

# Value Added: Jews in Postwar American Culture

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Americans are “descended from the same ancestors, speaking the same language, professing the same religion, attached to the same principles of government, very similar in their manners and customs,” John Jay wrote in *The Federalist* No. 2, in defense of the new Constitution.<sup>1</sup> At least he got the politics right: All the basic political institutions of the United States had been created by the end of the eighteenth century, and none since then. But the Framers could scarcely have imagined how the culture would keep shifting into new configurations. Regional and ethnic customs would vary widely, new languages would get injected (at least for one or two generations) and religious pluralism would become legitimated, largely because Americans increasingly did *not* have the same ancestors.

In this kaleidoscope, virtually no minority has been more colorful than the Jews, whose integration into a culture that they themselves have helped to transform has been especially conspicuous in the postwar era. The argument of this essay is entangled in paradox, however, for the distinctiveness of the Jewish impact—which has extended the contours of American culture over the past half century—has also weakened the sense of difference that has historically defined Jewish identity itself. The value system of the majority has become so open and variegated that the Jews themselves are now less conscious of their own beleaguered status as a minority. So successfully have they become included in American society, so impressively have they contributed to its democratic spirit, that it has become problematic what remains of their own subculture, what still separates the Jews as a singular people, an *'am ehad*.

One of their ancestors, Benedict Spinoza, was the first Western thinker to uncouple church and state and thus divide the sphere of values from the apparatus of power, in his *Tractatus Theologico-Politicus* (1670). More than a decade earlier, twenty-three Dutch Jews—they could not quite be classified as his “coreligionists”—became the first to disembark in what became the United States, where his principles would be pushed to their furthest point even as its citizenry continued to think of itself as pious. By certain indices, the Americans are more devout than any Western nation other than the Irish; and yet the American public culture has now become almost

completely secularized, even surpassing the imagination of seventeenth-century skepticism. So complete is this triumph, for example, that Irving Berlin's "God Bless America" (1918, rev. 1938) could never conceivably replace "The Star Spangled Banner" as the national anthem, despite the fact that it is easy to sing and remember. The principle of separation of church and state is simply too much of an obstacle.<sup>2</sup>

Until the early 1960s, however, the full implications of secularization as well as pluralism were unrealized. Although the election of a Roman Catholic to the presidency has not recurred, John F. Kennedy's victory in 1960 meant that it was no longer necessary for the holder of the nation's highest office to be a Protestant. Two years later, another symbolic defeat was inflicted on the traditions of religious conformity with the landmark U.S. Supreme Court decision of *Engel v. Vitale*. Though Protestantism had long unofficially dominated public education in most of the country, the Supreme Court banned the recitation of prayer after the parents of five New York children challenged its compulsory feature. (One of these sixth-graders was eleven-year-old Joe Roth, the son of two Jewish Communists. Until his graduation, he later recalled, some of his classmates would cross themselves in fear before talking to him.) The shock waves caused by the ruling reverberated beyond Long Island and across the country. About 80 percent of the citizenry disagreed with the Supreme Court's ruling, and liberal as well as conservative clergy expressed their outrage. Two years later, the Republican candidate for the presidency doubted whether 1964 was "the time for our Federal government to ban Almighty God from our school rooms"; and a conservative Catholic, William F. Buckley, Jr., warned of increasing antisemitism if the Jews weren't "careful."<sup>3</sup>

Nonetheless, the *Engel* decision remained in force, and the pluralist ideal was thus not only vindicated but was also widely applied in practice. No single faith—not even Christianity itself—achieved a privileged status in the public culture, antisemitism continued to decline dramatically, and society became increasingly accommodating to minorities. Roth himself, who also survived "the theological reverence of Communism in my house," became a Hollywood film director and then head of the Twentieth Century Fox studios,<sup>4</sup> as though personally warranting President Richard M. Nixon's contempt for "the arts," as he told an aide in 1972, because "you know—they're Jews, they're left-wing—in other words, stay away!"<sup>5</sup>

Such antisemitic outbursts, especially when originating with intelligent people, can illuminate the impact of the Jews in American life, and in this sense they deserve at least as much scholarly attention as the claims of communal defense agencies. The florid exaggerations must be discounted, of course, but even the rancid complaint of Henry Adams, who was the grandson and great-grandson of earlier U.S. presidents, should not be dismissed: "We are in the hands of the Jews," he wrote in 1896. "They can do what they please with our values." Nearly two decades later, Adams amplified his sense of a cultural shift:

The atmosphere really has become a Jew atmosphere. It is curious and evidently good for some people, but it isolates me. I do not know the language, and my friends are as ignorant as I. We are still in power, after a fashion. Our sway over what we call society

is undisputed. We keep Jews far away, and the anti-Jew feeling is quite rabid. . . . Yet we somehow seem to be more Jewish every day.<sup>6</sup>

Such anxieties were ugly, but they were not utterly misplaced. Indeed, they corresponded to the rise of an inescapable new system for the creation, packaging and marketing of the popular arts in which Jews were intimately involved. A revised edition of H. L. Mencken's *The American Language* noted, for instance, that "the most fruitful sources of Yiddish loans [into English] are the media of mass communications—journalism, radio and television."<sup>7</sup> Yet that lowly "jargon," which Henry Adams had found so "weird" when he heard it "snarled,"<sup>8</sup> is well-known to two recent American Nobel Prize laureates in literature: Isaac Bashevis Singer and one of his translators, Saul Bellow. In the family of a third laureate, Joseph Brodsky, Yiddish had already evaporated (though he was born in Russia itself, in 1940). But it is the mother tongue of still another writer holding U.S. citizenship to have won a Nobel Prize: Elie Wiesel. In Hollywood, meanwhile, newspapermen-turned-scenarists such as Ben Hecht (an urbane cynic whose Jewish nationalism became so ardent in the Second World War era that the Irgun later named an illegal immigrant ship after him) and Herman Mankiewicz (an atheist who kept a kosher home) helped make American movies in the 1930s and 1940s talk at a frenetic, witty pace. Hollywood's off-screen talk is still subject to ethnic fields of force. In a recent David Mamet play about movie deal makers, for example, "hiding the *afikomen*" is the double entendre for sexual "scoring" with the blonde secretary, whose own phyness—Madonna played her on Broadway—one seedy character contrasts unfavorably with the Baal Shem Tov.<sup>9</sup> And when a new film monthly listed the most powerful figures in Hollywood, the first thirteen names already included enough for a minyan. Among them was Steven Spielberg, who is as rich as a brace of Bronfmans. The most successful director in history has *mezuzot* on the doorposts of his own ministudio.<sup>10</sup>

At one time Jews also headed all three private television networks, whose programs were noted in the most widely read magazine to be invented in the postwar era: *TV Guide*. From 1953 until 1989, its publisher was Walter H. Annenberg, the chief legatee of a family that savored a spectacular comeback from the New Deal era. (His father, who published the *Racing Form* and the *Inquirer*, had become so embroiled in anti-Roosevelt politics that the president growled to his secretary of the treasury: "I want Moe Annenberg for dinner." The cabinet officer's reply was reassuring: "You're going to have him for breakfast—fried." The publisher was convicted of income tax evasion and was jailed from 1940 until 1942, when he died of a heart attack. In 1969, Moe Annenberg's son got the satisfaction of becoming ambassador to the Court of St. James—a post to which John Jay had earlier been accredited.)<sup>11</sup>

And even Christian religious festivities have not been immune to Jewish influence, what with Irving Berlin strutting at the head of "The Easter Parade" (1933) and "Dreaming of a White Christmas"—the hit from *Holiday Inn* (1942) that may be the best-selling song ever. No wonder that an immigrant born with the name of Israel Baline grew up invoking the Deity to bless America.

Not only was the Jewish romance with America lavishly expressed in the postwar

era; perhaps more importantly, it was reciprocated. Scholarly histories on the Jewish condition in the United States, though their titles may refer to “unease,” very rarely draw divisions as do books about “Germans” and “Jews” (as though Jews could not *really* be Germans).<sup>12</sup> Or consider another contrast. A classic history of racism in the American colonies and early republic, Winthrop D. Jordan’s *White over Black* (1968), is curiously subtitled “American Attitudes Toward the Negro” (when the author clearly means *white* attitudes). But the equivalent error that has assumed “American” to be synonymous with “gentile” is uncommon. Though the birth certificate of modern Jews is written in German, they were, in Solomon Liptzin’s phrase, never more than “Germany’s stepchildren.” The “world of our fathers,” however, for all of its poignant confusions and ferocious tensions, has become thoroughly implanted in America, where the children and grandchildren of Jewish immigrants have felt very much at home.

Millennia of martyrdom do not weigh heavily on the shoulders of most American Jews, who seem to bear no special historical burden of suffering and exhibit little sense of living in *galut*. At the dawn of the postwar era, Diana Trilling praised Isaac Rosenfeld’s autobiographical novel *Passage from Home* for “its ability to use its Jewish background as a natural rather than a forced human environment.” Rosenfeld had managed, she wrote as early as 1946, to “avoid the well-established emotions of Jewish separateness—the emotions of specialness, embattledness, social overdeterminism, self-pity and self-punishment.” *Passage from Home* would thus help revise a paradigm that, to Trilling, had become a familiar minority sensibility:

Unable to believe that his environment really belongs to him, the Jewish novelist cannot envision a valid personal drama of development within it. At best he writes a fiction of dignified resistance or acceptance, at worst a fiction of fierce personal aggression and of the individual effort to rise above the restrictions of Jewish birth.

But Rosenfeld, she felt, had managed to handle “the fact of being Jewish . . . as simply another facet of the already sufficiently complicated business of being a human being.”<sup>13</sup>

The naturalness of the American environment was shown in an oddity associated with the historical understanding of the 1960s, the decade that most severely tested the national attachment to John Jay’s “same principles of government.” The most influential analyst of Lyndon B. Johnson’s political failure in Vietnam was David Halberstam (*The Best and the Brightest* [1972]), and LBJ’s preeminent biographer has been Robert A. Caro (*The Years of Lyndon Johnson* [1982, 1990]). Their huge and important books on Johnson’s policies and career betray no special Jewish sensibility or angle of vision, though Halberstam is a descendant of Rabbi Meir Katzenellenbogen, a famed halakhic authority in sixteenth-century Padua, and Caro is a probable descendant of Yosef Karo, the sixteenth-century codifier of the *Shulhan Arukh*.<sup>14</sup> In their effort to fathom the complications of modern American history, such writers have typified the indifference of most of their fellow Jews to the further complexities and demands of their ancient heritage.

A formal Jewish culture in America is thin, and except for some immigrant intellectuals, has added little to the rejuvenation of Judaic thought. No native-born Americans have become canonical figures in the evolution of the Jews’ religious and

moral ideas.<sup>15</sup> Although all the great works of Judaism were composed in exile (except for the Bible itself), none has been written by an American. A cohesive and internally consistent Jewish culture in the United States now consists mostly of memories that are fading, its husk battered in the transmission to succeeding generations, its custodians and most sophisticated legatees generally found in academe and in museums.

The postwar reference points of Jewish culture have not been indigenous to the United States but have been defined instead by the two events that have irrevocably altered Jewish history itself: the extermination of two-thirds of European Jewry and the rebirth of Israel. The significance of the Holocaust and of Zionism has dwarfed whatever has happened in the United States. But the Jews who were so enmeshed in American culture nevertheless had to come to terms with that catastrophe and that hope, however vicariously, and in doing so enlarged and transformed the boundaries of that very culture. How those two events were absorbed and accommodated merits illustration.

The most poetically effective of all subjects, Edgar Allan Poe once theorized, is the death of a beautiful woman.<sup>16</sup> Yet even this morbid seer did not consider for literary purposes a more haunting and terrible death, the sort that brutally forecloses a natural emergence into maturity. Nor did any nineteenth-century writer, no matter how darkly penetrating, foresee that such a violent denial of life would be multiplied, under conditions of maximal suffering, by six million. That is a statistic too numbing to contemplate, too staggering for the ordinary moral intelligence to confront without flinching. But the fate of Anne Frank brought the pain inside.

The diary of her adolescence in the secret annex in Amsterdam was written in Dutch and published in abbreviated form in Holland only two years after she died in Bergen-Belsen. In 1950, translations of *Het Achterhuis* appeared in both French and German, but to little effect. The posthumous power of her words to give concreteness to the Holocaust began only with the publication of *The Diary of a Young Girl* in the United States in 1952.

The catalyst was Meyer Levin, an American novelist who first read the French translation. But he was told by Otto Frank, the only survivor among the eight Jews who had hidden at 263 Prinsengracht, that several distinguished American and British publishers had already rejected his daughter's diary: "Unfortunately, they all said, the subject was too heartrending; the public would resist, the book would not sell." Levin persisted: "I sent the Diary to a half dozen editors whom I knew. The reactions were uniform: they were personally touched, but professionally they were convinced that the public shied away from such material." Then, in the annual literary issue of the American Jewish *Congress Weekly*, Levin urged publication and was eventually persuasive. *Commentary* serialized it, and Levin designated it a classic on the front page of the *New York Times Book Review* after Doubleday published it. Brandished with Eleanor Roosevelt's introduction, *The Diary of a Young Girl* has been translated into fifty-one languages and has sold more than sixty million copies.<sup>17</sup>

Levin went on to write a theatrical version of the diary, even though producer Herman Shumlin warned him: "It's impossible. You simply can't expect an au-

dience to come to the theater to watch on the stage people they know to have ended up in the crematorium. It would be too painful. They won't come."<sup>18</sup> A play other than Levin's, written by Albert Hackett and Frances Goodrich, opened on Broadway in 1955. It won a Pulitzer Prize but also provoked a court battle, initiated by Levin, concerning alleged distortions of the original work.<sup>19</sup> The stage adaptation led to the republication of the *Diary* in German and, according to one historian, "caught the imagination of the German reading public." Attending a performance of the *Diary* in West Berlin in 1956, the British critic Kenneth Tynan recorded "the most drastic emotional experience the theatre has ever given me. It had little to do with art, for the play was not a great one; yet its effect, in Berlin, at that moment of history, transcended anything that art has yet learned to achieve." After it was over,

the house-lights went up on an audience that sat drained and ashen, some staring straight ahead, others staring at the ground, for a full half-minute. Then, as if awakening from a nightmare, they rose and filed out in total silence, not looking at each other, avoiding even the customary nods of recognition with which friend greets friend. There was no applause, and there were no curtain-calls.

Tynan acknowledged that his report was "not drama criticism. In the shadow of an event so desperate and traumatic, criticism would be an irrelevance. It can only record an emotion that I felt, would not have missed, and pray never to feel again."<sup>20</sup>

Though the Broadway production had, in his opinion, "smacked of exploitation," the emotional force of the New York version was also overwhelming. Pivotal to its effect was director Garson Kanin, who also directed films. (Indeed, when he visited Anne's tiny cubicle in Amsterdam, Kanin quickly noticed a Dutch movie poster on the wall above her bed, among the photos of Hollywood stars that she had collected. The poster announced: "*Tom, Dick and Harry*—starring Ginger Rogers, directed by Garson Kanin.") Among the ten actors Kanin picked for the New York production was Joseph Schildkraut, an Academy Award winner for his portrayal of Captain Dreyfus in Warner Brothers' *The Life of Emile Zola* (1937). Schildkraut's 1,068 performances as Otto Frank, over the course of three years,

were probably the most important and decisive of my whole life. Because I did not merely act a part, but had to live as Otto Frank through the whole terrible and shattering experience of an era which can never be erased from the memory of my generation. . . . It was, I believe firmly, not accidental that *The Diary of Anne Frank* became the culmination of my professional life.

Himself the son of a leading stage actor who had come from the Balkans to revive for German audiences a love of their own classics, Schildkraut had "never before . . . felt such an intimate relationship to a play, never such an identification with a part." For Anne Frank's diary "actually wrote the epitaph to a whole period of the history of Europe, the history of Germany, [and] the tragedy of the Jews."<sup>21</sup>

The play next became a George Stevens film (1959), in which Schildkraut also starred as Otto Frank, and has gone through other permutations as well. At one Bonds for Israel rally in New York's Madison Square Garden in New York, for example, a torch was brought from the new state and used to light a menorah on stage. Schildkraut lit it and said the prayer just as he had done in the final scene in

Act I on Broadway. "Thirty thousand people filled the arena, a sea of humanity," he recalled. "And like powerful waves the murmurs, sighs, prayers of that mass rose up to me, engulfed me, carried me away. I felt sorrow and exultation. My eyes burned, my heart ached in pride and grief." And in a March 1990 UNICEF benefit concert in New York, Michael Tilson Thomas conducted the New World Symphony in a concert piece he wrote entitled "From the Diary of Anne Frank." (As the grandson of the Yiddish theatrical pioneer Boris Thomashefsky, Thomas was a living link to the culture that the Nazis destroyed.) No wonder that Anne Frank's biographer could claim that "her voice was preserved out of the millions that were silenced, this voice no louder than a child's whisper. It has outlasted the shouts of the murderers and has soared above the voice of time."<sup>22</sup>

The last sentence in her diary was written only three days before the murderers came, and that whisper could not be unmediated. In the United States, her words could only be heard resonating inside a culture not known for its appreciation of the tragic—or of the suffering for which no grief or retribution is sufficient, the kind of loss with which no vengeance or restitution is commensurate. In an era when not even the term "Holocaust" was in use, when not even a name was available to summarize the evil of the Third Reich, when neither knowledge of nor interest in the Nazi genocide was conspicuous, morally serious artistic impulses were frustrated. It was exceedingly difficult to make sense of the senseless, to make mass murder intelligible to a mass audience. Some American moviegoers found *The Diary of Anne Frank* baffling, apparently not realizing that the film was based on one family's actual experience and assuming that what they were viewing was fictional. One early cut of the film ended at Bergen-Belsen, which so vexed a preview audience that it was changed, as in the Broadway play, to conclude on the more optimistic note of Anne's proclamation that "in spite of everything, I still believe that people are really good at heart." Otto Frank himself realized that audiences responded as much to the pathos of adolescent yearning as to the horror outside the secret annex.<sup>23</sup>

But what generated the greatest controversy was the evasion of the distinctively Jewish character of the family's ordeal. Meyer Levin himself blamed the playwrights Hackett and Goodrich, a husband-and-wife team of scenarists who had previously won an Oscar for *Seven Brides for Seven Brothers*. They were not Jewish, though the head of production at M-G-M assured Levin that, in researching the Hanukah scene, the team had "gone to the most prominent Reform rabbi in Hollywood."<sup>24</sup> Their distortions, which Levin also attributed to the editorial influence of playwright Lillian Hellman, had provoked his lawsuit. But the failure to underscore the uniquely Jewish dimension to the *Diary* was also cultural. In the early 1950s, audiences were still uneasy with particularism and peoplehood, with facing the lethal implications of diaspora history. The awful terminus of the Holocaust, it was widely assumed, had to be shown instead under the auspices of universalism: what happened to Anne Frank might have happened to anyone.

For example, the diarist herself wondered:

Who has made us Jews different from all other people? Who has allowed us to suffer so terribly up till now? It is God who has made us as we are, but it will be God, too, who will raise us up again. If we bear all this suffering and if there are still Jews left, when it

is over, then Jews, instead of being doomed, will be held up as an example. Who knows, it might even be our religion from which the world and all peoples learn good, and for that reason and that reason only do we have to suffer now. We can never become just Netherlanders, or just English, or just . . . representatives of any other country for that matter, we will always remain Jews, but we want to, too.

This echo of the covenant is posthumously twisted into something quite different in both the play and the film. "We're not the only people that've had to suffer," Anne is made to say. "There've always been people that've had to . . . Sometimes one race . . . Sometimes another."<sup>25</sup>

Meyer Levin therefore asked:

Why had her Jewish avowal been censored on the stage? It is an essential statement, epitomizing the entire mystery of God and the Six Million, a pure and perfect expression of the search for meaning in the Holocaust, for all humanity, Jewish or not. Nowhere in the substitute drama is this touched upon. This brazen example of the inversion of a dead author's words epitomizes the programmatic, politicalized [*sic*] dilution of the Jewish tragedy. Millions of spectators the world over were unaware they were subjected to idea-censorship.<sup>26</sup>

Nor were the actors in the Hanukkah scene to sing in Hebrew because, as the playwrights explained to Otto Frank, "it would set the characters in the play apart from the people watching them . . . for the majority of our audience is not Jewish. And the thing that we have striven for . . . is to make the audience understand and identify themselves. . . ." According to *Het Achterhuis*, Anne's sister Margot wanted to be a nurse in Palestine if she had survived the war, but neither on stage nor on screen is her Zionist sentiment mentioned.<sup>27</sup> And although Susan Strasberg had drawn raves for her Broadway portrayal of Anne Frank, Twentieth Century Fox honored earlier Hollywood custom by casting a non-Jewish actress named Millie Perkins instead.

It is interesting to contrast the reception of the *Diary* with that of Elie Wiesel's *La Nuit* (1958), which did not appear in an English translation until 1960 (after twenty publishers had already rejected it), but it is doubtful that the mass audience would have been prepared for his unsparingly bleak memoir of the camps—before which the *Diary* of course stops short. As Peter Novick has pointed out, American culture in the 1950s was not yet ready for Wiesel, who was born a year before Anne Frank. He was East European, poor, observant and unassimilated. She had been Western, middle-class, of Reform background, so assimilated that she was pleased that in December 1943 Hanukkah occurred so close to Saint Nicholas's Day and Christmas.<sup>28</sup> Anne Frank was therefore a more endearing icon of violated innocence. For most American Jews as well as non-Jews, identification was thus made easier, reinforcing an interpretation of the Holocaust that generalized it into the signature event of universal suffering.

Though Anne had dreamed of visiting the holy places in Eretz Israel, what she really wanted to do was to travel all over the world and become a writer.<sup>29</sup> That is the very sort of life that Philip Roth has led. In his novella *The Ghost Writer*, the twenty-three-year-old deuterio-Roth named Nathan Zuckerman visits an older and more austere Jewish writer and imagines that Amy Bellette, a young researcher who



is also staying in the house, has survived Bergen-Belsen and is really Anne Frank. Roth's tale is both a gesture of imaginative resistance to the Holocaust—wondering, as many undoubtedly have, whether something so unbearable and incomprehensible might just possibly not have been so truly awful as it was—as well as a melancholy acceptance of its finality. Amy Bellette is only herself. For “when the sleeve of her coat fell back,” Zuckerman “of course saw that there was no scar on her forearm. No scar; [and therefore] no book” after all.<sup>30</sup>

For Anne Frank could *not* still be alive, and hers are only the words of a ghost writer. She can “live” only in memory, only in representation. In the United States she can also live as a fragile symbol of Jewish identification, as an inspiration to sustain *ahavat yisrael*. Zuckerman, for example, stands accused of disgracing the Jewry of New Jersey with his scandalous fiction. But redemption is still possible, according to Judge Leonard Wapter, a distant family friend. “If you have not yet seen the Broadway production of *The Diary of Anne Frank*,” Wapter writes the errant young novelist, “I strongly advise that you do so. Mrs. Wapter and I were in the audience on opening night; we wish that Nathan Zuckerman could have been with us to benefit from the unforgettable experience.”

Zuckerman refuses to reply, and tells his father:

“Nothing I could write Wapter would convince him of anything. Or his wife.”

“You could tell him you went to see *The Diary of Anne Frank*. You could at least do that.”

“I didn't see it. I read the book. *Everybody* read the book.”

“But you liked it, didn't you?”

“That's not the issue. How can you *dislike* it?”<sup>31</sup>

And in fact her diary eludes such categories of judgment. Though its theatrical and cinematic distortions must be set in the context of the 1950s, when a vigorous and various pluralism was still subdued to a consensus that emphasized social stability, the *Diary* was virtually unique in the attentiveness to the Holocaust that it commanded. In American thought and expression, that subject was at first only slowly and rarely broached. In films, for example, even Stanley Kramer's moralistic *Judgment at Nuremberg* (1961) managed to depict the evil of Nazism without including any major or even minor Jewish characters. Not until Sidney Lumet's *The Pawnbroker* (1965) did Hollywood directly tackle the subject of the Holocaust again;<sup>32</sup> and even then the protagonist, a Jewish survivor named Sol Nazerman (Rod Steiger), was presented as a Christ figure, bearing stigmata. But the trickle of films soon became a flood that has helped shape the sensibility of American Jews—and of many of their neighbors.

While still struggling to restore Anne Frank's authentic voice, Meyer Levin did some research on the history of the Yishuv in Palestine, considering the possibility of giving the topic fictional treatment. Then he saw the galleys for “a novel of Israel” that Doubleday was about to publish, and realized that he would have to pursue another theme. The novel was *Exodus*.

Its author was Leon Uris, a former high school dropout from Baltimore, where he had flunked English three times before joining the U.S. Marines at the age of

seventeen. *Exodus* proved to be one of the publishing sensations of the era. For more than a year it remained on the *New York Times* best-seller list (including nineteen weeks perched at the top) and was a Book-of-the-Month Club alternate selection. The hardcover edition has never gone out of print, having sold to date more than half a million copies in some forty printings; the Bantam paperback was quickly reordered at a rate of two thousand per month, reaching almost seven million copies after sixty-three printings. Although propaganda novels have occasionally punctuated the history of U.S. mass taste, *Exodus* was unprecedented. For it was not intended to arouse indignation over a domestic issue, such as the moral horror of slavery (*Uncle Tom's Cabin*), the ugliness of urban working conditions (*The Jungle*) or the plight of migrant farmers (*The Grapes of Wrath*). *Exodus* was published when American Jewish interest in Israel was slight and levels of philanthropy and tourism were—by later standards—low,<sup>33</sup> and when ethnicity was suppressed or disdained as an embarrassing residue of the immigrant past. It was therefore astonishing that an American could write a Zionist epic that would virtually fly off the shelves of American bookstores. The year that it was published, ex-Prime Minister David Ben-Gurion asserted: "As a piece of propaganda, it's the greatest thing ever written about Israel."<sup>34</sup>

Though no political repercussions were immediately discernible, the political value of *Exodus* was unmistakable. Its popularity was not only a tribute to the expanding hospitality of the majority culture, however. It was also evidence that the Jewish people was now permitted to view their own experience through American mythology, to think of themselves not only as virtuous but as courageous, tough and triumphant. Uris pulled off such a feat by outflanking or evading the customary concerns of the ethnic novel—the tension between Old World authority and tradition versus New World promise and freedom. Ignoring such conventional issues as the peril posed to the family or the crises of belief, he drew heavily on the exploits of Yehudah Arazi, a Mossad agent who operated illegal Zionist ships in the Mediterranean under the British Mandate and who had drawn considerable press attention to the plight of Jewish refugees.<sup>35</sup> Uris transposed to the Middle East the adventure formulas that middlebrow American readers already expected. In making Jewish characters into heroes skillful with weapons, the ex-marine who had scripted the Western film *The Gunfight at the O.K. Corral* (1957) knew how to keep the action flowing. Indeed, the scene in Chapter 16, in which the Haganah frees Irgun prisoners from the British, might have been called "the gunfight at the Akko jail."

The critic Leslie Fiedler therefore felt compelled to lodge a protest against "stereotype-inversion . . . [which] merely substitutes falsification for falsification, sentimentality for sentimentality."<sup>36</sup> The courage of Uris's Israelis seemed designed to contradict General George S. Patton's denigrating remark (made after he slapped a couple of hospitalized U.S. soldiers in 1943) that "there's no such thing as shell shock. It's an invention of the Jews."<sup>37</sup> In Uris's novel, "the Jewish military heroes are presented as Jews already become, or in the process of becoming, Israelis." The book thus represented "a disguised form of assimilation, the attempt of certain Jews to be accepted by the bourgeois, Philistine gentile community on the grounds that, though they are not Christians, they are even more bourgeois and philistine."<sup>38</sup>

This interpretation now seems mistaken, however. *Exodus* tapped a subterranean

Jewish nationalism when the path toward full assimilation seemed utterly unobstructed, and represented an unexpected detour for countless readers. "I have received thousands of letters in the last quarter of a century telling me that *Exodus* has substantially changed their lives," the author claimed, "particularly in regard to young people finding pride in their Jewishness. Older people find similar pride in the portrait of fighting Jews in contrast to the classical characterization as weak-spined, brilliant intellectuals and businessmen."<sup>39</sup>

*Exodus* was Doubleday's third "Jewish" blockbuster in six years (after *Diary of a Young Girl* and Herman Wouk's *Marjorie Morningstar*) and won the National Jewish Book Award, a year before the same National Jewish Welfare Board gave its award to Roth for *Goodbye, Columbus* (1959). With its very different stereotypes, *Exodus* was thus wedged between the two novels that established the image of "the Jewish American princess"—a stereotype that eventually superseded "the Jewish mother" that Roth himself so giddily pilloried a decade later in *Portnoy's Complaint* (1969).

The romance between a *sabra* and a gentile nurse (the only important American character in the novel) was in the foreground of this saga of the genesis of the Third Jewish Commonwealth. The love story seemed to reiterate the staples of earlier popular works, stretching back to Israel Zangwill's *The Melting-Pot* (1908) in imagining how interethnic or interreligious love might surmount the primordial hatreds that history had nurtured. But *Exodus* shattered that convention when the nurse, the incarnation of the American majority culture, casts her lot at the end with the Jewish independence fighters; and the enormous appeal of the novel suggested a certain deceleration of the assimilationist impulses that previous American Jewish fiction had registered. (The effect on Otto Preminger, who adapted the novel to the screen in 1960, was admittedly less impressive. While on location in Israel, the director wanted to marry an Episcopalian. Because the Weizmann Institute's Meyer Weisgal, who was cast in a brief scene, was willing to testify to the rabbinate that the bride was Jewish, the couple was married in Haifa rather than in Cyprus.)<sup>40</sup>

The popularity of Preminger's movie was unaffected by the picket lines of neo-Nazi George Lincoln Rockwell and his followers in eastern cities. From the film score, crooner Pat Boone quarried a hit song notable for its egocentric arrogance ("This land is mine/God gave this land to me"), undoubtedly boosting a successful packaged tour organized in 1960 that traced the route of events in Uris's novel. The following year, El Al airlines announced a sixteen-day tour that would cover the very places where Preminger and his crew had shot scenes for *Exodus*.<sup>41</sup> Jewish ethnicity became a segment of the market.

The breadth of the appeal of *Exodus* was revealed in its impact upon a versatile black teacher and writer named Julius Lester. The son of a Methodist minister, he recalled that, while attending all-Negro Fisk University in Nashville, Tennessee, a classmate thrust the novel at him. Its effect "on me was so extraordinary that I wanted to go and fight for Israel, even die, if need be, for Israel." Lester added that "Israel spoke to the need I had as a young black man for a place where I could be free of being an object of hatred. I did not wish I were Jewish, but was glad that Jews had a land of their own, even if blacks didn't."<sup>42</sup> By the late 1980s Lester had become a Jew and even a cantor in a Conservative shul in western Massachusetts.

Though the passions that he felt and enacted were rarely as spectacular among his new coreligionists, one sociologist claimed it was “virtually impossible to find a Reform home in the 1950s without a copy of Leon Uris’s *Exodus*.” His novel undoubtedly awakened pride in the fulfillment of a dream that was both democratic and humane as well as nationalist.<sup>43</sup>

Though literary critics ignored *Exodus* (except to spray it with buckshot), it has appeared in more than fifty translations (most importantly, Russian);<sup>44</sup> and even hostile reviewers might be hard put to challenge Uris’s assertion that “it has been among the most influential novels in history.”<sup>45</sup> Uris himself insisted on a standard of aesthetic judgment that would privilege psychic health and affirmation. In an interview in the *New York Post*, he denounced

a whole school of American Jewish writers who spend their time damning their fathers, hating their mothers, wringing their hands and wondering why they were born. This isn’t art or literature. It’s psychiatry. These writers are professional apologists. Every year you find one of their works on the best-seller list. Their work is obnoxious and makes me sick to my stomach. I wrote *Exodus* because I was just sick of apologizing—or feeling that it was necessary to apologize.<sup>46</sup>

When Uris added that, contrary to the diaspora stereotype, “we have been fighters,” Roth was provoked to retort, “So bald, stupid, and uninformed is the statement that it is not even worth disputing.” Having published a hilarious short story about quite unheroic Jews in military uniform, “Defender of the Faith” (1959), Roth saw little “value in swapping one simplification for the other.” Saul Bellow’s judgment was more measured:

It may appear that the survivors of Hitler’s terror in Europe and Israel will benefit more from good publicity than from realistic representation, or that posters are needed more urgently than masterpieces. Admittedly, some people say, *Exodus* was not much of a novel, but it was extraordinarily effective as a document and we need such documents now. We do not need stories like those of Philip Roth which expose unpleasant Jewish traits. . . . [But] in literature we cannot accept a political standard. We can only have a literary one.<sup>47</sup>

Politics could not be easily excluded, however, especially when novelists themselves incorporated large historical and political themes in their work. Uris’s subsequent *Mila 18* (1961), which was number four among best-sellers that year, counterposed an episode of desperate heroism—the Warsaw ghetto uprising—to the passive victimization that the *Diary of a Young Girl* represented. And in one of his most complex fictions to date, *The Counterlife* (1986), Roth rewrote *Exodus* as ambivalence, putting Nathan Zuckerman, the sort of assimilated novelist whose real-life counterparts Uris had attacked, in the Holy Land. There Nathan confronts his brother Henry, a dentist from suburban New Jersey, now Hanoch, who has chosen to relive on the West Bank the vigilant and embattled Zionism that Ari Ben-Canaan had projected. It is as though the safely suburban professional man whom Marjorie Morningstar had married at the end of Wouk’s novel was suddenly thrust, in *The Counterlife*, into a condition of radical insecurity, falling under the sway of the brilliant, fanatically right-wing Mordecai Lippman. *The Counterlife* may be the

most dramatic and sophisticated novel that an American has yet written on the moral and political dilemmas facing Israel and of Israel's meaning for American Jewry.

With the news that Roth's *Portnoy's Complaint* would become the first foreign novel translated into Czech under a post-Communist regime,<sup>48</sup> the story of the Jewish impact upon American culture was elevated into a different and even mysterious dimension. The multiple ironies associated with minority life in America could no longer be confined to the United States. For if Czech readers could find engrossing the struggles between Alex and Sophie Portnoy, then even Jewish particularism had lost its specificity, its hermetic pungency, its implosive force. Thus the distinctly postwar phase of the Jewish involvement in American culture—especially mass culture—may be over.

This has been a story that might begin with *The Jolson Story* (1946), starring Larry Parks, a Kansan playing a Jew who was famous for singing in blackface. This cinematic envoi to vaudeville was released when the unrivaled power of the film industry was about to yield to television. The coda of that story might be a videocassette made in 1984 of a one-woman Broadway show, *Whoopi Goldberg*, written by and starring a black comedienne—who was raised as a Roman Catholic but who has given herself a Jewish surname—playing (among other roles) a black, streetwise junkie who visits the Anne Frank House in Amsterdam, and then breaks down and cries while meditating on vulnerability. The supervisor of the Broadway production was Mike Nichols, born Michael Igor Peschkowsky in Berlin in 1931, who had arrived in New York in 1939 knowing two English sentences: "I don't speak English" and "Please don't kiss me."<sup>49</sup> Yet the Jewish embrace of America was about to be fully consummated—and reciprocated.

The romantic tales that Broadway, Hollywood and publishers' row once chose to narrate tended to locate impediments to love in ethnicity, religion and "race"—though, except for race itself, these were hurdles that could be overcome. After the Second World War, the credibility of such impediments crumbled in an increasingly tolerant and diverse America. Hollywood's leading men in its golden age of the 1930s and 1940s tended to be handsome WASPs (Cary Grant, Gary Cooper, Clark Gable, John Wayne) and, somewhat later, their occasional Jewish facsimiles such as John Garfield (né Julius Garfinkle), Tony Curtis (né Bernard Schwartz) and the half-Jew Paul Newman. But while Jewish actresses (unless named Barbra Streisand) are still expected to conform to Anglo-Saxon conventions of what a good profile is, the requirement has now been waived for Jewish actors. The seismic shift in sexual attractiveness can be discerned in *Play It Again, Sam* (1972), when a businessman guesses that his wife (Diane Keaton) must be having an affair with "some stud." The camera suddenly focuses on his guilty, self-conscious best friend (Woody Allen),<sup>50</sup> whose imaginary romantic adviser is Humphrey Bogart. Instead of ridiculing himself as a *nebbish* (as in earlier Woody Allen comedies), he proves himself capable of winning Keaton (off-screen, too).

Director Woody Allen can of course give Actor Woody Allen his pick of women, whether played by Keaton, Charlotte Rampling, or Mia Farrow; but it is noteworthy that audiences have not rebelled. Nor is there widespread puzzlement—much less disapproval—when short, nasal Dustin Hoffman wins Katherine Ross (in *The Graduate* [1967]) and then Jessica Lange (in *Tootsie* [1982]), or when Hoffman,

like Allen himself in *Manhattan* (1979), plays the former husband of the ethereal Meryl Streep (in *Kramer vs. Kramer* [1979]). Art Garfunkel (rather than Jack Nicholson) marries Candice Bergen in *Carnal Knowledge* (1971), Jeff Goldblum gets to keep Michelle Pfeiffer as well as a bundle of cash in *Into the Night* (1985), Ron Liebman attracts Sally Field in *Norma Rae* (1979), and Billy Crystal gets to be more than friends with Meg Ryan in *When Harry Met Sally . . .* (1989). If unprepossessing and even unglamorous Jews can play romantic leads without the novelty of such casting attracting notice—or popular resistance—then Jews and gentiles may have become so comfortable with one another in American society that the historic distinction between them matters less than ever.

Because Jewish values and images have nicked the nation's postwar culture, making it less monochromatic and more variegated, the critical detachment that this marginal people once felt has largely dissipated, and the case for pronounced Jewish separation has been decisively weakened. Thanks to the disproportionate Jewish contribution to the popular arts, the traditional bifurcation between "them" and "us" is blurring into irrelevance. In so benign a setting, where neighbors are more accessible than ancestors, what "we" have left to defend and cultivate cannot be articulated with the same confidence as in the past. The explanation for assimilation that is herein proposed is therefore paradoxical: The very Jewish enlargement and invigoration of American culture that has enabled Jews to identify so fully with it has made Jewish identity under such conditions problematic. That national culture is not so much a distant threat as a distorted mirror, but the Jewish faces that it reveals are coming to resemble everyone else's.

## Notes

1. Alexander Hamilton, John Jay and James Madison, *The Federalist: A Commentary on the Constitution of the United States*, ed. Edward Mead Earle (New York: 1937 [1788]), 9.

2. Margaret Carlson, "Oh, Say, Can You Sing It?," *Time* 135 (12 Feb. 1990), 27. "If winning were everything," Carlson claims, "'God Bless America' might carry the day. Anyone can belt out a respectable version."

3. Stanley I. Kutler, *The School Prayer Controversy in America: Constitutionalism, Symbolism, and Pluralism* (Tel-Aviv: 1984), 12–17; Aljean Harmetz, "Has Joe Roth Got the Key to Success at Fox?" *New York Times*, 4 March 1990.

4. Harmetz, "Has Joe Roth Got the Key."

5. "Newly Released Tapes," in Staff of the *Washington Post*, *The Fall of a President* (New York: 1974), 222.

6. Henry Adams to Charles Milnes Gaskell, 31 July 1896 and 19 February 1914, quoted in *The Jew in the Modern World: A Documentary History*, eds. Paul R. Mendes-Flohr and Jehuda Reinharz (New York: 1980), 370.

7. H. L. Mencken, *The American Language: An Inquiry into the Development of English in the United States*, rev. ed., ed. Raven L. McDavid and David W. Maurer (New York: 1963 [1919]), 253–256, 260–264.

8. Henry Adams, *The Education of Henry Adams*, rev. ed., ed. Ernest Samuels (Boston: 1973 [1918]), 238.

9. Pauline Kael, "Raising Kane," in *idem*, Herman J. Mankiewicz and Orson Welles, *The Citizen Kane Book* (Boston: 1971), 17–20, 51; David Mamet, *Speed-the-Plow* (New York: 1987), 34, 72.

10. "The Most Powerful People in Hollywood," *Premiere* 3 (May 1990), 63–65; "Maker of Hit After Hit, Steven Spielberg is Also a Conglomerate," *Wall Street Journal*, 9 Feb. 1987.
11. Henry Morgenthau Diaries, 10 April 1939, quoted in Ted Morgan, *FDR: A Biography* (New York: 1985), 555–556; John Cooney, *The Annenbergs* (New York: 1982), 20, 125–138.
12. Consider Leonard Dinnerstein's *Uneasy at Home: Antisemitism and the American Jewish Experience* (New York: 1987) and Arthur Hertzberg's *The Jews in America: Four Centuries of an Uneasy Encounter* (New York: 1989), as well as Jacob Neusner's *Stranger at Home: "The Holocaust," Zionism, and American Judaism* (Chicago: 1981).
13. Diana Trilling, *Reviewing the Forties* (New York: 1978), 167–168.
14. Neil Rosenstein, *The Unbroken Chain: Sketches and the Genealogy of Illustrious Jewish Families from the 15th–20th Century* (New York: 1976), 312; Israel Shenker, "Now, Jewish Roots," *New York Times Magazine* (20 March 1977), 42–44; Fred A. Bernstein, "In an Explosive Biography, Robert Caro Portrays L.B.J.'s Path to Power as the Low Road," *People* 19 (17 Jan. 1983), 31–32.
15. Stephen J. Whitfield, *American Space, Jewish Time* (Hamden, Conn.: 1988), 60–64.
16. Edgar Allan Poe, "The Philosophy of Composition" (1846), in *The Portable Poe*, ed. Philip Van Doren Stern (New York: 1945), 557.
17. Sander L. Gilman, *Jewish Self-Hatred: Anti-Semitism and the Hidden Language of the Jews* (Baltimore: 1986), 345; Meyer Levin, *The Obsession* (New York: 1973), 34; Harry Mulisch, "Death and the Maiden," *New York Review of Books* 33 (17 July 1986), 7.
18. Quoted in Levin, *Obsession*, 36.
19. A full account of the legal battle is given in Levin, *Obsession*.
20. Gilman, *Jewish Self-Hatred*, 345; Kenneth Tynan, *Curtains* (New York: 1961), 450–451.
21. Joseph Schildkraut (as told to Leo Lania), *My Father and I* (New York: 1959), 2–3, 233, 236, 237.
22. *Ibid.*, 237–238; Ernst Schnabel, *Anne Frank: A Portrait in Courage* (New York: 1958), 192.
23. Judith E. Doneson, *The Holocaust in American Film* (Philadelphia: 1987), 69, 76, 80–81; Anne Frank, *The Diary of a Young Girl*, trans. B. M. Mooyart-Doubleday (Garden City, N.Y.: 1952, paperback ed. 1953), 237.
24. Levin, *Obsession*, 152; Doneson, *Holocaust in American Film*, 74.
25. Frank, *Diary of a Young Girl*, 186–187; Frances Goodrich and Albert Hackett, *The Diary of Anne Frank* (New York: 1956), 168; Levin, *Obsession*, 29–30; Doneson, *Holocaust in American Film*, 69–70, 82.
26. Levin, *Obsession*, 30.
27. Quoted in Doneson, *Holocaust in American Film*, 70; Levin, *Obsession*, 126.
28. Frank, *Diary of a Young Girl*, 108–113; Gilman, *Jewish Self-Hatred*, 349.
29. *Diary of a Young Girl*, 177, 206, 210; Levin, *Obsession*, 121.
30. Philip Roth, *The Ghost Writer* (New York: 1980), 207.
31. *Ibid.*, 128, 135.
32. Stephen J. Whitfield, *Voices of Jacob, Hands of Esau: Jews in American Life and Thought* (Hamden, Conn.: 1984), 30–41; Annette Insdorf, *Indelible Shadows: Film and the Holocaust* (New York: 1983), 6–10, 23–28.
33. David Biale, *Power and Powerlessness in Jewish History* (New York: 1986), 184.
34. Quoted in Edwin McDowell, "Exodus in Samizdat: Still Popular and Still Subversive," *New York Times Book Review*, 26 April 1987, 13.
35. Herbert Agar, *The Saving Remnant: An Account of Jewish Survival* (New York: 1960), 204–215.
36. Leslie A. Fiedler, *Waiting for the End: The American Literary Scene from Hemingway to Baldwin* (New York: 1964), 91.
37. Phillip Knightley, *The First Casualty: The War Correspondent as Hero, Propagandist, and Myth Maker* (New York: 1975), 320.
38. Fiedler, *Waiting for the End*, 91.

39. Leon Uris, letter to author, 16 April 1985.

40. Otto Preminger, *Preminger: An Autobiography* (New York: 1978), 225–226; Meyer Weisgal, . . . *So Far: An Autobiography* (New York: 1971), 313–315.

41. Patricia Erens, *The Jew in American Cinema* (Bloomington: 1985), 217, 219; David H. Bennett, *The Party of Fear: From Nativist Movements to the New Right in American History* (Chapel Hill: 1988), 325; Daniel J. Boorstin, *The Image, or What Happened to the American Dream* (New York: 1962), 107.

42. Julius Lester, “All God’s Children,” in *Jewish Possibilities: The Best of Moment Magazine*, ed. Leonard Fein (Northvale, N.J.: 1987), 28; *idem*, *Lovesong: Becoming a Jew* (New York: 1988), 29–30.

43. Norman Mirsky, “Nathan Glazer’s *American Judaism* after 30 Years: A Reform Opinion,” *American Jewish History* 77 (December 1987), 237; William A. Novak, “Twenty Important Jewish Books Written Since 1950,” *The Jewish Almanac*, ed. Richard Siegel and Carl Rheins (New York: 1980), 425.

44. Even the enormous impact of the novel in America was overshadowed by its Russian version, *Ishkod*, circulating illegally in the Soviet Union. An Israeli embassy official stationed there from 1959 until 1962 has disclosed that he and other staffers gave away numerous copies of the Bantam (U.S.) edition, which had arrived through the diplomatic pouch. The former official, who remains anonymous, recalled that “the book went from hand to hand. Remember, this was before the Six-Day War, when the Russian people were told Jews were bad, Jews were cowards. The book allowed them to identify with the Jewish national movement.” The 599 pages of the Bantam paperback were translated and then typed page by page, using as many legible carbon copies as possible in a nation where “private” citizens were denied access to Xerox machines. Four different translations were done by groups of people who were unaware that others were also producing a *samizdat Exodus*. A unit of “ideological Zionists” did some censorship of its own by eliminating the love affair between Ari Ben-Canaan and Kitty Fremont—the very convention that made it formulaic for American readers. As Jerry Goodman, the executive director of the National Conference on Soviet Jewry, explained: “They couldn’t see a Jew having an affair with a non-Jew” (McDowell, “*Exodus* in *Samizdat*,” 13). “There were dozens of such translations done in every city in Russia with Jews and by prisoners in the Gulag,” the novelist later claimed. “Many of these translations had eight or ten translators working on them, and other times a family would read it aloud during one entire night so that they could pass it along” (Leon Uris, letter to author, 16 April 1985).

Here was a novel that was to change lives—such as Eliahu Essas’s. In 1966 the mathematician read a seventy-page digest of *Ishkod*, of which roughly sixty pages consisted of historical background. “But the other ten were involved with the personalities, and they were digested so well that the hero became our hero.” Four years later, Essas received in Moscow a two-volume translation that Aliyah Library in Israel also produced. “I read it once, then again the next year, and I participated with many others making typewritten copies” (McDowell, “*Exodus* in *Samizdat*,” 13; Martin Gilbert, *The Jews of Hope* [New York: 1985], 169–173). Natan Sharansky’s autobiography records how the appeal of Zionism grew stronger while he was still a student: “Friends began giving me books about Israel, including the novel *Exodus*, which was circulated in *samizdat* form and had an enormous influence on Jews of my generation” (Natan Sharansky, *Fear No Evil*, trans. Stefani Hoffman [New York: 1988], xv). Though it was a work of fiction uninfected by any explicitly anti-Soviet propaganda, the distribution of *Ishkod* was manifestly illegal (see McDowell, “*Exodus* in *Samizdat*,” 13). At the trial of Leonid (Ari) Volvovsky in 1985, evidence was presented that he had given Uris’s novel to a woman who was asked to pass it on to others. The computer expert was charged, among other crimes, with distributing “anti-Soviet propaganda.” A few months earlier, a similar accusation had been brought against Yakov Levin, a Hebrew teacher in Odessa; he too was sentenced to three years in prison for slander. Both he and Volvovsky were released early in 1987. A year later, at an emotional Action for Soviet Jewry benefit in Boston, Volvovsky met Uris for the first time, along with Senator Edward M. Kennedy.

“When my wife Jill was photographing in a reception center in Israel,” Uris has recalled,



“people came up and showed her letters saying that, when they started reading *Exodus*, that was the first step for applying for a visa to come out of Russia.” In a transfer center for Soviet Jews in Vienna, he met a woman who was among the typists of *Ishkod*. In the fall of 1989, Uris went to Moscow, where he accepted a twenty-six-year-old, first-edition *samizdat* of *Exodus*. Weeping, he responded: “This means more to me than a Nobel Prize. I thank you all in this hall tonight, and I thank B’nai B’rith for bringing me here.” During Simhat Torah services in the synagogue, the worshipers roared and applauded loudly upon hearing the announcement from the *bimah* that Uris was there. The Muscovites mobbed the author when he carried a Torah scroll through the sanctuary, kissing the Torah cover—and Uris as well (Michael Neiditch, “Uris in the USSR,” *Jewish Monthly* 104 [Jan. 1990], 35–37).

No Jewish book was ever more cherished in the U.S.S.R. than *Ishkod*. “For Soviet Jewish activists,” Jerry Goodman asserted, “it was probably more meaningful than even the Bible. Most of the Jewish activists in the late 1960s and early 1970s always cited to me the importance of the book. They didn’t treat it as a literary experience; it was history—the only knowledge they had of the Jewish experience.” “Its impact was enormous,” Essas explained after settling in Israel in 1986, thirteen years after his first application for an exit visa. “It was our first encounter with Jewish history. It gave us inspiration, and turned almost everybody who read it into more or less convinced Zionists.” He added: “It gave us hope and pride when we needed it. It was the first book to teach us about the Jewish tradition, which is very different from what the Government said it was” (McDowell, “*Exodus* in Samizdat,” 13).

45. Leon Uris, letter to author, 16 April 1985.

46. Quoted in Philip Roth, “Some New Jewish Stereotypes” (1961), in *Reading Myself and Others* (New York: 1975), 138.

47. Roth, “Some New Jewish Stereotypes,” 138; Saul Bellow, Introduction to *Great Jewish Short Stories* (New York: 1963), 14.

48. *New York Review of Books*, 37 (12 April 1990), 2.

49. Cathleen McGuigan, “The ‘Whoopie’ Comedy Show,” *Newsweek*, 103 (5 March 1984), 63; Steve Erickson, “Whoopi Goldberg,” *Rolling Stone* (8 May 1986), 39–42, 90, 92, 94; Rex Reed, *Do You Sleep in the Nude?* (New York: 1969), 61.

50. *Woody Allen’s Play It Again, Sam*, ed. Richard J. Anobile (New York: 1977), 162.