands of copies of the English and Hebrew text through Jewish community councils, synagogues, and other organizations. The committee also placed full-page copies of the bi-lingual text in dozens of American Jewish newspapers around the country every spring in anticipation of Passover. Dedicated to the memory of "the six million of our brothers of the European exile," who had been slaughtered "by a tyrant, more wicked than

the Pharaoh who enslaved our forefathers in the land of Egypt" the short piece described the Nazis as "the evil ones," whose brutality "defamed the image of God in which man was created." The seder night had particular resonance for creators of this and other Holocaust texts. On the first night of Passover 1943, the "remnants of the Warsaw Ghetto" had risen up "to slay their oppressors as they were about to be slain." The reading, which was much used judging by the large number of letters sent to the committee, depicted the survivors of the concentration camps and ghettos as people who emerged from their trauma still able to envision a day "when justice and brotherhood would reign among men."[17]

In a not dissimilar vein, Louis Ruchames, a Reform rabbi who was Hillel director for western Massachusetts and a historian who specialized in African-American history, addressed the Grand Street Boy's Club during Negro History Week in February 1955. Its members were men who had grown up on New York's Lower East Side, moved away, done well, and maintained a lively interest in the "old neighborhood." Ruchames spoke to them in part to mark the tercentenary of Jewish settlement in America, choosing as his topic "Parallels of Jewish and Negro History." His speech, later republished in the *Bulletin of Negro History*, commented on the imperative that "we Jews" must understand the "problems which have confronted the Negro." To Ruchames the parallel suffering that linked the two peoples had very immediate resonance, since "in our day, the lesson that men have had to relearn in every generation, that the rights of all men are inter-related, that no minority group is safe while others are the victims of persecution has been seared into our minds and hearts through the burning flesh of six million of our brethren in Europe."[18]

Ruchames' words straddled the Jewish and the non-Jewish world. Delivered to a Jewish audience to mark Negro History Week and the festivities of the tercentenary of Jewish settlement in North America, the speech then became an article for consumption by an audience composed primarily of African American readers. He, like the creators of the seder reading, effortlessly linked the utterly Jewish with the universal in the same text and evinced no embarrassment in making the Nazi Holocaust a central element in Jewish self-consciousness.

In the mid-1950s, when Ruchames served as the Hillel rabbi at Smith College, Jewish students at the elite women's school (which had a few Jews) transformed a radio play, *The Ballad of the Warsaw Ghetto*, originally broadcast on the "Eternal Light" series sponsored by the Jewish Theological

Seminary, into a cantata with words, music, and modern dance. After arranging for the presentation of *The Ballad of the Warsaw Ghetto* to the other students at Smith College, Ruchames presented the cantata at other Hillel chapters and B'nai B'rith lodges in a dozen small and medium sized towns around Massachusetts. Here too, then, a text that memorialized the Nazi catastrophe served Jewish and non-Jewish audiences and demonstrated not the unwillingness of American Jews to present themselves through the medium of the Holocaust but their sense of urgency to do exactly that.

Finally, from April 10 to April 14, 1957, the American Jewish Committee sponsored a series of meetings, symposia, and lavish dinners at New York's Waldorf-Astoria Hotel to mark a half-century of its particular brand of Jewish advocacy, one that emphasized the mobilization of gentile American goodwill, eschewed militant and overt calls to Jewish self-interest, and stressed behind-the-scenes negotiations. At the opening banquet, with Christian clergymen, government officials, presidents of major universities, and Secretary-General of the United Nations Dag Hammarskjold in attendance, the Committee's former president Joseph Proskauer sounded the dominant tone of the jubilee meeting. "Our ethos," he stated, has been to foster "useful, valid, scholarly research into those causes which have operated to make Catholics murder Protestants, Protestants murder Catholics, and both, in turn, from time to time, murder Jews, until we saw its culmination in the Hitler holocaust." Proskauer referred to various kinds of group hatred, but only one form, antisemitism, he argued, fostered hatemongers to cross conventional barriers and only it culminated in a "holocaust." Otto Kleinberg, a professor of psychology at Columbia University and formerly head of UNESCO's Division of Applied Social Science (and a refugee from Nazi Germany), called on America to solve its race problem, in part, to allow it to forge positive relationships with the newly emerging nations of Africa. He explained the need for this in light of the fact that "at the time of World War II and preceding it, the internal situation in Germany made a very big difference to its relationship to the outside world. The German treatment of Jews and other minorities modified and transformed the relationships of Germany with the other countries." Kleinberg, who knew Nazism first-hand, asserted: "We, of course are not in anything like as serious a situation as Germany was [but] we do... face this problem of strengthening democracy at home in order to create a truly democratic alliance abroad." Numerous other speakers invoked the Nazi nightmare. Israel's ambassador to the United Nations, Abba Eban, forcefully recalled

that only "ten years ago...we stood in anguish before the martyred graves of six million of our kinsman,"—"never in all recorded history had any family of the human race been overwhelmed by such a tidal wave of grief and havoc as that which engulfed the Jewish people in the...second World War." Finally, the assembled dignitaries heard the American Jewish Committee's resolutions to mark this anniversary, one of which acknowledged the "vast changes that have taken place in the structure of Jewish communities" since 1906, particularly "as a result of the holocaust of the Hitler period," in which "the great historic Jewish communities of Europe have been decimated." Other resolutions called upon West Germany to make good on its restitution promises and to check the troubling rise of "ultra-nationalistic and chauvinistic" groups, warning that "further political developments in West Germany will be subject to the test of history." A resolution on Israel, about whose establishment the American Jewish Committee had long been ambivalent, declared that "the State of Israel was established nine years ago under the aegis of the United Nations. It has become a place of refuge for hundreds of thousands of victims of Nazi... persecutions."[19]

These scattered references are a handful of examples of how American Jews used and referred to the Holocaust in the years before the mid-1960s. Knowing that behind them there exists a trove many times larger of words, objects, and performances that invoked the memory of the slain Jews and that sought to remedy some aspect of its cataclysmic impact leads us then to the second part of this project, to explore the inability of historians and later commentators to confront this material.

III. Erasing the Evidence

Scholars from a number of "camps" and cultural orientations have helped create and sustain the scholarly "truth" that American Jews refrained from thinking about or invoking the Holocaust in the post-war years. One group, primarily on the left, claims that the late-twentieth (or early twenty-first) century American Jewish emphasis on the Holocaust has been constructed to serve a series of fundamentally conservative, and in their assessment, nefarious purposes. For example, Norman Finkelstein's *The Holocaust Industry* has lambasted American Jews, their communal organizations, and leaders for investing, "too much public and private resources...in memorializing the Nazi genocide." He has claimed, furthermore, that "much of the output is worthless, a tribute not to Jewish suffering but to Jewish aggrandizement," seeing it as "crass exploitation," a way to push the world to support Israel, whom he considers unworthy of support or recognition.

His argument, like those of other critics of contemporary Holocaust culture, pivots on a perception of history, one that posits that in the post-war period Jews, like other Americans, "paid the Nazi holocaust little heed." Because of the "conformist policies of the American Jewish leadership and the political climate of postwar America," American Jews "hewed closely to official US policy," which emphasized the fostering of cultural assimilation. Since he believes that Israel did not then play an important role in American Jewry's political agenda, it had felt no need to use Holocaust imagery. Rather he sees the period after the end of World War II as one in which Jews emphatically chose to deemphasize the Holocaust because of the emerging struggle between the United States and the Soviet Union. Finkelstein gives particular weight to the fact that, "with the inception of the Cold War" in 1949 and West Germany's emergence as an American ally in the anti-Communist struggle, Germany could not be vilified as the perpetrator of the horrendous crimes that had taken place under Hitler. American Jews collaborated with the United States government in its courting of Germany and in failing to name Germany as the culprit.[20]

Finkelstein's analysis may be the most extreme in this current, but it is in accord with the sentiments expressed earlier by other critics of the uses of the Holocaust by American Jews. Tim Cole, in *The Selling of the Holocaust* (1999), depicted the post-war period as one in which "those

Jewish survivors who arrived in Britain, Israel, Canada and the United States tended to remain silent about their experiences," since "silence was a shared reaction." After all, Cole claimed, the Jews who lived in those places and who greeted the refugees believed it would be "detrimental to the best interests of Jewry" to memorialize the Holocaust or draw attention to its horrors. It would have been a shameful "perpetual reminder...that the Jews are a helpless minority whose safety and very lives depend upon the whim of the people among whom they live or the governments who control their destinies." That, he understood, they did not want.[21]

In the same year that Cole's book appeared, the University of Chicago historian Peter Novick created a stir with his study *The Holocaust in American Life*. His attack on contemporary Holocaust uses was anchored in his belief from 1945 to 1967 American Jews did not want to appear "out of step with other Americans." Thus, "in matters having to do with Germany there was a virtual taboo on mention of the Holocaust," and not until the watershed moment of the Six Day War of June, 1967, did American Jews link images of the Nazi cataclysm with the fate of Israel. Novick postulated that among American Jews, only those on the left willingly championed the memory of the Holocaust since they did not, by definition, participate in the anti-communist rhetoric. For others, engagement with the tragedy existed only "around the kitchen table." Where and when American Jewish publications and mainstream organizations did invoke images of Auschwitz or Nazism they did so only to engage in the dominant anti-Communist rhetoric of the post-war era, linking developments in the late 1940s and 1950s in the Soviet Union with the history of Jewish suffering under Hitler. Novick, as well as those who praised his book and cited his work as authoritative, asserted that when American Jews elided Nazism and Communism in their publications and speeches, they erased the specifically Jewish dimension of the Holocaust.[22]

Novick, Cole, and Finkelstein all agree that 1967 provided the pivotal moment when events in Israel changed the American Jewish political agenda and reshaped the ways in which American Jews presented themselves to the American public. In that newly constructed agenda, according to this group, the Holocaust emerged from obscurity to play a key role. American Jews, their leaders and organizations, exhumed the Holocaust to appeal to the world's sense of guilt and win support for Israel among those with power and influence in America. For Finkelstein, in particular, the fact that Israel and its interests pushed the Holocaust to the center of American

Jewish consciousness made Holocaust observance particularly suspect. American Jews began to claim the Holocaust, these historians assert, for narrow, chauvinistic, and non-humane purposes, a claim ultimately that had nothing to do with the victims of the Nazi genocide and everything to do with a particular political agenda of some three decades later.

None of these books rests on a solid base of empirical evidence, systematically and broadly gathered. This absence of data points to the linkage between their "scholarship" and their political agenda, one that is harshly critical of what they find offensive, inappropriate, and misguided in contemporary Holocaust performances, let alone unaesthetic. They seek to show how the culture of Holocaust memory from the late 1960s on reflects what they consider to be the reactionary political project of American Jews, including a defense of Israel's occupation of Palestinian lands, as well as what they view as an increasingly conservative Jewish stance on American domestic issues, particularly vis-à-vis African-Americans and affirmative action. For Novick, the catapulting of the Holocaust to the top of the American Jewish rhetorical repertoire reflects the decline of any other kind of meaningful form of Jewish identity. As he sees it, religion and ethnic identity, particularly in the form of Jewish secular culture, have dried up as sources of meaning to American Jews so organizations concerned with the crisis of Jewish continuity turned to the Holocaust as a sure-fire way to trigger feelings of Jewish solidarity, particularly among the young.[23]

Ironically, these moral evaluations of the political posture of American Jewry did not require these scholars to mount a historical argument. If they found what American Jews did in the 1970s and beyond to be politically or culturally problematic, they could have denounced them without seeking to find historical evidence to contextualize them in their books to make that point. Their criticisms would have stood or fallen on their own strengths and intellectual merits.

Yet history plays a key role in these books. They derive much of their punch from the "fact" that in the 1950s American Jews allegedly avoided and were silent about matters surrounding the destruction of European Jewry. The authors, Novick, Finkelstein, and Cole, whose links to the American Jewish mainstream are weak or nonexistent, ironically benefited from the fact that Jewish communal activists and historians had actually constructed the same scenario beginning two to three decades earlier. As far back as the late 1960s, internal critics of the Jewish "establishment," young people in the main, began to complain that their parents, literally and fig-

uratively, had withheld from them knowledge of the Holocaust and that the previous generation had explicitly avoided talking about the European tragedy in order to strike a bargain with 1950s American culture. For example, writing in a symposium on Peter Novick's book, the historian Eli Lederhendler looked back to his own activist days "twenty-five years ago." He reported how he, as a young "active promoter of Holocaust consciousness," had confronted a Jewish educator—presumably older than himself—who had "offered his opinion in print that it was unwise to 'overdo' the curricular treatment of the Holocaust." Lederhendler then "entered the fray with a response in which I argued that American Jewry had not yet begun to 'confront' the Holocaust."[24]

Lederhendler's brief reminiscence points to the emergence of a new confrontational, generationally-differentiated debate within American Jewry in the late 1960s that made the Holocaust a matter of communal controversy. Young Jews who lived through the 1960s brought to the Jewish world a new consciousness, a product of their particular generation, shaped in large measure by the civil rights struggle, the movement against the war in Vietnam, the campus revolutions, and assertions of black pride and cultural separatism. Young Jewish participants in these movements applied the vocabulary of the movements to the Jewish communities in which they lived.

In the broadest sense these young activists questioned the basic premise on which they believed the Jewish communities functioned. They described in books, articles, manifestoes, newsletters, and alternative newspapers what they saw as an ugly communal truth, one that showed how their parents' institutions, practices, and ways of thinking embodied all that was shallow, compromising, and wrong with America and its Jews. In their critique of the suburban congregations that had come to dominate the Jewish landscape, the affluence of the Jewish community, and its escalating levels of integration, disaffected youth—and the scholars who emerged from that Jewish countercultural groundswell—focused on what was wrong with American Jewry.

Whether those influenced by the Jewish counter-culture turned to heightened levels of religious orthodoxy, more militant forms of Zionism, more demonstrative public assertions of Jewish distinctiveness, greater involvement in the campaign for Soviet Jewry, the creation of Jewish feminism, or the founding of *havurot* (extra-synagogal religious fellowships), they shared the assumption that what had preceded them had been obsequious, devoid of intense Jewish content, and collaborative with the larger mainstream culture.

The critique of the established community and, specifically, the argument that it had prevented the growth of a memorial culture united Jews along a wide political spectrum. It put Meyer Kahane and his far right Jewish Defense League with Jews for Urban Justice, a progressive organization on the left. Both not only used Holocaust imagery for very different political purposes, but both critiqued the community's leaders for suppressing any kind of meaningful and deep confrontation with that history. Across the political spectrum, they challenged the communal leadership, infusing their rhetoric with graphic Holocaust images. The rage they expressed focused on contemporary issues, but segued easily into historical diatribes, claiming that in the face of the Nazi menace American Jews did little and in the aftermath of the catastrophe went about their business as though nothing cataclysmic had occurred.

Kahane, in his manifesto *Never Again*, claimed: "Millions in Europe went to their gas chambers and crematoria, and we knew of it. We knew of it and were worse than silent, for he who knows of horror and limits himself to tepid, useless, respectable, occasional efforts is worse than the one who knows and does nothing." Kahane realized that his words would offend and upset many in the "Jewish establishment," a phrase he invoked repeatedly. "Why raise such a painful subject? That which was done is done and buried and what can be gained by going back over this most terrible of Jewish historical periods?" In answering his own question, he made clear that the leadership which attacked him "still shepherds us and still speaks in our name and gives us guidance." His Jewish Defense League would do what had not been done by those responsible for the "moral bankruptcy" of the American Jewish community. It would make sure that "Jewish heroes and martyrs" would "be brought to the attention of Jewish youngsters." It would sponsor "in-depth study of the Holocaust, the Jewish partisans and resistance in Nazi Europe," and it would create programs of Jewish self-defense, overtly based on the truth that "the death of six million Jews has in no way lessened the thirst of the world for Jewish blood," a point that the leadership of the community refused to acknowledge as it continued its morally suspect assimilationist behavior.[25]

At the other end of the political spectrum, *The Freedom Seder: A New Haggadah for Passover*, edited by Arthur Waskow and published in 1969, also merged Holocaust imagery with biting attacks on prevailing Jewish practices. It offered a reading from Emmanuel Ringelblum's Warsaw ghetto diary and the "*Ani maamen*," neither which would have been out of

place in American Jewish texts of the time or of the previous two decades. But it went on to offer a frontal attack on the politics of American Jewry. "In America," the *haggadah* declaimed, "we" (presumably American Jews) "have been both coerced and cajoled into abandoning the prophetic legacy," while, "for the sake of a mess of pottage, they" (presumably the leadership) "have abandoned their birthright in the Prophets and the Covenant." "Our people," the seder participant was instructed to intone, "have been frightened into allowing themselves to be purchased, and they have been purchased at such affluent prices that they have forgotten to be angry." That amnesia, the editors predicted, would come with a price, because "we know the cost of hushing; we counted it in millions dead. So we shall choose the risks of freedom." One contributor to the *Freedom Seder* worked out this theme further in an editorial note about "what's wrong with the American Jewish establishment." Its sin was that it had "completely lost track of what being Jewish is—in the pursuit of safety and material gain.... American Jewish life is largely geared toward defense and chauvinistic fundraising." In "the willingness of the Jewish Establishment to compromise their own ethical/moral posture for the sake of what they think is the best interest of Israel," it had adopted the position "Don't rock the boat or give the (goyishe) Establishment any trouble or they'll pull the rug out from under Israel." On the following page the text quoted Adolf Eichmann: "I sat at my desk and got on with my job."[26]

In these works challenging the American Jewish status quo, Holocaust imagery played a pivotal role. Not that it had not been present before in art, sermons, liturgy, ceremony, and communal rhetoric, but now it came to be a central device of the rising generation, the "new Jews" who hoped to create from scratch novel forms of Jewish communal rhetoric and practice. As they saw it, much of what had come before them, that which had been produced by the "Jewish establishment," had no resonance in part because it lacked sting. They considered much of American Jewish culture of the 1950s as thin and weak, without the intensity that they believed Judaism and Jewish life needed. They took upon themselves the challenge of remaking the American Jewish *status quo* and made Holocaust imagery part of that challenge.

Their critique of American Jewry dismissed as trivial the texts, practices, artifacts, and ceremonies that their parents had created to remember the Jewish victims of the Nazi era. They devalued the post-war doings of the organizations that had monitored Nazi war crimes trials and reported

them in detail in the press, that had pressed Germany to make reparations and root out resurgent Nazism, and that had called on the United States government to support Israel as a place of refuge for survivors. Indeed, the young people of the late 1960s, at the time and later, as they went on to write their own books and create new forms of Holocaust observance, played a crucial role in erasing from public consciousness all that had been said, done, written, and created about the catastrophe in the period from 1945 to 1962.

The process of erasing early American Jewish cultural and political action about the Holocaust and its victims continued a pace in the work of scholars who in the 1970s began to write the history of American Jewry. Many historians of the Jewish experience in America, some of them religiously observant individuals, deeply involved in the inner life of the Jewish communities where they live, and enthusiasts for Israel, in fact provided the imprimatur of scholarly authenticity for assertions that Novick and Finkelstein were to make in the late 1990s.

Work that might be considered "insider" writing about American Jewish history falls into two broad categories: first, key works in the field of American Jewish history and culture, and second, memoirs by American Jewish intellectuals and activists written at the end of the twentieth century but looking back to the post-war era. Both kinds of sources assert, directly and indirectly, that the Holocaust was not part of the expressive repertoire of American Jews in the fifteen years after the end of World War II, and that only the Israeli victory in 1967 brought the Holocaust out of historical hiding.

A few examples from historical scholarship of the 1990s will demonstrate the currency of this thinking and the degree to which it represents an academic and communal assumed truth. Until the 1990s no historian studying American Jews actually tackled the post-war period. In the 1970s and 1980s, the few works of history that dealt with this era treated it as contemporary studies and painted it with broad brush strokes. Scholars like Henry Feingold and Arthur Goren made almost no reference to the ways in which American Jews in those years had remembered the Holocaust and its victims, concentrating instead on suburbanization, the decline of anti-semitism, upward mobility, and the like. Where these historians dealt with cultural matters, they focused instead on the great success of American Jewish novelists and dramatists in creating works that explored Jewish themes for American audiences.[27]

By the 1990s, though, American Jewish historians did in fact begin to pay attention to the post-war period, and in their treatment of that era they played a pivotal role in excising the history of Holocaust commemoration as a factor in American Jewish life and culture. In 1992, the American Jewish Historical Society sponsored the publication of a five-volume history of Jewish life in the United States. The fifth volume, which spanned the years from 1945 through the 1980s, written by Edward Shapiro, not only ignored anything that had been created before 1967 to recall the lives of the Jews of Europe who perished at the hands of the Nazis, but stated that "for the first decade and a half after the end of World War II, Jews were reluctant to discuss the Holocaust." With no empirical data at his command, with no evidence drawn from archives or published primary sources, Shapiro wrote categorically: "During the 1950s, Jewish communities did not sponsor Holocaust commemorations, the Jewish lecture circuit did not feature speeches on the holocaust...and there was little public discussion among Jews regarding the fate of European Jewry." This assertion, since then recycled by other historians, including Finkelstein and Novick, means that that which had taken place did not in fact occur. Shapiro additionally offered a number of explanations about what finally shook American Jewry out of its muteness. None proved to be as important in his view as the Six Day War, a lightning bolt that allowed "repressed memories of the Holocaust" to spring "out in the open."[28]

The same year that Edward Shapiro made his pronouncement, Howard Sachar, in a one-volume history of American Jews, made the same point. While offering a few examples from the late 1940s, he saw the 1950s as the era of silence, one in which "the sheer density...inhibited Jewish writers and philosophers, no less than Jewish communal leaders, from coming to grips with the Holocaust." In Sachar's analysis, the "economic and political advancement" enjoyed by American Jews and the "preoccupation with the birth and growth of Israel" pushed the European catastrophe to the margins of public consciousness, only to re-emerge with vigor after 1967.[29]

It would not be interesting or useful to cite and quote from every work that has advanced this paradigm.[30] Let me, instead, cite a few examples to indicate how widely this thinking pervades the field, how little evidence supports it, and how scholars from within the world of American Jewish history or Jewish history more broadly have concurred with the analysis that fundamentally indicts American Jews for failing to put the Holocaust into the foreground of their communal culture in the 1950s.

Two works from 1997 illustrate this point. First, Gerald Sorin's *Tradition Transformed* emerged as probably the best one-volume history of American Jews, one that has been widely adopted for use in undergraduate courses. Sorin leaned heavily on Edward Shapiro's *A Time for Healing* to fashion his final chapter, which deviates not at all from Shapiro's analysis. If anything, he exceeded him in condemning post-war American Jews for their failures to engage in acts of public mourning or make use of the Holocaust in their communal culture. He claimed that American Jewish culture of the 1950s was based on a "conspiracy of silence," with survivors who refused to talk and American Jews who refused to listen collaborating in a project that would last until the 1970s, when "the consciousness of its [Holocaust's] enormity and the struggle with its meaning took a place as one of the pillars supporting identity." The "historical amnesia" of the 1950s persisted until the "Six Day War...ended the silence."[31]

Second, in 1997, Stuart Svonkin published *Jews Against Prejudice*, one of the first book-length historical works on American Jewish political culture of the 1950s. Here is a study of how American Jewry's "big three" defense organizations (the American Jewish Committee, the American Jewish Congress, and the Anti-Defamation League) created a role for Jews in the arena of liberal politics. Svonkin focused on the tendency to universalize rather than particularize, to create programs and texts to fight prejudice in general rather than anti-semitism. In particular, Svonkin assumed that the defense agencies had no reason to single out the European Jewry catastrophe. The era, he asserted, ended in the late 1960s. Citing and quoting Shapiro, Svonkin attributed the silence of the organizations to the fact that "American Jews seemed to have been reluctant, or unable, to come to terms with the mass destruction of European Jewry." Both Sorin and Svonkin saw the 1950s as the nadir of Holocaust consciousness, a period in American Jewish history when outside pressures, particularly the Cold War and the desire of Jews to participate in the bounty of suburban affluence, as well as their own shame and embarrassment at having a mournful history, closed off the wellsprings of any kind of commemorative memorial culture.[32]

One final example from the early twenty-first century demonstrates the hardiness of the paradigm. In 2001, in a series of lectures at the University of Washington, Alan Mintz, a professor of Jewish literature at the Jewish Theological Seminary, explored the contours of Holocaust memory in the United States. He focused on the role of American popular culture in general in spreading a distinctively American set of images and

tropes. He categorically dismissed anything American Jews produced in the 1950s, a decade that amounted to a "celebration" of American liberalism, "at which the Holocaust and everything we now associate with it were not welcome guests." Mintz acknowledged that at the immediate end of the war movie theatre newsreels made it impossible to avoid the subject in all of its gruesomeness but "an acute awareness of the Holocaust was not part of the American Jewish experience during the first two decades after the event because it impeded the process of Americanization." Thus Jews went out of their way to avoid performing it in public, since they were "too deeply engaged in the energetic enterprise of entering American society and seizing the opportunities offered to them to be available to make the subversive sadness provoked by the Holocaust." Mintz wrote his book after the publication of *The Holocaust in American Life*, which he praised, noting that its "most valuable sections...deal with the forties and fifties and the role of the Cold War" in making Holocaust silence the norm in American Jewish culture.

Mintz, like all those who have endorsed this narrative, had little empirical evidence. Although he suggested in a footnote that "there is much work to be done in fleshing out our picture of the late forties and fifties," he, like Sorin, Shapiro, Novick, and Finkelstein, among others, relied on inherited communal memory, rather than consulting the massive amount of empirical material available from this period. In accepting this assumption, historians from across the political spectrum, with very different positions vis-à-vis Judaism and Jewish culture, have met and shared in the erasure of history.[33]

In this they have joined with a number of scholars and communal leaders who have invoked their own memories of the period before 1967 to prove just how much has changed since that watershed moment. They have told their personal stories along the lines of this narrative trope, which has dominated the scholarship. In so doing, these memoirists demonstrate that despite available empirical evidence to the contrary the truth of Holocaust erasure in the 1950s functions as more than the construct of historians. It exists as the over arching orthodoxy. Arthur Hertzberg, rabbi, historian, Jewish communal activist, wrote in *A Jew in America* (2002) that the "measure of how much the times were changed was the suddenly revived memory of the Holocaust" in the 1970s. Before that moment "American Jews did not want the mass murder in Europe to be much mentioned in public." He recalled how he had spoken from the pulpit about the Warsaw Ghetto

uprising, and "the father of a young woman whose Bat Mitzvah was being celebrated that Sabbath went to the board of the synagogue to complain that I had ruined a happy family occasion by bringing up so sad a topic." Besides the analytic problem of conflating one person's reaction—the complaining father— with all of American Jewry (we do not learn how the board reacted), Hertzberg's anecdote stands in sharp contrast to the bat mitzvah gift book, for example, with pages and pages specifically dedicated to telling the story of the six million, the Rabbinical Assembly *mahzor* with its Yom Kippur dirge "To the Six Million," and the large numbers of articles that have appeared in *Conservative Judaism*, the movement's magazine, to indicate that the denomination had incorporated the tragic events into its religious projects.

Political scientist Daniel Elazar, an American-born scholar who emigrated to Israel and wrote extensively on American Jewish communal politics, reminisced about his years in Habonim, the Labor Zionist youth movement. Remembering the postwar period from the vantage point of 1993, he noted that the Holocaust was rarely mentioned in the activities of the group. He recalled that Americans who had fought in the Abraham Lincoln Brigade on the Republican side of the Spanish civil war were their heroes while the partisans and ghetto fighters were not.[35] Peter Novick, in fact, cited this particular memory of the early 1950s as evidence for his argument.

While it is obvious why Novick found this statement appealing, it is harder to explain why Elazar remembered the past the way he did, since his memories conflict with material in the Habonim archives, including handbooks for group leaders and counselors and descriptions of programs from both summer camps and city clubs showcasing the Holocaust. The summer camps, in particular, used the destruction of European Jewry as a way to mark the summer fast day of Tisha be-Av, a moment in the liturgical year that recalls the Babylonian and Roman destructions of the Temple in Jerusalem.

Habonim in fact published in 1957 a history of its camping activities, *Adventures in Pioneering*, in which graduates of its various camping programs enumerated how they, as staff, had grafted Holocaust imagery onto Tisha be-Av programming or, as campers, had experienced the heightened emotions of the day. One writer chronicling activities at Camp Kvutzah in California in 1956, wrote: "Our general camp theme was: 'Jewish Heroism through the Ages.' Through lectures, discussions, literary trials, models, games, and the arts, the children at camp became acquainted with the heroic moments in Jewish history beginning with our ancient struggles for free-

dom and independence down to the modern deeds of courage and valor of the defenders of the Warsaw Ghetto and of the Hagana."

Elazar, who remembered no Holocaust programming in his Habonim days—and Novick who accepted Elazar's memories—might have been interested in the ceremony staged at the movement's national convention in 1945 and then reprinted in its anniversary book in 1957. The 1945 gathering began with a poetic presentation of remembrance, "*Hazkara*":

> Over the blood-soaked plains of Poland, the sound of firing still is heard.
> And the dazed survivors of your people flee before the same pursuing mob.
> Only in a brief moment of council, we pause to consider a fitting monument
> And to tell our losses.
> The hundreds upon thousands upon millions, yet calls afresh each loved one
> Gone.
> From ghetto and from concentration camp, from Warsaw, Bialystok, Lublin,
> Majdanek, Auschwitz and Stryi.
> Brothers, from your graves look out!
> Look upon your people!
> Look into the ghetto, to the camp, into the ship that bears
> Illegal freight out of the graveyards of Europe.
> Look and say, oh brothers, will they live?
> Will this your people, these dried bones yet live?[36]

Lastly, in *Chutzpa* (1991), a memoir-manifesto dedicated to the premise that "American Jews need more chutzpah," or willingness to vociferously assert that "we are entitled to first-class status," Alan Dershowitz recounted his elementary and high school years at Brooklyn's Etz Chaim Yeshiva, where "many of our teachers—especially in our religious subjects—were right off the boat from the European displaced persons camps." Despite their experiences and those of "several of our classmates [who] had also experienced Hitler's concentration camps," the classrooms and playgrounds proved to be places where talk of those traumas never took place. Yes, he admitted, "it was in the air," but it never became entered the realm of the concrete in terms of curriculum or conversation.[37]

Yet a yearbook assembled by eighth graders in 1953 at a nearby school, not terribly different from Etz Chaim, the Yeshivah Flatbush, the children committed to writing exactly what Dershowitz—who would have been in the tenth grade that year—claimed only hovered amorphously in the atmosphere. In the yearbook, no doubt edited by teachers and approved by administrators, autobiographical pieces recounted the horrors of the Nazi era and tales of rescue and survival. One boy, Kenneth Wetcher, a sixth-

grader, wrote in a short story "I am the only child in my family. I was born, April 16, 1941.... At the age of one and one half, we went by cattle train from Russia to Poland. On the way soldiers made signs at us that they would slit our throats. In Poland many people hated Jews and threatened to kill us." Abraham Fuksman, "born May 1, 1940 in Barawich, Poland," told his teachers, school mates, and other adults who may have seen the yearbook that at the time, the Nazis started to attack Poland, "I stayed with my parents," but, "on the sixteenth month, my parents gave me away to a Christian woman in order to save me.... I did not know I was a Jew.... As soon as the war ended with a casualty list of over 6,000,000 people my mother and father came to take me back." Other Yeshiva Flatbush children used Holocaust imagery in their poems, drawings, and vignettes about Jewish holidays, particularly Hanukkah, Purim, and Israeli Independence Day. Where Dershowitz remembered his Etz Chaim days as devoid of Holocaust-talk, the words on paper, penned by the children of the other Brooklyn Orthodox day school, cast grave doubt on those later memories.[38]

Clearly a large chasm separates how American Jews, academics among them, think about the post-war period and the actual data to be found in archives, publications, books, and articles. The former accept as true that American Jews could not, would not, and did not weave the images, words, and metaphors of the European destruction of the Jews into their communal culture in the first decade and a half after World War II ended, while the latter show otherwise. How can this disjunction be explained?

Perhaps in light of the time of Holocaust-performance in recent decades, post-war references and invocations have seemed so paltry that scholars and activists have dismissed them from the historic record. In truth, the ways in which American Jews remembered the tragedy of the Nazi era earlier do pale when compared to such contemporary phenomena as the Holocaust Memorial Museum in Washington, D.C., movies like *Schindler's List* and *The Pianist*, and projects like the March of the Living, in which thousands of Jewish teenagers from around the world converge on Auschwitz on Yom Ha-Shoah (Holocaust Remembrance Day). They could easily help to excise from personal and communal memory what came before.[39]

Second, for communal insiders and critics of American Jewry alike, seeing Holocaust observance as a historically continuous phenomenon, which changed and grew over time, diminishes the significance of the June, 1967, war. Looking at Holocaust observance as an evolving phenomenon that began immediately (and indeed grew out of war-time communal prac-

tices) after the end of the war, and then developed through as writers of prayerbooks, compilers of song books, and creators of a range of other texts experimented with images and tropes, minimizes the role of Israel's victory in stimulating American Jewish consciousness. The idea that that event represented a momentous turning point in American Jewish political and cultural life has become thoroughly embedded in historical consciousness. To assert that it did not represent a watershed, that American Jews had found many times and places to remember the catastrophe before June, 1967, then implies that modern American Jewish history need not be divided into a pre-1967 and post-1967 period.[40]

Even more important: since the late 1960s American Jewish engagements with the Holocaust have taken place in a very different kind of America. In that earlier era, American Jews stood alone as the creators of books, poems, paintings, musical compositions, prayers, magazine articles, public ceremonies, and other kinds of texts that spoke of gas chambers, crematoria, annihilations, liquidations, mass murders, genocides, and destructions of total communities and cultures. In those earlier years, immediately after the war and into the early 1960s, American Jews had no "partners" or "competitors" in this kind of rhetoric.

Since the 1960s, a new tone and texture have come to dominate American public culture, one that venerates and validates discussions of group suffering. American Jews, who had earlier lamented in their particular ways the tragic fate of the six million, now did so alongside other Americans, from other ethnic backgrounds, who also created texts and practices that memorialized tragedy.

Additionally, after the 1960s, the language of "Holocaust" and the appearance of the word itself in capital letters came to be used to describe many other historical outrages and horrendous calamities against many other people. The tendency of many others to refer to their own "Holocausts" gave Jews in the United States a particular cultural project, designed to make sure that they did not lose that word and idea, that their very particular history would not be lost. The massive Holocaust memory project that American Jews launched in the 1970s, the development of programs designed to inspire "Holocaust consciousness," and the magnetic draw of the Holocaust in American popular culture well beyond the boundaries of the Jewish community, all have histories that grew out of the concerns and contours of late-twentieth-century America, a very different America from that of the years 1945 to 1962.

The differences between those two eras and the differences in the context of their Holocaust performances deserve to be studied in a comparative fashion. Whatever conclusions would emerge in such a study, it should not blind historians—as it has heretofore—to the efforts of American Jews, writers, teachers, summer camp counselors, rabbis, artists, as well as the consumers of these texts, to remember the six million. American Jews did not experience a period of amnesia, nor did they go about their post-war lives silent or impervious to the recent tragedy. They cobbled together a set of communal practices that reflected their sense of identity and those deserve not to be air-brushed out of the historical record.

NOTES

1 Michael Staub, *Torn at the Roots: The Crisis of Jewish Liberalism in Postwar America* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2002).

2 One of the few commentators to describe American Jewish interactions with the memory of the Holocaust in decidedly positive terms was Jacob Neusner, not a scholar of American Jewish history but of Talmud. Commenting on the 1950s, he wrote that it was not that people failed to "notice the absence of more than five million European Jews...." Rather they did not manifest the obsession with it that came to characterize later American Jewish cultural tendencies. In the 1950s, Neusner believed, much of what was performed vis-à-vis the European tragedy was imbued with an aura of "refinement, restraint, and dignity." Jacob Neusner, "How the Extermination of European Jewry Became The Holocaust, in *Stranger at Home: "The Holocaust," Zionism, and American Judaism* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1981), 82-91.

3 See David Roskies, *Against the Apocalypse: Responses to Catastrophe in Modern Jewish Cutlure* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1984).

4 Irving Howe and Eliezer Greenberg, *A Treasury of Yiddish Stories* (New York: Viking, 1954), particularly 12, 19, 67, 70, 72.

5 Philip S. Bernstein, *What the Jews Believe* (New York: Farrar, Straus, and Young, 1951), 40, 22, 31.

6 Leon Uris, *Exodus* (Garden City, N.Y.: Doubleday and Company, 1958). Much of Dov's confrontation with the memories of the Nazis and the death camps can be found in chapters 22-26, 117-154.

7 It would be impossible to list every reference to the Holocaust that appeared in the various volumes of the *American Jewish Yearbook.* Literally hundreds of references appeared in each volume and well into the 1960s the writers and editors of the *Yearbook* demonstrated how much the event loomed in their consciousness as well as in that of the women and men who were involved in the various projects around the world.

8 *High Holiday Prayer Book* (New York: Reconstructionist Foundation, 1948), 387-396

9 United Synagogue of America, *High Holiday Prayer Book* (Hartford, Connecticut: Prayerbook Press, 1951), 386.

10 Norman Lamm, "The Need for Tradition: The Editor's Introduction to a New Journal," *Tradition: A Journal of Orthodox Jewish Thought,*

1:1 (Fall, 1958), 10; *Tradition* 3:1 (Fall, 1960), 80.

11 Rabbinical Council, *Manual of Holiday and Sabbath Sermons* (New York: Rabbinical Council Press, 1957), 137-138; Rabbinical Council, *Manual of Holiday and Sabbath Sermons* (New York: Rabbinical Council Press, 1952), 143-144 are two of hundreds of possible examples.

12 "Hebrew Union College-Jewish Institute of Religion." Nearprint Collection. Document Group 20. American Jewish Archives.

13 Louis I. Newman, *Pangs of the Messiah and Other Plays, Pageants and Cantatas* (New York: Bloch Publishing Company, 1957), 3, 27, 222.

14 Meyer Waxman, Sulamith Ish-Kishor, and Jacob Sloan, *Blessed is the Daughter* (New York: Shengold Publishers, 1957), 86-87, 134-135, 136, 137, 151-152.

15 Ruth Rubin, *A Treasury of Jewish Folksong* (New York: Schocken, 1950), 12, 175.

16 Elma Ehrlich Levinger, *Jewish Adventures in America: The Story of 300 Years of Jewish Life in the United States* (New York: Bloch, 1954), 233-235, 238-240, 277.

17 "Seder Ritual," I-50, American Jewish Historical Society.

18 *Bulletin of Negro History* 19:3 (December, 1955), 63-64.

19 *Proceedings of the Fiftieth Anniversary Observance of the American Jewish Committee: April 10-14, 1957: The Pursuit of Equality at Home and Abroad* (New York: American Jewish Committee, 1958), xi, 3, 27, 40, 133, 140, 141,157,199,226, 228,230.

20 Norman G. Finkelstein, *The Holocaust Industry: Reflections on the Exploitation of Jewish Suffering* (London: Verso, 2000), 4-8, 12-18, 42.

21 Tim Cole, *Selling the Holocaust: From Auschwitz to Schindler How History is Bought, Packaged and Sold* (New York: Routledge, 1999), 2, 148.

22 Peter Novick, *The Holocaust in American Life* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1999), for example, 91, 96.

23 Of the three only Novick made any attempt to provide documentation but his references when studied closely show how his contemporary agenda shaped his scholarship. He made some superficial forays into the records of the American Jewish Committee, but did not survey even the entire corpus of material from that one organization. He saw random bits of American Jewish journalism, but with no thoroughness or consistency, and his lack of interest, indeed utter avoidance of sources coming from the world of Judaism—the religious sphere—as well as Zionism, Jewish education, and Jewish summer camping, indi-

cate that he engaged with a very superficial set of sources. He had no access to or interest in, it seems, any materials in Yiddish or Hebrew, nor did he survey the vast body of archival material on Jewish organizations' use of radio in the late 1940s and 1950s to refer to the horrors of the Holocaust. He made no use of even easily available material like the *American Jewish Yearbook*, the *Jewish Book Annual*, or scholarly publications like *Jewish Social Studies*, which abounded with references to the Nazi catastrophe and which did not require any knowledge of any other language.

24 Eli Lederhendler, "On Peter Novick's *The Holocaust in American Life*," *Jewish Social Studies* 7:3 (Spring/Summer, 201), 161.

25 Meir Kahane, *Never Again! A Program for Survival* (Los Angeles: Nash Publishing, 1971).

26 Arthur I. Waskow, *The Freedom Seder: A New Haggadah For Passover* (Washington, D.C.: Micah Press, 1969), 17, 19, 54, 45-47.

27 Arthur A. Goren, "The Jews," in Stephan Thernstrom, ed., *Harvard Encyclopedia of American Ethnic Groups* (Cambridge: Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 1980), 592-598; Stanley Feldstein, *The Land I Show You: Three Centuries of Jewish Life in America* (Garden City, New York: Anchor Press, 1978), 416-471; Henry L. Feingold, *Zion in America: The Jewish Experience from Colonial Times to the Present* (New York: Hippocrene Books, 1974), 299-357. Feingold began his final chapter, "The American Jewish Condition Today" with a philosophic statement that indicated that the Holocaust had come to be a crucial element in American Jewish self-consciousness, "the touchstone of all contemporary sensibility," but he did not historicize this statement and explore how American Jews went about the process of weaving it and images of it into their communal practices. (299).

28 Edward Shapiro, *A Time for Healing: American Jewry since World War II* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1992), 213-216.

29 Howard Sachar, *A History of the Jews in America* (New York: Knopf, 1992), 839, 844, 847.

30 Jacob Neusner, "How the Extermination of European Jewry Became 'The Holocaust'," in, *Stranger at Home: The Holocaust, Zionism, and American Judaism* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1981), 82-91, see, p. 84; Rona Sheramy, "Defining Lessons: The Holocaust in American Jewish Education," unpublished Ph.D. dissertation, Brandeis University, 2001; Michael Staub, *Torn at the Roots: The Crisis*

of Jewish Liberalism in Postwar America (New York: Columbia University Press, 2002) are a few examples of pieces of scholarship which have in one way or another chipped away at the prevailing paradigm. Neusner's piece was an article with no documentation, Sheramy's is a dissertation which focuses on the uses of the Holocaust in American Jewish pedagogic material and has several chapters on the pre-1967 period, while Staub, although he has much material on the pre-1967 period and the invocation of the Holocaust, never strayed beyond a few sources, particularly *Commentary*.

31 Gerald Sorin, *Tradition Transformed: The Jewish Experience in America* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1997), 194-195, 217.

32 Stuart Svonkin, *Jews Against Prejudice: American Jews and the Fight for Civil Liberties* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1997), particularly 180, 185-186; a number of other works on Holocaust memory and Holocaust memorial projects give some attention to efforts to commemorate the tragedy in the late 1940s but do not extend their analyses and consider the 1950s at all. See, James Young, *The Texture of Memory: Holocaust Memorials and Meaning* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1993), 287-290; Edward Linenthal, *Preserving Memory: The Struggle to Create America's Holocaust Museum* (New York: Viking, 1995), 5-9.

33 Alan Mintz, *Popular Culture and the Shaping of Holocaust Memory in America* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 2001), 5-8, 187.

34 Arthur Hertzberg, *A Jew in America: My Life and a People's Struggle for Identity* (San Francisco: Harper, 2002), 403-404.

35 Daniel J. Elazar, "Detroit, the Early 1950s: "Habonim Was Looked at a Bit Wild," in J. J. Goldberg and Elliot King, eds., *Builders and Dreamers: Habonim Labor Zionist Youth in America* (New York: Habonim Dror, 1993), 173.

36 David Breslau, ed., *Adventures in Pioneering: The Story of 25 Years of Habonim Camping* (New York: Chay Commission of the Labor Zionist Movement, 1957), 98-100, 159-162.

37 Alan M. Dershowitz, *Chutzpa* (Boston: Little, Brown, 1991), 42.

38 *Yeshivah Yearbook: 1953*, 28, 30, 34, 36, in the possession of the author.

39 Irving Howe made a point in this vein in his autobiography, *A Margin of Hope*. When in the memoir he explored his own political and intellectual engagement with the Holocaust he admitted that he did in fact react slowly, but "would add mildly that now, when incessant talk

about the Holocaust risks becoming a media vulgarity, we may value silence a bit more than anyone could have supposed in earlier years." Howe in fact participated in 1950s remembrance in as much as his anthology of Yiddish short stories put the tragedy on to the front page. Irving Howe, *A Margin of Hope: An Intellectual Biography* (New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1987), 247-248.

40 This point and the need to rethink the significance of 1967 has been made by Eli Lederhendler, *New York Jews and the Decline of Urban Ethnicity, 1950-1970* (Syracuse: Syracuse University Press, 2001). Here I need to plead a bit guilty myself. In my book, *The Jews of the United States* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2004) I have built my final chapter around the date 1967.

JEAN & SAMUEL FRANKEL
CENTER FOR JUDAIC STUDIES

The University of Michigan
3032 Frieze Building
105 South State Street
Ann Arbor, Michigan 48109-1285

**********ALL FOR ADC 064
109/16
Arnold Dashefsky
Univ Of Connecticut At Storrs
& Contemporary Jewish Life
Center For Judaic Studies
Storrs Mansfield, CT 06269-0001