

UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA
SANTA CRUZ

**MAKING AMERICA / MAKHN AMERIKE / HACIENDO LA AMÉRICA
JEWISH IMMIGRANTS WRITE THE AMERICAS (1880-1990)**

A dissertation submitted in partial satisfaction
of the requirements for the degree of

DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

in

LITERATURE

by

Joanna Meadvin

June 2016

The Dissertation of Joanna Meadvin is
approved:

Professor Susan Gillman, chair

Professor Juan Poblete

Professor Nathaniel Deutsch

Tyrus Miller
Vice Provost and Dean of Graduate Studies

Table of Contents

Abstract	iv
Acknowledgements	vi
Introduction:	
What Are the Jewish Americas?	1
Translating American Jews.	9
Instituting the Jewish American Subject, or Why Literature?	16
Jewish Politics: from liberals to transnational Communists and Yiddishists .22	
Methodology	27
Chapter One:	
Anhelos que no se han realizado: Gerchnoff and Yeziarska’s Jewish America	31
American Linguistic Nationalism.	42
Jewish Orientals	
I want America to Want Me: Yeziarska and Jews as the Real Americans.	45
Lo Que Hace Es Recobrar un Idioma Que Ya Fué Suyo: Gerchunoff and Jews as the Real Argentines	55
Jewish Occidentals	
Yeziarska’s Shifting Racial and Linguistic Landscapes	68
Gerchunoff’s Shifting Racial and Linguistic Landscapes.	82
Conclusion	
Chapter Two:	
As If I Were a Native: Waldo Frank and Henry Roth’s Jewish Americas	101
The Search for Jewish America: Frank and Roth’s Collapsing Racial Triangles Become America: Waldo Frank Feels with the Negro.	107
A New Pledge Allegiance: Henry Roth’s Alchemical Conversions .114	
Why Spanish-Speaking America?	125
Straight Toward a New “Whole” That Could Be Whole: Waldo Frank, Spain and Spanish-Speaking America.	129
It was like a blind force looking for an outlet: Henry Roth finds Spain and Spanish-Speaking America.	142
Conclusion.	166
Chapter Three:	
At heym in the hoyf: Mimi Pinzón’s Yiddish America.	169
The Politics of Yiddish in the Global Context.	171
The Politics of Yiddish in the Argentine Context.	175
Translating Nations: Pinzón Yiddishes Spanish, and Jewishes Argentina . .186	
khudio. hebreo. undzer shprakh: Ours, Yours / Language and the State . . .	194

Glaykhe fleysike un pinktlekhe shiler: Getting Schooled.	207
Di froy—der mentsh—un di shraybern: Human Rights—Women’s Rights	215
Vos iz dos far a roman? What kind of novel is <i>Der hoyf on fentster</i> ?	223
Conclusion.	232
Conclusion:	
The End of America: Yiddish and the Refusal of Utopia:	237
Works Cited	258

Abstract
Making America / Makhn Amerike / Haciendo la América
Jewish Immigrants Write the Americas (1880-1990)
Joanna Meadvin

This dissertation is a literary and cultural history of the intertwining of Yiddish, Spanish and English in the twentieth-century Americas. I employ a hemispheric lens to argue that across the Americas, Jewish authors imagined national belonging through different engagements with language.

The project follows the literary production of eastern European Jews in Buenos Aires and New York—two major urban immigration centers—arguing that linguistic strategies and language politics undergird the struggle to balance “Americanization” with Jewishness as well as a hemispheric future with a European past. I follow this process of adaptation through paired writers working across the waves of eastern European migration from the late-nineteenth to late-twentieth century. What emerges is a historical continuum from the standard-language racial romances of Anzia Yeziarska (circa 1890-1970) in the US and Alberto Gerchunoff (circa 1883-1950) in Argentina, to the English-language modernist experimentation of Henry Roth (1906-1995) and Waldo Frank (1889-1967), to the communist Yiddish-language work of Argentinian, Mimi Pinzón (1910-1975). Each author navigates Jewish Americanness through a world view profoundly shaped by language of publication.

The question, “How did (European) Jews make themselves American?” has received much scholarly attention. This project, anchored in the transnational turns of American literary and Jewish studies, makes the question new by reading Jewish

Americanness across the Americas. I explore the encounter between European notions of Jewish-belonging / un-belonging and American peoples and languages in the twentieth century. Thinking through language and across the Americas helps revise traditional understandings of Jewish Americanness. However, I argue that because the Jewish Americas are transnational and translational par excellence, they also help us rethink American identity writ large. By challenging the myth of two Americas—separated by Spanish and English histories and languages— as well as the notion that citizens must choose between cultural particularity and national loyalty, the Jewish Americas produce and demand trans-American theorizing.

Acknowledgments

Making America was completed under the guidance of my dissertation committee in the Department of Literature at the University of California, Santa Cruz. I would like to thank my committee members: Susan Gilman (Chair) for her enthusiasm for all things “Americas,” Juan Poblete for opening up the world of Latin American critical theory, and Nathaniel Deutsch for our wide-ranging conversations about history.

There are many others to thank. Christine Hong has been an unfailing mentor, challenging interlocutor and endless source of support. I was privileged to experience Murray Baumgarten’s famous generosity. Kirsten Silva Gruesz and Norma Klahn both asked crucial questions just as my project was beginning to take shape.

My writing group has been central not only to my dissertation, but also to my life in Santa Cruz. Kendra Dority, Sophia Magnone, and, later, Keegan Fineburg read with care and kindness. Sophia bakes with love, skates with joy and writes with passion. Kendra, one of the most thoughtful people I know, has taught me about the strength and depth of friendship. Keegan’s sharp intellect and huge heart make themselves felt across the miles. Other companions on this journey shared their love and laughter. Sarah Papazoglakis taught me all about the informational interview, commented generously on my work, cheered as I did my first muscle-up, and forgave me when I backed her car into a truck. One of the highlights of the past year has been collaborating with Katie Trostel on a project that has pushed us both out of our comfort zones. Tsering Wagmo is the best cook, ear, and swimming and walking

companion; although our projects are separated by oceans, they have overlapped in surprising and inspiring ways. And I have no doubt that in the coming years, Lara Galas and I will continue to spend hours over brunch, chatting about work and life as our coffee cools.

Thank you to Debbie, my heart's sister; to Abby, who challenges my intellect and comforts my soul; to Bill who always said I could; to my brothers and sisters, the funniest, cleverest people I know; to my dad for his unquestioning support; to Meryl for listening; to George for never giving up; to the Ryans for being my family away from home. Thank you to my mom whose love makes every risk possible.

Most of all, thank you to Chris whose smile is my every good morning and my every good night.

Making America was completed under the generous support of the Graduate Division at the University of California Santa Cruz in the form of a first year Chancellor's Fellowship. I have also received support from the Literature Department's travel and dissertation funds. Support—over three summers!—from the YIVO institute for Jewish Research made it possible for me to study Yiddish. Support from the Memorial Foundation for Jewish culture and the Jewish Community Federation and Endowment allowed me to conduct research in Buenos Aires, and also present at conferences in Guadalajara, Mexico and Venice, Italy. Endless thanks to UC Santa Cruz's Institute for Humanities Research for both a summer dissertation and a year-long Dissertation Fellowship, both of which granted me much-needed time

to think and write. I would also like to thank the estate of Henry Roth for its permission to publish excerpts from Roth's unpublished manuscripts. I would like to thank the archivists at Harvard's Judaica Collection, the Ravnani Institute (Buenos Aires), the IKUF Library (Buenos Aires), The Jewish Historical Society, and the Howard Gotlieb Archival Research Center at Boston University.

Introduction

What are the Jewish Americas?

In the fall of 1937, the Jewish Argentine journal, *Judaica*, published a special issue dedicated to the Jews of Latin America. The issue contained essays on a range of topics from “Hebrew-isms” in Spanish literature, to Christopher Columbus’s possible Jewish ancestry. As Liliana Ruth Feierstein notes, *Judaica*—the existence of which coincided with that of National Socialism in Europe (1933-1946)—was devoted both to sharing the richness of Jewish culture, and also to stressing that Jews were at home in Latin America (570). To these ends, in the collection’s first essay, “Judeoamérica,” Aarón Spivak boldly claims,

nuestro deber de americanos es hoy redescubrir América . . . Más para ir de América a América hay que pasar por Judea. No decimos que América debe ser forzosamente de los judíos. No lo sabemos si lo será. Decimos tan sólo que América es judía, que Judeoamérica es el término exacto, el verdadero nombre del continente” (102).¹

In order to claim and name the continent, Spivak offers an odd theory: Jews are the yeast that makes surrounding cultures rise. In fact, across time, the interaction of just three “principles”—Judaism, anti-judaism and marransim— have created *all of*

¹ Today, our responsibility as Americans is to rediscover America. What’s more, to arrive at American, one must pass through Judea. Let’s not say that America should necessarily be Jewish. We don’t know if it will be. We only say that America is Jewish, that Judeoamérica is the exact term, the true name of the continent (Unless otherwise noted, all translations are mine).

history. Having established Jews as the motor of civilization, Spivak turns his attention to the local, urging América to recognize itself as fundamentally Jewish. He concludes, “la historia exige que América sepa quién es, para que el fermento que contiene empiece a actuar sobre su materia étnica inerte” (135) [history demands that America know itself so that the ferment [Jews] begin to act on the continent’s inert ethnic material] (which he defines as “indios” and African Americans).

If Spivak’s tactics are extreme, so are his circumstances. In 1937, anti-Semitism and nationalism, along with the war in Europe, rendered the Jewish position in Argentina precarious. In this context, the editors and contributors to *Judaica*’s special issue make a concerted effort to establish the central importance of Jews, not only to Latin American culture, history and language, but also to the Americas (and the world) as a whole. This strategy, while deployed with particular urgency, is not new. By 1937, Argentine Jews had long addressed national and hemispheric concerns in terms imported from Europe and inflected by the Americas. In their campaign to establish Jews as an essential American ingredient, the contributors to the special issue are firmly in-line with a post-emancipation Jewish European tradition that imagines Jewish law, rooted in the Bible, as the foundation of Western Culture.² Many Latin America Jewish writers make this old trope—of Jews as the “father to the Christian world”—Latin American by claiming Sephardim as the essential ingredient

² See Lisa Leff, chapter 1

in the cultural development of Spain's Golden Age.³ They argue that Jews created the Spanish culture that civilized the New World.⁴

While the terms of Spivak's argument will be familiar to anyone who studies the Jewish Enlightenment in Europe, his argument is thoroughly inflected by local politics. He specifies that "Judeoamérica" equals the Spanish speaking Americas—*América*, not America. This neologism echoes with José Martí's famous "Nuestra América" (1892), an essay that encourages the peoples of "our mestizo América," to embrace autochthony, turn away from both Europe and the rapacious industrial North, and band together as the mixed descendants of Indians, Blacks and Creoles.⁵ Following the publication, in 1925, of the Mexican José Vasconcelos's, *The Cosmic Race*, the concept of mestizaje received renewed attention. During the period of Latin American national consolidation (1920s-1960s) mestizaje became a popular trope as

³ John Efron points out that Christian Hebraist, Lutheran theologian, Franz Delitzsch coined the term "Golden Age" to describe the period in Spain, when, according to Delitzsch, "Jewish scholarship and art reached its highest glory." Yet, as Efron argues, "it was the abundant use of the expression in the popular and scholarly discourse of German Jews that made for both its normative use and the nearly universal acceptance of its facticity" (2)

⁴ Leonardo Senkman notes that the first book published in Spanish by the prestigious idishista Instituto Científico Judío (IWO) was Antonio Portnoy's *Los judíos en la literatura española medieval* (1942).

⁵ The English translation of the word, "mestizaje" is "miscegenation," which carries a strongly negative connotation. We might think of "racial mixing" as a better term, however, over the course of the word's long life, it has also come to mean cultural mixing. In Spivak's time, the word still carried strong racial connotations.

It's doubtful that Martí wasn't at least partially on Spivak's mind. Martí was well known to the Jews of Argentina. Sara Jaroslavsky de Lowy relates in anecdote in which Alberto Gerchunoff was heard to say, "Cuba es la hermana menor de todas las Repúblicas de America. Llegó a la vida libre cuando ya las otras habían cumplido la mayoría de edad. No hay un solo argentino que no se sienta cubano y que no tenga a Martí por cosa propia" (22) [Cuba is the little sister of the American Republics. She attained her freedom when the others were already grown. There is not one Argentine who doesn't feel Cuban or that Martí belongs to him.] One of the essays in the special issue of *Judaica* is entitled "José Martí y los judíos de Cuba."

nations found their distinctiveness in cultural and racial hybridity.⁶ And while mestizaje was in some ways a celebration of “diversity,” when folded into nationalist rhetoric, it threatened to push Jews—who were historically vulnerable to the charge of being insular outsiders (not-mestizos)—outside of the new national.⁷ When Spivak calls the continent Jewish, he is both attempting to claim América from what he calls “inert ethnic material” (newly celebrated by elites as mestizo) *and* also linking América to America, by means of Jewishness.⁸ “Judeoamérica” is at once a celebration of Jewish exceptionalism, an anxious attempt to root Jews in Latin America and the Spanish language, a nod towards transamerican Jewish networks, a racialized attempt to distinguish Jews from other subalterns, and an acknowledgement of historical and ongoing Jewish precarity. It is a complicated, messy and sometimes, to the modern ear, discomfiting, engagement not only with Jewish identity in the Americas but also with the meaning of the word “America” itself. Long before they left “home,” Jewish emigrants imagined “America,” and they continued to imagine once they arrived. My dissertation traces these imagined “Americas,” contested and overdetermined, by following a series of Jewish immigrant authors as they each invent an America grounded in their historical moment, and shaped by their needs, longings, frustrations.

⁶ See Lourdes Martínez-Echazábal for a longer discussion of mestizaje and the discourse of national identity.

⁷ As I will demonstrate in the first chapter, the 1920s in both the US and Argentina, was a time of shifting racial politics.

⁸ Spivak links the Dutch—which he says was mainly Jewish—colonization of Brazil to the creation of New Amsterdam. He also argues that “sangre judío fecundó de libertad el suelo americano dos siglos antes de la lucha por la independencia” (121) [Jewish blood inseminated the American soil with liberty two centuries before the fight for independence].

Spivak, like many writers of his generation, sought to root Jews in American nations by aligning them—culturally, linguistically, racially—with American elites. He selected assimilationism from a broad range of competing solutions to the “problem” of Jews and American nations. While debates over the fitness of Jews for citizenship has a long European history, in the Americas, the place of the Jew within the nation became a critical issue in the 1890s, as eastern European Jews fled the Russian empire, and the Jewish American population surged. Recent imperial subjects, immigrants arrived on American shores shaped by a range of Jewish political movements with varying solutions to the Jewish “problem.” Zionists advocated for a separate Jewish nation in the Biblical homeland. By contrast, a movement which we might now call assimilationism, with roots in the German *Haskala*, or Jewish Enlightenment, advocated for the merging the of Jewish and non-Jewish cultures and languages. A third way, autonomism defined Jews as a “spiritual nation” that should simultaneously remain in diaspora and reject assimilation; various nationalities would exist autonomously within the framework of a multinational state. When Jewish writers approached American identity, they could not help but insert complex (global) readings of the relationship between the Jew and the State into the national conversation.

Historically, Jewish writers indicated and elaborated these political positions through language choice. Dan Miron reminds us that before the Second World War and the founding of the State of Israel so “drastically altered” the historical-cultural Jewish literary landscape, every Jewish author faced a series of linguistic choices that

immediately announced his political commitments.⁹ To write in Hebrew was to indicate one's faith in a Zionist future. To write in Yiddish was to align oneself with an exilic, territorialist, or autonomist modern and secular culture (based on the culture and history of Ashkenazic Jews). To write in non-Jewish languages—German, Russian, English, Spanish—was to indicate one's belief in the inevitable merging of Jewish and non-Jewish languages and cultures (38). In the Americas, language continued to be political. Some Jewish writers indicated their commitment to the host nation by writing in its national language, while others expressed their alignment with the Jewish transnational (and largely socialist aligned) “nation” by writing in Yiddish.¹⁰

My project traces the literature produced out of these conflicts. Following the literary production of eastern European Jews in Buenos Aires and New York—two major urban immigration centers—I argue that linguistic strategies and language politics undergird the struggle to balance “Americanization” with Jewishness as well as a hemispheric future with a European past.¹¹ I follow this process of adaptation

⁹ Miron elaborates four major differences between that cultural world, and “our” cultural moment. First, most Jewish scholars and critics were multilingual, often comfortably literate in at least four languages (Russian and German, Yiddish and Hebrew) (31). Second, scholarly study of Jewish texts was part of the revolutionary projects that shaped the literatures themselves (32). Third, as discussed above, choice of language of publication immediately located the writer along a political spectrum. Fourth, the reading public was particularly engaged with both fiction and criticism; critics “caused as much excitement and controversy as any literary genius they discussed” (52).

¹⁰ There were American Zionists writing in Hebrew, as well as Sephardic Jews writing in Ladino, and Jews who continued to write in eastern European languages such as Russian. These authors, while fascinating, are not the topic of this dissertation.

¹¹ New York city is well-known as the center of Jewish immigration to the Americas (by 1950, the Jewish population had peaked at two million), however, at the turn of the century, Argentina's booming economy—in the 43 years before 1914, Argentina's GDP grew at an

through paired writers working across the waves of eastern European migration from the late-nineteenth to late-twentieth century. What emerges is a historical continuum from the standard-language racial romances of Anzia Yeziarska (circa 1890-1970) in the US and Alberto Gerchunoff (circa 1883-1950) in Argentina, to the English-language modernist experimentation of Henry Roth (1906-1995) and Waldo Frank (1889-1967), to the communist Yiddish-language work of Argentinian, Mimi Pinzón (1910-1975). Each author navigates Jewish Americanness through a world view profoundly shaped by language of publication.

The question, “How did (European) Jews make themselves American?” has received much scholarly attention. This project, anchored in the transnational turns of American literary and Jewish studies, makes the question new by reading Jewish Americanness across the Americas.¹² While Aarón Spivak will make no further appearance in this dissertation, his judeoamérica— a complex, contradictory, and sometimes illegible zone where world, nation, and Jewish-belonging come into contact through linguistic politics—limns the landscape of this project. I explore the encounter between European notions of Jewish-belonging / un-belonging and American peoples and languages in the twentieth century. Thinking through language and across the Americas certainly helps us revise traditional understandings of Jewish

annual rate of 6% (the fastest in the world)— also attracted hundreds of thousands of immigrants. In 1914, half of Buenos Aires’s population was foreign born. By 1934, 131,000 Jews lived in Buenos Aires (see Lindstrom and Mirelman). Buenos Aires and New York were also centers for the publication and circulation of Yiddish texts. See Alejandro Dujovne.

¹² See Rebecca Kobrin and Nancy Green for the transnational in Jewish Studies, and Wai Chee Dimock, Jonathan Arac for the transnational in American literary studies.

Americanness. However, I argue that because the Jewish Americas are transnational and translational par excellence, they also help us rethink American identity writ large. By challenging the myth of two Americas—separated by Spanish and English histories and languages— as well as the notion that citizens must choose between cultural particularity and national loyalty, the Jewish Americas produce and demand trans-American theorizing.

II. Translating American Jews

Jewish immigrant writing is a particularly rich area for an exploration of the connections between nation and belonging because Jews arrived on American shores multilingual. Members of eastern European Jewish communities, according to age, gender, and social status, have traditionally fallen on a spectrum of internal and external bilingualism. Internally, Hebrew, the holy language of the book, partnered with Yiddish, the oral language of the everyday. In turn, the Hebrew-Yiddish complex interacted with the external languages of the state. This long history of multilingualism made Jews conscious of the various uses to which language might be put, at the same time that it intersected with very old European tropes of Jews as ultimate translators (interpreters or cultural middlemen). Actual multilingual Jews were translators, at the same that “Jews” served as abstract metaphors—taken up by Jews and non-Jews alike— for cultural and linguistic translation. As Naomi Seidman points out, “the Jew—almost by definition—is Europe’s translator” (16). In the

European context, Jews were both actual translators, people who moved between languages, *and* figures of translation and untranslatability.

The figure of the translating Jew translated recognizably in the Americas context. None other than Jorge Luis Borges, the celebrated Argentine writer, who once wrote, “it has not displeased me to think of myself as Jewish,” (qtd in Stavans) turns to the Jew as the figure of cultural translator par excellence. In a 1951 essay, “El escritor argentino y la tradición,” he writes

Recuerdo aquí un ensayo de Thorstein Veblen, sociólogo norteamericano, sobre la preeminencia de los judíos en la cultura occidental. Se pregunta si esta preeminencia permite conjeturar una superioridad innata de los judíos, y contesta que no; dice que sobresalen en la cultura occidental, porque actúan dentro de esa cultura y al mismo tiempo no se sienten atados a ella por una devoción especial; “por eso—dice—a un judío siempre le será más fácil que a un occidental no judío innovar en la cultura occidental . . . creo que los argentinos, los sudamericanos en general, estamos en una situación análoga: podemos manejar todos los temas europeos, manejarlos sin supersticiones, con una irreverencia que pude tener, y ya tiene, consecuencias afortunadas (qtd in Graff-Zivin 12).¹³

¹³ I remember here an essay by Thorstein Veblen, a North American sociologist, about the preeminence of Jews in Western culture. He wonders if this preeminence allows us to conjecture an innate Jewish superiority, and decides no; he says that Jews excel in Western culture because they act within the culture at the same time, they don't feel tied to it with any special devotion; “that's why,” he says, “it will always be easier for a Jew than for a non-Jewish westerner to innovate within Western culture. . . . I think that we Argentines, and South Americans in general, are in an analogous situation: we can handle European themes,

Borges's vision of the Jew as a privileged insider/outsider figure is both appealing and problematic.¹⁴ While he holds the Jew up as a model of cultural productivity, as Erin Graff-Zivin notes, Borges's European derived conception of Jews as simultaneous insiders and outsiders is highly unstable. Graff Zivin traces the deployment of this European "Jewish signifier" — a condensation of opposites in which the "Jew" is at home nowhere and everywhere, changeable and immutable, oppressor and pariah, rich and poor, asexual and hyper-sexual, modern and primitive, father of Christianity and its detractor—to Latin American literary and socio-historical contexts (4-7). The logic of the signifier means that Borges's Jews, balancing on the border between inside and outside, might easily slip into either belonging or un-belonging. The contradiction embedded in the "wandering signifier" helps us see how Borges translates a European logic—that for centuries read the "Jew," as the untranslatable "original" for which Christianity nevertheless provided the translation—into an Americas context.¹⁵ Further, placing this translating Jew in an

handle them without superstition, with an irreverence which might and does have fortunate consequences.

¹⁴ It is important to note that these tropes were not exclusive to Latin America. For example, 1896, William Dean Howells, champion of dialect-literature, reviewing "Yekel," the first English-language story written by Abraham Cahan, remarks, "he is already thoroughly naturalized to our point of view; he sees things with American eyes, and he brings in aid of his vision the far and rich perceptions of the Hebrew race" (qtd. in Jones 158).

There is something inherently Western and inherently American about this Jewish translator. It is not a coincidence that Borges comes to his realization about Jews and South Americans in conversation with a North American sociologist. By 1951, the US was well established as a center of American —if not world—Jewry. Argentina's vexed geographical position at the American periphery haunts the commentary of a writer often accused of being overly interested in European literature and culture.

¹⁵ See also Max Silverman, Bryan Cheyette and Slavoj Žižek. Malleable is Silverman's term, quoted in Graff-Zivin.

essay that meditates on the role of the Argentine *writer*, Borges signals that his “Jew” is both a metaphorical (or cultural) and potentially an actual (linguistic) translator

Focusing on the generation of Jewish writers who spoke Yiddish, and at least one national American language, I argue that in the Americas context, translating Jews read the “national” through a global context that had itself already played out, in the European Jewish experience, as a complicated negotiation between national and transnational belonging. In the Americas, a proliferation of peoples and languages further complicates Jewish identity formation. The first chapter explores how two early arrivals—Alberto Gerchunoff (arrived Buenos Aires 1890) and Anzia Yezierska (arrived New York 1891)—imagine assimilation as the merging of two binaries, that of native elite and Jew. For both authors language is the site of synthesis. However, inevitably other Others invade their prose, disrupting any possibility, always already fantastical, of pure opposition between Jew and native elite. In other words, Gerchunoff and Yezierska attempt to prove their fitness for Americanness through language, and are thwarted by the complexity of the American scene. In the chapters that follow, I explore how subsequent translating Jews, Henry Roth, Waldo Frank and Mimi Pinzón, mobilize their multilingualism to interrogate the connections between language, nation, and identity.

The generation of translating Jews arrived in the Americas at a moment in which language was tightly tied to national belonging. Benedict Anderson has famously argued that the national imagined community is largely constructed through print culture in a common language. Self-conscious discourses of linguistic

nationalism emerged in Europe in the 1880s when, with the advent of the democratization of politics and great population movements, a “new” nationalism stressed linguistic and ethnic criteria for national belonging. Language was explicitly tasked with creating citizens (del Valle and Gabriel-Stheeman 3). The colonial project of the Spanish crown, for example, had no explicit or consistent language policy. Only after independence, when Creole elites began to think of themselves as leaders of nations, did language become a topic of serious debate. Argentina's generation of '37 was the first to stress linguistic and literary independence from Spain (Velleman 15). However, as in north America, enthusiasm for the freshness of American language was tempered by fear of disunity and fragmentation. This is the generation that saw both the publication of Andres Bello's attempt to preserve a unified standard language with his *Gramática de la lengua castellana destinada al uso de los americanos* (1847) and Domingo Faustino Sarmiento's celebration of the particularities of American Spanish.

Gavin Jones marks a shift in US rhetoric around language and nation to the period following its Civil War, a historical moment marked by the development of large scale capitalism, wide disparities between wealth and poverty, race segregation and unprecedented immigration from eastern and southern Europe. “American” English was both the subject of political controversy and the material for a dialect-literature craze (8). Just as Argentina's generation of '37 struggled to resolve the exciting distinctiveness of American Spanishes with their potential to fragment the Standard inherited from Spain, US Gilded Age language debates seesawed from

celebratory embrace of dialect to doomsday predictions of the dissolution of the nation. As Jones argues, dialect literature was simultaneously a means of controlling the divergence—from Standard—of the language of newly visible others (immigrants, former slaves, rural peoples) and a potentially subversive celebration of the uniqueness of America’s fresh and distinct English. However, as the US embarked on imperial projects in the interwar period, the earlier, relatively tolerant—or at least engaged and curious—linguistic climate closed, and the US citizen was tightly linked to his command of “American” English. As literary critic, Joshua Miller, argues, “American” English was freighted with affect that linked “whiteness and masculinity to a hypermodern, quicksilver language of efficiency that embodied the optimistic, expansionist industrial empire” (13). This was the language of a nation “powerful” enough to nationalize subjects of discontinuous territories.

In both Argentina and the US, linguistic anxiety was triggered by the presence of immigrants, and immigrant writers were under pressure to pledge themselves to the nation by aligning with its Standard language. Speaking the national language was both the entry point into the rights and privileges of citizenship, and a constant reaffirmation of the primacy and legitimacy of the national tongue. As Horacio Legrás writes, “the recognition granted by the state (or by literature as a state apparatus) is never a gift but a loan that is finally collected in kind. In this economy of reflection and return the state provides recognition in return for recognition” (22). The immigrant asks for recognition by recognizing the state in its own—national—language. Early arrivals were extremely adept at presenting Jews in terms that were

legible to the state. By choosing the national language, early writers engaged in a politics of recognition that forced them to pitch Jews as deeply compatible with national needs.

Thus, the dissertation traces an arc from Gerchunoff and Yeziorksa who pleaded for recognition in the national language, to Henry Roth and Waldo Frank, US writers who put pressure on standard language by gazing beyond the nation to other Americas as they queried the possibilities for Jewish Americanness, to Mimi Pinzón, who wrote almost exclusively in Yiddish. I conclude with Pinzón—and dedicate a full chapter to her writing—because she marks a paradigm shift. I argue that outside of the national language, Pinzón was freer to reimagine “nation” as a loose network of multilingual solidarity. Her approach to identity was not a plea for recognition—voiced in the national language—but rather an assertion of ethnic and linguistic particularity.¹⁶ In her only novel, *Der hoyf on fentster* (1965), Jews, speaking Yiddish, Spanish and Russian, survive the monolingual violence of the State in solidarity with their multi-ethnic multilingual neighbors. Pinzón’s work points the way towards an Americas made up of peoples in diaspora, fiercely loyal to ethnic and linguistic particularity, and also deeply committed to cross cultural solidarity. Consequently, a final chapter explores the ways in which Jewish writers help shift the national paradigm away from Utopia, towards diaspora. This final chapter meditates

¹⁶ As I will show in the third chapter, Pinzón’s decision to write in Yiddish means that her path-breaking work has been largely lost to history.

on Yiddish, a minor language of diaspora and hybridity, as a rethinking of identity in the Americas.

III. Instituting the Jewish American Subject, or Why Literature?

This dissertation explores how meta-linguistic choices both reflect and inflect the process by which eastern European immigrants make themselves American and make America Jewish. While many of the texts I take up might be considered non-literary (journal articles, letters), I focus on novels, short stories, and self-consciously “literary” essays. I follow the process of Jewish America-making through literature, because, as critic Horacio Legrás argues, literature is both an institution *and* an instituting power (4). By “institution” Legrás means that literature is deployed by schools—and other nationalizing projects—as a form of domination by which peoples are incorporated into the nation through the machinery of representation. By “instituting” he means that literature also “creates social bonds through enunciation” (4). He argues, via Derrida and Levinas, that what literature “says” always goes beyond its intention.¹⁷ The distinction between “institutional” and “instituting” helps us see how newcomers recognize literature-as-institution, and thus, petition for national recognition in literature. However, saying always goes beyond its intention

¹⁷ All works of literature exist on a continuum from institution to instituting (some texts, at any given moment in time, are more “institutional” than others. *Los gauchos judíos*, written in Spanish with an eye to elite recognition is more likely to be taught in Argentine public schools than *Der hoyf on fentster*, a socialist realist novel written in Yiddish).

and—whether the author likes it or not—immigrant fiction enunciates unanticipated social bonds.

The “institutional” and “instituting” functions of Jewish American literature are always in flux. For example, Alberto Gerchunoff’s *Los gauchos judíos*, a collection of short stories written in celebration of the Argentine centennial was originally instituting; it sought to create new social bonds between Jews and the state. From subject matter—the Argentine pampas are depicted as a Jewish paradise—to language—ornate Cervantian prose—the text pleads for elite recognition. Once recognized and canonized, it became institutional. However, even the institutional text is complicated at every turn by literature’s infinite capacity to go beyond intention. As Leonardo Senkman notes, Gerchunoff’s stylized Spanish prose actually continues to expose him as an over-compensating outsider. Haunted by Yiddish (and Hebrew), *Los gauchos judíos*, exceeds its intention. Indeed, Gerchunoff’s struggle with his multilingual and multicultural Jewish self, his ultimate inability to force Jewishness to equal Argentineness, is the reason that critics continue to debate the collection. The text is richer and more interesting for its failure to make Jew equal Argentine, than it is for its attempt to enunciate social bonds between Jews and Argentine elites.

By contrast, Mimi Pinzón set out to *disrupt* the State’s monolingual power by writing a novel, *Der hoyf on fentster*, that argues for multilingual solidarity—in Yiddish. To use Legrás’s terms, Pinzón’s novel explicitly creates alternate social bonds through enunciation; the novel attempts to preserve the Yiddish-speaking

Jewish community in Argentina. However, Pinzón's commitment to Yiddish may be the undoing of her project. In the absence of a common language, how are non-Yiddish-speaking Argentines to know that Pinzón proposes solidarity? If a project turns too far from literature's institutional function—and its mutually legible national languages—the institution takes revenge, and the novel disappears from the social imagination (as Pinzón's novel has). Further, if we re-contextualize Pinzón's novel, as the cultural property of the transnational Jewish nation, it takes on an institutionalizing function. Pinzón's Jewish novel incorporates Argentine Jews into the machinery of normative Yiddish-language representation.

Legrás argues that in Latin America, literature's institutional role has been to translate the continent—and its peoples—into state driven nationhood. However, he points out that there has always been a troubling and productive “fissure” between the work and its origin (what Legrás calls the “cultural real”). This gap between institutional regimes of representation and the cultural real, is, of course, the limit and possibility of any literary project. However, I read Legrás's enunciation of the particular qualities of the Latin American fissure alongside Gregory Jusdanis's study of Greek “belated modernity.” Jusdanis argues that the process by which literatures of modernizing nations translate the local into the universal is *visible*; by contrast, “when culture ceases being visible, no longer a construct to be fought over but an ideology concealing its operations, it functions aesthetically” (82). He argues that literature was first aestheticized in Europe. However, in peripheral nations—or nations with “belated” modernities—“culture” remained visible, a construct to be

fought over, longer. When canon formation and language standardization are open for debate, art is not yet aestheticized. And while Latin American nations certainly have established canons and standardized language, the tension of Legrás's "fissure"—the visibility of the machinery that turns the "particular" into the "universal"—continues.¹⁸ Legrás traces the fissure to the trauma of the conquest, and defines as "postcolonial" literature "that registers the uncomfortable resistance of a cultural real in the stories it tells" (7). Together, Jusdanis and Legrás help us see that "postcolonial" literature is literature that refuses the telos of aestheticization, and/or the closure of language debates. Post-colonial literature is always in process, always imperfectly modern.

It is not difficult to make the case for Yiddish literature as the literature of a "belated" modernity. As many critics have pointed out, the *Haskala* (the Jewish Enlightenment which "spread" from Germany to eastern Europe) made a modern Yiddish literary canon—as the literature of a Jewish *nation*—thinkable. Thus, for Yiddish, the days of canon debate are not so far distant that we can't still glimpse nation being soldered to language. As Dan Miron and Naomi Seidman, among others, have argued, Yiddish was despised as a corrupt German dialect, considered by Jews and non-Jews to be weak in contrast with national languages (Hebrew as the ancient language of the Jewish people, and non-Jewish national languages such as German and Russian). Despite their distaste, *Maskilim*—Jewish modernizers— took up

¹⁸ See Julio Ramos for a discussion of the process by which 19th century Latin American intellectuals created an autonomous literary field.

Yiddish as means of reaching the Jewish masses, the majority of whom did not speak Hebrew or European languages. Miron pinpoints 1888 as the moment in which Sholem Aleichem “invents” modern Yiddish literature by dedicating his novel *Stempenyu* to “his dearly beloved grandfather, Reb Mendele Moykher-Sforim” (qtd. in Miron 31). Miron argues that “Sholem Aleichem made readers and writers suddenly conscious of the sovereignty, the expanse and the potentialities of their culture. The consciousness of history, real or imagined, often makes history” (31). By creating an august genealogy for secular Yiddish literature, Sholem Aleichem naturalizes Jewish literature in Yiddish as an institution with a history. In Jusdanis’s terms, in 1888, the cultural work of canon formation was visible, and Yiddish literature was not yet aestheticized. And as with Greek nationalism, Yiddish canon formation was as much about the language itself as it was about texts. Seidman points out that the suitability of Yiddish as a literary language continued to be debated as it was negatively associated with women and uneducated men, and considered at best something less than a language (a German “jargon”).

When eastern European Jews arrived on American shores, they were both recent subjects of empire *and* members of the emergent modern Jewish nation. Just as the literature of the Jewish nation came “late” to modernity, the Russian Empire’s attempt to, as Benedict Anderson describes it, stretch “the tight skin of the nation over the gigantic body of the empire” (86) was itself a strand of belated modernity. Because Jews arrived in the Americas already entangled in a complicated relationship with literature and modernity, I argue that we can read Legrás’s “fissure” across the

literature of the Jewish Americas. While it is easy to read Pinzón and Gerchunoff through Legrás's lens—given that their work can be classified as Latin American—I argue that we can also read the work of Anzia Yezierska, Waldo Frank and Henry Roth, US Jewish writers who write in English as productively belated, peripheral, or minor.

Literature produced by the generation of translating Jews—even in English, even in the US—is what Giles Deleuze and Félix Guattari famously call “minor literature.” Deleuze and Guattari define minor literature through the example of Franz Kafka whose German, they argue, inflected by Yiddish (and Czech) creates a “linguistic Third World Zone by which language can escape” (27). They claim that for Kafka, Yiddish functions

less as a sort of linguistic territoriality for the Jews than as a nomadic movement of deterritorialization that reworks German language . . . it is a language that is grafted onto Middle-High German and that so reworks the German language from within that one cannot translate it into German without destroying it; one can understand Yiddish only by ‘feeling’ it with the heart (25).

Although Deleuze and Guattari’s characterization of Yiddish is rooted in a romantic notion of language—Yiddish can only be “felt” with the heart—their reading of it as a deterritorializing force helps us see how Yiddish’s existence reworks national languages. Indeed, Legrás's insight into the gap between the cultural-particular and the national-universal, and his understanding that literature always simultaneously

reinforces *and* undermines elite cultural power, goes a long way towards explaining why many Jews chose literature as the path to making themselves American.

Literature is place from which Gerchunoff and Yeziarska court institutional power and elite recognition, only to be undermined (or empowered?) by its instituting power. Literature is where Henry Roth succeeds and fails to transform the “real” details of his immigrant childhood—through words—into (universal) “modernist gold.” Literature is where Pinzón mounts her case for the multilingual nation. Jewish American literature, produced at the confluence of multiple peripheries, is where Jews make themselves American, but it is also where saying goes beyond its intention, and the Americas are made new. As minor literature—in English, Spanish or Yiddish—Jewish American texts unveil the mechanics by which the diversity of the American cultural real is translated into a national institution, literature, and untranslated into new and unexpected social bonds.

IV. Jewish Politics: From Liberals to Transnational Communists and Yiddishists

Tony Michels has argued that “knowing that American Jews have become the largest, most affluent, and most secure Jewish community in the modern era,” contemporary historians dismiss radical Jewish politics as a stop-over on the way to liberalism. He contends that US-based Jewish historians have ignored Jewish political activity, and instead focused on Jewish-American cultural activity. I cannot help but heed Michels’s call for attention to radical Jewish politics given that my dissertation

argues for Jewish American writing as a case study in thinking about the Americas as an entanglement of subnational, national, and transnational engagements.

Communism, which for many Jews was linked to Yiddishism, is the “other” major transnational community to which the Jewish authors explored in this study belong. Indeed, international communism enabled many Jews to turn away from the assimilative demands of the monolingual nation and imagine identities rooted in sub- and transnational solidarities.

It is not surprising that Gerchunoff and Yeziarska, the two writers who pitched their plea for national recognition in Standard national language, flirted with, but ultimately rejected, political radicalism. Gerchunoff was associated with the Argentine Socialist party from 1902 until 1908 when he was inducted into Argentina’s intellectual elite as a member of the writing staff at *La Nación*, Argentina’s premier newspaper. From the publication of *Los gauchos judíos* (1910) until his death, Gerchunoff’s faith in the promise of Argentina was rooted in its liberal promise. And while Yeziarska spent some time in radical feminist circles, ultimately, her message was one of individual betterment that fit neatly into US cultural myths and liberal ideology.

Henry Roth and Waldo Frank were both committed members of the American communist party. In 1932 Frank was beaten as a union-sponsored observer of a miners’ strike in Kentucky and was president of the Leftist League of American Writers. Roth joined the Communist party in 1933, and attempted a novel based on the life of a Midwestern proletarian hero. Frank broke with the party over the purging

of the Bolsheviks, and Roth left the party in the late 1930s, however, in the 1960s, both writers struggled to reconcile their support for Israel with their concerns over imperialism. Roth ended his life a staunch Zionist. As I argue in the second chapter, Roth and Frank's communist commitments should be read in the context of their—shared—search for identity. Both writers spent their careers casting about for an institution—be it a nation or a party—to which they might belong without conflict (neither one of them could be classified as a communist writer or a writer of proletarian literature like Mike Gold, for example).

By contrast, Mimi Pinzón's communist commitments were deeply woven into her literary career. Her understanding of Argentina as a mosaic of multilingual solidarity was built at the intersection of transnational communism and yiddishism. Previous to 1913, progressive Russian Jewish intellectuals were opposed to any politics that “singled out a ‘nation’ (ethnic, racial, religious group) as its beneficiary” (Cassedy 12). However, Morris Vinchevsky (1856-1932), the “venerable grandfather of Jewish émigré socialism” lay the groundwork for the possibility of a specific Jewish socialism by orchestrating “one of the most remarkable ideological shifts in the American Yiddish-speaking intelligentsia of this period” (12) with an article ‘Race and Class’ in the premiere socialist journal in the United States, *Di tsukunft*. Vinchevsky argued that if socialism was to be truly international— crossing national boundaries— it must begin by recognizing different nations.

Vinchevsky's intervention makes it possible to be both a socialist, freed from the bonds of nation (whether political or “racial”), and also a Jew, rooted in “racial”

(and linguistic) particularity. He argues that socialist internationalism grows out of respect for different “nations.” And these “nations” resemble what I call “subnational attachments.” Pinzón, as a Yiddishist Communist builds her transnational socialism out of her particularist subnational attachments. Her novel, *Der hoyf on fenster*, is thus simultaneously critically suspicious of the effects of (monolingual) Argentine patriotism and celebratory of the allegiances formed by a transnational cooperation (the solidarity and friendship demonstrated across ethno-linguistic lines) rooted in respect for individual national culture (Italian, Jewish, Gallician). Pinzón, like other Leftist Argentine Yiddishists, was less interested in Argentina as nation, than in the potential she saw in transnational networks. With her dual citizenship in Yiddish and international leftist worlds, Pinzón critiqued the homogenizing aims of the territorial nation.

Ultimately, my project gestures towards other possible futures. Pinzón’s Yiddish language novel imagines the nation-to-be as a place where American songs of freedom must be sung in a multitude of languages. This vision resounds with the Benjaminian notion of original and translation as “fragments of a vessel . . . fragments of a greater language” (161). Benjamin knows that the sparks will never be gathered, and we will never read, write, speak or hear pure language. And like Benjamin, Pinzón and her readers know that her novel will never become the nation. The final chapter argues that in the face of crushing impossibility, by holding on to minor languages, we act as if alternate futures—of complex, open and fractured loyalties—are, and will one day be, possible. When Pinzón published a Yiddish novel

in 1965, she willfully (re)created a moment in Argentine history (the early nineteen-teens) when multilingual, transnational socialist solidarity was possible. In 1965, she knew the moment had passed, that Yiddish would decline world-wide. She knew of Stalin's purges, Jewish assimilation into Spanish, and the holocaust. However, writing her novel in Yiddish, she simultaneously professed, and fulfilled, hope. Her dream lives in the space of the novel. It lives in the bonds between, and in the hands, eyes and minds of its readers.

This vision of American identity provides a strong alternative to better-known models of national citizenship that insist that the particular subsume itself to the whole. Pinzón's insight—that nations are, and should be, hybrid constructions of multiple particulars—anticipates Jonathan and Daniel Boyarin's argument that diaspora, rather than monotheism, may be Judaism's great contribution to the world (723). They write

the renunciation of difference seems both an impoverishment of human life and an inevitable harbinger of oppression. Yet the renunciation of sovereignty . . . combined with a fierce tenacity in holding onto cultural identity, might well have something to offer a world in which these two forces, together, kill thousands daily" (723).

Yiddish—both a treasure house of Jewish culture and an example of the creative possibility of the contact zone—offers a model for a translational approach to identity. By thinking through language, Pinzón teaches us how to think across borders. However, the question remains. What do we do in a world in which Yiddish,

Navaho, Chicano English, Hawaiian Creole, Gullah, Mayan, and Welsh are continuously subsumed by Spanish and English? How do we maintain our fierce linguistic particularity if there's no one to talk to, no one to read our words? Perhaps we go "post-vernacular," and encourage minor languages to seep into our national-language prose. Perhaps we form small interest communities, re-learn these languages, and make a strident effort to bring them back into circulation. Perhaps some of us translate, and others chose to remember the best we know how. The final chapter will explore these questions through the afterlives of Yiddish. Multilingualism, with its attendant fractured loyalties, has always been an American reality. Languages in misalignment with the nation have always challenged us to re-imagine identity in broader and more hopeful outlines. In the conclusion, I argue that the story of Yiddish, and its translating American Jews, is nothing less than a particular, local, and singular fragment in the unfinished story of American identity.

IV. Methodology

Chapter one explores how early arrivals, Anzia Yezierska (arrived in the US in 1891 in early adolescence) and Alberto Gerchunoff (arrived in Argentina in 1890 at around age eleven) used national language (English and Spanish) to present themselves as ideal Americans. The second chapter moves slightly forward in time, pairing Waldo Frank (1889-1967, born in New York) and Henry Roth (1906-1995 immigrated around age two), US-based Jewish writers who, disillusioned by the failures of the national promise of assimilation and searching for a compensatory

(“authentic”) Jewish identity, tap into circulating tropes of romantic Hispanism and indigeneity. Roth and Frank imagine Spanish America as Jewish space that offers an alternative to the painful disjunctions of US nation, language and self. Shifting to a single-author analysis, the third chapter examines the sub- and transnational commitments of the Jewish Argentine writer, Mimi Pinzón (1910-1975, arrived in Argentina at about age four). A committed communist and Yiddishist, Pinzón provides a portrait of radical, secular Jewish identity that resists the better-known narrative of Jewish assimilation in the Americas. In contrast with the authors featured in the first two chapters, Pinzón chooses Yiddish, disengaging from the link between standard language and national loyalty. Her Yiddish-language coming of age novel, *Der hoyf on fenster*, advocates for a multilingual, multiethnic Argentina that finds its “nationhood” in a loose network of humanistic solidarity. The final chapter of the dissertation works toward a “theory of Yiddish,” arguing that Yiddish, the language of the eastern European Jewish diaspora, helps us think about how identity is formed, simultaneously, by subnational, national, and transnational commitments.

These threefold networks point toward comparison as a central method of analysis for the translating Jew. Historian Micol Seigel has written, “defining a self in contrast to (an) other(s) is essentially an act of comparison . . . this is as true for the formation of geopolitical entities as for individual subjects. The nation, like the self, emerges in relation to others” (64). By Seigel’s definition, the Jewish American search for identity is comparative. However, this is not traditional comparison, in which an observer outlines the similarities and differences between two parallel and

separate units. Rather, Jewish writers find themselves *inside* the process of comparison, as participants and observers, who re-shape both “Jewish” and “American.” Seigel calls for a moratorium on comparison in favor of a transnational approach that highlights enmeshed global networks of power (78). By contrast, another historian, Rebeca Scott, chooses instead to reshape “comparison” by moving away from a traditional framework towards the telling of stories that are “intertwined rather than juxtaposed” (4). Scott’s form of comparison works as a “zoom lens” that shuttles between the local and the global as they inform one another. In conversation with Seigel and Scott, I argue that Jewish Americans continuously generate their identity out of multiple comparisons—with other Americans, with other Jews, with abstract “American” ideals. Thus, my comparative methodology grows out of the work that the subjects of my dissertation *already* do. In other words, Gerchunoff, Yeziarska, Roth, Frank and Pinzón are my local, and I shuttle between their texts and the larger historical and cultural contexts they forged and were forged by.

The author groupings—Yeziarska and Gerchunoff (chapter one) Roth and Frank (chapter two) and Pinzón (chapter three)—illuminate Jewish literary strategies for making the Americas by highlighting trends that emerge at specific moments in time and place. However, the dissertation also works as a kind of Rubik’s cube (with no solution) turned by the reader. While I make explicit arguments about how and why Yeziarska and Gerchunoff, and Waldo Frank and Henry Roth, speak—intertextually—to one another, other connections inevitably arc across and through the chapters. Scholars have tended, for example, to write about Waldo Frank the Latin

Americanist, or Waldo Frank the Jewish modernist. I put these two Waldo Franks in conversation (as a subset of a larger conversation with Henry Roth), and argue that Frank's search for his own Jewish American identity passed through Latin America. Spin the cube, and Pinzón answers Gerchunoff's attempt to position Jews as Argentine in the Spanish language by claiming Argentina for Jews (and other subaltern others) in Yiddish. Spin the cube again and Pinzón and Yeziarska discuss how gender inflects their male colleagues' drive to insert Jews into the nation language equation (rather than to challenge the equation itself). Spin once again to juxtapose Henry Roth and Mimi Pinzón, two immigrants young enough to grow up fluent—and educated—in both Standard and Jewish languages, both of whom both produced nuanced childhood coming-of-age novels obsessed with the role of language in identity formation. The point here is not to hypothesize endless potential comparisons, but rather to undo the dissertation's—carefully chosen—logic, to open it up to other possibilities.

Chapter One

“Anhelos que no se han realizado”

Alberto Gerchnoff and Anzia Yezierska’s Jewish America

In the decades after his death, the “Father” of Latin American Jewish writing, Alberto Gerchunoff (circa 1880-1950) came under criticism for the assimilationist nature of his oeuvre.¹⁹ Younger Jewish writers argued that over the course of a career dedicated to proving Jews were an essential component of the Argentine liberal project, Gerchunoff glossed over myriad hardships of immigration, most notably antisemitism. And while subsequent generations of critics, most notably Edna Aizenberg, have re-read Gerchunoff's work for the vibrancy of his Jewish themes, the cosmopolitan immigrant, editor, journalist, professor and politician, who traveled, lectured and maintained contacts throughout Europe and the Americas, is still largely remembered as the Jew who wanted to be Argentine.²⁰

However, as recent critical work in Jewish studies points out, Jewish and national identities have never been mutually exclusive, indeed, they are often

¹⁹ See David Viñas, Mario Szichman, Gerardo Mario Goloboff, and Saúl Sosnowski.

²⁰ See also Dalia Kandiyoti who argues that while Gerchunoff’s short story collection, *Los gauchos judíos* is “in many ways in exercise in unproblematic literary and social assimilation through the adoption of prevailing nationalist myths” (103), Gerchunoff is also “inserting a Jewish space within” the pampas, showing us that “place does not automatically equal race or ethnicity” (111).

See also Ariana Huberman who stresses that “Jewishness is also celebrated in these tales” (102) and James Hussar who argues that *Los gauchos judíos* mounts “una defensa efectiva de la identidad judía . . . propone que aquéllos pueden ser patrióticos y, a la vez, mantener sus propias tradiciones” (41). [an effective defense of Jewish identity . . . it suggests that the Jewish gauchos can be patriotic even as they maintain their own traditions].

constitutive. When Gerchunoff writes of the Mosaic people as pre-Christian Christians, or argues that Spanish has been the enduring language of Jewish poetic creativity, his horizon is, of course, national. But he is also in conversation with ongoing transnational debates over Jewish identity. As Lisa Leff argues, in the wake of emancipation, French Jews became European not, as has been traditionally argued, by privatizing their Judaism and operating in the public arena as French citizens, but rather by asserting the affinity between Judaism and the French nation. Leff points out that the representatives to Napoleon's assembly of Jewish notables (1806) argued for Jewish emancipation by claiming not simply that Jews were required to follow national law when it conflicted with Jewish law, but further, that Jewish law, rooted in the Bible, is in fact, the foundation of both Christianity and Democracy. The notables argued that Jews had always, even in ancient times, embraced the nations to which they belonged through displays of fraternity toward their fellow citizens (34).

In the late 18th century, European emancipation gave rise to the Jewish Enlightenment or *Haskala*, which spread from western to eastern Europe. *Maskilim*—proponents of the *haskala*—advocated for Jewish embrace of secular values, subjects of study, and languages.²¹ In the Russian empire of Gerchunoff's birth, a range of Jewish political activity, including Zionism, nationalism, autonomism, and

²¹ The German Jew, Moses Mendelssohn (1726-1789), generally acknowledged to be the movement's founder, famously translated the Bible into German. Dan Miron argues that "the objection to Yiddish as an educational tool" was one of the main reasons for his translation project (36). His German Bible was meant to help Jews acculturate into a national, secular language (Seidman 15).

territorialism, had grown out of the *haskala*.²² Each of these movements, local, national and transnational in scope, envisioned a different relationship between Jews and the state. Zionists advocated for an independent Jewish nation in the biblical holy land. Nationalists encouraged full participation in the life of European nations. Autonomists argued for Jewish enclaves within non-Jewish host nations. When Gerchunoff immigrated to Argentina in 1889, he did so as part of a wave of the eastern European Jews who carried with them not only expectations of a better life in the “promised land,” but also a history of complex relations with the state.

The influence of eastern European politics can be seen in Gerchunoff’s advocacy for Israel, a project that he framed as inherently American.²³ While his early career was dedicated to an assimilationist project predicated on proving historical and spiritual compatibility between Jews and Argentines, by the 1940s, in the wake of Argentine antisemitism and the destruction of European Jewry, Gerchunoff had become a Zionist. Working closely with Moisés Toff, director of the Latin American Department at the Jewish Agency for Palestine (based in New York), Gerchunoff sent hundreds of letters to Latin American ambassadors, politicians, journalists and writers exhorting them to “defend the Jewish cause.” An unpublished personal note, sent to Alberto Ulloa on November 11, 1947 at the Waldorf Astoria in New York urged the Peruvian senator to intervene on behalf of the Jewish cause in

²² Gerchunoff was born in Proskuriv (now Ukraine)

²³ Of course, this is not the only place in Gerchunoff’s work that the influence eastern European politics might be located. As noted in the introduction, Naomi Lindstrom argues that *Los gauchos judíos* reflects Argentine centennial politics—which increasingly find the national spirit in the countryside—and eastern European Zionist politics of Jewish renewal.

the final debates over the United Nation's Partition Plan for Palestine. Gerchunoff wrote

creo que su intervención en las últimas discusiones puede ser fundamental para la causa judía y para la causa de la justicia . . . La Patria judía restablecida será un ejemplo de altura política y de elevación religiosa para el mundo porque vivirá con las normas de la civilización cristiana y los principios de la antigua tradición de la civilización cristiana y los principios de su antigua tradición que son un fundamento del cristianismo.²⁴

Repeating the word “Christian” three times, and the word “fundamental” twice, Gerchunoff deploys European rhetorics of assimilation that posit Jews as father to Christianity and Western civilization. United by “ancient” traditions, Jews and Christians are compatible. Jews are essential components of any modern state, and modern states have a role to play in the development of Jewish nation. Gerchunoff's closing line is telling: he sends Ulloa his greetings with “*amistad profunda y americana*” (emphasis mine). He reminds the Peruvian of their common cause, not only as modern men united by Christian civilization, but specifically as Americans. Gerchunoff grafts an old European argument—that there is something just, universal,

²⁴ I think that your intervention in the final discussions could be fundamental to both the Jewish cause and cause of justice . . . The reestablished Jewish nation will be an example of high politics and elevated religion for the world because it will live with the norms of Christian civilization and the principles of the ancient tradition of Christian civilization and the principles of its own ancient tradition which are fundamental to Christianity.”

and modern about Jewish tradition—to American exceptionalism. The founding of the state of Israel marks the triumph of a new world ideology.²⁵

It is not surprising that in immigrant writing European rhetoric exists alongside American ideology. All immigrant literature is created at the confluence of national, transnational and subnational currents. However, across the dissertation I argue that eastern European Jewish immigrants were particularly well equipped to explore the limits and possibilities of hybrid American identities. Jews were not only accustomed to interrogating the relationship between the individual, the community, and the state, but, perhaps more importantly, historically, they signaled their politics metalinguistically. For the most part, in Europe, Zionists argued their cause in Hebrew, Communists and Autonomists in Yiddish, and assimilationists in European languages (Miron 38). These multilingual political actors immigrated to American nations that were attempting to knit diverse populations into national culture through language. When Gerchunoff “proves” that Jews are at home in Argentina by pointing to the Jewish presence in the language and poetry of “Golden Age” Spain, his audience is multiple. His language—Spanish, rather than Yiddish or Hebrew—signals his host-country nationalism to Jewish readers.²⁶ His style—ornate, cervantian—

²⁵ Leonardo Senkman argues that Gerchunoff’s Zionism was of a piece with US based Zionists who saw no contradiction between Zionist and American ideology. American Zionists argued that liberalism was compatible with Jewish tradition and that in their fight for the promised land, they were the new American pioneers. Advocating for Zionism did not mean that an American Jew must emigrate. Rather, emancipated Jews of the New World argued for the Zionist solution on behalf of the oppressed Jews of the Old World (237-38).

²⁶ As noted in the introduction, John Efron points out that Christian Hebraist, Lutheran theologian, Franz Delitzsch coined the term “Golden Age” to describe the period in Spain, when, according to Delitzsch, “Jewish scholarship and art reached its highest glory.” Yet, as Efron argues, “it was the abundant use of the expression in the popular and scholarly

signals his *hispanismo* to elite Argentine readers. Meta-language carries as much argumentative force as content does.

Gerchunoff, like other multilingual Jewish writers, filtered questions of identity through the prism of language. They asked: to whom do Jews owe their loyalty? To the small eastern European towns of their birth? To the empire from which they hailed? To transnational communism? To Zionism? To the nations in which they found themselves? To their immigrant neighborhoods? They wondered in which language(s) they should express and prove their loyalty. Yiddish? Polish? Spanish? English? Hebrew? Gerchunoff would have answered these questions simply: We owe our loyalty to Argentina, and we foster and express that loyalty in Spanish.²⁷

In this chapter, I read Gerchunoff's work alongside that of his contemporary, Anzia Yezierska (circa 1890 -1970), a Jewish immigrant to the US, who would have said, "we owe our loyalty to America, in English." Like Gerchunoff, Yezierska, a foundational "first," advocates, in the national language, for the merging of Jews and Americans. Yezierska and Gerchunoff were born into Yiddish speaking families in eastern Europe, and immigrated to the Americas as children. At first glance, their work seems impervious to comparison. He was accepted into elite intellectual circles, and counted presidents and cultural luminaries among his friends. After a wave of

discourse of German Jews that made for both its normative use and the nearly universal acceptance of its facticity" (2)

²⁷ Although he became a late in life Zionist, he never considered emigration. And perhaps more importantly, he advocated for Israel in the same nationalistic terms with which he described Argentina.

fame as the “Cinderella of the ghetto,” Yeziarska died forgotten and alone. He wrote erudite essays, formal novels and short stories in cervantian Spanish. She penned personal novels and short stories in Yinglish. Clearly, movement away from their shared eastern European origins—to the life of a Jewish woman in New York and the life of a Jewish man in Buenos Aires—produced a proliferation of dissimilarities. However, I argue that these two foundational Jewish American authors share a startlingly similar conception of Jewish American identity, and make use of similar strategies in their attempt to make Jews Americans.

On the spectrum of Jewish approaches to nation, Gerchunoff and Yeziarska are, in George Fredrickson’s words, romantic racialists. Fredrickson traces romantic racial thinking to Johann Gottfried von Herder, the German philosopher, who believed that each cultural group, or Volk, expresses a unique spirit. Fredrickson points out that in the US, elites linked national characteristics to race during the conflict over slavery (98). White historians, cultural critics and writers embraced the notion that Anglo-Saxons were resourceful, practical and rational—if potentially aggressive and materialistic—while blacks were childlike and emotional. Gerchunoff and Yeziarska pick up on these tropes. Both authors construct their fictional worlds out of “contrasting stereotypes” (Fredrickson 101) that fix racial characteristics.

In Yeziarska’s short stories and novels, the oriental Jewess and the Anglo-Saxon man create a (more perfect) union by combining pure opposites. She is defined by her passion, seductiveness, spontaneity, and emotion. He, by his reserve,

repression, logic and rationality.²⁸ However, their differences are superficial. Ultimately, her role is to grant him access to his lost authenticity—to the primitive man buried beneath a crust of over-cultivation. When the romances fail (and they always do), the Jewish woman realizes that she, in and of herself, has been the true American all along. Her natural expressiveness and indomitable energy make her more American than the frozen Anglo-Saxon who rejected her. Neither Jew nor Anglo-Saxon can escape inherent racial characteristics. However, it turns out that Jewish racial traits are American national traits.

Gerchunoff's first, and still most famous work, *Los gauchos judíos* (1910), is similarly romantic. The text, an allegory for nation, fuses gaucho to Jew, through brotherhood, rather than heterosexual love. Like Yeziarska, Gerchunoff codes his Jews as racially oriental—exotics who pray in an ancient language. However, they are also ready to be citizens of the modern nation. The Jewish gauchos rejoice in their imagined return to cultivating the land. The gentle Argentine climate, so much like that of Spain, allows them to reenact their “*existencia anterior*” (15).²⁹ Gerchunoff forges this counterintuitive connection between Yiddish-speaking immigrants and Argentina by pointing counterfactually to a Jewish “*espíritu*” present in the Spanish

²⁸ Fredrickson points out that in the US, in the mid-19th century, romantic historiographers represented the Anglo-Saxon as “carrying in his blood a love of liberty, a spirit of individual enterprise, and resourcefulness, and a capacity for practical and reasonable behavior” (98). He also notes that for white romantic racial abolitionists, “the Negro was the symbol of something that seemed to be tragically lacking in white American civilization” (108). Yeziarska's romantically radicalized Jews occupy the same type of romantic racial otherness—offering that which the dominant culture lacks.

²⁹ In the opening chapters, Gerchunoff reminds his readers both that the Bible commands Jews to till the land, and that they were farmers in Spain.

language since before the Spanish Inquisition. With the spirit of language, he is able to elide the historical detail that most Jewish immigrants to Argentina had no Spanish ancestry; they were Ashkenazi, not Sephardic, Jews.³⁰

The first half of this chapter argues that the attempt to create America out of romantic racial stereotypes inevitably slips beyond both authors' control. In Yeizerska's *Salome of the Tenements* (1923) the Jewish woman is an obvious allegory for the ethnic who brings much needed creative energy to the overly rational, white American scene. By calling her Jewess oriental, Yeizerska taps into European tropes that link Jewish racial ambiguity to sexual allure, at the same time that she flirts with the US popular craze for the orient as a space of women's liberation, and US modernist interest in the indigenous "primitive" as a particularly American creative resource. At this complex intersection of signification, Jew-woman-passion surges beyond its boundaries. Rather than balance the Anglo-Saxon's coldness, the Jewish woman infects him, and the union fails. Gerchunoff encounters similar difficulties in keeping his terms pure. In an essay on Cervantes, Gerchunoff positions the "Jew" as a seductive—and essential—component of Golden Age Spain. However, as he deploys stereotypes that link "Jew" with seduction, femininity, and the exotic, he undermines his own (masculine) dominance over the text. The "Jew" escapes his control. Romantic racialists, Gerchunoff and Yeizeriska struggle with the assumption that assimilation is a dialectic in which one stable and pure thing synthesizes with another: Anglo-Saxon + Jew= American / Creole+Jew=American.

³⁰ Yiddish is a Germanic Jewish language. Ladino is a Spanish Jewish language.

The second half of the chapter marks a shift in work of both writers. The attempt to write the Americas as equal to the sum of white native-born and Jew became even more complicated in the 1920s. In both Argentina and the US, waves of eastern and southern European immigration triggered anti-foreign backlash. In the US, by restricting immigration, the passage of the Reed-Johnson Act reduced the perceived threat posed to the body politic by eastern and southern European immigrants. As African Americans migrated from the rural south to the urban north and west, elites became less concerned with protecting the “Anglo-Saxon” from white ethnics, and more concerned with establishing a firm boundary between black and white. In Argentina, the 1920s saw increasing right-wing nationalism and anti-foreign—including anti-Semitic—agitation. By 1930, the democratically elected Hipólito Yrigoyen had been overthrown, ushering in cycles of instability and a series of repressive military regimes.

In this climate, Yeziarska and Gerchunoff could no longer present themselves as exotic racial others. Post 1920s, as Yeziarska struggles to re-calibrate Jewish figures, African, Indigenous, and Hispanic others appear in her work. However, these others rarely serve simply as foils against which Jewish characters perform their whiteness. In *Red Ribbon on a White Horse* (1952), for example, Yeziarska mournfully passes the baton of otherness on to Richard Wright. In *All I Could Never Be* (1923), she engages in what could be called classic triangulation; when the protagonist, Fanya, is forced by poverty into waitressing, she quickly distinguishes herself from the abject “negro women” she sees “bent over huge pots. Their ragged

waists exposed wrinkled black breasts . . . the odor of negro sweat, foulness, steam of cooking filled the air” (173). Even this moment, distasteful as it is, is complicated by Fanya’s subsequent agitation (for which she is fired) on behalf of her fellow workers.

Gerchunoff responds to anti-Semitic Argentine nationalism by explicitly defining Jews as occidental. While his early work is saturated with depictions of Jews as Orientals, in a 1924 essay on national politics of language, he urges his fellow Argentines to acknowledge their membership in the family of occidental nations. Immigration should not be restricted, he argues, because immigrants—Jews among them—bring occidental values. By 1948, in his advocacy for Israel, he defines Arabs as oriental—with all associated negative stereotypes including laziness and corruption—in contrast to Jews with their civilizing, occidental values.

In short, as the meaning of both “Jew” and “American” shifts over the 20th century, Gerchunoff and Yeziorksa do not abandon their romantic racialism, rather they shift their characterizations of Jewish traits; pre-1920s, Jews offer the nation their orientalism, post-1920s, they offer occidentalism. However, while both writers conceived of “oriental” and “occidental” as racial categories, their main concern was not achieving whiteness, rather, it was assimilation.³¹ Given their historical circumstances, and their commitment to racial categories, neither author is able to

³¹ Language, as much as race, is caught up in the shift from oriental to occidental. As Yeziorksa drops oriental exoticism, her language standardizes. When Gerchunoff makes the case for Jews as occidentals, he points to the Hebrew language, —as contained by the Bible and the Talmud— as the “refuge” of the Jewish national spirit in diaspora (*Pino* 118).

embrace the inherent hybridity of either “nation” or “Jew.” Both are ultimately frustrated by their attempts to be American with no remainder.

I. American Linguistic Nationalism

Gerchunoff and Yeziarska arrived in the Americas as Argentine and US elites were embroiled in debates over the link between language and nation. Eric Hobsbawm has argued that after 1880, the democratization of politics and great population movements sparked a “new” nationalism in Europe. This nationalism stressed linguistic and ethnic criteria for national belonging. Language was tasked with creating citizens (3). In the imagined community of the new nation, citizens were bound together by their shared commitment to national values, and enacted nationality through their conventional performance of its language. In Latin America, it was only after independence, when Creole elites began to think of themselves as leaders of nations, that language became a topic of debate. Argentina's generation of '37, represented by Domingo Faustino Sarmiento's embrace of American Spanish, was the first to stress linguistic and literary independence from Spain (Velleman 15).³² However, as evidenced by Venezuelan Andres Bello's attempt to preserve standard Spanish with his *Gramática de la lengua castellana destinada al uso de los americanos* (1847), enthusiasm was tempered by fear of fragmentation. Miranda Lida argues that it wasn't until the 1920s, when philological debates between Américo

³² Juan Bautista Alberdi, Esteban Echeverría, Juan María Gutiérrez and Domingo F. Sarmiento were key members of this Argentine literary group that sought to distance itself from Spain.

Castro, Amado Alonso and Jorge Luis Borges spilled into the press, that the possibility of an “Argentine language”—as distinct from the Spanish spoken in Spain—was widely considered.³³

Indeed, 19th century language debates were heavily influenced by the Spanish national project. In the face of internal (Basque and Galician) and external (American colonial) independence movements, Spain relied on cultural diplomacy as a means of forging internal and external cohesion. Language would bring the former colonies back under the umbrella of Hispanic culture. In order for “the people,” particularly an estranged colonial people, to invest in the standard language of the “mother” country, language was imbued with symbolic value. At the turn of the century, as waves of immigrants pressured the meaning of “Argentine,” many elites were happy to return the Spanish embrace, aligning themselves ideologically with Hispanic language and culture as a means of drawing a contrast between themselves and invasive immigrants, and themselves and an imperialist United States (Del Valle and Gabriel-Stheeman 5).

Literary critic Gavin Jones marks a shift in US rhetoric about language in the period following the Civil War. In the context of emerging large-scale capitalism, widening disparities between wealth and poverty, intensifying race segregation and

³³ Spaniard, Américo Castro was the first director of the Instituto de Filología en la Universidad de Buenos Aires. Accused of denigrating the Argentine language in an attempt to “purify” Spanish, he was succeeded by Alonso, another Spaniard (after a number of brief interim directors). Borges weighed in, arguing in “*El idioma de los argentinos*” (1928) that linguists should be flexible, sensitive to local uses. Lida argues that while Alonso made a great effort to practice a philology rooted in Argentina and Argentine Spanish, he never accepted the idea that there was an “idioma nacional de los argentinos.” Lida also reminds us that at the beginning of the 20th century, the Argentine upper-class largely spoke French.

unprecedented immigration from eastern and southern Europe, “American” English became both the subject of political controversy and the material for popular dialect-literature (8). US Gilded Age language debates alternated between celebratory embrace of dialect to doomsday predictions of the dissolution of the nation. As Jones argues, dialect literature was simultaneously a means of controlling the divergence, from standard, of the language of newly visible others (immigrants, former slaves, rural peoples) and a potentially subversive celebration of America’s fresh and distinctive English. Joshua Miller notes that as the US sharpened its imperial gaze in the interwar period (defined as 1898-1945), an earlier heterogeneous and relatively tolerant linguistic climate contracted, and the status of the US citizen became rigidly linked to his command of American English. Miller argues that American English was freighted with affect that linked “whiteness and masculinity to a hypermodern, quicksilver language of efficiency. This was a language imagined to embody the ‘optimistic, expansionist industrial empire’” (13), of a nation powerful enough to nationalize subjects of discontinuous territories.

Given these linguistic environments, it is not surprising that Gerchunoff and Yeziarska write in Spanish and English (rather than Hebrew, Yiddish, or Polish).³⁴ In both bodies of work, language resounds with meta-signification; it is practically a character. Their interest in language *qua* language is, of course, connected to their

³⁴ Yeziarska, a non-native speaker of English, spoke Yiddish and Polish at home. Gerchunoff spoke Yiddish at home. He first learned Spanish in the colony, Rajil, from Joseph Sabbah, a young Turk from Itzmir who also spoke Arabic, French and Spanish. Sabbah gave Jewish colonists classes in Spanish, French and ancient Hebrew while another immigrant gave classes in Yiddish (Szurmuk 217). As an adult, Gerchunoff read most romance languages.

shared status as non-native speakers who perform their belonging in languages that don't quite fit. However, as I have been arguing, their attention to language is also ideological. Gerchunoff writes in self-consciously archaic Cervantian prose, and also explicitly argues that shared language is central to the national project. Miller's definition of dialect literature helps us see that although Yezienska is often celebrated for the "hybridity" of her Yinglish prose, her Yiddish inflected English serves to simultaneously offer Jewish language to the American project (raw, primitive language that will "improve" English just as passion improves rationality) and contain it. For both writers, language theorizes the Jewish place in the New World nation.

II. Jewish Orientals

a. "I want America to Want Me": Yezienska and Jews as the Real Americans

Yezienska's autobiographical novels, short stories and essays tell the same basic story. A bright Jewish girl breaks with her Old World family. She simultaneously searches for professional satisfaction (as a schoolteacher, a seamstress, a writer) and falls in love with a cold, rational, Anglo-Saxon (or occasionally, assimilated Jew).³⁵ The lovers stare at each other from opposite sides of a divide. She is Oriental. He is Anglo-Saxon. He is an individual. She struggles to

³⁵ See Mary V. Dearborne for a discussion of the strong possibility that Yezienska's generic Anglo-Saxon characters are based on John Dewey with whom she had an intense, quasi-romantic relationship.

break free from her community. She speaks an unvarnished Yinglish. He holds forth in cultivated English rhythms. She dreams that joining their complementary and opposite qualities, man and woman, Jew and Anglo, will create a more perfect union. However, when the romance inevitably fails, she salves her pain with the realization that she, the Russian Jewish immigrant has always been, in her unvarnished authenticity and indomitable spirit, a truer American than any native-born.

Yeziarska's love affairs owe their existence, at least in part, to the European trope of the *belle juive*, a Jewish woman who is not only sensual, exotic, and primitive, but also a conduit to the ancient revelation and romantic aesthetics of the Bible (Kalman 38). Yeziarska (and Gerchunoff) takes up the European notion that Jews, closer to ancient truths, connect their national brothers to a common spiritual past. She codes this knowledge as Oriental. Jonathan Freedman points out that while Jews had been described as "Oriental" in the US throughout the eighteenth and nineteenth century, in the 1880s, as large numbers of eastern European Jews arrived, Jews were increasingly seen as part of the oriental *race*. He notes that during this period

for much of white New York, and for that matter white America, the Lower East Side—and hence by extension the Jews who lived there—was quite literally understood as East in all of its connotative power: a place of mystery peopled by mysterious, hyper-emotional, jabbering, sexually ambiguous others (78).

While these adjectives—“mysterious,” “hyper-emotional,” “jabbering”—skew negative, they are somewhat ambiguous. Yeziarska embraces the ambiguity of the terms, offering America the mystery, emotion, innovative language and (sexual) passion of the Jewess.

At the time that Yeziarska was escaping from the ghetto, the orient was also popularly associated with escape from patriarchal constraints. In a discussion of Orientalism in silent films produced between 1916 and 1926, Gaylyn Studlar notes that for Westerners, the Orient was a place of liminal and shifting identity (489). Orientalist iconography was particularly appealing to the US New Woman who was looking to “escape bourgeois domesticity’s constraints and to create other, transformative identities” (491).³⁶ Yeziarska strategically deployed Orientalism, harnessing the liberating, powerful qualities associated with the Oriental woman, unhindered by convention, to her own project to become an independent writer.³⁷ However, any feminism in Yeziarska’s novels is complicated. The Jewish woman struggles to escape the repressive expectations of her patriarchal family; she longs to define herself through artistic and professional achievement. However, unlike most New Women, Yeziarska—along with her characters—longs to escape not “bourgeois domesticity,” but rather, abject poverty. Her characters’ professional striving cannot

³⁶A 1925 movie of Yeziarska’s *Salome of the Tenements* starred Theda Bara. Bara, whose parents were Jewish immigrants from Poland, was one of cinema’s earliest sex symbols, and often played “Oriental” roles.

³⁷Although it would be difficult to call Yeziarska a New Woman—it’s hard to categorize politics in any way—Bettina Berch and Lisa Botshon trace Yeziarska’s associations with a number of “feminist bohemians” including Charlotte Perkins Gilman, Rose Pastor Stokes, Zona Gale, Fannie Hurst and Henrietta Rodman. Yeziarska certainly rebelled against the constraints of bourgeois marriage: she fled two husbands and a daughter.

be untangled from their quest for marriage and economic security. Yeziarska both despises the condescension of the rich, and also fetishizes their wealth. She simultaneously condemns the sexism of the father, and offers herself as an exotic object to the Anglo-Saxon love interest.

In *Salome of the Tenements* (1923) the pairing of Sonya and John is at first described as the “fusing” of “the oriental mystery and the Anglo-Saxon clarity that will pioneer a new race of men” (108). However, as Sonya quickly comes to realize, they’ve “tricked” themselves into marriage “trying to find a common language” (132). Language misleads—it promises a union that can never be—but it is also the only place where amalgamation succeeds. Before they elope, John sounds alarmingly like Sonya when he whispers, “let’s fly away.” The narrator remarks, “in the contagion of her unfettered spirit he caught the very rhythm of her dialect” (102). This is the only moment in the novel in which the two have come together, but not yet failed. For a flash, the dream lives. And while Manning’s contraction of her “unfettered spirit” is described as a contagion, this moment directly precedes the consummation of the relationship and their (short-lived) marriage. Having caught the rhythm of her dialect, he cannot un-catch it. The marriage ends in divorce, but John Manning can no longer return to his sterile Anglo-Saxon existence. In a fit of jealous rage, he sheds his patina of cultivation, and nearly rapes her. His loss of control is not figured as threatening, rather, it is almost celebrated as the triumph his true self. The near rape reveals that deep down, John has always been more like Sonya than either one of them realized; “custom, tradition, every shred of convention, every vestige of civilization had left

him. He was primitive man starved into madness for the woman” (181). She realizes, “at bottom we’re all alike” (183).

Yeziarska’s novels are parabolic, the failure to assimilate, a vertex from which the character falls back to a bedrock self. Sonya and John’s marriage fails, like all of Yeziarska’s allegorical romances, in part, because he demands that she remake herself in *his* image even as he hungers for a (domesticated) taste of her “oriental mystery” (108).³⁸ Yeziarska resolves this conflict by relocating the true America within the Jewish woman. She recasts the Anglo-Saxon as the product of over-cultivation, a calcifying of the “original” American spirit. By contrast, the Jewish woman’s primitive, wild nature makes her more like the “original” Americans. Failure provides the occasion for epiphany, as Jewish characters come to realize that, blinded by their quest for love, they have stumbled along a false path.

Sonya’s mistaken belief that she and John might share “a common language” is similar to Fanya’s (*All I Could Never Be*, 1932) and Sophie’s (“To the Stars,” 1923) initial belief that mastering English will allow them to merge with America. Just as Sonya realizes her union with John is a false pass at Americanness, both Fanya and Sophie realize that their imperfect English, rather than holding them back, has actually prevented them from accessing a *false* America. Rejection by the Anglo elite frees them to express themselves in authentic immigrant language.³⁹ In “To the

³⁸ In the story, “America and I” the main character tells a “vocational guidance” councilor, “I want American to want me” (30).

³⁹ Many of the stories from *Children of Loneliness* especially follow a trajectory from the Jewish girl’s excitement to learn standard English, to her failure to master it, to a subsequent revelation that she can best express herself in “immigrant English.”

Stars,” Sophie finds a patron in the president of the university. She gives him a story she has written, and asks him to “change the immigrant English.” “Fix it up?” he protests

There are things in life bigger than rules of grammar. The thing that makes art live and stand out throughout the ages is sincerity. Unfortunately, education robs many of us the power to give spontaneously, as mother earth gives, as the child gives. You have poured out not a part, but the whole of yourself. That’s why it can’t be measured by any of the prescribed standards. It’s uniquely you” (71).

Here, the Jewish woman, a primitive connected to a simpler past, gives as a child gives. Her beautiful communication cannot be measured by standards designed for the world of civilized men; like mother earth, Sophie exceeds and precedes the rules of grammar. Yezierska transforms Sophie’s disappointment—she seeks the president’s help after an English teacher laughs at her writing—into a triumph. However, ironically, it takes an educated man to recognize Sophie’s value. The English teacher, educated but not refined, can only see Sophie’s failure to master rules of grammar. The president, highly refined, can see past the rules to the gift that is her whole self. Like Yezierska’s other Anglo-Saxon love objects, the president envies the Jewish woman’s spontaneity because his own nature has been nurtured away. A failure to access (low level) cultural capital is re-imagined as a deep nobility of spirit, only recognizable to the cultivated intellectual.

Similarly, in *All I Could Never Be*, Henry Scott, the “Anglo-Saxon” professor, recognizes Fanya’s “spirit”:

You are beautifully communicative in simply being. You are, but you don't fully know that you are. You feel as if you wanted to be. You suffer from striving, but it is unnecessary. You are already. And perhaps I can have the great happiness of helping you to a realization that *you are*, and *what you are*. You do not have reach, or strive, or try to achieve or accomplish. You already are. I repeat it a million times to you, my dear spirit (61 emphasis original).

Scott chides Sonya for “striving,” urging her to recognize that she is “beautifully communicative in simply being.” Yeziarska solves the disappointment of failed assimilation by arguing that the Jewish woman has no need to assimilate because *she already is*. However, although Yeziarska herself rebels against attempt to cultivate her characters, she is also fiercely proud of her own artistry. In “Mostly About Myself,” she undercuts the stereotype of the uncultivated immigrant who simply writes from the heart, commenting, “think of the toil it takes to wade through a dozen pages that you must cut down into one paragraph. Sometimes, the vivisection I must commit on myself to create one little living sentence leaves me spent for days” (132).⁴⁰ While the president admonishes Sophie that she should not fit herself into the

⁴⁰ She also acknowledges that her body of work is an attempt to refine one basic story. She writes in “Mostly About Myself,” “Critics have said that I have but one story to tell and that I tell that one story in different ways each time I write. That is true. My one story is hunger. Hunger driven by loneliness . . . when I first started to write, I could only write one thing—different phases of the one thing only—bread hunger. At last, I've written out my bread hunger. And now I can only write the different phases of the one thing—loneliness, love hunger, the hunger for people” (136).

rules of grammar, Yezeriska, the actual successful Jewish author, does not simply give as mother earth gives, her “primitive” style is hard-won. And perhaps most importantly—and problematically—the very quality that makes the Jewish woman the true American is her relentless energy and passion, in other words, her striving. Paradoxically, if Yeziarska’s women accept themselves as they are, they cease to be who they are.

“America and I” (1923), Yeziarska’s most explicit attempt to transform the oriental Jewess into the true American, grapples with this very problem. The narrator of this story arrives on US shores fully invested in the fantasy of America as Utopia. Following a pattern typical of Yeziarska’s fiction, at first, she celebrates immigration as a movement from past (Europe-Yiddish-Judaism) to present (America-English-secularism).⁴¹ She explains that in America, “the hidden sap of centuries would find release; colors that never saw light—songs that died unvoiced—romance that never had a chance to blossom in the black life of the Old World” (20). She embraces the New World with energy, reaching out to English as the key to mastery of her new environment: “Every new word,” she remarks, “made me see new American things with American eyes. I felt like a Columbus, finding new worlds through every new word” (22). However, harassed at every turn by native born Americans and assimilated Jews—“ashamed to remember their mother tongue” (22)— she quickly

⁴¹ The most frequently cited example of this is Mary Antin’s claim in the introduction to her autobiography, *The Promised Land* (1912) that, “I began life in the Middle Ages, as I shall prove, and here am I still, your contemporary in the twentieth century, thrilling with your latest thought” (xii).

realizes that while she may assimilate into language, her body is indelibly marked by otherness: “the words alone were only for the inside of me,” she despairs, “the outside of me still branded me for a steerage immigrant” (22). Frightened that she will never become American, and that the America she imagined was only a fantasy, she searches through history, until she finds others, who like her, in the face of great hardship, relied on nothing other than their “indomitable spirits.” And who could be more American than the “Pilgrim Fathers”?

The narrator asserts that as a “seeker of the new world,” she, like the pilgrims, represents the best of America:

I began to read the American history . . . I read on. I delved deeper down into the American history. I saw how the Pilgrim Fathers came to a rock desert country, surrounded by Indian savages on all sides . . . they did not ask the Indians for sympathy, for understanding. They made no demands on anybody, but on their own indomitable spirit of persistence . . . I, when I encountered a few savage Indian scalpers, like the old witch of the sweatshop, like my “Americanized” countryman . . . when I found myself on the lonely, untrodden path through which all seekers of the new world must pass, I lost heart and said: “There is no America.” Then came a light—a great revelation! I saw America—a big idea—a deathless hope—a world still in the making. I saw that the glory of America was that it was not yet finished. And I, the last comer, had her share to give, small or great, to the making of America, like those Pilgrims who came in the Mayflower . . . I

began to open up my life and the lives of my people to them. And life draws life. In only writing about the Ghetto I found America (32-33).

The narrator's imaginative time travel is an attempt to read the conflict between "seeker" and "Americanized" countryman as a conflict between Pilgrim and Indian. She superimposes her own messy and confusing present on a fantasy historical moment when binaries—Pilgrim / Indian—contrasted unequivocally. However, the analogy—20th century immigrant Jew is to Pilgrim Father as "Americanized" countryman is to savage Indian scalper—falls apart under the weight of its tortured logic. The "Pilgrim" represents American values, while the "savage Indian" stands in for the murderous enemy of the indomitable spirit of persistence. The narrator emulates the pilgrims, and vows to fight savages. However, given that her "Americanized" countrymen, the "savage Indian scalpers" of her own experience, were recently fellow "seekers of the new world" (new immigrants themselves), the logical conclusion of her argument is that as immigrants assimilate (become more American), they become more savage (less American). As they assimilate, immigrants lose their privileged position as "comers" (or, in the language of her other texts, "unfettered spirits" or "primitives"). Weirdly, here, in becoming "civilized beings" (22), immigrants become savages, like the "witch of the sweat-shop" who mistreat newer immigrants. America destroys American-ness.

Yeziarska's reliance on raced and gendered national stereotypes makes it very difficult, having designated the Jewish woman as passionate primitive to then ally her protagonist with the Pilgrims. In this piece, Yeziarska upends her own oppositions to

dizzying effect, demonstrating that once deployed, Orientalist tropes cannot easily be contained. And while orientalizing is somewhat toned down in this piece (perhaps because there's no Anglo-Saxon love interest to serve as foil), Yezeriska's insistence, across her work, on the Jewish woman's passionate soul, and her repeated use of terms such as "primitive," and "savage," makes it nearly impossible to simply read the narrator of "America and I" as a later-day pilgrim. The narrator's ability to "write about the ghetto"—a space associated with the "primitive"—is the very quality that differentiates her from assimilated Americans. Savagery marks the Jewish woman even as she imagines herself a later-day pilgrim.

b. "Lo Que Hace Es Recobrar un Idioma Que Ya Fué Suyo":

Gerchunoff and Jews as the Real Argentines

Alberto Gerchunoff published *Los gauchos judíos* in 1910, the year of the Argentine centennial, in a climate of fervent nationalism, both celebratory and defensive. As Beatriz Sarlo and Carlos Altamirano point out, the centennial cultural field was shaped by European Catholic and monarchic nationalism (that looked to counter bourgeois values with a return to spiritual philosophy) and local *hispanismo* (the valorization of Argentina's Spanish heritage especially in the wake of the Spanish American war). Nationalists advocated for the rebirth of the "alma nacional" (165). The literary magazine *Ideas*, for example, founded by conservative nationalists Ricardo Rojas and Manuel Gálvez, sought to protect Argentine spiritual and

intellectual values from “un ambiente extranjerizante que despreciaba lo argentino” (qtd in Lvovich 124).⁴²

In this climate, economic hardship, increased immigration, growing US imperialism, and rapid urbanization led to the valorization of figure of the gaucho as an antidote to the immigrant.⁴³ Popular literatura gauchesca painted a picture of a figure who, roaming far from the corrupt city, embodied authentic Argentine culture. Once reviled as a thief, Dalia Kandiyoti notes that, “the gaucho, the brave, disinterested, artistic noble savage now became the archetypal Argentinian, as the latter was before the scourges of materialism, cosmopolitanism, urbanization, and immigrant invasion” (102). Indigenous peoples had been largely decimated, leaving the gaucho to stand in as an autochthonous figure who lent literary elites authenticity through his connection to the land.⁴⁴ Naomi Lindstrom notes that literatura gauchesca dovetailed neatly with eastern European politics of Jewish renewal. Jewish renewal, like literatura gauchesca, bemoaned the evils of cosmopolitanism (rootlessness, dirt, corruption, the dissolution of national boundaries). Contact with the land was meant to reactive Jewish cultural values lost to the evils of diaspora.⁴⁵

Los gauchos judíos (1910), a short story cycle saturated with orientalist images, marries eastern European Jewish politics of renewal to the conservative,

⁴² Gerchunoff was briefly a member of their Grupo de Ideas.

⁴³ Beatriz Sarlo and Carlos Altamirano call the early years of the 20th century, a time of ideological ferment, the “primer nacionalismo” or “nacionalismo cultural” (164).

⁴⁴ See David Rock for a long discussion of the historical rural-urban tensions between Buenos Aires and the rest of the country.

⁴⁵ See Todd Presner and Jay Geller.

nationalist *gauchesca* genre.⁴⁶ The text roots Jews culturally in Spain by arguing that pre-expulsion Jews *made* hispanic culture through their artistic and intellectual contributions. It roots them physically in the pampas by arguing that a historically rural people was forced, by diaspora, from its pastoral calling. Argentina and Jews are made for one another: Argentina fulfills Jewish millennial dreams—a pastoral Zion as promised by the Bible—and in exchange, Jews lend their “*espíritu quijotil*” to the Argentine nation. Jews become Argentine through contact with the land because they are already both pastoral *and* hispanic. In a conservative nationalist climate, Gerchunoff publishes a text in which Jews and Jewish culture are not threatening because Argentine culture has already been formed by Jewish influences. Argentineness and Jewishness, superficially different, are fundamentally compatible.

Like Yeziarska, Gerchunoff capitalizes on elite fascination with the Orient as a means of offering the Jew to the national project (superficially exotic and compelling, but deep-down the same). Like Yeziarska, he deploys European Orientalist tropes of the Jew as a seductive, conduit to a shared ancient past. However, Gerchunoff, a Jewish male writer in Argentina, deploys his Orientalism differently than Yeziarska, a Jewish female writer in the US. Gerchunoff, like Yeziarska, literalizes the national romance: Chapters “*Las bodas de camacho*,” and

⁴⁶ “*Literatura gauchesca*” was a genre that flourished mainly in Argentina from about 1850-1930. It is roughly comparable to dialect literature in the US. In novels, short stories and poems, depict romantic gaucho-figures who speak a special rural dialect. The lyric poem, “*Martin Fierro*,” by José Hernández (1872, 1879) is one of the genre’s founding—and most famous—texts. *Literatura gauchesca* held up the rural way of life as a counterpoint to the cosmopolitanism of Buenos Aires.

“El episodio de Miryam,” relate love affairs between Jewish women and creole men.⁴⁷ As Mónica Szurmuk writes, “Jewish women desired by Argentinian men become a sign of approval of the Jews . . . the key to acceptance, the text claims, is to adopt the host society’s ways, and the host society is marked as socially male and politically hegemonic” (247). However, unlike Yeziarska, Gerchunoff is in the uncomfortable position of simultaneously offering exotic Jew to the Argentine gaze, and protecting his autonomy as a male author. In other words, when Gerchunoff offers the mystery of the *belle juive* to the Argentine project, he feminizes “Jew,” and risks feminizing himself. As a result, Gerchunoff is far more ambivalent than Yeziarska over intermarriage / romance. In “La boda de Camacho,” a Jewish bride disastrously flees her wedding to run off with a gaucho. While Yeziarska’s characters face some disapproval when they chose Anglo men, in *Los gauchos judíos*, the community’s expression of anxiety and disapproval seems much closer to the narrator’s own point of view.

Further, Orientalism had a slightly different resonance in Argentina than it did in the US. While US elites drew a contrast between themselves as Occidental rationalists and Orientals as atavistic others, Argentine elites, aware of their peripheral American location, and their inheritance of Spanish rather than British culture, oscillated between embracing a Spanish oriental, romantic spirit (especially in contrast to the cold, rational north), and depicting themselves as Occidental

⁴⁷ See Doris Sommer for a discussion of the heterosexual union as a metaphor for a unified nation. She writes, “romantic novels go hand in hand with patriotic history in Latin America” (7)

rationalists.⁴⁸ Christina Civantos notes that Argentine fascination with the Orient can be traced back to Sarmiento's argument, in his most famous work *Facundo: Civilización y Barbarie* (1845), that the struggle between civilization (aligned with the occident) and barbarism (aligned with the orient) provides Argentina with its poetic essence (34). Sarmiento's ambivalence over the figure of the gaucho, barbarous in contrast to the European, and also freshly, inherently American, is a through line in the Argentine search for national identity. For Argentine elites, the Oriental was both self and other.

Los gauchos judíos has trouble stabilizing its terms. While Yeziarska explicitly links Oriental-female-Jew, and offers the Jewish female body to the national project, the male narrator of Gerchunoff's text has a more complicated task. While Yeziarska is free to ignore the assimilation of Jewish men, Gerchunoff must find a way to offer both Jewish men and women to the Argentine national project, while maintaining gendered binaries. The male narrator offers his (male, Argentine) readers Jewish women's bodies for consumption. And he solves his ambivalence over actual sex between Argentine and Jew by writing the future of amalgamation onto women's bodies prior to consummation: newly arrived eastern European Jews have blond hair, blue eyes that tremble like the Virgin Mary's, and upturned noses.

⁴⁸ US romantic racist historiographer, William H. Prescott made a career out contrasting Anglo-Saxon, Spanish and Indian racial characteristics. For more on the romantic depiction of Spain, and Spanish language and culture, as the spiritual counterpart to Anglo-Saxon rationalism, by US writers and historians, see chapter two.

He offers Jewish men to the Argentine project by describing their language and learning, rather than their bodies, as already compatible with Argentine language and culture. In the chapter, “Leche Fresca,” Raquel’s ripe body is unveiled for readers who catch a glimpse of her round breasts through her garments, by contrast, Rabí Abraham of “La muerte del Rabí Abraham,” is cloaked in oriental mystery.⁴⁹ On the morning of his murder by a gaucho, Rabí Abraham says his daily prayers “cubierto por la túnica que daba a su figura un aire oriental y sacerdotal” while he “gravemente pronunciaba las palabras invocando en el idioma que habló Jehová a los profetas” (86).⁵⁰ The narrator transforms Abraham into a father to Christianity, not only by clothing him in priestly garb, but also by routing his Jewish prayers to the Christian god. Rabí Abraham prays in the same language—Hebrew—with which “Jehová” spoke to the prophets.⁵¹ And on his death bed, Abraham “parecía Nuestro Señor Jesucristo, velado por los ancianos y las santas mujeres de Jerusalem” (87).⁵² *Los gauchos judíos* offers the ripe Jewess, and the priestly Jew—both already Argentine—to the making of a Catholic nation.

⁴⁹ The story is about a Jewish colonist killed by his gaucho servant which many critics believe is a fictionalization of the death of Gerchunoff’s own father. As Gudiño Kramer points out, for immigrants, the choice was “asimilar a las formas reaccionarias de vida y cultura, o morir” (qtd in Senkman 222).

And not all Jewish men are orientalized. Younger men, like the narrator, Jacobo, are Jewish gauchos. However, because they have already assimilated, they are no longer fully coded Jewish.

⁵⁰ Covered with the tunic that gave his figure an oriental and priestly air, he gravely pronounced the words, making his appeal in the language with which Jehova spoke to the prophets

⁵¹ Jehová, derived from the Latin, Iehova is a transliterated approximation of the Hebrew tetragrammation used by Christian commentators on the books of the Jews (OED).

⁵² With his hair, his beard and his tunic, he resembled our Lord Jesus Christ, veiled by the ancient ones and the holy women of Jerusalem.

Jewish men are doubly Argentine. They are connected to the land through their connection to rural gauchos, and they are connected to cosmopolitan Hispanic culture through their language and ancient religion. However, Leonardo Senkman points out that in the years following the “restauración nacionalista” (at the time of Argentina’s centennial celebrations) nationalist ideology congealed.⁵³ As it became politically impossible for Gerchunoff to continue to link Jews to gauchos (Jews could no longer be convincingly associated with the gauchos, the “real” Argentina), he increasingly stressed the Jewish connection to Golden Age Spain.⁵⁴ Senkman writes, “al discriminar tajantemente quién es argentino y quién es cipayo, el nacionalismo argentino le había sustraído a Gerchunoff el derecho mismo de invocar al gaucho y a la tierra para legitimar la argentinidad del judío (200).”⁵⁵

Gerchunoff responds to the loss of the pampas by publishing a series of essays, *La jofaina maravillosa* (1922), on the work Miguel de Cervantes. The collection emphasizes Jewish contributions to Spain. In the introduction, Gerchunoff tells his own story as the coming of age of a Jewish Argentine writer through the

⁵³ *La restauración nacionalista, informe sobre educación* was published by the nativist, Ricardo Rojas in 1909, the year before *Los gauchos judíos* was published as a full collection. However, the stories of *Los gauchos judíos* were serialized in *La Nación* in 1908.

⁵⁴ And Jews were migrating in huge numbers from the pampas, where they had originally settled in Agricultural colonies, to Buenos Aires. Gerchunoff himself was only able to write and publish his pastoral paean once he relocated to Buenos Aires; as Lindstrom points out, “concentration in Buenos Aires was a prerequisite to Jewish entry into national cultural life” (5).

⁵⁵ “with its focus on differentiating between who is Argentine and who is Cipayo, Argentine nationalism had withdrawn Gerchunoff’s right to invoke the gaucho and the land in order to legitimate the Argentine-ness of the Jew.”

Cipayo is technically an indigenous soldier who fought for the armies of England, France or Portugal in the 18th and 19th century. However, in the *lunfardo* dialect, it came to mean someone who sympathized with or was in service of the interests of foreigners.

work of Cervantes. Senkman argues that Gerchunoff is less interested in the spell cast by *Don Quijote* than he is in “su evocación lingüística recreada por el narrador judío” (50).⁵⁶ His task is to prove his Argentine-ness—his connection to Hispanic culture—through language. Gerchunoff walks a tightrope. He must prove that he can be an Argentine writer without disappearing into a Spanish prose so refined that it leaves no trace of Jewish difference. If he lets his readers forget that he is Jewish, then he disappears. He attempts to be simultaneously Jewish and not-Jewish, as Yeziarska does, by casting the Jew as oriental conduit to a shared past—both different and not-different. In the essay, “*La gitanilla*,” he sets his terms. Jewish power, as embodied by the gypsy girl, is mysterious, indeterminate, sexually alluring, and feminine. Spanish power is male and desirous of sex and knowledge. However, just as Yeziarska loses control of her binaries, Gerchunoff, the male author who needs the Spanish language narrative, *and* the Jew who longs for recognition, oscillates between Jew and Spaniard, male and female, subject and object.

Cervantes's own *Gitanilla* recounts a young nobleman's problematic love for a gypsy, Preciosa. Preciosa, a dancer and poet, is simultaneously associated with the negative qualities of gypsyhood (thievery, sexual danger, lies) and the positive qualities associated with nobility (blondness, honesty, beauty and reason). Preciosa's ambiguity is explained by the dénouement when her noble lineage is revealed. However, as S.F. Boyd points out, a text that seems on first reading, to fix “gypsy,” as an essential category actually glosses over the distinctions between doing and being

⁵⁶ his linguistic evocation, recreated by the Jewish narrator

(being born to padres ladrones is not the same as being born a thief). Cervantes's text leaves space for both racialized essentialism and the possibility of cultural “becoming”—learning to perform gypsy—rather than simple racial “being.” Preciosa is an indeterminate figure long before Gerchuoff encounters her.

Gerchunoff reads *La Gitanilla* as an opportunity to reflect on Spain’s romantic attraction to its banished others. As noted above, Gerchunoff’s collection of essays is an exploration of authorial power. Gerchunoff likens Cervantes's loving creation of Preciosa to Jehová's creation of the first man. He writes that Cervantes “amó en la Gitanilla a una de sus mujeres más realmente vivas y más hechas a penetrar en el corazón ya quedar en el recuerdo” (61).⁵⁷ Cervantes is simultaneously God, lover, and conduit for the desires of his (male) readers. And of course, as Senkman argues, when Gerchunoff thinks about Cervantes as a writer, he also thinking about himself—with a difference. A collection of essays that seeks to prove that an immigrant Jew can wield the language of Cervantes, can never let those readers forget that the pen is in the hand of a Jew; in the introduction, Gerchunoff insists, “sólo te pido que no olvides que soy el mediador de tu buena fortuna . . . Será premio suficiente para mí un sitio en tu memoria” (12).⁵⁸ Don't forget, he writes, that I am a writer, creating the character of the authoritative Argentine Jew that will lodge in your memory, just as Cervantes's *Guitanilla* has lodged in the memory of Hispanic culture. Cervantes,

⁵⁷ loved in the gypsy girl one of his most believably real women, one of his women best designed to penetrate the heart and remain in the memory

⁵⁸ I only beg that you don't forget that I am the mediator of your good fortune . . . a place in your memory would be prize enough for me

male-Spaniard-author creates Preciosa, the female-other-object. However, Cervantes's gitanilla, already an indeterminate figure, becomes, in Gerchunoff's hands, an even more troubling figure. She *penetrates* cultural memory and lodges there. Gerchunoff's Preciosa is both a passive object and an active subject so that he, her creator, can be both Jew and Argentine. He needs her—as a stand-in for all the suppressed others of Catholic Spain—to lodge in cultural memory so that Hispanic culture (retaining the memory of its suppressed others) can be more than just Catholicism.

This indeterminate figure inevitably overwhelms him. He means for her to represent the value the of female other (much like Yeziarska's passionate Jewesses). He tries to position himself as a member of the lettered elite who looks upon her and transforms lust into poetry. He writes that she

Es la mujer misteriosa de la morisma y de la judería y con ella se esparce el aliento de las antiguas farsas de juglares y juglaresas . . . Don Miguel de Cervantes ha resucitado en esa muchacha de encendida belleza a la mujer de razas que al irse de España dejaron en ella el recuerdo de sus encantamientos prodigiosos . . . es el eterno romance de la mora que turbaba el alma de España católica . . . Se encarnaba en la gitana bailadora y revivía en todos la poesía de los amores orientales, la sed de lo extraño, el afán de lo desconocido (63).⁵⁹

⁵⁹ She is the mysterious Jewess and Moorish, and with her, the breath of the ancient jugglers' farce is scattered . . . Don Miguel de Cervantes has resuscitated this girl of incendiary beauty, the woman of races who, upon expulsion, left Spain with the memory of her prodigious enchantments, . . . it is the eternal romance of the Moor that troubled the soul of Catholic

Spaniards' "thirst for the strange, the desire for the unknown" because, like the Anglo-Saxon man, the mysterious woman's exotic sexuality answers a lack; her oriental love offers poetry to prose. However, her love is exciting because it is dangerous. At any moment, her seductive dancing might become a "lasso made of arms, thrown around our necks" (62-63). Gerchunoff further notes that there is always a Spanish gentleman who sneaks out of his "honest and religious house" because he loves the Moorish or Jewess, and can't resist her spells (63). Preciosa is "una pesadilla deliciosa" (64), titillating and frightening.

Cervantes's Preciosa is not a Jew. She is Jewish only in that she is mysterious, exotic, atavistic, dark, marginal, and essential to the Spanish imagination. Gerchunoff links the Gypsy to the Jew and the Jew to the Moor by describing her as "the woman of races who, in leaving Spain, left behind the memory of her prodigious enchantments." And while Preciosa's seductive powers are dangerous for the Spanish man, they are even more dangerous for the Jewish writer who, in attempting to align himself with the Spanish male gaze ("Preciosa . . . se presenta a nuestra imaginación"), draws himself into alliance with the female other. Gerchunoff not only argues for the inescapable presence of Jewish difference in Spanish culture, but he also argues that Cervantes himself loved this difference. Gerchunoff, looking for Cervantes to bless—and love—his own Jewish presence in Hispanic culture draws on available orientalist tropes that allow him figure the resolution of cultural

Spain . . . it was incarnated in the dancing gypsy and reanimated in us all the poetry of oriental loves, the thirst for the foreign, the desire for the unknown.

difference as a love affair. However, in sexualizing and feminizing difference, Gerchunoff exposes himself to the possibility that he, as author, will no longer be allied with the male, the rational, the honest, the religious, but rather, the gazing eye becomes the feminine object. With *La guitanilla*, Gerchunoff entangles himself in the chain of terms dictated by his romantic racialism.

Gerchunoff's argues that Jews are lodged—like *la guitanilla* in Spanish memory—in the Spanish language over the course of his career. In “Los Judíos en la lengua castellana” (1926), he argues that Jews have no need to learn Spanish: “Yo diría que no se adapta. Lo que hace es recobrar un idioma que ya fué suyo y para el cual representa, tal vez, una nueva promesa” (32).⁶⁰ Yezierska's Jewish women have no need to learn Standard English because their immigrant Yinglish conveys a truth that grammar cannot capture. Gerchunoff's ornate prose indicates his commitment to proper Spanish. However, his relationship to language is similarly wishful: Gerchunoff was of Ashkenazi, not Sephardic, descent. His ancestors never spoke Spanish. He makes Jews culturally Hispanic by selecting a particular strand of Jewish history and universalizing it, annexing Jews across space and time into a Sephardic genealogy. Although their methods are somewhat different, as noted above, both Yezierska and Gerchunoff write in a historical moment in which language was imbued with affect. If American English could, as Joshua Miller argues, “embody the

⁶⁰“I would say that they shouldn't adapt. What they should do is recover a language that was always theirs which represents, perhaps, a new promise.”

‘optimistic, expansionist industrial empire’” (13), then language could also be made to hold counterintuitive truths of Jewish Americanness.

Gerchunoff imagines that a Jewish “spirit,” carried by language, moves through Hispanic culture. In “Los judíos en la lengua castellana” (1926), he writes

Lo curioso es que al ser expatriados de España, y dispersos por los países balcánicos, por el centro de Europa, el Asia y el Africa, conservaron la lengua aprendida en España. Siguieron pensando en español y cantando en español sus antiguos recuerdos, sus leyendas domésticas, sus esperanzas oscuras. Así como el hebreo continuó siendo su lengua teológica, el español prosiguió siendo la lengua lírica” (32).⁶¹

Spanish, language of “thought,” “song,” “memory,” “domestic legend,” and “dark hopes,” is the “lengua lírica,” the language of literature. Hebrew functions alongside Spanish as a theological language. For Gerchunoff, nations are constructed out of ancient memory and domestic legend—out of aesthetic culture. Spanish keeps far flung Jews—dispersos por los países balcánicos, por el centro de Europa, el Asia y el Africa—under the umbrella of hispanic culture. The language of romance—between Jews and Spain—holds lovers together even as the miles (and expulsion) part them.⁶²

Gerchunoff and Yeziarska make their case for Jewish Americanness by declaring that

⁶¹Interestingly, upon being expelled from Spain, and dispersed to the Balkan countries, to central Europe, Asia, and Africa, they maintained the language they had learned in Spain. They continued to think in Spanish and sing their ancient memories, their domestic legends, their dark hopes, in Spanish. Just as Hebrew continued to be their theological language, Spanish continued to be their poetic language.

⁶²Tellingly, Gerchunoff refers to his literary god, Cervantes, not only as the greatest Spanish prose writer, but as the great writer of romance.

Jews have always been American. Both authors make this counterintuitive truth true by finding their evidence in language—a place where history can be collapsed into fantasy.

III. Jewish Occidentals

a. Yeziarska's Shifting Racial and Linguistic Landscapes

Mathew Frey Jacobson argues that the history of whiteness in the United States can be divided into roughly three epochs. The first period, inaugurated in 1790 with the nation's first naturalization law, tied fitness for self-government to race. The second period (1840—1920) saw mass European immigration, and whiteness was fractured into a hierarchy of races. Jacobson marks a profound shift in US racial thinking with the inauguration of the third epoch, when the Reed-Johnson Act (1924) imposed quotas on immigration. Jacobson writes that 1924 was the “high water mark of the regime of Anglo-Saxon or Nordic Supremacy” (93). As Reed-Johnson reduced the threat posed to the body politic by “inferior” immigrants, and African Americans migrated from the rural south to the urban north and west, elites were increasingly interested in the boundaries between black and white. 1924 was also the year of the passage of the Indian Citizenship Act which granted citizenship to all non-citizen Indians born in the United States. Walter Benn Michaels has argued that the Citizenship Act, coupled with the Reed-Johnson Act, effectively recast “citizen” from something one could become to something one simply was.

Reading *Salome of the Tenements* (1923) in the context of shifting racial politics makes it possible to see the novel as the culmination of a series of stories and novels in which Yeziarska trades on US fascination with the primitive language, emotion, and sexuality of the racialized Jewish woman. Although Yeziarska's work has been traditionally read for its “realistic” portrait of immigrant life, her early work, up to and including *Salome*, functions largely in the mode of romantic melodrama: emotion is the source of experience, and the reader is encouraged to interpret characters through the lens of (stereo)types which are both “natural” to each character also representative of his or her group. Each time that Sonya is described as primitive, Yeziarska brings to bear a host of circulating cultural assumptions about the Jewish woman and about the primitive. John Manning is described as cold or rational in a short-hand that links him to all “Anglo-Saxon” men, and demands that he act and react within the bounds of the stereotype.

While critics have claimed Yeziarska as a modernist writer, it is perhaps less useful to assign her work to any one literary school, than it is to interrogate the usefulness of the various conventions to which she resorts over the course of her career. For while *Salome* (and earlier works) make enthusiastic use of orientalist tropes, by the time *Red Ribbon on a White Horse* is published in 1952, not only has the passionate Jewess almost disappeared, the text’s language and genre have shifted. Yeziarska's eighteen-year publishing “silence” (between the publishing of *All I Could Never Be* (1932) and *Red Ribbon*) might, in part, be attributable to the increasing irrelevance of her mode of writing. It may be that readers had lost interest in her

subject matter—as has often been argued—but it may also be that she no longer knew how to effectively manipulate the Jewish signifier as broader understandings of “race” shifted, casting her generically adrift.⁶³

Recently, scholars have attempted to nuance the perception that Jews—along with other immigrants—“became white” in the 20th century. While whiteness studies has elucidated the ways in which “ethnic” immigrants defined themselves as “not black,” often at the rhetorical—and actual—expense of African Americans, telling the story of Jewish identity in the Americas as a simple achievement of whiteness reduces the complexity of the Jewish experience. Michael Alexander writes in a review of Eric L. Goldstein’s *The Price of Whiteness: Jews, Race and American Identity*, “I still do not see a clear Jewish drive toward whiteness. I do see Jewish drives toward money, material, social stature, middle-class luxury, power, and even acceptance by a vague gentile American mainstream . . . But are these economic and social drives indications of attempts to be white? (97). Alexander’s refusal to reduce the drive toward “money, material, social stature, middle-class luxury, and even acceptance” to a drive towards “whiteness” reminds us that Yeziarska’s work was produced at the complex intersection of racial, assimilative, and linguistic thinking.

⁶³Additionally, the creation of Israel also marked a major shift in Ashkenazic self-identification from Oriental to Occidental. And while Gerchunoff was certainly more attune to the shifting of transnational Jewish identity politics (as will be demonstrated later in the chapter), Yeziarska was not immune from a major change in the way that Ashkenazi Jews saw themselves. See Aziza Khazzoom for a discussion of the ways in which Ashkenazi Jews committed themselves to occidentalism as a form of self-improvement; Israel was meant to be a “European” country.

Joshua Miller elucidates some of the connections between race and language thinking when he points out that the 1920s was a particularly fraught moment in the debate over American English. Early in the decade, Nebraska and (1920) Illinois (1923) declared English their official language, Washington J. McCormick proposed that the US language be renamed “American” to distinguish it from the language of the United Kingdom (1923), the third edition of H.L. Mencken's *The American Language* was published (1923), and Jean Toomer, Willa Cather, Dashiell Hammett, Gertrude Stein and Anzia Yezeriska all published books that were “linguistically inventive” (Miller 9-11). If, as Miller argues, US language was a site where elite anxiety over the increasing presence of ethnic, racial, and national others was worked out, then as whiteness consolidated by the end of the 1920s, and US elites were increasingly anxious about blackness (as the presence of non-assimilated European others decreased), unsurprisingly, anxiety over the contaminating presence of “foreign” languages ebbed (at least momentarily).

Strikingly, as Yeziarska's orientalism and romanticism decline, English replaces Yinglish. While characters in *All I Could Never Be*, *Red Ribbon on a White Horse*, and the later stories, may occasionally speak in Yinglish or Yiddish, the narrator herself uses standard English. Yeziarska's increased fluency is the result of time in country, but the shift in her prose is also influenced by a larger cultural shift. As Jews re-envision themselves as ethnics, Yeziarska's subject position shifts to something less flamboyantly other, and her language shifts as well. Yeziarska wrote passionately in her final stories about the desperation of poverty and old age.

However, by the end of her life, she was no longer fully a cultural, linguistic or racial other. And while it may seem a bit counter-intuitive that her abandonment of Yinglish coincides with a relaxing of US hostility towards other languages, the relaxing of anxiety might also indicate a lessening of widespread interest; after the 1920s, Yezeriska can no longer convincingly sell herself as a linguistic or racial exotic.

Red Ribbon on a White Horse (1952), Yezierka's fictionalized autobiography, dramatizes a series of dislocations, as the Yezierska character confronts the loss of the otherness that drove her earlier works. Due to the runaway success of her short story of ghetto life, "Lonely Hearts," the Yezierska character is offered a spectacularly lucrative job translating the text into a screenplay. At first, she exults that she will be leaving behind "fear," "poverty," the hunger of the ghetto, and an ugly parting from her old-world father. She constructs a familiar set of binaries: "Why did we come to America," she wonders when her father curses her success, "if not to achieve all that had been denied us for centuries in Europe? fear and poverty were behind me . . . I would learn to live in the now . . . not in the next world" (33). The old world, her father and his religion, poverty, the ghetto and fear contrast with what lies ahead: Hollywood, independence, cosmopolitanism, material success and cultural capital.

Hurtling from one coast, one phase of her life, to the other, she experiences a rare moment of grace:

the train raced through the wide monotonous landscape at a terrific pace to reach its destination on scheduled time. Sand sifted through the screened air vents and closed doors. The train stopped at the station to refuel. Passengers

stepped out to buy trinkets from the Indians squatting on the platform. Over the entrance of an adobe building I read in gilt letters the inscription: THE DESERT WAITED, SILENT AND HOT AND FIERCE IN ITS DESOLATION, HOLDING ITS TREASURES UNDER SEAL OF DEATH AGAINST THE COMING OF THE STRONG ONE. I looked across the vast space and thought of the time when all this silent sand was a rolling ocean. What eons had to pass for the ocean to dry into this arid waste! In the immensity of the desert the whirl of trivialities which I had so magnified all fell away. I was suspended in timelessness—sand, sky, and space. What a relief it was to let go—not to think—not to feel, but rest, silent—past, present and future stretching to infinity” (35, emphasis original).

The idyll ends as the train starts up again. Yeziarska writes, “the sense of time and the concern with self stirred again. Green hills, dazzling gardens and orange groves, towering date palms ushered in the great adventure ahead of me” (35). The speeding train literalizes the runaway-train of Yeziarska's changing circumstances (the blast from the ghetto to the adventure ahead), mapping her expedited movement through time onto the landscape (her arrival in the future is heralded by a change in topography as the dessert gives way, to dazzling gardens and orange groves).

Yeziarska reflects contemplates the passage of time that dried the ocean and made a timeless, arid waste. For Yeziarska, the desert provides a stopping point that reminds

her of the smallness of her individual human concerns. She breathes, reflects, *feels*, and rests, before speeding towards her personal future.

In some ways this is a classic modernist moment.⁶⁴ Mired in the concerns generated by the inner world of the individual artist, Yezierska registers dislocation as her body is moved at speed from one place to another. She finds respite, if only for a heartbeat, in a featureless landscape, where Indians sell trinkets. As scholars have noted, fantastical projections onto native peoples were key to the development of elite US modernism. “Indians” simultaneously functioned as a primitive other against which US modernity and progress was defined, and as a inspiration for spontaneous natural artistic expression. Primitivity provided a well of authentic Americanness from which US writers might draw inspiration. Through the study of communal art forms such as storytelling and chanting, modernists thought through vexing questions of individuality and self. Further, access to “Indian expression” distinguished US from cosmopolitan European modernism.⁶⁵

Rachel Rubenstein points out that Jewish modernist writers made use of these larger cultural fantasies, by drawing on a long standing imaginative association between two “tribal” peoples. The title of Rubenstein's study, *Members of the Tribe*

⁶⁴ A number of critics have corrected an earlier tendency to read Yezierska's work as simply descriptive of the “immigrant experience,” by arguing that she was an (ethnic) modernist. Brooks E Hefner, for example, argues that Yezierska's linguistic experimentation makes her a “vernacular modernist” whose work can be contrasted with the realist and assimilationist projects of such writers as Mary Antin and Abraham Cahan (190). However, I am not sure how useful it is “claim” Yezierska for modernism. Here, I merely seek to use some of the insights provided by scholars of modernism to highlight some of the intellectual and cultural currents that influenced Yezierska. See Rubenstein and Walter Benn Michaels.

⁶⁵ See Rachel Rubenstein and Susan Hegman,

(2010), highlights that “primitivity” linked Jews and Native Americans in the Euro-American and Jewish imaginations. Many Jewish writers courted positive characteristics (such as authenticity, rootedness, spirituality and pure emotion) associated with Native peoples, even as they worked to dis-identify Jews from negative associations (such as savagery, backwardness and indolence). Conflicted, and on the brink of achieving her dreams (of material success, of elite recognition of her talent, of escape from the ghetto, her father, and Judaism), Yeziarska, gazing at Indians, inhabits an elite subject position. Romantic primitives add nostalgic color to an artistic scene, and define her, by contrast, as modern. Yeziarska’s tableau requires the presence of Indians to attain its full significance, however, like other elite modernists, she both uses and neutralizes by Indians by dismissing them as squatting, sellers of trinkets.

The guilt letters written over the adobe building, “THE DESERT WAITED, SILENT AND HOT AND FIERCE IN ITS DESOLATION, HOLDING ITS TREASURES UNDER SEAL OF DEATH AGAINST THE COMING OF THE STRONG ONE” (her capitalization)—is a quote from Harold Bell Wright’s successful sentimental novel, *The Winning of Barbara Worth* (1911).⁶⁶ *Worth* tells the story of the struggle between Western Eastern US capitalists to claim the “Kings’ Dessert” for development. Although the novel acknowledges the historical presence of native peoples— “In the Southwest savage race succeeded savage race, until at last the slow-footed padres overtook the swift-footed Indian” (86)— and makes

⁶⁶The novel sold nearly 2 million copies.

concessions to geopolitical realities by having its “Indians” speak Spanish, it also insists that Kings Dessert was never touched by an “ever-swelling tide of life” (87). Rather, as Yeziarska picks up on, “the Dessert waited, silent and hot and fierce in its desolation, holding its treasures under the seal of death against the coming of the strong ones; waited . . . for the days of my story” (87); a historically blank swath of landscape conveniently available for development. As Erin A. Smith points out, Wright was influenced by a Protestant Millennialism that argued that the civilized races had a responsibility to improve humanity. The novel itself is concerned with “types” that stand for “vital element[s] in the combination of human forces that was working out for the race the reclamation of the land.” The “Mexican” “dark” Pablo is described as “softly touching his guitar, representing a people still far down on the ladder of the world's upward climb” (qtd. in Smith 235). As Barbara and her suitors advance the human project by developing the dessert, the peoples that swirl around the periphery of Kings' Dessert must either assimilate-advance or disappear. The nominally capitalist Indians selling trinkets on the periphery of Yeziarska's reverie can certainly be read as casualties of a Wrightian civilizational project.

In Yeziarska's desert idyll, Indians signal a series of modernist associations between timeless land and peoples, set pieces that set off Yeziarska's modernist subject position, aligning her with progress. However, it is worth noting that while the parting scene between Yeziarska and her father constructs a binary that aligns the protagonist with progress, hope and success, the binary is upended by Yeziarska's miserable experiences in Hollywood. The future that the train speeds towards is a

future that requires Yeziarska to modify her gestures, dress and affect. And while it is a future of clean sheets, white walls, running water, and the author's name in gilt letters on an office door, it is also the future of disconnection from the ghetto world that made her. This is a future where she will feel herself in trying to “win the approval of Hollywood . . . losing my own hard won bit of truth” (75). While Yeziarska experiments with racial triangulation—defining herself as modern in contrast with native peoples—ultimately, she returns to the ghetto. Alicia Kent has argued that African, Jewish and Native American modernisms were a response to temporal and physical dislocations (4) at the same time that they were a response to dominant negative conceptions of these groups inability to modernize (17). In *Red Ribbon*, Yeziarska crosses the US by train and jumps forward in time, an attempt to work through the precarious symbolic function of the Jew in post-1920s America.

After the disappointment Hollywood, the Yeziarska character slips back into poverty. During the Great Depression, she secures a job at the Works Progress Administration's Writer's Project where she meets two men: Jeremiah Kintzler and Richard Wright. Kintzler, former editor of Warsaw Hebrew monthly, student of Talmudic literature, and author of a study of the Baal Shem Tov, is, by the time Yeziarska meets him, a tall, gaunt, ragged Jew who carries his life's work, *The Life of Spinoza*, in a broken-down briefcase that also contains the yellowed newspaper clippings that predict his “great future” (158).⁶⁷ Richard Wright, is of course, the

⁶⁷ Yeziarska identifies S.H. Setzer, Yiddish writer, translator, and student of the Kabbalha as the model for Jeremiah Kintzler in a note to the editor of *Commentary* magazine in December

author-to-be of *Native Son* (1940) and *Black Boy* (1945). Yeziarska conceives of the two men as opposite poles on the spectrum of writerly possibility: one black, one Jewish, one old, one young, one whose promising future never came to be, one whose promising future—as Yeziarska knows by 1950 when she writes *Red Ribbon*—will be massive and global. Somewhere in between these contrasting poles, falls the Cinderella of the Ghetto, whose work has fallen out of favor. She writes,

I looked from the furrowed forehead and dream-ridden eyes of the old Jew to the smooth-faced young Negro. One reminded me of so much that I knew and wanted to forget; the other opened a new, unknown world. I wondered whether it was harder to be born a Jew in a Christian world than a Negro—a black skin in a white world (158).

Contrasting the two men allows Yeziarska to explore the increasing irrelevance of her brand of difference. Blackness takes the place recently vacated by oriental Jewishness. Yeziarska knows, writing from the vantage point of 1950, that the future of Jewish difference is cultural-religious, rather than racial. The young Wright represents the future of writing about difference. Yeziarska's awkward final sentence points to the futility of her attempt to compare the two. If the sentence were balanced, it would read, "I wondered whether it was harder to be born a Jew in a Christian world than a Negro in a White world. Instead, "Negro," is followed by a tail and defined as "a black skin in a white world." The emphasis on Wright's skin subtly

of 1952. She writes, "Rabbi Weiner has caught the innermost essence of an actual man that embodies the race—the truth of a character that transcends fiction."

reminds the reader that Jewish difference is religious and cultural, while Negro difference is marked on the body.⁶⁸

The day that Kintzler dies, leaving behind a moldering manuscript that is nothing more than nonsense and plagiarized “ghetto” philosophy, Wright wins *Story Magazine's* contest as a “young and vigorous talent” (195). Yeziarska reflects, “I had never seen him so radiant” (194)

it was in his face, the look of a man driving straight for what he wanted. I knew the double-edged thrill of his triumph. It was not only recognition for his talent, but balm for all he had suffered as a Negro . . . I thought of Hollywood when I had been as intoxicated with the triumph over my handicaps as Wright was now, wresting first prize from a white world. But he had the intelligence to take what he could get wherever he went and build with it (195).

The chain of linked binaries that Yeziarska uses to contrast Kintzler and Wright (young-old, future-past, success-failure, Jewish-Black, vigorous-dead) are reminiscent of the now-defunct Anglo-Saxon / Jew construction. However, the contrast between Wright and Kintzler is complicated by a third term: Yeziarska. In

⁶⁸ It is interesting to compare this to the moment in “America and I” when Sonya remarks that the words alone were only for the inside of me . . . the outside of me still branded me for a steerage immigrant.”

We might also compare this statement to a letter she wrote to *Commentary* magazine about the man upon whom she based the character of Kintzler. She praises the interviewer who has “caught the innermost essence of an actual man that embodies the *race*— the truth of a character that transcends fiction” (emphasis mine). So while Yeziarska clearly fluctuated in the 1950s between conceiving of Jewishness as racial and religious, when she pairs Jew with Negro, Jew is religious and Negro is racial.

Wright's moment of triumph, he resembles Yeziarska herself. On some level, the comparison works: both are talented, both have triumphed against the odds to wrest first prize from a "white world." And while she was never able to convert her triumph into sustained comfort and security, he "had the intelligence to take what he could get . . . and build with it." The Yeziarska of 1952 knows that Richard Wright will succeed where the oriental Jewess has failed.

It is a bit odd that Yeziarska uses the term "double-edged" to describe Wright's prize as both recognition of talent and balm for racial suffering. In Yeziarska's experience (in this passage, Wright functions as an avatar for the Yeziarska that never came to be), talent is individual, while racial suffering is communal. The term sounds like an off-kilter deployment of W.E.B Du Bois's "double consciousness." Du Bois defines double consciousness as the "sense of always looking at one's self through the eyes of others, of measuring one's soul by the tape of a world that looks on in amused contempt and pity" (2). Yeziarska has vast experience measuring her soul by the tape of a world that looks on in amused contempt and pity. However, rather than take Wright's success as an opportunity to reflect on the challenges of minority identity, she chooses to compare herself to Wright along the lines of exceptional talent and send him on his way as a success. Projecting her own longings, she assumes that elite recognition will heal his racial wounds.

The narrator of "The Lower Depths of Upper Broadway" (1954) similarly grapples with the realities of shifting Jewish subject positions. In this story about

Puerto Rican immigrants, the immigrant is not, as in Yeziarska's early works, the speaking subject. Rather, the Yeziarska character advocates on behalf of other immigrants. Briefly: the narrator, who struggles financially, lives in a nice building with a welcoming lobby. She has her own tidy apartment, with communal kitchen, a sparkling clean bathroom, and neighbors with whom she shares "comradeship and mutual trust" (26). The building changes ownership, and suddenly, a music student from Juilliard (the embodiment of genteel poverty) is evicted. Puerto Rican families crowd into apartments meant for single occupancy. With the arrival of the newcomers, the mutual trust of the communal living spaces is broken. The narrator positions herself in solidarity with the new immigrants—remarking, "they had come, like other immigrants, hoping to better themselves economically and to give their children the kind of education they did not have on their island" (27). However, she displaces any racist, nativist sentiment into the mouth of an alcoholic redhead in a "tight-fitting pink satin kimono and red mules with little pompons of ostrich feathers" (27). She indicates the distance between herself and the Puerto Ricans. She speaks Standard English. Their English is broken. While she places the blame for the unpleasant change in her living conditions on the greedy landlords and a housing system that cares little for the poor, she also details the shouting, fighting and overcrowding and that has shattered her living situation. Even as she sympathizes with her Puerto Rican neighbors, she exoticizes them. The former oriental Jew is "fascinated" by Puerto Rican "gaiety . . . their eyes sparkled when they dressed in their rainbow colors, like butterflies on the wing! The children were irresistible" (27).

In “The Lower Depths of Upper Broadway,” the Yezierska character is impoverished, but more genteel than the poor whites and Spanish speaking immigrants who share her living space. What she lacks in capital, she makes up for in cultural capital.

b. Gerchunoff’s Shifting Racial and Linguistic Landscapes

Fernando Degiovanni knits together the threads of Gerchunoff's seemingly contradictory oeuvre by arguing that the work exhibits a bedrock commitment to Argentine liberalism. He reminds us that Jorge Luis Borges remarked that neither the gauchos nor the judíos in *Los gauchos judíos* are the wandering, barbaric nomads described by Sarmiento. Gerchunoff's gauchos and gauchos-judíos are farmers—settled, domesticated workers. Degiovanni speculates that *Los gauchos judíos* appealed to conservative nationalist Martiano Leguizamón—who wrote the book's first prologue—not only because it assimilated Jews, but also because it domesticated the gaucho; the text dissolved two aligned categories of troubling “others” into the Argentine liberal project (“Gerchunoff y la tradición” 79).

Even in the wake of La Semana Trágica, the rise of international fascism, the crisis of Argentine liberalism and the founding of the state of Israel, the liberal democratic nation never ceases to be Gerchunoff's Utopia. However, while *Los gauchos judíos* dreams of the liberal Utopia to come, by the time Gerchunoff publishes *Entre Ríos, mi país* in 1950, he writes of the liberal Utopia that has gone. *Entre Ríos* argues nostalgically for a “return” to the “mesianismo de los obreros económicos y de los conformadores sociales de la Argentina de 1886 a 1930” (qtd in

Degiovanni 83).⁶⁹ Leonardo Senkman argues that Gerchunoff's "most important" literary production occurred between 1910 and 1932; the few works published after 1932 (*El hombre importante*, and *La clínica del Dr. Mefistóles*), are "literarily inferior," they are followed by 15 years of literary "muteness." Of course, Senkman does not argue that the prolific Gerchunoff stopped writing, rather, he points out that between 1936, and his death, a period in which he fought against fascism in the press, Gerchunoff stopped writing literature.

Senkman's observation that the 1930s marks an "antes y un después en la creación de Gerchunoff, quien se sentía profundamente afectado por la crisis del liberalismo en el país y el triunfo de nazismo y el facismo europeos" (200) points to a parallel in Gerchunoff and Yeziarska's responses to shifting racial landscapes.⁷⁰ Both authors' fiction is bound up with romantic racialism. As US conceptions of race shift in the 1920s, Yeziarska's work becomes less romantic, moves away from orientalism, and toward standard language; Gerchunoff shifts from the literary to the expository in the 1920s and 30s. In his early fiction, Jews and gauchos share a spiritual connection to the land and their shared Spanish past; in his journalism, Gerchunoff denounces the realities of fascism, Uriburuism and Peronism. However, Gerchunoff does not completely abandon romanticism—he continues to insist on a spiritual connection between Jews and Argentine. Instead, he refines his characterization of Jews, turning

⁶⁹The messianism of the economic workers and social reformers of the Argentina of 1886-1930

⁷⁰ A before and after in the work of a man who was profoundly affected by the crisis of liberalism in the country and the triumph of European nazism and fascism

away from the trope of Jew as romantic primitive, and refashioning him as the foundation of (white) occidental culture.

“El espíritu judío en la cultura española,” (1940), explicitly places Spanish Jews “en el alba del culto revolucionario, de la religión modificadora de la humanidad.” Pointing to the Jewish presence in Lyon prior to the arrival of the Christian missionaries, Gerchunoff argues that Jews were present at a foundational moment in Catholic Spanish—and by extension all of Western—history:

Cuando los misioneros cristianos comenzaron, en Lyon, a predicar, ante el pueblo sumergido todavía en el paganismo, la moral del hombre que había manifestado en Jerusalén una nueva concepción de la divinidad, es decir, en el alba del culto revolucionario, de la religión modificadora de la humanidad, en las ciudades y aldeas de España existían ya núcleos de familias judías que profesaban el credo mosaico, cultivaban sus tradiciones domésticas y convivían con la masa social de modo fraterno (103).⁷¹

The missionary, a harbinger of the future-to-come stands before a population "sumergido todavía" in paganism. The Jews, however, are not sunken in paganism; their mosaic faith and domestic traditions place them on the same plane as the missionaries. Although the Jews live in harmony with the “masa social,” their true

⁷¹ When the Christian missionaries began, in Lyon to preach—before the people still submerged in paganism—the ethics of the man who had expounded a new conception of divinity in Jerusalem, that is to say, at the dawn of the revolutionary cult, of the religion that would change humanity, in the cities and towns of Spain there were already core Jewish families that professed the mosaic faith, cultivated its domestic traditions and lived with the social masses in a brotherly way

fraternity is with emerging Christianity.⁷² Jews, before Christianity, before citizenship, before Spain, are more Spanish than the Spanish, more Christian than Christian, and better suited for nation than their pagan counterparts. With their patriarchal families, domestic traditions and fraternal relations with their neighbors, Jews are not only rational, monotheistic, and pre-Christian Christians, but also the originators of the mode of social relations that will make the American nation possible. The words domestic and fraternal will appear again and again as Gerchunoff makes his case that Jews—unlike other primitives—are the stuff of nation.

La jofaina maravillosa (1924)—the collection which contains “La guitanilla”—is a transitional text. Pre 1920s, Gerchunoff paints a romantic-pastoral portrait of Argentina rooted in a connection to the land. From the mid-1920s on, he is more likely to describe Argentina as a nation held together by modern men who share a common language and (Christian) values.⁷³ He increasingly stresses the relationship between Jews and Catholic Spain as the key component of the modern Argentine nation. “*La guitanilla*” links Jews to the mysterious, romantic and primitive elements of Spanish culture. However, the introduction and epilogue to *La jofaina maravillosa*, like “El espíritu judío en la cultura española,” link the same ancient Jews to proto-national elements in Spanish culture. The collection as a whole makes the case that

⁷² I remind us of Lisa Leff’s argument that French Jews seeking emancipation argued that Jews would make good citizens because they had always, even in ancient times, embraced the nations to which they belonged through displays of fraternity toward their fellow citizens (34).

⁷³ Of course, this isn’t a clean or clear break, there are elements of pastoral romanticism across Gerchunoff’s work, and elements of the theory of the “modern”—or, as he calls it, “occidental nation” in earlier pieces.

some Others (Jews and Moors) shape Spanish culture, while others Others threaten the emerging modern nation, and must be expelled beyond its boundaries. In the epilogue, Gerchunoff writes,

¿Qué nos importan los países de las latitudes lejanas, cuyos pueblos mascan un lenguaje rudimentario, en el cual no se cantan penas de amor, ni se rememoran aventuras que estrechen las almas en un mismo recuerdo y en un mismo aliento? En esos países remotos y primitivos no hay hogar, porque no tienen idioma, no tienen poesía y nada los reúne al de la luz doméstica, nada los vincula en la sociedad de los afectos pacíficos; el idioma es el principio de la fraternidad (153).⁷⁴

In remote places, there is no home, because no language of poetry brings men into the domestic circle of light. They have no culture, sing no songs of love, tell no tall tales. Nothing links them. Words such as “lejana,” “rudimentario,” “remoto,” and “primitivo” establish distance (in space, time and language) between primitive peoples and modern men.

In order to prove that Jews are part of the “nos” en “¿Qué nos importan los países de las latitudes lejanas?” Gerchunoff must show not only that Sephardic Jews—and by his inclusive logic, all Jews—spoke Spanish, he must also make the

⁷⁴ What difference do countries of faraway latitudes, whose *pueblos* chew a rudimentary language, in which they do not sing the sorrows of love, nor recall the adventures that stretch souls in the same memory and the same breath, make to us? In these remote and primitive countries, there is no home because they don't have language, they don't have poetry and nothing links them to domestic light, nothing links them to a society of peaceful feeling; language is the principle of brotherhood.

case that other Jewish languages are capable of creating the poetry that links men and makes nations. The case for Hebrew, the language of Jehová, the ancient (written) language of the Bible, is easy to make. Yiddish, by contrast, considered by many Jews and non-Jews to be a corrupt German dialect, a “lenguaje rudimentario,” haunts this passage. Naomi Seidman has argued that by the mid-19th century, “something very like a myth of Yiddish ‘femininity,’ usually negatively valenced” (6) flourished in Europe. Yiddish was freighted with a series of negative linked traits—it was the oral language of uneducated women and children, and the language of the home. Hebrew, by contrast, was the written language of educated men. I have argued that *La jofaina maravillosa*, particularly the story “La guitanilla,” gives Gerchunoff gender trouble. In the collection’s epilogue, he works to transform “la luz domestica” into a masculine space. When men are drawn into domestic spaces by the language of brotherhood, the domestic becomes the cradle of nations. By contrast, in primitive places where men speak rudimentary languages, there may be a fire, but there is no real home. Real languages, the languages of nation transform hearth into home and make nations.

Gerchunoff rarely mentions Yiddish in his broader discussions of the role of language in nation formation, preferring the more suitable Hebrew. The existence of an Ashkenazi diasporic language simultaneously undermines his claim that ancient Jews, as proto-Christians, spoke languages capable of poetry, and his claim that the diasporic language of the Jews is Spanish (as noted above, in 1926, he wrote, “el hebreo continuó siendo su lengua teológica, el español prosiguió siendo la lengua

lirica”). However, in a 1934 obituary for “Schalom Aleijem,” Gerchunoff does mention Yiddish, if only to praise the Russian Jewish author’s masculine effort to transform a dialect into a literary language.

Gerchunoff writes that in dissolving the traditional separation between Yiddish and Hebrew, Aleijem modernized Yiddish out of its previous degraded (feminized) status; he “elaboró el idisch, lo refinó, lo enriqueció con sus giros, lo ductilizó con su humor y traslado a su tejido de vertebras el espacio y la brumosa muchedumbre del ghetto”(51).⁷⁵ This description of Yiddish as carrying “la brumosa muchedumbre del ghetto” in its very spine doesn’t sound much like Gerchunoff’s description of Spanish. However, Aleijem’s language does contain the Jewish street within an elaborated, refined, and enriched structure. According to Gerchunoff, Aleijem’s accomplishment is to transform Yiddish into a literary language. And, as Gerchunoff writes in the epilogue to *La jofaina maravillosa*, “el idioma es el principio de la fraternidad.” “Idiomas” link brothers to common memory and feeling.⁷⁶ By contrast, “lenguajes” chewed by primitive peoples, don’t concern

⁷⁵ Elaborated Yiddish, refined it, enriched it with his twists and turns, he made it malleable with his humor and transferred to its spinal tissue the space and the murky crowds of the ghetto.

⁷⁶ He does conclude the essay by admitting, “very often late at night, after a day of deep identification with the Christian universal life of the metropolis and the country, I feel a morbid need for the ghetto. That is when I dive into the café in Corrientes Street where, between the noise of tea glasses and the bickering, I watch the transatlantic relocation of that fabulous and strange world. The mysterious desire for Jewishness is satisfied in me as if I was coming back from a trip to Warsaw, Bucharest, or Odessa” (Translation Mónica Szurmuk). It is likely that conversation in the “ghetto” of Corrientes street took place in Yiddish. But Gerchunoff’s “morbid need” for the ghetto only emphasizes the backwardness of his “mysterious” desire for a “fabulous” and “strange” world.

“us.”⁷⁷ On this point, Gerchunoff agrees with the conservative Argentine nationalist Ricardo Rojas who argues that the nation is “la comunidad de esos hombres en la emoción del mismo territorio, en el culto de las mismas tradiciones, en el acento de la misma lengua, en el esfuerzo de los mismos destinos (qtd in Lvovich, 126).⁷⁸

In 1924, a climate in which conservative nationalists agitated against continued immigration, Gerchunoff explicitly rejects orientalism and points to the occidental possibilities embedded in Judaism. In “El problema de la nacionalidad y la política del idioma” (1924), he tells his countrymen, “debemos aceptar la realidad histórica. Es menester que comprendamos nuestro destino de Nación. Pertenecemos a la humanidad blanca, a la comunidad de la cultura occidental” (112).⁷⁹ If Argentina is Europe's destiny, then the occidental immigrant, rather than the gaucho, lies at the heart of the national project. “Mitre y Sarmiento,” he writes in the same essay, “son los antigauchos, son los europeizantes, como Jéfferson y Lincoln fueron en Estados Unidos los anglizantes, los predicadores de de una Nación de derecho y de libertad” (106).⁸⁰ The gauchos judíos, with their spiritual connection to the land, are gone. Instead, Gerchunoff looks to the recent past to argue that Argentina's founding fathers endorsed European-style rights and liberties. While he maintains a difference

⁷⁷ While lenguaje means language, it can also be translated as jargon, a word often used to describe Yiddish. There may be also be an undertone of written vs. oral in Gerchunoff's contrasting of the two terms.

⁷⁸ The community of men in the emotion of shared territory, in the cultivation of these same traditions, in the accent of the same language in the force of the same destiny

⁷⁹ We must accept the historical reality. It's crucial that we understand our national destiny. We belong to white humanity, to the community of occidental culture.

⁸⁰ Mitre and Sarmiento are the anti-gauchos, the Europeanizers, like Lincoln and Jefferson were Anglicizers in the US, the preachers of a nation of rights and liberty.

between Argentina and the US—the US modeled itself on Britain, Argentina on Europe—he also links them as the common outgrowth of the Old World’s pursuit of rights and freedom. The analogy between Mitre-Sarmiento and Jefferson-Lincoln collapses British and Spanish colonialisms, and the subsequent particular histories of both nations, into a common occidental civilizational project. Positing Argentina as an occidental nation, Gerchunoff folds Jewish immigrants into the larger category of European immigration (and its civilizing project).

However, Gerchunoff acknowledges that “Vienen a la Argentina gentes de origen diverso, nacional y racial.” He wonders, “¿Cómo las fundiremos en un cuerpo social coherente y en un espíritu unísono?(117).⁸¹ In search of an answer, Gerchunoff looks to European history for models of linguistically diverse nations that have cohered, and for cautionary tales of those that have failed to do so. Italy, for example, has not come together as a nation because it is divided into zones of separate languages and cultures. Portugal, by contrast, has been able to maintain its national identity by refusing to take on Spanish language and culture. The Catalans actively hide themselves “en sus lenguas, detrás del sólido parapeto de sus libros.”⁸² “El libro,” he reminds us, as he transitions to the case of the Jews

es un territorio moral medularmente cohesivo, como las cadenas que unían las legiones galas en el combate. Nos lo ha demostrado el judaísmo disperso por la tierra. Destruída su nacionalidad política hace veinte siglos . . . esa

⁸¹People of diverse racial and national origin come to Argentina. How will we form a coherent social body and a unified spirit?

⁸² In their languages, behind their solid parapet of books

interminable Diáspora no extinguió en su espíritu la llama de sus lares milenarios. . . se refugió en la Biblia y en el Talmud” (118).⁸³

For Jews, the people in diaspora par excellence, books function as a moral territory. They are unifying weapons (like the chains that linked Gauls in combat), and also shelters for the domestic flame. In the absence of political nationality, books preserve the spirit of the nation. However, even when a nation has a territory, it must also have a language that, by carrying its national spirit, simultaneously creates the domestic space and functions as a weapon to protect that domestic space. The Poles, for example, resisted Russian and the German imperialism because

vivía en su idioma, amaba en su idioma, lloraba en su idioma . . . sin una cultura y sin un idioma, que fuese su representación fija y el signo de los matices indefinibles de su espíritu, Polonia habría sucumbido . . . lo que llamo la política del idioma abarca por lo tanto la existencia varia y completa de un pueblo que aspira no ser una seca designación geográfica (118-119).⁸⁴

Without the Polish language, Poland would have succumbed to imperialism. Here, Gerchunoff undoes the romantic connection between nation and land that he attempted to establish with *Los gauchos judíos*. Further, his argument that language

⁸³ Is a fundamentally cohesive moral territory, like the chains which united the Gallic legions in combat. Judaism, dispersed across the earth have demonstrated this for us. Their political nationality was destroyed twenty centuries ago . . . this interminable Diaspora did not extinguish the flames of their millennial homes from their spirit . . . they took refuge in the Bible and the Talmud.

⁸⁴ They lived in their language, loved in their language, cried in their language . . . without culture and without language to serve as their fixed representation and the sign of the undefinable aspects of their spirit, Poland would have succumbed . . . that which is called the politics of language covers, in this way, the varied and complete existence of a people that aspires to be more than a dry geographical designation.

elevates the nation from a dry association with a territory to a spiritual entity, privileges Jews who have maintained their “nation” in the absence of territory.⁸⁵ However, Gerchunoff walks a fine line. He uses the example of the Jews—a nation in diaspora—to argue for the role of language in the making of Argentina—a territorial nation. In this essay, language and books are the house of the national spirit, the source of unity, and also a potential source of disunity. Language holds nuances of the spirit, enabling a culture to not only to survive in the face of great hardship, but to transcend its geographical location. However, as the cases of Italy and Spain demonstrate, when tied to region rather than nation, language can destroy the nation by separating its citizens into isolated subgroups. And while the Jews are the example of a “nation” that has maintained itself through “culture,” they have also been as isolated from the nations that host them as the Catalans behind their parapets of books. This is perhaps why Gerchunoff refers to, but never names, Hebrew, and

⁸⁵Here, Gerchunoff sounds like Simon Dubnow (1860-1941) who, in *Nationalism and History*, argues that there are three phases of nation: 1. the tribe 2. the civic union or state (when several tribes are united in the same territory) and 3. “a still more rigid test for the maturity of a nation. When a people loses not only its political independence but also its land, when the storm of history uproots it and removes it far from its natural homeland and it becomes dispersed and scattered in alien lands, and in addition loses its unifying language; if, despite the fact that the external national bonds have been destroyed, such a nation still maintains itself for many years, creates an independent existence, reveals a stubborn determination to carry on its autonomous development--such a people has reached the highest stage of cultural-historical individuality and may be said to be indestructible, if only it cling forcefully to its national will” (80). While Dubnow characterizes the third phase with loss of territory and language (and Gerchunoff argues that it is language that keeps a people together), Gerchunoff shares Dubnow’s understanding of an elevated national will that can survive even in the absence of territory. As Dubnow was one of the most famous Jewish thinkers of his time, undoubtedly Gerchunoff was familiar with his work. Dubnow’s characterization of the Jewish nation as the highest form of nation—the spiritual nation—undergirds Gerchunoff’s thinking on Jews and nation.

elides Yiddish entirely. Jews offer opposing possibilities: the survival of the Jews in Europe demonstrates the power of language to make and maintain nations. However, the continuing existence of Jewish languages in Argentina potentially corrodes the Argentine national project, creating isolated communities like those in Italy.

In this same essay, Gerchunoff contrasts the people who make up the modern nation with autochthonous peoples:

Nada nos vincula con la memoria del inca o del azteca. Su historia, su mitología, su leyenda no ejerce en nuestro ánimo ninguna de esas atracciones fuertes que califican la capacidad modeladora del recuerdo. Nos impresiona como una curiosidad, como si fuera el relato incoherente de los pueblos asiáticos anteriores a las grandes formaciones religiosas . . . No nos sentimos sus continuadores, como que somos continuadores en América de la civilización europea y nuestro destino de americanos es precisamente perfeccionarla y ahondarla para fundar en la tierra abierta a la humanidad los consorcios nacionales de acuerdo con los anhelos que aún no se han realizado (105).⁸⁶

Gerchunoff has set the stage by arguing that Argentina is an occidental nation.

Included within this occidental nation are European immigrants, Jews among them.

⁸⁶ “Nothing links us to the memory of the Inca or the Aztec. Their history, their mythology, their legends do not exercise on our spirit any of the strong attractions that mark the molding capacity of memory. They make an impression on us as a curiosity, as if they were the incoherent story of Asian peoples anterior to the formation of the great religions . . . We do not feel ourselves to be their heirs, as we, in America, are the heirs of European civilization and our destiny as Americans is precisely to perfect and deepen European civilization in order to found, in a land open to humanity, national consortiums in agreement with longings not yet realized.”

Thus, “we,” that have no links to the memory of the Inca and Aztec. This modern Argentine “we” includes Gerchunoff and his fellow Jews. The Inca and the Aztec cannot function as components of the Argentine nation, because they don't share the linguistic, cultural, and racial sameness that connects the fraternal nation. Rather, these ancient natives are a curiosity, so deeply other that it is not enough to relegate them to the past, they must be ejected beyond the borders of the nation—reduced to an “incoherent fiction of some pre-monotheistic Asian culture.” By linking the Inca and the Aztec to the Orient, Gerchunoff attempts to diffuse and defuse the danger unleashed by his experiments—similar to Yeziarska's—with the Jew as Oriental. Not only is Argentina occidental, the “we” embedded in “debemos” includes the Jews who are no longer Oriental, especially not as compared with the vanished natives who are as strange, as fundamentally incompatible with Christianity, as the truly oriental Asians. We are not their descendants, he argues, we are Europeans. By writing Argentina's genealogy as entirely European, Jews are fundamental to the nation. Native peoples are not at the origin of the American story, Jews are.

By 1948, advocating for Israel in the pages of *Jadla*, the propaganda organ of the *Agencia Judía Pro Palestina*, Gerchunoff has thoroughly dispensed with Jewish orientalism. This is a very different Gerchunoff from the Gerchunoff who described Preciosa as “la mujer misteriosa de la morisma y de la judería.” In the pages of *Jadla*, rather than employ romantic Orientalist stereotypes that link Jews and Moors, he makes use of negative orientalist tropes in order to distance Jews from Middle Eastern primitives. He writes, for example, that in 1897, when the Sultan of the

Ottoman empire wanted to sell Palestine to the Jews, “los judíos no deseaban hacer con el sultán de Constantinopla un negocio oriental, sino volver a su antiguo territorio por un movimiento de opinión y un avenimiento de pueblos” (“Paz Judeo-Arábiga”).⁸⁷ Gerchunoff distances Jews from an age old association with commerce by arguing that they refused to do business the “oriental” way, choosing, instead to attain their territory through the common agreement of the international community. The oriental Sultan, by contrast, is aligned with back channel corruption. While the Sultan operates outside of modern codes of behavior, Jews are committed to contracts, and the legal codes of modern nations. In October of that same year, Gerchunoff continues to contrast the Jewish capacity for modern nationhood with Arab backwardness and unfitness for the same. He writes,

Los caudillos de la morisma, como decían antiguamente los españoles, no logran conciliar sus intereses mucho menos sus odios y sus amores. Continúan así la tradición anárquica de los pueblos mueslímicos que consisten en una eterna lucha de grupos que pueden alguna vez congregarse por un instante pero que se disuelven como en una polvareda no bien tropiezan con la primer disidencia . . . también en materia religiosa, los Árabes se mantienen en una anarquía idéntica, de la cual se salvan por su incapacidad mística y permanecen, por lo tanto, estancados en las normas primitivas de la fe mohomética. Un fenómeno totalmente distinto ofrece la vida de Israel en medio de ese sarpullido

⁸⁷ The Jews did not want to enter into oriental dealings with the Sultan of Constantinople, only to return to their ancient territory by means of a movement of opinion and an agreement between peoples

de naciones que se juntan y se disgregan al igual que los montículos de arena en el desierto . La unidad de Israel es algo que no pueden desconocer los estadistas de las Naciones Unidas más hostiles a su consolidación; los Árabes, a su vez, al comparar su desmoronamiento y su dispersión con esa extraordinaria coherencia espiritual comprenden lo profundo de su inferioridad desde el punto de vista de su capacidad nacional” (1).⁸⁸

It is typical that Gerchunoff re-imagines a conflict between Jews and Arabs as a confrontation between peoples expelled from Spain. He puts his judgement of the peoples living in Palestine—they are incapable of national unity—in the mouth of his ultimate authority (pre-expulsion Spaniards). With *los gauchos judíos*, Gerchunoff authenticated Jewish fitness for Argentine identity by pointing to Spain, here he authenticates “Moorish” unfitness for nation by pointing to Spain. As argued, he collapses the movement of diverse Jewish communities across the globe and through languages, by encouraging Ashkenazi Jews to “reclaim” Spanish. In this essay, he collapses cultural, linguistic and historical diversity into the term “Moor.” Paired with “caudillo,” a word with dictatorial undertones, (in the wake of Mussolini’s defeat, this

⁸⁸ The Moorish caudillos, as the Spaniards used to say, are not able to reconcile their interests, much less their hates and loves. In this manner, the anarchic tradition of Muslim pueblos that consists of an eternal struggle between groups that can come together once in a while for an instant but that dissolve as if in a dust storm, clashing with the first disagreement, continues . . . similarly, in religious matters, the Arabs maintain themselves in an identical anarchy, from which they excuse themselves with their mystical incapacity and remain, in this way, stuck in the primitive norms of the Mohammedan faith. In the midst of this rash of nations that come together and come apart like grains of sand in the desert, the life of Israel offers a completely distinct phenomenon. The unity of Israel is something that the even states of the United Nations most hostile to her coming together can’t ignore; the Arabs, for their part, comparing their collapse and dispersion with this extraordinary spiritual cohesion, understand the profound inferiority from the point of view of national capability.

is probably a strategic move), “Moor” becomes not only the opposite of the liberal nation, but an anti-Occidental vector. While Jews, pre-Christian Christians, with their Mosaic faith, departed from Spain, spreading civilizing values in their wake, Moors, members of the Muhammadan faith, incapable of coherence, spread only chaos. We are still in Gerchunoff’s romantic universe: nations move—through language—from the light of the domestic hearth out into public spaces. “El idioma es el principio de la fraternidad,” and brotherhood is the foundation of the nation. The Moors are led by caudillos who can’t reconcile their loves and hates—without brotherhood, there is no nation. Jews are a people that tends toward unity, Moors carry within their culture the seeds dispersal.

These Moors, like other primitive peoples disparaged by Gerchunoff, are oriental.⁸⁹ Unlike the gauchos judíos who connect with the Argentine landscape through a feeling for the land of their adopted country, the Muslim people of Palestine are negatively determined by the landscape. The pampas of *Los gauchos judíos* (like the land of Israel) are an agricultural paradise, a place where Jews can return to their Biblical roots as farmers and cultivate a relationship to the nation. By contrast, the Palestinian desert, inhabited, but not cultivated by the Arabs, dissolves unity like grains of sand in a storm. Jews shape landscape into nation. Arabs are

⁸⁹ Aziza Khazoom reminds us that the orientaling of Arabs by Jews finds its roots a European colonial practice that created “mediators” out of previously marginalized ethnic groups. In the Middle East—as well as North Africa, as Lisa Leff points out—French Jews created a system of Alliance schools which served to westernize Arab Jews. Khazoom argues that as French Jews orientalized Middle Eastern Jews, so Middle Eastern Jews orientalized Arabs (496-497)

shaped by the landscape. The binaries abound. Arabs are incapable of mysticism. Jews have an extraordinary spiritual coherence. Arabs, with their primitive norms are stuck in the past. Jews offer Palestine its national future. Such is the unity of the Jews, that all members of the United Nation, friend for foe, must recognize it. Such is the dispersion of the Arabs, that they themselves must recognize the superiority of Jewish national capacity.

IV. Conclusion

As argued at the beginning of the chapter, the locally inflected differences in Gerchunoff and Yezierska's arguments make the confluence of their strategies for Americanizing all the more striking. However, for both writers, the nation is a romantic project. Nations, like geniuses, have distinct spirits that flower out of racial characteristics. This spirit resides in the nation's language. In both authors' early work, Jews are exotic Orientals who, in their very speech, offer the nation mystery, spirituality, passion. However, these racial qualities are only superficial. The Oriental Jew's best quality is that she is a conduit to ancient Jewish-Christian sameness. Yezierska and Gerchunoff make the case that Jews created Western Culture; Jews are the best Argentines and the best Americans. In the 1920s and 30s, in the US and Argentina, shifting racial and linguistic attitudes made impossible to continue to present Jews as Orientals. However, neither Gerchunoff nor Yezierksa abandoned the romantic terms out of which they had constructed their Americas. Jewish Orientals become Jewish Occidentals. For Gerchunoff, post-1920s, "primitive" meant people

who chewed their language; people incapable of legend of peoples; people incapable of nation; people less fit than Jews for inclusion in the national family. African Americans and Puerto Rican Americans remind Yeziarska—positively and negatively—of all she could no longer be.

Gerchunoff's insistence that Jews are temporally and culturally prior to both Christianity and Hispanic culture, and therefore crucial components of Christian Hispanic American nations, explicitly echoes European Jewish rhetorics that claim that Jews, with their Mosaic faith, invented western civilization. Yeziarska engages with these same themes indirectly. While her work picks up on notions of sameness and wields orientalist tropes as an argument for Jewish value, she less explicitly deploys the vocabulary of nation. Gerchunoff, an elite intellectual with global contacts, cultivated relationships with leaders and intellectuals across the continent. Yeziarska's gaze rarely wandered across the US border. Her work was always personal, and she never commented publicly on the emergence of the Jewish state. Perhaps her interests rarely strayed from the local because she was never able, as Gerchunoff was, to gain access to elite intellectual circles. Or, perhaps Gerchunoff, writing from the American periphery, had no choice but to engage with the US as the regional metropole, and thus think hemispherically and globally. Perhaps his invocation of Jefferson and Lincoln was an implicit admission that power lay to the North. Perhaps her blinkered interest in the US, was not due to her exclusion from local circles of power, but her privileged location in the US. Most likely, both explanations are true: Yeziarska's lack of explicit engagement with global

conversations around the meaning of Jewishness, was the product of overlapping privileges and disadvantages.

Yeziarska and Gerchunoff imagine assimilation as an equation: A Jew on American soil, in the presence of native born Americans, will transform into (and might already be) American. This equation is built out of a series of stereotypes that link fixed racial and national traits to representative characters. Post 1920s, Gerchunoff and Yeziarska attempt to map these terms onto a shifting racial landscape—a world in which readers will no longer unquestioningly accept American is as simply equal to Anglo-Saxon, or Argentine to Creole. Gerchunoff and Yeziarska's struggle to fix Jews in a romantic racial order reminds us that "American" and "Jew," like "Spanish" and "English" have always been hybrid terms.

Chapter Two

“As if I were a native”

Waldo Frank and Henry Roth’s Jewish Americas

In his posthumously published memoirs, the novelist, historian, and literary critic, Waldo David Frank (1889-1967) laments, “I was a Jew by birth and had no Hebrew . . . had never been west of eastern Pennsylvania; never south of New Jersey. A Jew without Judaism, an American without America” (32). Unlike Anzia Yezierska and Alberto Gerchunoff—the authors discussed in the first chapter—Waldo Frank did not begin life as an impoverished immigrant fantasizing about American identity from the margins. Raised on the Upper West Side of Manhattan in an affluent, assimilated, German Jewish family, he attended Yale University. Considered a prodigy, he became one of the better-known intellectuals of his time, publishing novels and essays in Spanish and English. However, despite his success, he *felt* impoverished—a Jew without Hebrew, an American ignorant of its landscape.

The notion that an American Jew might fall between Jewish and American identities is not uncommon. Almost thirty years after Frank’s lament, in 1996, Ruth Wisse, a scholar of Jewish literature, speculated about the causes of Jewish American writer Henry Roth’s (1906-1995) famous writer’s block. She argued that Roth’s immigrant coming of age novel, *Call It Sleep* (1934), “unwittingly reveals how little is left of the existential artist after he has freed himself from an implicit community. Child of a loveless family, Jew without Jewishness, American master without an

ennobling myth of American culture” (74). Unlike Waldo Frank, Henry Roth *was* an impoverished immigrant (on New York’s Lower East Side). However, although his beginnings were modest and troubled, as Wisse notes, Roth’s deployment of the English language was masterful. *Call It Sleep*, which received positive reviews at time of publication, became hugely successful and eventually canonical when it was reissued in 1964. The novel, intertwining Yiddish, English, Hebrew, Aramaic and Polish, is recognized as an unparalleled modernist achievement, and now considered an origin point for Jewish American literature.

When Waldo Frank proposes that he is neither truly Jewish nor truly American, his terms are at odds. He laments that he lacks Jewishness because he lacks Hebrew, while he despairs that he lacks Americanness because he’s never been west or south. Jewishness is tied to *language*, while Americanness is tied to *place*. These uneven terms set the parameters for this chapter which moves along the trajectory of the Jewish American search for identity in the twentieth century by paring Frank and Roth. I offer two intertwined arguments. The first argument unfolds geographically. Waldo Frank and Henry Roth, trapped in a gap between their Jewish and American identities that stems in part from their inability to locate themselves in the US racial landscape, turn their gaze southward, across the US border, to Latin America, hoping that the history of Spanish Jews on the American continent will help them reimagine, and even reconcile, their troublesome Jewish and US identities. In this chapter, Spanish-speaking America provides a route into the function of Spain and Latin America in the Jewish American imaginary, and also helps demonstrate

that for Jewish writers, the search for national belonging and identity in the twentieth century Americas was a hemispheric project. US Ashkenazi Jews were not only looking to native and indigenous Americans, fellow immigrants, and back to eastern Europe for clues as to how to tell their stories, they were also looking south for Other Americas.

Waldo Frank, a self-described mystic, found the Latin America that met his needs: a place where the sensual, baroque culture of Catholic Spain (counterpoint to the secularized Protestant, spiritually dead US) melded with the savage and primitive culture of indigenous peoples. In his mind, Latin America was a Jewish place where Hispanic culture, shaped by the Jews of Spain, encountered the spirituality of native peoples. In *The Jew in Our Day* (1944), Frank proposes that the Jewish “convergence upon Hispano-American life appears to be destiny (126-127). Latin America would be the place where he would heal the disjuncture between his Jewish and American identities and become “whole.” Late in his career, he went so far as to claim that the story of the Jews of Spain and Latin America (as told by the Jewish mystic Waldo Frank) would solve the problems of the modern world.

Henry Roth was not a mystic, and unlike Waldo Frank, his interest in Spain and Latin America has been largely written out of his biography. However, like Frank, Roth was drawn to Latin America out of the hope that the Other Jewish America would be a place where it was possible to be both Jewish and American without conflict. Like Frank, Roth struggled, and failed, to stabilize his US Jewish identity. And like Frank, Roth thought about his US Jewish identity in racialized

terms. He spent three years exploring his interest in Spanish and Latin American Jews. In 1965, 1966 and 1967, he lived in Spain and Mexico working on a novel—which became a play and was never finished—about a marrano, or crypto Jew, who escapes the Inquisition by posing as a conquistador. This Spanish-American turn, although brief, is crucial not only to the breaking of his infamous decades-long writer’s block and his still somewhat mysterious pivot towards Zionism, but is also key to understanding his decades long struggle with his own Jewish identity.

The chapter’s second argument contrasts Frank and Roth’s language use to further the dissertation’s overarching argument that Jewish languages and Jewish identity are inseparable in twentieth-century American literature. Waldo Frank, raised in an English-speaking household, was educated in prestige languages, while Henry Roth, raised in a Yiddish-speaking household, learned English at school and in the streets. Although both authors were driven to write by their search for belonging, Roth’s work emerges out of the intersection between Standard and Jewish languages, while Frank’s work remains within linguistic borders.

Roth’s relationship to language and literary representation is thematized in his late-in-life autobiographical novel cycle, *Mercy of a Rude Stream* (1994-1998). Ira, a Roth avatar, devours the Western canon. As he moves from *Huckleberry Finn* through *The Three Musketeers* to Poe, he “submitted to being a Christian. What else could he do when he liked and esteemed the hero? All he asked of a book was not to remind him too much that he was a Jew” (*Star* 150). Later, as a young adult, Ira reads T.S. Eliot, “all too conscious of the poet’s anti-Jew bias . . . Eliot’s clever aspersions

and disdainful caricatures seemed no more than just” (*Bondage* 138). Roth, via Ira, is reacting to institutional regimes of representation that either erase Jews or reduce them to “Jews.” Before Roth, Jews were largely present in Americas texts (including, to a certain extent, those penned by Yeziarska and Gerchunoff) as what Erin Graff-Zivin calls “wandering signifiers.” These textual “Jews,” infused with meaning based on the needs of the text, are metaphors (2, 20). The brilliance of *Call It Sleep* is its lack of caricature. There are no “Jews,” only Jews.⁹⁰

What literary critic, Horacio Legrás, terms “the cultural real” enters *Call It Sleep*, and Roth’s late in life autobiographical cycle, *Mercy of a Rude Stream*, via language. The novels’ complex linguistic architecture demands a nuanced attention to thick detail that prevents Roth from reverting to stereotype. Roth probably makes an accurate assessment of his own work when he writes,

From the moment [the immigrant Jewish writer] begins writing, unless he writes in the language of that Diaspora, of that exile, unless he writes in Yiddish . . . but instead writes in the language of country in which he lives, he begins to lose identity . . . except at home, all speaking, and of course all writing, was in English, and it became almost inevitable that *Call It Sleep*, based on a lost identity, would be all the novel I could genuinely write” (*Landscape* 299).

⁹⁰ There are Jewish authored texts that come before *Call It Sleep*—Abraham Cahan’s, *Yekel* (1896) the most prominent example—that manage to touch the cultural real through language, but none that achieved the prominence of *Call It Sleep*.

Roth made this statement before he wrote *Mercy of a Rude Stream*. Indeed, his writer's block was broken in a torrent of words about his childhood. By contrast, his attempt to write about post-conquest Mexico may have been a "failure" (he never finished or published his "marrano" manuscripts), because in order to write about a converso conquistador, he separated himself from his language of cultural knowledge, Ynglish. Forcing himself into standard English to write a Jewish story distant in time, space and language from his own, Roth resorted to stereotypes in his description of the (fictitious) Uxcaman people, indigenous to Mexico.

Waldo Frank's standard English and standard Spanish texts almost entirely ignore the multilinguality of the Americas. Although he traveled widely, his essays and novels tend to flatten what he observed, forcing "Jews," "Indians" "Blacks" "Spaniards" into ideological set pieces, each standing for a role in his quest for spiritual wholeness. While Henry Roth's most successful work depicts the everyday lives of Jewish immigrants in their own language, Waldo Frank's work hovers above its subjects. Frank was linguistically adept—he even published in Spanish. However, his prose betrays a lack of intimate knowledge of linguistic register. When he writes in dialect (as he does in his novel, *Holiday*), he writes not out of careful observation but into stereotypes. Pairing Roth and Frank, I explore the possibility that literature written at the intersection of national and Jewish languages knows more about twentieth-century Jewish American identity than literature written in solely in a national language. There might have been something to Frank's lament that he was a Jew without Hebrew.

Both authors' Latin American projects might be called failures. Henry Roth never finished his *marrano* manuscripts, and while Waldo Frank gained traction in Latin American intellectual circles, his vision of the Latin American Jew as the solution to the ills of modernity was never taken up by a wider audience. Today, he is largely forgotten. Attention to where these projects “failed”—in over reliance on stereotype, in flattening of the cultural real, in the inability to find nuanced language, in abandonment, in obscurity—sheds light on the function of Spain and Spanish-speaking America in the Jewish American imaginary.

I. The Search for Jewish America: Frank and Roth's Collapsing Racial Triangles

a. “Become America”: Waldo Frank “Feels with the Negro”

By the time of his death, Waldo Frank, at the height of his career considered a prominent modernist intellectual, had fallen into obscurity. Today, he is remembered either as an early pan-americanist or as a modernist cultural critic who influenced better-known American writers, Jean Toomer and Hart Crane.⁹¹ Scholarship that focuses on Frank and Latin America rarely addresses his complicated relationship with Jewishness. Little work attempts to synthesize his various interests—including but not limited to travels through and writing on eastern Europe, the Soviet Union, Israel, and Spain, his intellectual friendships with Diego Rivera, Ortega y Gasset, García Lorca, Hart Crane, Randolph Bourne, Scholem Asch, Sherwood Anderson,

⁹¹ See Michael Yellin and Robert Perry

Amy Lowell, Carlos Mariátegui, Alfonso Reyes, Victoria Ocampo, and José Vasconcelos, his status as a “Young American” critic, his founding of the journal, *Seven Arts*, his pacifism, his enthusiastic writing on Charlie Chaplin, his chairmanship of the (Communist) League of American Writers, his labor organizing, his mystical and Freudian philosophy, and his experimental fiction. As Frank wrote of himself, in the third person, “He had fame of a kind, but no definite audience . . . there was almost no one who had read him entire & to whom his literary personality appeared as more than a mere fragment of what he had really given” (qtd in Blake 256).

The through-line in Frank’s work is an attempt to solve his own dislocation from “modern culture” by accessing a spiritual wholeness that places the individual in harmony with his peers, God, and the Universe; William Bittner writes “the basis of all Frank’s writing is his sense of the unity of all things: this unifying force in the multiverse he calls God” (16). Frank’s quest for unity must be understood in the context of his deep disillusionment with US culture. Historian Casey Nelson Blake has argued that Frank and his “New American” contemporaries, Randolph Bourne, Van Wyck Brooks and Lewis Mumford, adrift in a rapidly industrializing world that had unhinged them from the Victorian mores of their parents, built a critique of modern culture out of a Romantic critique of capitalism, and a radicalized version of civic republicanism (3,12).

The shadow of Judaism distinguishes Frank from his New American colleagues; his critique of modern culture cannot be separated from his personal sense

of alienation from Jewish culture. Early in his career, he attempts to occupy an elite subject position. He works to repair his alienation through contact with African and indigenous Americans, whom he believes, frozen in time, have retained a primitive wholeness, a seamless connection between individuals, community and god. If the rational man (Frank) can merge with the spiritual Other, then a new, balanced whole will be achieved. However, Frank is Jewish at a historical moment in which Jews are racially unstable—transforming from oriental into white in the public imagination—rhetorically merging with the subaltern is a dangerous strategy. Eventually, Frank will decide that wholeness has been his all along; it is his Jewish inheritance. Although he is an Ashkenazi Jew, he finds this inheritance in the history of the Jews of Spain who teach him not only that Jews are a romantic, spiritual, and whole people, but also that their culture—in its original and uncorrupted form—forms the basis of all that is good in Western Culture.

Frank articulates his theory of wholeness in a romantic manifesto, *Our America* (1919), a series of essays that establish the ideological framework that will come to dominate his career. The book was written after a sojourn in France, a stint as the editor of the journal *Seven Arts*—cofounded with James Oppenheim—the publication of his first novel, *The Unwelcome Man*, and a trip through Southwest. Frank claims to speak “as honestly as I could, to my own generation” (xi), urging them to “become America” (5). He depicts a country initially shaped by the “passionate restraint” of indigenous peoples, “extremes of weather,” and “prophets” such as Washington, Madison, Hamilton, Jefferson and Lincoln that has fallen into

decadence as its citizens and leaders relentlessly pursue “industrialism.” He argues that America can only be saved by artists and spiritual leaders. Over the course of his career, Frank will continue to argue that artists and spiritual leaders be the van guard of new American wholeness; “For us of the younger generation,” he writes, “America is a promise and a dream. . . a mystic word” (8,10).

Frank believes himself to be one of these artist-prophets. In his posthumously published memoirs, he looks back on a spiritual awakening that he had while riding a pony during a 1911 journey to Wyoming. Intoxicated by the landscape, he proclaims, “This was America!” (52). Suddenly

I heard a call and answered it, then stopped my horse to hear better . . . the call came again, and I was about to answer again when I realized that it was the cry of wolves. I had answered the call of wolves. I shuddered, and the shudder became part of the darkening earth as the sun leaves it. I had been in communication with the wild: and it had entered me! (52).

Imagining Wyoming as the true America, Frank invokes the very same tropes that led Yeziarksa to the Vermont countryside, Gerchunoff to wax poetic about the Jews of the pampas, and Roth to disappear into Maine; the urban landscape—the place where Jews have traditionally thrived—is not the real America. If a Jew wishes to become truly American, he must separate himself from the teeming masses of his coreligionists and intermingle with the folk who derive their Americanness from the landscape. However, while Yeziarksa and Gerchunoff depict the countryside as a communal and neighborly space, for Frank “real” America is wild, threatening and

solitary. His oneness—he is entered by the wild and enters the wild—comes into being at the same moment in which the sun leaves the earth. His shudder at hearing wolf in his mouth loops back into the landscape. For Frank, entering into unity with America means taking its savagery inside his body.⁹²

Frank's search for wholeness is inflected by race and always tinged with mystery and danger. In a chapter of *Our America*, entitled "The Land of Buried Cultures," Frank continues his search for wholeness on a bus in Pueblo, Colorado, a region which "belongs to that vast tract, summing a million square miles, which the United States conquered from Mexico in 1848." Frank notes that, "in the bus with me are Mexicans and one Anglo-Saxon . . . the women are dressed in black, but their eyes are deep and slow like shaded summer pools in which many colors have fallen, and their black hair is blue" (93). Frank's "Mexican" and "Anglo-Saxon" invoke the romantic racial comparison that undergirds his quest for wholeness. Like Gerchunoff and Yeziarksa, Frank operates within the romantic racial tradition that conceives of the Other as a "symbol of something that seemed to be tragically lacking in white American civilization" (Fredrickson 108). The Mexican women's deep, slow eyes, implicitly contrast with the (probably sharp, appraising, acquisitive) eyes of the (most likely male) Anglo-Saxon.

⁹² Frank was a fan of the Whitman who contained multitudes and whose "irresistible appeal for me was that he naturalized his sense of the cosmic Whole into the body and shape of America." (11)

Calling the reader's attention to the Mexican history of US territory, Frank shows characteristic interest in erased and subaltern histories.⁹³ In a later passage, he focuses on the harsh treatment Mexicans have received at the hands of "gringos," and acknowledges that if the Mexican is "dissolute, shiftless, insolent and cringing," he is so because Americans treat him as a "greaser, a "half-breed and a "nigger" (95). Frank warns that soon "the integral expressions of Mexican life—their remarkable harmony with the native American world" will flee over "southward over the American border" (96). However, even as he values "Mexican" cultural contributions and critiques race-based oppression, his perspective is overdetermined by his quest for an answering opposite to the Anglo-Saxon. The Mexican women with their "deep and slow" eyes "like shaded summer pools in which many colors have fallen," clearly sexualized, are meant to fill a lack. But while it is the Frank narrator who gazes upon the women with admiration—and probable lust—they are meant to couple with—and complement—the anonymous Anglo-Saxon stranger. In his writings, Frank waged a lifelong struggle to place himself, the Jew, in a romantic racial landscape determined by complementary binaries.

In Frank's 1923 novel, *Holiday*, southern African Americans, rather than Mexicans, occupy the space of exotic, passionate, spiritual Other. The novel was inspired by a 1922 trip through the rural American South with Jean Toomer during

⁹³ As Sebastiaan Faber notes, Frank was popular in Latin America, in part because, unlike his contemporaries, he listened to and respected the opinions of Latin American intellectuals. For Faber, this quality alone is reason enough for scholars to take another look at Frank's output.

which Frank poses as “Negro.” The trip inspired *Holiday*, Toomer’s *Cane* (1923), as well as critical commentary on everything from African American Jewish solidarity to racial voyeurism.⁹⁴ *Holiday*, an allegorical novel that depicts the murder of a black man after an ambiguous encounter with a white woman, and Frank’s non-fiction commentary on his trip with Toomer, point to Frank’s awareness of structural oppression at the same time that they advance his fantasy that rural African Americans are both a source of unpolluted folk culture, and potentially threatening semi-savages. In his memoir he reflects,

I felt shame, as if I must confess the sins of my own fathers; I felt with the Negro. This empathy was startling. Lying in dark sleep I would dream I was a Negro, would spring from sleep reaching for clothes on the chair beside the bed, to finger them, to smell them . . . in proof I was white and myself (105).

This is Frank at his most explicit about his own racial ambiguity. Frank and Toomer’s journey took place two years before the watershed year of 1924 in which, as mentioned in the last chapter, Jews began to shift white in the popular imagination. Frank poses as Negro at a moment in which he, as a Jew, is poised on a racial precipice. His subject position is precarious, and his anxiety of its time. He simultaneously feels “with the Negro” and shame for the “sins of his fathers.” These lines of affiliation are unclear. Does he feel “with the Negro” as a Jew whose swarthy features allow him to pass as African American, or does he feel with the Negro as a

⁹⁴See Daniel Terris and Kathleen Pfeiffer and Michael Yellin.

sensitive white man whose exposure to the horrors of Jim Crow allows him to reflect on the sins of his fathers?⁹⁵ His insistence that he is “white,” that he can smell his whiteness on his clothing, reveals how deeply the South terrifies him—“My place on earth had frighteningly shifted!” (105). Hearing the language of the wolf in his mouth also frightened him. In danger of losing his whiteness, he frantically sniffs out the proof that his body is a white body. In Wyoming, the language of the wolf invades his mouth. In the South, blackness invades his whiteness. Frank longs to merge with the landscape, but these moments of merging are also the moments when he must assert his difference.

b. “A New ‘Pledge Allegiance’”: Henry Roth’s Alchemical Conversions

In the quotation that opens this chapter, Frank laments, “I was a Jew by birth and had no Hebrew . . . had never been west of eastern Pennsylvania; never south of New Jersey. A Jew without Judaism, an American without America” (32). For Frank, Jewishness is found in language, while Americanness is found in the Western landscape. For much of his life, Henry Roth also searched for Americanness in the

⁹⁵ During his travels in Spain, Henry Roth makes an explicit connection between his “passing” as a Jew in Spain, and African American “passing” for white

I seem to be able to blend completely with the mass. No one gives me a second look—on the contrary, people as directions as if I were a native, ask the time, or being casual conversations. (It’s not to be wondered at, now that I think of it: there’s a good deal of me mixed up with them. But it is true that by appearance alone I could easily ‘pass’ as a light skinned Negro might pass in the US) (Roth papers box 8, folder 15).
Both kinds of passing are possible because there’s a great deal of “me” mixed up in “them.”

rural landscape. After the publication of *Call It Sleep* (1934), he eventually settled in Maine where, among other things, he raised and slaughtered ducks. And like Frank, Roth, uncertain as to where Jews fit in the American racial landscape, flirted with racial triangulation, often casting African and indigenous Americans as absolute others to white (native born) Americans. For Roth language was key to this racial negotiation.

Roth emigrated from Galicia around 1908 as a young child, but he often wrote that his personal diaspora began with his family's relocation from the Jewish Lower East Side to Harlem in 1914. He called the move "a disaster" (*Landscape* 66) that "warped" his growing up (*Landscape* 256) by pulling him "away from the roots" (*Landscape* 66). He believed that the move inaugurated a life of timidity and depression, incest and alienation, and indirectly caused one of the most famous writer's blocks in literary history; between the publication of the now-canonical *Call It Sleep* (1934), and a quartet of autobiographical novels collectively entitled, *Mercy of a Rude Stream* (1994), Roth published next to nothing.⁹⁶ The *Mercy* novels make an imaginative return to Harlem, which Roth realizes, has been the source of his creative inspiration all along.

The first volume, *A Star Shines Over Mt. Morris Park* (1994), dramatizes the process by which Roth's alter ego, Ira Stigman, destabilized and "disenchanted" by arrival of greenhorn relatives, becomes a writer. Ira's genius cannot be untangled from his torment and dislocation. For Ira, the arrival of the relatives is a

⁹⁶ See Kellman, "Writer's Block" for a longer discussion.

disappointment. He had hoped that, like his Americanized postman uncle, Louie, the new arrivals would slip him quarters. However, the newcomers speak an “impenetrable Yiddish.” They “were here to learn about America themselves, to learn American ways, to earn their living in America, not to treasure him” (20). Angry and embarrassed by the relatives’ “foreignness” in the “goyish” world, “a feeling of isolation, of such intense disenchantment pervaded Ira, that to escape from his disconsolateness” (19). Ira escapes his discomfort by heading out into the park

He was thirsty . . . his thirst seemed bound up with vague new longing spawned by disenchantment . . . fancy suddenly imbued him. Fancy suddenly buoyed him up, lifted him high above despond, scattered disgruntlement: He was a Scout, lone explorer in trackless America, self-sufficient, resourceful and intrepid, roving through the visionary land, and arrived at this rivulet in the primeval forest. For a moment the countervailing through crossed his mind that the rill at his feet might have been peed in; though it looked clear, maybe it wasn't safe to drink. But he had to be resolute—he was a bold, buckskin clad Scout, the wide-ranging explorer, slipping silent as a shadow into the trackless wild: he had pledged himself to a new resolve, to a new ‘pledge allegiance,’ a new covenant he couldn't name, an American covenant; he had to drink to confirm it (22)

Roth often blamed his family's move from the Jewish Lower East Side to an ethnically mixed Harlem neighborhood for many of his problems, including poor grades, a loss of self-confidence, alienation from his Jewishness, even weight gain.

When the relatives arrive, Ira is humiliated, not by the newcomers themselves, but by the “garish” *difference* between them and the surrounding neighbors. When “the contrast became too much to bear” (19), Ira solves his “disenchantment” by re-enchanting himself. On one level, Ira is a fictional version of the young Roth, a Jewish boy who escapes into fantasy to compensate for the gap between his family and himself and himself and America. However, this scene can also be read as the moment of emergence of a writer. Fantasy “lifts him high,” and from this omniscient position, the writing Jew transforms the wandering boy into a buckskin clad scout. Just as the “heroes” of the American frontier cloak themselves in the skins of the men they violently displace, Ira empties the park of its troubling human content by cloaking himself in fantasy. Jolted by the arrival of his relatives into a realization of just how distant he is from America, Ira attempts to inoculate himself from foreignness by drinking America into his body. However, the mature writer, from a distance of years, notes that the rude stream from which the young Ira has pledged to slake his thirst for Americanness may be contaminated. The scout drinks; the budding author pledges himself to a covenant he cannot name. He cannot name the covenant, in part because as an immigrant child, he does not have detailed understanding of American mythology, in part because the covenant isn’t meant for him. He is no more a buckskin scout than his greenhorn relatives are jolly postmen. This scene not only sets the terms for Roth’s career-long attempt to purge himself of the contaminated promise, but also echoes with a propensity, shared by Waldo Frank, to stake a claim

on elusive Americanness through both contrast and comparison with African and indigenous others.

In *A Diving Rock on the Hudson* (1995), the second volume of *Mercy*, Ira continues to explore his in-between status as an American through the twin lenses of race and language. He snags a job selling cold soda at the Polo Grounds, home to the New York Giants. As Ira seems to note, the ballpark, a space of aggressive Americanness, has been built on top of a landscape purged of otherness. However, others survive on the fringes. For example, on his first day, “Ira, self-conscious at first in his white raiment,” follows his friend to a restaurant where a large mural depicts *Custer’s Last Stand* in which “U.S. Army regulars vainly held off hordes of torso-naked, buckskin-fringed Indian braves” (104-105). The white raiment is, of course, his uniform, but on some level, Ira is aware that he wears white raiment as a result of the same process that reduces “torso-naked buckskin-fringed Indian braves” have to paintings on the wall. Painted white, perhaps Ira can become American. After dinner, on his way in to the stadium, he further notices that a number of tenements have been razed to make way for the stadium parking lot. In the one remaining building, “sat Negro men, women and children quietly watching the activities below” (105). Self-conscious in white, Ira is bombarded by evidence of the violent purging that has made way for the American scene.

That very day, overwhelmed by the demands of his job—he is a sensitive dreamer forced by poverty to literally perform, by shouting and clowning, capitalism—he shirks his hated “hustlin’” duties, and strikes up a conversation with

Pearl, a young African American woman.⁹⁷ It doesn't take long for him to ask how much she charges. He muses to himself, "he'd never laid a full-grown woman with big tits" and figures that sex for money—and sex across racial lines— might be his chance to escape an incestuous relationship with his sister.⁹⁸ As I will discuss below, across his work, Roth explicitly connects the enclosed Jewish world to incest. He hopes to transform himself into a "normal" American by having "normal" sex for money with a young African American woman.

Later, at home, Ira contemplates his options

Maybe if he did, he'd, maybe if he did, he'd—so what was the difference? That nobody else did it? Did what he did; that it was bad, double bad, triple, quadruple bad? Horrible bad. Unspeakable-babble bad. Abomination bad. He was fated to do it. [. . .] Now this comely, café-au-lay-he-oh, lay he-e oh waited on 137th Street. A light, hardly almond. Compare that to . . . his pig-men-tation. Yeah. (130)

Ira's attraction to difference—sexual, racial and linguistic—promises a way out of the "unspeakable-babble bad" of incest. The entwining of his uneasy meditation on skin color with his anxiety over transgressive sex and uncertain masculinity, reveals this scene to be about the intertwining of language with Ira's desire to be American. His

⁹⁷Roth was uncomfortable with what he called "the business diaspora." He was critical of what he saw as a Jewish immigrant obsession with money and "hustle." A longtime member of the Communist Party, in some of his writing, he critiqued capitalism as a system, but in other places, he blamed Jews for being overly "acquisitive."

⁹⁸ As the second volume of *Mercy* reveals, Ira is involved in sexual relationships with both his sister and younger cousin.

attempt to lay a “café-au-lay-he-oh,” when read in the context of the 1920s, is similar to Frank’s travels in the South, as it triangulates white, black and Jewish, in an attempt to make the narrator American.⁹⁹ However, Pearl’s hardly almond pigmentation, so much like Ira’s own, reminds Ira that he will always be Other to America. Indeed, he fails both as a John and a soda vendor. When he arrives at Pearl’s address, he finds that she was merely the bait, switched by her pimp for the “scrawny and homely and black-coffee brown” Theodora who comes to the door. Ira pays two and half dollars for a “businesslike screw.”¹⁰⁰ He is also a “flaccid” soda vendor. The ballpark experience is a bust. His incest with his sister continues, and he finds himself out of a job.

It is not surprising that Ira contemplates racial and sexual transgression through a deconstruction of language. In the final volume, of *Mercy, Requiem For Harlem* (1998), Ira leaves his mother’s Harlem apartment for the Lower East Side and Edith Wells, the alter ego for Ida Lou Walton who famously supported Henry Roth—intellectually and financially—while he wrote *Call It Sleep*.¹⁰¹ A lifeline to the world outside of his family, Roth credits Walton as key to his emergence as a writer just as Roth’s alter-ego Ira credits Edith Wells with introducing him to the modernist (and secular) texts, which taught him that

⁹⁹ See Sander Gilman, and Karen Brodtkin for discussions of Jewish negotiations of whiteness.

¹⁰⁰ Ira’s repulsion and attraction for the Theodora’s darkness—and his exaggerated depiction of her dialect (“you lookin’ fo’ somebody that anit’ heah . . . you got it, honey. The nearer the bone, the sweeter the meat” (134-135)—bring to mind Frank’s repulsion and excitement traveling through the South.

¹⁰¹ Ida Lou Walton, a PhD in Anthropology and English, was Roth’s mentor and lover. The Edith character plays a central role in the *Mercy* volumes.

it was language, language, that could magically transmogrify the baseness of his days and ways into precious literature—into the highly touted Ulysses itself . . . it was language that elevated meanness to the heights of art. Like the irritating particle that bred the nacre of the pearl . . . language . . . interceded between the wound and the dream” (*Bondage* 75 & 77).

As a young boy in the park, and a young man in the ball park, Ira turns away from the “baseness of his days,” and takes refuge in a fantasy made of his own words. Edith’s gift of Joyce teaches Ira, who will go on to write a modernist masterpiece of his own, that words on the page can work an “alchemical transformation . . . convertible from base to precious, from pig iron to gold ingot” (75). Reading Joyce, not only does he learn that his own low experiences can be written about, he also learns that this transformation might be recognized as *high* literature.¹⁰² Ira’s recounting of his

¹⁰² As an old man, Ira renounces modernism. The Rothian narrator remarks that reading Eliot Ira became averse to Jews and repelled by Jews. Eliot’s clever aspersions and disdainful caricatures seemed no more than just. Deft and diverting and oh so apt, their contemptuous attributions didn’t apply to him, for the simple reason that Ira appreciated them. Ira shared his repugnance, appreciated his wit, applauded his finesse. That excluded him from Eliot’s gibes, as it did all other Jews who possessed taste fine enough to relish the supreme adroitness of his calumnies. Or to whom his ridicule no longer pertained . . . sophisticated Jews, the assimilated, the deracinated: Jews like himself” (*Bondage* 138-9).

He also explains that he has turned away from Joyce, because of “the need to bring an end the self-imposed exile within himself . . . identifying and reuniting with his people, Israel.” He denounces Ulysses as void of cultural texture, accusing Joyce of using the “Jew” as an empty signifier:

On every page: commencing with the scarce nominal Jew that the great Guru foisted on the reader, a Jew without memory, without wry anxiety, exilic insecurity, not merely oblivious of his heritage, but virtually devoid! Of the Kishinev pogrom the year before, nothing, of Dreyfus, nothing . . . No recall of Friday candles, no recall of *matzahs*. Jeez, what a Jew, even one converted while still a juvenile—no *cheder*, no *davening*, no Yom Kippur, no Purim or *hamantashen*, no *brukhe*, no Hebrew, no Yiddish, or naught but a negligible trace. And despite the lack, daring to depict the Jew’s ‘stream of consciousness,’ the inner flow of a Jew’s psyche, an Irish quasi-Marano of the year

exposure to Joyce goes on for rapturous pages. This new kind of literature (smuggled by Edith from Europe) transforms the misery of his childhood into universal gold.

Edith Wells is the fictional stand-in for Ida Lou Walton, a PhD in anthropology and English, who grew up in New Mexico, wrote her dissertation on Navajo poetry, and published two books of her “own” poetry loosely based on her translations of Navajo works. Walton influenced Roth’s conception of indigenous Americans as a source of Americanness.¹⁰³ The figure of the Indian recurs in *Call It Sleep*, *Mercy of a Rude Stream*, and, most notably in a short story, the “Dun Dakotas” in which an Indian chief allows the main character to “pass” through the American landscape, symbolizing the easing of Roth’s writer’s block.¹⁰⁴

1904 . . . had Joyce even looked at Sephardism, Ladino, the Inquisition—let alone for all his highly touted erudition, Yiddish, Hebrew, or Chaldee” (*Diving Rock* 116) The passages that recount Ira’s discovery of Joyce run on and on in paroxysms of joy. These passages of denunciation run on and on in paroxysms of sarcasm, hatred, betrayal. This is only a small sampling of Roth’s performance of his detailed knowledge of the details of Jewish history and culture. Here, performing anti-Joyce, whose sin is to transform the Jew into a signifier, Roth is also the anti-Frank (and anti-Gerchunoff for that matter). He denounces Joyce for ignoring the details of his own Jewish present as well as his ignorance—or at least elision—of Jewish history, culture, and crucially language.

¹⁰³ Ira’s description of Edith’s thesis subtly links native Americans to Jews, and also functions as a commentary on a translation process that is “faithful” through “re-creation.” Her thesis was “an analysis of the rhythms and structure of Navajo songs and religious changes, their transliterations into Roman characters, with scrupulous indication of accent and syllabic pattern, and finally their rendering into English verse, not verbatim but by re-creation into English, faithfully equivalent to the original Navajo” (354)

¹⁰⁴ See Rachel Rubenstein, especially pages 119-121 where she discusses a passage in “The Dun Dakotas,” in which the narrator, *a scout*, has lost to “the Chief” in poker, and waits, to be aloud to pass. Rubenstein writes

the belated passage granted by the Indian chief signifies the release of Roth the writer from his long silence, decades spent, so to speak, wandering in the American wilderness, or, given his mention of a “Mr. Eliot,” a modernist wasteland.” She continues, “the Indian, who I argue, acts as a link between the modernist, bohemian, politically radical, self-consciously American milieu of Eda Lou Walton . . . and the messianic underpinnings of Roth’s later preoccupation with Spain, Marrano Jews, and Zionism” (120).

In the *Mercy* novels, Edith Wells, native-born with ties to both indigenous Americans and the literary culture of Europe and America, offers Ira escape from his home culture. Visiting her apartment for the first time, he marvels over the “sheer white walls . . . so simple, plain” decorated with Navajo rugs with “primitive” designs (*Diving Rock* 359). Ira also admires the Navajo ring Edith has given to Larry (Ira’s friend and Edith’s lover before Ira). The ring “spoke of open spaces, amplitude . . . it called for rare perceptions . . . that prized unique artisanship . . . you had to change, you had to change and try to come close to her—her values: to learn to recognize artistry cultivated in the most unlikely places” (*Diving Rock* 365). In *Diving Rock*, indigenous people appeared as “torso-naked buckskin-fringed Indian braves,” painted on a restaurant wall. Here, Edith’s cultured taste translates indigeneity into modernist aesthetic, and Ira into a modernist writer.¹⁰⁵

Just as Anzia Yeziarska imagines that her characters will become American through romantic love, Ira imagines that Edith’s love will Americanize him. Not only does she offer the universal literature and American high modernist aesthetics, but she also promises normal (exogenous) sex. Ira fantasizes that sex (and love) with

¹⁰⁵ In chapter one, Rachel Rubenstein’s work on native American in the Jewish imagination helped me think through Anzia Yeziarska’s interest in US indigenous peoples. Rubenstein’s work also helps me understand Roth’s continuing interest in Indigenous Americans. She writes, “In the work of many moderns, such as Mary Austin, Georgia O’Keeffe, Jean Toomer, and William Faulkner, Indians, the Southwest, and the rural South loomed large and served not as foils for modern and experience and expression but as vehicles for modern experience and expression. Indians, that is to say, were, in the words of writer, ethnographer, and activist Oliver La Farge, *both* “primitive” and “modern.” In the early days of his relationship with Edith, she serves as Ira’s conduit to the world of primitive modernism, even as she distances him from his own primitive incestuous behavior. I will further argue that for both Roth and Frank, indigenous Americans and Latin Americans occupy a similar imaginative space.

diminutive and lady-like Edith—whose body is as refined as her taste in jewelry—will be a bridge to the universal. By contrast, his descriptions of Stella, the cousin he’s “screwing,” ooze with hatred and disgust. She is a “dumb-bunny,” “a tub,” “a cow.” Edith, “dainty and knowing and womanly” is “a world apart” (*Requiem* 226). When Edith first begins to date Ira’s friend Larry, Ira contrasts the purity and romance of their relationship with his own “pratting his fat foolish cousin in the cellar” (*Diving Rock* 313). For Roth, incest and the closeness of his Jewish home culture are entwined. Edith, associated with modernism, American indigeneity, and exogenous sex, offers the hope of escape.

However, the conversion fails. *An American Type*, Roth’s final (posthumously edited) novel, narrates Ira’s attempt to break away from Edith, and the stifling financial and emotional support that he complains prevents him from becoming a fully realized man. His descriptions of Edith have hardened into disgust. Edith now “flinty” and controlling rifles through his papers behind his back and insults his wife-to-be, M, a “middle-class Midwesterner.” Edith’s “mothering” has become repressive, “his dependence on her was ruinous . . . he could feel himself disintegrating” (40). By this time, Ira has joined the Communist party and, wanting “to break away from an extension of the immigrant East Side Jewish child” (21), is at work on a proletarian novel based on the life of a “tough, second-generation German-American who had been raised on the streets of Cincinnati and relied on his fists and physical stamina to cope with life” (*Landscape* 22). Ironically, Roth would go on to burn his unfinished proletarian novel.

Over the course of their careers, both Frank and Roth inhabit displacement. As I have been arguing, both authors initially attempt to locate themselves in the American cultural landscape through racial triangulation. White, Jew and Other (a position most often occupied by either indigenous or African American peoples) makes for an unstable and ultimately unsatisfying triangle. “Jew” continuously shifts in the work of Frank and Roth, failing to resolve into white or Other. Frustrated by this failure, both authors will look to Spanish-speaking America for an alternate model for how to be American and Jewish.

II. Why Spanish-Speaking America?

Historian Jonathan Brown argues that “Spain” was created in the American mind by a Protestant intellectual elite centered in Boston and New York. Writing in the romantic racialist tradition of Johann Gottfried von Herder, US historians and writers such as William H. Prescott (1796-1859), George Ticknor (1791-1871), Washington Irving (1783-1859) and Henry Wadsworth Longfellow (1807-1882) posited that Spain, frozen in time, served as a natural counterpart to the relentless industrial progress of the United States and its striving people (ix). Literary works by authors such as Washington Irving, Alexander Slidell Mackenzie (1803-1849) Caroline Cushing (1802-1832) John Hay (1838-1905), Kate Field (1838-1896) and James Russell Lowell (1819-1891), their work saturated with orientalism, depicted Spain as a romantic backwater (Kagan 8). However, as James D. Fernández argues about Longfellow’s interest in Spanish “as an American language,” “US interest in

Spain is and always has been largely mediated by U.S. interest in Latin America.” Fernández claims that early US attention to Latin America, driven by commercial opportunities, led to an interest on the part of US elites in Spanish literature and culture (12). US Hispanists took up Spain, in part, as a means of imagining a contrasting and sometimes complementary relationship with their very close neighbors.¹⁰⁶

Just as nineteenth-century elites created a “Spain” that suited their needs, the story of Spanish Jews has been put to various rhetorical uses inside and outside of Spain by Jews and non-Jews. In Spain, as intellectuals debated the causes of the nation’s modern “decadence” and decline, the figure of the ‘Jew” began to circulate in discourse on everything from theology, to philosophy, politics, art, and literature. For conservatives, the expulsion of Jews and Moors marked the start of Spain’s greatness; the decline of the Spanish nation in the modern era was the result of surviving *converso* elements. For liberals, the expulsion was the historical mistake, and the *convivencia* of the Middle Ages marked Spain’s highest achievement.¹⁰⁷ (Waldo Frank was aware of these controversies and comments on them in his memoir). These contradictory readings of *convivencia* and *inquisición*, multiplicity and cohesion, would be taken up across Europe and the Americas as a means of working through the challenges and opportunities posed by the multiethnic,

¹⁰⁶ See Nadia Altschul, *Nadia* for a discussion of the longer history of Europe’s invention of Spain as retrograde through its connection to the both Muslim world and Latin America.

¹⁰⁷ See Daniel Fleser, Tabea Linhard & Adrián Pérez Melagosa. Also Gonzalo Álvarez Chillida, and Yael Halevi-Wise.

multilingual, modern nation.¹⁰⁸ Yael Halevi-Wise points out that writers as far flung as Germany, England, Latin America and India found the history of the Spain's expulsion of Jews and Moors to be a "useful metaphor, remarkably well suited to reimagining the image and political status of minorities in competing national agendas" (1).

While the history of Jews in Spain became a metaphor for the limits and possibilities for the modern, multicultural nation, for the Ashkenazi Jews of the *Haskala*, Sephardic Jews provided a model for modern secular identity. As Todd Endelman argues, German Jews

constructed an image of Sephardi Judaism that stressed its cultural openness, philosophical rationalism, and aesthetic sensibilities in order to criticize what they disliked in their own traditions, i.e. its backwardness, insularity, aversion to secular studies ...in their battle against racial myths about Jewish deformities, Jewish anthropologists drew on the Sephardi mystique to create a counter myth of their own- that of the well-bred, aesthetically attractive, physically graceful Sephardi, a model of racial nobility and virtue (4).

Ironically, these German Jews created a fantasy of Jewish Spain in order to claim "Western values" for Jews. Not only was western European Jewish literature interested in the Jews of Spain, but the first two subfields of what was to become

¹⁰⁸ It is important to note, as Erin Graff-Zivin does with regards to Latin America, the "Jews" that are being so passionately debated, are signifiers even before they become metaphors. At the time of the Spanish 19th century Spanish debates, there were almost no Jews in Spain.

modern Jewish studies—medieval Jewish philosophy and poetry—were based on the study of Spanish-Jewish texts (49).¹⁰⁹

Waldo Frank and Henry Roth each embrace the Spain—and later Spanish-speaking America—that suits their needs. Frank, an enthusiastic student of German romanticism takes the mystical racist myth of a backward Spain frozen in time. In Frank’s mind, “Spanish” and “Jewish” complement and reinforce one another; Jews, like Spaniards, are “wholer” than industrialized peoples. By contrast, although orientalism underlies Roth description of Catholic Spain, his world view is secular, rather than mystical. Roth’s Spanish Jew is well-suited for multicultural modernity. However, both the romantic Frank and secularist Roth shared an impulse to link Sephardic peoples to indigenous Americans.

Rachel Rubenstein has shown how U.S., Jewish writers embraced modernist literary strategies that claimed an *affinity* with subaltern peoples—especially native Americans—as way of positing an authentic American aesthetic that would stand against cosmopolitan European modernism. However, of course, elite modernists also maintained the *difference* between rational, progressive artists and “primitive” peoples. Some Jewish writers posited a special affinity between Jews and these other “tribal” peoples. Exploiting the malleability of the Jewish signifier, they also sought to align themselves with the progress of elite Westerners. None other than Saul Bellow, whose *Adventures of Augie March* includes a long soul-revealing sojourn in

¹⁰⁹ This preference survives in the Language Council of Israel’s choice of the traditional Sephardic accent for the revived Hebrew language (even though the majority of Jews immigrated to Israel from Yiddish speaking eastern Europe). See also Ismar Schorsch.

Mexico, explained to Philip Roth, “I simply had to go to Mexico . . . I was, as kids were to say later, making a statement. I had spent most of my life in weary, stale, flat, and unprofitable Chicago and I needed barbarism, color, glamour, and risk” (Leader 224). Bellow’s attraction to the “barbarism, color, glamour, and risk” of Mexico, in contrast to the staleness of his Chicago life, can certainly be read as a Jewish author’s attempt to take up an elite subject position in which the self is orderly and familiar, while the exotic Other offers excitement and inspiration. However, mid-twentieth-century Jewish writers were not entirely free of the link between Jews and primitivism. As Rubinstein points out, Jewish modernists walked a tightrope between staking a claim on primitive authenticity by claiming an affinity between “tribal” peoples, and allying themselves with white, “rational” culture. The Jewish signifier made it possible for Jews to establish a deep history on the continent by aligning themselves with Europeans *and* natives. Spanish-speaking America, the place where Jewish Europe meets Jewish-like indigeneity, was all the more promising as place where it might be possible to be both Jewish and American. By claiming a natural affinity with both conquerors and conquered, perhaps Jewish writers could root at-homeness in the past, and thus side-step struggle in the present.

a. Straight Toward a New “Whole” That Could Be Whole: Waldo Frank, Spain and Spanish-Speaking America

Like other Hispanists, Waldo Frank found Latin America by way of Spain. In his memoirs, begun in 1962 and published after his death, he explains that he was

never “in love with the twentieth century,” but on a trip in 1921, he falls in love with Spain (128). He admits that the country may have its problems (civil wars, political incompetence, inquisitorial oppression). However, because it, “remained outside the Western culture of capitalism, political democracy, mechanolatry, and mechanistic science,” (128) Spain touches something in him that corresponds to a lack in “Western culture.” “Love registers a need,” he explains, “and the need is in the lover. Spain in my first encounter, had made manifest an incompleteness in myself” (128). He discovers the “town folk of Spain” who “had a vigor, a vibrant erect vigor, like a tumescence. These men were *man*, these ample-bodied women were *woman*” (emphasis original 128).

For Frank heterosexual coupling is metonymy for cultural amalgamation in which opposite elements will make a whole. He argues that if America is to avoid becoming merely the “grave of Europe” (134), she must embrace Spain. However, as attracted as he is to binaries (when he travels to Latin America, he comes away with a very negative impression of mestizo culture), his depiction of the union of Spain and America is not actually one of opposites. In Frank’s intellectual schema, primitive peoples occupy the pure opposite pole from the modern American man. However, Indians are not suitable mates. Inaccessible in their inscrutability, they are too radically different to be useful.¹¹⁰ In Spain, Frank finds an Other that is similar

¹¹⁰ . In *America Hispana* (1930), Frank argues that the Inca, like all Indians . . . was not a person at all: he was part of his ayllu . . . Common notions of state, soul, monarch, property, marriage, morals, since they are derived from the European concept [of the person], must not be applied to analogous Indian forms . . . the ayllu fuses in submission to a realm

enough to be consumable, and also different enough to answer his needs. In his memoir, he explains

All over Europe, science and the stirring of the peoples were establishing a new economy, a new world. Spain fought and then ignored these innovations. The Spaniard continued to live in a synthesis . . . Other races, other cultures knew the instinctual integration of man within soil and cosmos: Africa, Asia, Indo-America were full of such simple forms of knowledge. The distinction of the Spaniard was that he had *not* gone back to primal unity, such, for instance, as had flourished in the isles of the South Seas or in the Andes. He was the heir of Europe's intellect, ethic and aesthetic . . . The Spaniard lacked technique and method to articulate his whole nature in terms of contemporary life; but at least he had not gone off at sterile and dangerous tangents. His own hard-headedness had temporarily saved him during the centuries of rationalism and mechanism . . . The "backwardness" of the Spaniard among his European brethren

whose substance is its own. This submission becomes its entire life; and like a woman's submission to her man, it is rhythmic, joyous, fertile" (42).¹¹⁰

Here, Frank is sensitive to the untranslatability of pre conquest cultures—he recognizes that "state," "property," even "soul" and "person" are European word-concepts—even as he appoints himself, the elite, all-knowing interpreter who slots native reality into an intellectual schema. Frank makes the Inca make sense according to his own system. He files his observations of Incan life into a preconceived notion that "primitive" people submit—to nature, to the group, to history. Never far from Frank's mind is the heterosexual coupling: unlike the active Western man, the Incan submits to the ayllu as a woman submits to her man. However, in describing the Inca as already "whole," he forecloses the possibility of fusion. The Inca, in harmony, don't need a modern "opposite."

paradoxically prepared him to advance straight toward a new “Whole” that could be whole (133-134).

According to Frank, Europe took a wrong turn with the Enlightenment. While primitive peoples have always been integrated, internally self-sufficient—and unknowable—the Spaniard, heir to Europe’s intellect, ethnic and aesthetic, *and* frozen in an earlier, better, more holistic time, is the perfect candidate to merge with the West and create a new wholeness. And although Frank ironizes Spain’s “backwardness” by putting it in quotes, like many of his contemporaries, he also fetishizes it.

Frank presents himself as a Westerner in search of a Spain that will heal his culture’s mechanism and rationalism. However, his descriptions of Spain—as a both different and same—remind us that Frank is a Jew who, by the end of his career, will be hailing Jews, in very similar terms, as both of and apart from American culture. Further, Frank’s vision of the Spaniard as prepared to “advance straight toward a new “whole” because by standing apart from the “new economy,” he is actually better prepared for the “new” future, sounds very similar to his later exultation of Jews as best prepared for American life because they are rooted in ancient values.

Perhaps more important to his overall project, Frank understands Spain to be fundamentally Jewish. In *The Jew in Our Day* (1944), he argues that Fernando de Rojas, the “true progenitor of Cervantes” (99), was the both author of *La Celestina*—the precursor to *Don Quixote*—and also a converted Jew. He claims that de Roja’s story

captured Spain and was absorbed into the Spanish consciousness . . . Latin as a literary tongue, was doomed. *La Celestina* ushered in the period of classic Castilian prose. It was a founder of the picaresque; it was the first great Spanish novel; it was the fountain-head in language, in style in point of view—whence sprang the affluent currents of the creative realism of Spain’s Golden Age (103). Frank’s celebration of the Spanish “Golden Age,” sounds very much like Alberto Gerchunoff’s certainty not only that Spanish literary culture stemmed from Jewish creativity also that Jewish genius gave rise to classic *Castilian* prose.¹¹¹ Spain may have attempted to expel its Jews, but it could not purge the Spanish language of Jewish influence. Gerchunoff believed that Sephardic Jews retained their “Spanish” identity by carrying the Castilian language with them into diaspora. At the same time, the New World was made Jewish by the Jewish linguistic elements folded into the Spanish language during the Golden Age. Thus, when Latin Americans celebrate Spanish tradition, they actually celebrate Jewish tradition. Jews are Spanish and Spanish is Jewish.

Enthralled by the mystical possibilities offered by Spanish (Jewish) culture, Frank turned to his Spanish-American neighbors. In *American Hispana* (1930), he argues for the inevitable union of North and South America, writing that although “it was Bolívar who first envisaged the two young bodies as a single integration; the

¹¹¹ This may be the result of direct communication between the two. While Samuel Glusberg was Frank’s champion in Argentina, Frank and Gerchunoff had certainly met (after Gerchunoff’s death, his wife wrote Frank a letter asking him to translate Gerchunoff’s work into English. Frank was too busy).

Atlantic World” (18), the world was forced to wait for North American technical know-how so that North and South America could finally complete their destiny: “with the piercing of Panamá, with the waning of the Pacific, the Americas at last may be one body” (18). Frank explains that this merging is destiny because the Americas are the remnants of a deep-time world system:

The vague science of geology and the exact art of myth inform us that there were two continents that have died and the sea has buried. One was called Atlantis, Lemuria the other. Atlantis was a mighty island poised westward from Africa and Europe. When the ocean took it, it left fragments that still breathe: these are the Canaries, Madeira, Cape Verde, the Bahamas and Antilles. The farthest east of Atlantis was near Spain, the farthest west may have been Yucatan . . . the Druids of Britain, the Cro-Magnons of Iberia and Gaul, the Egyptians who taught Crete and Hellas, the Maya and Toltec of Mexico were all, by virtue of this legend, heirs of Atlantis . . . Panamá is the juncture of two other worlds—the two Americas—whose fate lies in a future hardly less dim than Atlantis and Lemuria in the past . . . The mythic contents sank beneath the waters . . . but an old world-awareness merely slumbered . . . when Italy and Spain begot Columbus, that old world-awareness woke . . . the inspired madman knew better than the facts. Cuba, his inner eye informed him, must be Japan . . . he was right. Panamá was indeed the place of passage which he sought; the Indians were indeed the children of the East. Mystics are likely to be confused by Time.

Columbus saw too far behind, too far ahead . . . He was off reckoning on time—a few centuries too soon, a few eons too late—the way of mystics who with their tragic lives bind past and future (3-5).

The “exact art of myth” allows Frank to use his mystical powers to project backwards and forwards in time. He “sees” the Americas, Africa and Europe as having once been a continuous content. But Atlantis was not merely a slab of land that joined Spain to the Yucatan, it was a mythical place-time to which global peoples as diverse as the Druids, Egyptians and Maya were (are) heir. This world-continent produced a world-view (a view of the world as linked system) that merely slumbered until the birth of Columbus. Columbus, the mad, mystical prophet who saw Cuba as Japan, and saw native Americans as children of the East, knew a deeper truth. Cuba is Japan because Cuba was Japan, and perhaps will one day be Japan again. Accordingly, like Columbus, the Frank-prophet sees into the dim future of the unified Americas. Frank unapologetically collapses historical specificity in his pursuit of mythical truths. Because these deep truths trump vague scientific or historical claims, he can bend world history to his mystical vision without worrying about the details. At explicit stake here is the unified future of the Americas, however, the implicit concern is the place of the Jews within them.

By 1944, Frank had identified Jews the key to uniting the rational North and the spiritual South. In an essay entitled “Israel in the Western Hemisphere”—included in the collection, *The Jew in Our Day*—he writes, “understand what the Jews are, understand what America Hispana is, understand the basic need of the world, and

Israel's function in Ibero-America will become clear as a geometrically proven proposition" (116). For Frank, Jews + Ibero-America = the answer not only to America, but to the *world's* needs. How is this possible? According to Frank, Jews founded Western culture. They invented the "occidental" notion of the "value and dignity of the person" even as they recognized the "integral relation of this personal will . . . with the social will" (118). Jews are also, despite common misconception, culturally agrarian.¹¹² Thus, the "Western spirit" of the Jew and his "at-homeness in the agricultural world" make him perfect for Latin America's "preponderantly non-industrial economy" (121). Indeed,

The very name of Ibero-America suggests the fitness of Israel within it. For Iberia is Spain and Portugal; Iberia is the European part of Ibero-America (which is far more Indian and African than it is Latin). And it is not necessary here to insist on the great part played by the Jews in the formation of Iberian cultures. It is true that most of the Jews today who have come to live in Mexico, Brazil, Peru, Bolivia, Chile and Argentina, are not of Spanish or Portuguese descent. But they are Jews; they partake of the same ethos as the Iberian Jews who saturated the Hispanic world with Semitic values . . . What we call Latin America is really Ibero-Indo-Afro-America . . . here, inevitably, there must come to be a symphonic culture—or none at all. . . the Jews, if latecomers, are timely. Their

¹¹² This was a common argument at the time. See discussion of Gerchunoff and the pastoral, chapter one.

convergence upon Hispano-American life appears to be destiny (126-127).¹¹³

His argument is complicated. Because Jews had an actual physical (literary and cultural) presence in Golden Age Spain, they are relevant to Latin American culture. And while Latin American Jews immigrated from eastern Europe, their “Semitic values”—not their historical presence in Spain—make them a good fit for Latin America. Further, the Latin America that they encounter is not just “Latin,” but it is also “Ibero-Indo-Afro.” Earlier in the essay, he explicitly identifies Jews as “occidental.” However, by claiming Jews as part of the “complex ethnic and cultural symphony” (127) of Latin America, he aligns Jews with the subaltern. Frank exploits the complexity of the Jewish signifier to make Jews all things at once: they are the most advanced of peoples because they invented Western culture, but in retaining their spiritual wholeness, in remaining frozen in time, they also align with primitive needs and values of the African and Indian. Jews are Latin America’s “destiny”—and Latin America is the U.S.’s destiny—because they are a bridge between rational and emotional, ancient and modern, North and South. Jews are perfectly positioned to

¹¹³ It is hard not to hear echoes of Gerchunoff in Frank’s willingness to flatten the complexity of Jewish culture across time and space: the Jews currently residing in Latin America may not be sephardic, but they share an “ethos” with the Jews of Golden Age Spain. Indeed, Frank was undoubtedly familiar with Gerchunoff’s work as he was very much involved in the Argentine Jewish community. Not only did Gerchunoff publish flattering reviews of Frank’s work in *La Nación*, Frank praised Gerchunoff in this very same essay: “one of the most deeply respected of all Argentine journalists, a man with a continental reputation, is Alberto Gerchunoff, an editor of *La Nación*.” Samuel Glusberg (Enrique Espinoza), a prominent Argentine Jewish publisher, and Frank’s main contact in the Argentine Jewish community most likely introduced Frank and Gerchunoff (Frank is credited with encouraging Glusberg and Victoria Ocampo to found *Sur*). After Gerchunoff’s death, his widow begged Frank to translate her husband’s work into English. He refused.

midwife the future American continent, “provided of course the Jew himself has remained intact!” (122).

Frank is firm in his insistence that the Jew must be authentic. Only a Jew “bearded and skullcapped, speaking an outlandish tongue or a crude guttural English, following his antiquated dietary laws and refusing to work or ride on his Saturday Sabbath” (37) can save America. The Jew cannot—like Frank himself—be assimilated, because it is his bearded face, covered head and outlandish tongue that indicate his steadfast loyalty to Jewish “difference as a peculiar people” (37) who retain a connection to their ancient religion. The authentic Jew is a living time machine; he never abandoned the truths of the Jewish “pastoral prophets” who, for the first time in history, “expressed a number of ideas that are still unrealized—even as democracy is still unrealized” (31). Frank stresses the pastoral and universal nature of early Judaism in which

to worship God meant to practice mercy and justice with all mankind . . . the history of mankind must be the progressive realization of love—the Golden Rule . . . every man and woman, of whatever race or condition, being the child of God, possessed sovereign dignity, an individual responsibility, in the enactment of God’s plan for earthly justice. Thus was born, more than two thousand years before America was discovered, the American promise and the American purpose” (31-32).¹¹⁴

¹¹⁴ see chapter one for a discussion on the function of the pastoral in *Los gauchos judíos*, and the Jewish colonies in general as a means of combating anti-Semitic stereotypes of Jews as effete urban moneylenders.

The ancient Jew—the more authentically primitive the better— carries democracy’s future within him. As we have seen with Alberto Gerchnoff and Anzia Yeziarska, the European tradition of normalizing Jews by casting them as father to Christian religion and Western culture was recognizably translated in the Americas context. Gerchunoff saw Jews as the inventors of Hispanic culture; Yeziarska saw the Jew as the true American who retained within herself the puritan spirit, uncorrupted by assimilation. For Frank, the authentic Jew offers contemporary Americas both ancient democracy in its purest form and access to spiritual wholeness decimated by modern fragmentation.

Sadly, assimilation robbed Waldo Frank of his Jewish authenticity. Frank often expressed disappointment and a sense of loss at having been denied access to Jewish truths by his assimilated father. He rails against his father’s membership in the Society for Ethical Culture which he calls “a completely commercialized religion: a religion, in other words, which was no religion at all, since all the mystery of life, all the harmony of scene, all the immense of God were deleted from it” (*Our America* 87). “I am an ignorant Jew,” he admits (and complains) in *The Jew in Our Day*,

I was not brought up as a Jew, although my Jewish origin was not concealed from me. At twenty-one, I could read in five languages: Hebrew and Yiddish were not among them . . . For myself, I discovered the Jewish Word; or rather, in a profound crisis of my life, that Word came straight to me as an answer, palpable as the flesh of my body” (92).

For Frank, the original crisis is assimilation. His parents and grandparents, eager to be American, abandoned their Jewishness, and, in so doing, according to Frank, inadvertently denied their son access to the very spiritual wholeness that would enable him to survive *as an American*. At twenty-one, he was cosmopolitan. He spoke prestige languages, including French and German, but he was ignorant of the Jewish languages that would root him in the “Jewish Word.” Of course, it is ironic that Frank describes his experience of Jewish “conversion” or spiritual awakening in Christian language (the word made flesh), but we know that Gerchunoff, too, used similar Christian (“universal”) language. This language has something to do with Frank’s lifelong immersion in Christian culture, but is also a strategic choice that draws a line of continuity between Jewish and Christian religious traditions.

His role, then, is not to be raw spiritual material, but rather to become an interpreter or prophet, an artist whose special vision will bring about the unified Americas. In his memoir—written sometime between 1962 and his death—Frank describes his own Bolivarian moment:¹¹⁵

A little after seven, I became the high priest—and the body—of a religion: a new one or at least my own. Friday is bath night for me. I luxuriate in the hot soapy water. I lie stretched out in it, on my back (the tub longer than my stripling length), all immersed except my penis. It stands up, erect, the island apex of a continent which a pressure of hand and foot on the bottom

¹¹⁵ Here Frank creates his own synthesis of the discovery that is at once Waldean, Bolivarian and Whitmanian.

of the tub reveals above water. This is the Waldean continent with the male organ is its center” (6).

In this passage, Frank casts his young self as not only “high priest,” but also body, of a new religion. Although the religion is new, it is inaugurated on a Friday night, with a circumcised penis, rather than the Panama Canal at its apex and center. The body is at once Frank, the new religion, the Waldean continent (the boy himself named for the American great, Ralph Waldo Emerson), and the Americas. If the Americas are to be brought into being by a prophet, how fitting that the prophet be Jewish? Columbus himself, Frank argues, was, if not Jewish, funded and inspired by Jews.¹¹⁶ Just as Gerchunoff finds the Jewish spirit in Spanish culture (in the absence of any actual Jews) and claims that Ashkenazi Jews must simply “re-learn” the Spanish they have always known, Frank collapses historical realities into his mystical vision of the truths that lie beyond truth.

The young Frank, the prophet, who stretches his body across the continent, offering his flesh to heal the Americas is an invention of the older Frank, penning the memoir he will not live to finish. This is a Frank who sought spiritually whole, primitive cultures as a balm for his disappointment with modern industrial culture. His quest led him to Spain where he found a bridge between the primitive and the modern, a synthetic culture that conveniently both served as a metaphor for the

¹¹⁶ “It has been fairly well established that Columbus was descended from Catalan Jews. But whether this is true or no, it is certain that he could never have made his great journey without the maps, the navigation science and the money of Jews, and without the inspiration he derived from the Bible” (*Jew in Our Day* 33).

Jewish role in history (as simultaneously modern and primitive) and had a historical Jewish presence. He turned his gaze to Latin America, where both of these elements—the pure native and the synthetic Spaniard—could be made Jewish. Latin America allowed Frank to erase his family’s assimilation and his own sense of desolation. When he imagines that the Jewish Word comes straight to him, he is finally the artist-prophet, the Jewish Word made the flesh of his very own Jewish body that will bridge North and South and forge our America.

b. “It was like a blind force looking for an outlet”: Henry Roth finds Spain and Spanish-Speaking America

Henry Roth’s imaginative journey, from the US to Spain, to Latin America, to Israel and back, was, like Waldo Frank’s journey, about belonging. His biographer, Steven Kellman writes that in the 1960s, Roth, living in rural Maine in the throes of his profound writer’s block, “had become tantalized by a book that [his son] Hugh brought home for a school assignment—an abridgment of Henry Charles Lea’s *History of the Inquisition of the Middle Ages*” (236). Fascinated by an Other iteration of Jewishness—distant in time, space, and language—Roth began to plan a novel about a young, imperfectly converted marrano who escapes the Inquisition by joining the conquistadors in search for gold in Aztec Mexico. Kellman notes, “this material might enable Roth, a European immigrant ambivalent about his own Jewishness, to ponder questions of personal identity and destiny in his own life.” However, while Roth, like Frank, found the history of the Jews in Spain and Latin America to be an—

at least temporary—balm for his own sense of disconnection, unlike Frank, he was not a romantic. He was uninterested in the cultural glories of the Spanish Golden Age or the Jewish presence in the Spanish language. Rather, for Roth, the history of Jews in Spain and Mexico became a template for his own need to think through the psychological consequences of disjunctive identity and failed assimilation.

Roth, we know, believed that his own cultural dislocation—exiled from the Jewish milieu of his childhood, never fully accepted into the American mainstream—inaugurated a life of timidity and depression, incest and alienation, and caused one of the most famous writer’s blocks in literary history. In 1969, however, he claimed both that he had found a home, and that his writer’s block was beginning to break. He explained to *Partisan Review*:

this dead author may be going through a resurrection. I started writing again in the summer of 1967, simultaneously with the outbreak and conclusion of the Israeli-Arab war . . . I have become an extreme partisan of Israeli existence—for the first time I have a people (*Landscape* 174).

Israel resurrected Roth—in Guadalajara, Mexico where he anxiously followed news of the Israeli-Arab war.¹¹⁷ He had spent much of 1965, 1966 and 1967 in Spain and

¹¹⁷ Waldo Frank also wrote about Israel from Mexico. Frank published *Bridgehead: the Drama of Israel* (1957), a collection of linked essays, after a trip to Israel on a commission from a group of US and Latin American Spanish language newspapers. While Roth finds a home and a people in Israel, Frank writes as an anthropologist observing a new culture. However, in the preface, written in Pátzcuaro, Mexico, Frank does frame his project by reflecting on the centrality of Jews to world culture. He writes that “Israel’s culture” is the force behind “the machines of Christian Europe” which “spring ordinally from Israel’s culture as it wedded with the Greek.” He also argues that the “religious nationalism of the Arabs” is a version “virulent and misguided . . . of the immanence of God in human conduct, first expressed in the Jewish Torah” (x).

Mexico. He would later describe the '67 war as a “second vector” that, in turning him back toward Judaism, broke his writers block (*Landscape* 173). Surprisingly for a Yiddish-speaker from the Lower East Side, the first vector was the marrano, “caught . . . at the center of a struggle between zealous Catholicism and equally zealous Aztec paganism” (*Landscape* 173). In the wake of the '67 war, Roth exults, “for the first time I have a people.”

Roth runs headlong into an embrace of his people when just four years earlier, he had encouraged American Jews to orient “themselves to ceasing to be Jews” (*Landscape* 114). Why did he suddenly embrace Israel as the solution to his personal diaspora twenty years after the nation’s founding in 1948? While Frank is interested in the Jewish elements infused in elite Spanish culture, Roth focuses his attention on the oppressed marrano. The marrano is the “vector” that carries him from writer’s block to the *Rude Stream*, from a rapidly fading faith in Communism to an embrace of Zionism, from the US to Israel (and back again), from alienation to home. Through the figure of the marrano, the forcibly converted Jew, who, out of love or blood, can never fully escape his Jewish roots, Roth explores the consequences—political and personal—of un-belonging.

Roth actually created two marrano characters. One, Manoel, a conquistador, allows Roth to (briefly) recast the Americas, and diaspora itself, as a space of creative possibility. “Caught” at the borders of belief systems, Manoel remains a Jew, not because he believes, but because he cannot escape. Violently separated from his faith, he successfully flees Spain by hiding his Jewish past. He arrives in Mexico only to be

exposed. However, in the New World, his vulnerable position at the borders between languages, religions, and cultures, becomes his salvation. Roth locates Manoel's inescapable Jewishness, not in faith or tradition, but in alienation. The character survives by embracing displacement and vulnerability. Out of a converso conquistador, Roth forges a secular man, powerful precisely because he is an outsider.

The second marrano is an adolescent, Juan, who lives in Seville with his converso family. While Manoel's Jewishness becomes his salvation in the New World, Juan has a secret darker than his family's hidden Jewishness: incest. In Roth's universe, the young Juan's sexual proclivities reveal the private, dark consequences of hidden and minority identities. Juan's story, a rehearsal in both form and content for *Mercy of a Rude Stream*, reveals Roth at work on his theory that incest is—at least in part—a political problem, the result of growing up with no outlet to the “outside” world, a terrible folding in. With Manoel, the conquistador character, Roth embraces the possibility that a Jew can be at home in—indeed is potentially particularly well suited for—the Americas with all their cross cultural contact and conflict. The child converso, Juan, allows Roth to experiment with a return to the autobiographical material; revealing his own dark secret, he purges the past to write again.

Post-'67, Israel eclipses the marrano in Roth's imagination. He abandons his manuscripts, and his interest in Spain and Mexico is largely written out of his literary biography. Subsequently, Roth's interest in the marrano has been largely ignored by

scholars. A short story, “The Surveyor,” set in Spain, has been written about.¹¹⁸ However, the hundreds of pages of handwritten and typed drafts, which I call the “marrano” manuscripts, sit organized, but virtually untouched, among his archival papers. Roth’s Spanish-American turn is more than an intriguing detour in the work of a canonical Jewish-American writer. Not only does his engagement with Spanish-Jewish America shed light on the breaking of his writer’s block and his late-in-life Zionism, but it also deepens our understanding of the function of Spain and Spanish-speaking America in the Jewish American imaginary. As we have seen, Roth’s attraction to marranism as a metaphor for modern identity was not unique. For Roth, Spanish America was the place where the most Jewish of European histories (the Sepharad) met another tribal world. This Other Jewish America presented a counter historical alternative to grappling with the long history of disappointment with US assimilation.¹¹⁹ In the marrano manuscripts, Roth re-approaches his own identity as an Ashkenazi Jew shaped by the American diaspora. While Roth ultimately despaired of his condition as a “diaspora Jew,” the marrano manuscripts reveal a Roth intrigued by the possibilities offered by displacement and diaspora

In 1966, Roth’s “The Surveyor” was published in the *New Yorker*. Set in Seville, the story follows Aaron Stigman’s attempt, with the help his wife Mary, to locate and lay a wreath on the site of a vanished quemadero where “heretics found

¹¹⁸ See Rachel Rubinstein, Hana Wirth-Nesher, and Virginia Ricard.

¹¹⁹ See Waldo Frank, Gerald Vizenor, Michael Dorris and Louise Erdrich, for example. The Jewish presence in Spain, is, not surprisingly, a major concern for Latin American Jewish writers. See also Sarah Phillips Casteel.

guilty by the Holy Inquisition were burned—among others, relapsed conversos, those Catholics who secretly clung to their old Judaic faith” (*Landscape* 149). As Mary and Aaron search for the site with the help of “a grimensor,” they are approached by a suspicious police officer.”¹²⁰ Aaron declines to answer the officer’s questions, claiming that the matter is “private.” The officer, arguing that “surveying is public places . . . is no private matter,” (*Landcape* 139) brings them and their wreath to the police station for further questioning. At the station, they are rescued by a sympathetic state attorney, Señor Ortega, who, after securing their release, invites them to a cozy neighborhood café where he reveals that his own great grandfather, “when he became very old, would light a candle on Friday nights” (*Landscape* 149). By contrast, neither Ortega nor Stigman participate in the ritual. For Ortega, “a candle in consciousness is enough” (150), and Stigman explains, “I left the faith of my ancestors long ago.” The story ends with Stigman’s realization that somewhere along the way, he has lost the wreath meant to memorialize those burned at the quemadero.

While Señor Ortega is a literal marrano, Aaron Stigman is a figurative marrano. Stigman, like Roth, an American Jew of Ashkenazi descent, has no ancestral or historical connection to Inquisition Spain. Rather, for Roth—as for many other authors, Jewish and non-Jewish—marranism serves as a metaphor for modern identity. Roth believed that when the Inquisition separated the Jew from his faith, it inducted him into the experience of displacement, and out of this displacement

¹²⁰ The Spanish word “agrimensor” means surveyor. Somewhere along the way, agrimensor became “a grimensor.”

emerged the possibility of a secular Jewish identity unmoored from belief and observance. This marrano—a man forcibly separated from home, who can nevertheless never be fully assimilated because his original identity cannot be erased—is Roth’s modern Jew. For Roth, the inescapable disjunction between the private and the public self is a source of suffering and confusion. However, as he explores in the 1960s through his marrano manuscripts, it might also be a potential source of strength.

The figure of the marrano is the fulcrum of Roth’s late-in-life, and still somewhat mysterious, turn, first to Zionism, and then to the material of his own childhood that becomes *Mercy of a Rude Stream*. As late as 1963, Roth had argued that Jewish identity was disposable. He famously wrote in the pages of *Midstream*, “to the great boons Jews have already conferred upon humanity, Jews in America might add this last and greatest one: of orienting themselves towards ceasing to be Jews” (Landscape 114). However, just three years later, he creates Señor Ortega, a marrano whose Jewishness, passed down over generations through nothing more than mysterious ritual, is inescapable. Ortega’s defining characteristic, broadcast by his body even before his interest in the quemadero is revealed, is his Otherness. The narrator introduces him by remarking that he is, “uncommonly tall for a Spaniard, and the way he stood, in a stooped, hollow fashion, was even more uncommon” (144). Generations removed from religious belief, his body, curved around an absence, his Jewishness survives as something uncommon. The protagonist of “The Surveyor,” Aaron Stigman is also a marrano, a figurative marrano who left the faith of his

ancestors a much more recent “long ago.” Both men know the location of the quemadero, and neither can escape his Jewish identity. In fact, Stigman has undertaken an expensive, time consuming and somewhat counterintuitive project, to, as Roth wrote of his own trip to Spain, “reunite with Judaism—via a side door!” (*Landscape* 248).

The resulting material is made up of roughly three strands, two of which are closely related, while one is quite different. I call the first strand the “Manoel” novel, as it consists of multiple and often redundant typed drafts, heavily marked with hand-written corrections, of a novel that follows the Mexican adventures of a converso-conquistador named Manoel. The second strand—longer, also typed, marked up with hand-written notes, and unfinished—transforms Manoel’s story into a play. The third (also unfinished) strand, the “Juan text,” is difficult to classify. It is the story of a converso child who lives with his family in Seville. Its genre is fluid. There are long chunks of prose, play-like dialogue, and frequent digressions into the self-conscious present of a Roth-like character. It is handwritten, quite possibly dictated by Henry to his wife, Muriel. While none of the drafts are dated, it is fairly clear from Roth’s letters that the Manoel novel was written first, and then followed by, when Roth ran into difficulty, the Manoel play. The Juan text was most likely written last.

I will restrict my comments on the “Manoel” texts to the play, as aside from formatting, the novel and the play are similar, and Roth seems to have devoted more time to the play. In both versions, an adept translator and not-quite-Spaniard, Manoel, and his conquistador companions are captured by the “Uxcaman” people. When his

comrades discover that Manoel is Jewish, they encourage him to play it up, and he wins a spot as advisor to the Uxcaman king. The novel and play make it clear that its hero moves fluidly between cultures precisely because the trauma of the Inquisition has freed him from any belief—be it Catholic, Jewish or Uxcaman. Perhaps most importantly, Manoel eventually infects both Uxcaman king and high priest with doubt. Into the space forged by this doubt rushes the possibility of a tolerant, multicultural society.

The play opens with a series of scenes that establish Manoel as different from the other Spaniards. He is the youngest, the smartest, the only conquistador fluent in the Uxcaman language. In the first scene, the Uxcaman high priest encourages the king to immediately sacrifice Manoel and his comrades, and eat them. However, the king equivocates: “I have an intimation—if nothing more than because this one speaks our tongue so well. Let the sacrifice be postponed” (box 40, folder 5, 7). Linking Manoel’s clever tongue to his Judaism (and ultimately his survival), Roth plays with a very old European trope that imagines the Jew as the ultimate translator, interpreter or cultural middleman. As Naomi Seidman points out, multilingual Jews, fluent in Jewish and host languages, historically performed actual linguistic translations. At the same time, “Jews” served as abstract metaphors—taken up by Jews and non-Jews alike—for cultural and linguistic translatability and untranslatability. Manoel continues this tradition of doubleness. His linguistic acuity, nurtured in the furtive multilingual milieu of his childhood—his mother taught him “the little Hebrew he knew” (box 40, folder 5, 10)—hints at his Jewishness. As he

literally translates between Uxcaman and Spanish, he becomes a figure of Jewish translation and untranslatability. He is eminently translatable: not a real Spaniard, he can translate himself into Uxcaman language and culture. And he is eminently untranslatable: he was only ever imperfectly Spanish. He will only ever be imperfectly Uxcaman. Cultural and linguistic indeterminacy is a burnable offense in Spain. In the Americas, Manoel's liminality offers survival.

In light of Manoel's linguistic ability and his potential value as an informer, the Uxcamans postpone the sacrifice. In the meantime, planning to cage and fatten the Spaniards, the Uxcamans strip them and parcel their shredded clothing as reward to the bravest warriors. In the process, Manoel's "mutilation" reveals him as a Jew. In a whispered conference, his shocked comrades encourage him to play up his alienation from Spain. They argue that if he can convince the Uxcamans that he is not truly Spanish—that in fact, he is an enemy of Spain—then perhaps he can go undercover and save himself and his friends. "You are different," Miguel says to Manoel when Manoel initially refuses to play, along "You are marked, clearly marked" (emphasis original, Box 40, Folder 5, 18). Difference marked on his body, difference that claims him as Jew, proves his disloyalty to Spain, and thus his potential loyalty to Uxcama. As Manoel later tells the Uxcaman king, outed as Jewish, he can never go back to Spain, and must make his life in the New World. Manoel finally agrees to pretend to be disloyal to Spain. However, as he playacts the traumatic scene of his mother's murder by the Inquisition, he begins to remember, and in remembering, feels the pain of his marrano childhood. Recognizing that he was forged in the crucible of

repression, he connects with the Uxcaman King through shared vulnerability to the Spaniards.

Ultimately, of course, although Manoel uses his knowledge of historical European warfare to lead the Uxcmans to a number of victories, Spain triumphs. Not only does the King kill himself (in one draft version), but Ixtl, a priest-in-training, hoping to alter the course of history, sacrifices himself to the Uxcaman gods. Before he dies, Ixtl despairs, “he [Manoel] has made nothingness of all I am going to do and represent, a hollow sham. . . . where is there now to replace what has been destroyed. I am only a disguise now, a mask” (Box 40, folder 5, Scene IV sup. 3). In another version, Ixtl rages, “Are all your people like this? Is that why they are strangers even in Spain . . . ? We hold evident truths. You contrive to break them” (box 40, folder 5, Scene IV, act 2). Manoel does not provoke Ixtl’s crisis of faith by introducing the possibility of an Other God. Rather, Roth suggests that there is something Jewish—“are all your people like this”—about breaking evident truths. The Inquisition violently separated Manoel from his faith and his people. The crypto-Jewish conquistador imports doubt to the New World by exposing belief as a series of masks in an endless play. He makes a shambles of all that Ixtl does and represents.

This notion of belief as a mask will make another appearance in the “Juan text,” the third, handwritten strand of the marrano manuscripts, set in Seville. Similar to Mercy of a Rude Stream’s Ira Stigman—another Roth avatar—who loses his moxy in his family’s move from the Jewish Lower East Side to Harlem, Juan, a

former scrapper, grows timid and bookish under the shadow of the Inquisition. As he explains to his sister,

that was why he couldn't lick Christian kids. It was all nonsense and they believed it. They didn't act as if they believed it. They believed it. They believed it. But he acted as if he believed it and there was nothing behind the act. It was all hollow behind. It was like a big mask. (box 40, folder 5, "E1")

Juan suffers from a disconnect between institutional ideology—Catholic “nonsense”—and the hidden beliefs of his marrano community. He cannot simply believe. *Mercy of a Rude Stream's* Ira Stigman, removed from the Jewish milieu of his early childhood and immersed in the multiethnic world of upper-Manhattan, suffers a similar disconnect. Ira, like Juan, is fatally discombobulated by the cacophony of overlapping languages and cultures. By contrast, Manoel sees the mask, and the seeing frees him, and makes him strong. His Spanish comrades decry the folly of Ixtl's self-sacrifice. His fellow captive conquistador, Miguel argues that the act cannot be comprehended—Uxcamans are savages. However, Manoel, from his position both inside and outside of Spanish and Uxcaman culture, points to the savagery of the Inquisitors who “slew my mother on their altar” (Box 40, folder 5, D. Scene II-8). Juxtaposing the savagery of three faiths: Christianity, Judaism (linked with Moorish Islam) and the Uxcaman religion, and professing faith in none, Manoel introduces doubt into worlds that have never conceived of a gap between faith and the real. In Seville, the child, Juan, playacts Christian in order to mask his lack of faith. In

Mexico, Manoel puts on a Jewish mask to cover the conquistador mask that covers his Jewish past. Manoel's increasing certainty that no real lies beneath the mask ripples outwards, provoking crises of faith in those around him.

Manoel is a visionary, a modern Jew whose counter-historical narrative is meant to forge a better New World. Urging his friends to join the Uxcamans, urging the Uxcaman king to have mercy on the Spaniards, Manoel's rhetoric offers a powerful corrective to Roth's disappointment in the world events of the 1960s. "You've got to throw your lot in with these Mexoans for a new kind of world, not Spain's world," Manoel exhorts the Spaniards (Box 40, Folder 5, "Design for Act III"). Perhaps, the narrative seems to speculate, if the Jewish ambassador intervenes at a crucial moment in history, and convinces conquistadors to join with indigenous peoples, then he can fulfill the promise of the new continent, and grant Roth a future in which "Jewish" and "American" work in concert. However, the Spaniards refuse to join the Uxcamans. Manoel turns to the Uxcaman king, urging him not to sacrifice the Spaniards. He pleads, "will you not admit them into your realm? On equal terms with your other subjects? . . . The alternatives are to preserve your customs or build an empire, a nation that can hold its own." The king responds:

Crosses I shall have here, and the star you tell me is your people's emblem, and what others? Those Moors of another persuasion that you have told me about, and the conflicting sects you say are in the north of your world . . . It cannot be. No you are hopelessly visionary.

Yet it cannot be. (box 40, folder 5, Act II, Scene III, supplement B)

In Roth's fantasy, a Jewish-Uxcaman alliance creates a diverse Utopia. This America never-to-be would have been a place where Moors, Protestants and Jews would find shelter under the protection of a "nation that can hold its own" in a world that isn't Spain's. This fantasy past offers an answering counter-future to Roth's own present—a US that has, by alienating him, warped his personality and blocked his writing. But history must triumph. The king despairs that Manoel is a hopeless visionary. He recognizes that by embracing a series of "emblems," he will only destroy his kingdom; neither Uxcama nor Spain is ready to tolerate the indeterminacy of faiths in juxtaposition. "It cannot be." The Uxcamans will perish under Spanish assault, and Roth, the Ashkenazi Jew, will turn towards Israel. While the play flirts with possibilities for other futures, ultimately, other futures—futures in which Jews and indigenous Americans build an Other America—are foreclosed. The Uxcamans must die, and with them Roth's counter-historical vision of the New World.

Looking back, the seeds of destruction are planted in the play's opening scenes; Manoel's first act as interpreter is to inform the king that his world has been remapped. "We came to New Spain to seek gold," he informs the king. Unsurprisingly, the king asks, "New Spain? Where is New Spain?" The crypto-Jew speaking as a conquistador explains, "The New World. Mexico . . . we were sent to a far coast to form a colony. To partition the natives among us" (box 40, folder 5, 6). Of course the king cannot make sense of Manoel's description of "here" as New Spain. And of course, Manoel can only explain by resorting to other, equally meaningless signifiers, one broad, one specific: the New World, Mexico. Manoel

defines Mexico for the first time in the Uxcaman tongue as “a colony where we partition the natives among us.” It turns out that the play’s potential counter possibilities—of an alliance between Jew and native that might undermine Spanish tyranny—are closed before the play opens them. Although Manoel goes on to join his destiny to that of the Uxcaman people, it is already too late: the Jew may be a mere intermediary, but, with his facile tongue, he has unwittingly already claimed the New World for Spain.

Roth struggled with his marrano project from its inception. As early as July 1965, he wrote to a friend, “I simply can’t swing the scope of the canvas I summon up in reverie. I’m either too lazy, or have a crack in my nervous system” (*Landscape* 134). He most likely switched the Manoel material from a novel to a play out of frustration. However, as noted above, finished neither piece. He may have found it impossible to complete Manoel’s story not because he was lazy, cracked, or uninterested in historical detail, but because he tried to create a novel—and then a play—out of a metaphor. The Manoel manuscripts are so focused on the psychological effects of disjunctive identity that the details of time and place function as mere backdrop. They lack the extraordinary specificity of language, richness of imagery, and exquisite attention to the texture and detail of everyday life that make *Call It Sleep* a masterpiece. Indeed, in places, the dialogue uttered by sixteenth century Spanish Jews sounds remarkably similar to the speech of twentieth century Jewish American immigrants, and the descriptions of native landscapes and peoples are fairly crudely sketched stereotypes. “The Surveyor,” the only fictional piece to

come out of Roth's marrano years, is richer in detail. However, the story's tight focus on Stigman's personal journey—he repeatedly insists that his quest is “a private matter”—indicate that Roth is less interested in the material and ongoing effect of the Inquisition on contemporary Spanish Jews than the imaginative space opened by the dilemma of hidden and disjunctive identities.

In the end, Roth was less interested in the marrano character, than he was in where the marrano could take the author: home. By March of 1967, Roth was moving towards material that he could explore in all of its rich—personally significant—specificity. He wrote to a friend that he and Muriel, living in Mexico City, were at work on a “play” that

has taken many unforeseen hops, skips and jumps, as though I have gone through the ‘stages of my youth and childhood,’ writing in outline and sketchily all the novels and stories and dramas I should have written in the years of desuetude . . . it's funny that I have to recapitulate, and finally arrive at little more than adolescence, at the same time as I reach the old age (*Landscape* 15-152).

The 1967 project was most likely the handwritten—and final—“Juan” strand of Roth's marrano manuscript, a project that coincides with his excitement over the Arab-Israeli war, his turn towards Israel, and his return to the material of his childhood as a source of fiction. And although this strand of the manuscript also remains unfinished, it may have served both formally and thematically as a rehearsal for *Mercy of a Rude Stream*: in both, a frame narrative takes place in the present of its

writing, and embedded within the frame, a very personal story takes place in the past. In the frame of the Mercy novels, Ira Stigman converses with his computer, the embedded story concerns Ira's childhood. The frame of the marrano narrative is the narrator's collaboration with his wife, "M" (she is taking down his dictation of the story), and the embedded story is Juan's. In the Juan manuscript, time and time again, "he," the dictating author, begins to tell the embedded story, only to break off, "caught between his skill in narrative and his reluctance to reveal," noting to himself that he'll "have to convert that story" (box 40, folder 5). Startlingly, the story that he is reluctant to reveal, Juan's story, sounds very much like Ira Stigman's story. At the core of Juan's narrative, a scene which Roth wrote and re-wrote, is an incident of brother-sister incest.

Scribbling in the third person, Roth exhorts himself to push his writing to a new level, away from the "wrong direction" of *Call It Sleep*. He also wishes to explore the "affects [*sic*] of breakdown of Judaism in the father—eclecticism that leads to lack of identity and morality." And perhaps most importantly, he will portray "mutual devotion" which

allows for reflections on his wife's character. Had wanted to demonstrate a long time such qualities. To create such a woman has always been an ambition. Never had a framework to hang it on. Also the evaluation of the best in the American temperament (non-Jewish) its greater values than this much touted Jewish subjectivism and exposure of pains etc. (Box 40, Folder 5)

The frame story will allow him to demonstrate “the best in the American temperament (non-Jewish)” even as Juan’s story, one of “exposure of pains,” explores Jewish subjectivism. If making Juan a marrano distances him from Roth, the frame story yanks him back into Roth’s orbit. However, the frame narrative also provides a kind of distance: it contrasts the lost, confused and “depraved” boy with the man, a writer (in control of his story) with an American wife. The frame narrative (in both *Mercy* and the Juan manuscript) highlight the artificiality of storytelling and grant the adult narrator some degree of control over the boy’s uncontrollable urges.

In the Spain that echoes Harlem, the tyranny of the Inquisition is linked to the tyranny of the father who beats his son so badly that a neighbor intervenes, shouting, “Marrano, I won’t let you kill him” (box 40, Folder 5). This scene is extremely similar to a scene *Mercy* in which Ira is accused by an Irish neighbor of tormenting her son. Ira’s father beats him so badly that a Jewish neighbor intervenes, chastising the father for beating his own son on the word of a “goya.” In the “Juan” manuscript, the neighbor’s accusation—in a bit of wish fulfillment—leads Inquisition straight to his father.¹²¹ Indeed, in the upper corner of one of the manuscript pages, Roth scribbled, “incest is psychological retaliation” (Box 40, Folder 5, “D1”).

Roth wrote the central scene of incest over and over again. Juan’s mother is called out of the house—where she is set to supervise the bathing of her two pre-adolescent children—by a neighbor who shouts that the Inquisition has her husband.

¹²¹ In one version of the scene, Juan and his sister are in the bathtub and “something happens,” which leads Juan to remark, “so the inquisition leads to this.”

In many versions, the frame narrator (who I will call Roth), leads Juan and his sister right up to the bathtub in which their transgression will occur, and then pulls back into present. In one version, the mother in Juan's story insists that he get into the bathtub, but the narrator's silence drags the reader (and the listener, M) back into the present of the frame narrative:

Hurry up bathe. Get into tub. [Juan's mother says to Juan]

He stands somewhere silently. [This is Roth]

Wife: Yes?

He: Perhaps we've done enough

Wife: You're leaving it in the midst of something

He thinks he should go on. Every step was getting in deeper . . .

Compulsion. Caught between his skill in narrative and his reluctance to

reveal. Perhaps she wouldn't guess. No she was much too sensitive . . . He

thinks you're crazy. You can't tell this. Can't be done. Preyed on his mind

for decades (Box 40, Folder 5).

In this version, M grants Roth his silence by leaving the room to finally confess to Roth's father (who is visiting) how much she has disliked him over the years. Given that the father character in *Call It Sleep*, the *Mercy* novels, and the Juan manuscript is a brutal bully, and that Roth's notes indicate that he wished to show the breakdown of his father's Judaism as leading to a "lack of morality," when M interrupts the incest story to rebuke Roth's father, she doubly saves him from the brutality of his childhood. The woman who stands for the "best in American temperament" is not

only “sensitive” enough to know that Roth confesses, she is patient. Over the course of many drafts, she draws out Roth’s story. And quietly forgives him. In one version, she simply gazes as him as Juan encroaches on his sister. In another, Roth completes the incest scene and asks M if he should make the characters more sympathetic. She laughs and says, “I think I can handle it.” In yet another, she asks

Is that what happened?

Husband: What do you mean

Wife: Is that what happened in the story?

He put his pipe to the side and got a cigarette. Something he never did unless he was profoundly agitated.

He: Yes it took a skip I hadn’t anticipated. But I’m glad it did. I think I am.

Wife: I’m glad it did too.

He turns around slowly to look at her “that’s really the end of the story, but I think we can go on from there” (Box 40, Folder 5).

Steven Kellman has written that the sixty-year gap between *Call It Sleep* and *Mercy of a Rude Stream* might be in part attributable to Roth’s reluctance to reveal his “dark personal secret” before “most of the people who could be hurt by his shocking revelations—especially his beloved Muriel—were gone” (30). However, the Juan text—quite possibly written in Muriel’s hand—indicates that Henry may very well not only have “confessed,” but been absolved of his incest over the course of their collaboration. (Roth’s “secret” was not, after all, so deeply buried. In *Mercy*, frightened that his cousin is pregnant, Ira confesses to Edith. Not only does she

absolve him, but she assures him that his attraction to his cousin is part of normal, healthy experimentation that has been improperly repressed by “middle class” culture). M hears Roth’s thinly disguised confession and accepts him safely back home in the present.

However, although he speculates “that’s really the end of the story,” Roth attempts to continue the novel (which trails off into notes). He plans that two years will elapse, and when Juan is 16 and his sister is 14, she will become pregnant.¹²² The sister will refuse to reveal the father of her child, and in her grief and shock, the mother will turn back to Judaism which will leave her vulnerable to the Inquisition. She will be burned as Juan watches. Edith and M may have absolved him, but as the father’s brutality—coupled with the brutality of Inquisition—leads to incest, the incest leads back to the Inquisition and the mother’s death. Roth abandoned the “Juan” manuscript once he told his incest story to M and was forgiven; he no longer needed Jewish Spain as a decoy. Indeed, there are places in the manuscript where Roth toys with dispensing with Spain altogether (for example, he describes Juan’s wandering through the streets of New York “or Seville” written in parenthesis), and by the time writes *Mercy of a Rude* stream, he is able to tell his story without recourse to a character distant in time and space. With the Juan strand, Roth turns away from the marrano as metaphor for the capable secular, modern man, in order to focus on the psychological consequences of hidden and disjunctive identities. It is telling

¹²² In *Mercy*, Ira and his sister have a pregnancy scare, during which, Ira terrifies himself with murderous thoughts. Indeed, it seems that his longing to kill his sister frightens him much more deeply than the incest.

Juan's desperate story, rather than Manoel's hopeful one, that finally allows Roth to go on. He tells his secret, claims his Jewish identity and ceases to be a marrano. In doing so, he clears the way for Ira Stigman.

Many critics have noted that as late as 1963—just two years before his Spanish detour—Roth was still in flight from Judaism. He wrote in an article for *Midstream*, “I feel that to the great boons Jews have already conferred upon humanity, Jews in America might add this last and greatest one: of orienting themselves to ceasing to be Jews” (*Landscape* 114). As Roth himself later noted, this prescription for Jewish (self) annihilation in America is “diametrically opposite” to the views he espouses upon his “return” to Judaism just a few short years later. In 1976, reflecting on the *Midstream* Article, Roth comments that the Six-Day war changed his outlook; while Roth commented extensively on the place of Spain in his Jewish imaginary in the late 1960s, by the 1970s, Spain and Spanish America had been overshadowed by Israel in Roth's narrative or Jewish return.

In 1978, Roth returned one last time to his time in Spain. He published an essay, “The Wrong Place,” based on a letter he had written to a high school and college friend. The letter mainly consists of his observations about life in Seville. However, as Mario Materassi notes, before publication, Roth made some changes. Most of the changes were minor, however, he did replace the letter's original ending—that betrayed a discomfort for “having dabbled in Catholicism” (248)—with a triumphant reflection on his “stupendous” Spanish “detour.” In the published version, he writes

Why had I come to Spain? Ostensibly to familiarize myself with the background of my Marrano central character. But that wasn't the reason I had come here. It was evident now, though all this while I had concealed it from myself. I had come to Spain to reunite with Judaism—via a side door! I wouldn't admit it until now, but that was the reason. Still, all other doors were closed to me [. . .] I had closed the doors myself: on the business Diaspora, the acquisitive Diaspora, the observing Diaspora. What door was open? Idiot, I thought: the same door that was open to those Marranos' descendants who but yesterday fled from Arab persecution: Israel! (*Landscape* 248)

I include this excerpt because although it is one of the latest instances of Roth's acknowledgement of Spain's role in his "return" to Judaism, Israel still manages to play the starring role. When contemplating his escape from the Diaspora, Roth describes *Israel* as the "door that was open to those Marranos' descendants who but yesterday fled." However, in 1965, when the letter was written, he was working on a manuscript that imagined *Mexico* as the open door. Manoel does not escape Spain for Israel, but rather for the Aztec empire. When Roth was at work on his Marrano manuscripts, he was attempting to imagine a Jewish Americas. By 1978, his interests had shifted to the Jewish nation, and accordingly, Israel rises to prominence in the revised letter. The Marrano manuscripts explores the pathology of hiding. "The Wrong Place" elides—even as it highlights—Spain's role in his reconciliation with Judaism. Thus, it is telling that Roth describes himself as having "concealed" (from himself) the reason for his time in Spain. Indeed, reading the two versions together

(the revised and published letter, and the unpublished letter form 1965), the exclamation point that follows Israel is almost too emphatic, too celebratory, too triumphant, as it replaces—and displaces—the letter’s original ending, in which Roth reflects, “evidently I was still a Marrano, a latter-day one without the Shema” (249). The first letter dwells in uncertainty as Roth contemplates the possibility not only that he is a Marrano, but that Marranism is the only way to be American and Jewish. The published version is triumphant as its telos is the arrival in Israel and the end of corruptive Diaspora.

But perhaps Roth’s joyful celebration of Israel comes too soon. In 1977, Roth and his wife spent two months as guests of the Israeli government. However, when his time was up, Roth decided against making aliya. Roth commented in a 1986 interview that he returned to the U.S.

because of language and because of culture . . . I realized that although my emotional and political identification with the Israelis had taken me to their land, I had to come back to America [. . .] This is not my soil. But, again, one has to remember this is a Jew speaking, a Diaspora Jew. And that the only time he ever felt as sense of belonging to both a place and a people was during the short period when he lived in a Jewish min-state, and he didn’t know it (*Landscape* 229-230).

An old man in Israel. Roth wants to belong—his journey through Spain and Spanish America have enabled him to find his emotional and political connection to Israel—but in the end, he is estranged by language and an amorphous thing he calls “culture.”

Israel is not his soil. But the little boy from the “mini-state” of the Jewish Lower East Side of Manhattan never had any soil. The mythical time of belonging—both to a place and a people—captured by *Call It Sleep* was ruptured by the move to Harlem. Having spent his whole life trying to escape and then return, ostensibly Roth’s loop is now complete; he searched the American landscape, Spain, Mexico and Israel and he finally accepts himself as a Diaspora Jew—and most importantly, he can write again. But, of course, there is no going home. The flood of the *Mercy* novels does not document his time of belonging; they begin after the fall, in Harlem, in exile. And *Call It Sleep* was never a story of belonging.

Conclusion: Detours and Returns

Both Waldo Frank and Henry Roth, alienated from both US and Jewish identity find the Spanish-speaking America that fits their needs. Frank finds a place where the mystery of Spain (infused with Jewish language and culture) meets the primitive landscapes and peoples equipped to welcome its spiritual presence. Roth finds a testing ground for modern identity, a place where he can rip off the masks of belief and shame. However, we know that Frank is not remembered as the artist prophet who united the Americas, while Roth’s portrait of the Jewish Lower East Side lives on. Why such different fates? Perhaps Roth himself offers an answer in the voice of Ira Stigman who puzzles over the success of his *Call It Sleep*-like novel:

unwittingly he had struck the universal chord of what had affected millions of people . . . well, maybe one guy might have surmised . . . Feldman by

name, who prophesied to Mom, with extraordinary clairvoyance, even if a bit wide of the mark, ‘There grows another Maxim Gorky.’ Who else would have dreamed that the little gamin whom the poor harassed rabbi, or *malmut*, was preparing to translate *Lushin Koydish* into *Mama Lushin* would one day see his English step-*Mama Lushin* translated into modern *Lushin Koydish* . . . in his novel, he had stumbled on a fable that addressed a universal experience, a universal disquiet, more prevalent in this age, undoubtedly, than ever before in human history: the sense of discontinuity” (*Bondage* 30-31).

Stigman’s mother dreamed her son would be a rabbi, able to translate *loshn koydish* (the Holy language, Hebrew) into *Mama Loshn* (Yiddish) for his congregation. Instead, the son chose a secular life, writing fiction for an audience, rather than a congregation. And behold, his famous novel, written in his step-mama *loshn* (English) was translated into modern *Loshn koydish* (Hebrew).

Roth and his novels occupy a nexus of language and history that makes possible this dizzying series of transfers and translations, from the Yiddish speaking tenement, to the glories of modernist gold, to the revived language of the modern Jewish nation. And Roth, fluent in the language of eastern European Jewish immigration as well as the language of the US nation wrote a novel that “struck a universal chord.” His very particular, and linguistically nuanced, story of Jewish American life was considered important enough to circulate beyond the borders of the American nation. Frank, fluent in the standard dialects of prestige languages

could, like a prophet only see from above. In trying to force unity, Frank failed to address what Roth calls, “a universal experience, a universal disquiet, more prevalent in this age, undoubtedly, than ever before in human history: the sense of discontinuity.”

Chapter Three

At heym in the hoyf

Mimi Pinzón's Yiddish America

The Argentine journalist, yiddishist, literary scholar, and teacher, Adela Weinstein-Shliapochnik (1910—1975), who later adopted the pseudonym Mimi Pinzón, immigrated to Argentina with her parents at the age of four from Belotserkov, near Kiev.¹²³ She is best known—if she is known at all to contemporary audiences—for her novel, *Der hoyf on fentster* (*The Courtyard Without Windows*) (1965), which tells an Argentine immigrant story through the eyes of a Etl, a precocious young girl. In addition to the novel, Pinzón published literary criticism in Socialist and Communist Yiddish language periodicals, translated in and out of Yiddish, taught Yiddish, and was involved in the secular Yiddish language school movement. She was an active member of ICUF (*Idisher Cultur Farband*), the Argentine branch of YKUF, a communist aligned, transnational Yiddishist organization founded in Paris in 1937. She lived through violent transformations in Argentine politics, the destruction of Eastern European Jewish language and culture wreaked by the Holocaust, and the re-territorializing of a sector of the Jewish people with the founding of the State of Israel.

This chapter zooms in on Buenos Aires, locating Pinzón in relation to two (rough) poles of the Argentine Jewish literary scene. At one end, we find Alberto

¹²³ It was common for Yiddish writers to take pseudonyms. Among Pinzón's pseudonyms were Ad-Sum and Yidl Yidl Kotoynti. She also wrote under her married name, Adela Weinstein-Shliapochnik.

Gerchunoff (1883-1950), widely acknowledged to be a founder not only of Jewish Argentine literature, but also Jewish Latin American literature writ large. In the tradition of romantic hispanism, Gerchunoff embraced the national language as a reflection of the spirit of a great people. He advocated for the inclusion of Jews in the liberal, Spanish-speaking national project. At the other end of the spectrum, we find Pinzón's mentor, Pinie Katz (1882-1959), a Yiddish-language novelist, journalist, translator, and intellectual who founded both the Yiddish-language journal *Di Presse* and also ICUF. Katz advocated for an ongoing Yiddish-speaking, leftist Jewish presence in Argentina. Pinzón, a generation younger than Gerchunoff and Katz, wrote in a landscape cleared by these two pioneers. And while she aligns more closely her mentor, Katz, by situating her relative to both figures, I stress the extent to which language *was* politics in Jewish Argentina. Further, I hope to draw attention to the ways in which Pinzón, as a communist-aligned, Yiddishist, *woman* writer simultaneously fits into and diverges from the profile of an Argentine Jewish author.

Pinzón asserted that ethnic and linguistic particularity was a crucial component of identity. Her work transforms the realities of Yiddish, a minor language (in which to survive is to translate) into a world-view that refuses the pressures of assimilation, insisting on the value of the particular to the whole. Even as she insists on particularity, Pinzón celebrates the linguistic and ethnic diversity that makes up her Buenos Aires. In *Der hoyf on fentster*, Yiddish, Spanish and Russian-speaking Jews survive the monolingual violence of the State alongside—and with the help of—their multiethnic, multilingual neighbors. They are new Americans *and* new Jews.

Outside of the national language and its demand for unwavering loyalty, Pinzón reinvents “Argentina” as a loose network of multilingual solidarity. Her work points the way towards an Americas made up of peoples in diaspora, fiercely loyal to ethnic and linguistic particularity, but also deeply committed to cross cultural solidarity.

I. The Politics of Yiddish in the Global Context

I pick up the threads of Pinzón’s story long before her birth, in the late 18th century, when the Haskala, or Jewish Enlightenment, made a modern literary canon of secular works written in Yiddish possible. As critics such as Dan Miron, Naomi Seidman, and John Efron point out, Yiddish was initially despised by maskilim, the intellectual leaders of the Haskala. Maskilim characterized the language as a corrupt dialect of German (in contrast to Hebrew and also non-Jewish national languages such as German and Russian).¹²⁴ However, despite their distaste, Jewish modernizers eventually took up Yiddish out of necessity, especially in the fight against Hasidism, a mystical movement that emerged in Poland in the eighteenth century. For the inheritors of the Jewish Enlightenment, Yiddish was a vehicle for modern, secular ideas, a practical tool for reaching the Jewish masses, the majority of whom were not fluent in Hebrew or national languages.

Even Sholem Aleichem, perhaps the most recognized name in modern Yiddish literature, had a vexed relationship with the language to which he defaulted

¹²⁴ The conception of language as a vehicle for spiritual values and national character that we see in the work of Alberto Gerchunoff and Waldo Frank can be traced back to the Haskalah’s engagement with German romanticism.

after a failed career as a Russian-language novelist. Dan Miron argues that in 1888, when Aleichem dedicated his novel *Stempenyu* to “his dearly beloved grandfather, Reb Mendele Moykher-Sforim,” he “met a spiritual need. By supplying it, Sholem Aleichem made readers and writers suddenly conscious of the sovereignty, the expanse and the potentialities of their culture. The consciousness of history, real or imagined, often makes history” (31). Creating an august genealogy for secular Yiddish literature, Aleichem naturalized Jewish literature in Yiddish as an institution with a history. That Aleichem could conceive of Jews as a community moving through time, a community with a deep national history, indicates some of the material and ideological effects of the Haskala on the Jewish communities of Imperial Russia. However, as Naomi Seidman points out, Yiddish continued to be negatively associated with women and uneducated men, and considered at best something less than a language (a German “jargon”). Seidman points out that on a document as important as the epigraph on his tomb-stone, Aleichem “dramatizes the clash” between Yiddish-as-premodern-women’s language and Yiddish-as-sophisticated-language-of-secular-modernity (13-14).

Before the Second World War and the founding of the State of Israel so “drastically altered” the historical-cultural Jewish literary landscape “that most of us today can hardly conjure a vague mental image of their erstwhile reality” (Miron 31), language choice was freighted with moral and political meaning. As Miron reminds us, every Jewish author faced a series of linguistic choices that immediately indicated

his political commitments.¹²⁵ To write in Hebrew was to indicate one's faith in a Zionist future (based on Hebrew traditions traceable to the Bible). To write in Yiddish was to indicate faith in an exilic or territorialist, modern and secular culture (based on the culture and history of Ashkenazi Jews). To write in non-Jewish languages—German, Russian, English, Spanish—was to indicate one's belief in the inevitable merging of Jewish and non-Jewish languages and cultures (38). Once the writer selected Yiddish, he (the male pronoun reflects historical realities) further chose whether he was writing the language of the modern Jewish nation—a nation with its own literary canon—or was he was simply using the available language of the proletariat as a delivery system for progressive ideals (41). The Yiddishist radical left was further divided between Marxist-fundamentalists (who accused their enemies of nationalist sympathies) and Marxists who argued that an author or critic might search for salvageable progressive elements in the literary past (42).¹²⁶

World-wide, leftist and Yiddishist politics were linked, and Argentina had particularly vibrant leftist subcultures. Anti-nationalist politics were popular in the

¹²⁵ Miron elaborates four major differences between that cultural world, and “our” cultural moment. First, most Jewish scholars and critics were multiply lingual, often comfortably literate in at least four languages (Russian and German, Yiddish and Hebrew) (31). Second, scholarly study of Jewish texts was part of the revolutionary projects that shaped the literatures themselves (32). Third, as discussed above, choice of language of publication immediately located the writer along a political spectrum. Fourth, the reading public was particularly engaged with both fiction and criticism; critics “caused as much excitement and controversy as any literary genius they discussed” (52).

¹²⁶ Miron also points out that many nineteenth century Jewish writers were such thorough “masters” of both Yiddish and Hebrew that they wrote “the same piece in Yiddish and Hebrew with equal (though far from identical) stylistic brilliance . . . annul[ing] all accepted distinctions between the “original” text and its translation, and they thoroughly undermine they normal aesthetic hierarchy, which prefers the former to the later” (9). However, as Miron demonstrates, such linguistic bridging was regarded as pernicious and suspect (10).

anarchist circles that dominated Argentine Jewish leftist politics before the rise of the Soviet Union. Leftist Yiddishists were less interested in Argentina as nation-state, than they were in the potential of transnational networks. With their dual membership in Yiddish and international worlds, these writers were suspicious of the aims of the territorial nation. Such sentiments were succinctly articulated in 1916 in the pages of *Avangard*, a socialist journal: in celebration of Mendele Mocher Sforim’s birthday, the journal sent a message to the great writer “from the ‘triangular piece of land’ (i.e. Argentina).¹²⁷ As Victor Mirelman points out, the message represents “Argentina” as a geographic area through its triangular shape, rather than as a nation (142).¹²⁸ Pinzón grew up surrounded by such radical politics. After the Bolshevik revolution, Argentine Yiddishist leftists aligned themselves with Soviet communism, and Pinzón published extensively in Yiddish language Soviet aligned journals.¹²⁹

¹²⁷ Rebecca Kobrin describes *Avangard* as similar to “mainstream Yiddish newspapers in the US” (120).

¹²⁸In an account of his arrest and torture during La Semana Trágica, Pinye Wald, cofounder of *Avangard* (the worker’s organization), and contributor to the journal wrote, “One particularly officious-looking man subjected me to an interrogation: “What nation are you from?” “The Jewish nation.” “How long have you been in this country?” “Thirteen years.” “Your religion?” “Socialism” (88) (translated from the Yiddish by Debbie Nathan). Here, Wald reworks the definitions of the words “nation,” “country,” and “religion.” He undercuts the State’s expectations by arguing that Jewish no longer equals religious affiliation, it equals nation. “Country” is only the location where he finds himself (earlier in the account, he reveals that he is a naturalized Argentine citizen). And “religion” is a transnational utopian political movement.

¹²⁹ Gennady Estraiikh writes that by 1919, worldwide, leftist Jews had accepted the Comintern (Communist International) program, and they subsequently founded several Yiddish-language Communist periodicals. He further notes that Hirsh Bloshtein, an Argentine poet, referred to Jewish Communists—approvingly— as “Soviet foreigners.” (“Yiddish-language” 66).

While transnational Yiddishism and communism often went hand in glove, they did not do so without conflict.¹³⁰ Yiddishist communists struggled to resolve the conflict between leftist universalist goals, and their own commitment to the specificity of Yiddish language and Jewish culture. By the time that Pinzón published her only novel *Der hoyf on fentster* (1965), Stalin's treatment of Jews had been long-known in Argentina. It was no longer possible to believe in the possibility of a Communist party that would welcome Jews as Yiddish speakers with their own culture.¹³¹ Correspondingly, tensions between Pinzón's commitment to Soviet Communism and Yiddishism are palpable in her novel.

II. The Politics of Yiddish in the Argentine Context

Pinzón wrote at the crossroads of the transnational Yiddish, Argentine, and Jewish-Argentine literary traditions. No Jewish writer in Latin America could ignore Alberto Gerchunoff and his Jewish ggauchos. As Edna Aizenburg writes, "in one way

¹³⁰ See especially G. Estraikh, *In Harness*. For many Leftist Yiddish writers, the Soviet Union glimmered as the only place where a Leftist-Yiddishist-Jew might find a state-sponsored home. Dan Miron points out that by the 1920s and 30s, the Soviet Union became appealing to Yiddish territorialists who argued that Yiddish needed the support of a state-like structure if it was going to survive. They were drawn to Ukraine and Byelorussia where Yiddish was one of the official state languages. The USSR also sponsored Yiddish speaking settlements in southern Ukraine and Birobidzhan. Many Yiddish writers made trips to the Soviet Union during these years (184-185). Procor, an Argentine version of the Russian, Gezerd, the Organization for the Jewish Toilers on Land in Russia was formed in 1924, and sent Argentine delegations to the USSR in 1929 and 1935 (Mirelman 144).

¹³¹ ICUF (Idisher Cultur Farband), a progressive, transnational Yiddishist institution with which Pinzón was involved) articulated two goals for their organization: unconditional alignment with the Argentine communist party and the development of Jewish identity based on the Yiddish language and progressive Jewish secular culture. Israel Lozerstein's work traces the dissolution of the first goal to the mid-1950s, and the wake of revelations of the USSR's oppression of Yiddish writers.

or another every piece of Argentine-Jewish, if not Latin American-Jewish, literature has had to dialogue with Alberto Gerchunoff (1889-1950) and his story collection, *Los gauchos judíos* (1910)” (17). The collection loomed—and perhaps continues to loom—over every Jewish Argentine text. *Los Gauchos judíos* was so influential that we might call it a latter day work of “foundational fiction,” a term Doris Sommer coined to describe the romantic novels of the mid-eighteenth century in which “erotic passion was . . . the opportunity (rhetorical and otherwise) to bind together heterodox constituencies: competing regions, economic interests, race religions” (14). Gerchunoff’s collection was published as Argentina revisited its foundational moment. 1910 saw the celebration of the nation’s centennial, and also anxiety over a surge of “undesirable” Eastern European immigrants. Sommer has argued that foundational fiction birthed the consolidated nation (12); *Los gauchos judíos* attempts to birth the liberal Argentine nation as home to the Jews.¹³² Recent critics have pointed to the nuances in Gerchunoff’s oeuvre, arguing that he wasn’t as thoroughly assimilationist as previously assumed, but the nation was undoubtedly his favorite unit of analysis. *Los gauchos judíos* launched itself, in the hegemonic national language, into the project of nation building.

¹³² Unlike the novels that make up Sommer’s archive, *Los gauchos judíos* is ambivalent about physical love (between Jewish women and Argentine men) as a consolidating force. However, as argued in the first chapter, Gerchunoff had no need to advocate for the physical amalgamation of Jews and Argentines, because, according to his logic, upon arrival on Argentine soil, Jews were already members of the Argentine family; the Jewish-Spanish romance had already played out on the fields of language and culture long before Argentina came into existence.

Gerchunoff's vision was anathema to the Yiddishist Left. When Pinzón's mentor, Pinie Katz, translated *Los gauchos judíos* in 1952, he began the process of what Aizenburg calls "parricide on the pampa," the attempt by Jewish writers who came after Gerchunoff to grapple with—and destroy—a hugely influential figure.¹³³ While *Los gauchos judíos* was a nationalist novel pitched largely at Argentine elites, Katz's translation, *Yidn gauchn* had two audiences: Argentine Jews who lived the distance between Gerchunoff's romanticism and the reality of the Jewish immigrant experience, and transnational Jewish readers with little to no stake in the Argentine national project. *Yidn gauchn*, translated by a leftist Yiddishist for a Jewish audience, recontextualizes the stories, reversing the collection's objective, by preserving Jewish particularity (and language) from the pressures of assimilation.

In a long footnote to the brief autobiography included with the novel, Katz takes control of the text. First, he calls attention to the cultural, political, geographical, social and linguistic differences between *Los gauchos judíos* and *Yidn gauchn*. Gerchunoff opens his autobiography with his approximate birth date (at least according to the documents issued upon arrival in Argentina) and place, "in Proskurov, a shetl in the Podolier Government, which like Lithuania, is a Russian province with a large Jewish population" (9), Katz, however begs to differ:

¹³³ Katz translated *Los gauchos judíos* as part of a series of translations published by ICUF. The series also included Katz's translations of *Don Quijote*, (1951,1952), and *El río oscuro* by the Argentine communist writer Alfredo Varela. In 1955 & 1956, ICUF published Katz's translations of Howard Fast's *Spartakus* and *En tierras del caco* by Jorge Amado (Dujovne, Tesis, 153).

Vos shayekh pinklekhkeyt in rusisher geografie, zol men es bam mekhaber nit zukhn. Dos eygene vos shayekh yidishe minhogim. Dos zaynen zakhn, vos geyen durkh dem mekhabers kinstlerisher faralgemeynerung, a faralgemeynerung, vos ligt inem apologetishn kharakter funem verk. Der mekhaber hot far alemen in zinen dem nit-yidishe leyener, spetsiel dem shpanishn. Er nutst zikh deriber oft mit nit-yidishe bagrifn far yidishe minhogim. Dos iz oykh goyrem zayn genoygtkeyt tsu manifitsirn dos vos iz ba yidn farbundn mit dem shpanishn period, vi mit dem biblishn un minitizirn dos vos iz farbundn mit dem mizer-eyropeishn, tsu velkhn er gufe, agev, hot zikh batsoygn mer vi mit bitl. Ersht unter dem virkung fun S. Reznik's iberzetsungen fun der moderner yidisher literatur un fun di moderne yidishe denker, hot Alberto Gerchunoff geendert zayn batsoyng tsu ydish un tsu der yidisher kultur, vos iz oyfgekumen in mizerkh-eyrope. Nemendik dos in akht, hob ikh, vu es iz meglekh geven oysgeglet in der iberzetsung yene shteln, vu dem mekhabers bekivndike oder sheloybekivndike tsuputsungen inem original dergaeyn biz absurd. Farfirm derfun vet efsher dos verk bloyz in der retorik, tsu velkher es hot getsoygn dem demolt yungn shpanish-shrayber. Zikher ober veln derfun gevinen zayne shpeterdike kinstlerishe ibertsayungen, vos zaynen dem iberzetsen bakant. (9)¹³⁴

¹³⁴ One shouldn't seek exact Russian geography from the author. The same as concerns Jewish customs. These are things which are true throughout the author's artistic generalizations, generalizations which lie in the apologetic character of the work. Above all, the author had the non-Jewish reader in mind, especially the Spanish reader. Therefore, he often used non-Jewish concepts for Jewish customs. This is also the cause of his exactness in

The footnote is odd. The initial cause for intervention seems trivial (the details of Katz's objections may be lost to history given that Proskurov *was* located in the Podolier region). However, it seems that the particularities of geography interest Katz less than clearing ground and establishing his position of authority as translator; this first page of the collection consists of a title—“Alberto Gerchunoff's Autobiography”—with a nine-line footnote about how the biography came to be published after being found in Gerchunoff's papers posthumously—five lines of Gerchunoff's own writing, and the nineteen-line footnote under discussion. This means that four-fifths of the first page of the collection, the first full page of the text that the readers sees after the front-matter and the table of contents, is dedicated to the translator's commentary.

And his commentary is pointed. Disregarding established hierarchies (between original and copy, Spanish and Yiddish, national and subnational, Creole and Jew), Katz argues that *Yidn gauchn* is an improved version—at least for a Yiddish reading audience—of *Los gauchos judíos*. He uses a critique of Gerchunoff's geography as a stepping stone to a critique of Gerchunoff's cultural

exalting that which for Jews, is bound up with the Spanish period, and with the biblical period, and diminishing that which is bound up with the eastern European period, to which he himself, by the way, he was related more than a little. First under the effect of S. Reznik's translations from modern Yiddish literature, and from the modern Yiddish thinkers, Alberto Gerchunoff changed his relationship to Yiddish and to Yiddish culture, which sprung up in eastern Europe. Keeping this in mind, I, where it was possible, smoothed out in the translation those places where the author intentionally or unintentionally embellished the original to the point of absurdity. The work might lose something only in rhetoric, to which the then young Spanish-writer was drawn. But assuredly his later artistic demonstrations, which are recognized by the translator, win.

knowledge—a loose association at best, given that Gerchunoff’s own text has merely stated the author’s place of birth. Katz charges that Gerchunoff, in pitching his oeuvre and his interests to the “universal,” not only ignored the nuance of, but also *apologized* for Jewish culture. He argues that Gerchunoff did not merely describe Jewish customs with Spanish words, he used foreign *concepts* to describe Jewish customs. Given the sensitive nature of Yiddish language politics as outlined above, Gerchunoff’s translation of Jewish custom into Spanish concepts could easily have been read as an act of betrayal.¹³⁵ Katz makes the case that translation is a recovery or reclamation, rather than merely a vehicle for the delivery of the author’s original content to a different language system. Katz declares that where Gerchunoff has been overly slavish to Spanish tastes, he, Katz, will make judicious corrections. And oddly, when Katz writes of “smoothing” out the rhetoric of the text, he is not merely referring to Gerchunoff’s universalizing content, he is explicitly referencing Gerchunoff’s overly ornate Spanish prose, which, as discussed above, was in itself a plea for universal recognition. The translator makes explicit his performance of a cultural, geographical, social, linguistic and stylistic recovery project; he longs to bring the text “home” to the minor language. By arguing that Gerchunoff had modified and softened his relationship to Yiddish before he died, Katz attempts to rescue Gerchunoff himself, bringing the Argentine man of letters home to Yiddish

¹³⁵ See Naomi Seidman on Jewish languages and “hidden transcripts” in the introduction to *Faithful Renderings*.

culture.¹³⁶ “Smoothing out” the text, and removing the “absurdity” of the “original,” Katz argues that he brings *Yidn gauchn* closer to the author’s own (more mature) intentions. By fixing the text, he both moves *Los gauchos judíos* “back” to the original version that was hidden by Spanish language and concept, and moves it “forward” in time, towards Gerchunoff’s reformed relationship with Yiddish.¹³⁷

However, the footnote is ironic in a way that Katz may have never intended. Katz’s critique of Gerchunoff turns on Gerchunoff’s treatment of “minhogim,” a word that translates as “Jewish customs.” These traditions, handed down over generations, are community specific (Sephardic minhogim differ in some ways from Ashkenazic minhogim), and as such, can function as a means of identification. But when Katz spells minhogim, he breaks with tradition. Historically, the Hebrew word “minhogim” came into Yiddish as “מנהגים,” retaining its Hebrew spelling. Katz, using Soviet orthography, designed to simplify Yiddish by spelling Hebrew words phonetically, spells the word “מינהאָגים.” His Soviet spelling—phonetic rather than etymological—indicates not only alignment with the USSR, but also an affiliation with certain organizations within Argentina, and an implied commitment to

¹³⁶In a section of the collection entitled, “Alberto Gerchunoff and the Beauty of his *Yidn gauchn*,” Katz stresses that Gerchunoff’s work was a response to anti-semitism, and recasts *Los gauchos judíos* as a sort of proto-proletarian celebration of the Jewish everyman.

¹³⁷ While Gerchunoff did change his rhetoric about Yiddish over the years—from dismissing it as jargon early in his career, to mourning for it near the time of his death, according to Aizenburg, the earliest versions of *Los gauchos judíos* included more Yiddish and Hebrew than the later versions. Aizenburg documents a host of changes made to the various editions of *Los gauchos judíos*. Gerchunoff tinkered with the text over the course of his life.

secularism and general education (the lack of vowels in traditional spelling was considered an impediment to literacy).¹³⁸

Katz's spelling reveals the not-so-hidden conflict at the heart of his translation of Gerchunoff's text. While Manuel Kantor, Gerchunoff's son-in-law, claims (in an essay included in *Yidn gauchn*) that Gerchunoff called Yiddish "the *mame-loshn* [mother-language] . . . which he loved (31), Gerchunoff's relationship to the *mame-loshn* was very different from Katz's. Gerchunoff only ever published in Spanish.¹³⁹ His life of letters led him into the inner-most elite Latin American literary circles.¹⁴⁰

¹³⁸ See G. Estraikh's *Soviet Yiddish* where he writes that after 1931, the "naturalized" spelling was introduced in Argentina and dominated publications there. However, by 1951, *Di Presse*, the leftist Yiddish newspaper founded by Katz, had abandoned its use of Soviet Orthography (Chinski). This is most likely connected to the upheaval that occurred in the wake of the revelation of Stalin's campaign against Soviet Jewish writers. In fact, Pinzón's orthography shifted over the course of her career. In 1950, she published two early excerpts of *Der hoyf on fenster* in the Yiddish Women's magazine, *Di idische froi* (an ICUF aligned women's magazine). In these early excerpts—published before the suffering of Jews under Stalin was known—she uses Soviet orthography. For, example Pinzón replaces the Hebrew word "חתונה" [wedding] with the phonetic "כאַטענע." The major Yiddish daily newspaper, *Di Presse*—where Pinzón met her husband—had abandoned Soviet orthography by 1951. However, Pinzón was still using Soviet orthography as late as October of 1965. *Der hoyf on fenster*, by contrast, was published with the traditional etymological spelling of Hebrew words.

¹³⁹ Although more than once, I was directed by members of the Argentine Jewish community to look for Gerchunoff's "first," lost Yiddish novel. No evidence of this novel exists, but the rumors are indicative of a longing for a certain heymish Gerchunoff.

¹⁴⁰ After having dismissed Yiddish as a jargon early in his career (see chapter one), later in life, Gerchunoff longed for Yiddish, and the bygone ghetto—a private Jewish space. In 1941, for example, he wrote:

León Jaffe solía decirme que uno de los hechos más afligentes para el poeta judío consiste en la falta de una lengua hereditaria, uniformemente hablada y transformada en un resorte instintivo del espíritu. El hombre judío, habituado a vivir en lugares disímiles de la tierra, lleva en sí una imagen dispersa del mundo y la refleja fragmentariamente en palabras de origen y de sonoridad diferentes. Es posible que el poeta llegue a dominar científicamente una lengua, a poseer sus secretos en una forma técnica, pero como no es la que ha bebido desde su nacimiento ni se ha impregnado de ella automáticamente, la cultivará siempre con una especia de frialdad mecánica. Yo

Katz by contrast, made a career out of Yiddish. He was the editor of *Di Presse*, a Yiddish daily that began publishing a few weeks after the Russian Revolution (1918). The journal's aim was "attachment and conscientious treatment of the Yiddish language, support for every undertaking designed to encourage Jewish culture, (...) struggle on behalf of the workers and other working people" (qtd in Feierstein 568). It is impossible to talk about Argentine Jewish writers' linguistic choices without talking about the concordant conflict between liberal democratic nationalism and communism/socialism/anarchism. While Gerchunoff flirted with leftist politics in his youth, the Zion of his literary imagination was the liberal Argentine state. Katz was a member of the leftist (progressive, socialist and later, communist) literary world.¹⁴¹ Many Argentine Jews, especially those Jewish writers who chose to make Yiddish their main vehicle of publication, were involved in Anarchist, Socialist and Communist politics. As Genady Estraiakh writes of international Yiddish literary life in Communist circles of the 1920s and 30s:

mismo, agregaba, he sentido profundamente esa aflicción y la expresé en una pequeña poesía en idisch (117).

Katz, a journalist and translator, who dedicated his work not only to defending Yiddish but to proving that it was a language capable of conveying not only up-to-the-minute news, and also complex philosophical ideas, would take issue with Gerchunoff's claim that Jews have no hereditary language. And while Katz argues in his footnote that Gerchunoff turned towards Yiddish in his later writings, Gerchunoff's turn was towards a language of nostalgia, not the vital, living language of the Jewish people. Indeed, this quote is drawn from a speech given at the opening of Hebrew University, in praise of Hebrew as the new language of the Jewish people.

¹⁴¹ See Senkmen who argues that Gerchunoff's shift from literary to journalistic writing was motivated, in part, by his despair over the failure of the liberal Argentine state in the wake of the 1930 coup.

These circles, scattered all over the world, were linked through the network of the Communist International, or Comintern . . . hardly any other Communist literary milieu had such a broad geographic distribution and such mobility within its cadre as that of Communists writing in Yiddish. As a result, it is sometimes difficult to define a writer as, for instance, Soviet, Argentine, or American. Therefore, I use the term “Comintern writers” to emphasize their loyalty to the Moscow-based ideological center (ix).

Gerchunoff’s ultimate horizon was the nation, his vehicle of argumentation, Spanish. By contrast, Leftist Yiddishists were less interested in Argentina as nation, than they were in the potential they saw in transnational networks.

Across the Americas, leftists were interested in disrupting connections among nation, language and territory. In 1913, just one year before Pinzón arrived in Argentina, Morris Vinchevsky (1856-1932), the “venerable grandfather of Jewish émigré socialism” (Cassedy 12) published an article ‘Race and Class’ in the premiere socialist journal in the United States, *Di tsukunft*.¹⁴² Steven Cassedy makes a case that Vinchevsky’s article lay the groundwork for the possibility of Jewish socialism by orchestrating “one of the most remarkable ideological shifts in the American Yiddish-speaking intelligentsia of the this period” (12). Previous to 1913, progressive Russian Jewish intellectuals were opposed to any politics that “singled out a ‘nation’ (ethnic, racial, religious group) as its beneficiary” (12). However, Vinchevsky argued

¹⁴² The journal sought to represent the vanguard of Jewish thought in New York, and eventually the world (Cassedy 2).

that if socialism was to be truly international—something that crosses national boundaries— it must begin by recognizing the existence of different nations. Cassedy writes

In an era when ‘nation’ and ‘race’ are used almost interchangeably, this means that socialism must, in the name of internationalism, recognize separate movements for the members of different races or nations. The category of ‘nation’ or ‘race’ is a *conditio sine qua non* of the internationalism that socialism seeks. By urging the acceptance of what may appear at first glance to be a particularizing trend (a *Jewish* socialism and, presumably, and by extension, a *Negro* socialism and any number of other socialisms), Vinchevsky is actually arguing for a movement that transcends the particularity of individual nations or races; it’s just that it first needs to recognize and accept those individual nations and races (emphasis original, 13).

Gerchunoff, a liberal nationalist, was uninterested in this fight. He argues in *Argentina País de Advenimiento*, “lo que llamo la política del idioma abarca por lo tanto la existencia varia y completa de un pueblo que aspira a no ser una seca designación geográfica” [what I call language politics covers, at the very least, the complete range of experiences of a people that aspires to be more than a dry geographic name], that language politics is a “política vitalísima en una Nación como la nuestra.” He advocates the use of a national language (Spanish) as a means

of forging various peoples (one might say, nations) into one Argentine nation. The “nation” in his phrase, “una nación como la nuestra,” means Argentina.

In contrast with Gerchunoff, when Pinzón uses the word “*undzer*” [our] to refer to literature, culture, and history, she almost always refers to the Jewish, not the Argentine “nation.” Vinchevsky’s intervention clears the path for someone like Pinzón to be simultaneously suspicious of Argentine nationalism *and* also celebrate the various “national” cultures found in immigrant spaces. Vinchevsky makes it possible to be both a socialist, committed to transnational socialism, and also a Jew rooted in national (and *linguistic*) particularity. Transnational allegiances (solidarity and friendship across ethno-linguistic lines) can be rooted in respect for individual national cultures (Italian, Jewish, Gallician). However, Pinzón does not merely write “against” Gerchunoff and in the spirit of Vinchevsky. Her novel, urban where Gerchunoff’s is rural, gritty where his is idealized, Yiddish where his is Spanish, contests the liberal dream, but it also refuses Vinchevsky’s transcendence. For Pinzón, recognizing linguistic and cultural particularity is not a step on the way to transcending nation or race. Particularity is the key to solidarity and can never be abandoned.

III. Translating Nations: Pinzón Yiddishes Spanish, and Jewishes Argentina

When Pinie Katz died in 1959, Pinzón published an essay, “*Pinie Katz: mayne lerer, mayn khaver, mayn fraynt*” (“Pinie Katz, My teacher, My Friend, My Relative”) in the Jewish women’s magazine, *Di idishe froi* in which she explains that

Katz nurtured her writing career, teaching her, by example, to write work that was “*poshet, klor un farshtendlekh*” [simple, clear and understandable] (4).¹⁴³ Insisting that work be simple, clear and understandable was not just a note on style. Simplicity was a fundamental tenant of Soviet Socialist Realism and a touchstone for Pinzón’s politics of style. The call for clarity also almost certainly rebukes Gerchunoff’s ornate rhetoric.

Pinzón describes Katz’s life as “a ring in the chain of Jewish history” (5). She makes the case that Katz’s life, his “ring,” was forged not only by his *maskil* father and his youth in the shtetl, but also by Jewish ethics, and the great world that surrounded him, including the works of Leo Tolstoy, Miguel Cervantes, Maxim Gorky, and Romain Rolland. She notes,

nit bloyz iz er geven ongeknipt on zey: er hot oykh undere farknipt in ot der vunderlekher keyt. Mit zayne iberzetsungen hot er getsoyn un farkirtst mamesh astronomishe shtokhim: sholokhovs “shtiln don” un nikolay ognievs “togbukh fun kostia riabtsev”, fun rusish. Goyraldeses “don segundo sombra” un benito lintshs “royb-foycl fun la florida”. pairo un sarmiento hobn zikh gegeb di hant mit undzer alberto gershunov—durkh im (5).¹⁴⁴

¹⁴³ Generally, when I transliterate, I use the YIVO standard, which is based on the pronunciation of Livitsh Yiddish for a anglophone speakers. Transliteration is complicated both by Yiddish dialect (the pronunciation of the same printed word can vary widely) and by the language into which Yiddish is being transliterated. Spanish speakers, for example, transliterate the journal *Di Yidische Froy* as *Di Idishe Froi*. In this case, I follow their transliteration.

¹⁴⁴ not only was he forged by them: he also forged another ring in the wondrous chain. With his translations he pulled and tightened astronomical stitches: Sholokhov’s *And Quiet Flows*

Pinzón praises Katz at the same time that she elaborates her own theory of translation. Engaging with “the great world around” the translator forges links in the wondrous chain of Jewish history. The translator Katz pulls artistic creations across the borders of language, space and time. Pinzón praises Katz’s work for bringing Lynch and Güiraldes, Sholokhov and Ognev, to the Jews, rather than bringing the Jews to them (although Pinzón also did quite a bit of translating from Yiddish into Spanish).

In fact, even when she writes about Katz’s translation of *Don Quijote*—which she calls his “song of songs”—she writes of it as Jewish text, as “another ring in the great chain” (5). *Don Quijote* loomed large for Jewish Argentine writers. As mentioned in the first chapter, it was Gerchunoff’s Ur-text, the model for both his prose style and world view. For Gerchunoff, *Don Quijote* was the great Hispanic contribution to world literature and culture, the text that made him Argentine, and transformed Argentines into cultured human beings.¹⁴⁵ When Pinzón lists great works of world literature, she almost always mentions Cervantes. However, while Gerchunoff’s *Quijote* opens his own small world outward, towards the universal, Pinzón’s *Quijote* travels inwards, into the Jewish circle. Pinzón writes of Katz’s translation:

the Don, and Nikolai Ognev’s *Kostia Riabstev’s Diary*, from Russian. Ricardo Güiraldes’ *Don Segundo Sombra*, and Benito Lynch’s *The Vultures of La Florida* [*Los Caranchos de la Florida*]. Through him, Payro and Sarmiento are introduced to our Alberto Gerchunoff” (5). It is worth noting that Pinzón claims Gerchunoff as “our” Alberto. While the linguistic and political conflicts were real, he was also a beloved member of the Jewish community.

¹⁴⁵ He writes in *La jofaina maravillosa* of discovering *Don Quijote* as a young factory worker. Cervantes’ literary prose—“ciertamente yo no penetraba bien el sentido de aquel idioma tan distante al que oía en la fábrica” (18), and taught him his life’s code of behavior: “el quijotismo, que es el humanismo viviente . . . se transfundió el grey común” (77).

volt er nor ibergeezts ot dos eyne verk—volt er shoyn derfar aleyh fardint zayn ort in der yidisher literatur . . . dermit hot pinie kats, der groseleser yungerman vos is ongekumen aher, tsu di zid-amerikaner breg, “makhn-Amerike”—dos heyst zi helfn makhn greser, shener, raykher un frukhtiker,—opgegeben zayn tsinz tsu der muter fun der hispanioamerikaner kultur. Un in der figur fun dem groysn bal-hakhloymes, in dem “kavalir fun der hofenung,” hot er opgegebn . . . koved ot di ale bal-hakhaloymes: fun yosefn on biz menakhem-mendl.

ot di ale vos hobn zikh amol aroysgelozt fun zeyer land,—af “rosinantes” oder tsfus—zukhn af der breyter velt a bisl broyt un a brokn glik . . . (5-6)¹⁴⁶

This active model of translation, echoes with Katz’s own commentary on his translation of *Los gauchos judíos*. According to Pinzón, by translating *Don Quijote*, Katz does not merely deliver the content of a great work of Hispanic culture to Yiddish readers, he contributes to the canon of Jewish (or Yiddish, the word “Yiddish” is ambiguous) literature. By translating, Katz forges a link in the great Jewish chain. Further, and tellingly, Katz’s *Don Kihot* contributes to Spanish American culture. Here, the word “American” is crucial. *Don Quijote*, is not only a

¹⁴⁶ if he had only translated this one work—this work alone, he would have reserved his spot in Jewish (Yiddish) literature . . . With it, Pinie Katz, the great young man who came here, to the South-American shore, “making-America”—this is called, helped make it greater, more beautiful, richer and fruitful,—giving his spark to the mother of HispanoAmerican culture. In the figure of the great fool, and the “cavalier of hope,” he offered . . . dignity to all dreamers: from Yosef to Menakhem-Mendl.

To all of those who once fled their country, on “Rosinantes” or on foot—looking to the broader world for a bit of bread and a crumb of luck . . .

classic Spanish novel, it also enjoys a tremendous afterlife in Latin American letters. Katz, the newest comer, adds to the great work—in Yiddish. Even if no non-Jewish Argentine *ever* reads *Don kihot*—it is obviously inaccessible non-Yiddish speakers—Katz has deepened, enriched and fructified the great work. And he has done it from the Yiddish periphery. However, as important as it is that Katz has enriched the Hispanic world of letters with his translation, Pinzón seems to care most about Katz’s contribution to the Jewish world. When she writes that with the figure of the great fool, “he” offered dignity to dreamers from Yosef to Menakhem-Mendl, the “he” is Katz, not Cervantes. The “*kavalir fun der hofenung*,” belongs to Katz, and to Jewish literature—to Sholem Aleichem and the Hebrew Bible—as much as he belongs to Cervantes. In an almost subversive move, Pinzón depicts the central figure in Spanish American letters as a Jewish immigrant. She’s making Spanish America Jewish.

Pinzón manages to make even the famous Argentine journalist and short story writer, Roberto Payró, Jewish.¹⁴⁷ She writes,

vi modne es zol nisht oyszen, iz dos ober azoy: farn yidishn leyener, far vemen di modenerne argentiner literatur iz kimat fremd, far dem leyener vos vet veln zikh tsu ir dernentern un mit ir zikh bakenen, vet oyskumen, az der shrayber vemen er vet tsum bestn farshteyn un banemen, der shrayber, vos vet tsum noentstn zayn far zayn psikhologie un gedanken-

¹⁴⁷ Payró was one of Gerchunoff’s mentors. In an essay entitled “Un Quijote Argentino,” Gerchunoff connects the heroic Payró (heroic in his work as a correspondent during the first world war) to the values expressed by Cervantes.

gang—dos iz der same argentinishster fun ale shrayber: roberto payro
(9).¹⁴⁸

Although modern Argentine literature is foreign (*fremd* can also mean alienating), the Jewish/Yiddish reader, will paradoxically find himself reflected in the work of Roberto Payró, “the most Argentine” of all writers, who is also the closest—psychologically and intellectually—to Jewish writers. This is a reverse Gerchunoffian strategy. Rather than arguing—in Spanish—that Jews are just like Argentines, she argues—in Yiddish—that the most Argentine writer is actually just like Jews. Indeed, comparing the town of Pago Chico to the well-known towns of Yiddish literature, Yehupetz, Glupsk, and Kasrilevke, she argues “oyszen bakant un heymish vet im pairos “pago tsiko” [Payró’s *Pago Chico* will seem familiar and heymish] (9), not only because the town itself seems like a town in eastern Europe, but also because in Payró’s collection, the reader will see that which is “heymish fun der yidisher literature—dos iz der sholem-aleykhemisher humor un di mendelische satire” [hemyish from Yiddish literature—sholem-aleichem-like humor and medele-like satire] (9). She neatly folds Payró’s work, in both content and style, into the tradition of Yiddish writing. The father and grandfather of Yiddish literature become adjectives used to describe the work of the “most Argentine writer.”

¹⁴⁸ How strange it seems, yet it is true: for the Yiddish reader, for whom modern Argentine Literature is almost foreign, for the reader who wants to approach and get know it, will realize that the writer who he will best understand and comprehend, the writer who is closest due to his psychology and way of thinking—this is the most Argentine of all writers: Roberto Payro.

Not only is Payró's fiction Jewish in its themes and styles, Payró himself is the grandson of a Catalan immigrant, who (exactly) like Katz, "gekumen 'makhn amerika,' dos heyst, zi bafрукhtikn, zi makhn shtarker, raykher" [coming to "make America," this means, fructify it, make it stronger and richer] (9). When Gerchunoff argues for important contributions made by immigrants, he directs a political argument to elite Argentines who have the power to change immigration laws and quotas. When Pinzón praises the effort by immigrants to strengthen the Argentine nation, she does so in Yiddish to a largely female audience (this article was published in a women's magazine). The example of Payró's grandfather shows readers that an immigrant, loyal to his own small and threatened language, can not only "make America," but also that she, and immigrant, can produce children and grandchildren who will be "the most Argentine." This is not an argument for assimilation given that "the most Argentine" is actually Jewish in his world view, psychology and humor.

Pinzón implies that Payró's background partially accounts for his ability to produce a text that feels familiar to Yiddish readers. She explains that the stories of *Pago Chico* depict the struggles of the impoverished, ethnically mixed (mostly Spanish and Italian) citizens of a small town under the yoke of a corrupt, incompetent and semi-feudal ruling class. In Pinzón's description, Pago Chico sounds very much like a rural version of a conventillo, and *Pago Chico* very much like an Italian Creole version of her novel, *Der hoyf on fentster*. Pinzón remarks

oyb pairos zeyde iz geven fun di vos zaynen aher gekumen "makhn amerike", iz dos eynikl shoyn geven fun di, vos zaynen gehstanen mamesh

bam bereyshis, ba di geburt-veyen fun dos, vos es shtelt mit zikh for der oyfkum fun a naves folks-gevisn oder, vi er aleyn drikt zikh oys . . . “veystu leyener, fun vos du bist es geven okersht a tsushoyer ?Nit mer un nit vintsiker—vi fun di ershte otem-tsug fun a demokratsie vos gedayet ersht, un fun di breyshisdike bavegunen fun a groyse shotot vos gefint zikh nokh in der vig (10).¹⁴⁹

Once again, Pinzón links Payró’s heritage—his grandfather who helped make America—to the Jewish experience. Immigrants “make America.” They enrich the new world with their languages, cultures, political ideology. As outsiders, they work to gain access to existing structures which they strengthen. However, their descendants—native speakers of the dominant language, potential members of the elite—can (and should) do more. Pinzón argues that Payró’s writing actually makes something new: real democracy. Payró calls attention to problematic social and political structures at the same time that he depicts the people suffering under these structures with humor, sympathy and humanity. And even if Payró has abandoned Catalan for Spanish, his Pago Chico, a place peopled by Italian creoles, gestates

¹⁴⁹ If Payró’s grandfather was one of those who came here to “make America,” then the grandson was one of those who stood at the genesis, at the birth-pangs of this, which was planted by them, the origin of a new folk-knowledge, or as he himself published . . . “Do you know, reader, to what you have just been an audience? Nothing more and nothing less—than the first breaths of a gestating democracy, and the first movements of a great city that is still in its cradle.

Here are Payró’s—very similar—words from the epilogue to *Pago Chico*: “sabes a qué espectáculo hemos asistido juntos sin saberlo? ¡Nada menos que a las primeras palpitations de una democracia en gestación y a los primeros desperezamientos de una gran ciudad en la cuna!” (213). [Do you know what we have just witnessed without realizing it? Nothing less than the first pangs of a gestating democracy and the first stretches of a great city in its cradle!!]

democracy. *Pago Chico* is the rural compliment to Pinzón's *Der hoyf on fentster*, the urban cradle of folks knowledge and the coming world.

IV. “khudio. hebreo. undzer shprakh”: Ours, Yours / Language and the State

Pinzón's most significant work, *Der hoyf on fentster* (*The Courtyard Without Windows*) (1965), an immigrant coming of age story, depicts the Buenos Aires of Pinzón's childhood and also conveys her hopes for Argentina's future. The majority of the action takes place in a multilingual, multiethnic conventillo, a setting resonant for the Argentine immigrant experience. While the conventillo has been compared to the Lower East Side tenement, its hoyf, or inner courtyard, distinguishes this “Argentine tenement” from its iconic US counterpart. Separated by a gate from the alienating streets beyond its walls, Pinzón's *hoyf* demarcates an alternative space of multilingual exchange that stands in opposition to the monolingual nationalism—enforced at school and in the streets—of the Argentine state.

A contact zone, the hoyf functions as the novel's physical and ideological center. It is a hybrid space where native-born Argentines, Spanish, Italian and Jewish Russian immigrants—each in their own languages—fight, discipline their children, wash their clothes, sing songs of freedom, and learn to live together. Rather than merely an object of representation contained within the novel, the *hoyf* is a synecdoche for the novel itself that challenges both monolingual Argentine nationalism and also the idea of a singular Yiddish voice. Both novel and hoyf are

cultural contact zones where an array of unexpected sources meet. In the *hojf*, peoples and languages come together. In the novel, Argentine nationalist myths and Stalin Prize-winning Socialist realist novels mingle with the works of Sholem Aleichem, I.L. Peretz, Shomer, Pinie Katz, Roberto Payró, and Harriet Beecher Stowe.

Both novel and *hojf* evince what Mary Louise Pratt calls a “contact perspective” that “emphasizes how subjects are constituted in their relations to each other . . . not in terms of separateness or apartheid, but in terms of copresence, interaction, interlocking understandings and practices, often within radically asymmetrical relations of power” (7). The novel depicts the interaction of multilingual characters in the *hojf* as a means of interrogating asymmetrical power relations specifically on the field of language. A communal space of distinctive linguistic subcultures, the *hojf* is synecdoche not only for the novel, but also the Argentine nation, a mosaic rather than a *crizol de razas*. Pinzón’s metalinguistic argument addresses at least two audiences. She offers a Yiddish novel to the multilingual mosaic of Argentine literature, and she offers an Argentine novel—written in Spanish-inflected Yiddish—to the mosaic of American Yiddish literature.

One of the novel’s pivotal scenes takes place in 1917. Etl witnesses a celebration of the Bolshevik overthrow of the Russian Provisional Government in the streets of Buenos Aires. Impoverished Argentines sing, drink, and toast “a holiday for the whole world” (277). Arriving at the *hojf*, Etl realizes the import of the joyous revelry. Not only are all of the neighbors standing at a table constructed out of each

household's individual table, covered by a cloth made-up of each household's tablecloth, but they are also singing the same song:

mit der zelber melodie, mit der zelibiker yontefdiker fayerlekhkeyt,—zingt eyder fun zey—af an ander shprakh: der tate zingt es af yidish, siome mit abramen—af rusish, un medina der shloser un nokh a por—af shpanish. un andere—zingen ingantsn dos lid on verter—nor zeyere shtimes gisn zikh tsuzamen ineynem un dos lid kumt aroys a shtarks, a mekhtiks, a gants Un fun demolt on iz ba ir in zkhroynes farblibn, az—a revolutsie iz epes azoyns: . . . ale mentshn kukn eyner afn andern—mit frayntshaft un libshaft. un ale ineynem zingen a lid—af voser shprakh es zol nit zayn—iz dos dos zelibike lid—a shtarks, a mekhtiks, a gants (279-280).¹⁵⁰

In Etl's memory, friendship, love and the multilingual song are something like a revolution. In singing, the members of the *hoyf*, though divided by their histories, languages, and cultures, recognize themselves as family. Crucially, the song becomes “complete” not as it erases the linguistic particularity of its singers, but as it welcomes even singers unfamiliar with the words. The histories contained within the Russian, Yiddish, and Spanish languages make it possible to imagine an Argentine communist revolution, sparked by the revolution in Russia. The novel expresses its

¹⁵⁰ with the same melody, with the same holiday spirit—each one of them sang in a different language: her dad sang in Yiddish, Siome and Abram in Russian, and Medina, the locksmith and a few others, in Spanish. And others sang the whole song without words—only their voices poured together as one and the song came out strong, and courageous and complete. . . . And from then on in her memory, revolution was something like this . . . everyone looks at one another with friendship and love. And everyone sings a song in the same voice—in whichever language—it's the same song—a strong, courageous and whole song.

political optimism *through language*. Rather than the biblical babble so feared by Argentine elites, who enforced Standard Spanish, Pinzón's revolutionary song is, to borrow Walter Benjamin's term, a "fragment of a greater vessel."¹⁵¹

However the song produces its multilingual revolution and becomes Etl's memory of revolution in the very same moment; the novel's very next chapter depicts the events of La Semana Trágica (1919) in which a general strike (prompted by the police killing of several striking workers at a metallurgy factory) and anti-Semitic agitation by the Catholic church, led to the attack of Jews and union members by a group spearheaded by the conservative and nationalist Liga Patriótica (with tacit permission of the police). Offices of the Bundist association, libraries and archives were burned, and Jewish neighborhoods were attacked (Mirelman 62-65). The nineteen-teens were a less than hospitable time for immigrants to Buenos Aires. The celebration of centennial had occasioned not only fervent expressions of Argentine patriotism, but also backlash against the realities of eastern European immigration. Argentine schools were under increasing pressure to use Spanish language education to produce citizens. La Semana Trágica loomed large in the Jewish imagination as Jewish immigrants recognized it as the first (and, as it turns out, only) pogrom on American soil.

The multilingual hoyf, with its shared melody, stands in opposition to such brutal expressions of Argentine nationalism. The shared outdoor space of the hoyf, separated by a gate from the alienating streets beyond its walls, is the locus of

¹⁵¹ See Walter Benjamin.

Pinzón's working out of a collective multilingual politics. She emphasizes the hoyf's centrality by placing the word in quotation marks each of the hundreds of times it appears in the novel. The quotation marks function on several levels. First, they constantly remind the reader that *Der hoyf on fentster* is, perhaps above all else, "about" translation. "Hoyf" somewhat awkwardly translates the Spanish word "patio" (the novel's title page transliterates the title as *Der hoif on fentzer (el patio sin ventanas)*). While there were no conventillos in Eastern Europe, the word "hoyf" did refer to an outdoor space enclosed by houses along most of its perimeter. And just as Pinzón emphasizes the importance of the hoyf—the central social space—over and above the structure of the conventillo as a whole, in eastern Europe, "hoyf" referred both to social space between the houses, and to the complex of houses themselves (Senderovich 3).¹⁵² The eastern European hoyf and the hoyf on fentster are social spaces, as important to the life of the community than the private indoor spaces that surround them. When Pinzón refers to the "patio" as a "hoyf," and continually sets the reference apart from the rest of the text, she emphasizes the hybrid nature of the novel. Etl's "hoyf" is an American space because in it converge the eastern European hoyf, with its associated complex historical associations, and an Argentine patio, a zone where peoples and languages come into contact.

¹⁵² Senderovich writes that the word hoyf has a number of connotations. In Bashevis Singer's work, it has been translated as estate (with aristocratic undertones). It can also denote the physical space and cultural institution of the court of a Hassidic rebbe. The hoyf also became the focal point of some Soviet Jewish literature.

Pinzón, like Etl, received much of her literary education at home from the Yiddish books on her parents' shelves.¹⁵³ She learned Spanish in school and on the streets. Placing both the novel—and its author—in historical (and literary-historical) context allows us to see the *hojf* as the cradle of Pinzón's linguistic politics. Pinzón simultaneously inherits a line of Yiddish literary thinking that capitalizes on the radical potential offered by the spurned jargon, and a radical Argentine political moment that is both explosive and threatening. In the novel, the contrast between the Soviet Utopia and fragile reality of the American diaspora is dramatized when the multilingual and multiethnic celebrations of the Bolshevik revolution are quickly followed by an invasion (during the events that came to be called *la Semana Trágica*) of the *hojf* by the Argentine state. While in the eyes of the Argentine elite, one event led to the other as Russian immigrants, riled up by the Bolsheviks fomented revolution in Argentina, for Pinzón, the latter underscores the importance of the former. Police officers and soldiers force the neighbors outside, while inside, they upend their belongings. In Etl's house, a soldier rifles through the family's books, looking for contraband political material. The soldier asks Etl's dad

—dayne bikher?

—mayne—hot der tate geentfert.

—Un tsu vos darfstu, drekishen ruso, bikher?

¹⁵³ I don't read Etl and Pinzón as one and the same—or for that matter read Pinzón and Shliapochnik as one and the same. However, many of the details of Shliapochnik's life match up with the details of Etl's story. Alan Astro, notes that Etl was “modeled on Pinzón in her early years” (Jewish Women's Archive).

. . . Nor hot geentfert hot er, mit a modne shtiler un ayngeltener shtime:
—tsum leyenen, mayn her. Banakht, s'iz umetik—leyent men. Men vert a
bisl kliger.

—Ikh vel dir gebn “kluger”! Ir zent shoyt azoy oykh tsu klug! Gekumen
aher, men hot aykh arayngelozt in undzer land, ir est undzer broyt, undzer
fleysh, un itst hot zikh aykh farglust revolutsies makhn! Mirn aykh vayzn,
ir maksimalistn, vukhnikes, vos ir zayt.

. . . Etl hot fun der vaytn gezen: er halt im mitn kop arop, dem bukh. Yener
hot a freg geton bam tatn:

—af voser shprakh zaynen zey, di bikher dayne?

Der tate, punkt azoy shtil, vi frier:

—yidish.

Un zeendik as yener farshteyt nisht, fartaytsht er:

khudio. hebreo. undzer shprakh.

In eyer kurvisher mame, mit der shprakh ayerer ineynem! Vos far a tayvl

ken zey den farshtayn? (284-285). ¹⁵⁴

¹⁵⁴ “Are these your books?”

“Mine,” Dad answered.

“And why do you need books, dirty Ruso?”

He answered with a strange, still and restrained voice:

“To read, mi señor. At night, it’s important that one reads, to get a bit smarter.”

“I’ll give you smarter. You are already too smart. Coming here, you settle (?? check this) in our country, you eat our bread, our meat, and now you want to make a revolution! We know you, you Maximalists, usurer that you are!”

. . . From far away, Etl noticed: he had the book upside down. He asked dad:

“What language are your books in?”

Dad, just as still as before:

“Yiddish.”

This scene stages a clash of political world views as embodied in language.¹⁵⁵ Benedict Anderson notes that between Marx's death and Lenin's rise to power in 1917, orthodox Marxism was less a prevalent world-wide leftist ideology than Anarchism.¹⁵⁶ Pinzón's text reflects the anarchist based political currents of Etl's world; the man the police arrest at the end of the chapter—Dovidke, Etl's dear friend—is an active Jewish anarchist. (In Argentina, at the time, "maximalist" described anarchists, anarchosyndicalists, and communists). And, as Anderson points out, not only was Anarchism (in the pre-Soviet days) the most seriously international leftist ideology, anarchists were, "the most productive linguistic translators of the era—out of need" (xvi).¹⁵⁷ The intrusion of the monolingual State into site of anarchist of Jewish translation scene makes clear that this scene stages something other than the invasion of private space. The soldier is not simply defiling the domestic space when he enters the home and tosses belongings on the floor. Rather, his mandate to suppress political material (which is hidden from him in a language he cannot understand) stands in direct contrast with the revolutionary song that knits a

And seeing that he didn't understand, dad translated:

"Jewish. Hebrew. Our language."

"To your whore of a mother with your whole language. What kind of devil could understand this?"

¹⁵⁵ The text repeats over and over that there are both police and soldiers present. The police have come to the *hojf* before—called by the neighbors to settle both domestic and communal disputes—but the novel presence of soldiers hammers home the potentially repressive power of the state.

¹⁵⁶ The events of 1917 and 1919 depicted by *Der hoyf on fentster* also reflect to some extent a general shift from anarchism to Bolshevism. Anarchists factor heavily in the events surrounding *La semana trágica*, but they increasingly fade from view as the Soviet Union becomes the main focus of leftist concerns of Pinzón's later journalistic work.

¹⁵⁷ Anarchism, more than other ideologies traveled with immigrants to the New World, the Mediterranean, Asia and Africa (Anderson xv).

whole out of different languages and cultures. In the hoyf, neighbors, forced by poverty into close quarters, learn each other's burdens and languages. The political and the linguistic become inseparable as the varied languages in which the hoyf's residents celebrate the Bolshevik revolution are directly contrasted with the suppressive and assimilative program of the monolingual state. The hoyf becomes a crucible for a different way of being-in-nation.¹⁵⁸

It is not then surprising that this chapter slants its use of the adjective "heymish" (homelike) as a means of distinguishing between self (the residents of the hoyf) and other (the police as the embodied—and monolingual—authority of the state). Everything associated with the hoyf and its residents is described as heymish—from the smell of bodies to the poverty. Crucially, the word is not used to describe that which is Jewish, rather that which is hoyfish in contrast to that which invades. This point is underlined when one of the native Argentine members of the hoyf stands up for his neighbors, only to be dismissed by the leader of the police as having become "Ruso" by selling himself to said Rusos (301).¹⁵⁹ However, surprisingly, the gestures that the police make while talking amongst themselves are also described as heymish. Indeed, the word "heym" appears four times in three sentences that describe a member of the Liga Patriótica who has hair that shines

¹⁵⁸ This is not to say that the picture that the novel paints of hoyf living is idyllic—far from it. Children scream from hunger, husbands murder their wives, and the conventillo is awash with petty intrigue and violence. However, its members stand together against the state, across their differences.

¹⁵⁹ In Argentina at this time, Russian Jews were associated with radical agitation and were known as "Rusos"—a somewhat strange territorialization of a people who fled their "native" land, in part, because they were not accepted as Russians.

“umheymlekhn.” He gazes at the leader of the invasion with a “heymish” look, and, to top it all off, “er iz tsu tsu im,vi a heymisher tsu a heymish” [he went to him like one insider to another] (299). Here, home means inside; the boy’s hair shines to the members of the hoyf in an un-heym-like way but, when he speaks to his fellow officer, it’s as if he’s speaking with family. The police are invaders, but they are insiders to each other; heym demarcates the two communities who use different languages systems (one multilingual, one monolingual), use different gestures, smell and smell of different scents, and in move different spaces.

This difference between hoyf and state is further emphasized when the soldier, looking through Etl’s father’s books, written in an un-decodable, and therefore entirely foreign script, says, “you come to our country, you eat our bread, our meat and now you want to make a revolution. We know you, you Maximalists, usurer.” The repetition of the adjective “our” to modify “country,” “bread” and “meat” stands in stark contrast to “you” and “your revolution.” And somehow, “you” are Maximalists, or extreme anarchists, *and* usurers. Lacking detailed knowledge, the soldier resorts to age-old stereotypes of the Jew as both revolutionary and capitalist par excellence. For the soldier, the hoyf is inscrutable, and all of its tenants—Jew and non-Jew alike— potential revolutionary Maximalist “Rusos.”¹⁶⁰

“We,” the soldier says, “know you.” But perhaps not. In trickster fashion, Etl’s father subtly undermines the soldier, who is depicted as too ignorant to know

¹⁶⁰ In the wake of the 1919 strike, a civilian group, known as the Guardia Blanca, “launched physical attacks against anarchists, including principally foreign workers who “looked” maximalist or “Russian” (Mirelman 62).

when he is being mocked.¹⁶¹ The state may have the power, but the Rusos have the smarts—and the hidden transcript. While the soldier sees books as a source of communist sedition, Etl’s father, simultaneously giving him the “respect” warranted by his position (meyn her), wryly informs him that studying books at night makes one smarter. He serves up “good citizen,” a man striving to better himself in his new country. The strangeness and restraint that Etl hears in her father’s voice lets the reader know that the words coming out of her father’s mouth are a cover. The Hebrew alphabet similarly covers potential evidence; Etl notices that Yiddish writing is so foreign to the soldier that he holds the book upside down. Even when her father names the language, Yiddish, the soldier still requires translation. Which he provides: “Jewish. Hebrew. Our language.”

While “Khudio” *is* a translation of the word “Yiddish” into Spanish (“Yiddish” means both Yiddish and Jewish), “Hebreo” is not a translation of “Yiddish,” but refers to Hebrew. Etl’s father does seem, on one level, to be engaged in a good-faith act of translation; in a series of substitutions, he accommodates the Argentine’s ignorance: if he hasn’t heard of Yiddish, perhaps he’s heard the word “judio.” If he doesn’t recognize “judio,” perhaps “Hebrew,” the language of the Bible, will be more familiar to him. After all, Hebrew and Yiddish—right-side up or upside down—are equally unintelligible to the uninformed. If he hasn’t heard of

¹⁶¹ See the introduction to Naomi Seidman’s *Faithful Renderings* for a discussion of how Yiddish has historically provided Jews with the tools to create a “hidden transcript, the secret communication of a subjugated group in contrast with the public transcript, that is, official history as a record of what can be said in the presence of power” (4).

either Jewish language, he can at least understand that this is “our language.” And we have come full circle. This final explanation is so vague as to be pointless; the soldier has made it quite clear that he knows that the book is not written in “his” language. The only distinctions that matter here are yours and mine.

Describing “Jewish,” and “Hebrew” as “our language,” Etl’s father stakes out his linguistic territory. The soldier knows he’s been bested, conceding, “to your whore of a mother with your whole language.” Unable to read the mysterious text, he resorts to dismissal and violence. The words “your whore of a mother” parallel his lascivious treatment of Etl’s mother. On his way out of the door, defeated by linguistic trickery, he comments, “with such a robust young wife, one shouldn’t read at night, yokel” (az m’hot aza yoderdik vaybl, leyent men nisht kayen bikhlekh banakht, du yold!) (285). The soldier again falls back on anti-Semitic stereotypes: the effeminate Jewish man prefers to read a book than attend to his young wife. However, Etl’s father has won this round. Because, of course, here, even Spanish has become a Jewish language. Not only has the soldier been deceived in “his” own language, but the novel itself Judaizes Spanish by rendering the entire dialogue in Yiddish, and hides its revolutionary politics behind its Yiddish words.

Back out in the hoyf, the soldier faces another kind of resistance, as a native-born Argentine, Medina, stands in solidarity with his frightened neighbors.¹⁶² Medina informs the soldier, “Mi Señor, here in the hoyf there are no rebels. Only peaceful, working people. Poor—but honest” [mayn her . . . Do in hoyf zeynen keyn fareter

¹⁶² He is Argentine, but “medina” means country in Yiddish.

nishto. Bloyz rueke, arbetzame mentshn. Oreme—ober ornlekhe] (300). The soldier demands that Medina be silent and asks him if he is a “Ruso.” Medina responds, “I am Argentine, mi Señor. Juan Carlos Medina is my name” [an argentinian, mayn her. Khuan Karlos Medina iz meyn nomen] (300). Medina, in the same carefully respectful register that Etl’s father employed to speak with the same soldier, simultaneously claims the members of the *hoif*, and identifies himself as Argentine. However, the state rejects dual loyalties. The soldier, resorting again to stereotypes, barks, “Son of a whore! And you are Argentine? Have you sold yourself to them, to the rusos? Will you also become a usurer, and make revolution?” [du kurvesher zun! un du bist es an argentinian? host zikh farkoyft tsu zey, tsu di rusos, vilst oykh nemen vukher, makhn revolutsies?] (300). As Medina continues to defend his neighbors, the soldier remarks, “you are even more ruso than they are” [bistu nokh mer ruso fun zey] (300). The notion that the Jewish usurers have paid Medina to betray his “natural” loyalty to the nation of his birth contains a counterintuitive truth: Jews have not bought Medina, rather, the state has sold him out. Capitalism inevitably consigns some citizens to abjection. Medina, an Argentine, has fallen in with those who are Other to the state. For Medina, the ideology of Argentinianess pales in comparison to the lived realities of the *hoif*—both the hardships of poverty and the privilege of seeing the humanity of others up close.

This scene, terrifying as it is, echoes the optimism of the revolutionary celebrations. Medina attempts to simultaneously remain committed to his home culture, and reach beyond himself to other languages, other peoples, other traditions.

The soldier cannot understand multiple loyalties, and demands that Medina choose. In the confrontation between the two men—one of the *hojf*, the other of the state, one who reaches across boundaries, the other who reinforces them—Pinzón advocates for a world in which, “everyone looks at one another with friendship and love. And everyone sings a song in the same voice—in whichever language—it’s the same song—a strong, courageous and whole song” (279-280). The song includes Etl and her family, Medina, and anyone else who joins their voice to the melody. The novel simultaneously rebukes and looks past monolingual nationalism.

V. Glaykhe fleysike un pinktlekhe shiler : Getting Schooled

When the state violently intrudes into the *conventillo*, Etl has already experienced the pressures of assimilation at school. Education had been the site of vexed nationalist debate in Argentina since the end of the 19th century. In 1884, imagining that schools could alchemize citizens out of immigrants, the government passed *La ley nacional de educación* which dictated that “*la instrucción cívica*” should be “in agreement with the country’s political system (national history, national geography, national language)” [de acuerdo con el régimen político del país (historia nacional, la geografía nacional, el idioma nacional)] (qtd in Bertoni 43). Schools were directed to educate children into Spanish and Argentineness. However, from the beginning of the 20th century, a network of Jewish schools existed alongside state schools. Efraim Zadoff argues that while progressive Argentine Jews initially saw Yiddish as a means of providing the masses with an ideological education, by the

mid-1940s, as a result of the Communist Party's more lenient attitude towards Yiddish, the ICUF journal (for which Pinzón wrote) began to advocate for Yiddish as a means of fostering Jewish cultural and national values in school children (285).¹⁶³ By the mid-1950s, ICUF was running its own federation of progressive schools in which "Yiddish as a cultural asset continued to play a central role" along with "their teaching of fraternity among the proletariat, irrespective of nationality" (286). Pinzón taught Yiddish at ICUF sponsored Chiam Zhitlovsky and I L Peretz schools. In 1953 debates raged in Argentine Jewish newspapers over the wisdom of instructing children in a language increasingly being replaced by Hebrew (and decimated by the Holocaust). Pinzón wrote an open letter to the leftist Yiddish daily, *Di Presse*, inviting the paper's editors to witness for themselves the beautiful Yiddish spoken by her students. She attested to the authenticity of student Yiddish by asking the editors to listen for their "soft el" (a sound which is difficult for Spanish speakers to pronounce).¹⁶⁴

While Etl happily encounters Argentine culture in the streets—in the form of parades and holidays—the novel's discomfort with assimilation is thematized at school, where Etl endures the boredom of indoctrination through mindless repetition, and merciless teasing by her peers for her love of Yiddish novels. Etl's first encounter with the school system offers a critique of patriotism:

¹⁶³ There was, as always, dissent in the ranks. Many teachers used traditional etymological spelling in official documents, but taught etymological orthography alongside the phonetic transliteration in the classroom (Zadoff 286).

¹⁶⁴ Qtd in Lozerstein

Oykh vi mentshn lebn zikh es in di farsheydnste shtet un lender fun der velt hot zikh etl fun der lerke dervust: vegn khinezer mit lange tep, vos esn rayz mit azelkhe shtekelkeh, un feyglishe nestn in der zup; un fun vilde mentshn, vos esn afilu menstsh-fleysh . .

nor fun ayn sort lebn hot etl ir keynmol nit gehert reydn un dertseyln: vi azoy es hobn gegesn, geredt, geshofn un zikh arumgekrigt di mentshn in “hoyf”—di gazshegas, italiener un yidn . . gleykh zey voltn far der lereke gornit ekzistirt, un oyb yo—zaynen zey far ir fremder un vayter, vi di vayte un fremde khinezer (61-62).¹⁶⁵

The teacher’s ideology—her belief in the greatness of those *born* in Argentina—rests equally on xenophobic commentary and ignorance. As she contrasts the strange and uncivilized habits of savages and Chinese with the courage and fortune of Argentines, Argentine comes to mean civilized. At the same time, the teacher’s denial of the lives of poor and immigrant students (who may, like the savages she describes, eat, sleep, and speak differently from the nation’s heroes) restricts the definition of Argentine to

¹⁶⁵ Ethel would repeat every day—to the point of dizziness and fatigue—what the teacher instructed her regarding the nation’s grandeur, prosperity and vigor; the deeds of its *próceres*, it’s heroes. From those lessons it emerged that there was no better, wealthier, more heroic or beautiful land on the face of the earth, and no people more fortunate, intelligent or courageous than those born there.

Ethel also learned from the teacher how people lived in the most diverse cities and countries in the world. There were Chinese who wore long braids, ate rice with a kind of sticks, and dined on bird’s-nest soup; there were savages who consumed human flesh . . .

There was only one way of life Ethel never heard the teacher mention: the way people ate, spoke, slept and fought in her court yard . . . It was as though such people did not exist for the teacher. Or if they existed, they were even more foreign and remote than the foreign and remote Chinese (translation, Alan Astro).

a certain kind of cultivated, native born person. Etl— repeating the teacher’s message to the point of dizziness—is clearly vulnerable to patriotic indoctrination. However, teacher’s authority cracks when Etl realizes that as an immigrant, she knows an Argentina that her teacher cannot and will not see.

In this scene, it is particularly difficult to untangle the novel’s omniscient narrator from its author, Mimi Pinzón. To a great extent, Etl is an avatar for a young Adela Weinstein; the child’s observations will become the writer’s convictions. So although Etl is not yet sophisticated enough to move from observation to theorization, by juxtaposing the teacher’s Argentina with Etl’s Argentina, the Pinzón-narrator asks readers to consider not only the possibility that the teacher’s knowledge of “savages” and “Chinese” is ill-informed, but also that all stereotypes erase humanity in service of an agenda. A Yiddish-reading audience would likely be familiar with the notion that the experiences of a Jewish immigrant girl could be erased by nationalistic ideology, however, Pinzón pushes her readers further, challenging them to reject chauvinism and un-interrogated stereotypes of all kinds.

Etl continues to be vulnerable to nationalist mythology. When the family falls on hard times, and her mother refuses to send her to school with dirty clothes, Etl sneaks into her dirty uniform, and runs to school.¹⁶⁶ As she scurries, she imagines herself

¹⁶⁶The unrealistic—and morally freighted—demands of the scholastic sanitary regime are often contrasted with the difficult realities of housekeeping in the impoverished *hojf*.

shteyendik far di shiler in klas, un di lererke, vos shteyt nebn ir, halt a hant ba ir afn aksl un dertseylt nokhamol di kinder vegn sarmienton: —“vos iz eynmol, in a gus-regn, gekumen in shul areyn. eyninker aley; der eyntsiker shiler vos hot afilu in grestn shturem nit farfelt tsu kumen in shul arayn . . .” un etl hot zikh aley; derfildt vi a shtikl krub tsu sarmienton—zi un er—altseyens glaykhe flaysike un pinktlekhe shiler (127).¹⁶⁷

Directly rebelling against the teacher’s earlier claim that Argentine heroes are native born, Etl aligns herself with Domingo Sarmiento, the nation’s founding father, through shared heroic qualities. The adjectives “fleysik” and “pintlekh” (industrious and exacting) call to mind Sarmiento’s own praise for his fantasy industrious northern European immigrants. Etl is remaking herself in the image of the state.

However, reality does not match Etl’s patriotic fantasy. She arrives in the classroom, and the teacher, mangling her family name (as usual), rebukes her for coming to school “when it pleases you” (ven dir glust zikh), and orders her to leave. Pinzón, who, as stated above, was an advocate for Yiddish instruction in Jewish schools, was undoubtedly familiar with Sarmiento’s contradictory attitude towards immigration. Samuel Baily points out that while Sarmiento initially gloried in the civilizing capacities of northern European immigrants, by the 1880s, he denounced Italian immigrants for refusing to assimilate. His main target was schools that provided instruction in Italian. Sarmiento lamented “We shall build, if we have not

standing before the students in class, and the teacher, who stands near her, rests a hand on her shoulder, and tells the children once again about Sarmiento— “who once came to school in the pouring rain; the only student who didn’t miss school in such a storm . . .” and Etl felt a bit of closeness to Sarmiento—her and him—identically industrious and exacting students.

already built, a Tower of Babel in America, its workmen speaking all tongues, not blending them together in the task of construction but each persisting in his own . . . one does not construct a homeland without patriotism as its cement” (qtd. in Baily 140). When Etl attempts to align herself with Sarmiento through a shared love of learning and sense of duty, she is rebuked. Interpreting Etl’s lateness as the result of disrespect rather than poverty, the teacher cannot see the Argentine “hero” who stands before her. Her blindness indicates, in part, why the novel had to be written in Yiddish. Etl’s story *is* the story of Babel, but Sarmiento, and his loyal pedagogues, reject babble; they seek to cement the nation with patriotism, a patriotism which can exist only in Spanish.

As dreadful and oppressive as school can be, expulsion at the end of Etl’s sixth year comes as a shattering loss. In the wake of the conference with her teacher and principal, Etl stands motionless, utterly bereft. (Etl’s expulsion is precipitated by her declaration to her teacher and the class that not only will she be a writer when she grows up but that her hero is Louise Michel, a French anarchist. Twelve-year-old budding anarchists are not welcome in State schools). The principal, finished with Etl, “umgekukt tsu ir un genumen redn shtil un heymish, mit der lererke, vos hot zikh ongeboygn tsu ir, ibern shreybtish” [not looking at her, began to speak quietly and heymishly with the teacher who was bent towards her over the writing table] (308). Once again, “heymish” separates insider from outsider. The teacher and principal, bent cozily over—of all things—a writing table, communicate with their gestures and tone that Etl stands beyond the pale.

Given how painful school has been, it is somewhat surprising that Etl uses the language of exile to describe her expulsion:

af ir lebn hot zikh etl nit gefilt azoy mius un iberik af der velt . . . zi hot poshut nit gevust, vos azoyns darf zi ton? . . . shteyn azoy vayter mitn bikhele in hant, vi a gulm un vartn . . . nor eyns hot zi gevust, etl: az zi filt zikh vi an aroysgevorfene, an iberike zakh; epes a zakh,—vos iz keynem nit neytik, un vos far ir iz epes in ergetz nito keyn ort . . . (308)¹⁶⁸

There are emotional and social realities to Etl’s dismissal. She feels rejected by her teacher and principal—and the affective dimension of citizen-making cannot be ignored.¹⁶⁹ Even when they treat her terribly, Etl longs to please her teachers. Further, and perhaps more disturbingly, her notion that she has become “something extraneous” (and the Yiddish repeats the word “zakh,” or thing) reflects a social reality. If she was invisible before as an as-of-yet-unassimilated school child, denied further education, she potentially permanently joins the ranks of the dispossessed. Ideology aside, expulsion from school dramatically curtails her family’s future economic stability. The state has thrown away a potentially brilliant interlocutor because it fears her politics. Exile from school continues a process begun during *La Semana Trágica*, only confirming that the Argentine state will not provide her with a home.

¹⁶⁸ In her life, she had never felt so terrible and extraneous in the world . . . she simply didn’t know what she should do . . . stay like this with her books in her hands, like a golem, and wait . . . Etl knew one thing: that she felt like something ugly, like something extraneous; some kind of a thing—which is completely useless, and for which there is no place (308)

¹⁶⁹ See Sara Ahmed..

Pinzón rejects the false “heym” offered by exclusionary patriotism, and instead finds lines of affiliation that cross over and tunnel under nationalist mythology and its demand for monolingual same-making. In the novel, and in her journalism, solidarity emerges out of provisional alliances: through language (Yiddishist to Yiddishist across national borders), literature, gender, shared emotion (there is much connection over crying and shared suffering as well as joy in the hoyf). In the hoyf, alliances can be multiple and even contradictory. However, micro-alliances are always subsumed under the common interest created by poverty. Poverty alone links speakers of different languages, practitioners of different religions, keepers of different customs, and concordantly, wealth separates same language speakers, religious believers and custom-keepers. When, Tsalke, the Jewish manager of the hoyf is threatened by his tenants during a conflict over garbage pickup, he comes to Etl’s father for help, arguing that the Jews in the hoyf should stick together, and support his position—heym should always be found with other Jews. Etl’s father responds angrily: “Mikh tsu ayere mshirim misht nit. Ba mir zaynen yidn—nit yidn—alts eyns. Abi a menstsh. A menstsh darf men zayn, ir hert? [Don’t get me mixed up in your business. To me Jews, non-Jews, are all one. Only human being. One should be a human being, do you hear?] (148). Tsalke asks Etl’s dad to override his class interests, in favor of Jewish solidarity. Etl’s father however, explains that he is a human-being—aligned with other human beings (the world mensch is loaded here, it conveys an ethical personhood)—before he is a Jew. However, this is not a universalism that denies cultural particularity. Rather, it is a considered socialist

position. Etl's father stands with his impoverished Spanish, Argentine, Italian and Jewish neighbors against the tyranny of Tsalke, the landlord's tool.

VI. Di froy—der mentsh—un di shraybern : Human Rights—Women's Rights

Pinzón's advocacy on behalf of linguistic and cultural minorities is inextricable from her advocacy on behalf of women. As noted above, Pinzón published literary criticism (and social commentary) for *Di idishe froy*, a women's magazine sponsored by ICUF, from 1950 through 1965. Over the course of fifteen years, she wrote for women about Shakespeare, Steinbeck, Hemingway, Ibsen, several (Yiddish and Russian language) Soviet writers and actors, Peretz, Sholem Aleichem, Sholem Ash, and several Argentine Yiddishists. She dedicated only two essays to Spanish-language Argentine writers: Roberto Payró—as mentioned above—and Alfonsina Storni, the whose poems she translated into Yiddish.

According to Pinzón, Storni, a woman who rebelled against the constraints of a patriarchal social order, accomplished much “in a land, vu der porurteyl tsu der froy —tsu der nit-khasene gehater, avade un avade,—iz geven umgeheyer groys” [in a country where the prejudice against women—against unmarried women, of course and of course—is unspeakably great](16). Storni rebelled by writing, living and teaching against patriarchal, patriotic prejudice. Pinzón implies that Storni committed suicide in 1938 because she found it impossible to survive as a single mother and working female artist in Argentina; Storni died of institutionalized patriarchy. And

although Storni is described in the first sentence of the article as “the Argentine poet,” readers are encouraged to connect with her along lines of shared oppression, as women. Pinzón’s advocacy for women is tied to her denunciation of patriotism and monolingualism. Thus, Pinzón admires women like Storni and Gitl Katalina Pershteyn, one of the founders of *Di idishe froi*, who, undereducated, and burdened by poverty and poor health, became autodidacts, and worked towards making a meaningful life under the twin constraints of patriarchy and capitalism.¹⁷⁰

Pinzón also critiques the constraints imposed by traditional Jewish religion and culture, and the ways in which such constraints are propagated by literature. In one of her earliest essays in *Di idishe froi*, she critiques the female characters created by “our greats” Sholem Aleichem and Mendele for being, “sombras humanas con formas femininas” [human shadows with female forms](1).¹⁷¹ Pinzón argues that in traditional Yiddish literature, female characters are so constrained—by the demands of religious patriarchy under which “al hombre pertenecen los seiscientos trece ‘mitzves’ . . . para ella nada” [the 613 mitzvahs belong to the man . . . she gets nothing](2), and by their male author’s lack of imagination—they are not “real” people with genuine inner lives, but rather empty shadows that can only respond to the beatings inflicted upon them with predetermined actions. She writes of the father and grandfather of Yiddish literature

¹⁷⁰ See Pinzón’s “Gitl: Katalina Perlshteyn: Makhshoves un zikhroynes tsum tentn yorgang.”

¹⁷¹ “La Condición Femenina en la obra de Peretz” (1951). Uniquely, this essay was published bilingually.

Existió en su obra la “ídene”, envuelta en toda clase de harapos sucios, agobiada por el pesado deber de tres “mitzves”, tan solo tres, que tan difícil tornaron su existencia y achicaron, limitaron su horizonte. Figura en su obra la niña, una criatura de poca importancia, jugado a las piedrecillas (“tchejins”) tal vez con algún deseo profundo, con un anhelo oculto, deseo que se evaporaba con las lágrimas el día de casamiento, que se derretía con las primeras velas sabáticas y que desaparecía al fin con los mil pequeños y grandes problemas que traía consigo la nueva y dura vida enterrado por las interminables noches de insomnio al lado de la cuna, al pensar días enteros cómo saciar el hambre de los suyos. Otro destino pudo tener tal vez en un caso especial “alguna muchacha judía caída,” que fué sacrificada por pecados ajenos (1).¹⁷²

Pinzón places “Yidine” in quotes because the Yidine, the difficult, complaining woman, is a stock character, traditionally the object of humorous or contempt on the part of a more fully fleshed out male character. However, Pinzón points out Yidines are made, not born. The insignificant little girl, playing jacks in the corner, dreaming her secret dreams, grows up only to be smothered by the three mitzvot when she

¹⁷² The “yidine” existed in their work. She was wrapped in all manner of dirty rags, smothered by the weighty obligations of three “mitzvahs,” which alone, made her existence so difficult, dominated her, and limited her horizons. The girl figures in their work, a creature of little importance, playing Jacks (“tsheykhns”), maybe with some deep desire, some hidden longing, that evaporated with tears on her wedding day, that melted with the first Sabbath candles and that finally disappeared with the thousand problems great and small brought by her new and difficult life, buried by the interminable nights spent next to the cradle, by spending entire days thinking of how to satisfy the hunger of her little ones. Another destiny might be had in the special case “some fallen Jewish girl” who was sacrificed for the sins of others.”

marries.¹⁷³ (Etl is not far from this reader's mind). Pinzón links the acts of ritual—the wedding day, the lighting of candles—to the erasure of female self-hood.

Undoubtedly, the daily domestic requirements of an impoverished woman's life, coupled with the demands of religion, were extremely oppressive in “real life.” However, while Pinzón was aware of the crushing material conditions of women's lives—which she highlights elsewhere—she argues that Sholem Aleichem and Mendele add insult to injury by ignoring the personhood of their burdened female characters, who are not “real” people with interior lives, but rather empty “symbols” whose presence is secondary to author's real interest in male characters. The “other” destiny, that of the prostitute, another pawn, a symbol, sacrificed for the sins of others, is both bleakly unfair, and sadly parallel to the fate of the wife.¹⁷⁴

Pinzón praises the female characters created by the leftist Yiddish writer, I. L. Peretz. She argues that Peretz's female characters aren't “símbolos, son seres de carne and hueso” [symbols, they are beings of flesh and bone] (4). And while there are “malvadas” in Peretz's work, Pinzón argues that these women are evil because they are the “producto de las condiciones del medio” [products of their environment] (4). She admires Peretz because his work performs a structural critique of the conditions that produce women's suffering and also portrays women acting within these

¹⁷³ Commandments reserved for women (lighting candles, separating a portion of the challah dough, and sexual separation during menstruation). Men have 613 mitzvot to fulfill. Pinzón implies that the women's commandments are a burden, while the men's are a privilege.

¹⁷⁴ When Etl's family falls on hard times and she is expected to take up the burden of caring for her brother and cleaning house, the novel dwells on her feeling of oppression and rebellion as she longs to read her books and play with other children in the hoyf.

constraints as living, breathing subjects, rather than mere plot devices. Pinzón argues that Peretz's greatest innovation is creating active, rather than passive, female characters:

Es notable como Peretz casi no creó mujeres pasivas y apáticas. Una mujer, especie “Bontzie Shvaig” no la podemos hallar. ¹⁷⁵ Revolucionaria, sublevada, en una forma desconocida en la literature judía hasta el momento vemos a la mujer pelear ya sea en su interior o con el medio por sus derechos humanos y de mujer . . . la mujer levanta la cabeza, eleva los brazos y no pudiendo golpear, maldice. Maldice a los hipócritas (4)¹⁷⁶

We might read Pinzón's praise of Peretz as an indication of her hopes for her own female protagonist, Etl, who, as the novel ends has begun to pick up her head and raise her arms.

In essays written in the 1950s, Pinzón contrasts capitalist oppression of women with the freedom offered to them by the Soviet Union, where a woman can live all of her identities—as a writer, a member of the proletariat, a socialist, and a mother—in harmony. She praises the Soviet Jewish writer, Shirke Gorsman, whom she visited in Soviet Union in the 1950s, remarking that “*der shreybn irer—iz a teyl—an ekhter, an umtsuteylbarer fun ir lebn. Di froy—der mentsh—un di*

¹⁷⁵ Interestingly, Bontshe is a man, one of Peretz's most famous characters, whose vision is so narrowed by poverty that when he is offered any wish granted at the gates of heaven, he chooses only to eat butter every day.

¹⁷⁶ It is notable that Peretz created almost no passive and apathetic women. We find no women of the “Bontzie Shvayg” type. Revolutionary, stirred up, in a form unknown in Jewish literature until now, we see the woman fight, be it in her interior or with her environment, for her human rights, her rights as a woman . . . the woman picks up her head, raises her arms and if she can't hit, curses. Curses the hypocrites.

shraybern—zaynen ba ir eyns [her writing is a piece of truth, indivisible from her life. For her, woman—person—and writer—are one] (8). Pinzón closes the essay with chain of descriptions, “Shirke Gorshman di froy, der mentsh, di mame, di yidish-sovetishe shraybern” (8) [Shirke Gorshman, the woman, the person, the mother, the Jewish-Soviet writer], all equally important, all equally equal to Shirke Gorshman. And in a review of Vera Panova’s *Bright Shore*, which won the Stalin Prize in 1950, and depicts life in a kulkhos (Soviet collective farm), Pinzón writes that the characters live healthy lives free of “der moyre far der ekonomisher bodnlozikeyt, on der angst far ‘morgn’ , on dem pakhed far arbetslozikeyt, farm farlirn dem bord unter di fis . . . vos zaynen eygn der kapitalistisher gezelshaft [the fear of economic eviction, of angst over the future, of the terror of unemployment, of loosing the land under their feet . . . which are the hallmarks of capitalist society] (17).

Reading these essays illuminates the character of Etl who is both an avatar for the young Pinzón, and also the manifestation of the ideal woman-writer-worker-leftist-yiddishist. While *Der hoyf on fentster* begins as a fairly typical immigrant coming of age story, concerned with the anxiety of exchanging the old traditions and language of the home culture for the adopted culture, the reader’s political consciousness dawns with Etl’s. First we observe, along with our protagonist, the difficult, and impoverished lives in the hoyf. Life is hardest for women who bear children in pain, are abused (and even killed) by their husbands, desperate for their home countries, intellectually unfulfilled, and burdened by endless chores. As noted above, as Etl enters the school system, she is introduced to the brutality of the state’s

monolanguage (even as she discovers the joys of reading—the game of language, the delicious escape of story—at home). In the hoyf, she discovers solidarity in poverty across lines of language, religion and culture. In the hoyf, and in the Jewish library, she meets anarchists. She hears their singing and samples their literature. She sees her parents suffer. Education and observation come to a head when, on the last day of elementary school, Etl’s teacher vets her, a star student, for the privilege of reading an essay, “what I will be when I grow up,” on graduation day. Another candidate for the honor, Etl’s goody-goody rival, the well-behaved Amalia, claims that she will write an essay about how she wants to be a teacher, just like her dear teacher from sixth grade. Etl, by contrast, in all of her innocence and conviction bravely claims

“Ikh . . . vel shreybn: Ikh vil zayn aza froy vi loyze mishel iz geven.”

—ver? hot di lereke ibergefregt, mit a ruiker gleykhgiltiker shtime . . .

—loyze mishel. di “royte busuleh .” hot etl geenfert.

—di royte—vos”?¹⁷⁷

The class erupts in chaos as the students explain to the teacher that Etl knows about Louise Michel because she reads novels. Trembling, the teacher asks

—vos iz dos far a roman?

—dos iz nit keyn roman,—hot etl geenfert. oykh zi hot gefilt vi dos hartz klapt modne, mit kurtse, opgehakte klep vos fargeyen azh, dakht zikh, biz tsum

¹⁷⁷ “I will write: I will be a woman like Louise Michel.”

“Who?” The teacher asked, with a quiet, suspicious voice . . .

“Louise Michel. The “Red Virgin.” Etl answered.

“The Red—what?”

haldz.—dos iz nit keyn roman. dos iz an emeser mentsh. a froy. loyze mihel hot zi gehheysn. in frankreykh hot zi gelebt. in pariz. un beshes der komune—hot zi gekemft zayt ba zayt mit di komunarn—af di barikadn geshosn” (305).¹⁷⁸

Etl herself is surprisingly insensitive to the dangers of proclaiming her anarchist sympathies in the classroom. She has just lived through *La Semana Trágica*, during which, her neighbor, Dovidke, was hauled off to jail, and her own home invaded. This contrast between the two girls—Amelia either dull or shrewd in her determination to become just like her dear teacher, the other reckless in her passion—is the point. Etl has no guile because she is poshet and klor. A burgeoning writer, Etl declares her intention not simply to *be* “the kind of woman Louise Michel was”—a revolutionary, a virgin whose life was not determined by men’s wishes—but also to write about her. The statement performative. Although Etl is dismissed before she has the opportunity to write the essay, by declaring her intention to be a Louise Michel, she *is* a Louise Michel. Telling what she *will* write, she risks her safety—her economic and educational future— but she also shoots at the barricades of the State’s intolerance and fear.

Tellingly, Louise Michel, like Adela Weinstein Shliapochnik, had a number of pseudonyms (the red virgin among them). We might think of the “Red Virgin” and

¹⁷⁸ “What kind of novel is this?”

“It’s not a novel,” Etl answered. She felt like her heart was beating strangely, with short, choppy beats which seemed to be going up her throat. “It’s not a novel. She’s a real person. A woman. Louise Michel was her name. She lived in France. In Paris during the communes—she fought side by side with the Communards—shooting at the barricades.”

“Mimi Pinzón” as Adela Shliapochnik’s twinned French inspirations. “Pinzón” is the Hispanicization of the name of the main character, Mimi Pinson, of Alfred de Musset’s short story, “La Grisette” (1841). In the 19th century, the figure of the grisette represented poor, independent, coquettish working class women (Lescart 103). However, Musset’s story upends the reader’s assumptions about such a figure by portraying a grisette, Mimi Pinson, who, while alluring to the male protagonist, is also remarkably principled. A figure of solidarity, she sacrifices her own good for that of her friend. And while Shliapochnik also wrote under the pseudonyms Ad-Sum and Yidl Kotoyinti, “Pinzón,” the homage to the good hearted French working class girl, was her most frequent nome de plume. At the end of *Der hoyf on fentster*, these powerful identities converge in Etl who awakens on the morning of her first job, a woman who has begun to menstruate.

VII. Vos iz dos far a roman? What kind of novel is *Der hoyf on fentster*?

As a writer, critic, and Yiddish teacher, Pinzón filters her politics through the literary, believing that language and literature can be agents for change. The stakes are high; in a 1953 essay on Galina Nikolayeva's Stalin Prize winning socialist realist novel, *Harvest*, Pinzón echoes Stalin’s own language, describing Soviet writers as “engineers of the human soul” (injeniern fun mentshlekhe neshomes) (“Shnit-tsayt” 12) who teach us that people can learn to resolve their problems simply, healthily and humanly (14). In the essay, Pinzón explains that one cannot judge a Soviet novel by the same criteria one uses to read a book written outside of the Soviet world. The

Soviet person is not different from other people, but the shape of his life is different, his problems are different, and thus, his psychology is different. She offers an anecdote: A “well-known” and “intelligent” man of Pinzón’s acquaintance once asked her about the Soviet novel:

tsi hobn di dozike mentshn nit keyn bazundere, perzenlekhe problemen, problemen familiare, afektive, individuele, oder poshet, mentshelkhe, tog teglekhe zorgn, vos hobn gornit tsu ton mit der kolektivizatsie, mit der politisher ekonomie? (12)¹⁷⁹

Profoundly misreading the Soviet novel, and judging it by bourgeois standards, Pinzón’s “intelligent” man implies that the Soviet novel is not a novel at all, but rather, propaganda. Pinzón responds to his challenge, remarking, “entfern af ot der frage—iz entfernen af alts” [answering this question—answers everything]. She argues that the human being is actually the most priceless material in the Soviet collective. A communal life in tune with the rhythms of nature and its beauty, enriches the human experience. Such a life, she argues, “iz nishto keyn plats far puster neshomegriblenish, far nudner in-zikh-zukhenish, un far hofenungslozer benkenish, —zakhn mit velkher di literatur fun di burzshaz-demokratishe lender iz ibergefilt” [is no place for the empty soul-probing, for dull self-searching, the hopeless-nostalgia with which bourgeois-democratic literature overflows]. Unlike the bourgeois novel, the place of

¹⁷⁹ Don’t these people have separate, personal problems, family problems, emotional problems, individual, or simply human, day-to-day worries, which have nothing to do with the collective, with the political economy?

the grimmest fantasy, nostalgia, the Soviet novel is *life*. Literature from bourgeois countries is dead. The Soviet novel—and the Soviet Union—is the future.

Pinzón praises Nikolayeva's characters because, “di mensthn in bukh zaynen nisht keyn roman-heldn” [the characters are not novelistic-heroes] (12). In Soviet novels, individualism is not the solution to structural oppression. In this same essay, Pinzón empathizes with Ibsen's Nora, who is misunderstood and oppressed by her husband, but she also criticizes the character for finding individualistic and selfish solutions to problems that seem personal but are actually structural. By contrast, Avodia the (non) hero of *Harvest* never dreams of a bourgeois solution to her problems. She never engages in fantasy; she simply acts for the good of the community. In 1963, (two years before the publication of *Der hoyf on fentster*) Pinzón praised the Yiddish Soviet writer, Shirke Gorshman, for the straightforward authenticity of her style, claiming that she was “azoy vayt fun literarishn onshtel, vi vayt ir bloyer litvisher himil is fun der zamdiker, karger litvisher erd” [as far from literary pretense, as her blue litvish heaven is from the sandy, stingy Litvish earth].

Pinzón's challenge with *Der hoyf on fentster* was to write an Argentine novel that was “klor, poshut un tsum harts” [clear, simple and from the heart]. Etl lives in a conventillo rather than a wholesome kolchoz. And by the time Pinzón's novel is published, the Soviet dream has failed. Because she cannot write a Socialist realist novel, Pinzón must create a literature that simultaneously describes difficult realities and finds a path forward. Pinzón must be an engineer of the human soul in a post-Soviet, Americas context. Late in the novel, she describes Etl's encounter with two

novels—one dangerously bourgeois, the other helpful and wholesome—as a means of articulating what literature can and should do.

When Etl begins reading independently in Yiddish (up until this point, her father always read to her, mostly from Sholem Aleichem and stories for Jewish children), she borrows *Der lester yidisher kenig. eyn hekhst interesanter historisher roman* (*The Last Yiddish King: A Highly Interesting Historical Novel*) from a neighbor. Here, Pinzón nods to the struggle over the definition of the literary in the Yiddish-speaking world. As Gennady Estraiikh reminds us, Sholem Aleichem made his name not only by elevating Mendele Mocher Sforim to “grandfather status,” but also by denigrating the work of Shomer (Nokhum Meir Shaikevich). Estraiikh notes that Shomer was a prolific writer of “formulaic works marked as ‘highly interesting novels,’ which were read voraciously by hundreds of thousands of Russian Jews” (4). Aleichem destroyed Shomer’s reputation by dismissing the prolific author’s production as “shund” [trash], and ejecting it from the category of the literary.¹⁸⁰

Etl dives into the highly interesting novel, noting that its language is Yiddish, but a strange ornate Yiddish that does not at all resemble the Yiddish spoken by her mom and dad, the hoyf neighbors, or Sholem Aleichem’s characters. The language intoxicates her. She notes that the words “hobn epes vi gefokhet far ire oygn—vi farbike, oysterlishe tikher, gereyts dos oyg un zikh oysbhaltn eyne unter der anderer,-vi zey voltn gespilt mit ir in baheltenish” (163) [almost waved before her eyes--like

¹⁸⁰ Indeed, a few chapters later, an anarchist neighbor takes the book out of Etl’s hand, leafs through it, and dismisses it with one word: shund. (145)

colorful, mysterious cloth, they teased the eye, and hid, one behind the other—like they wanted to play hide and seek with her]. The language of the highly interesting novel invites Etl, a child trying to make sense of her world, to play. It offers her an escape from the grim world that surrounds her.

However, while the novel’s language might be described as productive—it engages Etl’s mind and enriches her vocabulary—the novel’s content is threatening. As Etl’s neighbor notes, reading the novel, “men fargest af voser velt men gayt arum” [one forgets in which world one wanders] (162). In the world of the conventillo, where hungry children cry all night long, wandering in another world is tempting. But the escape the romantic novel offers is pernicious:

Demolt hot Etl derzen un farkhapt gevorn fun epes a gor ander velt: a velt, vos is tog tsu nakht, nit enlekh geven af der velt, vos zi hot gekent. Di velt, vos inem kleynem, fargekhn bikhle, – hot nit gehat keyn opgerisene, farshmotderte un hungerike kinder; keyn shelndike, zikh arumaysndike mames, keyn gragerndike shkhinem, keyn beyzer “enkargade.” Dort aynene geven—eydlekh, gute un sheyne mentshn, vos hobn geredt af epes a himlsher, noerdisher sprach, zikh gesholgn mit shverdn, zikh “farlibt” un eydele, sheyen froyen, mit punimer vi mlakhim un hent, vi ba lialkes; vos hben geshpilt af “fortepianes,” geveynt mit zise, shitle trenn, nit afn kol, vi men hot geveynt in “hoyp” (163).¹⁸¹

¹⁸¹ Then Etl realized and understood something of a totally different world: a world, which was as different from the world she knew as day is to night. The world, which in the little gilded book, had no dirty, hungry children; no cursing, worn-out mothers, no noisy (rattling)

This passage draws a stark contrast between the romance that Etl reads, and the realistic novel in which she lives. If the sword fighting weren't enough, Shomer's fantastical world is emphasized by quotation marks around the word "portepiano"—no one in Etl's world has ever seen, much less played a porte piano, which is the stuff of historical fiction.¹⁸² This fictional world seduces Etl (a few pages later, she locks herself in her room and imagines that the hero, with his sunburned hands, carries her into a cave). While her engagement with the novel's rich world-play leads to an active game of hide and seek (a game which forces her to do the "head-breaking" work of learning new words (162)) her withdrawal into the novel's romantic plot poses a

neighbors, no mean "encargade." There, there were refined, good and beautiful people, who spoke a heavenly un-earthly language, fought with swords, fell in love with refined, beautiful women with angelic faces and doll's hands; who played "portepiano," and cried with sweet, quiet tears, not out-loud like one cried in the "hojf."

¹⁸² In the very next chapter, Etl begins (regular) piano lessons to please her mother who has a fantasy of a better life that involves a refined daughter who plays the piano. Etl senses something strange about her piano teacher and is especially unsettled when the teacher chastises her for using uncultivated language to tell a story about the hojf. The teacher tells her, "nu. zey megn redn . . . mentshn umvisndike, fargrebte; ober du, —a meydl vos lernt, a frayln kimat,—du torst azoy nit reydn. Far dir—past es nit "[of course they must speak that way . . . coarse, ignorant people: but you—a girl who learns . . . almost a lady—you must not speak that way. For you—this is not permissible (226). Instead of feeling ashamed, Etl, who has begun to be politicized, is angry: "mitamol derfildt tsu ot dem meydl a groyse fremdkeyt. Un nit nor a fremdkeyt: epes, vi a min sneh flegt zi in der minut tsu ir derfiln shier nit aza feyntshaft—vi tsu der lereke in shul, demolt, ven zi hot ir geheysn onshrebyn etlkhe hundert mol: "Ikh darf zikh oyffirn vi a frayln" [suddenly she felt estranged from the girl. And not only estranged: something more like hatred—like when her teacher in school made her write one hundred times "I must behave like a lady.] (227). Etl thinks that she hates the word "fraylin" as much as she hates the word "manners." Etl connects the snobbism of the piano teacher with the repressive demands of the state run school; both wish to discipline her body (both the discipline of playing the piano and the repetitive training of copying lines by hand) and tongue. However, Etl is critical enough to assert herself as not a lady, and to chose to align herself with her hoyfish neighbors and their coarse language. Her instincts are rewarded when she discovers shortly thereafter that the piano teacher is a prostitute. Her pretty things have been purchased for her by her madam and pimp (who have been passed off as an aunt and uncle). Her mother's bourgeois fantasy is cast as unsavory. The desire for finer things (fancy language, lady-like skills) corrupts.

potential loss of self. Reading, Etl occupies the viewpoint of the novel's beautiful "people" (sheyne mentshn) who are, in fact, men. She too falls a little bit in love with the women with angel faces and doll's hands. (It is worth noting that "lialke," doll is the same word Pinzón uses to critique the world which entraps Ibsen's Nora).

As noted above, Pinzón critiques Sholem Aleichem and Mendele for creating fictional women who are human shadows with female forms. Pinzón's Etl is anything but a refined, angel-faced, doll-handed fictional receptacle for romantic fantasy. But the highly interesting historical novel seduces her not only into fantasizing about the existence of a kind of character that Pinzón's has elsewhere described as empty, but also leads her to objectify the novel's women in the exact way that she, Etl, as a female fictional character in a Yiddish book would have historically been objectified. We know how Pinzón feels about women's agency, and at this moment, Etl's is precarious. So while the narrator approves of Etl's meta-linguistic experimentation, she clearly disapproves of romantic fiction.

However, the novel does offer Etl a better, less conflicted, model for engaging with text. When Etl's father discovers that she is reading "shund," he takes her to the library in search of more appropriate reading material. She brings a book home:

dos iz geven dos ershte mol af ir leben, vos zi hot leyendik a bikhl,
farshtanden altsding,—altsding is ir geven klor, poshut un tsum harts: zi
hot geveynt b'shas zi hot dos geleyent, un gemakht veynendik alemen fan
"hoif", vemen zi hot fun dem bikhele dertseylt. Vorem dos iz geven dos
ershete mol af ir lebn, vos zi hot gekont rend mit ale hoyfishe mentshn

vegn a bikhl vos zi leyent. Un modne: ale hobn dos farshtanen, ale hobn zikh mit dem bikhl farinterisirt” (276).¹⁸³

The book is *Uncle Tom’s Cabin* [*Onkl tom’s shtibele*]. It may seem strange that Harriet Beecher Stowe’s romantic, Christian-allegorical, sentimental novel is taken up by a communist aligned Argentine Yiddishist with a penchant for socialist realism. However, Etl’s tears link Pinzon’s novel to a widely circulated 19th century political novel. In *Uncle Tom’s Cabin*, suffering, as expressed through tears, binds together not only characters, but also the novel’s readers to the characters and readers to one another. Harriet Beecher Stowe’s novel was meant to do work in the world by moving its crying readers towards action. Etl enters into this affective economy. She reads the book and cries. She shares the book with her neighbors, and they cry. Through sympathy, the members of the hoyf—already linked through suffering—enter into a global literary network oriented towards action.

Describing *Onkl tom’s shtibele* as “poshet, klor, un tsum harts, ”—the same words with which she praises Gorshman, Nikolayeva and Katz’s work. Pinzón uses the exact same words to describe a US slavery novel published in 1852, Soviet fiction of the mid twentieth century, and Yiddish newspaper work of the early twentieth century because these are all texts about making America. With a few words, Pinzón gathers Soviet fiction of the mid-twentieth century, and a US slavery novel published

¹⁸³ This was the first time in her life that she had read a book and understood everything—everything was clear, simple and to the heart: she cried after she read it, and she described the book to everyone in hoyf and made them cry. Because this was the first time in her life that she was able to talk with the people from the hoof about a book that she was reading. And strangely: everyone understood, everyone was interested in the book.

in 1852, along with her own novel, into a new literary mode: that of transnational solidarity in pursuit of a future beyond nationalism.¹⁸⁴ The translated/transliterated title of Stowe's work, *Onkle tom's shtibele*, gestures towards Pinzón's linguistic vision. The title is a hodgepodge of languages: "Onkl" a transliteration of the English word "uncle"—the Yiddish word for "uncle" is "feter"—hovers between languages. With "Tom," the character retains his English name, albeit in transliteration. And we might read "shtibele," a rough translation of the word "cabin," as analogous to the approximate translation of patio to *hojf*. By importing *Onkle tom's shtibele* into the *hojf*, Pinzón marries linguistic hybridity and particularism to Stowe's sentimental power. Pinzón approves of Etl's reading of *Uncle Tom's Cabin* because the work can be shared in the proletarian space of the *hojf*. Thus, even in the face of the collapse of the Yiddish project in the Soviet Union, the linguistic, cultural and human devastation of the Holocaust, the evolution of Argentine fascism, the novel, *Der hoyf on fentster*, offers a space, like the *hojf* itself, for the contemplation of the possibility of multilingual proletariat solidarity.

¹⁸⁴The North American anti-slavery novel, *Uncle Tom's Cabin*, crosses borders—from English to Yiddish to Spanish, from the print on the page, to Etl's oral retelling, from antebellum US to 20th century Argentina.

In a study of the afterlives of *Uncle Tom's Cabin* in Russian culture, John MacKay points out that seventy editions of the novel, in at least twenty-one languages appeared in the Soviet Union between 1925 and 1991. He notes, "in the postemancipation period *Uncle Tom's Cabin* became both an educational tool and a touchstone for the Russian (and later Russo-Soviet) educated elite's sense of its own identity and values" (8). Given that Pinzón looked to the Soviet Union for many of her political and literary clues, it is not impossible that for her, the novel was routed through Russia. *Uncle Tom's Cabin* also has a history of translation and performance in Yiddish.

VIII. Conclusion: The Task of the Translator Across Space, Time and Language: *Der hoyf on fentster* and its Afterlives

In his introduction to Alan Astro's *South of the Border: An Anthology of Latin American Jewish Writing*, Ilan Stavins, a US-based Professor of Latin American and Latino culture writes, "I owe to Alan Astro heartfelt thanks for his effort to unearth and translate an array of tales, poems and essays . . . these items were not available to a curious Mexican-Jewish adolescent" (xvi). Stavins goes on to suggest that the function of Astro's anthology is "to offer a context, to create a portable library, to open unexpected vistas . . . this anthology documents that Yiddish . . . also flourished in Latin America, leaving behind powerfully artistic testaments" (xv). Stavins, with his preference for the artistic, frames Astro's project as one of literary recovery, arguing that the anthology demonstrates not only that Jews existed in Latin America, but also that they made Yiddish art.

In a review of *South of the Border* for the US academic journal, *Shofar*, Zachary Baker, the curator of Judaica and Hebraica collections at Stanford University notes that "today's English-speaking reader is likely to be drawn less to narratives bearing a heavy-handed, self-consciously proletarian impress . . . than to those evoking a sense of the exotic" (143). Baker's suggestion that the anthology would have been more appealing to English-speaking readers if it had been more exotic and less proletarian reflects his 2003 reality: that the most pressing questions for the US Jewish community were cultural—can Jewish culture be retained in the face of high rates of intermarriage and assimilation?—rather than economic or political. In 2005,

historian Tony Michels argued that scholars of US Jewish history had been telling stories that were “uncritically triumphalist.” Michels claims that “knowing that American Jews have become the largest, most affluent, and most secure Jewish community in the modern era,” contemporary historians dismiss radical Jewish politics as a stop-over on the way to liberalism; US-based Jewish historians have ignored Jewish political activity, instead focusing on Jewish-American cultural exchange.

Dorothy Seidman Bilik argues that a post-Holocaust concern (that gathered steam in the 1960s) over the loss of cultural resources has led to a preoccupation with Jewish literature as it depicts the experience of European Jewish immigrants (Lindstrom 39). This tendency to focus on the culture that immigrants imported from Europe narrows our possibilities for interpretation. In Argentina, for example, the work of proletarian writer and Jewish Argentine immigrant, José Rabinovich, was re-discovered in the 1960s. As Naomi Lindstrom points out, Rabinovich was beloved by Argentine realists of the 40s for his blunt depiction of the plight of the Jewish poor. By the 60s, however, “interest arose in his ability to represent . . . a nearly lost portion of cultural history” and his “freethinking humanism seemed, with the passage of time, more likely to produce nostalgia than revolution” (Lindstrom38). Mimi Pinzón was instrumental in introducing Rabinovich’s work to the larger Argentine public. Before Rabinovich began writing in Spanish, Pinzón translated several of his early works from Yiddish, and the two traveled in the same Jewish Argentine socialist circles. Ironically, had Pinzón garnered more attention from the Spanish-speaking public,

Rabinovich's fate—to later have his work rediscovered and repackaged as a repository of extinct culture—might have been her fate.

The conviction that that proletarian literature is quaint, stale, self-conscious, defunct, or, at most, a stage that Jews passed through on their way to economic security, has a constraining impact on the ways in which American Yiddish texts are presented in translation. In calling for more of the exotic (or cultural) and less of the proletarian (or political) (Baker ends his review with the remark that “this pioneering anthology whets the reader's appetite, and encourages one to hope that many more translations of Latin American Yiddish writing will soon join its ranks” [144]).

What of Pinzon will survive? Her Yiddish writing has not been translated into Spanish, and only a tiny fraction it is available in English. Astro includes a brief excerpt of *Der hoyf on fentster* in *Yiddish South of the Border*. He also includes an excerpt of the novel in his entry on Pinzón for the Online Jewish Women's Archive. These excerpts, read in isolation, *do* function as fascinating cultural documents; they allow the English-speaking reader to see life in Jewish Argentina. However, these snapshots curtail novel's radical vision for a secular Jewish identity that resists the better-known narrative of Jewish assimilation in the Americas. In translation, Pinzón's insistence on a multilingualism that challenges the traditional link between language and nation, is lost. If we only read her as a cultural documentarian, we lose the opportunity to reflect on our own citizenship moment. The Pinzón that I have been sharing in this chapter is a writer who conceives of identity as a complex

interplay of subnational, national and transnational loyalties. However, even as I submit my version of Pinzón, I must admit, that there are other versions.

For example, I have argued that *Der hoyf on fentster* paints of portrait of the palimpsestic layering of Yiddish and other American languages in the Americas contact zone. However, because the novel's context is entirely urban, Pinzón is never forced to grapple with the Americas legacy of destruction of indigenous peoples, and the Argentine legacy of the replacement of vanished native peoples with immigrants. When Pinzón writes of Roberto Payró's Pago Chico—in the same essay in which she calls Roberto Payró the most Argentine and the most Jewish of Argentine writers—she tells the “famous” story of how Payró's Catalan grandfather defended himself from an encroaching “‘erev-rav’ fun indier, mulatn un mishlingen” [a “rabble” of Indians, Mulattos and Mixed-Bloods] with only a pitchfork and a candle stick. In attempting to claim Payró's Catalan ancestor as an American model, Pinzón celebrates the patriotic mythology of the clearing of the Pampas and the triumph of immigrants over the mixed blood rabble. The complexity of her task—to align proletarian Jews with the Hispanic hegemony—produces a knotty linguistic moment. In the service of a contradictory and tense new world scene, Pinzón creates a hybrid of Yiddish, Hebrew, and Spanish—none of the languages alone will do. “Erev-rav” is the Soviet spelling of the Hebrew word for “rabble,” or the Biblical (mixed) children of Egyptians and Israelities. “Indier,” is the Yiddish (loan) word for Indian. “Mulatn,” is the Yiddishized version of the Spanish word “Mulatto.” Mishlingen is the Yiddish word for “mixed-blood” children (and also the German word used by the Nazis to

designate people with Aryan and Jewish ancestry). Three synonyms, from different language systems, designate hybridity along of a spectrum from potentially neutral (mulatto) to derogatory (Erev-rav). Together, they indicate a discomfort with regards to hybridity (linguistic, cultural, racial) that is absent from the urban scene.

Pinzón stands in opposition to Alberto Gerchunoff, who advocated for Jewish assimilation into the national language. Her vision of identity is anti-Utopian: her goal is not harmony, but rather solidarity. Yiddish, a hybrid language of contact, is her impure argument. In the spirit of impurity, I cannot ignore the disappointing or distasteful moments in Pinzón's body of work—the places where she falls short of the dreams I have for her. As the “recoverer” of a forgotten body of work, I am at times tempted to allow my own longing for other possible futures (and pasts), my dissatisfaction with my own historical moment, my desire for other linguistic, political and literary models, to flatten complexity. This tendency is particularly acute because this recovery is being conducted through and with a language that is saturated with post-vernacular nostalgia. Perhaps rather than thinking of myself as recovering Pinzón, I might think about myself as listening for a voice from an unanticipated past. Rather than heroize Pinzón's cultural particularism—or fetishize her commitment to Yiddish, especially in a climate in which Jews are anxious over disappearing language and culture—we might take up her invitation to fragment the American story and insist, always, on particularity.

Conclusion

The End of America

Yiddish and the refusal of Utopia

In “Leche Fresca,” the first chapter of *Los gauchos judíos*, Alberto Gerchunoff shares his vision of Jewish Argentina,

Raquel ordeña a la vaca inmóvil. Esta de rodillas y sus dedos aprietan las ubres magníficas . . . La aurora otoñal envuelve en su roja palidez al grupo y la moza deja ver, por la bata entreabierto, los pechos redondos y duros que el sol de los fuertes veranos ha dorado como frutas . . . El pelo desciende en olas oscuras sobre su espalda . . . Sus ojos tienen el azul que tiembla en las pupilas de la Virgen y la nariz resume en el bronceado arremango, los signos rotundos de la raza . . .

Tu presencia renueva, con la vaca mansa y la cabra discreta, la vida remota del Jordán. Sonríen los ranchos a la faena naciente y allá, en medio de la colina, el arroyo canta a la mañana y ofrece, en pocillos de greda, agua fresca al buey y al caballo. Y como en los días lejanos de Jerusalén, tu padre, cubierta la frente por la cajita de cuero negro de las filacterias, que contiene sentencias divinas, reza al Dios de Israel, Señor de las ejércitos, dueño del aire, de la luz y de la tierra, y en hebreo arcaico le saluda:

—Baruj athá Adonái . . . (Alberto Gerchunoff, *Los gauchos judíos* 19)¹⁸⁵

¹⁸⁵ Raquel milks the motionless cow. She is on her knees and her fingers squeeze the magnificent udders. The autumn dawn envelopes the group in pink paleness and the girl allows glimpses through her half-open housecoat, of hard round breasts that the strong

When the Leftist, Yiddishist Pinie Katz translated *Los gauchos judíos* into Yiddish, he omitted Raquel's story. There are some obvious reasons. Undoubtedly, Katz would have found the narrator's gaze—lingering on knees, fingers, udders and breasts—distasteful, and he most likely disapproved of Gerchunoff's blatant offering of the Jewish woman's body for consumption by the Argentine reading public. He also might have objected to the story's idyllic portrait of Jewish colonial life that was in reality brutal, desperate, and ultimately unsustainable. A footnote to the translation (discussed at length in chapter three) indicates that for Katz, Gerchunoff's most egregious trespass was his conversion of Jewish life into Christian language. Katz faults Gerchunoff—for most of his career—for using “non-Jewish concepts for Jewish customs,” in pursuit of the “Spanish reader.”¹⁸⁶ Katz claims that in catering to his Spanish-reading audience, Gerchunoff ignores eastern European Jewish history and culture in favor of celebrating the Biblical and Spanish periods. In Katz's mind, Gerchunoff's love affair with the Spanish language is inseparable from his evacuation of Jewish history and culture.

summer sun has gilded like fruit . . . Her hair falls in dark waves over her back . . . her eyes, the same blue that trembles in the pupils of the Virgin and, her nose, golden and upturned, encompasses the charms of her race.

[Raquel,] your presence renews, along with the calm cow and the cautious goat, the life of remote Jordan. The farms smile at the newborn tasks and there, in the middle of the hill, the stream sings to the morning and offers ox and horse, in bowls of clay, fresh water. And as in ancient days of Jerusalem, your father, his forehead covered by the little black leather box of the phylacteries that hold the divine maxims, prays to the God of Israel, leader of armies, master of air, light and earth, and, in archaic Hebrew, greets him:

“Blessed are you, Adonai . . .”

¹⁸⁶ It is important that Katz conceives of Gerchunoff's audience as Spanish readers, rather than Argentines. For Katz, language was a more meaningful and revealing category than nationality, race or religion.

Dalia Kandiyoti notes that “Jewish survival in Argentina depends, for Gerchunoff, on an emptying of time in favor of a textual way of living” (110). This “emptying of time” is exactly what Katz, the socialist, Yiddishist, and committed student of modern Jewish history and culture despised. As a whole, *Los gauchos judíos* presents a static world in which Jews and Argentines share a deep (biblical) past, and will share a timeless—and ideal—future. The sacred text invoked by *Los gauchos judíos* is not the Hebrew Bible, but rather what Christians call the Old Testament, a work they read anachronistically as prefiguring the coming of Christ. In other words, *Los gauchos judíos* positions the Jewish Bible as the first half of the New Testament. Raquel embodies the female Old Testament archetype (Raquel, tú eres Ester, Rebeca, Débora o Judith) and also the New Testament’s Virgin Mary. Divided into parts that correspond with domestic beasts and the landscape—breasts ripe as fruit, hands that squeeze forth milk—Raquel promises fruitful, comingled future, in which Jew, Christian, land and community are in harmony.¹⁸⁷ Even her father, davening in the background in his ancient language, underscores that Raquel’s connection to a Biblical past grants her a special place in the pastoral landscape.

Looking back to the introduction, we’ve seen Naomi Lindstrom argue that in Gerchunoff’s work, eastern European politics of Jewish renewal neatly dovetail with Argentine centennial rhetoric (51). When a rabbi exults that Argentina *is* Zion—“which is to be found wherever peace and happiness reign” (15)—he routes the

¹⁸⁷ The collection is uncomfortable with interfaith romance—see especially the chapter “Las Bodas de Camacho”—however, as argued in the first chapter, if Gerchunoff can argue that Jews are *already* Argentine, then there is no need for actual physical mingling.

possibility of “Jewish renewal” to the Americas. In order to link eastern European politics with Argentine rhetoric, Gerchunoff transforms the concept of the Jewish homeland into a Christian Utopia. Leonardo Senkman points out that with *Los gauchos judíos*, “Alberto Gerchunoff no sólo inauguró la literatura judeoargentina . . . sino que simultáneamente daba inicio con su libro a la literatura moderna sobre la utopía en tierras sudamericanas [Alberto Gerchunoff not only inaugurated Jewish Argentine literature . . . he also simultaneously initiated modern Utopian literature in South America] (*Una lectura*). Senkman helps us see that Gerchunoff’s American Zion is shaped by tropes that imagine the New World as Europe’s second chance, a “virgin land” where the Old World might finally realize its fallen ideals.¹⁸⁸ As we saw in the writings of Waldo Frank, Latin America—far more than the United States—was imbued with mysticism (in contrast to the industrial North, and Europe) that only enhanced its utopian value. Across the dissertation, we have seen Gerchunoff, Yezierska, Frank, and to a certain extent, Roth, attempt to place Jews in an American Utopia. Pinzón, by contrast, has guided us away from the conventional, even iconic “melting pot” ideology to a diasporic (ultimately dialectical) politics.

Literary critic, Santiago Castro-Gómez, alerts us to the *dangers* that Utopian thinking has wrought in Latin America argues,

Por desgracia, este discurso foundational de la “utopía americana,” que se caracteriza por su pretensión integral y totalizante ha sido reproducido. . .

América Latina entendida como el “otro absoluto” de la racionalidad

¹⁸⁸ See Henry Nash Smith’s *Virgin Land*.

européa, como el continente de la gran síntesis, como la reserva espiritual de la humanidad, como el futuro de la Iglesia cristiana, como la tierra del misterio, la magia y la poesía (43).¹⁸⁹

Castro-Gómez makes the case that the dream of a conflict free world, coupled with suspicion of European rationalism and a romantic longing for synthesis, inevitably leads to totalitarianism, as that which is “different” is expelled in the name of harmony.¹⁹⁰ In an attempt to convert Jews into Argentines, Gerchunoff invests in this utopian thinking. He places his Jews in a neutral landscape and mobilizes their (superficial) difference (Raquel’s father praying in the background) to prove both that Argentina is a bastion of tolerance and that the two cultures share a deep and timeless sameness despite superficial differences. Gerchunoff’s fantasy of a natural Christian-Jewish union is particularly troublesome in light of David Rock’s definition of Argentine “Nacionalismo,” as the “antiliberal counterrevolutionary movement that emerged during the late 1920s and 1930s . . . distinguished . . . by their attempts to weave a ‘*futurism of the past*,’ that is, to reconstruct a conservative authoritarian government and restore the temporal power of the church” (emphasis mine 3). *Los gauchos judíos* predates the rise of nacionalismo, and Gerchunoff is certainly not a counterrevolutionary longing for the restoration of the temporal power of the church,

¹⁸⁹ Unfortunately, this foundational discourse of Latin America as the American Utopia, characterized by its *totalizing and linking* pretensions, lives on . . . Latin America is understood as the “absolute other” of European rationalism, as the continent of grand synthesis, as humanity’s spiritual reserve, as the future of the Christian church, as the land of mystery, magic and poetry (43).

¹⁹⁰ Jonathan Boyarin traces the colonizers’ denial of indigenous coevalness back to the Spanish continent where the Christian elite conceived of both Jews and Muslims as barbarous. He argues that Spanish expulsion of difference predates the colonial project.

but his conflation of Jewish and Christian textual histories is grounded in a similar “futurism of the past,” reasoning that if Jews and Christians share a deep communal past, then they will also share a future.

Gerchunoff’s (and Anzia Yezierska and Waldo Frank’s) insistence that Jews and Christians are fundamentally the same follows a line of thinking that can be traced back to the French Enlightenment when Jews attempted to make themselves belong, citizens of a European nation (see chapter one). This strategy was successful to the point that even Santiago Castro-Gómez conflates Jewish and Christian textual histories in his anti-utopian argument. He writes, “pienso que ese concepto de justicia como ‘ausencia de todo mal’ es herencia de la escatología quialística judea-cristiana que es preciso abandonar—la creencia en el advenimiento del milenio, en la reconciliación del hombre con la naturaleza, en el surgimiento de un hombre redimido” (43).¹⁹¹ When Castro-Gómez traces intolerance for the Other (the “mal” that contaminates justice) back to Judeo-Christian eschatology, he participates in the very difference obscuring logic for which he critiques utopian thinking. He does not come to this diagnosis of Judeo-Christian eschatology through considered exploration of specific texts. Rather, he accepts as natural a relatively recent—and, as I have argued, ideologically motivated—conflation of Jewish and Christian traditions.¹⁹²

¹⁹¹ I think that this concept of justice as “the absence of all evil” is an inheritance of the very Judeo-Christian eschatology that we must abandon—the belief in the coming of the millennium, in the reconciliation of man with nature, in the emergence of a redeemed man.

¹⁹² The term Judeo-Christian first appeared in 1821 when it meant a community of Jews who had become Christians (OED), and was popularized after the Holocaust.

Ironically, while Gerchuoff and Frank strategically collapse Jewish Christian difference in pursuit of American utopias, Castro-Gomez assumes Jewish-Christian sameness as a given in his critique of utopia.

This story suppresses traditional Jewish textual traditions that embrace difference and multiplicity. Philosopher and Rabbi, Marc-Alain Ouaknin, characterizes Talmudic tradition, predicated on “mahloket” or the necessity of disagreement, as itself as powerfully anti-utopian. He writes that mahloket “is not oriented toward synthesis, unity, a Truth that is One” (161), but rather,

reconciliation is not sought. If the term “dialectic” can be used—and it is often to describe Talmudic thinking—we would have to talk of an “open dialectic,” since no synthesis, no third term, cancels out the contradictions . . . *Mahloket* breaks open the immanent structure of synthetic and limitative thought; it stirs up the tranquility of a Truth that is one (84-85).

This refusal of Truth applies to the text itself which can never be understood because “once it becomes visible, graspable, the Text takes on the shape and status of an idol. Its language becomes totalitarian” (64). Castro-Gómez uses the word “totalitarian” to describe the ultimate outcome of “Judeo-Christian eschatology.” However, Ouaknin demonstrates that a robust Jewish tradition that not only “tolerates” difference, but is predicated on the maintenance of contradiction.

Ouaknin’s “open dialectic” might help us move away from the synthetic “melting pot” model of American national belonging.¹⁹³ If the Jews have something to “contribute” to the American conversation, it is not their ability to “melt,” but rather, as Jonathan and Daniel Boyarin suggest, “Diaspora, and not monotheism, may be the most important contribution that Judaism has to make to the world” (723). Diaspora—and, as I have been arguing over the course of the dissertation, its languages—offers the Americas a powerful model of living with identities—genealogical, religious and national—in dialectical tension (721).

This is what Mimi Pinzón teaches us. In contrast to *Los gauchos judíos*, *Der hoyf on fentster*, written in Yiddish, and published in 1965, turns away from Utopia. In one of the novel’s pivotal scenes, immigrant neighbors sing a revolutionary song in a collective voice, made up of different languages—or no language at all. Like *Los gauchos judíos*, *Der hoyf on fentster* mines the past for what it might offer the future. However, the recent past depicted in Pinzón’s work (she writes about the 19-teens

¹⁹³ The term melting pot was coined by the Jewish British play write, Israel Zangwill. His play, of the same name, tells the story of a Russian Jewish immigrant to America who falls in love with a Russian Christian immigrant. The hero, David, informs a native-born American who complains that immigrants are “killing” his America, that he, David, is a Jewish immigrant, “but a Jew who knows that your Pilgrim Fathers came straight out of his Old Testament, and that our Jew-immigrants are a greater factor in the glory of this great commonwealth than some of you sons of the soil. It is you, freak-fashionables, who are undoing the work of Washington and Lincoln, vulgarizing your high heritage, and turning the last and noblest hope of humanity into a caricature . . . I come from Europe, one of her victims, and I know that she is a failure; that her palaces and peerages are the outworn toys of the human spirit, and that the only hope of mankind lies in a new world. And here—in the land of to-morrow—you are trying to bring back Europe.” The term melting pot, still a popular way to describe the American dream of assimilation, is rooted in the notion that Jews are actually more American than Americans and that the “Old Testament” gave birth to the best strains of American cultural life (including the Pilgrim Fathers).

from the vantage point of the 1960s) is the messy, noisy, contentious, impoverished hoyf, a far cry from Gerchunoff's biblical pampas. There is no Zion in Pinzón's world, and this is the point. As I argue in chapter three, the quotation marks that enclose "hoyf" each of the hundreds of times it appears in the novel point to the limits of language in isolation, and to the inadequacy of "purity." "Hoyf"—and *Der hoyf on fentster*—signifies at the borders of Yiddish and Spanish, reminding us that some concepts are only utterable where languages converge. In this way, Pinzón's vision of national solidarity built out of multilingualism offers an alternative to utopian and ultimately violently assimilative models of citizenship. In the hoyf, each singer fiercely protects her own language—and the histories and traditions it carries—but also joins her voice to the larger chorus of freedom. Pinzón's insight—that nations are, and should be, hybrid constructions of multiple particulars—anticipates the Boyarins' argument that diaspora may be Judaism's great contribution to the world (723). They write:

The renunciation of difference seems both an impoverishment of human life and an inevitable harbinger of oppression. Yet the renunciation of sovereignty . . . combined with a fierce tenacity in holding onto cultural identity, might well have something to offer a world in which these two forces, together, kill thousands daily" (723).

The Boyarins embrace the possibilities offered by diaspora as a bulwark against assimilation, thus insisting on the importance of ethnic particularisms. Pinzón's work expands our understanding of the well-known Boyarin paradigm as it stresses the

importance of Yiddish in nurturing cross-cultural solidarities rooted in ongoing cultural and linguistic identity.

In the novel, Yiddish functions as an example—along with Hebrew, Italian, Russian and Ukrainian—of a “non-Argentine” language that, by continuing to exist, challenges the monolingual state. However, perhaps more importantly, Yiddish—both a treasure house of Jewish culture and an example of the creative possibility of the contact zone—offers a model for a translational approach to identity. By thinking through language, Pinzón teaches us how to think across borders. Her notion of the *hojf* as a place where songs of freedom must be sung in a multitude of languages resounds with the Benjaminian notion of original and translation as “fragments of a vessel . . . fragments of a greater language” (161).

As I have concluded throughout the dissertation, language is central both to the maintenance of cultural particularity *and* the production of cross cultural connection. Particularity is built out of attachment to language and the traditions it carries. Solidarity is created when languages (peoples and cultures) come together—and change one another—in the contact zone. “*Hoyf*” is at once, and without compromise, eastern European, Yiddish, Spanish, Argentine, Jewish, immigrant. Further, as historical linguistics demonstrates, the life history of language rejects static utopias. Language changes while it carries traces of what it has been. Mikhail Bakhtin could have been speaking of Pinzón’s *hojf* when he wrote:

the living utterance, having taken meaning and shape at a particular historical moment in a socially specific environment, cannot fail to brush

up against thousands of living dialogic threads, woven by socio-ideological consequences around the given object of an utterance, it cannot fail to become an active participant in social dialogue (276).

Utterances travel, expanding and contracting with time and meaning. Words are worlds. In Pinzón's hands, the *hojf* is a chronotope, a place where "time thickens out, takes on flesh, and becomes artistically visible" (Bakhtin qtd in Harootunian 42). When Gerchunoff writes in Cervantian (archaic) Spanish, he writes against linguistic change. His defining moments (Jewish Spain, the Bible) travel intact across time and space, static in their eternal perfection. *Hoyf*, by contrast, embraces and embodies change as it moves across national, linguistic and cultural borders.

In the open dialectic of "*hojf*," a word that retains its Yiddish "roots," even as it travels Spanish "routes," I find some provisional answers to the questions I pose in the introduction: What do we do in a world in which Yiddish, Navaho, Chicano English, Hawaiian Creole, Gullah, Mayan, and Welsh are continuously subsumed by Spanish and English? How do we maintain our linguistic particularity if there's no one to talk to, no one to read our words? Perhaps, in partial answer, we might remind ourselves that when we say "language," we also say "hybrid." "Fierce maintenance" means keeping language alive in the mouths of speakers, but it also means attending to language travel and change. It means allowing language to tell us where it's going as well as where it has been. Just as Tony Michels urges us not to subsume Jewish political radicalism to the triumphant story of Jewish prosperity, I urge us not to

forget the histories of other ways of being-in-nation contained in the words that continue to travel with us.

In this spirit, I'll close by following the Jewish word, "landsman" as it moves across time, space, language in a cluster of immigrant texts. "Landsman" lends itself particularly well to the diasporic project because it purports to signify "home," all the while unmooring itself from any stable referent. The word seems to describe a Jew who hails from the same town or district as another Jew. The recognition of the landsman in the New World, a moment of relief and pleasure, is a trope that recurs in immigrant literature. The Jewish immigrant expresses little love for his nation of origin. However, he often expresses a deep longing—a subnational attachment—for his own small corner of the earth, and its Yiddish dialect. In many ways, "Landsman" is "about" disjuncture, even after immigration, between Jew and nation. On the European side, as Rebecca Kobrin notes, "east European Jews, like their European counterparts, saw their identity as intricately tied to their cities, towns or regions of origins" (9).¹⁹⁴ (While "land" means country in Yiddish, the word

¹⁹⁴The OED defines landsman "in Jewish use" as "a Jewish person who immigrated, or whose family immigrated, from the same country as another (esp. oneself or one's family); a compatriot." However, country of origins carried less significance for immigrant Jews than town or region. None of the OED examples definitively ties landsman to country of origin: (1933) Amer. Mercury "A friend who is rooming with a landsman, a man who has been in this country for twenty-five years, told me this illuminating story" / 1950 B. Malamud in Partisan Review, "With, after all, a landsman, he would have less to fear than with a complete stranger" / 1973 Listener, "You put on your Shabbat suit . . . and descended on a nearby relative or landsman." The dictionary's final two examples directly contradict the connection between landsman and country of origin: R.H. Rimmer's Premar Experiments (1976): "Every last Jew is a landsman, and hence he's related to every other Jew," and A. Wieseman's Lucky Mom: "Dr. Joe Greenberg, whose parents came from the same district in the Ukraine as mine, which makes him a landsman, practically a relative." These examples indicate that "country" is simultaneously too broad and too narrow a concept to contain the "landsman."

emerged in German long before the modern concept of country had been invented). On the American side, the word also implies a disconnect between Jew and nation. While “landsman” expresses longing for the homeland, this very longing encompasses feelings of loss and displacement triggered by the nation of *arrival* (If two Bialystockers bump into one another in Bialystock, they are simply neighbors. If they one turns a corner and sees another on the streets of Buenos Aires, they are landsmen). Landsman encompasses a complex of subnational, national and transnational attachments and detachments triggered by displacement.

Michael Chabon's *The Yiddish Policemen's Union* (2007), a speculative, post-vernacular detective novel concerned with displacement, offers landsman as one of its central concepts. Nominally a hardboiled detective story, Chabon's novel interrogates the meaning of national belonging in a counterfactual world that imagines the collapse of Zionism—and with it, Hebrew as a national language—a mere three months after Israel was founded. The Jewish autonomous territory of Sitka, Alaska, a place where Jews go about their business in Yiddish—with occasional forays into “American”—is about to revert to US ownership. Against this backdrop of national (un)belonging, the depressive detective, Meyer Landsman, investigates a murder. Along the way, a Jewish paramilitary group, in partnership with American evangelical Christian Zionists, bombs the Dome of the Rock in Palestine. As Margaret Scanlan notes

Chabon, convincingly and with much supporting detail, outlines how a certain version of Christianity and a certain version of Judaism might, by

embracing the same purity of desire, the same urge to destroy in order to bring about a more perfect and God-centered world, commit themselves to bombing an iconic site in a distant country. He reminds us of how compelling such utopian visions can be (524).

Chabon's counterfactual world, menaced by utopianism, is policed by a landsman who disavows any "version of Judaism" that makes common cause with Christian evangelicals. The villain of the story is "purity of desire." Many critics have noted Chabon's extended deployment of an invented 21st century American Yiddish (a cell-phone is a shoy-fer—ram's horn). This imaginative English-inflected Yiddish is central to the novel's project, Chabon's critique of fundamentalism (Glaser 159). The Yiddish language, allied with diaspora implicitly contrasts with Israel (destroyed in the world of the novel, but at large in the world of the author) and the Hebrew language. Yiddish signifies beyond its communicative value. It carries the novel's message metalinguistically.

The Yiddish that Chabon uses to make a point about the value of diaspora, is firmly, to use a term I borrowed earlier from Jeffrey Shandler, post-vernacular.

Shandler defines the post-vernacular as a language whose

instrumental value as a vehicle for communicating information, opinions, feelings, ideas—is narrowing in scope. At the same as its secondary, or meta-level of signification—the symbolic value is invested in the language apart from the semantic value of any given utterance in it—is expanding (4).

For Shandler the prefix “post” does not imply that vernacular Yiddish is finished or that post-vernacularity is an entirely new phenomenon. Indeed, American Yiddish has in some ways always been post-vernacular, a language that signifies by its very presence, rather than the contents of its utterances, belonging, insider-ness, even defiance. The concept of the post-vernacular frees speakers from the intimidating requirements of fluency, and allows them to make Yiddish, whatever Yiddish they know, their own.

Post-Holocaust, post-Israel, post-assimilation, Yiddish increasingly signifies loss, grief, nostalgia and longing. Longing may render problematic post-vernacular uses of Yiddish, in which a multifaceted hybrid language, dense with history and politics, is depoliticized as kitsch or universalized as symbol of the non-national. If we keep Yiddish “alive” by peppering our English with words like “kvetch,” “tsurus” and khutzpah, or uncritically celebrate the language as “deterritorial,” we domesticate it and reduce its complex history as the written and spoken record of Jews, those other Others.

However, Yiddish has always resisted domestication by national languages and might have the last word. In Anzia Yeziarska’s *Bread Givers* (1925) Yiddish plays a trick on the word Landsman, evading the narrator’s attempt to link it to a national territory. In a revelatory scene, Sarah Smolinski, an immigrant who has isolated herself by leaving her family behind in her quest for education, experiences a homecoming when she and her boss, Principal Hugo Seeling, realize that “our beginnings were the same. We came from the same government in Poland” (277). For

a moment, they look at each other, breathless with discovery, and then, “*Landsleute*—countrymen!” we cried, in one voice, our hands reaching out to each other” (277). Hugo and Sarah’s recognition seesaws from the local to the national and back again; they are from the same government (local) in Poland (national). This means that they are *Landsleute* which Yeziarska translates into English as “countrymen.” By dropping a Yiddish word into an English-language novel, Yeziarska implies that Yiddish is the only language capable of expressing a specifically Jewish moment of mutual recognition and homecoming. “*Landsleute*” names a concept that can only be expressed in Yiddish.

Only it’s not. The Yiddish plural of *landsmán* is *landsláyt*. In a text filled with casual Yiddish expressions—mostly curses and expressions of pain—Hugo and Sarah’s moment of recognition, routed through the “same government in Poland,”—is uttered in German. In general, Yeziarska’s deployment of Yiddish is somewhat inscrutable, and often inconsistent. Sometimes Yiddish domesticates Jewish characters, painting them with local color in an otherwise English-language text. Sometimes Yinglish contrasts with English, the former authentic and spontaneous, the later stilted and overly cultivated. However, the moment when Yiddish is asked to appear in solidarity with the story of the concept of the Polish nation, it becomes German.¹⁹⁵ In Yeziarska’s work, Yiddish is most subversive not when it appears as

¹⁹⁵ I doubt that Yeziarska’s intention was to comment on Yiddish as a non-national language. It is possible, but less likely given her attachment to “authenticity,” that she Germanized her Yiddish in an attempt to “elevate” her Yiddish. However, it happened, the German “reclaiming” of this most Jewish (and immigrant term) prevents Yiddish from becoming attached to Poland.

flavorful curses and complaints, but in its absence—when it refuses solidarity with nation-as-territory.

German and Yiddish become similarly entangled Henry Roth's *Mercy of a Rude Stream* (1998). Ira, the Roth character, an immigrant, has befriended an assimilated American Jew, Larry. "Of course, I can't speak Yiddish," Larry says to Ira, "I can speak a little Hungarian. Mostly because of our Mary, our maid . . . my great-grandparents on both sides came here from Hungary." Ira remarks

"So we're some kind of *landslayt*, nearly."

"I know that word. *Landsleute*. It's the same in German. That's what I'm taking."

"Yeah? It's Yiddish too."

"Is it? I know a few words of Yiddish. *Tsuris*. I've heard Sam say that. Troubles. *Keyn ayin-horeh* . . ."

Silently, resentful of his own bewilderment at the peculiar displacement going on within him, he watched Larry's big capable hands tear a square of foil from the top of the yellow package of Camels" (192).

Although Larry casually remarks, "it's the same in German," the reader can't help but note, as Ira does, that *landslayt* and *landsluete* are not the same. This is a moment of disjunction: two words meant to convey connection across language and space are members of the same language family, but to call them "the same" is to ignore not only the entangled movement of languages across space and time, but also the inequality of language. Larry comes to *Landsleute* through casual classroom German,

just as he has picked up some Hungarian from his *maid*. These are not Jewish languages. Ira is “displaced” at the very moment of recognition (landsman!) because he recognizes that he is not at home with the elegant and assimilated Larry. They are “some kind of” landslayt, but the Americas have severed Larry from the language—Yiddish—which makes the moment of recognition possible. What was once the “same,” has, in the New World, diverged. Ira presses the connection—“it’s Yiddish too”—even as he utters the difference. Larry’s response is postvernacular: he falls back on a stock set of phrases that mean more symbolically than semantically. The slippage between German and Yiddish encapsulates Larry’s inability to see Ira in all of his specificity.¹⁹⁶ And while Ira’s relationship with Yiddish is firmly vernacular, the novel itself, written in English, will be experienced by most of its readers in the post-vernacular mode. This scene, powered by the difference between landslayt and landsleute, points to the potential power of a post-vernacular Yiddish that continues to carry its historical and linguistic specificity.

One last landsman. In the Guatemalan Jewish author, Victor Perera’s *The Conversion* (1970), Stanley, a U.S. born Jew of Sephardic descent, travels to Spain to conduct research on his master’s thesis. He quickly goes astray. Wandering about the Spanish countryside with his teenage guide, he is introduced to a “tourist hermit,” a

¹⁹⁶ When Ira and Larry first meet, Ira believes that Larry is “American” (a *goy*). However, once he learns that Larry is an assimilated and wealthy Jew, they become inseparable. Ira, tortured by his squalid immigrant existence is fascinated by Larry’s elegance and *ease*. However, the balance of power shifts over the course of the four novels that make up the *Mercy* cycle. Ira discovers that his power as a writer comes from his ability to transform the rawness of his Jewish immigrant childhood into literature, and Larry proves himself to be something of a rudderless dilettante. And of course, Ira steals away Larry’s alluring older girlfriend.

painter with a “Slavic” accent. The hermit, thrilled to encounter a “Yank,” invites Stanley inside his hut, where he properly introduces himself

“My name is Jacob Perlman, I’m living in London, and as you can see, I paint. How do you do?”

“Stanley Bendana. Pleased to meet you, Mr. Perlman.”

“Call me Jacob. Did you say Bendana? What kind of American name is Bendana? It sounds to me Spanish or Hebrew. Maybe even Arabic.”

“As a matter of fact it’s all three, in varying degrees. I’m told it dates back to Toledo, before the Inquisition.”

Jacob Perlman slapped his cheek. “Mein Gott, a lants—” He checked himself, lifted an eyebrow. “You’re not one of these stuffed-shirt Sephardim, I hope, who never heard of Yiddish? You know the word *lantsman*?”

“From my cradle practically. I grew up in Flatbush” (105-106).

This encounter of “lantsmen” is far from typical. As it registers the imperfect fit between Jew and nation (and historical violence against Jews), it also registers internal Jewish disjunction. Jacob, a holocaust survivor encounters Stanley, a descendent of survivors of the Inquisition, on Spanish soil. For Jacob, *lantsman* no longer means “Jew from the same district,” it simply means fellow Jew encountered in a strange land. However, even as the traditional word of recognition leaves Jacob’s mouth, it is broken in half by his realization that Stanley is a not an Ashkenazi—Yiddish speaking—but rather a Sephardic, Jew. Jacob alludes to a historical

imbalance of prestige between Ashkenazi and Sephardic Jews when he assumes that a Stanley will establish his superiority by denying knowledge of the existence of Yiddish.¹⁹⁷ Stanley was raised in the America where Ashkenzi Jews—and Yiddish—dominate in number, power and visibility. The moment is even more poignant if we consider that Perrera, himself a Sephardic Jew, was actually born and partially raised in Guatemala. His is a story nearly invisible to the mainstream narration of Jewish American history. And in this textual moment, he does his part to redefine America as Spanish and Hebrew and maybe even Arabic. Here “lantsman” reveals that Jewish histories were complex and hybrid before they reached American shores where they encountered yet more contact zones. Perrera’s lantsmen remind us that in the Jewish Americas, Yiddish, a minor American language, enjoys major language status, eclipsing other Jewish languages, and other Jewish peoples. Stanley, a—traditionally Ladino speaking—Sephardic Jew cannot help but know “lantsman,” the Yiddish word, which in this context, has come to simply mean “Jew.”

Reading the language politics of Alberto Gerchunoff, Anzia Yezierska, Waldo Frank, Henry Roth and Mimi Pinzón, I have argued that the presence of Jewish cultures and languages in the Americas refutes monolingual nationalist discourses that seek to expel cultural and linguistic difference. Some Jewish authors, like Mimi Pinzón, explicitly imagine other models of nation through the lens of Jewish linguistic and cultural difference. Others like Gerchunoff and Yezierska find their

¹⁹⁷ See chapter two for a longer discussion of the prestige associated with Sephardic Jews and Ladino as juxtaposed with Ashkenzi Jews and Yiddish. By the 1970s, this balance of power was shifting.

nationalist fantasies undermined by Jewish difference. Either way, multilingual Jewish literature unsettles the equation of nation-language-citizen. We must keep our landsmen and our hoyfs because the Jewish *linguistic* presence in the Americas points not only to the impossibility but also the *undesirability* of nation-as-utopia. Reading Jewish immigrant writing across national, generic and linguistic borders, I take a stand for the continuing value of minor languages, colliding in the contact zone, as constitutive of our American pasts and futures.

Works Cited

- Ahmed, Sara. *The Cultural Politics of Emotion*. Second edition. New York, NY: Routledge, 2015. Print.
- Ainsa, Fernando. *La Reconstrucción de La Utopía*. Buenos Aires, Argentina: Ediciones del Sol, 1999. Print.
- Aizenberg, Edna. *Books and Bombs in Buenos Aires: Borges, Gerchunoff, and Argentine-Jewish Writing*. Hanover, NH: University Press of New England, 2002. Print.
- Alexander, Michael. "The Price of Whiteness: Jews, Race, and American Identity (review)." *American Jewish History* 93.1 (2007): 96–99.
- Alonso, Amado. *Castellano, español, idioma nacional; historia espiritual de tres nombres*. Buenos Aires: Editorial Losada, s.a., 1943. Print.
- Altamirano, Carlos, and Beatriz Sarlo. *Ensayos argentinos: de Sarmiento a la vanguardia*. Buenos Aires: Centro Editor de América Latina, 1983. Print.
- Altschul, Nadia. *Geographies of Philological Knowledge: Postcoloniality and the Transatlantic National Epic*. Chicago; London: University of Chicago Press, 2012. Print.
- Alvarez Chillida, Gonzalo. *El antisemitismo en España: la imagen del judío, 1812-2002*. Madrid: Marcial Pons, 2002. Print.
- Anderson, Benedict R. O’G. "Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism." *ACLS Humanities E-Book* (2006): n. pag. *cruzcat.ucsc.edu Library Catalog*. Web. 8 Jan. 2016.

- . *The Spectre of Comparisons: Nationalism, Southeast Asia, and the World*. London; New York: Verso, 1998. Print.
- . *Under Three Flags: Anarchism and the Anti-Colonial Imagination*. London; New York, NY: Verso, 2005. Print.
- Antin, Mary, and Werner Sollors. *The Promised Land*. New York: Penguin Books, 2012. Print. Penguin Classics.
- Appiah, Anthony. *Lines of Descent: W. E. B. Du Bois and the Emergence of Identity*. Cambridge, Massachusetts; London, England: Harvard University Press, 2014. Print.
- . *The Ethics of Identity*. Princeton, N.J: Princeton University Press, 2005. Print.
- Appiah, Kwame Anthony. "Thick Translation." *The Translation Studies Reader*. Ed. Lawrence Venuti. London; New York: Routledge. Print.
- Apter, Emily. "Translation with No Original: Scandals of Textual Reproduction." *Tranlation/Transnation: Nation, Language and the Ethics of Tranlsation*. Ed. Sandra Berman and Michael Wood. Princeton, N.J: Princeton University Press, 2008. Print.
- Arac, Jonathan. *Huckleberry Finn as Idol and Target: The Functions of Criticism in Our Time*. Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1997. Print.
- . *Impure Worlds: The Institution Of literature in the Age of the Novel*. 1st ed. New York: Fordham University Press, 2011. Print.

- Arac, Jonathan, and Harriet Ritvo, eds. *Macropolitics of Nineteenth-Century Literature: Nationalism, Exoticism, Imperialism*. Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1991. Print.
- Arendt, Hannah. "The Jew as Pariah: A Hidden Tradition." *Jewish Social Studies* 6.2 (1944): n. pag. Print.
- Astro, Alan. "Alpershon's Galut of the Jewish Gauchos." *Yiddish-Modern Jewish Studies* 17.1.2 n. pag. Print.
- , ed. *Yiddish South of the Border: An Anthology of Latin American Yiddish Writing*. First edition. Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 2003. Print.
- Astro, Allan. "Mimi Pinzón." *Jewish Women's Archive*. Web.
- Aviv, Caryn, and David Shneer. *New Jews: The End of the Jewish Diaspora*. New York: New York University Press, 2005. Print.
- Bachman, Merle. *Recovering "Yiddishland": Threshold Moments in American Literature*. 1st ed. Syracuse, N.Y: Syracuse University Press, 2008. Print.
- Baily, Samuel L. *Immigrants in the Lands of Promise: Italians in Buenos Aires and New York City, 1870-1914*. Ithaca, N.Y: Cornell University Press, 1999. Print.
- Baker, Zachary M. "Yiddish Publishing After 1945: A Brief Overview." *Yiddish After the Holocaust*. Ed. Joseph Sherman. Oxford: Oxford University Press. Print.
- Baker, Zachary M. "Yiddish South of the Border: An Anthology of Latin American Yiddish Writing (review)." *Shofar: An Interdisciplinary Journal of Jewish Studies* 23.4 (2005): 142–144.

- Bakhtin, M. M., Caryl Emerson, and Michael Holquist. "The Dialogic Imagination: Four Essays." *ACLS Humanities E-Book* (1981): n. pag. *cruzcat.ucsc.edu Library Catalog*.
- Barnstone, Willis. *The Poetics of Translation: History, Theory, Practice*. New Haven: Yale University Press, 1993. Print.
- Barylko, Jaime, ed. *Pluralismo E Identidad: Lo Judío En La Literatura Latinoamericana*. Buenos Aires, Argentina: Milá, 1986. Print. Ensayos.
- Baumgarten, Murray. *City Scriptures: Modern Jewish Writing*. Cambridge, Mass: Harvard University Press, 1982. Print.
- Beasley-Murray, Jon. *Posthegemony: Political Theory and Latin America*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2010. Print.
- Bejarano, Margalit, and Edna Aizenberg, eds. *Contemporary Sephardic Identity in the Americas: An Interdisciplinary Approach*. 1st ed. Syracuse, N.Y: Syracuse University Press, 2012. Print.
- Bello, Andrés, and Ramón Trujillo. *Gramática de La Lengua Castellana Destinada Al Uso de Los Americanos*. Madrid: Arco/Libros, 1988. Print.
- Bellow, Saul. *Herzog*. New York, New York: Penguin Books, 2015. Print.
- . *The Adventures of Augie March, a Novel*. New York: Viking Press, 1953. Print.
- Bellow, Saul, and Benjamin Taylor. *Saul Bellow: Letters*. New York: Viking, 2010. Print.
- Belluscio, Steven J. *To Be Suddenly White: Literary Realism and Racial Passing*. Columbia: University of Missouri Press, 2006. Print.

- Ben-Dror, Graciela. *The Catholic Church and the Jews: Argentina, 1933-1945*.
 Lincoln, Neb: University of Nebraska Press : Vidal Sassoon International
 Center for the Study of Antisemitism(SICSA), the Hebrew University of
 Jerusalem, 2008. Print.
- Benjamin, Walter. "The Task of the Translator." *Illuminations*. Trans. Harry Zohn.
 New York: Harcourt, Brace & World, 1968. Print.
- Benor, Sarah. "Towards a New Understanding of Jewish Language in the Twenty-
 First Century." *Religion Compass* 2.6 (2008): n. pag. Print.
- Bercovitch, Sacvan. *The American Jeremiad*. Madison: University of Wisconsin
 Press, 1978. Print.
- . *The Puritan Origins of the American Self*. New Haven: Yale University Press,
 1975. Print.
- . *Typology and Early American Literature*. Amherst: University of Massachusetts
 Press, 1972. Print.
- Berger, Silvia. *Cuatro Textos Autobiográficos Latinoamericanos: Yo, Historia E
 Identidad Nacional En A. Gerchunoff, M. Agosín, A. Bioy Casares Y O.
 Soriano*. New York: P. Lang, 2004. Print.
- Berlant, Lauren Gail. *The Female Complaint: The Unfinished Business of
 Sentimentality in American Culture*. Durham: Duke University Press, 2008.
 Print.
- . *The Queen of America Goes to Washington City: Essays on Sex and Citizenship*.
 Durham: Duke University Press, 1997. Print.

- Bertoni, Lilia Ana. *Patriotas, Cosmopolitas Y Nacionalistas: La Construcción de La Nacionalidad Argentina a Fines Del Siglo XIX*. Buenos Aires: Fondo de cultura económica, 2001. Print.
- Bettina, Berch. *From Hester Street to Hollywood*. Sefer International, 2009. Print.
- Beverley, John. "Writing in Reverse: On the Project of the Latin American Subaltern Studies Group." *The Latin American Cultural Studies Reader*. Ed. Ana del Santo, Alicia Rios, and Abril Trigo. Durham London: Duke University Press, 2004. Print.
- Bittner, William Robert. *The Novels of Waldo Frank*. Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1958. Print.
- Blake, Casey Nelson. *Beloved Community: The Cultural Criticism of Randolph Bourne, Van Wyck Brooks, Waldo Frank, and Lewis Mumford*. Chapel Hill, N.C: University of North Carolina Press, 1990. Print. Cultural Studies of the United States.
- Boas, Ralph Philip, and Barbara M. Hahn. *Short Stories for Class Reading*. New York: H. Holt and company, 1925. Print.
- Bonfil, Robert. "Reading the Jewish Communities of Western Europe in the Middle Ages." *A History of Reading in the West*. Ed. Cavallo and Chartier. Amherst Boston: University of Massachusetts Press, 1999. Print.
- Borges, Jorge Luis. "Borges Todo El Año: Jorge Luis Borges: El Idioma de Los Argentinos." N.p., n.d. Web. 10 May 2016.

- . "El Escritor Argentino Y La Tradicion." *Discussion*. Buenos Aires: Emece Editores, 1957. 128–37. Print.
- Botshon, Lisa. "Anzia Yeziarska and the Marketing of the Jewish Immigrant in 1920s Hollywood." *Journal of Narrative Theory* 30.3 (2000): 287–312. Print.
- . "The New Woman of the Tenements: Anzia Yeziarska's Salome." *MFS Modern Fiction Studies* 56.2 (2010): 233–261.
- Boyarin, Daniel. *Border Lines: The Partition of Judaeo-Christianity*. Philadelphia, Pa: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2004.
- Boyarin, Daniel, and Jonathan Boyarin. "Diaspora and the Ground of Jewish Identity." *Critical Inquiry* 19.4 693–725. Print.
- Boyarin, Jonathan. *The Unconverted Self: Jews, Indians, and the Identity of Christian Europe*. Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 2009. Print.
- . *Thinking in Jewish*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1996. Print.
- Boyarin, Jonathan, and Daniel Boyarin, eds. *Jews and Other Differences: The New Jewish Cultural Studies*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1997. Print.
- . *Powers of Diaspora: Two Essays on the Relevance of Jewish Culture*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2002. Print.
- Boyd, Stephen F. *A Companion to Cervantes's Novelas Ejemplares*. Woodbridge, Suffolk, UK; Rochester, NY, USA: Tamesis, 2005. Print.

- Branche, Jerome. *The Poetics and Politics of Diaspora: Transatlantic Musings*. New York; London: Routledge, 2015. Print. Routledge Studies on African and Black Diaspora.
- Brickman, Celia. *Aboriginal Populations in the Mind: Race and Primitivity in Psychoanalysis*. New York: Columbia University Press, 2003. Print.
- Brodkin, Karen. *How Jews Became White Folks and What That Says about Race in America*. New Brunswick, N.J.: Rutgers University Press, 1998. Print.
- Brown, Jonathan. "Forward: Toros Y Flamenco: The Image of Spain in the United States." *Spain in America*. Ed. Richard L. Kagan. Urbana and Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 2002. Print.
- Cahan, Abraham. *The Rise of David Levinsky*. New York: Harper, 1960. Print.
- . *Yekl a Tale of the New York Ghetto*. New York: Appleton, 1896. Print.
- Cammy, Justin Daniel, and Ruth R. Wisse, Eds. *Arguing the Modern Jewish Canon: Essays on Literature and Culture in Honor of Ruth R. Wisse*. Cambridge, Mass: Center for Jewish Studies, Harvard University: Distributed by Harvard University Press, 2008. Print.
- Caplan, Marc. *How Strange the Change: Language, temporality, and Narrative Form in Peripheral Modernisms*. Stanford, Calif: Stanford University Press, 2011. Print.
- Cassedy, Steven. "The Question of Human Rights in American Yiddish Journalism: The Example of Di Tsukunft." *Yiddish and the Left*. Ed. Gennady Estraiikh

- and Mikhail Krutikov. Oxford European Humanities Research Centre:
Legenda, 2001. 2–23. Print.
- Casteel, Sarah Philips. “Sephardism and Marranism in Native American Fiction of
the Quincentenary.” *MELUS: Multi-Ethnic Literature of the U.S.* 37.2 (2012):
59–81. Print.
- Castro-Gómez, Santiago. *Crítica de la razón latinoamericana*. Barcelona: Puvill
Libros, 1996. Print.
- Castro-Klarén, Sara, and John Charles Chasteen. *Beyond Imagined Communities:
Reading and Writing the Nation in Nineteenth-Century Latin America*.
Washington, D.C.; Baltimore: Woodrow Wilson Center Press; Johns Hopkins
University Press, 2003. Print.
- Chabon, Michael. *The Yiddish Policemen’s Union: A Novel*. First edition. New York:
HarperCollins Publishers, 2007. Print.
- Charyn, Jerome, *Inside the Hornet’s Head: An Anthology of Jewish American
Writing*. New York: Thunder’s Mouth Press, 2005. Print.
- Cheyette, Bryan, and Laura Marcus, eds. *Modernity, Culture, and “the Jew.”*
Stanford, Calif: Stanford University Press, 1998. Print.
- Cheyfitz, Eric. *The Poetics of Imperialism: Translation and Colonization from The
Tempest to Tarzan*. New York: Oxford University Press, 1991. Print.
- Civantos, Christina. *Between Argentines and Arabs: Argentine Orientalism, Arab
Immigrants, and the Writing of Identity*. Albany: State University of New
York Press, 2006. Print.

- Cohen, Arthur. "The Last Jew on Earth." *Commentary* 1 Nov. 1972: n. pag. Print.
- "Comparative Diasporas: The Local and the Mobile in Abraham Cahan and Alberto Gerchunoff." *MFS: Modern Fiction Studies* 1 (1998): n. pag.
- Conklin, Ljiljana. "Between the Orient and the Ghetto: A Modern Immigrant Woman in Anzia Yezierska's *Salmoe of the Tenements*." *Frontiers: A Journal of Women's Studies* 27.2 136–161. Print.
- Cro, Stelio. *Realidad Y Utopía En El Descubrimiento Y Conquista de La América Hispana, 1492-1682*. Troy, Mich: Madrid, España: International Book Publishers; Fundación Universitaria Española, 1983. Print.
- Damrosch, David. *What Is World Literature?* Princeton, N.J: Princeton University Press, 2003. Print.
- Dearborn, Mary V. *Love in the Promised Land: The Story of Anzia Yezierska and John Dewey*. New York: Free Press, 1988. Print.
- Degiovanni, Fernando. "Alberto Gerchunoff Y La Tradición Argentina." *Cuadernos Hispanoamericanos* 604 (2000): 73. Print.
- . "Inmigracion, Nacionalismo Cultural, Campo Intelecutal: El Proyecto Creador de Alberto Gerchunoff." *Revista Iberoamericana* LXVI.191 367–379. Print.
- De Landa, Manuel. *A Thousand Years of Nonlinear History*. New York: Zone Books, 1997. Print.
- Deleuze, Gilles, and Félix Guattari. *Kafka: Toward a Minor Literature*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1986. Print.

- Derrida, Jacques. "What Is a 'Relevant' Translation?" Trans. Lawrence Venuti.
Critical Inquiry (2001): n. pag. Print.
- Derrida, Jacques, and Christie V. McDonald. *The Ear of the Other: Otobiography, Transference, Translation: Texts and Discussions with Jacques Derrida*. New York: Schocken Books, 1985. Print.
- Deutsch, Nathaniel. *The Jewish Dark Continent: Life and Death in the Russianpale of Settlement*. Cambridge, Mass: Harvard University Press, 2011. Print.
- Deutsch, Sandra McGee. *Crossing Borders, Claiming a Nation: A History of Argentine Jewish Women, 1880-1955*. Durham N.C.: Duke University Press, 2010. Print.
- Deutsch, Sandra McGee, and Ronald H Dolkart. *The Argentine Right: Its History and Intellectual Origins, 1910 to the Present*. Wilmington, Del.: SR Books, 1993. Print.
- Devoto, Fernando, and Roberto Benencia. *Historia de La Inmigración En La Argentina*. Buenos Aires: Editorial Sudamericana, 2003. Print.
- Dewey, John, and Jo Ann Boydston. *The Middle Works, 1899-1924*. Carbondale: Southern Illinois University Press, 1976. Print.
- DiAntonio, Robert E, and Nora Glickman. *Tradition and Innovation: Reflections on Latin American Jewish Writing*. Albany: State University of New York Press, 1993. Print.

- Díaz, Roberto Ignacio. "Review of *Between Argentines and Arabs: Argentine Orientalism, Arab Immigrants, and the Writing of Identity*." *Latin American Literary Review* 36.71 (2008): 137–139. Print.
- Dimock, Wai-chee, and Lawrence Buell, Eds. *Shades of the Planet: American Literature as World Literature*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2007. Print.
- D’Innocenzo, Michael, Josef P. Sirefman, and Hofstra University, Eds. *Immigration and Ethnicity: American Society--“Melting Pot” or “Salad Bowl”?* Westport, Conn: Greenwood Press, 1992. Print.
- Dolle, Verena. *Múltiples identidades: literatura judeo-latinoamericana de los siglos XX y XXI*. Madrid: Frankfurt am Main: Iberoamericana ; Vervuert, 2012. Print.
- Dubnow, Simon. *Nationalism and History; Essays on Old and New Judaism*. Philadelphia: Jewish Publication Society of America, 1958. Print.
- Dubnow, Simon, and Israel Friedlaender. *History of the Jews in Russia and Poland, from the Earliest Times until the Present Day*. Philadelphia: Jewish Publication Society of America, 1916. Print.
- Du Bois, W. E. B. *The Souls of Black Folk*. New York: Dover, 1994. Print.
- Dujovne, Alejandro. "Print Culture and Urban Geography: Jewish Bookstores, Libraries and Printers in Buenos Aires, 1910-1960." *The New Jewish Argentina: Facets of Jewish Experiences in the Southern Cone*. Ed. Adriana Brodsky and Rannan Rein. Boston: Brill, 2013. Print.

- Eagleton, Terry. *The Ideology of the Aesthetics*. Cambridge, MA, USA: Basil Blackwell, 1990. Print.
- Ebest, Ron. "Anzia Yeziarska and the Popular Periodical Debate Over the Jews." *MELUS* 1.25 (2005): 69–97. Print.
- Edwards, Brent Hayes. *The Practice of Diaspora Literature, Translation, and the Rise of Black Internationalism*. Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 2003.
- Efron, John M. *German Jewry and the Allure of the Sephardic*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2016. Print.
- Eichelbaum, Samuel. *El viajero inmóvil*. Buenos Aires; Montevideo: Sociedad Amigos del Libro Rioplatense, 1933. Print.
- Elahi, Babak. *The Fabric of American Literary Realism: Readymade Clothing, Social Mobility, and Assimilation*. Jefferson, N.C: McFarland, 2009. Print.
- Endelman, Todd. "Benjamin Disraeli and the Myth of Sephardi Superiority." *Disraeli's Jewishness*. Ed. Todd Endelman and Tony Kushner. London: Vallentine Mitchell, 2002. Print.
- Éstraïkh, G. *In Harness Yiddish Writers' Romance with Communism*. Syracuse, N.Y.: Syracuse University Press, 2005.
- Éstraïkh, G. *Soviet Yiddish: Language Planning and Linguistic Development*. Oxford : New York: Clarendon Press ; Oxford University Press, 1999. Print.
- . *Translating Sholem Aleichem: History, Politics and Art*. London: Legenda, Modern Humanities Research Association and Maney Publishing, 2012. Print.

- . *Yiddish in the Cold War*. Leeds: Legenda, 2008. Print. Legenda Studies in Yiddish 7.
- . "The Yiddish-Language Communist Press." *Dark Times, Dire Decisions: Jews and Communism*. Ed. Jonathan Frankel. New York: Oxford University Press. Print. Studies in Contemporary Jewry.
- Faber, Sebastiaan. *Anglo-American Hispanists and the Spanish Civil War: Hispanophilia, Commitment, and Discipline*. 1st ed. New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2008. Print.
- Feierstein, Liliana Ruth. "The New Midrash: The Jewish Press in Argentina." Conference 80 Jahre Presse: Der judische Beitrag zum modernen Journalismus. Universitat Bremen, 2008.
- Feierstein, Ricardo. *Contraexilio y mestizaje: ser judío en la Argentina*. Buenos Aires: Editorial Milá, 1996. Print.
- . *Historia de Los Judíos Argentinos*. Buenos Aires, Argentina: Galerna, 2006. Print.
- Fernandez, James. "'Longfellow's Law': The Place of Latin America and Spain in U.S. Hispanism Circa 1915." *Spain in America*. Ed. Richard L. Kagan. Urbana and Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 2002. Print.
- Fiedler, Leslie A. *Love and Death in the American Novel*. Normal, IL: Dalkey Archive Press, 1997. Print.
- Fishman, David E. *The Rise of Modern Yiddish Culture*. Pittsburgh, PA: University of Pittsburgh Press, 2005. Print.

- Flesler, Daniela, Tabea Alexa Linhard, and Adrián Pérez Melgosa, Eds. *Revisiting Jewish Spain in the Modern Era*. London; New York: Routledge, 2013. Print.
- Folks, Jeffrey. "Henry Roth's National and Personal Narratives of Captivity." *Papers on Language and Literature* 35.3 (1999): 279. Print.
- Foucault, Michel. *Discipline and Punish: The Birth of the Prison*. First American edition. New York: Pantheon Books, 1977. Print.
- Franco, Dean J. *Race, Rights, and Recognition: Jewish American Literature since 1969*. Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2012. Print.
- Franco, Jean. *The Decline and Fall of the Lettered City: Latin America in the Cold War*. Cambridge, Mass: Harvard University Press, 2002. Print.
- Frank, Waldo David. *America Hispana: A Portrait and a Prospect*. New York: C. Scribner's Sons, 1931. Print.
- . *Birth of a World: Bolivar in Terms of His Peoples*. Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1951. Print.
- . *Bridgehead: The Drama of Israel*. New York: G. Braziller, 1957. Print.
- . *Chalk Face*. New York: Boni and Liveright, 1924. *Open WorldCat*. Web. 10 May 2016.
- . *Chart for Rough Water*. New York: Doubleday, Doran & company, inc, 1940. Print.
- . *City Block*. Darien, Conn.: Waldo Frank, 1922. *Open WorldCat*. Web. 10 May 2016.
- . *Cuba: Prophetic Island*. New York: Marzani & Munsell, 1961. Print.

- . *Dawn in Russia; the Record of a Journey*. New York; London: C. Scribner's Sons, 1932. Print.
- . *Espana virgen; escenas del drama espiritual de un gran pueblo*. Buenos Aires: Editorial Losada, 1947. Print.
- . *Holiday*. New York: Boni and Liveright, 1923. Print.
- . *Island in the Atlantic, a Novel*. New York: Duell, Sloan and Pearce, 1946. Print.
- . *Memoirs of Waldo Frank*. Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 1973. Print.
- . *Our America*. New York: Boni and Liveright, 1919. Print.
- . *Rahab*. New York: Boni and Liveright, 1922. Print.
- . *South American Journey*. New York: Duell, Sloan and Pearce, 1943. Print.
- . *Summer Never Ends a Modern Love Story*. New York: Duell, Sloan and Pearce, 1941. Print.
- . *The Death and Birth of David Markand*. New York, London: C. Scribner's sons, 1934. Print.
- . *The Jew in Our Day*. New York: Duell, Sloan and Pearce, 1944. Print.
- . *The Rediscovery of Man; a Memoir and a Methodology of Modern Life*. New York: G. Braziller, 1958. Print.
- . *The Unwelcome Man a Novel*. New York: Boni and Liveright, 1923. Print.
- . *Virgin Spain Scenes from the Spiritual Drama of a Great People*. New York: Boni & Liveright, 1926. Print.

- Frank, Waldo David, and Anita Brenner. *Tales from the Argentine*. New York: Farrar & Rinehart, Inc., 1930. Print.
- Fredrickson, George M. *The Black Image in the White Mind; the Debate on Afro-American Character and Destiny, 1817-1914*. New York: Harper & Row, 1971. Print.
- Fredrickson, George M. *The Comparative Imagination: On the History of Racism, Nationalism, and Social Movements*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1997. Print.
- Freedman, Jonathan. *Klezmer America: Jewishness, Ethnicity, Modernity*. New York: Columbia University Press, 2008. Print.
- . "Transgressions of a Model Minority." *Shofar: An Interdisciplinary Journal of Jewish Studies* 23.4 (2005): 69–97.
- Frieden, Ken. *Classic Yiddish Fiction: Abramovitsh, Sholem Aleichem, and Peretz*. Albany, NY: State University of New York Press, 1995. Print.
- García Canclini, Néstor. *Culturas Híbridas: Estrategias Para Entrar Y Salir de Lamodernidad*. México, D.F: Debolsillo, 2009. Print.
- . *Culturas Híbridas: Estrategias Para Entrar Y Salir de Lamodernidad*. México, D.F: Grijalbo: Consejo Nacional para la Cultura y las Artes, 1989. Print.
- García Canclini, Néstor. *Culturas En Globalización: América Latina, Europa, Estados Unidos: Libre Comercio E Integración*. Caracas, Venezuela: CNCA; CLACSO; Nueva Sociedad, 1996. Print.

- Gardiol, Rita Mazzetti, and Alberto Gerchunoff. *The Silver Candelabra & Other Stories: A Century of Jewish Argentine Literature*. Pittsburgh, PA: Latin American Literary Review Press, 1997. Print.
- Geller, Jay. *The Other Jewish Question: Identifying the Jew and Making Sense of Modernity*. First edition. New York: Fordham University Press, 2011. Print.
- Gentzler, Edwin. *Translation and Identity in the Americas: New Directions in Translation Theory*. London; New York: Routledge, 2008. Print.
- Gerber, Jane S. *The Jews of Spain: A History of the Sephardic Experience*. New York: Free Press, 1992. Print.
- Gerchunoff, Alberto Gerchunoff. *Argentina, País de Advenimineto*. Buenos Aires: Editorial Losada, 1952. Print.
- . *Autobiografía*. Buenos Aires: Libreros y Editoriales del Polígono SRL, 1983. Print.
- . *Buenos Aires, la metrópoli de mañana*. Buenos Aires: N.p., 1960. Print.
- . *Cuentos de ayer*. Buenos Aires: Ediciones Selectas América, 1919. Print.
- . *El pino y la palmera*. Buenos Aires: Sociedad Hebraica Argentina, 1952. Print.
- . *El problema judío*. Buenos Aires: Ediciones Macabi, 1945. Print.
- . *Enrique Heine, el poeta de nuestra intimidad*. Buenos Aires; Madrid: Biblioteca Argentina de buenas ediciones literarias, 1927.
- . *Entre Ríos, mi país*. Buenos Aires: Editorial Plus Ultra, 1973.
- . *Figuras de nuestro tiempo*. Buenos Aires, República Argentina: Editorial Vernácula: Distribuidor, Plus-Ultra, 1979. Print.
- . *Historias y proezas de amor: relatos*. Buenos Aires: Emecé, 1962. Print.

- . *La asamblea de la bohardilla*. Buenos Aires: M. Gleizer, 1925. Print.
- . *La clínica del doctor Mefistófeles; moderna milagrería en diez jornadas*. Santiago de Chile: Ediciones Ercilla, 1937. Print.
- . *La jofaina maravillosa agenda cervantina*. Buenos Aires: M. Gleizer, 1927. Print.
- . *Los amores de Baruj Spinoza*. Buenos Aires: Biblioteca argentina de buenas ediciones literarias, 1932. Print.
- . "Los Refugiados árabes." *Jadla* Aug. 1948: 24. Print.
- . "Paz Judeo-Arábiga." *Jadla* : n. pag. Print.
- . *Retorno a Don Quijote*. Buenos Aires: Editorial Sudamericana, 1951. Print.
- . *Roberto J. Payró*. Buenos Aires: Librería y casa editora de Jesus Menendez, 1925. Print.
- . *Yidn Gautshn*. Trans. Pinie Katz. Buenos Aires, Argentina: Ikuf, 1952. Print.
- Gerchunoff, Alberto, and Ricardo Feierstein. *Alberto Gerchunoff, Judío Y Argentino: Viaje Temático Desde "Los Gauchos Judíos" (1910) Hasta Sus últimos textos (1950) Y Visión Crítica*. Buenos Aires: Míla, 2000. Print.
- Gerchunoff, Alberto, and Manuel Kántor. *El hombre importante*. Buenos Aires: Hachette, 1960. Print.
- Gerchunoff, Alberto, and Prudencio de Pereda. *The Jewish Gauchos of the Pampas*. Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1998. Print.
- Gerchunoff, Alberto, and Eliahu Toker. *Entre gauchos y judíos*. Buenos Aires: Secretaría de cultura de la nación en coproducción con Editorial Biblos, 1994. Print.

- Gilman, Sander L. *Multiculturalism and the Jews*. New York: Routledge, 2006. Print.
- . *The Jew's Body*. New York: Routledge, 1991. Print.
- Goldman, Shalom. *Zeal for Zion: Christians, Jews, & the Idea of the Promised Land*. Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2009. Print.
- González Echevarría, Roberto. *Myth and Archive: A Theory of Latin American Narrative*. Cambridge; New York: Cambridge University Press, 1990. Print.
- Gordon, Marjorie Salgado. "Alberto Gerchunoff and Samuel Eichelbaum: Two Literary Reflections on Judeo-Argentinidad." N.p., 1985. Print.
- Gracia, Jorge J. E. *Forging People: Race, Ethnicity, and Nationality in Hispanic American and Latino/a Thought*. Notre Dame, Ind: University of Notre Dame Press, 2011. Print.
- Grade, Chaim. *Rabbis and Wives*. New York: Knopf: Distributed by Random House, 1982. Print.
- Greenfeld, Liah. *Nationalism: Five Roads to Modernity*. Cambridge, Mass: Harvard University Press, 1992. Print.
- Green, Nancy L., and Patrick Altman. *Jewish Workers in the Modern Diaspora*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1998. Print.
- Güiraldes, Ricardo, Harriet De Onís, and Waldo David Frank. *Don Segundo Sombra: Shadows on the Pampas*. West Drayton, Middlesex: Penguin Books, 1948. Print.
- Gunn, Drewey Wayne. *American and British Writers in Mexico, 1556-1973*. Austin: University of Texas Press, 1974. Print.

- Gustafson, Thomas. *Representative Words: Politics, Literature, and the American Language, 1776-1865*. Cambridge, England; New York, NY: Cambridge University Press, 1992. Print.
- Halevi-Wise, Yael. *Sephardism: Spanish Jewish History and the Modern Literary Imagination*. Stanford, California: Stanford University Press, 2012. Print.
- Halperin, Donghi, Tulio. "Argentine Counterpoint: Rise of the Nation, Rise of the State." *Beyond Imagined Communities: Reading and Writing the Nation in Nineteenth-Century America*. Ed. John Castro-Klaren and John Charles Chasteen. Washington DC: Woodrow Wilson Press. Print.
- Hefner, Brooks E. "'Slipping Back into the Vernacular': Anzia Yezierska's Vernacular Modernism." *MELUS: Multi-Ethnic Literature of the U.S.* 36.3 (2011): 187–211.
- Hegman, Susan. "Before Cultures: The Ethnographic Imagination in American Literature, 1865-1920 (review)." *Anthropological Quarterly* 79.1 (2006): 183–185. Print.
- Hernández, José. *Martín Fierro*. 1. edición. Nanterre, Francia: Allca XX, Université Paris X, 2001. Print.
- Hertzberg, Arthur. *The French Enlightenment and the Jews; the Origins of Modern Anti-Semitism*. New York: Schocken Books, 1970. Print.
- Hetényi, Zsuzsa. *In a Maelstrom: The History of Russian-Jewish Prose (1860-1940)*. Budapest; New York: Central European University Press, 2008. Print.

- Hindus, Maurice. "The Revolt of the New Immigrant." *The Century* 10.6 (1923): 847–854. Print.
- Hirsch, Steven, and Lucien Van der Walt. *Anarchism and Syndicalism in the Colonial and Postcolonialworld, 1870-1940: The Praxis of National Liberation, Internationalism, and Social Revolution*. Leiden; Boston: Brill, 2010. Print.
- Hobsbawm, E. J. *The Age of Empire, 1875-1914*. London: Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 1987. Print.
- Horowitz, Brian. *Jewish Philanthropy and Enlightenment in Late-Tsarist Russia*. Seattle: University of Washington Press, 2009. Print.
- Howard, John. *Lazarus Rising: A Personal and Political Autobiography*. Pymble, N.S.W: HarperCollins, 2010. Print.
- Huberman, Ariana. *Gauchos and Foreigners: Glossing Culture and Identity Inthe Argentine Countryside*. Lanham, Md: Lexington Books, 2011. Print.
- . *Gauchos and Foreigners: Glossing Culture and Identity in the Argentine Countryside*. Lanham, MD: Lexington Books, 2011.
- Hussar, James. "La Visión Tríptica Del Judío En Los Gauchos Judíos de Alberto Gerchunoff." *Pegaso* (2006): 44–51. Print.
- Huyssen, Andreas. "After the Great Divide: Modernism, Mass Culture, Postmodernism." *ACLS Humanities E-Book* (1986): n. pag. Print.
- . "Diaspora and Nation: Migration into Other Pasts." *New German Critique* 2003.88 (2003): n. pag. Print.

- Hyman, Paula. *From Dreyfus to Vichy: The Remaking of French Jewry, 1906-1939*. New York: Columbia University Press, 1979. Print.
- . *Gender and Assimilation in Modern Jewish History: The Roles and Representations of Women*. Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1995. Print.
- Israel Lotersztain. *La Historia de Un Fracaso: La Religión Judeo Comunista En Los Tiempos de La URSS: La Prensa Del ICUF En Argentina Entre 1946 Y 1957*. Diss. Universidad Nacional de General Sarmiento, 2014.
- Itzkovitz, Daniel. "Secret Temples." *Jews and Other Differences: The New Jewish Cultural Studies*. Ed. Jonathan Boyarin and Daniel Boyarin. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1997. Print.
- Jacobson, Matthew Frye. "Whiteness of a Different Color: European Immigrants and the Alchemy of Race." *ACLS Humanities E-Book* (1999): n. pag. Print.
- Jakobson, Roman. "On Linguistic Aspects of Translation." *The Translation Studies Reader*. Ed. Lawrence Venuti. Kentucky: Routledge. Print.
- James, Henry, and Leon Edel. *The American Scene*. Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1968. Print.
- James, Henry, and Pierre A. Walker. *Henry James on Culture: Collected Essays on Politics Andthe American Social Scene*. Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1999. Print.
- Jameson, Fredric. *The Ideologies of Theory*. London; New York: Verso, 2008. Print.

- Jaroslavsky de Lowy, Sara. *Alberto Gerchunoff: vida y obra, bibliografía, antología*.
New York: Hispanic Institute in the United States, Columbia University,
1957. Print.
- Jones, Gavin Roger. *Strange Talk: The Politics of Dialect Literature in Gilded Age
America*. Berkeley, Calif: University of California Press, 1999. Print.
- Jusdanis, Gregory. *Belated Modernity and Aesthetic Culture: Inventing National
Literature*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1991. Print.
- Kahzoom, Aziza. "The Great Chain of Orientalism: Jewish Identity, Stigma
Management, and Ethnic Exculsion in Israel." *American Sociological Review*
68.4 n. pag. Print.
- Kalman, Julie. "Sensuality, Depravity, and Ritual Murder: The Damascus Blood
Libel and Jews in France." *Jewish Social Studies* 13.3 (2007): 35–58. Print.
- Karush, Matthew B., and Oscar Chamosa. *The New Cultural History of Peronism:
Power and Identity in Mid-Twentieth-Century Argentina*. Durham NC;
London: Duke University Press, 2010. Print.
- Katz, Wendy. "Untying the Immigrant Tongue: Whitman and the 'Americanization'
of Anzia Yeziarska." *Walt Whitman Quarterly Review* 21.3 (2004): 155–165.
Print.
- Kaufman, Heidi. "Borders of Intimacy in Israel Zangwill's Children of the Ghetto."
Partial Answers: Journal of Literature and the History of Ideas 13.1 (2015):
91–110.

- Kellman, Steven G. "Living on Writer's Block: Henry Roth and American Literature." *Shofar: An Interdisciplinary Journal of Jewish Studies* 26.3 (2008): 21–32. Print.
- . *Redemption: The Life of Henry Roth*. New York: W.W. Norton, 2005. Print.
- Kennedy, J. Gerald et al., eds. *The American Novel from Its Beginnings to 1870*. Oxford; New York: Oxford University Press, 2014. Print.
- Kent, Alicia A. *African, Native, and Jewish American Literature and the Reshaping of Modernism*. New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2007.
- Khazzoom, Aziza. "The Great Chain of Orientalism: Jewish Identity, Stigma Management, and Ethnic Exclusion in Israel." *American Sociological Review* 68.4 (2003): 481–510.
- Kobrin, Rebecca. *Jewish Bialystok and Its Diaspora*. Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2010. Print.
- . "The Other Polonia: Yiddish Immigrant Writers in Buenos Aires and New York Respond to the New Polish State." *Choosing Yiddish: New Frontiers of Language and Culture*. Ed. Lara Rabinovitch, Shiri Green, and Hannah Pressman. Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 2013. 103–121. Print.
- Koltun-Fromm, Ken. *Material Culture and Jewish Thought in America*. Bloomington and Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 2010.
- Konzett, Delia Caparoso. *Ethnic Modernisms: Anzia Yezierska, Zora Neale Hurston, Jean Rhys, and the Aesthetics of Dislocation*. New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2002. Print.

- Korn, Francis, and Luis Alberto Romero. *Buenos Aires/entreguerras: la callada transformación, 1914-1945*. Buenos Aires: Alianza Editorial, 2006. Print.
- Kramer, Michael P. *Imagining Language in America: From the Revolution to the Civil War*. Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1992. Print.
- Kulbak, Moshe, and Hillel Halkin. *The Zelmenyaners a Family Saga*. New Haven: Yale University Press, 2013. Print.
- Leader, Zachary. *The Life of Saul Bellow: To Fame and Fortune, 1915-1964*. New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 2015. Print.
- Leff, Lisa Moses. *Sacred Bonds of Solidarity: The Rise of Jewish Internationalism in Nineteenth-Century France*. Stanford, Calif: Stanford University Press, 2006. Print.
- Legras, Horacio. *Literature and Subjection: The Economy of Writing and Marginality in Latin America*. Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Press, 2008. Print.
- Levine, Robert M. *Tropical Diaspora: The Jewish Experience in Cuba*. Gainesville: University Press of Florida, 1993.
- Levy, Lital, and Allison Schachter. "Jewish Literature / World Literature: Between the Local and the Translational." *PMLA: Publications of the Modern Language Association of America* 130.1 (2015): 92–109. Print.
- Liacho, Lázaro. *Alberto Gerchunoff*. Buenos Aires: F.A. Colombo, 1975. Print.
- Lida, Miranda. "Una lengua nacional aluvial para la Argentina: Jorge Luis Borges, Américo Castro y Amado Alonso en torno al idioma de los argentinos." *prismas Prismas* 16.1 (2012): 99–119. Print.

- Lilianna Feierstein. "The New Midrash: Jewish Press in Argentina." *A Homage to the Jewish Talent for Journalism: 80 Years of Pressa, the International Exhibition of Modern Press in 1928 in Cologne*. Ed. Michael Nagel et al. Cologne: Universitat Bremen. Print.
- Lindstrom, Naomi, and University of Missouri Press. *Jewish Issues in Argentine Literature: From Gerchunoff to Szichman*. Columbia: University of Missouri Press, 1989. Print.
- Lvovich, Daniel. *Nacionalismo y antisemitismo en la Argentina*. Javier Vergara, Grupo Zeta, 2003. Print.
- MacKay, John. *True Songs of Freedom: Uncle Tom's Cabin in Russian Culture and Society*. Madison, Wis: University of Wisconsin Press, 2013. Print.
- Marks, Elaine, and Mazal Holocaust Collection. *Marrano as Metaphor: The Jewish Presence in French Writing*. New York: Columbia University Press, 1996. Print.
- Martí, José et al. *Nuestra América*. 2a. edición. Caracas: Biblioteca Ayacucho, 1985. Print.
- Martinez-Echazabal, Lourdes. "Mestizaje and the Discourse of National/Cultural Identity in Latin America, 1845-1959." *Latin American Perspectives* 25.3 (1998): 21–42. Print.
- McGrath, Charles. "Breathing Life into Henry Roth." *The New York Times* 23 May 2010. Web.

- Mendes-Flohr, Paul R., and Jehuda Reinharz, eds. *The Jew in the Modern World: A Documentary History*. 3rd ed. New York: Oxford University Press, 2011. Print.
- Meyerowitz, Rael. *Transferring to America: Jewish Interpretations of American Dreams*. Albany, NY: State University of New York Press, 1995. Print.
- Michaels, Walter Benn. *Our America: Nativism, Modernism, and Pluralism*. Durham: Duke University Press, 1995. Print.
- Michel Foucault. "Nietzsche, Genealogy, History." *The Foucault Reader*. Ed. Paul Rabinow. London: Penguin. Print.
- Michels, Tony. *A Fire in Their Hearts: Yiddish Socialists in New York*. Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 2005. Print.
- . *Jewish Radicals a Documentary History*. New York: New York University Press, 2012. Print.
- Miller, Joshua. *Accented America: The Cultural Politics of Multilingual Modernism*. Oxford ; New York: Oxford University Press, 2011. Print.
- Mirelman, Víctor A. *Jewish Buenos Aires, 1890-1930: In Search of an Identity*. Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 1990. Print.
- Miron, Dan. *A Traveler Disguised; a Study in the Rise of Modern Yiddish Fiction in the Nineteenth Century*. New York: Schocken Books, 1973. Print.
- . *From Continuity to Contiguity: Toward a New Jewish Literary Thinking*. Stanford, Calif: Stanford University Press, 2010. Print.

- Natalie Friedman. "Marriage and the Immigrant Narrative: Anzia Yeziarska's Salome of the Tenements." *Legacy* 22.2 176. Print.
- Norich, Anita. *Writing in Tongues: Translating Yiddish in the Twentieth Century*. Seattle: University of Washington Press, 2013. Print.
- Ogorzaly, Michael A. *Waldo Frank, Prophet of Hispanic Regeneration*. Lewisburg Pa.: London ; Cranbury, NJ: Bucknell University Press ; Associated University Presses, 1994. Print.
- Onega, Gladys S. *La inmigración en la literatura argentina, 1880-1910*. Buenos Aires: Editorial Galerna, 1969. Print.
- Ouaknin, Marc-Alain. *The burnt book: reading the Talmud*. Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1995. Print.
- Payró, Roberto Jorge. *Pago Chico Y Nuevos Cuentos de Pago Chico*. Buenos Aires: Editorial Losada, s.a, 1939. Print. Bibliotheca Contemporanea.
- Perera, Victor. *Rites: A Guatemalan Boyhood*. San Francisco: Mercury House, 1994. Print.
- . *The Conversion*. First edition. Boston: Little, Brown, 1970. Print.
- . *The Cross and the Pear Tree: A Sephardi Journey*. First edition. New York: Knopf, 1995. Print.
- Perry, Robert L. *The Shared Vision of Waldo Frank and Hart Crane*. Lincoln: University of Nebraska] 1966. Print.
- Philip M. and Ethel Klutznick Chair in Jewish Civilization et al., eds. *The Jews of Eastern Europe*. Omaha: Creighton University Press, 2005. Print.

- Pinzón, Mimi. “Maydlekh: A Kapitl Funem Bukh: Der Hoyf on Fentster.” *Di idishe froy* 2 (1950): n. pag. Print.
- Pinzón, Mimi. “Bagegenish Mit Yidishe Shrayberns: Sirke Gorshman-- a Sovetish Yidishe Shraybern.” *Di idishe froy* 43 n. pag. Print.
- . “Bagegenishn Mit Yidishe Shrayberns: Shirke Gorshman—a Sovietish Yidishe Shraybern.” *Di idishe froy* 43 (1963): 7–8. Print.
- . “Briv Fun Toytn-Hoyz.” *Di idishe froy* 16 (1954): n. pag. Print.
- . “D. Roberto Kh. Payro Un Zayn Shtetl ‘Pago Chiko.’” *Di idishe froy* 11 (1953): 9–12. Print.
- . “D. Roberto Payro Un Zayn Shtetl ‘Pago Chiko.’” *Di idishe froy* 11 (1953): n. pag. Print.
- . “Ernst Heminvey--Der Shrayber Fun Kurazsh Fun Gvald Un Fun Toyt.” *Di idishe froy* 28-39 (1961): n. pag. Print.
- . “Fertsik Yor on Y.l. Perets--Fertsik Yor Mit Y.l. Perets.” *Di idishe froy* 17 (1955): n. pag. Print.
- . “Gitl : Katalina Perlshteyn.” *Di idishe froy* 34-35 (1960): n. pag. Print.
- . “Henrikh Ibsn der Festung-Shurmer Far Der Umophengikeyt Fun Der Froy.” *Di idishe froy* (1957): n. pag. Print.
- . “La Condición Feminina En La Obra de Peretz.” *Di idishe froy* 3 (1951): 1–4. Print.
- . “Pinie Kats: Mayn Lerer, Mayn Chaver, Mayn Fraynt.” *Di idishe froy* 30-31 (1959): n. pag. Print.

- . "Shnit-Tsayt Fun Galina Nikolayeva." *Di idishe froy* 46 (1963): 12–13. Print.
- . "Simfonie in Groy Un in Grin." *Di idishe froy* 8 (1952): n. pag. Print.
- . "Vera Panova Un Ir Bukh: 'Der Likhtiker Breg.'" *Di idishe froy* 14 (1954): n. pag. Print.
- . פּענצטער אָן פּענצטער *der hoyf on fentster*. Buenos Aires: IKUF. Print.
- Pratt, Mary Louise. *Imperial Eyes: Travel Writing and Transculturation*. London; New York: Routledge, 2008. Print.
- Presner, Todd Samuel. *Muscular Judaism: The Jewish Body and the Politics of Regeneration*. London; New York: Routledge, 2007. Print.
- Radway, Janice. "What's in a Name? Presidential Address to the American Studies Association, 20 November 1998." *American Quarterly* 51:1.
- Rama, Angel, and Mario Szichman. *Más Allá de La Ciudad Letrada*. Ediciones del Norte, 1983. Print.
- Ramos, Julio. *Desencuentros de La Modernidad En América Latina: Literatura Y Política En El Siglo XIX*. México: Fondo de Cultura Económica, 1989. Print.
- Ran, Amalia. *Made of Shores: Judeo-Argentinean Fiction Revisited*. Bethlehem, Pa.; Lanham, Md.: Lehigh University Press; Rowman & Littlefield Pub. Group, 2011. Print.
- Rein, Raanan. *Argentina, Israel, and the Jews: Perón, the Eichmann Capture, and After*. Bethesda, Md.: University Press of Maryland, 2003. Print.
- Ricard, Virginia. "Against Oblivion: Henry Roth's 'The Surveyor.'" *Journal of the Short Story in English. Les Cahiers de la nouvelle* 44 (2005): 49–63. Print.

- Rich, Charlotte J. *Transcending the New Woman: Multiethnic Narratives in the Progressive Era*. Columbia, Mo: University of Missouri Press, 2009. Print.
- Rock, David. *Politics in Argentina, 1890-1930: The Rise and Fall of Radicalism*. Cambridge, Eng.: Cambridge University Press, 1975. Print.
- Rojas, Ricardo. *La restauración nacionalista informe sobre educacion*. Buenos Aires: Ministerio de justicia é instrucción pública, 1909.
- Rosen, Norma. *John and Anzia: An American Romance*. New York: Dutton, 1989. Print.
- Roth, Henry, and Willing Davidson. *An American Type: A Novel*. 1st ed. New York: W.W. Norton, 2010. Print.
- Roth, Henry, Alfred Kazin, and Hana Wirth-Nesher. *Call It Sleep*. 1st Picador ed. New York: Picador, 2005. Print.
- Roth, Henry, and Mario Materassi. *Shifting Landscape: A Composite, 1925-1987*. 1st ed. Philadelphia: Jewish Publication Society, 1987. Print.
- Roth, Henry. *A Diving Rock on the Hudson*. 1st ed. New York: St. Martin's Press, 1995. Print. Mercy of a Rude Stream v. 2.
- . *A Star Shines over Mt. Morris Park*. 1st ed. New York: St. Martin's Press, 1994. Print. Mercy of a Rude Stream v. 1.
- . *From Bondage*. 1st ed. New York: St. Martin's Press, 1996. Print. Mercy of a Rude Stream v. 3.
- . *Requiem for Harlem*. 1st ed. New York: St. Martin's Press, 1998. Print. Mercy of a Rude Stream v. 4.

- . Unpublished Manuscript. Henry Roth Papers; P-702; Box 40, Folders 5, 6 & 18,
American Jewish Historical Society, Newton Centre, MA and New York, NY.
- Rubinstein, Rachel. *Members of the Tribe: Native America in the Jewish Imagination*.
Detroit, Mich: Wayne State University Press, 2010. Print.
- Ruggiero, Kristin, ed. *The Jewish Diaspora in Latin America and the Caribbean:
Fragments of Memory*. Brighton; Portland, Or: Sussex Academic Press, 2005.
Print.
- Salomone, Alicia. *Alfonsina Storni: mujeres, modernidad y literatura*. Buenos Aires:
Corregidor, 2006. Print.
- Sauter, Irene Billeter. *New York City, "Gilt Cage" or "Promised Land"?*
Representations of Urban Space in Edith Wharton and Anzia Yezierska. New
York: Peter Lang, 2011. Print.
- Scanlan, Margaret. "Strange Times to Be a Jew: Alternative History after 9/11." *MFS
Modern Fiction Studies* 57.3 (2011): 503–531.
- Schneider, Judith Morganroth, and State University of New York College at
Brockport, eds. *Latin American Jewish Writers*. Brockport, N.Y: Dept. of
Foreign Languages, State University of New York, 1987. Print. Folio /
Department of Foreign Languages, State University of New York no. 17
(Sept. 1987).
- Schoen, Carol. *Anzia Yezierska*. Boston, Mass: Twayne Publishers, 1982. Print.

- Schorsch, Ismar. "The Myth of Sephardic Supremacy." *Sephardism: Spanish Jewish History and the Modern Literary Imagination*. Ed. Yael Halevi-Wise. Stanford, California: Stanford University Press, 2012. Print.
- Schwarz, Jan. *Survivors and Exiles: Yiddish Culture after the Holocaust*. Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 2015. Print.
- Scott, Rebecca J. *Degrees of Freedom: Louisiana and Cuba after Slavery*. Cambridge, Mass.: Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2005. Print.
- Seidman, Naomi. *Faithful Renderings: Jewish-Christian Difference and the Politics of Translation*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2006. Print.
- Seigel, Micol. "Beyond Compare: Comparative Method After the Transnational Turn." *Radical History Review* 91 (2005): 62–90. Print.
- Senkman, Leonardo. *La identidad judía en la literatura argentina*. Buenos Aires, Argentina: Ediciones Parnes, 1983. Print.
- Shandler, Jeffrey. *Adventures in Yiddishland: Postvernacular Language & Culture*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 2006. Print.
- Shaw, Stephanie J. *W.E.B. Du Bois and the Souls of Black Folk*. Chapel Hill, NC: University of North Carolina Press, 2013.
- Sherman, Joseph, and Oxford Centre for Hebrew and Jewish Studies, eds. *Yiddish after the Holocaust*. Oxford: Boulevard Books, 2004. Print.
- Silverman, Max. "Re-Figuring 'the Jew' in France." *Modernity, Culture and the Jew*. Ed. Cheyette Bryan and Laura Marcus. Stanford, California: Stanford University Press, 1998. Print.

- Smith, Erin A. "Melodrama, Popular Religion, and Literary Value: The Case of Harold Bell Wright." *American Literary History* 17.2 (2005): 217–243. Print.
- Smith, Henry Nash. *Virgin Land: The American West as Symbol and Myth*. Cambridge, Mass: Harvard University Press, 1978. Print.
- Sommer, Doris. *Foundational Fictions the National Romances of Latin America*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1991.
- . *One master for another: populism as patriarchal rhetoric in Dominican novels*. Lanham, MD: University Press of America, 1983. Print.
- Spivak, Aaron. "Judeoamerica." *Judaica* 51-53 (99– 135). Print.
- Stavans, Ilan. *Tropical Synagogues: Short Stories*. New York: Holmes & Meier, 1994. Print.
- . "Yo, Judío: Borges and the Jews." *Jewish Quarterly* 212 (2008): n. pag. Print.
- Stavans, Ilan, and Library of America (Firm), eds. *Becoming Americans: Four Centuries of Immigrant Writing*. New York, NY: Library of America: Print.
- Steiner, George. *After Babel: Aspects of Language and Translation*. New York: Oxford University Press, 1975. Print.
- Studlar, Gaylyn. "Out-Salomeing Salome: Dance, the New Woman, and Fan Magazine Orientalism." *Michigan Quarterly Review* 34.4 (1995): 487–510. Print.
- Szichman, Mario. *A Las 20:25, La Señora Entró En La Inmortalidad*. 1a edición. Hanover, N.H., New York, NY: Ediciones del Norte ; Distribuido por, Ediciones Vitral, 1981. Print.

- . *Los Judíos Del Mar Dulce*. 1. edición. Buenos Aires: Galerna, 1971. Print.
- Szurmk, Mónica. "Home on the Pampas: Alberto Gerchunoff's Jewish Gauchos." *Jews at Home: The Domestication of Identity*. Ed. Bonner Simon. Vol. 2. Oxford: Littman Library of Jewish Civilization, 2010. Print.
- . "Identidades En Tránsito: La Autobiografía de Alberto Gerchunoff." *Brújala* 3 (2004): 11–25. Print.
- Tarcus, Horacio et al., eds. *Mariátegui En La Argentina: O Las Políticas Culturales de Samuel Glusberg*. Ciudad de Buenos Aires: Ediciones El Cielo por Asalto, 2002. Print.
- Terris, Daniel. "Waldo Frank, Jean Toomer and the Critique of Racial Voyeurism." *Race and the Modern Artist*. Ed. Heather Hathaway and Jeffery Melnick. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003. Print.
- "The Practice of Diaspora : Literature, Translation, and the Rise of Black Internationalism (eBook, 2003) [UC Santa Cruz Library]." N.p., n.d. Web. 12 Jan. 2016.
- Toomer, Jean, Rudolph P. Byrd, and Henry Louis Gates. *Cane: Authoritative Text, Contexts, Criticism*. 2nd ed. New York: W.W. Norton & Co, 2011. Print. A Norton Critical Edition.
- Toomer, Jean, Waldo David Frank, and Kathleen Pfeiffer. *Brother Mine: The Correspondence of Jean Toomer and Waldo Frank*. Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2010. Print.

- Toomer, Jean, and Robert B. Jones. *Jean Toomer: Selected Essays and Literary Criticism*. 1st ed. Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press, 1996. Print.
- Valle, José del, and Luis Gabriel-Stheeman. *The Battle Over Spanish Between 1800 and 2000: Language Ideologies and Hispanic Intellectuals*. Routledge, 2002. Print.
- Vasconcelos, José. *La Raza Cósmica: Mision de La Raza Iberoamericana, Argentina Y Brasil*. 16a edición. México, D.F: Espasa-Calpe Mexicana, 1992. Print.
- Velleman, Barry. "The Ideological Construction of an Empirical Base: Selection and Elaboration in Andres Bello's Grammar." *The Battle Over Spanish Between 1800 and 2000*. Ed. Jose del Valle and Gabriel-Stheeman. London & New York: Routledge, 2002. Print.
- Viñas, David. *Literatura Argentina Y Realidad Política*. 2a edición. Buenos Aires: Centro Editor de América Latina, 1982. Print.
- . *Literatura Argentina Y Realidad Política: Apogeo de La Oligarquía*. Buenos Aires: Siglo Veinte, 1975. Print.
- Wald, Alan. "Inconvenient Truths: The Communist Connection in Life and Art." *American Literary History* 21.2 (2009): 367–403. Print.
- Wald, Pinye. "Nightmare: Excerpt of a Memoir of 'The Tragic Week.'" *Yiddish South of the Border*. Ed. Allan Astro. New Mexico: University of New Mexico Press. Print.
- Wasserman, Suzanne. *Sweatshop Cinderella*. Women Make Movies, 2010. videorecording.

- Weber, Donald. *Haunted in the New World: Jewish American Culture from Cahan to The Goldbergs*. Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2005. Print.
- Weinreich, Max. *History of the Yiddish Language*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1980. Print.
- Whalan, Mark. *Race, Manhood, and Modernism in America: The Short Storycycles of Sherwood Anderson and Jean Toomer*. Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press, 2007. Print.
- Wirth-Nesher, Hana, ed. *New Essays on Call It Sleep*. Ann Arbor, Mich: ProQuest Information and Learning, 2003. Print.
- Wirth-Nesher, Hana, and Michael P. Kramer, Eds. *The Cambridge Companion to Jewish American Literature*. Cambridge, U.K.; New York, NY: Cambridge University Press, 2003. Print.
- Wisse, Ruth R. "The Classic of Disinheritance." *Call It "English": The Languages of Jewish American Literature*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2006. Print.
- Wright, Harold Bell, F. Graham Coates, and Book Supply Company. *The Winning of Barbara Worth*. Chicago, Il: The Book Supply Company, 1911. Print.
- Yellin, Michael. "Visions of Their America: Waldo Frank's Jewish-Modernist Influence on Jean Toomer's Fern." *African American Review* 43.2 (2009): 427–442. Print.
- Yeziarska, Anzia. "A Jewish Scholar." *Commentary* 1 Dec. 1952: n. pag. Print.
- . *All I Could Never Be*. New York: Brewer, Warren & Putnam, 1932. Print.

- . *Arrogant Beggar*. Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 1996. Print.
- . *Arrogant Beggar*. Garden City, N.Y: Doubleday, Page & Co, 1927. Print.
- . *Bread Givers: A Novel: A Struggle between a Father of the Old World and a Daughter of the New*. New York: G. Braziller, 1975. Print.
- . *Children of Loneliness; Stories of Immigrant Life in America*. New York and London: Funk & Wagnalls Co., 1923. Print.
- . *How I Found America: Collected Stories of Anzia Yezierska*. 1st ed. New York: Persea Books, 1991. Print.
- . *Hungry Hearts*. Reprint edition. Salem, New Hampshire: Ayer Company, 1984. Print.
- . *Red Ribbon on a White Horse*. Rev. ed. New York: Persea Books, 1987. Print.
- . *Salome of the Tenements*. Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1995. Print.
- Yezierska, Anzia, and Alice Kessler-Harris. *The Open Cage: An Anzia Yezierska Collection*. 1st ed. New York: Persea Books, 1979. Print.
- Zadoff, Efraim. *Historia de la educación judía en Buenos Aires (1935-1957)*. Buenos Aires: Milá, 1994. Print.
- Zangwill, Israel. *The Melting-Pot: Drama in Four Acts*. New and revised edition. New York: The Macmillan company, 1914. Print.
- Zucker, George K., Ed. *Sephardic Identity: Essays on a Vanishing Jewish Culture*. Jefferson, N.C: McFarland & Co, 2005. Print.