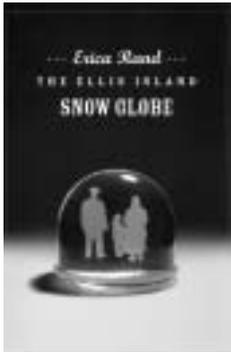


his own idiosyncratic suggestions.

Call it the great gift of analysis, call it common sense. *Beating Around The Bush* is vintage Buchwald. MDH



THE ELLIS ISLAND SNOW GLOBE

Erica Rand

Duke University Press, 2005. 323 pp. \$22.95

ISBN: 0-8223-3591-3

To Erica Rand, contemporary Ellis Island, with its glitzy exhibits and kitschy souvenirs, exemplifies all that is wrong with the United States. Ellis Island stands as a monument glorifying capitalism while at the same time trivializing the hardships and the discrimination the immigrants encountered in the country. Rand cites manifold academic publications and popular media to support these conclusions. As a Jew, Rand is especially sensitive to the distortions of the Jewish experience. In one set of gift shop plaques, the Israeli flag is used as the backdrop for the Ellis Island silhouette, thereby ignoring the fact that Israeli immigrants were never processed at Ellis Island. The State of Israel was formed in 1948 after Ellis Island was no longer used as an immigrant entry point. Nor do all Jews identify Israel as their symbolic homeland. Another distortion is that "Jews" and "Hebrews" are often listed apart from their country of origin, as a discrete statistical group, suggesting that Jews are the eternal sojourners, never actual residents of the countries they inhabit.

As a feminist and a lesbian, Rand is riled by the omnipresent glorification of the traditional family. The exhibits gloss over the government officials' oppressive patriarchal conduct toward women and their "policing

of gender." Unaccompanied single women, gays, lesbians and transgender people were subject to exclusion as undesirables.

For some readers, the book will appear witty and insightful, but for most readers it will often appear doctrinaire and be difficult to read. Erica Rand is professor of art and visual culture and chair of women's and gender studies at Bates College. She is the author of *Barbie's Queer Accessories*. Biblio. CP



SYNAGOGUE ARCHITECTURE IN AMERICA: FAITH, SPIRIT AND IDENTITY

Henry Stolzman, Daniel Stolzman

Images Publishing Group, 2004. 264 pp. \$60.00

ISBN: 1-86470-074-2

As a perpetual minority group, Jews have, by choice or by force, grafted elements of the surrounding culture onto their own. From food to language to art and music, Jews have creatively absorbed and reflected countless foreign concepts without losing sight of Jewish traditions and core values. Synagogue architecture is no exception, with every popular style represented, including Georgian, Classical, Gothic and Modern.

Through engaging narrative and stunning visuals, this coffee-table-size book traces American Jewish history and sociological and spiritual trends through the lens of synagogue architecture over the last 350 years. The authors, a father-and-son team, feature 40 extant synagogues, beginning with Touro Synagogue in Newport, Rhode Island (built in 1763), to today's suburban synagogues that double as community centers. The work of architectural luminaries, such as Frank Lloyd Wright, Percival Goodman, Philip Johnson, and Minoru Yamasaki are represented, as is the authors' own firm.

Beautifully composed color photographs

of each synagogue's façade or sanctuary are paired with intimate descriptions of how each congregation perceives and utilizes its sacred and profane spaces.

For the architecturally challenged, a glossary would have been helpful in understanding sentences like this one (material in parentheses added by reviewer): "In 1845, the Baltimore Hebrew Congregation erected a new Classical Revival (inspired by ancient Greek or Roman style) synagogue that featured an impressive portico (covered porch) with a triglyph frieze (designs carved on a block divided into three square panels) that was supported on four Doric (fluted, no-base) columns."

Fortunately, the Stolzmanns do not get carried away with technical descriptions or confine their analyses to bricks and mortar. In addition to its aesthetic and historical value, this book could help inform any congregation seeking to build or renovate its own house of worship. Bibliography. RKL

THREE HUNDRED FIFTY YEARS: AN ALBUM OF AMERICAN JEWISH MEMORY

Compiled by Michael Feldberg, Karla Goldman, Scott-Martin Kosofsky, et. al.

American Jewish Historical Society, 2005, 246 pp.

THE CAMBRIDGE COMPANION TO AMERICAN JUDAISM

Dana Evan Kaplan, ed.

Cambridge University Press, 2005, 462 pp. \$70.00 (hc), \$27.99 (pb)

ISBN 0-521-82204-1 (hc), 0-521-52951-4 (pb)

Milestones, like the recent 350th anniversary of the arrival of the first Jews in America, are occasions for looking backward and projecting into the future. These two books were published toward the end of a year-long anniversary celebration.

Three Hundred Fifty Years: An Album of American Jewish Memory is an astonishingly beautiful "scrapbook" created by a team of eminent historians. It was presented as a "keepsake album" at a national dinner in Washington, D.C. in September 2005. Because of its original purpose, the book has not been widely distributed and its reader-

ship has been limited. Publication by a commercial or a university press would allow what is a very special book to take its rightful place among the widely available publications coinciding with this recent milestone.

Four partners supported the project: the American Jewish Historical Society, the Jacob Rader Marcus Center of the American Jewish Archives, the National Archives, and the Library of Congress. Filled with beautiful and evocative visual representations, mostly photographs, and wonderfully written text, the book is a small size "coffee table book." But, it is far more. It is a wonderful introduction for the casual reader and the serious student. It covers well-known major events, institutions and people and events that are important but not so central to our collective memory. One-page narratives accompanying each full page illustration manage to cover complex events, issues and lives with remarkable brevity.

Several examples stand out. A photograph and description of the 1943 "We Will Never Die" pageant developed by Ben Hecht, Kurt Weill and Moss Hart is a platform for describing the Jewish community's response to the Holocaust. The text accompanying a photo of the pageant notes that 100,000 people viewed the performance in six cities and makes mention of the highly influential Rabbi's march. A description of the kosher meat boycott of 1902 encapsulates some of the oligarchical tendencies of the U.S. corporate economy and reminds the reader of one of the most important instances of collective action by immigrant women when an estimated "20,000 women on the Lower East Side broke into kosher butcher shops, threw the meat into the street, soaked it with gasoline, and set it on fire."

The book ends with photos of campaign buttons for the 2004 election. This was a signal event because of the candidacy of Senator Joseph Lieberman, a Sabbath observer, symbolizing major changes in American political life. Forty years earlier, Abraham Ribicoff, another Senator from Connecticut, declined John Kennedy's offer to become the Attorney General "for fear that the country was not ready for a Jew to appear in such a visible position of power."

In contrast to the largely celebratory tone of *Three Hundred Fifty Years* and its effortless illustrations of the diversity of American Jewish life is the serious and scholarly assessment of the Jewish past and speculation about the future in *The Cambridge Companion to American Judaism*. The book is an interesting hybrid between an edited volume and an encyclopedia, containing articles by 26 differ-



...an effective one-volume overview that could serve as a text for a course on the American Jewish community.



ent authors covering topics such as Jewish denominations, religious behavior, identity, gender roles, life cycle rituals, education, literature, music and painting. With entries averaging about 15 pages, the available space is too brief for some subjects while other topics are covered in much more detail. On balance, however, it is an effective one-volume overview that could serve as a text for a course on the American Jewish community.

Recent scholarship on the changing meaning of religion in American life and Cohen and Eisen's book *The Jew Within* serve as points of departure. Cohen and Eisen point out that religious affiliation has become much more of an *achieved* than an *ascribed* status and that religious practice has become more personalized. They argue that the ethnic dimensions of American Jewish life are declining and that the religious aspects have become more prominent. These ideas shape the book's main thesis. Kaplan contends that most previous scholarship has focused on the American Jewish community as an ethnic group and that this book is "a comprehensive survey that attempts to cover Judaism as a religion in the United States rather than Jewishness as an ethnicity" since "privatized Judaism is becoming dominant over ethnic identity."

The individual articles do not uniformly support these claims and, instead, suggest that the matter is far from settled. Making ethnicity and religion mutually exclusive

rather than overlapping concepts challenges basic understandings of both concepts by sociologists. Kaplan's contention that "privatized Judaism is relatively non-judgmental and non-obligating, whereas ethnic Judaism makes demands and requires loyalty" clouds the issue since it is the case that religion itself creates parameters for accepted behavior while the personalistic expressions that Kaplan defines as religious practice might better be conceived as expressions of individual spirituality, religious expression perhaps but not religion.

In an article that appears toward the very end of the book, Bruce Phillips reports an alarming fact: that data from the 2000 National Jewish Population Survey document that a large number of "American Jews" define themselves as members of other religions including nearly 18% of adult Jews who define themselves as Christians, 3.5% who practice an Eastern Religion along with 13% who have no religion. Even among those reporting two Jewish parents, only 87% identify themselves as Jewish.

In contrast to *Three Hundred Fifty Years*, which has photos and descriptions of Jews of all stripes, the *Cambridge Companion to American Judaism* tends to omit or downplay some important features of the diversity of the American Jewish community. There is no mention of the recent wave of Russian Jewish immigrants who are taking their place both individually and organizationally. Like many other discussions of the Jewish community, Sephardic Jews also tend to be overlooked—both earlier immigrants from Turkey and Greece and more recent immigrants from Syria. The book omits the significant role of Lubavitch Hasidim in promoting the religious expression the book emphasizes. This numerically small but influential group has a nationwide presence in a network of Lubavitch centers, many of them on college campuses. As this review goes to press, an emailed announcement (available at <http://www.shmais.com/image.cfm?image=image9335.jpg>) illustrates a menorah kindled in Saddam Heisein's former palace in Baghdad, organized by a U.S. Navy Intelligence Officer who is also a member of Chabad. Yet, the only

mention of this group is the important doctrinal dispute splitting its membership, which nonetheless has not affected the fact that its emissaries probably encounter the largest number of unaffiliated Jews.

Individually, each of these books contains important and rich information about American Jewish life. Together, they provide an accurate profile of its present complexity: cause for celebration about Jewish inclusion in the American mainstream but reason to be concerned about polarization and continuity in the face of personalist religion and an open society. **SC**



UNCHOSEN: THE HIDDEN LIVES OF HASIDIC REBELS

Hella Winston

Beacon Press, 2005. 224 pp. \$23.95

ISBN: 0-8070-3626-9

In *Unchosen: The Hidden Lives of Hasidic Rebels*, Hella Winston takes us beyond the beards, wigs and modest attire of Hasidic Jews and offers insights into what is systemic in those communities that inspires “rebels” to yearn for a different type of life. Through interviews with those struggling to find themselves and an identity outside the insular world of Hasidism, Winston offers a thought-provoking and often heart wrenching glimpse into life inside a world unknown and often foreign to outsiders.

Ms. Winston has accomplished no small feat in penetrating the tight-lipped communities of Satmar and other lesser known Hasidic sects. She becomes privy to the frustrations and yearnings of those tortured by Kafkaesque conflicts between the dogma of their upbringing and culture and their indi-

vidual wants and needs. Hampered by a lack of secular education and an often slipshod ability to communicate in English (many of the Hasidic communities use Yiddish as a means of communicating), these “rebels” face innumerable obstacles in their effort to try to immerse themselves in a non-Hasidic world.

Although the concept of trying to escape and reach beyond the confines of one’s upbringing and family values is certainly not novel, the difficulty that the Hasidic “rebels” encounter in attempting to exit the fold appear to some to be unbearable. These individuals have been raised with a clearly articulated mantra that any challenge to the stringent religious and communal rules results in sharp condemnation and a rebuke to “get back in line.” Confronted with disdain by their families and communities and threats that siblings will be unable to find suitable matches, these “rebels” often find the attempt to find meaning and purpose outside the cocoon of their communities a battle too difficult to fight successfully.

Winston’s objectivity and ability to enable her subjects to share their most mundane as well as philosophically complex thoughts join together to take the reader on a soul searching journey. **PL**

ARTS



DRUNK FROM THE BITTER TRUTH: THE POEMS OF ANNA MARGOLIN

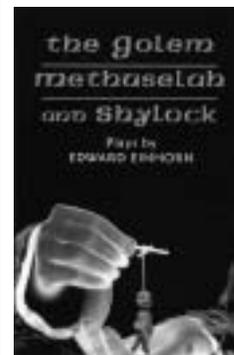
Anna Margolin, Shirley Kumove, trans.

SUNY Press, 2005. 288 pp. \$29.99

ISBN: 0-7914-6579-9

Born Rosa Lebensboym in Belarus in 1887, one of Yiddish’s most experimental and

storied poets emigrated to America in 1913, publishing only one volume of poems in 1929 before settling into a later life of embittered affairs and heartbreak. *Drunk from the Bitter Truth* collects that one book, *Lider*, in addition to later uncollected poems printed—often-times begrudgingly—in daily Yiddish newspapers, which usually favored simpler verse as opposed to the abstractions of the so-called “di yunge” (The Younger Generation) or “inzikhistn” (The Introspectivists) of the 1920s. Margolin loved many of the poets involved with these groups, though she was a member of neither: I have wandered so much, beloved/through strange and dark lives,/through hearts like wastelands—/be kind. This astounding bilingual edition presents Margolin complete for the first time in English, and for the first time in Yiddish in over 50 years. Translator, editor and introducer Shirley Kumove has done Jewish letters an amazing service in her fine renditions, and wonderfully presented biographical and bibliographic material. Highly recommended. **JC**



THE GOLEM, METHUSELAH, AND SHYLOCK: PLAYS

Edward Einhorn

Theater 61 Press, 2005. 196 pp. \$14.95

ISBN: 0-9770197-0-5

Utilizing legends, along with Biblical and Shakespearean material—in the style of absurdist theatre and from a contemporary perspective—Edward Einhorn dramatizes and reflects upon the Jewish condition.

In *The Golem*, the mythic superman that Rabbi Loew creates out of clay to defend the Jews of 16th century Prague from anti-Semitic slaughter, does so without blood-