Open Access Repository
www.ssoar.info

Gender, Memory, and Judaism

Gazsi, Judit (Ed.); Pető, Andrea (Ed.); Toronyi, Zsuzsanna (Ed.)

Preprint / Preprint
Konferenzband / collection

Empfohlene Zitierung / Suggested Citation:
Gazsi, J., Pető, A., & Toronyi, Z. (Eds.). (2007). *Gender, Memory, and Judaism* (Studien zur Geschichte Ost- und Ostmitteleuropas, 6). Budapest: Balassi K. https://nbn-resolving.org/urn:nbn:de:0168-ssoar-72092-0

Nutzungsbedingungen:
Dieser Text wird unter einer CC BY Lizenz (Namensnennung) zur Verfügung gestellt. Nähere Auskünfte zu den CC-Lizenzen finden Sie hier:
https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/deed.de

Terms of use:
This document is made available under a CC BY Licence (Attribution). For more Information see:
https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0

gesis
Leibniz-Institut
für Sozialwissenschaften

Mitglied der
Leibniz-Gemeinschaft

619.

FEMINIZMUS ÉS TÖRTÉNELEM

Gender, Memory, and Judaism

Edited by
JUDIT GAZSI · ANDREA PETŐ · ZSUZSANNA TORONYI

BALASSI KIADÓ
GABRIELE SCHÄFER VERLAG

GENDER, MEMORY, AND JUDAISM

FEMINIZMUS ÉS TÖRTÉNELEM

FEMINISM AND HISTORY

GENDER, MEMORY, AND JUDAISM

Edited by
Judit Gazsi, Andrea Pető,
and Zsuzsanna Toronyi

BALASSI KIADÓ · BUDAPEST
GABRIELE SCHÄFER VERLAG · HERNE

The publication was supported by
The Rothschild Foundation (Europe)

Text revised by A. T. Gane

© 2007 by The authors
© 2007 by The editors

ISBN 978-963-506-742-8
ISBN 978-3-933337-55-9
ISSN 1586-3344

All rights reserved. No part of this publication my
be reproduced, stored in a retrieval system,
or transmitted in any form or by any means,
electronic, mechanical, photocopying, recording,
or otherwise, without the prior written permission
of the Publishers.

Printed in Hungary

CONTENTS

Introduction, *Zsuzsanna Toronyi and Judit Gazsi* 7

PART ONE
TRADITIONS—NOW 15

Remembering the Past, Living the Present, Planning the Future, *Alice Shalvi* 17

Voluntary Work and Jewish Renewal: Observations on the Situation in Germany, *Lara Dämmig* 25

Esther and her Bag, *Andrea Pető* 35

PART TWO
GENDER AND RELIGION 49

The Meaning of Israel in Yiddish Poetry, *Esther Jonas-Märtin* 51

Transforming Traditions: Halakhah, Women, and Kriat ha-Torah, *Valérie Rhein* 67

Life Stories of the Personal, Professional and Political: Orthodox Jewish Women Negotiating Work and Home, *Chia Longman* 75

PART THREE
GENDERED REMEMBERING 87

Fanny von Arnstein and her Biographer Hilde Spiel, *Eleonore Lappin* 89

Jelena Kon, *Edit Jankov* 105

An Untold Story about the Feminist Association, *Andrea Pető* 107

Finding Our/My History: The Case of Manya Wilbushewitz Shohat, *Shulamit Reinharz* 121

Johanna Bischitz, Katalin Gerő, and Budapest's Jewish Women's Association (1866–1943), *Julia Richers* 125

The Work of Ilka Gedő (1921–1985), *István Hajdu* 145

The Female Progressive Workshop: An Attempt at a Collective Biography, *Borbála Juhasz* 173

"You're the exception..." The First Jewish Women Psychoanalysts, *Anna Borgos* 179

The Jewish Woman as an Allegory: The Portrayal of Jewish Women in Hungarian Literature at the Turn of the Century, *Miklós Konrád* 195

Centropa and Women's Stories, *Eszter Andor and Dóra Sárdi* 217

Contributors 251

INTRODUCTION

Zsuzsanna Toronyi and Judit Gazsi

Background

"Diversities"—this was the title of the Fourth Bet Debora Conference for female rabbis, cantors, academics and activists, held in Budapest by the EszterTáska Foundation between 23–27 August 2006.

The Bet Debora Initiative Group was founded by Lara Dämmig and Elisa Klapheck in Berlin in 1998. Both women are academics and Reform Jews; they are rightly regarded as the founders of their country's Reform community. Klapheck, who studied to be a rabbi, is the author of a biographical work about Regina Jonas, the first female rabbi. Dämmig wrote a book about the life of Bertha Falkenberg, president of the Berlin chapter of the Jewish Women's League. Held every two years, the Bet Debora Conference received a new venue in Budapest when EszterTáska Foundation agreed to organise the fourth conference. The success of the event was due to the joint efforts of Judit Gazsi, Andrea Pető and Zsuzsanna Toronyi—all members of the EszterTáska Foundation.

The Conference

The Budapest conference was attended by hundred registered conference participants, in addition to the invited speakers and presenters. The female academics attending the conference came from many different countries—from Austria to Bulgaria and from Italy to Israel.

In their papers, the speakers addressed issues with relevance to female identity, Jewish identity and life as Jewish women.

In Hungary, the general public still tends to be distrustful of feminism and gender issues—especially in the Jewish dimension. For this reason, it was particularly encouraging that participants were greeted at the opening of the conference by the former chief rabbi of Hungary, József Schweitzer, and that the president of the Association of Jewish Congregations in Hungary, Péter Feldmájer (a member of the Supervisory Board of the EszterTáska Foundation) sent a letter welcoming conference participants to Budapest. In his letter—which was read out at the opening of the conference—Feldmájer emphasised the importance of the issues that were to be raised at the conference.

The Hungarian participants included almost all "interested parties"—the Sim Shalom Community, which employed the first female rabbi in Hungary, the modern Orthodox Pesti Shul Association, WIZO Hungary, the Haver Foundation for Social Tolerance, the rabbi of the conservative Frankel synagogue, the director of the Bálint Jewish Community Centre and her staff, and the Centropa Foundation—which has also contributed to this volume, etc.

The opening lecture was given by Alice Shalvi, often referred to as the "mother of Israeli feminism". This volume too begins with her paper, because Bet Deborah could never have been established without her intellectual support. Shalvi was born in Germany. In 1950, she moved to Israel where she founded several organisations and became one of the first women rectors. In 2007, she was awarded the Israel Prize for her life's work. In her lecture, she demonstrated how Jewish women can obtain full equality based on universal human rights and without abandoning their traditional roles.

The Collection

The papers in this collection are a selection of the lectures given at the conference as well as relevant articles from the catalogue of an exhibition entitled *The Jewish Woman* (Hungarian Jewish Museum and Archives, 2002), which was curated by Zsuzsanna Toronyi and which sought to promote a more democratic approach to history-writing.

The connection between the two is that the organisers of the conference were keen on incorporating some aspects of the 2002 exhibition into the programme of the 2006 conference. In the exhibition, which addressed the two forms of emancipation, we presented portraits and biographies of thirty Jewish women who lived and worked at the turn of the nineteenth and twentieth century.

In Hungary, and particularly in Budapest, *Diversities* is perhaps the best word to express local Jewish history. Hungary has always been at the crossroads between East and West, and Budapest was, at the turn of the century, a city where the full diversity of Europe's Ashkenazi communities could be observed within a single district or even within a single block. This reflected Hungary's historical tradition, since under Ottoman rule, Buda's Jewish community had worshipped according to four different rites and had included Ashkenazi Jews, Sephardic Jews, and even Syrian Jews. Indeed, ever since the sixteenth century, Hungary has been characterised by diversity (and divisions)—among Jews and non-Jews. Often Hungarian society has been divisible into two almost equal and irreconcilable halves—this even applies in respect of people's attitudes towards Jews. In the final third of the nineteenth century, diversity and divisions also became a feature of Hungary's Jewish community, which broke into three "denominations"—Neolog, Orthodox and Status Quo Ante. In Budapest, the Neologs constituted the largest group; they were slightly more conservative than Germany's Reform Jews. The Hungarian capital was also fertile ground for rabbinical orthodoxy as well as Eastern European Hasidism.

The western and eastern models exhibited differences with respect to modernisation and emancipation. Jewish communities in the West, most of which were middle class, encountered and accepted the notion of legal equality. Meanwhile Jews in the East formed part of a traditional and conservative social model, where middle-class values were barely known. The Jewish community in Hungary found itself at the crossroads between these western and eastern models. The community had contact with both models and was unable to prevent either one from having an effect. This meant that the chasm between the two was even deeper, and the contours were even sharper. The mid-nineteenth century saw the granting of civil and political rights to the Jews of Central Europe, but such rights could only be enjoyed by male adult Jews. Jewish women still lacked the same rights. Moreover, in many places the reception of Judaism—its recognition as an official religion—was delayed. This latter issue could be speedily resolved—at least in a legal sense—with the adoption of legislative amendments, but women's emancipation remained on the backburner for several further decades. Some gestures were made, but the change in social attitudes towards women was a slow process. The assimilation of Jews into majority society and women's social assimilation were two very different issues. The latter issue raised a whole series of fascinating questions, which are worthy of examination. The role of women in the manifestation and public expression of Jewish assimilation provoked a variety of responses. Moreover it was not just the Jews who had different views on women's emancipation and the new types of women who were appearing in tandem with assimilation. People in majority society also had differing views on such developments. Some saw them as positive examples worthy of imitation, but others transformed them into symbols that could be used to promote antisemitism.

Miklós Konrád examines the literary and social manifestation of the new type of woman, a product of dual emancipation, in his paper entitled *The Jewish Woman as an Allegory*. The papers by Juhász and Borgos also note the perception of Jewish women as a collective, placing the emphasis on an examination of the occupational, lifestyle and political value systems that were typical among Jewish women. Anna Borgos explores the early history of psychoanalysis, a topic that has multiple overtones in Eastern Central Europe and an area in which Jewish women played an eminent role. Borbála Juhász offers insights into Jewish women's political activity, exploring their contribution to feminism and the left-wing movements—both of which can be seen as related to the traditional Jewish value of "tikkun olam" even though they are detached from the religious worldview. After these general papers, which treat the community of Jewish women in Central Europe in a symbolic manner, the collection continues with several concrete case studies, offering insights into major aspects of female Jewish existence through an exploration of the life stories, value choices, and dilemmas of distinguished Jewish women, such as Jelena Kon, who ran an aid organisation in Serbia (article by Edith Jankov), Johanna

Bischitz, who founded the Budapest Women's Group (article by Julia Richers), and the painter Ilka Gedő (biography by István Hajdu). The extent to which we should view all these women as examples for ourselves is revealed in the papers by Eleonore Lappin and Shulamit Reinharz. For her part, Lappin draws parallels between the identities and life stories of the saloniere Fanny von Arnstein and Hilde Spiel who wrote Von Arnstein's biography. Meanwhile, Reinharz indicates in the very title of her paper that her research into the life and work of the Zionist trailblazer Manya Wilbushewitz Shohat is also an attempt to resolve her own debilitating identity crisis. Andrea Pető examines the politics of memory by means of her study of Mrs. Meller, the founder of the Hungarian Feminists' Association.

As the above essays and papers demonstrate, the Jews of Central Europe became emancipated in the course of the nineteenth century. In most Central European societies this development was accompanied by nascent female emancipation. Still, even though Judaism became a "received", or officially recognised, religion, the Jewish community did not generally "receive" its women into religious functions, as Valérie Rhein's question: "Does Halakhah Allow Women to Read from the Torah and to Be Called to the Torah?" shows. The answer to the question is unclear, since, as in other areas, the various Jewish communities came up with different responses. The problem is a different one in the Orthodox communities: the problems and value choices presented by Chia Longman show that changes are underway even within Orthodox communities with regard to women and the role of women. Finally, Esther Jonas-Martin's essay on Yiddish poetry adds colour to the collection.

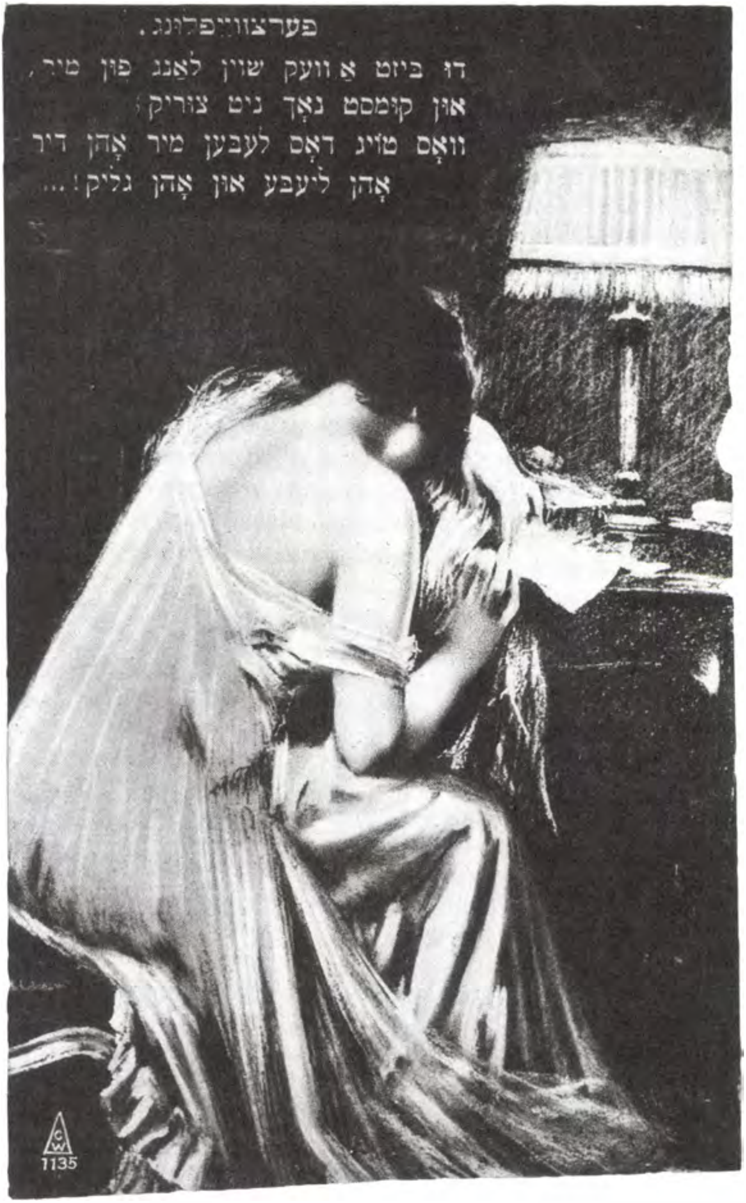
Illustrations

The images and illustrations in the collection are the graphic Yiddish-language postcards of the Warsaw-based Central Verlag, one of the era's largest producers of picture postcards. The postcards—part of a collection of thousand items—were donated to the Hungarian Jewish Museum in 1933 by Vilmos Kohn, a Budapest paper merchant. We chose these postcards because they represent the first public images of Jewish women after long centuries during which portraits of Jewish women were only seen in the private sphere. Family photographs did already exist, but they were only viewed by those with access to family photograph albums. The women here are portrayed in accordance with the visual manifestation of the non-Jewish (gentile) canons, as biblical women figures or symbols, and as metaphors personalised by female figures. The symbolic aspect of some of the postcards presented in the book is strengthened by the Yiddish verses that appear on them, which intensify these religious stereotypes. For East Central European Jewish women living in traditional circumstances, *tsniuth*, or modesty, was a primary value. The postcards, which evoke the linguistic and visual world of memoirs, embodied this sweet and doleful idyll, in which women could admit to and express their emotions. It is no accident that these pictures were not seen on the Rosh Hashanah greetings cards associated with Jewish religious obligations, but on rarer postcards that had no connection to such community festivals. These postcards were sent when people wanted to express yearning, desire or similar emotions based on the free emotional expression of people of free will. There was no opportunity for this within the traditional narrative and visual framework. The texts also define the people who used such postcards since the little poetic verses had to be understood by those who were to receive the postcards.

The Central Verlag was a postcard manufacturer that specifically targeted the Jewish market. Other postcard series included biblical scenes, famous rabbi portraits, and images based on works by famous Jewish artists in the era, such as Filikovsky, Krestin, and Maurycy Gottlieb. The postcards—which were probably relatively cheap because their quality was rather poor—were very popular. A sign of their popularity is the publishing of a series in the 1910s by the New York company Williamsburg Art Co., which aimed to cash in on the East European, Yiddish-speaking market in the United States.

At the peak of the postcards' popularity (1898–1918), family photographs became popular even among poorer families away from the urban centres. This is why we also incorporated pictures from the Centropa collection. The phenomena described in the articles are given visual expression in the photo-essay assembled from the Centropa pictures. The photographs are followed by brief retrospective explanations, thereby also illustrating diversity from a woman's perspective. Initially, family photographs were made by professional photographers in their studios. Later on, however, amateur photography became increasingly popular, resulting in the portrayal of families in more diverse environments. Hierarchy is present in such old family photographs, but because everyone tended to be photographed, this has allowed successor generations to remember the women, children or female family servants appearing in the pictures. They have faces and bodies, and we can examine their clothes and their posture. In other words, they can become a living part of our historical memory. As photography became a mass phenomenon, we can even discover things such as baby haircuts, women smoking cigarettes, and nuances indicating changes in the woman's position within the family. This historical record is further strengthened by the narrative that was formed a long time after the photographs were taken, by means of interviews undertaken in the late twentieth and early twenty-first century.

The editors hope that this collection of essays, papers and photographs will both enhance knowledge and encourage further debate.



פערצווייפלונג.

דו ביזט אַ וועק שוין לאַנג פון מיר,
און קומסט נאָך ניט צוריק;
וואָס טויג דאָס לעבען מיר אָהן דיר
אָהן ליעבע און אָהן גליק!...

Part One

Traditions—Now

עס בליהט זיך דאָס בלימעל
אין פֿריהלינג, און גרינט זיך, ——
און לעכצעט נאָך טהוי צום דערקוויקען:
ווען איך וואָלט געוואוּסט וואו:
מײַן ליעבער געפֿינט זיך,
וואָלט איך איהם אַ בריוועלע שיקען,
וואָלט איך איהם אַ בריוועלע שיקען!..

REMEMBERING THE PAST, LIVING THE PRESENT, PLANNING THE FUTURE

Alice Shalvi

This remarkable gathering of European Jewish women is taking place at a highly significant point in the Jewish calendar. The fact that the opening day of our conference coincides with Rosh Hodesh Elul has a double significance. Firstly, because Rosh Hodesh, the beginning of a new month, was traditionally designated as a monthly minor festival for women, a day when they were exempted from housework and the other regular tasks assigned to women, a day that for centuries was marked by women's acts of charity, one of which for many centuries was to go to the cemeteries to renew the faded lettering on the tombstones of earlier generations—a kind of rebirth for the dead, keeping their memory alive.

The reason why women marked and still mark this day is clearly related to the fact that we, like the moon which is reborn at the beginning of each Jewish month, have a natural monthly cycle related to our womanhood and our ability to give birth. We too are each month renewed. Even our childbearing involves nine *months* of gestation. But in Judaism another reason is given: this minor festival was granted to women because they refused to give up their jewellery to build the Golden Calf, thus demonstrating their unshaken fidelity to the new concept of one invisible deity.

No less significant is the fact that the coming month, Elul, the month that precedes Rosh Hashana, the Jewish new year, is a time for soul-searching, for summing up our actions in the past year and spiritually preparing for the year to come.

So I hope that this conference will prove both a time for celebration and a time for reflection on what we have achieved and what remains to be done, as women, individuals, as Jews, as members of our communities and, no less, members of the family of humankind.

Let me therefore begin by congratulating our Hungarian hosts for the way in which they are carrying on the Jewish feminist tradition that began in Berlin in 1999 and the stimulating programs they have prepared. And I also want to thank Lara Daemmig and Elisa Klapheck for having planted such firm roots for that tradition, so that others are now able to ensure its survival. I should also like to thank the organizers, the members of Esther's Bag, for having invited me to deliver this opening speech, perhaps because I am among the oldest participants in terms of age, or perhaps because, as Andrea Pető assured me, I am a kind of living embodiment of the overall theme of continuity. Whatever the reason, I feel privileged to be here at this historic moment, in a European city whose Jewish population was virtually eliminated sixty years ago, but which is now the home of Central and Eastern Europe's largest Jewish community. Here, indeed, we have a living symbol of both resurrection and continuity. Here we may be seen as repairing the faded letters on the tombstones. Here we can surely utter the slogan "עם ישראל חי", the people of Israel lives on.

Indeed, remembering the past is a vital factor in continuity and there are several aspects of the past which are of particular significance. Not only the centuries of exclusion, ghettoisation and persecution that culminated in the horrendous "Final Solution" which entailed the murder of six million Jews and wiped out entire communities, some of which had existed for almost a millennium, and some of which—Vilna and Warsaw, for example—were traditional centres of great Jewish learning and rich Jewish culture. For all that was destroyed and irretrievably lost, we must continue to mourn. But, equally, we need to remember the other side of the coin: the indestructible fruits of that learning and culture, the heroism of those who resisted and also of those who went bravely to their death, singing "אני מאמין", I believe ... Both should be an inspiration to all of us, especially the women, the unsung heroines such as the קשריות *(couriers)*, young women who travelled from ghetto to ghetto, smuggling arms, alerting the inmates to what was happening elsewhere, urging them to resist. And those women who, despite all odds, gained an education not only in secular subjects, but in Hebrew language and Jewish culture—women like Sarah Schenirer, who founded the Bais Yaakov schools for girls.

Jews in general, even while they were confined by the restrictions of the ghetto, the Pale of Settlement, the *numerus clausus,* contributed enormously to the general culture of their host countries—in sciences, the arts, politics, social change and the economy. Bertha Pappenheim, an early feminist and crusader against trafficking in women, and Alice Salomon, the first social worker educator. Adele Bloch-Bauer, a patron who inspired and supported some of the greatest artists of the twentieth century. The revolutionary Rosa Luxembourg and, in Italy, Anna Kulioscioff. And many, many others, too many of whom have been unjustly forgotten.

All this—and much more—on what one might call the worldly, material level. But what of the spiritual level? The concept of monotheism, the practice of Shabbat, one day each week of rest from labour, from income-earning, from everyday cares. Can we conceive of modern civilization without all this? Throughout the centuries, Jewish women remained faithful to Jewish values of social justice, even if they were not halakhically observant. The perception of humankind as created in the image of God has ensured that those mitzvot which apply to relations between human beings continue to guide our everyday behaviour. They are the standard to which we must hold ourselves, even today.

Living the present

Not only is it incumbent upon all of us to ensure that this overriding precept of כבוד האדם, respect for all humans, continue to characterize the Jewish people, its life and its culture: we also need to ensure the continuation of that culture itself, even if today it finds secular-humanist, rather than primarily religious, expression. What has come to be known as "The Jewish Bookcase" ranges from the Bible, the Talmud and other rabbinic literature, midrash and aggadah, to the writers of more recent times—Bialik, Leah Goldberg, Paul Célan, Yehuda Amihai, Dalia Ravikovich, Yona Wollach, Amos Oz—many of them inspired by and/or responding to classical Jewish sources. The Hebrew language, once the *lingua franca* of Jews everywhere, should continue to be one of the links that bind us, throughout the Diaspora and between Diaspora and Israel. It should be at the heart of Jewish education *everywhere*, part of the heritage that we impart to our children, whether through day-schools, Saturday or Sunday schools, or summer camps. And it should also be a part of the cultural Jew's areas of proficiency.

Reference to the link between Israel and the Diaspora brings one, of course, to the sensitive issue of the Diaspora-Israel relationship and Zionism in general. There are now two major centres of Jewish life and learning—on the one hand, the Diaspora (itself divisible into North America and Europe, with Australia also playing an important role) and Israel. But the epicentre of the Jewish people is in Zion and, in my opinion, should remain so. Whatever criticism you in the Diaspora may have of Israel, its government, its policies, whether you approve or disapprove, this land is *your* land, too. What is required of all Jews, irrespective of political opinions or religious outlook, is unconditional support for the concept and reality of a Jewish state, within viable borders, living at peace with—and respecting—its neighbours. Though I would love to see more Jews actually living in Israel, contributing to its culture, its economy, its social policy, I know that this is not about to happen. Instead, we must ensure that the two centres of Jewish life must, like Jerusalem and Babylon, equally engage in and contribute to the continuity of Jewish learning, tradition and culture.

In this entire giant project of ensuring continuity, women have a vital role to play and we must strive for their maximal involvement, as planners, decision-makers, teachers, community leaders *and rabbis*, spiritual leaders. We must also continue to play our traditional role within the family, as spouses, mothers, sisters, daughters, but at the same time, in all these spheres our goal must be to ensure equal opportunity, equal status, equal rights. We must do away with the outmoded patriarchy that has dominated throughout the ages. Marriage and divorce, child-custody, even the traditional concepts of the family itself, need to be rethought and reformed to give greater scope for individual freedom of choice and for pluralism. All of these issues cannot, must not, be left in the hands only of men.

Preparing the future

From everything I have said so far, it should be clear that I perceive the primary duty of our, your own and future generations to be that of ensuring Jewish continuity and preventing assimilation that could lead to the disappearance of the Jewish people, as surely as the Holocaust might have done. I do not want the Jew-less Jewish culture of Klezmer music or the Krakow Jewish arts festival. I want an authentic, real Jewish culture, created by Jews and for Jews, based on a common heritage.

But we must not be a "people that lives alone". We need to be involved, to have national, regional and global connections. Bet Deborah is one example of such a connection and it must continue, dealing primarily with *European* Jewish issues. There is a great need for the resurrection of a vital, thriving pan-European Jewish community and in creating that women must play a major role. The International Council of Jewish Women is another example, as are—or should be—the World Jewish Congress and the World Zionist Organization, in both of which there are too few women. But we must also be involved with, and active participants in, international frameworks and organizations—UNESCO, the European and UN Commissions on Women, CEDAW (Convention for the Elimination of Discrimination Against Women), Human Rights Watch, Amnesty International. We have to ensure representation of and by Jews, especially Jewish women—women dedicated to feminist principles of social justice—themselves derived from Judaism. Here the watchword is EMPOWERMENT. We need to train ourselves and others in leadership skills, to serve as mentors, to nominate women for every position that opens up, to vote for women and support them. It is especially in developing and sustaining dialogue between diverse and even hostile groups, cultures and peoples that women excel. Given the spread of Islam in Europe and elsewhere, it seems to me essential that we be extremely sensitive to the status of Muslim women within their own community. They suffer from the same patriarchal culture as Jewish women. They too are subject to misogynist views of what constitutes correct behaviour, correct dress and what is woman's limited role in society. In their case, the rules and the sanctions imposed on their infringement are more extreme. Thankfully, Judaism no longer practices death by stoning of women believed to have committed adultery or engaged in extramarital sex. But the *underlying* subjection of women within our respective religions is very similar and this is one issue on which feminist alliances can be created—alliances that might ultimately impact even on the international tensions between Islam and Judeo-Christian cultures.

Certainly, I have found surprising bonds between Jewish and Muslim women at international conferences dealing with the status of women. Unfortunately, despite the UN Resolution 1325, women are still not part of mainstream peace negotiations. In this area, too, education, knowledge and social awareness are critical if women are to attain their rightful place. We need to be as courageous and persistent as the daughters of Zelophad, who claimed equal inheritance rights for daughters when Moses apportioned the Promised Land.

We women must see ourselves as the standard bearers in the fight against all forms of injustice, racism, homophobia, the domination of patriarchy and of wealth. But we must also retain what is particular to ourselves—as women, as Jews, as citizens, even as we strive to be an integral part of human society worldwide. For sisterhood is global, but so is humanity. We need to be inclusive and not inflict on others that same exclusion and discrimination to which we have ourselves so long been subjected.

Let me close by reciting a well-known passage from the Ethics of the Fathers:

אם אין אני לי, מי לי?
וכשאני לעצמי, מה אני?
ואם לא עכשיו, אימתי?

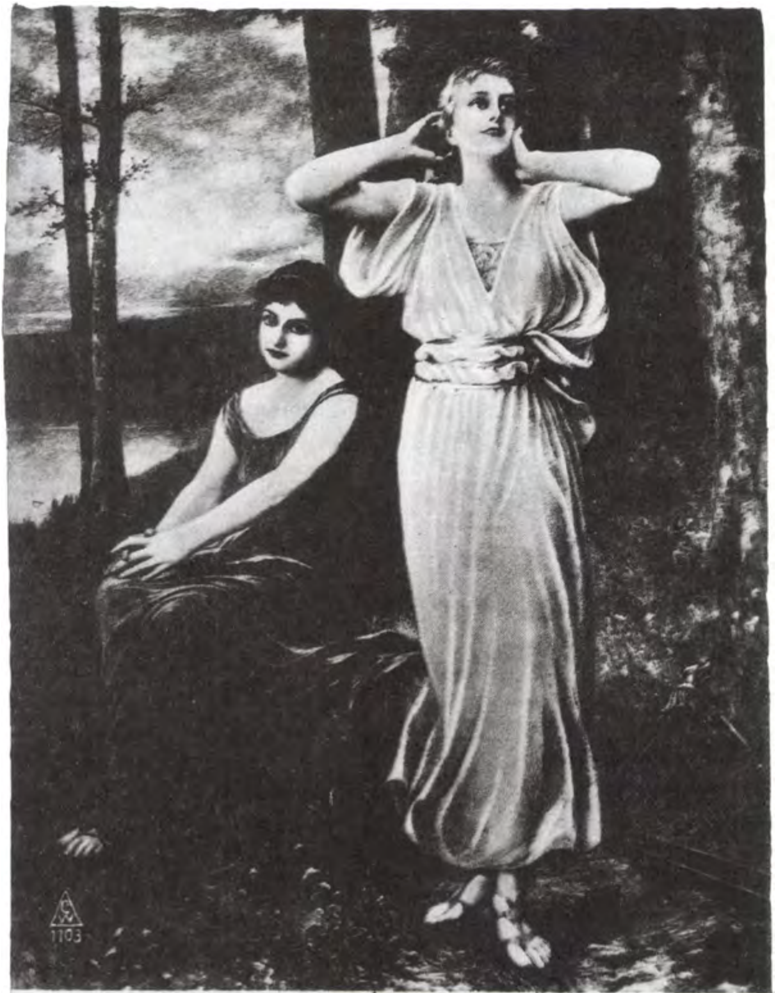
If I am only for myself, who will be for me? This phrase posits the need for self-development and self-protection.

But if I am (only) for myself, *what* am I? (Note the objectification of the individual, who becomes a "thing" rather than a human creature.) If we concentrate only on the "I", the personal, we are, in a way, dehumanized.

And if not now, when?

Let us not put off the task of creating a better world—for women, for Jews, for all the peoples of the world, for humankind. Much remains to be done and though it may not be for us to complete the task, neither are we exempt from engaging in it.

So—חזקו ואמצו—be strong and of good courage—and when we next meet at Bet Deborah or elsewhere, may it be in an era of peace, goodwill, justice and equality.



ווידער=קלאַנג.

פון ערגיין רערטראָגט זיך
אַ ווײַטעס געזאַנג,
און ס׳פאַלט אויף צוויי הערצער
פערשיעדען זײַן קלאַנג. — — —

VOLUNTARY WORK AND JEWISH RENEWAL: OBSERVATIONS ON THE SITUATION IN GERMANY

Lara Dämmig

The success of the fourth Bet Debora Conference that took place in Budapest, August 2006, is mainly thanks to the great voluntary efforts of the members of Esther's Bag. They provided a forum for Jewish women from all over Europe, using the motto "Diversities", to discuss women's contributions in shaping newly emerging forms of Jewish life.

Despite their position operating outside of the Jewish establishment, they managed to bring together women who work both within the official Jewish communities, as well as those who work outside of these structures. It is now clearly apparent that since this first conference, a fruitful European network of women has formed. In the future, Jewish feminists will hopefully regularly meet in different European countries, to exchange ideas and to support one another.

Not only am I convinced that the women involved in Esther's Bag received great recognition for their work by official community representatives, but further that their successful work has also stimulated positive impulses for Jewish life in Hungary.

Breaking away from the Past

Esther's Bag carried on a tradition that began in Berlin. Similarly to the Budapest women, a group of Jewish women formed an initiative called Bet Debora or The House of Debora in 1998. One year later they invited people to come to the first Conference of European Women Rabbis, Cantors, Rabbinically Educated and Interested Jewish Women and Men.

At that time, the main focus was on the self-image of active women in the Jewish community. In 2001 a second conference took place on the topic of "The Jewish Family—Myths and Reality" that examined the concept of the ideal woman in the context of the Jewish family and Jewish women's concrete life style approaches.

The third conference in 2003 was devoted to the subject "Power and Responsibility from Jewish Women's Perspectives". The discussions revolved around the question of Jewish women's involvement in synagogues, communities and institutions and the degree of influence they have upon them.

Further the participants also exchanged ideas about new fields in politics, women's approaches to politics, solidarity, and competition among women. Charlotte Knobloch, the then vice president of the Central Council of Jews in Germany, opened the conference and stressed that in the context of newly emerging forms of Jewish life, initiatives such as Bet Debora, although they may at first glance appear marginal, are an important vehicle in stimulating new developments.

Indeed Bet Debora does stand for a broadly encompassing renewal of Judaism that took off in Germany, as well as in numerous European countries in the 1990's. Germany's reunification in 1990 triggered fears among Jews in Germany of growing nationalism and anti-Semitism. Thus the fall of the Berlin Wall was also a major turning point in Jewish life. Jewish communities radically changed via the immigration of tens of thousands of Jews from countries from the former Soviet Union. Since 1989, 190,000 people, a so-called "quota of Jewish refugees" came to Germany. 80,000 of them joined Jewish communities.[1] Germany's Jewish community today with its roughly 105,000 members is the third largest community in Europe after France and Great Britain. Yet it was not only immigration that changed the face of the Jewish communities. A process of pluralism began in the communities after the opening of the Berlin Wall. Jewish life had stagnated for decades in both East and West Germany. The communities in the West were predominantly established by Jews that had ended up in Germany via DP (Displaced Person) camps. The survivors sat on proverbially packed suitcases, and did not actually foresee remaining permanently in Germany, even if they had long since formed families and created successful careers. The majority of them were originally from Eastern Europe and were raised in traditional Orthodox households. Most of them clung to these traditions, no matter how observant they actually were. They perceived any impulses for renewal as a threat and rejected them. The tradition of German liberal Judaism basically ceased to be fostered. The GDR communities predominantly consisted of returning immigrants. In these shrinking communities with few members, who were more or less cut off from the Jewish world, they nevertheless went to great lengths to maintain a minimum of Jewishness.

In the 1990's many Jews finally unpacked their bags and accepted that even in the "Land of the Perpetrators", Jewish life had a future and they wanted to be involved in its shaping. Liberal and conservative groups and egalitarian minyans were established in many German cities—some as private initiatives, others as official communities. They were critical of the prevailing spiritual-religious standstill of Judaism and sought a contemporary renewal. They mainly looked to role models from the USA, yet also latched on to the perceived lost traditions of German liberal Judaism. The equal participation of women and men in ritual life played an important role. This new movement was mainly initiated by women. It was a means of critically examining the Jewish tradition and seeking new ways of creating gender equality in Judaism.

"New" Forms of Volunteer Work

This development, which signifies a major change in women's roles in the communities, also stands for new forms of voluntary involvement by women. In the decades following the Shoah, women were predominantly active in voluntary social services. One example is in 1953, when the Jewish Women's Union was re-established as an umbrella organization for Jewish women's associations. The main focus of their members' work was providing aid to Holocaust survivors.[2] "We had to draw to us those who were coming out of the concentration camps, because all of them were in a state of despair. They were broken. That's why we set up a women's group, to give these people something to hold onto and a bit of warmth", recalls Ruth Galinsky, a long-standing member of the board of the Jewish Women's

Union, in a panel discussion held during the second Bet Debora conference.[3]

In later years, numerous Jewish women were especially active in WIZO and gathered at bazaars and charitable fundraising events for Israel. Women who identified as Jewish feminists mainly raised their voices and were active outside of the official community, as for example the Berlin Shabbes-Circle, founded in 1984 that mainly focused on and examined anti-Semitic tendencies within the German women's movement. Women who have in recent years become involved in the struggle for gender equality in the communities, especially within religious life, embarked upon new territory. They mainly operated outside of Jewish structures, in self-organized initiatives and groups that dealt with these issues with self-determination. This stemmed out of a central desire to create a progressive, egalitarian Judaism that provided the same space for both women and men for self-actualization. This development shows that women who engage in voluntary work in the Jewish community are no longer solely limited to the classic fields of social services and education.

They were no longer content to be selfless volunteers for others, rather now they wanted to reap rewards from their work for themselves. These are of course, tendencies, which can be observed in society as a whole. If the "bygone" concept of honorary posts was located mainly in associations, churches and other facilities, now volunteers began to lean more towards self-organized groups and projects.

Even if serving the common good of the community remains central to this redefinition of volunteer work, one's own concerns and needs often provide the drive for voluntary activities. It is no longer perceived as a one-way street of pure giving, rather as a "give and take". It is no longer seen as a form of self-sacrifice, rather as an enriching experience for the volunteer.[4] Certainly one contributing factor to this development in volunteer work is the changing roles of women in society. The women's movement especially developed and carried out a brand new self-conception of voluntary work. Simultaneously, voluntary work also fostered equal rights for women, because it opened up doors for them to new spheres of activity.

It is clearly apparent from developments since the 1990's that voluntary work outside of the official communities made a significant contribution to the process of pluralism in Jewish life in Germany, as well as to gender equality in the Jewish communities.

Today the Union of Progressive Judaism (formed in 1997) constitutes twenty liberal communities.[5] Egalitarian synagogues exist in both Frankfurt on the Main[6] and Berlin[7] under the umbrella organization of the *Einheitsgemeinde* (Unity Community). Women rabbis have been active in the Oldenburg and Weiden communities for numerous years.

Women are increasingly becoming involved in organizing themselves according to their own interests. One instance of this is the Jewish Women's Network that was founded in 2002. Their mandate is to provide "a forum where Jewish women regardless of their age, level of religious observance or specific 'brand' of Judaism, political conviction, country of origin, profession or honorary post, can gather to discuss professional or private concerns, to support and foster one another in their endeavours and to collectively discuss their Jewish identity".[8]

Even the Central Council of Jews in Germany has come to recognize the signs of the times and now promotes pluralism. "The spectrum of religious denominations within the communities is wide-ranging, spanning the gamut from ultra-orthodox to reform and conservative to liberal communities." The Central Council of Jews in Germany clearly describes itself on its website as "consolidating the religious interests of all Jews in Germany".[9] A mere decade ago, Ignatz Bubis, the former chairman of the Central Council rejected demands for pluralism and renewal with vehemence.[10] A scathing article about the first Bet Debora conference in 1999 appeared in the Jewish weekly newspaper *Jüdische Allgemeine*, a paper funded by the Central Council. Since then liberal communities have become accepted by the Central Council. The third Bet Debora conference was supported by the Central Council and was opened with a speech by Charlotte Knobloch, the former vice president of the Central Council.

In the meantime, in June 2006, she was elected president of the Central Council of Jews in Germany. She is the first woman to hold this office. Back in 1985, when asked if she would like to take on the chairmanship of the Munich Jewish Community, she first consulted the rabbi and asked his attitude towards her candidacy. Over twenty years later, it was not even an issue for her. "Back then I was the first woman to become a chairperson of an Orthodox community—with the result, that today numerous women have assumed this same position."[11]

Community Offices

Even if today there are examples of women in key positions in the communities and representative bodies, nevertheless they remain in the minority. In most cases, they are the heads of smaller communities, because they took on the responsibility in times when communities were overrun by immigrants, when it came down to safeguarding communities from the feared danger of them lapsing into dispersal and unstructured chaos. At the third Bet Debora conference in 2003, Gabriele Brenner (head of the Weiden community) concluded that: "Women would have never otherwise been given power in these circumstances, if most of the community board of directors at that time had not been so overwhelmed and quickly approaching retirement."[12]

Women's contribution in reshaping Jewish life in Germany is however not in the slightest reflected in any of the official community representative bodies, Jewish organizations or institutions. Men still predominantly fill the traditional "old" voluntary posts. To name a few examples: within the presidium of the Central Council of Jews in Germany, which consists of nine members, apart from Knobloch, there is only one other female member. Women lead only five out of the twenty-three regional associations of Jewish communities affiliated with the Council. In Berlin's Jewish community there is not a single woman on the board of directors. Further, only very few women are involved in the committees where community politics are developed. Basically, it is the same situation in most other communities as well.

This situation corresponds to the findings of a recent study conducted by the Federal Ministry for Family, Senior Citizens, Women & Youth on the topic of honorary posts during the years 1999–2004.[13] It is barely surprising to discover that according to this study, women and men continue to be active in very different fields of volunteer work. Men are mainly interested in sports, politics, professional organizations or the volunteer fire department. Women are mainly found in social services, health departments, education, and religious establishments. One further difference: men are more involved in organizations where they can potentially achieve a position of status. Women seldom hold key or leadership positions; they also tend to be less represented than men in electoral offices. Men "organize, represent, and lead", women "help, care for, and consult".[14] This is also the case in Jewish communities. It is predominantly men who run offices, as these positions carry with them recognition, power, and status.

Perspectives

The further development of pluralism and equality in Judaism is not possible without the equal participation of women in the communities. In 2003, at the third Bet Debora conference, Gabriele Brenner, head of the Jewish community of Weiden, appealed for us to recall the female part of Jewish history, posturing ourselves as "the Jewish women such as the founding fore-mothers, who had always taken on responsibility, possessing and practicing the power of judges, in affirming and maintaining this, we can preserve female power for everyone".[15]

In order to take on more responsibility and power, women must have more opportunities to gain access to taking on positions in established structures—such as on community boards, regional associations, or in the Central Council. For this to occur, it is necessary for it to come from "above" too, from the leaders of communities, the Central Council, etc. to formulate and carry out the goal of equal participation of women and men.

Here, it may be worthwhile taking into consideration the adaptation of strategies that have been implemented in other societal contexts, such as gender mainstreaming. One needs to consider—along with initiatives like Bet Debora—how structures could be made accessible, enabling and creating more options for participation. This should also include offering adult continuing education and training programs.

To accomplish this, many decision-making bodies must be reformed. Already in 1930, Bertha Falkenberg, one of the first women in Berlin's Jewish community representative assembly, bemoaned that the committees served the political advancement of the individual, rather than attending to the community's problems. This stood in direct opposition to what women conceived of as community work.[16] Anyone reading the proceedings of the contemporary Berlin representative assembly sessions will quickly ascertain that the situation today unfortunately does not seem to have changed much.

At the same time, projects and initiatives that work outside of the mainstream need to receive more attention and support—as they are important catalysts in the reshaping of Jewish life. The fourth Bet Debora Conference demonstrated the manifold ways women all over Europe are involved in renewing Jewish life. These conferences are an important platform for exchange. Thus, I hope that we can meet regularly in the future in different European cities, to learn from each other and to be mutually involved in the further development of gender equality in European Judaism.

Translated by November Wanderin

NOTES

1. http://www.zentralratdjuden.de/de/topic/62.html.
2. The Jewish Women's Union was founded in 1904 by Bertha Pappenheim (1859–1936). It was forcibly disbanded by the Nazis in 1938. See also Marion A. Kaplan, *The Jewish Feminist Movement in Germany* (Westport, 1979).
3. Dagmar Schwermer, "'No trace of a salon'. The Jewish Women's Union after 1945", *Bet Debora Journal* 2 (2001): 22.
4. See Ursula Nothelle-Wildfeuer, "Women in the 'New' Concept of Volunteer Work", in Irmgard Pahl and Andrea K. Kaus eds., *The Social Roles of Women in Religious Communities* (Bochum, 2001), 39–50.
5. See www.liberale-juden.de
6. See http://www.minjan-ffm.de/.
7. http://www.or-synagoge.de/.
8. http://www.netzwerk-juedischer-frauen.de/frames_ueberuns.htm
9. http://www.zentralratdjuden.de/de/topic/5.html.
10. See Heinz-Peter Katlewski, *Judentum im Aufbruch* (Berlin, 2002), 195–107.
11. *Tagesspiegel*, June 12, 2006, see www.tagesspiegel.de.
12. Gabriele Brenner, "In Krabbenkorb. Über das gespaltene Verhältnis von Frauen zur Macht", see www.bet-debora.de.

13. *Freiwilliges Engagement in Deutschland 1999–2004. Ergebnisse einer repräsentativen Trenderhebung zu Ehrenamt, Freiwilligenarbeit und bürgerschaftlichem Engagement* (Munich, 2005).
14. Ibid., 262.
15. Brenner, "In Krabbenkorb".
16. Larissa Dämmig, "Bertha Falkenberg", in *Leben mit der Erinnerung. Jüdische Gesichte in Prenzlauer Berg* (Berlin, 1997), 26.

דיַ אָבֿגענאַרטע ליעבֿע.

די ליעבֿע פערשפראָכען האָט גליק
און האָט עס פערביטען מיט פּײַן ,
דעריבער איז טרויריג איהר בליק ;
און זי קאָן שוין מעהר פרעהליך ניט זיין .

ESTHER AND HER BAG[1]

Andrea Pető

Between the collapse of "state-ist feminism" (1989) and Hungary's accession to the European Union (2004), several important works were published by both Hungarian and foreign authors on the reasons for the absence of a women's movement in Eastern Europe.[2]

After the political changes of 1989, a democratic expectation and a general hope was that the women's movement and the scholarly discourse would undergo dramatic changes, and that such changes would permit the importance and value of gender equality to become manifest in the public arena. As a participant in the academic feminist discourse, I too have encountered the various forms of institutional resistance to gender equality in society.[3] Various authors have indicated the factors that hinder—either through their absence or through their presence—the proper development of a women's movement.

In what follows, I describe and analyse the birth and activity of a special women's organisation, Esther's Bag—a Jewish feminist association. My aim is to show how it was that for some years this women's organisation edited and published the only feminist articles in a special section of the male-dominated, often ribald Hungarian press. At the same time, Esther's Bag also ran a feminist film club (at a time when many smaller cinemas had to close because they could not compete with the new multiplex cinemas showing the big Hollywood films) and it organised a reading series called "Untold Stories", which introduced works that stand in opposition to the Hungarian mainstream's perception of history and the Holocaust: in this way, we made space for constructions of gendered memory in society.

Background

Within the space of a few months in 1944, Hungary—where the largest Jewish community in Eastern Europe now lives[4]—deported 500,000 of its citizens of Jewish descent to the concentrations camps.

Most of the assimilated and non-religious intellectual Jews live in Budapest. Under communism, the only possible life-strategy was to conceal one's Jewish identity. Thus, in private conversations between young people or adults, one question has often been raised: "How did you find out you are Jewish?" Indeed, many stories have been told about how and when people realised they were Jewish.[5]

Political scientists have characterised the post-1989 period as a time when the red carpet was pulled out from under society, revealing everything that had been swept under the carpet. The situation is not so simple, as far as women's politics is concerned. After 1945, not only was Hungarian society restructured, but also—thanks to full female employment and free abortion rights—the right of women to self-determination developed differently from how it did on the other side of the Iron Curtain. This is still true, even though—to the sorrow of many women—such self-determination never manifested itself in the public arena as "feminist consciousness". Following the collapse of "state-ist feminism" and the conservative shift in women's policy after 1989, there was a drastic decrease in the number of employed women—a factor that had previously served to achieve "full" emancipation. The old patriarchal model of private life became the political norm in public life. The situation was made even more serious by the simultaneous collapse of social services and provisions for children (nurseries, kindergartens, and day-care centres), owing in large part to the triumph of neo-liberalism.

The historical churches—as victims of the communist regime—came out from under the red carpet as beneficiaries, but even today the churches are reluctant to face up to their collaboration with the communist apparatus and secret services or the spiritual consequences of such collaboration. Because they were victims, they seem to feel they are exempted from efforts being made in other parts of the world to redefine spirituality and reaffirm its social relevance for civilisation. On the contrary, ever since 1989, the churches have vociferously supported traditional female roles—motherhood as a norm, the biological difference of women, and they have related femininity to the concept of female dignity. In such matters, there is little difference between the Catholic and Protestant churches and the Jewish religious communities in Hungary. Older men remind younger women of their duties, forming a strong coalition against efforts to modernise—irrespective of whether such efforts are inspired by Catholic feminism, feminist Protestant theology or the female rabbi of a reform congregation.

At the same time as in other countries where "state-ist feminism" had once prevailed, the 1990s in Hungary saw both a drastic reduction in female political representation and a failure on the part of the women's movement to make the anticipated impact. The various women's associations and NGOs, whose activity required great personal efforts, were unable to influence the mainstream or break out of a process that Sabine Lang has described as the "NGO-isation of feminism"—in which the NGOs representing "women's interests" operate with minimal prestige and budgetary resources in a system founded on individual self-sacrifice and self-exploitation.[6]

It was in this rather odd social space that the Esther's Bag Workshop *[EszterTáska Műhely]* was established as a foundation and an association of public utility.

Esther and her bag

In 1999, Katalin Pécsi—who was at the time a teacher of Hungarian literature at the Táncsics Grammar School in Buda and who had already successfully put together a Jewish literary anthology available in a limited number of copies at select bookshops—edited a special edition of *Szombat* [Saturday]. The magazine, which was read mainly by a new generation of Jewish male intellectuals in Budapest and was extremely critical of various aspects of the Jewish religious community, was published monthly and contained articles of medium length. The three male editors were of all of the same generation, while the editorial board members were all older men.

In Hungary, from the mid-1990s onwards, almost all magazines and periodicals of note produced special "women's" issues, thereby addressing, in their view, the need to cover the "issue of the day". What happened at *Szombat* was different, however. Owing in large part to the enthusiastic efforts of the editor Katalin Pécsi, the special issue led to further conversations "with women". The conversations were continued over cups of coffee at the Café Central—reflecting the café traditions of previous generations of feminists. It was there that the Esther's Bag Workshop was formed. The founding members were: Mónika Sándor (psychologist), whom I had met at the women's club run by Chabad Lubavitch, the Hasidic Orthodox community; Borbála Juhász (historian), who had been a student of mine at the Central European University; Judit Wirth, who had wide-ranging experience and was the president of NaNe, an organisation combating violence against women; Zsuzsa Toronyi, who was a museologist and archivist at the Jewish Museum; Andrea Kuti, who was training to be a rabbi; and myself, a teacher and researcher of social/gender history at the Central European University (from 1991).

Esther's Bag functioned because its founding members were at a special point in their lives. We all felt relatively free but also rather dissatisfied with our previous work. Whether we were between jobs, recovering from a divorce, in the midst of a romance, or about to give birth—all of us suddenly wanted to do work that inspired us. It was an exceptional moment. We already had professional experience; we knew what we did not want to do and also what we were really interested in. Each of us brought with her a network of contacts at Hungarian and international NGOs. We could also mobilise contacts in our respective professional fields. Internationally, it was at the Bet Debora conferences in Berlin that we found the milieu that reflected our intellectual and spiritual yearning. The Esther's Bag Workshop organised events that we thought would contribute to a reinterpretation of Jewish tradition from a woman's perspective.

Activities

Our existing contacts were crucial to the success of our activities. At the Hungarian Jewish Museum and Archives, Zsuzsa Toronyi was curator of a long-planned exhibition about Jewish women. *Untold Sto-*

ries exploded onto the public scene with the first evening held at the Jewish Museum. An exhibition catalogue was produced and edited by Zsuzsanna Toronyi.[7] The papers were translated into English and made available on CD. The first evening was followed by seven further events, at which women of various ages read out their stories.

The *Untold Stories* were written for this occasion. Many women were accompanied by their families who, sitting in the front row and struggling to hold back their tears, looked on as the women read out, for the first time publicly, their experiences of persecution and their stories of discrimination. When one of the women took from her bag the dress which, in the winter of 1944, the other girls in the labour camp had secretly made for her to wear on her eighteenth birthday, we felt that our efforts had not been in vain. Our audience was always mixed, and that was the attraction of the evenings. Older and younger women and men, mothers with their daughters and sons, Jews and non-Jews—perhaps sixty or so, sometimes a hundred of us. One of our friends had a bakery; she brought savoury scones, which we ate with wine, as we talked about our shared past. The evenings provided the missing link in the chain for the Hungarian women's movement; their effect was the same as when the awareness-raising groups in North America faced up to slavery. The groups there rejected discrimination from a Protestant theological standpoint. Here, our hope for reinterpreting progressive politics by forming groups and raising consciousness was based on *tikkun olam*, the command to repair the world. All of this took place among a generation whose members should have experienced the 1968 movement but did not do so because of the repressive effects of "state-ist feminism". Of course, as Emma Goldman so rightly pointed out, women do not like to take part in a revolution if they cannot dance. So we too spent much time together in a relaxed atmosphere. Papers, plans, edited stories, and internet articles were conceived while we nibbled at biscuits. We shared our sorrows and our joys. Sometimes the meetings were connected with festivals—above all with *Rosh Chodesh*, the first day of every month in the Hebrew calendar, marked by the appearance of the new moon and considered to be a "women's holiday". Although none of us had kept the holidays previously, it was an interesting experiment with a tradition that was unknown to us. Esther's Bag was a learning process for us all, in the course of which we tried to determine the meaning of tradition for ourselves. We also held two Hanukkah parties, celebrating the Festival of Re-dedication by lighting candles—one in a café, and one in the apartment of Lujzi Vasvári, organiser of the Pest–New York Salon and an honorary member of Esther's Bag. The grandmothers' generation knew the songs; we listened to them and were delighted to see how relaxed they looked as they sang.[8]

Thanks to her good relationship with the management of the Hungarian Jewish Museum and Archives, Zsuzsa Toronyi arranged for us to hold at the museum the first evening of *Untold Stories*, a conference on Jewish women's literature, and a presentation of a magazine published by a historical research institute of Jews in Austria. We did not have to pay rent for the venue, and this was also true of the feminist film club. Vera Surányi, who worked for the Hungarian Film Institute, later joined us in our work. Her feminist film club showed films on Sunday afternoons at an alternative cinema called *Cirkogejzír*. To cover costs, we sold tickets for 500 forints. This way, we were able to see many special films that we otherwise would not have seen. Each film was followed by a debate. At the time this was the only feminist film club in Hungary.

As soon as the feminist pages began to appear in the magazine *Szombat*, there was a dramatic increase in the number of copies sold. Esther's Bag's co-operation with *Szombat* produced the only feminist press product in Hungary. Indeed, many readers of the magazine were "only" interested in feminism.

The articles we published in *Szombat* concerned festivals and newly published books. Since most of us had a humanities background, we wrote reviews of books by female authors and reports on women's topics. Several articles were written when Elfriede Jelinek received the Nobel prize; we also held a conference on that occasion. Since I often travelled to places such as Mexico, Moldova and Armenia, I wrote reports for the supplement on the lives of Jewish women and their memories of the Holocaust. We also interviewed Kinga Fabó, a person who will be the subject of doctoral theses in years to come (unlike the female star-poets currently favoured by men working in the media, most of whom will pass into obscurity). We chose, as the subjects of our interviews, women who fight against social forgetting. We were their "sisters in arms", and for a time we felt at home at *Szom-*

bat. (The founders of Esther's Bag and three of the editors of *Szombat* had a shared past: in the 1980s, all of us had attended the so-called Flying University, and on Fridays we had met up—along with other young Jewish intellectuals—at the Rabbi School in the Eighth District; at the time we had suspected, and now we know, that we were under the surveillance of the secret police.)

Difficulties and their consequences

The threads of friendship between us and the "honorary Esthers" became stronger. A support network developed; as it became more institutionalised, there were inevitable changes leading to a crisis of identity.

In 2002, we changed the legal status of the workshop to a more official form; it became a foundation. There were administrative consequences of this change: we had to collect a statement from each member—all of which had to be dated within a period of one month—accepting my invitation as founder to join the foundation. It quickly became apparent that although all of us wanted to do things, the administration involved was very off-putting—even though we attempted to keep it to a minimum.

Even so, after a while we began to apply for grants. The practical side of filling out application forms was never a problem—we always knew what we wanted to do—but state funding procedures dampened our spirits. Much time was lost in obtaining obscure documents and certificates (e.g. a certificate verifying that we had no customs debt). It seems never to have occurred to lawmakers that they might make special rules for small (cultural) foundations, which would diminish their administrative burdens.

Such administration was very time-consuming and a constant source of tension. We used it to model typical marital conflicts, such as who should be responsible for paying bills, who should take out the garbage, who should cook tonight, etc. But such things are just superficial aspects of equality and co-operation; emancipation should not stop there. The other memory against which we all had to fight was our shared nightmare of the communist pioneer movement. We laughed and chatted a lot about what one should or should not do at a pioneer group meeting. But this shows what the literature on social movements also underlines, namely that mobilising experience is crucial in the civil society sector. We detested the formalism of the pioneer movement. We were full of the idealism of 1989 and our childhood experiences of "the group at any cost" led us to experiment with alternative groupings—which inevitably entailed conflict.

A successful grant application did not mean immediate income but merely a pledge that if the association or foundation held an event (which it funded itself), it could then submit an invoice to the funding body by a certain deadline. The funding body then spent an inordinate amount of time verifying the invoice. After a long wait (six months if we were lucky), the money was transferred. Although the amounts were small in the wider picture, nevertheless they represented substantial sums—if we had to advance them from our own pocket for an indefinite period of time.

A characteristic feature of the new social movements in western countries is that they train the experts who are then recruited by government bodies. This is how the state apparatus acquires its base of experts and the political parties their professional grounding. In Hungary, however, this rarely happens. Those who start working in the non-government sector are hardly ever offered government posts later on. In consequence, many activists working for NGOs train for long years only to see their initiatives thwarted by the state apparatus. Esther's Bag is an exception to this rule, for it has served as a training ground for Borbála Juhász, who went on to be a head of department of equality of men and women at Hungary's first, newly formed Ministry for Equal Opportunities, and Katalin Pécsi, who became the educational manager at the newly established Holocaust Documentation Centre. But as these women moved into the mainstream, the rest of us were left wondering how much they would be able to preserve of the spirit of Esther's Bag (sadly, as it turned out, next to nothing) and whether new recruits could be found for our training ground.[9]

Our lives and routines changed: Borbála Juhász and Katalin Pécsi became important civil servants; Andrea Kuti married and moved abroad; Zsuzsa Toronyi had a child; Mónika Sándor began her PhD and started a new job, which, with two children, proved too great a burden; Judit Wirth decided to invest her energies in *NaNe* (Women's Rights Association). But in their place came Judit Gazsi and Vera Surányi. Under the new circumstances, personal contacts brought in new members. The work of Esther's Bag changed as the new members introduced their own fields of interest.

It turned out that Esther's Bag was indeed the product of a fortunate moment in history. Since Hungary's accession to the European Union, equal opportunities experts have simply been appointed, rather than selected from among the trained experts. Indeed, the most important criterion seems to have been membership of an inner circle of decision makers—rather than long-term experience in the NGO sector or a master's degree in gender studies from a foreign university. Indeed, since gender studies are unknown in Hungary, the level of professionalism is very low.[10]

An additional factor is that all social movements are utopian: they seek a more beautiful, humane and just world. And if this is not translated into tiny successes and small victories in everyday life, then one's personality quickly becomes distorted. Esther's Bag is an attempt to translate ideas into action. Every event we hold is a miracle—amid rather poor conditions. But those of us who attended the film clubs, the conferences, and the evenings of "untold stories" went home feeling that we had done something to stick together the pieces of our broken world.

We had no great illusions concerning the support we were likely to receive from other institutions: from the outset, we only planned events that we could finance ourselves. We saw how the civil society sector usually means self-exploitation and the use of one's own resources.

In Eastern Europe, 1968 never meant the street demonstrations of Paris, the new sensibility, environmental issues, or the peace and women's rights movements. Instead it meant the crushing of the Prague Spring—with Hungarian tanks among others. Consequently, recognition of women's rights as human rights is a slow and hesitant process. In order to make headway, civil society organisations often have no choice but to employ the old methods of the era of "state-ist feminism" (personal lobbying of government decision-makers, seeking alliances with political parties, obtaining key positions in umbrella organisations). Few civil society organisations will express satisfaction with a government in power until they have received the funding they desire. In consequence, the aim of any government is to reduce the potential for criticism from such organisations by means of the redistribution of funding. For our part, however, we wanted to increase our freedom potential through a critical and wry approach. This meant, however, that we could not count on support from any level of government or the Jewish nomenclature.

Between 2002 and 2005, we regularly published articles in *Szombat*. This gave structure to our activities—we had to take note of new books and submit material on time. It also set the limits on our work.

In the end, we proved too radical for *Szombat*; we wrote too few articles on Orthodoxy and Israel and too many on gender-based discrimination. There were limits to the tolerance of the male editors. Indeed, topics such as female rabbis and the crisis of Jewish masculinities made them hit the roof. The members of Esther's Bag sought to expound the different gendered experiences, while *Szombat*'s editors were interested in "Jewry" in the singular sense. We opted for pluralism, and invested great energies in making our case. The editors began to employ methods that we knew only too well from communism; they censured the material we submitted. At first, they attempted to divide our group. Then, with the name Esther's Bag still at the top of the page, they asked young, inexperienced and easily manipulated women to write articles instead of us—and without informing us. Fortunately, this technique did not work because we drew together. Later on, we decided to publish electronically. Not all of us were interested in writing. When relations with *Szombat* deteriorated beyond repair, none of us was particularly bothered that we no longer had to write. This also meant, however, no more deadlines. Without discipline we too eased up.

From the outset, our objective was that Esther's Bag should be a place where people come together: people of different interests and with different amounts of time at their disposal. As time passed, however, we realised that, in line with the neo-conservative shift, Jewish women of the younger generation were more attracted to the various religious movements such as the Pesti Shul, a modern Orthodox community established in 2001, and the Chabad. In the Reform community, the division into two parts of Sim Shalom, headed by the only female rabbi, Katalin Kelemen, was also a result of the general polarisation.

The members of Esther's Bag became events organisers: we arranged book series, held photo exhibitions, published books (including *The Diary of Éva Weinman*), and organised conferences on Jewish women's literatures or Jewish women's films. There are, of course, state-funded institutions specialising in such fields, but they do not share our special spiritual inspiration, which seeks to reinterpret Jewish tradition from a woman's perspective. Because of the neo-conservative trend, they cannot satisfy this need. On the other hand, our "uniqueness" isolated us and prevented us from mobilising a coalition.

For other women's organisations, Esther's Bag was "too Jewish"; for Jewish organisations, it was "too feminist". Hidden anti-semitism could be felt when we heard among women activists criticising the left-wing government someone say: "Well, if Esther's Bag [i.e. the Jews] hasn't [haven't] received any money, then what hope do we have?" We joined a nascent umbrella organisation called For Women's Interest (Női Érdek). An enduring hope was that we might have our own office, a place where we could meet with readers, talk and drink tea. The editorial office of *Szombat*, which consisted of two small rooms, was never suitable for this purpose. Thus, when it seemed that the Women's Centre [Nőház], which had been planned since the 1990s, would finally be established, we happily became involved. At the beginning, we thought it would be an inclusive and democratic organisation. But unrealistically high rent fees (accepted at the very outset) and the anti-democratic conduct of the management persuaded us—with nine other founder women's organisations—to dissolve the Women's Centre.

The women's policy issues spotlighted as a result of the EU membership, such as women's employment and sexual harassment in the workplace ("women's" issues as a result of anti-discrimination legislation) were of no great interest to us.[11] In line with European trends, the Hungarian women's movement is becoming more technocratic as it seeks to accommodate the language and practice of neo-liberalism. The budgetary system and the new system of EU funding are strengthening this trend. Under such circumstances, an NGO made up of volunteer activists with a critical view of Jewish traditions has very little room for manoeuvre. In years to come, our organisation will probably have to professionalise its work or accept that it cannot meet the requirements of the grants procedures. The system has been devised with the intention of norm transfer and unifying the European civil society movement. This is how a united "Europe" is to be born. The trouble is many of us do not fit in.

Moreover, in the European Union, it is only in Hungary that equal opportunities means also "women, Roma and people with disabilities". We do not find such an approach to equal opportunities anywhere else in Europe. There are three basic reasons for this link. The first is that this is a politically correct way of formulating the employment problems faced by Roma in such a way that they are required to look for the factors causing their inequalities of opportunity among themselves rather than in majority society or the institutional systems. Second, women politicians fighting for "women's rights" can neutralise to some degree efforts to push them aside if they take a joint stand with Roma, who have a stronger position in domestic political life, and with people with disabilities. The third reason is that if we speak of "women, Roma and people with disabilities" together, we inevitably switch to an alibi rhetoric, that is we do not say anything that would require us to take concrete action, because these groups cannot be united using the rhetoric of political mobilisation.

European Union membership has made the increasing professionalism of women's civil society groups inevitable. In the process, small organisations based on individual goals and individual input will gradually disappear. What will remain are the "official" women's groups with their professional forms of administration and management—which are actually modelled on the decision-making and executive structures of the state institutions. In the future, we shall have to decide whether or not we want to run such an organisation.

Summary

After a long grants application procedure, we held the fourth Bet Debora conference in Budapest from August 24–27, 2006. The conference began amid hectic circumstances. It was at this time that the Hungarian media reported how the previous Hungarian member of the UN CEDAW committee had written a letter to the heads of all the New York missions to the UN stating that it would be unfortunate if

I received a political post in the organisation because I was "a Zionist activist, founding member and head of an influential Hungarian Jewish women's organisation (Esther's Bag)". The conference was the summation of all our previous activities. Not only did we serve as hosts to almost 50 Jewish activists, scholars and female rabbis from 15 countries, but we also could thematise the topics ourselves, attempting to provide a theme to the European discourse. To mark the occasion, we organised an exhibition entitled *Jewish Women*, which presented women's life stories and photos taken at the previous Bet Debora conferences in Berlin. We published postcards and a book about *bat mitzvah*, a ceremony for girls celebrating their acceptance into the Jewish community. And, most importantly, every participant received the information material for the conference in a linen bag—Esther's bag—produced especially for the conference.

Why did we call ourselves Esther's Bag?

Esther is a key personality and heroine of Purim, a joyous Jewish holiday that commemorates the deliverance of the Persian Jews from evil Haman's plot to exterminate them. Esther's story can be read in the *Book of Esther*. The sweet triangular pastries served at Purim are called Haman's bags, named after a man. Thus, we lose the opportunity—although Esther was the heroine and by celebrating her we raise her from forgetting—to make her a "real" or "living" tradition. To do justice to all the "Esthers" who have ever lived, we named our organisation "Esther's Bag". Naming also means having power over it. We too would like to believe that we have such power from ourselves, for ourselves—and even though we find ourselves in a strange period of transitions and these opportunities are here only temporarily.

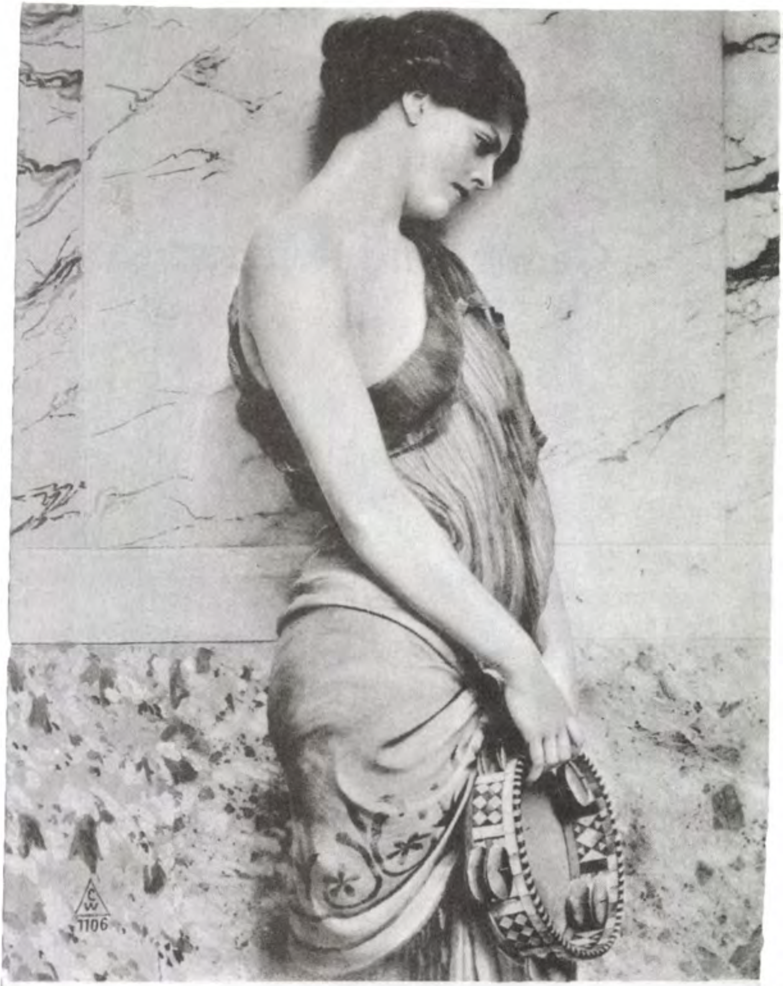
NOTES

1. An earlier version of this article was published in Magda Kósa Kovács and Andrea Pető eds., *Balance Sheet. Disadvantaged Social Groups in Hungary in 2007* (Budapest: Napvilág Kiadó, 2007), 159–176.

2. Andrea Pető, "Hungarian Women in Politics", in Joan Scott and others, eds., *Transitions, Environments, Translations: The Meanings of Feminism in Contemporary Politics* (New York: Routledge, 1997), 153–161; Andrea Pető, "The History of the Women's Movement in Hungary", in Rosi Braidotti and Gabriele Griffin, eds., *Thinking Differently. A Reader in European Women's Studies* (London: Zed Books, 2002), 361–372.
3. Ian Manners and Andrea Pető, „The European Union and the Value of Gender Equality", in Ian Manners and Sonja Lucarelli, eds., *Values and Principles in European Union Foreign Policy* (London and New York: Routledge, 2006), 97–113.
4. Zvi Gitelman, Barry Kosmin, and András Kovács, eds., *New Jewish Identities: Contemporary Europe and Beyond* (Budapest: CEU Press, 2003).
5. Ferenc Erős, András Kovács, and Katalin Lévai, "'How did I find out that I was a Jew?'", *Soviet Jewish Affairs* 17, no. 3 (1987): 55–66.
6. Sabine Lang, "The NGOization of Feminism", in C. Kaplan, S. Keates, and J. S. Wallach, *Transitions, Environments, Translations. Feminisms in International Politics* (London and New York: Routledge, 1997), 101–120.
7. Zsuzsanna Toronyi, ed., *A zsidó nő* [The Jewish woman] (Budapest: Hungarian Jewish Museum and Archives, 2002).
8. Andrea Pető, "Women in the Hungarian Jewish Communities: Tradition(s)?", in *Jewish Central Europe. Past and Present* (2003), 36–46.
9. Andrea Pető, ed., *Női esélyegyenlőség Európában. Nőtudományi tanulmányok és a munkaerőpiac kapcsolata Magyarországon* [Equal opportunities for women in Europe. The relationship between women's studies and the labour market in Hungary] (Budapest: Balassi Kiadó, 2003).
10. Ibid.
11. Andrea Pető, ed., *A társadalmi nemek oktatása Magyarországon* [Gender Studies in Hungary] (Budapest: Ministry of Youth, Family and Social Affairs and Equal Opportunities, 2006).

Part Two

Gender and Religion



די טענצערין .

איך קאָן אײַך , מענשען , אַלעם שענקען :
שפּיעל , געזאַנג און טאַנץ ;
אײנם נור בעט איך אײַך געדענקען :
לאָזט מײַן עהרע גאַנץ !

THE MEANING OF ISRAEL IN YIDDISH POETRY

Esther Jonas-Märtin

Language is memory; it reflects each particular nature and character, it is the expression of the self-portrait of a community that lives and suffers from its own story. In a language history is alive because it preserves in written and spoken words the same feelings and experiences that gained importance for the people who speak the particular language. Special code words, like "Israel", "Jerusalem", etc. have the significance of a common canon; indeed, they signify the two classic areas of collective memory: being chosen and the marking off of the Jewish people, and they stand for a common memory as well as for ideals and achievements. These are the indelibly branded ideals and results of the Yiddish language, one of the "Jewish languages",[1] which in the circulation of the cyclical embedding of events kept their voice and connected the generations with each other.

The term "Yiddish" goes back to the adjective "yiddishly" which corresponds to the mediaeval German term "Jewish"; originally they meant the same, namely; a term for the language that the Jews used. Therefore names like *Judendeutsch* or *jargon* are not correct, because Yiddish in Eastern Europe became a developed language medium[2] that was fully equipped with an own grammatical structure and specific vocabulary[3].

Originally, Yiddish literature was only meant for the uneducated population, primarily for women. They usually could not understand the Hebrew prayers. In order for this to change, it was necessary to create a connective link with which women could be reached. Such a medium ensured their appreciation of the religious regulations. Thus commandments could be developed by women. The so-called

Tkhines, the prayers for women, arose at that time. Traditionally, education in the religious documents of the Hebrew Bible and the interpretation literature,[4] which was the basis of Jewish education, was left to men. In accordance with the religious law, girls were not obliged to participate in these studies.[5] The life in a closed community bound to the rules of Halakha, the religious law, meant a fixed life that was outlined for women and men in a similar manner.[6] Men had to devote themselves to study of the biblical documents:

> Where men's education reflected the manifest efforts of the rabbinical leadership to exercise absolute controls and to hermetically seal the society from foreign influences, the education of women transpired through gaps in system of controls, in the region left abandoned by the oversight apparatus in consequence of women's inferiority.[7]

The main topics of female education were teaching the prayers, the religious duties of women and the tasks of leadership of a Jewish household—which had to do justice to the dish and purity regulations. For religious life within the family, the woman was traditionally of central importance. Through lighting and blessing the candles she gave the sign for the beginning of the Shabbat.[8] The Shabbat offered for women the opportunity to occupy themselves with reading. Several extremely popular women's prayer-books and the so-called building literature[9] were at the disposal of women, which not only included instructions, but also permitted conversation. The *Tkhines* contained prayers that stood in connection with the liturgical year, but also contained very personal prayers, for daily life.[10] One of the most popular books was the *Zene urene* the so-called "woman bible" which is supposed to have been published 1600 in Lublin[11] by Jacob Ben Isak from Janow (Galicia). The title refers back to the Song of Songs. It can be concluded from this that the title is obviously addressed to the daughters of Zion: "Come out and see!" This book was very popular; it was richly filled with stories and legends from the Hebrew Bible, the prophetic readings (Haftarot) and the scrolls (Megillot,[12]) in a sequential order woven through with "*Parabeln, Anekdoten und Legenden aus dem nachbiblischen Schrifttum*",[13] such as Talmud and Midrash.

> Für die Zeit zwischen 1600 und 1850 kann die "Zenne Urenne" mit Fug und Recht als das grundlegende Erziehungs- und Bildungsbuch der jüdischen Frau schlechthin angesehen werden.[14]

The prayer-books reflected the life cycle of women; prayers for pregnancy, birth, health and family were found in them. Women could voluntarily gain their own access to the contents and handle their religious inheritance more freely than the men without specified times or texts. The education was completely aligned with the future role of the girls as wives and mothers. Besides this, the women were frequently responsible for the living expenses[15] of the family. Therefore they had to have abilities and knowledge of business life situations in often non-Jewish surroundings. While men were instructed in reading Hebrew texts, women usually studied Yiddish, foreign languages and mathematics.[16] The reading ability of men concentrated on obligatory studies of the Torah in the congregation-public sphere, while women read the Yiddish *Zene urene* in a private environment and without any instruction. In the description of the "other" experience while reading the *Zene urene* the following emphatic statement is found in a male autobiography:

> The Tseina Ur'eina [Zene urene] really opened my eyes ... in the heder I studied only discontinuous sections of the Five Books, with no relation or connection between them. Through the Tseina Ur'eina a complete and elaborate picture from the lives of our ancestors was disclosed to me, a picture seasoned with fine and wonderful *Aggadot*, which captured my heart.[17]

Over centuries Yiddish was a language whose distinctive feature was its *Mündlichkeit*. For the development of the Yiddish language the expansion of the press since the nineteenth century[18] played an important role. The relatively late standardization of he language had to reflect facts determined by the popular medium of the press.

A first conference of Yiddish scholars and "culture builders"[19] that was concerned with the further development of the Yiddish language took place at Czernovitz in 1908. During this language congress Yiddish was declared to be one of the Jewish languages besides Hebrew.

Urbanization and an expanding proletariat changed the traditional Jewish social structure of Eastern Europe in the nineteenth century. Religious learning became a luxury. Simultaneously the need for communication, particularly in growing towns, increased. In the course of these important changes, the Yiddish language became increasingly a political issue. Different schools and movements made use of this Yiddish language for their own purposes: Hasidism, a religious movement grounded in Jewish mysticism,[20] regarded Yiddish as a genuine expression of the people and considered it to be a worthy medium for religious practice. For the Haskala, or the Jewish, Yiddish was a bad "jargon", which had to be resisted. At the end of the eighteenth century Yiddish had still been the mother tongue for nearly all Maskilim. But unlike German and Hebrew, Yiddish was not yet a fully developed written language, and thus the Maskilim saw it as a symbol of ignorance and poverty and looked down upon it as a "jargon" and as a symbol for backwardness of the East European Shtetl—basically as a language that represented everything that one did not want to be any more. The Jewish labour movement which arose in the nineteenth century, took upon itself[21] the tasks of supporting Yiddish language and culture as a part of its program. Zionism looked at Yiddish as a stigma of the despicable Diaspora culture, which in turn should be replaced[22] by modernized Hebrew.

There always remained a gap between Hasidism,[23] the spiritual movement of "simple" people and the Haskala. The Maskilim rejected Yiddish completely. However they wanted to enlighten the people—who only understood Yiddish, thus the Yiddish language was the only form of communication.[24] In this process the fabled history of the Jewish people, especially the experience of exile, was repeatedly picked out as a central theme. By appearing with a didactic content in the Yiddish language, it contributed to opening the way for modern Yiddish literature.

In poetry, the most subjective form of expression and the most direct message from an individual person, we shall start looking for traces in one area, usually ignored by scientists—Yiddish poetry. We will explore the conception of Israel as the single and general identity or identification. This approach will be completed with the historical and biographical background of the poetesses, which is partly reflected by them. I will examine the following two writers:[25] Rachel Korn and Kadye Molodovsky. In their poetry you find the motif of Israel as a connecting pattern and also as a very subjective idea. With the knowledge about the general importance of Israel for the definition of Judaism, the question for the ideal conception and poetic construction of the Place Israel becomes more and more thrilling.

Israel—even a brief glance at an encyclopaedia shows quite clearly that there is no easy definition. The complexity of the term lies in its different meanings: religious community, people, old kingdom, geographic region and a modern political state. A one-dimensional interpretation is impossible. With my choice of texts I tried to corporate as many ideas as possible nevertheless I do not claim a completeness of ideas. I can show only some of the ideas and merely a hint at the multitude of highly different variations on the topic.

Rachel Korn is one of the best-known female Yiddish poets. She was born in 1898 in a village in Eastern Galicia; she lived in Lvov until 1941. After difficult years in Russia she migrated to Canada. Until her death in 1982 she published poetic and also prose texts, which are mostly characterized by their fineness and figurativeness. "The Way to Jerusalem"[26] was published in 1968 in the journal *Di goldene Kejt*.

This poem leaves the reader with many more questions than answers. The most remarkable characteristic consists in the two parts. What do these parts talk about and why does the writer put them together as one? On the first reading it seems to be two poems that are connected under one topic or motto. This first impression becomes stronger by repeating of the first stanza at the end of the first part. Following this idea we will look at the two parts, separated from each other and analyze them as if they were two poems.

The Way to Jerusalem

Mountain up, mountain up
Sinuous, winds the way
Between old rocks and trees—
Every tree a sign-post
To the town
Enveloped by prayers and dreams.

At the edge of the way
with the stomach up,
with broken ribs,
lie tanks and jeeps,
as if fallen
in these dreadful days.

The comrade rusts, like clotting blood
on skeletons
of tanks and weapons—
such a silence.
No bird chirps,
no human voice,
nothing wakes up the silence
on the cemetery of iron and steel.

Between rusting iron dried flowers
And look,
In between
A fresh bouquet
Still moistened from dew, or from tears—
I can see nobody
No step to hear
Probably come,
Stand still for a moment
And away
On sinuous way.
A mother, a sister, a bride, a woman?
Hug the jeep, or the tank,
As if it were a lover's body
With iron and steel united
To liberate the town on the mountain,
The town from today and once.

Mountain up, mountain up
Sinuous, winds the way
Between old rocks and trees—

Every tree a sign-post
To the town
Enveloped by prayers and dreams.
b.
My father tries to hide the exile for me.
Between flowering gardens, green meadows,
Till it cries out in his blood—
The longing for the mourning Shekhina.
Midst out of grain fields and thick woods
Surrounded with goyish neighbors,
Forced his trembling voice
A way into the homeland:
"Next year in the built up Jerusalem".

Foreign earth covers his young bones,
Who knows, if there is left a memory
Of his grave in Moschzisker cemetery,
Where the destroyer streets paved
With gravestones.

Only I as the only one of his three children
Be meant for
Through all homelessness take his longing
For a kiss on holy earth.

The first part describes the apparent way to Jerusalem, because there "every tree is a sign-post", but unmistakably, this way is described as a cemetery. Tanks and jeeps lie there "fallen" once having been alive and now mortal relics of the "dreadful days". The "dreadful days" probably means the Six-Day War of June 1967. Contrary to the elation in Israel after this victory, which saw the defeat of Egypt and the return of the holy sites—including the Wailing Wall—as well as strategic territories, Rachel Korn does not follow the general elation; she feels the pain. She describes the other side, the human and material losses of the war. Rust on the "comrades" is like the blood on skeletons. Blood as an allegoric picture for life is used here for the objects of death. The personification of tanks and Jeeps allow one to feel their loss, perhaps for the first time as a loss. Amid the "rusty iron" one can find flowers, fading blossoms as well as fresh flowers. The writer does not ask how the flowers had got to this place, whether somebody had brought them there or whether nature had reclaimed her territory. The dew, which moistens the flowers, is probably an allusion to tears of the mourning earth. Also the ability of nature to revitalize whatever humans have destroyed could be a further explanation. It is nature that can reestablish life—acting like a miracle.

The fallen soldiers are not actually mentioned. The mourners are not seen, but obviously they are female: "A mother, a sister, a bride, a woman?" In their mourning they hug tanks and jeeps on behalf of the bodies of soldiers. Does this mean that mourning is a female matter? Or do the men not have to mourn or regret their deaths, because of their splendid victory, and because they died as heroes?

Jerusalem, "the city on the hill to liberate" as an adequate justification of every sacrifice. "Sacrifice" does not mean a literal sacrifice, to give one's own life for the "city of today and former times" is a duty (in the meaning of *mitzvah*) and an honor (also recognized as *mitzvah*). The women standing here are the real ones who suffer. The traditional image of mourning women, only of woman who lament, seems to be not reflected. The fact that Rachel Korn did not ask for mourning fathers, brothers and yes men in general shows how profoundly the traditional images of gender roles are embedded in the society and in her own subjective understanding.

With this image of gender roles in our head one could excuse the writer for simply reflecting society values. But, what makes me so critical is that when this text was written (it was published 1968), gender roles had changed in the war itself. Women in Israel were by this time liable for military service.[27]

One explanation could be that she does not realize that women were involved in the fighting and were able to make this kind of experience.

For Rachel Korn it was not possible to understand by her own experience, as she was far away. The only possibility to deal with the traumatic loss is to write about it. Within the writing lies the liberation from traumatic experiences not only for the writer also for readers.

Korn shows off ways in her poem to find a pathway through mourning. Ways that are winding and tortuous but have a clear destination.

In these stanzas there is no chance for mourners of both sexes and there is no possibility shown for this kind of future, the missing of men be lasting. Despite the very physical description of the whole scene with the keywords "stomach", "ribs", "blood" and "body" the reader is left asking whether there was a human being behind this. Reading these words, one is surprised by the anonymity. An anonymity that has, in the next moment, only women as mourners? As a contrast to reality and in the longing for safety in a divine present, the Shekhina, the city Jerusalem, appears to be "enveloped in prayers and dreams", the everlasting dreams and prayers within Jerusalem.

At first sight the structure and the content of the second part seem to be completely different. The form itself suggests a more traditional motif. The motif of the everlasting longing for Jerusalem, which for centuries has found its in the Passover–Haggada with the sentence "Next Year in Jerusalem".[28] In addition to the form, it comes as no surprise that the content is also very different. Contrasting to the first part Rachel Korn described on a personal level, from an individual and inner perspective. This second part is therefore the counterpart to the first one.

The female poet laid down the everlasting longing for Jerusalem in her biography and in the fate of her family. She and her daughter survived the Shoah through their flight, but her husband and almost all her family were murdered. Nevertheless these verses speak not about her own longing, it is the expressive longing of her father, which was never It is an intensive expression, which is affecting. Korn describes her father as a sensitive man who was always caring for other people. He fought against his ardent wish: "the longing for the mourning Shekhina" and made therefore a life in exile possible for his whole family. Though the writer must have felt it, because even "flowering gardens and green meadows" could not conceal his inner sadness.

The unshed tears[29] remained like the unfulfilled longing. Through his voice the father wanted to overcome isolation into the land of the ancestors. In the sentence "Next year in Jerusalem", prayed by observant Jews every Passover, rebuilding within the eternal dream. But also as a part of daily liturgy[30] Jerusalem has an extraordinary position:

ברוך אתה יי בונה ירושלים. ולירושלים עירך ברחמים תשוב.
ותשכון בתוכה ובנה עיר-צדקתך במהרה בימינו ותכין בתוכה מכון-תפלה לכל-העמים.

These prayers illustrated the profound meaning of and the inner and emotional connection with Jerusalem.

Rachel Korn's father died and was buried on foreign soil. His grave was destroyed; probably by German soldiers who used the gravestones as construction material thereby removing any possibility for a place to remember. The fact that there is no undisturbed place for the dead, no place for memory means that it is much more painful. The poetess regards herself as the sole responsible survivor. In the name of her father the poetic figure and daughter takes his longing along until its fulfillment in Jerusalem; she wants to bring it to sacred soil. By kissing the sacred soil the longing will be served. The "kiss" leads to a traditional imagination of a kiss—I mean the kiss of G-d,[31] This kiss is explained as a gentle, peaceful dying without any pain.[32]

Very clearly the writer separates the longing of her father from her own person and her own wishes. It is not her longing, and it will not be hers. Rachel Korn has been living in Montreal since 1948, where she can obviously live without an "eternal longing for Jerusalem", without an inner sadness.

The dualism of this poem reflects the emotional separation caused by the Six-Day War. on the one hand the holy sites, including the wailing wall, were re-opened for Israel and they can fulfill their longing; on the other hand there was death, pain and devastation—not the peaceful dying of longing.

With the poetess Kadye Molodovsky I close the circle that I opened at the beginning with my introduction about the Yiddish language and the story about Jewish enlightment. Molodovsky belongs like Rachel Korn to a generation of female writers from the twentieth century who repeatedly raised their voices and emotionally and intellectually defined their "Own", their identities. Kadye Molodovsky, born in 1894, was educated by her father, who was a maskil and who taught her in a subject that was traditionally the preserve of men. Her father taught her Yiddish Literature as well as Jewish traditional texts,[33] such as the Talmud and Torah. This education enabled her to take a teaching qualifikation at the Warsaw Hebrew Seminary. At the same time she had literary ambitions and so she started pointing out literally at the early 1920th her political experiences, social perceptions and in general her own feelings.[34] In addition to her work as teacher she was engaged in socialist groups like the BUND, the "Allgemeinen jüdischen Arbeiterbund in Polen". The growing anti-Semitic atmosphere led Molodovsky emigrate. She emigrated in 1935 to the United States and settled in New York City. There she extended considerably her literary program, publishing short stories, children's poetry and columns for the Yiddish daily *Forverts*. She worked also as editor for the journal *Seviva*, which one she co-founded in 1943. From 1948 until 1952 Kadye Molodovsky lived in Tel Aviv, where she published a journal for women pioneers called *Di Heym*.[35] She returned to the United States because she was afraid of loosing her Yiddish as a result of the conflicts between Hebrew/Ivrith writers and Yiddish writers. She knew that she would loose her own *Nigun* if she were forced to change her language. Molodovsky addressed the two main issues of collective memory: the chosenness of the Jewish people and the marking off of the Jewish people. Both her journalistic work and her poetry reflect her *Jüdischkeit*—the latter explicity that the fact that the American society in which she lived until her death 1975 fails to secure universal happiness becomes more clear in her poem "From Jerusalem."[36] This poem recalls the prophecy of Jeshajahu and describes the place, Jerusalem, which is the reason for all positive things.

> Die Stadt des Tempels, der Könige und Propheten, die einst der stolze Mittelpunkt Israels, sodann bis auf den Grund zerstört, war bei den Späteren naturgemäß dauernd Gegenstand rührender Erinnerungen und hoffnungsfreudiger Ausmalung einer besseren glanzvollen Zukunft.[37]

More than in her other poetry it is here where one can perceive her deeply felt attachment to the Jewish people. But the poem reflects not only her knowledge of the Hebrew Bible also her knowledge of Midrash.

Totally affected by this tradition of the central reverence to Jerusalem in an order of questions and answers the attributes for Jerusalem connecting to a poetical entirety. The poetess underlined her poem with the further detail that it is a folk's motif, that means she figured out the well-known motif especially for her people. The title itself does not show any deeper connotation, any deeper meaning—even the structure of the poems seems to be very easy—but only at first sight. The first impression is probably a nice story "From Jerusalem"—but very fast the reader is taught a better way and taken away on an excursion through the popular and partly mystical and partly philosophical thoughts of the city of eternal longing—Jerusalem.

From Jerusalem

Where from comes light into the world?
From Jerusalem comes light into the world
Because there lies the Shekhina—
Light comes into the world.

Where from comes song into the world?
From the mountain of Zion comes song into the world,
Because the singer lies there—
David's psalm—the song comes into the world.

Where from comes mercy into the world?
From Jerusalem comes mercy into the world,
Because the prophets walk there—
Mercy comes into the world.

Where from comes strength into the world?
From the sand of Mount Sinai comes strength into the world,
Because the mitzves carry there
In fire pillars—
Strength comes into the world.

Where from comes grace into the world?
From the stones of Jerusalem comes grace into the world.

Because she was washed with tears,
Because she was purified with tears,
Because she was purified with pain—
Grace comes into the world.

Each stanza begins in her first verse with the question after the where are from of a special quality. In always equal order the question followed by an answer with the highest matter of course and within fitting derivation. No doubt that this derivation is only for those self-evident who are having this kind of folks motive, where this special knowledge or, this special cultural memory exists. More difficult is the understanding for an outsider. Even if the verses because of their simple surface structure leave the impression of a simple text, there is a highly complex construct behind this simple structure. Very early on Jerusalem was seen as the geographic and moral centre of the world.[38] This idea was already a part of biblical tradition, but later this view was underlined by the writings of Talmud and Midrash. Everything that exists had therefore its origins in Jerusalem. Starting with the creation itself to every following single quality. With the question for the origin of light we are standing in between of the construct of the imaginations of Jerusalem. The term "light" signifies the beginning, because it means in a sense all the "highness and pureness"[39] and is the basis for everything that follows. "The first spoken words—'Let there be light' (Gen. 1:3)—are G-d's and they not only announce the creation of light, but literally bring it into existence".[40] Light is also a metaphor for the presence of G-d, the Shekhina; it signifies not only the presence of G-d itself, but also the place of G-d. Out of the divine light emanate all other attributes. The picture reminds one of a well with one central basin, which lets the water flow into the other basins. Next to the light Kadye Molodovsky sets the song. The song itself is closely connected to David, who has his special significance as a singer—especially in folkloristic singing[41]. In addition the tradition shows him as an outstanding king as poet he is admired and the assumption is that from his lineage one day should come the Messiah.

The connection between song and David lies in my opinion in prayer. Singing and praying belong together and it is said that a prayer which is sung has to be of greater effect than the simple spoken word.

As the Talmud explains: "Wenn David zu singen begann und dann die Inspiration über ihn kam, war es 'Für David, ein Psalm'; wenn aber zuerst die Inspiration über ihn kam und er daraufhin sang, dann war es 'Ein Psalm für David'".[42] Consequently the song, the *Nigun*, is much closer to the divine light and nearer to the divine origin than is the word. Because of the singer lying there, in Jerusalem, the song must be of this origin.

Mercy, a further attribute, is connected here with the prophets who were active in Jerusalem—the prophets who always remind and admonish the Jewish people on the Mitzvoth and which were inspired by divine will and divine visions. Also mercy has its source from divine well, which became popular through the humble prophets. From mercy comes power—immediately combined with divine Mitzvoth. Similarly to the ideal divine creation all the qualities together symbolize a fitting necklace. This necklace Molodovsky retained until the last quality: grace. But the picture, which was very harmonic, breaks down at this point: "From the stones of Jerusalem comes grace into the world, because she is purified with pain." Are tears and pain therefore the reason for grace in the world? "Zehn Maß Schönheit kamen in die Welt, neun davon hatte Jerusalem"[43] is stated in the Talmud. Why this break in the harmonious picture? At this point we have to examine when this poem was written. Since it was published in a journal we can state that the poem was written at the latest in 1958. In that year the State of Israel celebrated its tenth anniversary also with military parades. This was reason enough to think about wars in the country, especially the battles around and for Jerusalem. Grace has a high price—not in material terms, but in tears and pain. If in connection with Jerusalem one speaks of tears this also concerns the mourning over the destruction of the temple. Tears and pain are also the signs for the coming of the Messiah, as well as all the suffering that time has brought and will bring to the Jewish people including the experience of exile. Though the issue is not mentioned directly, it is present in these verses. The question is whether the city of peace, an often-used translation for Jerusalem, can one day can enjoy her grace and how long must we pay for it. I wish that one day the full meaning of the Hebrew word will be realized: Shalom, or peace, "signifies a state of prosperity, of blessed harmony, on several levels, physical and spiritual".[44]

NOTES

1. At the first language conference in Czernovitz in 1908 Hebrew and Yiddish were defined as Jewish languages. Susanne Marten-Finnis, *Vilna as a Centre of the Modern Jewish Press, 1840–1928. Aspirations, Challenges, and Progress* (Oxford, 2004), 124.
2. Hans Peter Althaus, *Zocker, Zoff and Zores. Jiddische Wörter im Deutschen* (München, 2002).
3. Leo Rosten, *Jiddisch. Eine kleine Enzyklopädie* (München, 2002).
4. Susanne Galley, *Das jüdische Jahr. Feste, Gedenk- und Feiertage* (München, 2003), 157.
5. Rachel Biale, *Women and Jewish Law. The Essential Texts. Their History and Their Relevance for Today* (New York, 1995), 17.
6. Helene Schruff, *Wechselwirkungen. Deutsch-Jüdische Identität in erzählender Prosa in der „Zweiten Generation"* (Hildesheim, Zürich, and New York, 2000), 37.
7. Iris Parush, *Reading Jewish Women: Marginality and Modernization in Nineteenth-Century Eastern European Jewish Society* (Waltham/Mass. 2004), 58.
8. "Niddah, Challah, and Hadlaka", in Biale, *Women*, 40.
9. Bettina Kratz-Ritter, *Für „fromme Zionstöchter" und „gebildete Frauenzimmer". Andachtsliteratur für deutsch-jüdische Frauen* (Hildesheim, Zürich, and New York, 1995).
10. Cf. Tracy Guren Klirs, ed., *The Merit of our Mothers. A Bilingual Anthology of Jewish Women's Prayers* (Cincinnati, 1992), 6.
11. "The dating of Old Yiddish texts is a highly complex process", Kathryn Hellerstein, "The Name in the Poem: Women Yiddish Poets", in *Shofar. An Interdisciplinary Journal of Jewish Studies* 20, no. 3 (2002): 32–52.
12. "Megillot are the Shir ha-Shirim, Kohelet, Ruth, Ekha and Esther. Article "Megillot", in *Jüdisches Lexikon*, IV/1, Me-R, Sp. 50f.
13. Salcia Landmann, *Jiddisch. Das Abenteuer einer Sprache. Mit kleinem Lexikon jiddischer Wörter und Redensarten sowie jiddischer Anekdoten* (Frankfurt/M. and Berlin, 1994), 5th ed., 98.
14. Helmut Dinse and Sol Liptzin, *Einführung in die jiddische Literatur* (Stuttgart, 1978), 31f.
15. Parush, *Reading*, 39ff.
16. Ibid., 57.
17. Ibid., 66.
18. Marten-Finnis, *Vilna*, 19ff; Susanne Marten-Finnis and Heather Valencia, *Sprachinseln. Jiddische Publizistik in London, Wilna und Berlin 1880–1930* (Köln, Weimar, and Wien, 1999), 16–17.
19. Allerhand, *Metamorphose*, 78–79.

20. Dovid Katz, *Words on Fire. The Unfinished Story of Yiddish* (New York, 2004), 129.
21. Irving Howe, *World of our Fathers. The Journey of East European Jews to America and the Life they Found and Made There* (London, 1976).
22. Cf. Marten-Finnis and Valencia, *Sprachinseln*, 13–14.
23. Cf. Grözinger, Karl E. ed., *Die Geschichten vom Ba'al Schem Tov, Schivché ha-Besch"t*, 2 vols (Wiesbaden, 1997).
24. Landmann, *Jiddisch*, 110.
25. If not mentioned otherwise, the biographical facts are taken from: Congress for Jewish Culture, Inc. ed., *Leksikon fun der Nayer Yidisher Literatur. Biographical Dictionary of Modern Yiddish Literature* (New York, 1956).
26. *Di goldene Kejt*, Tel Aviv, nos. 62/63 (1968): 31–32.
27. Mostly women were not be involved in direct fighting.
28. Michael Shire, *Die Pessach-Haggada* (Berlin, 2001), 52.
29. Yitzhak Kahn, *Portraits of Yiddish Writers* (New York, Washington, and Atlanta, 1979), 175.
30. "Habe Acht auf Jerusalem, deine Stadt. Lass deine Gegenwart in ihr wohnen und lass es bald und noch in unseren Tagen eine Stadt sein, in der deine Gerechtigkeit wohnt. Möge sie ein Zentrum des Gebets sein für alle Völker. Gepriesen seist du Ewiger. Du baust Jerusalem", Jonathan Magonet ed., *Siddur ha-Tefilot. Das jüdische Gebetbuch* (Berlin, 2001), 180–1.
31. The talmudic term is translated by "death through kiss".
32. Herlitz and Kirschner, *Lexikon*, IV/1, 239.
33. Christina Pareigis, *"trogt zikh a gezang..." Jiddische Liedlyrik aus den Jahren 1939–1945. Kadye Molodovsky, Yitzhak Katzenelson, Mordechaj Gebirtig* (Munich and Hamburg, 2003), 69.
34. Ibid., 71.
35. http://www.jwa.org/archive/jsp/perInfo.jsp?personID=85, 3/10/2003 S. 1.
36. *Di goldene Kejt*, Tel Aviv, no. 30 (1958), 158.
37. Herlitz and Kirschner, *Lexikon*, III, 209.
38. Translated from Herlitz and Kirschner, *Lexikon*, III, 209.
39. Ibid., 1102.
40. Josef Stern, "Language", 543–51, in Arthur A. Cohen and Paul Mendes-Flohr eds., *Contemporary Jewish Thoughts. Original Essays on Critical Concepts, Movements and Beliefs* (New York and London, 1987), 543.
41. Herlitz and Kirschner, *Lexikon*, II, 51–2.
42. Quoted in Abraham J. Heschel, *Der Mensch fragt nach Gott. Untersuchungen zum Gebet und zur Symbolik* (Berlin, 2002), 17.
43. Herlitz and Kirschner, *Lexikon*, III, 209.
44. Aviezer Ravitzky, "Peace", in *Contemporary Jewish Thoughts*, 685.

TRANSFORMING TRADITIONS: HALAKHAH, WOMEN, AND KRIAT HA-TORAH

Valérie Rhein

In most Orthodox synagogues, women sit apart—passive spectators—from where the actual service takes place. Is this really necessary? Allowing women a more active role in Orthodox services, for example during the Torah reading, is an issue only rarely considered by Orthodox congregations, particularly in Europe. As a result, many people do not know that it is possible to make significant changes while at the same time living in accordance with the relevant halakhic sources. Consequently, it is helpful to examine the subject of women reading from and being called to the Torah (*kriat ha-Torah* and *aliyot la-Torah*) on the basis of rabbinic commentary from throughout the ages.

> No longer shall we hear the argument that women are demanding this or that of the Halakhah. Rather, the issue should be set forth in the following terms: Halakhah, the Jewish way, cries out for reinterpretation in the light of the new awareness of feminine equality, feminine potential.[1]

Equality of men and women is common nowadays in Reform and in many Conservative synagogues. In contrast, in most Orthodox synagogues women sit apart. They are spectators, hidden behind a curtain or seated upstairs in the women's gallery, with no active role in the service. This is not the case, however, in all Orthodox synagogues. Shira Hadasha, for example, an Orthodox minyan in Jerusalem's Emek Refaim neighbourhood, is strikingly different: The service there is not led by men alone—as in virtually all Orthodox synagogues—but also by women. At Shira Hadasha, a woman leads the service during the taking out of the Torah on Shabbat morning, and women also read from the Torah and are given aliyot, are called up to the Torah. For visitors, this might be surprising and unexpected within an Orthodox setting, but for the members of Shira Hadasha, this procedure is normal. Men and women conduct services together as if they had never done it any other way.

The prayer service at Shira Hadasha, which means 'new song', is a wonderful example of something that Blu Greenberg, the president of the Jewish Orthodox Feminist Alliance (JOFA), has summarised with the famous words: "Where there is a rabbinic will, there is a halakhic way."[2] What is true for the subject of Torah reading by women and the calling up of women to the Torah applies in many other areas as well: Anyone who reads the sources, analyses them, and—looking at today's needs—reinterprets them finds a surprisingly large degree of flexibility within the Halakhah, the Jewish law, itself. I think it is very important to be aware of this flexibility and of course also to use it.

But do rabbinic sources actually allow women to read from or be called up to the Torah? The rabbinic sages have considered these issues many times throughout the centuries. In the Tosefta, for example, a companion volume to the Mishna edited around the year 220 CE, we read:

> All may be included among the seven [called to the Torah on Shabbat], even a woman, even a minor. We do not bring a woman to read to the public.[3]

The Tosefta gives no explanation; it just says that women may be called up to the Torah but that they do not read from it.

During the time of the Mishna, the Torah was not yet read by a *ba'al kria*, a Torah reader, as is common today, but by the person who was actually called up to the Torah. Thus, if the women of the Mishnaic times were not allowed to read from the Torah in public, it would not, it follows, have been possible for them to be called up to the Torah.

What does the Babylonian Talmud say about women's Torah reading? In bMegilla 23a we read:

> Our Rabbis taught: All may be included among the seven [called to the Torah on Shabbat], even a minor and a woman, but the Sages said that a woman should not read from the Torah because of the dignity of the congregation *(kevod ha-zibur)*.

The Talmud is more informative than the Tosefta in that it provides a reason for why women should not read from the Torah in public: *kevod ha-zibur*, the dignity of or the respect towards the congregation. This statement remained unchallenged for centuries. In the Shulhan Arukh, for example, Josef Karo's famous code printed in 1565, we find the same information as in the Babylonian Talmud, a text that was edited approximately thousand years earlier:

> All may be included in the number of seven [persons called for aliyot on Shabbat], even a woman and a minor who understands to whom he is reciting the blessing, but the rabbis said that a woman should not read in public because of the dignity of the congregation.[4]

The only new information we get from the Shulhan Arukh is that the minor has to know for whom the blessing, which is said upon being called to the Torah, is made. What we read in the Shulhan Arukh is repeated in the *Mishna Berurah*, a comprehensive commentary on the Shulhan Arukh section "Orah Hayyim" written in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries by Israel Meir Ha-Cohen, the so-called Hafetz Hayym. But the Hafetz Hayym adds an interesting commentary to this sentence. He writes:

> The above mentioned may only contribute to the prescribed count called up, but they may not be [or even of a majority of them] all women or minors.[5]

This means that, by the twentieth century, it becomes possible to say that of the seven *aliyot* awarded during a Shabbat morning service, up to three may be given to women.[6]

In principle, each of these sources allows women to read from the Torah. But because of *kevod ha-zibur*, the dignity of the congregation, the tradition, for centuries, was not to allow women to read from the Torah. How come? And what does "kevod ha-zibur" really mean? There are a lot of answers to this question. One of them is that if women read instead of men, this could be interpreted as men's inability to read, an interpretation shameful to men. Whereas this might have been the case in Talmudic times, it is no longer true, since today it is customary for a professional reader to do the actual Torah reading: the person who is called up to the Torah is only expected to recite the *brahot*, the blessings. Thus, if nowadays a woman reads from the Torah, there would be no reason to assume that she is doing so only because the men present are unable to read, and no reason for the men to feel ashamed. Not only are the tasks of men and women in today's society different from the tasks that they had in the time of the Talmud or the Shulchan Arukh, but their tasks have also became very much the same.

As a conclusion, it is important to point out that today's reservations against women's Torah reading are far from being based on legal prohibition but rather are highly emotional. In addition, *kevod ha-zibur* is clearly a relative concept. This can be seen in a story told in the rabbinic literature that takes place in a town inhabited exclusively by Kohanim, descendants of the priests. Of the seven *aliyot* of the Shabbat morning Torah reading, the tradition is to give the first to a Kohen, the second to a Levi (or, if there is no Levi, to another Kohen), and the rest of the *aliyot* to descendants of Israel. If a town is inhabited by Kohanim only, this means that all the *aliyot* (including numbers three to seven) must be given to Kohanim. But this could cast doubt on the priestly lineage of the man who received the first aliyah (i.e., the Kohen who was called up qua Kohen). One of the rabbinic sages who tried to solve this problem was the Maharam of Rothenberg, who lived in the thirteenth century:

> ... a town which is inhabited entirely by *kohanim* and where there is not even one Israelite, it appears to me that a *kohen* should read twice [i.e. the first two *aliyyot*] and thereafter women should read, for all can complete the number of seven, even a slave, a maidservant and a minor ...

> and with respect to the conclusion "but the Rabbis said a woman shall not read in public because of *kevod ha-tsibbur*", where there is no choice the dignity of the congregation is pushed aside in order to avoid casting suspicion on the *kohanim* called to read, that people should not say they are the children of divorcees.[7]

Here as well, *kevod ha-zibur* is seen as a relative—and overridable—notion and not as an essential halakhic category.

These examples clearly show that Halakhah, Jewish law, contains an amazing amount of room for movement. A most striking statement on this topic was made in the 1980s by Hayyim David Halevi, the former Sephardic chief-rabbi of Tel Aviv:

> The term *halakhah* derives from the *root hei*—lammed—chet [to go]. It signifies something that extends from early on until the end, that is to say, that which is received and transmitted in Israel from Sinai down to the present .... Now, this [continuity] was possible only because permission was granted to the *hakhamim* of Israel in every generation to introduce halakhic innovations in accordance with changes of time and circumstance. Only thus was it made possible for Torah to persist in Israel. (...) Whoever thinks that the *halakhah* is frozen, and that we may not deviate from it right or left, errs greatly. On the contrary, there is no flexibility like that of the *halakhah*.[8]

It is important to point out that legal questions concerning women's Torah reading and women being called to the Torah can be solved and reservations against these practices refuted. Nevertheless, it will take quite a while until the inclusion of women in Orthodox services is the rule rather than the exception. This is clearly not just a phenomenon of Jewish religious life. There are plenty of examples where the law allows something that is not yet or only partially realisable in daily life, among them equality of rights of men and women in contemporary western society.

And there is something else that makes it difficult to allow women a more active role in Orthodox synagogues: It is the fact that this topic is rarely if ever discussed in Orthodox congregations, particularly in Europe. As a result, people are not even aware of the relevant halakhic sources, not to mention the possibilities for change allowed by these sources.

In addition, even where this question has been discussed, mainly in Israel and in the USA, the discussion often ends in what I would call the dead end of power and politics, unrelated to halakhic argument. Yehuda Henkin, a contemporary Israeli rabbi, points this out very clearly:

> Regardless of the arguments that can be proffered to permit women's aliyyot today—that *kevod ha-tsibbur* can be waived, that it does not apply today when everyone is literate, that it does not apply when the *olim* rely on the (male) *ba'al qeri'ah* and do not themselves read—women's aliyyot remain outside the consensus, and a congregation that institutes them is not Orthodox in name and will not long remain Orthodox in practice.[9]

Other contemporary experts present similar arguments, among them the former Sephardic chief-rabbi of Israel, Ovadiah Yosef. On the other hand, Yosef also says:

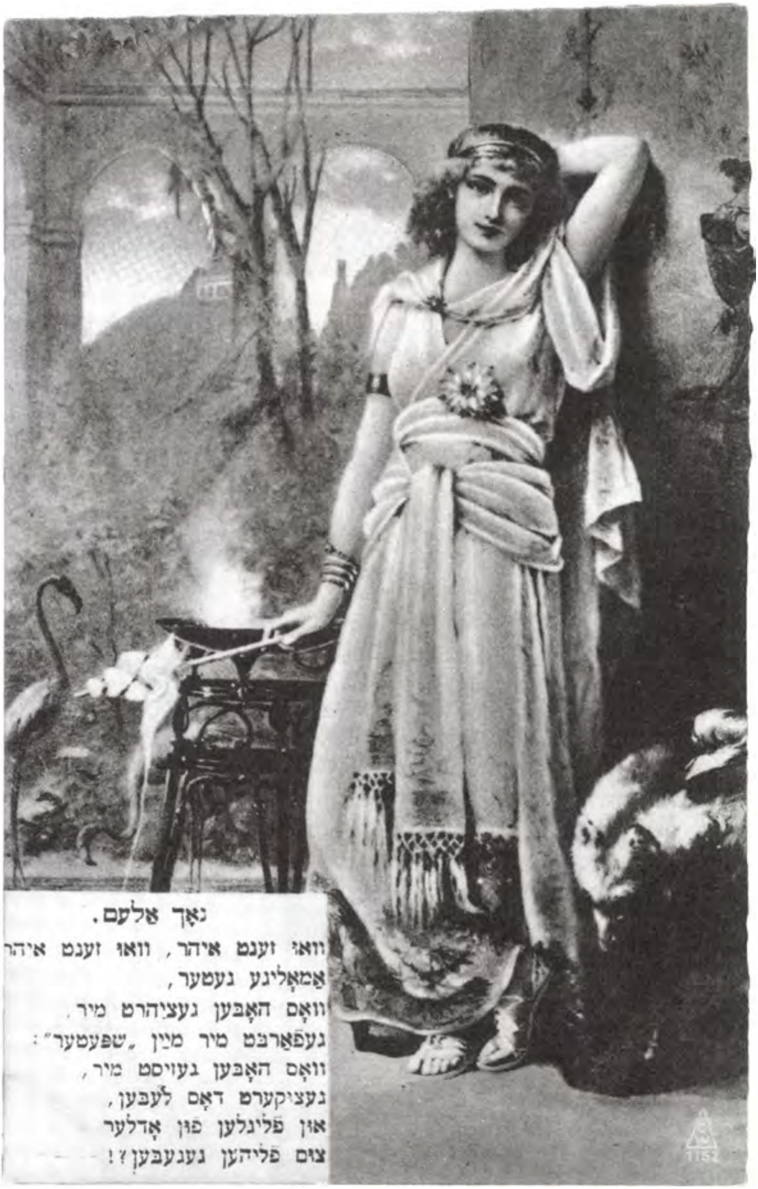
> ... the purpose of *qeri'at ha-Torah* is that [the congregation] should know, understand and hear the Torah. It makes no difference who reads, for even a woman or a minor may read and fulfill the congregation's obligation, because in the final analysis all hear the Torah and learn.[10]

In other words, Ovadiah Yosef and other *poskim* (rabbis who make halakhic decisions) reject a translation into action—i.e., permitting women to read Torah and receive aliyot within Orthodox services—because this would, as they say, encourage Reform Judaism, assimilation, and, even worse, feminism.[11]

Where there is a rabbinic will, it is indeed possible to find a halakhic way. But as long as the rabbinic will in Orthodox Judaism—and at the same time also the authority to make halakhic decisions—is solely in the hands of men, it is, especially where subjects of relevance for women are concerned, very often not possible to *walk* on this halakhic way. This is why it is so important for lay people in Jewish communities around the world to take it upon themselves to look for the sources or to ask the professionals to show them where it is written that something is halakhically permitted or forbidden. This is an opportunity for Jewish women not only to get involved but also to take responsibility for living a life as a Jewish woman. Transforming traditions starts by studying the sources.

NOTES

1. Blu Greenberg, *On Women and Judaism. A View from Tradition* (Philadelphia, 1981), 46.
2. Quoted from Asher Lopatin, "What Makes a Book Orthodox? Wrestling With God and Men by Steve Greenberg" [Review], *The Edah Journal* 4, no. 2 (2004): 9.
3. *Tosefta*, Megilla 3,11.
4. *Orah Hayyim* 282,3.
5. Comment on *Orah Hayyim* 282,3.
6. Judith Hauptman, *Women and Public Reading of Scripture*, Limmud Conference, 29 December 2005.
7. R. Meir ben Baruch from Rothenberg, section 4,100:8, Prague edition (hebr.); quoted from Mendel Shapiro, "Qeri'at ha-Thorah by Women: A Halakhic Analysis", *The Edah Journal* 1, no. 2 (2001): 38.
8. Hayyim David Halevi, *Aseh Lekha Rav*, vol. 7, section 54 (Tel Aviv, 1986), 234ff. (hebr.), quoted from Michael Walzer, Menachem Lorberbaum, and Yair Lorberbaum eds., *The Jewish Political Tradition: Authority* (Yale University Press, 2000), vol. I, 294f.
9. Yehuda Herzl Henkin, "Qeri'at Ha-Torah by Women: Where We Stand Today", *The Edah Journal* 1, no. 2 (2001): 6.
10. *Sefer Mi-Shiurei Maran Ha-Rishon Le-Zion Rabenu Ovadiah Yosef*, 1998, 103 (hebr.), quoted from Shapiro, "Qeri'at ha-Thorah by Women", 7.
11. See Shapiro, "Qeri'at ha-Thorah by Women", 34f.



נאָך אַלעם.

וואו זענט איהר, וואו זענט איהר
אַמאָליגע געטער,
וואָס האָבען געציהרט מיר,
געפאַרבט מיר מײַן „שפעטער”:
וואָס האָבען געוויסט מיר,
געציקערט דאָס לעבען,
און פליגלען פון אָדלער
צום פליהען געגעבען?! — —

LIFE STORIES OF THE PERSONAL, PROFESSIONAL AND POLITICAL: ORTHODOX JEWISH WOMEN NEGOTIATING WORK AND HOME[1]

Chia Longman

Introduction

One of the major feminist critiques of *malestream* scholarship has been the unmasking of so-called "objectivity" as merely a partial perspective. For this so-called objectivity has most often represented and sustained an androcentric and therefore very particular outlook on the world. Thus feminist scholarship in the past few decades has not only generated knowledge on the diversity of women's experiences, contributions and struggles in past and present societies worldwide, but has also raised crucial epistemological questions. As Donna Haraway[2] so eloquently argues, there is no such thing as a "view from nowhere", for knowledge production is always from "somewhere"; it is situated, as in every context each one of us is always positioned according to our gender, "race", sexual identity, ethnicity and religion. This positioning influences our subjectivity, access to power and the way we experience life. Within feminist research methodologies this also implies that we must be reflective as to our positioning, to how our "social situatedness" affects and determines our perception of and interaction with the subjects with whom we work.

As a feminist anthropologist dealing with what may be seen as women living according to and subscribing to "patriarchal" values, such reflection is particularly challenging. How as a secular outsider am I able to empathise and understand women who draw on religious ideologies to guide their lives? As a woman, to what extent can I identify with similar issues and experiences to those of my research subjects concerning relationships, motherhood, sexuality, and career? As an anthropologist, am I not exoticising the "others" I am studying, exaggerating the differences between their lives and mine? And as a feminist, how do I move beyond viewing "other" women as mere "victims" of patriarchy to that of "agents" who as all human beings, actively negotiate their practices and identities in society, to the extent that, similar to myself, they may claim spaces or create possibilities of empowerment, autonomy, or control?

My field of research is women's roles and identities among ethnic religious minorities in Western Europe. Over the past years I have interviewed orthodox Jewish women in Antwerp in Belgium, both strictly orthodox or *Charedi* (including Chassidic) women (middle-aged-senior) and more recently working or professional self-identifying orthodox Jewish women (2005–2006). One of the general questions that guides my research is that of the potential of conflict/reconcilement between gender equality and cultural diversity in multicultural societies of today, and specifically religious diversity. Whereas from the secular liberal feminist point of view, it is often argued that religion, and especially traditional religion can only encumber emancipation, my particular interest is the possibility of multiple forms of "feminisms", or kinds of "agency" among women, *within* an orthodox religious framework. Women living in what from an outsider's viewpoint may be seen as highly patriarchal structures and communities, prove most challenging to such an endeavour.

In recent years scholarly attention has grown as to the relationship—and possible compatibility—between feminism and orthodoxy, addressing a variety of issues such as women's halakhic status, expanding women's role in the religious domain, the challenge towards male dominance of the institutional and ritual sphere (regarding e.g., Gemara study, public Torah readings, women being ordained as rabbis).[3] Most of this work and the activism it concerns can nevertheless be situated in either the Israeli or North American context, and to a much lesser extent in (Western) Europe. During my research in the Jewish community of Antwerp in Belgium, over the years, I have met and talked to women of very diverse backgrounds, communities and lifestyles under the umbrella of what is usually designated as "orthodox", ranging from self-identified Chassidic women such as the very strict Chassidic Satmar community, to the "modern" orthodox.[4] However, as of yet I have not encountered any self-identified "orthodox feminists", let alone any organised activism such as a critique of the current gender inequalities within orthodox communities and ideologies. As will become clear in the case study I will shortly introduce in this paper, I therefore set out to meet women who maybe not explicitly, yet perhaps implicitly are "negotiating" with their religious tradition that may propagate gender conservative or traditionalist gender norms.

Negotiating orthodoxy

My recent project explores, through life stories, how orthodox Jewish women in Antwerp who participate actively in the surrounding secular non-Jewish society, negotiate religious traditionalist gender norms in their own community. The main research question is whether belonging to a religious traditionalist ethnic community can co-exist with modernist forms of female agency and autonomy. Contemporary orthodox Judaism prescribes roles and behaviour for women that potentially conflict with institutionalised gender equality in Western liberal democracies. Through self-narratives of self-identified orthodox Jewish women living in Antwerp, I aimed to discover the strategies and experiences of women who have maintained religious ethnic identification with their religious community, yet have implicitly or explicitly challenged its expectations and ideologies surrounding womanhood through taking on public, professional or activist roles.

Conversely, I also question to what extent such women may draw on their personal religiosity and familial or community values and support as resources of individual empowerment and agency. The challenge, therefore, is to seek out and account for the apparent discrepancies for women, yet also the emancipatory potentialities of, on the one hand "belonging" to a community identity that promotes gender conservatism, yet on the other hand are striving for individual autonomy. Furthermore, the broader question of this research is to explore how their life stories ultimately challenge notions of the public, the private, the religious versus the secular and other concepts and theories central to contemporary debates on the relationship between gender equality and cultural diversity.[5]

In locating potential interviewees, I do not apply a priori categorisations in terms of "strictly" versus "modern" orthodox, or affiliation with a particular sub-congregation or synagogue. Rather, I tried to locate adult women of varying ages and backgrounds that differ from the "average" in that they have transgressed the "normative" in that they, for instance, follow or have followed higher secular education, are active in professions within or beyond the boundaries of the community, or are involved in activism or public roles that require a high level of involvement with secular society. Due to the relative smallness (app. 20,000), cohesiveness, and religious traditionalist character of Antwerp Jewry, I did not come across a large number of women fitting the above description. Although some "exceptional" women had obtained secular degrees in higher education, they were usually working within community institutions rather than in those of the broader non-Jewish secular society. Having gathered some twenty interviews, I will here present some excerpts from the stories of Josephine, Rivka, Marion, and Nora. Although these summaries are unavoidably selective and concise, I hope to illustrate both the diversity and idiosyncrasy among my interviewees, yet will also conclude with some preliminary remarks as to my viewpoint on the existing and potential relationship between orthodox women's personal, professional and political lives in Antwerp.

Life stories of exceptional women[6]

Josephine

Josephine was born just after the war, has parents from a East European Chassidic background, yet was brought up "very religious yet open-minded", as a member of a minority within the for the most part liberal or secular Jewish community in Brussels. She claimed to be "exceptional" as an orthodox Jewish girl going on to higher education, and was supported in this by her parents. She started studying medicine at the French speaking university of Brussels, but quit because of one exam she flunked due to a notorious professor, who also called her *Mademoiselle samedi* because of her request for exemption of exams on Saturdays. She ultimately obtained a degree in psychology, worked as a child psychologist for seven years in a hospital in Brussels, and now practices as a private psychologist in Antwerp. In the meantime she had married to someone working in the Antwerp diamond industry and bore two of her three children during her studies.

Her husband didn't mind her studies and work, she said, the household may have suffered a bit—but it was not a problem, there was also an *au pair* to help and so on... However, one day her children rebelled: it was her son who said he didn't like it at all that she was not home for their lunch: "The minute my son complained, I stopped going to Brussels. You have to realise, for me it was a big sacrifice, but I didn't think twice. The minute he told me: 'Mummy, we do not like it that you are not there for us', I asked what were my priorities? I didn't consult my husband, I didn't consult anybody... I decided immediately my priority is my family." Josephine said that for orthodox Jewish women in general: "We have a career, some like me, because we need it, for me it's for my personal balance... Others need it because they need to bring money home. So Jewish religious women have a career but the career will never be more important than family life."

As for the secular education of her three children, Josephine told me that one of her daughters had wanted to study law at the University of Antwerp but could not find a single friend to go with her to university and would not go by herself and alone. According to Josephine, the situation in the university had changed dramatically since she went, the two main factors being AIDS and drugs. As university graduates themselves, she claimed that her husband and herself did not feel comfortable with the idea that their daughter would have gone by herself. "It's not that we didn't trust her, we trusted her one hundred percent that she would not hang around with people that are not her cup of tea, but it was a big responsibility to take and she couldn't find a girl of her class to attend the courses." All her children did go on to higher education in Israel where they are currently also living and working.

Although Josephine claimed to be amazed and pleased by the way men's roles—as elsewhere—have changed in the Jewish religious community, such as helping to take care of children, she was firmly against equality (as sameness) in the religious sphere: "We are not for it. We are still from the good old guard that women don't study Talmud. I personally didn't miss it. I understand that some women do miss it. Maybe because they feel "why shouldn't I be allowed to", but personally I am very open-minded and rebellious but I never missed the learning of the Gemara and for sure being a rabbi is surely not my ideal in life although some women are becoming rabbis now, but not in the religious circles. I don't resent the fact that I'm not allowed to study Gemara, there are so many things that we can study..."

Rivka

Rivka was ten years Josephine's junior, in her late forties, and said she was "very very very orthodox", being a member of the Chassidic Belzer community in Antwerp. She went to a Chassidic girls' school in Antwerp, which in those days was private, which meant her diplomas were not officially recognised. Rivka, again, as all of my interviewees always claimed, was a "great exception". Her brother had contracted meningitis when he was young and became permanently handicapped. The problem, however, for Rivka, was that there was no schooling for children with learning problems within a Jewish framework in Antwerp. This life event had, in my words, stimulated her to become an exceptional woman "with a mission". "I had to do something, there was no choice"—she repeatedly said. Rivka went on to higher education in Brussels, gained another degree at my university in Ghent in orthopaedics and then specialised further in psychology in another Flemish town. "I always wanted more knowledge, the feeling of the more you know, the more you don't know." Over a period of twenty years she has managed to build up and run a school for Jewish children with learning difficulties, which after a bureaucratic fight of seven years has only just received state funding.

Rivka started her higher education after marriage and having two children (she now has seven): "Everyone was against it, I got no support, including my husband, but I had to do it. ... I was up at five in the morning, to get to class at eight, and left my children at my mother's place. I sometimes had to "drink my own tears like soup", it was tough, to put it mildly. … I had no physical or moral support, no one appreciated it. Yet I was enormously determined, and no one could stop me." As for her husband, Rivka maintained: "Over the years he came to terms with it, and saw it could be no other way." Later, he even supported the school financially, though these days he is proud and as she said laughingly "taking the credit".[7]

Rivka claimed that she had not neglected her children during her studies, "for quality is not quantity", but by contrast, she had involved them with everything she could, from taking them along to public library visits where she claimed there wasn't a book left for her to read, and by explaining to them what she was doing as they sat playing beside her at her desk. She just had to share it with them, and they were the ones who had given her the courage to persist. As for her experiences in the secular world during her studies, she claimed it was difficult, but her fellow students and professors had been very understanding, by, for example, giving copies of their notes when she missed Friday classes or the time she gave birth one week before a final exam. I also asked Rivka about her daughters' education, and she also claimed that things had changed nowadays. One of her daughters goes to a college in Antwerp where she studies logopedics. In recent years there have been a limited number of courses and degrees available in cooperation with secular institutions (such as bookkeeping, pharmacy assistant), where there is strict control of the curriculum and teaching by the Jewish schools. "You would need an enormously strong character to go to university though, and I did it when I was already married." Rivka did not point to AIDS or drugs, but thought that in general, when she went to university, people were less critical and there was much less verbal aggression, it being a different world than today. As for a sense of achievement or personal fulfilment, Rivka claimed that she never had felt self-satisfaction, except for maybe three or four times in twenty years some brief moments of accomplishment, but that that had never been her main goal.

Marion

One of the rare highly educated orthodox women working in the secular world I encountered in Antwerp was a university professor. Marion was absolutely passionate about, lived and breathed for her work.

Being secularly educated in another European country, she had gained her degree when she already had two children, taking her time for her PhD and then had another two children during another number of years as a voluntary assistant before a vacancy came up for a professorship. She had had the possibility to do so because of what she referred to as "class"; that is not under the financial pressure of having to continuously do full paid employment. Although on the one hand she claimed to separate her religious identity from her workplace, she never kept her professional activities outside of her home, never hiding what she did in front of her kids, not even having "a room of her own" to work in, but worked at her desk and books in the middle of the spacious family living room. One of her teenage daughters, however, who goes to one of the main orthodox (non-Chassidic), secondary schools, and who was present during parts of the interview, claimed that she would never be able to see her religious identity as "separate". Although Marion had no personal ambitions to challenge traditional gender roles in the context of religious learning or knowledge, she was thrilled about developments abroad and very much saw new opportunities for her daughters in the realm of Torah study, although in Antwerp such education was not available.

Norah

Norah is in her mid-thirties, has six children and calls herself not Chassidic but definitely "ultra Orthodox". She was educated and now works halftime as a pedagogical adviser at two religious schools. In contrast to Marion, Norah was dedicated to bringing in her religion into her work: whereas her studies were secular, she will use religious scripture, like sayings of the Fathers, and so on, and will look everything up in the Torah. She also talked of herself as fulfilling an important role, serving as a bridge of communication with the surrounding secular society. For example, there is currently a threat of government subsidies being redrawn from some schools because of their "lack" of sexual education, and she tries to negotiate with the government officials.

Norah combines her halftime work with house or homework. She does have help in the house yet claims many look at her as a "superwoman" but for her it is "normal". She claims the role of the woman is vital. "There is a big place for the rise of the woman, she must be emancipated… I am and feel enormously important in my household. If I have the flu and am in bed one day, you know how many people are necessary to replace me… The woman is also the one who builds up the husband." For her daughters however, she doesn't see much future in Antwerp and hopes they will be able to study in Israel where there are more options and a framework that isn't threatening and is respectful. She feels she had the maturity, and her secular studies have only strengthened her faith. She said that she still has ambitions and that her work gave her much satisfaction, this being in a very intellectual-religious kind of way.

Preliminary results and questions

The limited number of and therefore "exceptional" orthodox Jewish women, who work or study outside of their community in Antwerp, can in the first place be ascribed to the relative smallness of the population compared to other diasporic urban localities such as in the US and UK. However, the specific character of Antwerp Jewry, i.e., its "chassidification", coupled with a general increase in isolationism from the broader society (and concurrent gender stringency—which is no doubt a global and cross-cultural phenomenon), and apart from some attempts at starting up alternative courses, has led to a further desecularisation of the orthodox Jewish educational system. There is nevertheless a *de facto* need for women (besides men) to join the workforce due to economic pressures and therefore to gain a degree. Workplaces have become increasingly limited for women (and men) within the confines of the community. However, higher education within the secular world is generally conceived of as a threat to community boundaries and incompatible with a young woman's (future) role as wife and mother.

The women interviewed therefore represent "exceptions to the norm" due a number of factors varying from migratory past (e.g., originating and educated in the US or elsewhere) to family history and upbringing ("open-mindedness"), and economic class (option for home help, spreading studies, voluntary work). Those exceptional women educated in secular higher institutions, however, are mostly active in "feminised" caring professions tied or catering to their own community. Their life stories illustrate a tension between individual aspirations and fulfilment and an altruistic need to help others, the first nevertheless being nearly always subsumed to familial and mothering obligations. Whereas some sever their personal identity from their professional identity, others try to infuse the public sphere with the private sphere—and vice versa. Both secular educational and professional experiences show varied patters in terms of interpersonal conflicting gendered religious values (e.g., norms pertaining to modesty and interaction between women and men outside of the family). Yet among the vast majority of interviewees, exposure to secular society has strengthened rather than weakened "belonging" or religio-ethnic and gender identification.

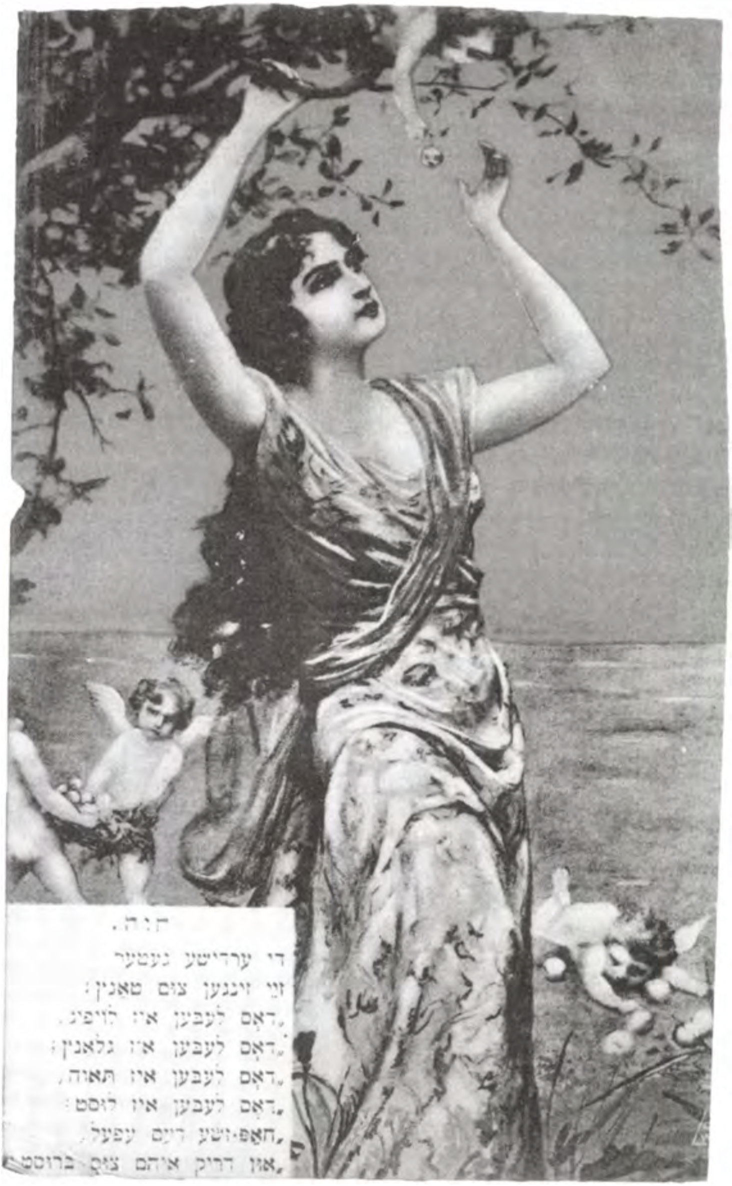
The perceived liberalisation of the surrounding society nevertheless withholds these mothers from either stimulating or allowing their daughters (and sons) an education with the secular framework (in Belgium). It is my guess that "modernist" forms of female agency and autonomy as propagated by normative secular liberal gender discourse will therefore continue to or increasingly conflict with current orthodox Jewish gender norms, unless the first begins to accommodate to cultural-religious sensitivities and/or, conversely, the latter becomes receptive to an internal revision of women's status, a process of change that appears to be currently limited to certain communities in Israel and the US and maybe UK.

NOTES

1. The research for the project discussed in this paper was partly funded by the Hadassah-Brandeis Institute Research Award 2005.
2. Donna Haraway, "Situated Knowledges: The Science Question in Feminism and the Privilege of Partial Perspective", in Haraway, *Simians, Cyborgs and Women: The Reinvention of Nature* (New York: Routledge, 1991), 183–201.
3. E.g., Tamar El-Or, *Next Year I Will Know More: Literacy and Identity among Young Orthodox Women in Israel* (Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 2002); Sylvia Barack Fishman, *A Breath of Life: Feminism in the American Jewish Community* (Hanover and London: Brandeis University Press, 1995); Blu Greenberg, *On Women and Judaism: A View from Tradition* (Philadelphia

and Jerusalem: The Jewish Publication Society of America, 1998, orig. 1981); Debra Renee Kaufman, *Rachel's Daughters: Newly Orthodox Jewish Women* (New Brunswick, New Jersey: Rutgers University Press, 1993); Haviva Ner-David, *Life on the Fringes: A Feminist Journey toward Traditional Rabbinic Ordination* (Needham, MA.: JFL Books, 2000); Tamar Ross, *Expanding the Place of Torah: Orthodoxy and Feminism* (Waltham, MA.: Brandeis University Press, 2004).

4. E.g., Chia Longman, "'Not Us but You have Changed' Discourses of Difference and Belonging among Haredi Women", *Social Compass. Revue Internationale de Sociologie de la Religion/International Review of Sociology of Religion*, forthcoming 2007.
5. Cf. Joshua Cohen, Matthew Howard, and Martha C. Nussbaum, eds., *Is Multiculturalism Bad for Women? Susan Moller Okin with Respondents* (Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1999); Ayelet Shachar, *Multicultural Jurisdictions: Cultural Differences and Women's Rights* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001).
6. I have used pseudonyms for the women interviewed.
7. Transl. Flemish saying: 'walking away with the feathers'.

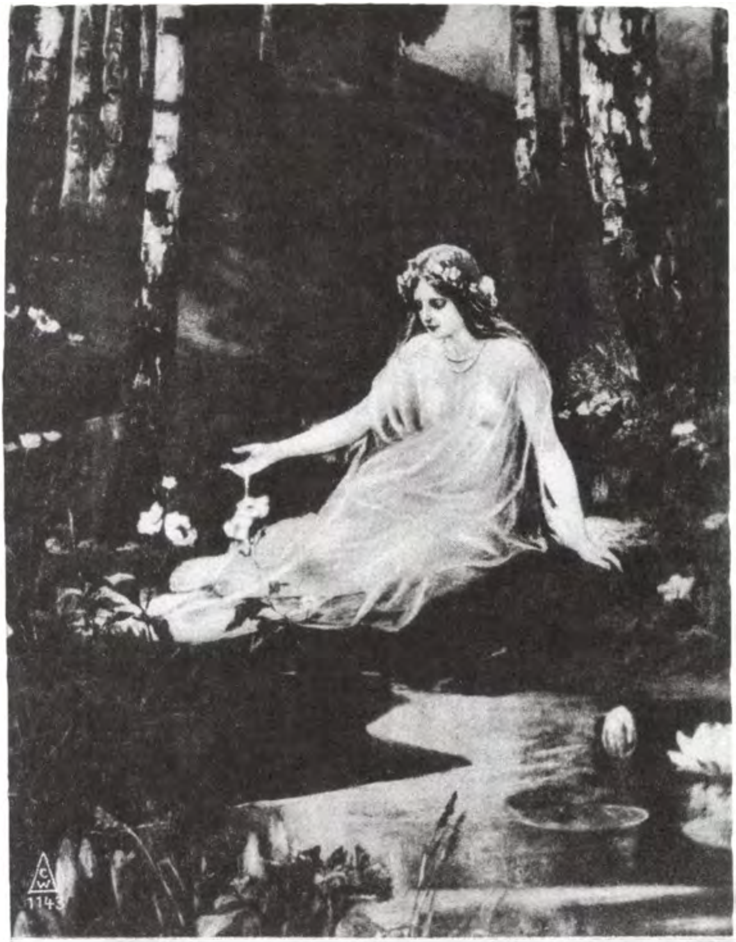


ח ו ה.

די ערדישע געטער
זיי זינגען צום טאַנץ;
„דאָס לעבען איז לויפיג,
„דאָס לעבען איז גלאַנץ;
„דאָס לעבען איז תאוה,
„דאָס לעבען איז לוסט:
„חאַפּ־זשע דים עפּעל,
„און דריק איהם צום ברוסט.

Part Three

Gendered Remembering



טהױ.

איך וועל מיט טהױ ,
מיט מאָרגען-טהױ
מײן בֿלימעלע בעגיסען ;
און געבען וועל
איך עס אַזױ
מײַן ליעבען און מײַן זיסען...

FANNY VON ARNSTEIN
AND HER BIOGRAPHER HILDE SPIEL

Eleonore Lappin

In 1962 Hilde Spiel published the biography *Fanny von Arnstein oder die Emanzipation* [Fanny von Arnstein or the emancipation]. In her autobiography she commented:

> With the manuscript I was satisfied like never before or after. The research alone had involved repeated moments of bliss—the many hours spent under the reading lamp in the British Museum and the Viennese National Library as well as at the State Archives, the City Archive, the Court and Chamber Archive, and the Archive of Aristocracy, but even more so the occasions when I found handwritten testimonies of my heroine in old coffers in Vienna or in a castle in Carinthia, recollections or diaries, whose importance and even existence had been unknown to the descendants until then.[1]

Hilde Spiel obviously felt an affinity to her heroine. Fanny (1758–1818), daughter of Daniel Itzig, the most prominent Berlin Court Jew, left her sheltered enlightened home when she was not yet eighteen to follow her newly-wed husband Nathan Arnsteiner to his native Vienna. Although she managed to establish a famous salon there—preceding the Jewish hostesses in Berlin—she always stayed *"scandaleusement prusienne"*. But Fanny also stayed *"scandaleusement juive"*. When most Jewish members of her class, the so-called "second society", and particularly the famous hostesses chose baptism in order to melt into the German and Austrian elites, Fanny stayed true to her religion. Hilde Spiel (1911–1990) had left Vienna in 1936 at the age of twenty-five to marry Peter de Mendelssohn, a German emigrant in London. A comparison between *Fanny von Arnstein* and Spiel's autobiographies[2] shows yet more similarities between the lives of the author and her heroine, real, constructed and denied ones.

Hilde Spiel (1911–1990)—an author in search of her world

Hilde Spiel was born in 1911 to upper middle-class Jewish parents who had become Catholics as adults. Hilde, their only child, was also baptised and raised in the Catholic faith. For the first of her two autobiographies covering the years 1911–1946, Spiel made some research into the past of her family. She found out that an ancestor of her mother, Marie née Gutfeld, Marcus Benedict (1753–1829), had been chief rabbi of Moravia. His son Jakob established himself as a merchant in Vienna and, according to one of Hilde's great-uncles, had access to Emperor Francis. It may be assumed that Jakob Benedict came to Vienna after the death of Fanny, at a time when the old families of the Court Jews disappeared, either because they opted for baptism or because new immigrants took their economic positions. All such Fanny's relatives, with the exception of her husband, became Christians, but Nathan and his partner Bernhard von Eskeles lost their position as Vienna's most important bankers to Salomon Rothschild.[3] Jakob Benedict also belonged to the newcomers who had sufficient economic power to be "tolerated" in *Biedermaier*-Vienna. Family lore remembered Jakob (Koppel) and his wife Luise (Deborah) as traditional, but very well-educated Jews who hosted "a circle of friends [consisting] notably of politicians".[4] His descendants were successful also in other professional realms. Gustav Singer, one of Jakob's many grandsons, who was Hilde's great uncle and most important source of information, had been director of Vienna's Rudolf Hospital (Rudolfsspital). At the time of the monarchy he was the physician of Archduke Eugen, and later, during the First Republic, of the Christian-Social Austrian federal chancellor, Prelate Ignaz Seipel. After the *Anschluss* he managed to emigrate to England.[5] Spiel portrays her maternal family as successful successors of Fanny von Arnstein's. They followed her tradition of assimilation into a society, which offered acculturated Jews windows of opportunity and which for some of them quite naturally led to baptism.

After finishing Fanny's biography, Hilde and Hans Flesch-Brunningen,[6] who was to become her second husband, travelled to Nikolsburg (Mikulov) in Moravia, the hometown of Markus Benedict. "They must have found life here very *gemütlich* (cosy)", she wrote in her calendar. After that they continued to nearby Brünn (Brno), where they "discovered the old Flesch Palace where Bismarck had been a guest. ... We even found the small village Krönau were my father and we [her mother and herself] had been billeted in 1916."[7] By taking this trip, Hilde tried to recover the past of her family as well as her earliest childhood memories—that of her father as a proud officer of the Imperial and Royal Army. Her partner Flesch was a member of the old Austrian aristocracy and, as she points out in her autobiography, reminded her of her beloved father.

Hugo Spiel was a chemical engineer, "a man filled with thirst for knowledge, but equally a man of action, no less conscious of the capabilities of his body as of his mind. His 'scars', which at first glance made him look like an old warhorse, later saved him from undeserved ignominy".[8]

Hugo had received his scars in a duelling fraternity to which he belonged as a student. Politically, he was a German-National Liberal. His baptism, which he undertook as a student, seems to have been an attempt to escape his ignominious descent, not only as a Jew, but as an Eastern Jew whose maternal grandfather had been a landowner in Galicia. Otherwise not much is known about the Spiels, which gave Hilde the opportunity to make up a more elegant family history: "The family in the East was called Birnbaum. This sounds better when it is replaced by the Sephardic form of the name, Pereira. Had it migrated there in grey aeons from Portugal?"[9] The possible Sephardic descent of her father's family—there is no proof of this whatsoever—also creates a possible connection between her family and Fanny's, whose daughter Henriette married Heinrich Ahron Pereira, a Dutch Jew of Portuguese descent.

Although Hilde's family had lost most of its wealth during World War I her parents managed to maintain a bourgeois lifestyle and active social life. Her father later became a partner in a chemical firm, but his heart belonged to the chemical experiments he conducted at home. Her mother, whom she called Mimi until her death, Hilde describes as good-looking, eternally immature and frivolous.

Hilde portrays her family as typical members of the Viennese bourgeoisie and her upbringing as Catholic. Although she does not mention this, they quite clearly also mingled with Jews. Sonia Wachstein, daughter of Bernhard Wachstein, the famous Jewish historian and director of the library of the Jewish community, described a meeting with Hilde when she was about ten years old. Together with their parents they were invited to the "salon" of Franz Kobler, a lawyer "pacifist, Zionist and Jewish scholar," who hosted "young aspiring artists, poets and musicians, but also personalities well established in science, arts and literature".[10] Hilde "sat with me at the children's table and said, pointing at the table of the grown-ups, that she disliked women who talk so much. I considered it necessary to call her attention to the fact that she had pointed at my mother".[11] This episode not only shows that Hilde Spiel already as a child considered the lively intercourse typical for the Wachstein family as unrefined, but also that Jewish salons existed in Vienna in the inter-war period and that they were attended by Hilde Spiel's family. In her autobiography Hilde claimed to have been unaware of her Jewish descent in her childhood because her Jewish relatives were completely secular and did not speak about their different religions.[12] Even in the family of Sonia Wachstein, which was consciously Jewish, intermarriage was accepted. Among the acculturated Jews of interwar Vienna, intermarriage and baptism obviously did not necessarily entail a change of social environment and were not discussed openly.

The Spiels also shared the Jewish bourgeoisie's outlook on social mobility, culture and education. Hilde went to the progressive girls' high-school of Eugenie Schwarzwald, a Jewish woman from Czernowitz who had earned a PhD in philosophy in Zurich.[13] The majority of the students of her school were middle-class Jews and so were Hilde's friends. Already as a high-school student she became a regular in the near-by Café Central, the meeting place of artists and writers.

In 1930 Hilde Spiel started to study philosophy and psychology at Vienna University. She considered the logical positivism of Moritz Schlick a decisive influence on her thinking and writing. Schlick, who was murdered by a right-wing student in 1936, also made her aware of the danger of fascism. Spiel, who also studied psychology, worked as a free-lancer for Karl and Charlotte Bühler's *Wirtschaftspsychologische Forschungsstelle* (Research Institute for Economic Psychology) where she befriended left-wing Jews like Marie Jahoda and Paul Lazarsfeld and joined the Social Democratic Party in 1933. In 1936 she earned her PhD in psychology with a dissertation on "Darstellungsthoerie des Films" [Theory of representation of movie]. However, she did not strive for an academic career. In addition to her studies and here work for the *Forschungsstelle*, she wrote essays and short stories for Austrian newspapers. In 1933, at the age of 21, she was awarded the prestigious Julius Reich prize for young writers for her first novel *Kai auf der Brücke*, and she published her second novel, *Verwirrung am Wolfgangssee*, in 1935.

During and after the short-lived Austrian revolution against the Austro-Fascist regime in February 1934, Hilde Spiel was active in a network offering support to banned social democrats and families of political prisoners. Nevertheless, she became entangled in fascist politics—as a writer whose publisher was an Austro-fascist and also as the lover of a diplomat of fascist Italy. In her autobiography she calls the period of Austro-fascism a "smeary time", when the feeling for right and wrong was weakened. In order to escape this moral danger she decided to marry Peter de Mendelssohn, a German journalist who had emigrated to London more for political than racial reasons. He only had one Jewish grandfather, whose telling name he, however, bore.[14]

In London the Mendelssohns successfully mastered the English language and soon started to write for English as well as German-language Czech and emigrant papers. Once again assimilation seemed the right way, this time into English society and culture. After Austria's annexation to Germany finally barred a return home and made her an emigrant—in the meantime, she had managed to bring her parents to London—Spiel became interested in Austrian Jewish history, for "objective" rather than personal reasons, as she later insisted.[15] Inspired by Hans Tietze's history of the Jews of Vienna[16] she began research for a historical novel covering the period from 1881 to 1938. "But world history left no time for long-term literary activities",[17] she said later, explaining why *Fruits of Prosperity* was finished only in 1943 and after she had published her first novel in English, *Flutes and Drums*, in 1939. As a publisher could not be found in England or in Austria, *Fruits of Prosperity* first came out in German only in 1981.[18]

By the end of World War II, Spiel and her husband felt completely integrated in England, where her daughter and son had been born in 1939 and 1944 respectively. Therefore it came as a shock to them when close English friends expected them to return to their former home countries. A short time later, however, Peter did just that. He went to Germany to assist in establishing a new democratic press for the American occupation forces and later for the British occupation forces. Hilde also became restless in England. In 1946 she spent several months in Austria as war correspondent for the *New Statesman*. Thereafter she and the children followed her husband to Berlin.

In Berlin, Spiel wrote for German, English, Swiss and French papers. Despite certain post-war hardships, which were much less serious for the occupation forces than for the German population, the Mendelssohns had a lively and inspiring social life, meeting and hosting leading representatives of all occupation forces—including the Russians, which was later held against them by advocates of the Cold War—as well as representatives of the budding post-war German cultural and political life. This period of living "in Saus und Braus" ('in clover') suited them exceedingly well; indeed, Hilde later remembered it as the most interesting time of her life. Fanny's salon at the time of the Vienna Congress (1814), when politics were made by "secret diplomacy" rather than at the conference table, certainly reminded her of her Berlin years.

After their return to England in 1948, Hilde no longer felt at home there. Wimbledon, where they lived, was far removed from their friends and colleagues, and it became Hilde's "green grave" as she called the chapter about this period in her autobiography.[19] When her children started to attend boarding schools, her life became even emptier, despite a heavy workload as a journalist, essayist, translator and editor of books. Discontent with her life also wore down her marriage. The research for *Fanny von Arnstein* gave her an opportunity to spend time in Austria, where her lover Hans Flesch-Brunningen, who was to become her second husband, had been living since 1958. When the book was published in 1962, her husband finally agreed to a divorce.[20]

But Spiel only returned to Vienna in 1963 when she became a correspondent for the prestigious *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung*, a position that gave her financial security.

In the preface to the book Spiel calls Fanny "a symbol of the liberation of women and the emancipation of the Jews",[21] a description she also uses in her autobiography.[22] While the emancipation of the Jews is indeed central to the work, the liberation of women is presented less convincingly. Due to her charm and excellent education, Fanny was an admired hostess, whose opinions on the arts, literature and music were highly respected among her contemporaries. Spiel depicts her as strong willed and enchanting, as well as the dominant partner in her happy marriage. Her husband Nathan adored her, although he was no intellectual and was more interested in gambling than the exchange of ideas in her salon, where he stood in her shadow. Even so, "good-humoured" Nathan was a highly successful and—considering that he lived in the age of early capitalism—presumably tough businessman whose wealth and high standing at court provided the basis for Fanny's social success and was the reason for their ennoblement in 1797. Even though Nathan's mother Sibilla became the head of their joint household and a partner in the family business after her husband's death, Fanny depended on Nathan. Her inheritance from her father did, however, enable her to function as a generous benefactress for the Jewish and Christian poor as well as for music and the arts. Fanny was liberated intellectually, but had to comply with the patriarchal order of the upper bourgeoisie.

While Hilde Spiel wrote *Fanny von Arnstein* she pondered her own liberation from a failing marriage and her 'green grave' in Wimbledon. Although she had always worked on her career and contributed to the family income and she had returned to Austria only when she was able to support herself financially, Spiel never considered herself a feminist.[23] She always worked at home and took care of the household and her two children. When she wrote her autobiographies at an advanced age, she still suffered pangs of bad conscience because of her frequent trips and separation from her daughter and son, while she had no qualms concerning her extramarital love affairs.[24] She also attributes one such affair to Fanny, arguing that this was in accordance with the spirit of her time, just as it had been accepted in the Vienna of her youth and in her parental home and also was in her own marriage. On the other hand, in *Fanny von Arnstein* as well as in her article "Jewish Women in Austrian Culture"[25] Spiel points to the difficulties faced by daughters of salon ladies because of the social success of their mothers. Fanny's daughter Henriette was "intimidated by her mother's overpowering personality, she herself hardly had the confidence to be able to take up Fanny's position in life" after her death. Her cousin Lea Mendelssohn-Bartholdy, the mother of the famous composer Felix, warned her against even trying: "Would she ... summon up the courage, the patience and the endurance, Lea asked, to lead that tiring existence which the customs and connections of her father demanded, to 'do the honours of the noisy paternal house', since she 'had always shown an aversion to it'."[26] During their years in Berlin from 1946 to 1948, the Mendelssohns' household and lifestyle resembled those of Fanny; perhaps Hilde's daughter Christine experienced similar problems. However, during Hilde's last years her daughter translated *Fanny von Arnstein* into English. In her acknowledgements a grateful Spiel wrote: "It is now her book as well as mine."[27]

Despite her ambitions as a journalist and writer and the liberties she took for herself in her marriage with Peter de Mendelssohn, Spiel does not come across as a 'liberated' woman in her autobiographies. She defines herself by her—sometimes prominent—lovers as well as by the well-known writers, artists and politicians she mingled with. She tries to justify her frequent namedropping with the fact that the people she knew were her life. At times, this accumulation of names of more or less famous personalities at the expense of real information makes *Fanny von Arnstein* as well as Spiel's autobiographies quite cumbersome reading.

Spiel calls Fanny "a symbol of the emancipation of Jews". Fanny is indeed no more than a symbol, as the majority of Jews was far from emancipated or even "tolerated" in Berlin or Vienna at that time. The roots of Fanny's love for Prussia lay in her youth in enlightened Berlin. Her father's palace and splendid garden sheltered her and her siblings from an awareness that they were second-rate citizens and allowed them to grow up in "a pleasant dream". Spiel claims that even when this dream was shattered in adulthood, they did not lose their self-confidence: "In times of tranquillity and, indeed, hope, ill-will vanishes and benevolence increases. … Even the children of the despised faith were allowed to harvest the fruits of peace."[28]

A more concrete sign of acceptance was that the family of the rich Court Jew Daniel Itzig finally received civil rights in Berlin—an exceptional privilege for Jews that tied Fanny even more closely to her native city. At this time Fanny was already a successful and respected salon lady in Vienna, where only comparatively few Jews were "tolerated". In 1802 they numbered 1300–1400 out of a population of 250,000. Even the ennobled Arnsteins were not allowed to own a house in the city but could only buy a plot of land in a suburb, where they built their summer-residence. Spiel is aware of these facts and therefore wants Fanny's destiny to be seen as a parable:

> In her, for a short span of the time, the whole Biblical People had taken on a serene, contented and confident form. She had enabled the great ones of this world, to whom she opened her doors, to wonder whether or not there was room in the community of mankind for the children of the Old Testament.[29]

Considering the small number of tolerated Jews in Vienna and Berlin, this interpretation of the importance of Fanny for the Jewish people seems exaggerated. Acceptance of a handful of rich and educated Jews who were willing to assimilate did not bring about a far-reaching improvement of the social and political status of Jews in Germany and in Austria. However, for the Jews, Fanny's example was a promise that education, assimilation and economic success would pave the way to emancipation. To an extent this promise was fulfilled when the Jews of Austria and Germany received civil rights in the 19th century and—at least for a time—seemed to be on the way to full social integration.

Spiel considers the "pleasant dream" of her childhood to be the source of Fanny's staying true to Judaism, while the majority of the socially successful Jews and particularly the famous hostesses in Berlin and Vienna chose baptism. In Spiel's interpretation, Fanny's position was shaped by the teachings of Moses Mendelssohn, who had been a frequent visitor to her parental home. Like him, she believed in the equality of religions. Therefore she saw no reason to forsake her faith, but at the same time accepted her daughter's baptism. Although Spiel quotes one of Fanny's numerous wills in which she stipulated that Henriette should only receive her part of the inheritance if she was still Jewish, she stresses that Fanny made peace with her daughter's conversion to Catholicism. Her final will as well as her continued good relations with Henriette substantiate this claim. Henriette, however, not only broke with her mother's tradition of hosting, but also with her open-mindedness in religious matters. While Fanny had been a benefactress of Jews and gentiles alike, Henriette concerned herself with Christians only. Thus, Fanny's descendants soon melted with their Austrian compatriots. Spiel describes their destiny with a mixture of admiration and irony:

> Those men in brown shirts, who sought in faces rigid with fear or in dusty birth registers for clues to possible victims, discovered nothing to distinguish the Pereira-Arnsteins from their fellow citizens. Many of these, both daughters or sons of daughters, were, moreover, obscurely disguised, bearing the titles of counts and barons.... But it was one of Fanny's descendants who still bore her name to whom a Habsburg finally paid a visit.... Now that there were no longer any imperial receptions, Fanny's descendant had become presentable at court.[30]

Despite her admiration for Fanny's steadfastness, Spiel refused to be considered a Jew. As she argued she would "allow neither the Nuremberg Racial Laws nor any other racist prejudice to tell her where she belonged".[31] Her son Felix quoted both his parents' dictum "Hitler has made us Jews".[32] Spiel's refusal to be Jewish was a protest against Nazism and racism rather than against Judaism. In post-war Austria secular left-wingers of Jewish descent frequently claimed not to be Jewish because they were not religious, a position that was also shaped by the experience of Nazi racism and is less frequently found among the younger generation.

However, Spiel also adored and to a certain point emulated the lifestyle of the old Austrian aristocracy and—just like Fanny's descendants—was pleased to become part of it even at a time when its heyday was long over. In 1971, she married Hans Flesch-Brunningen in the rural church of Sankt Wolfgang, where they had a small summerhouse—albeit with "a little serene irony".[33] Although Flesch had been her friend and lover for decades, they only then stopped addressing each other with the formal "thou". Her son considered her biography of Fanny von Arnstein as homage to the religious tolerance of the Habsburg Monarchy and the first Austrian Republic.[34] Spiel indeed imagines that during the last months of her life Fanny might have reconsidered her always a bit condescending, always a little superior relationship with Austria… Presumably Fanny now felt that she had much for which to apologize to her second home; she had, after all, to thank it for an existence in which the feeling of well-being far outweighed the times of discomfort. … But to tear from her heart her love of Prussia, let alone her religion, certainly did not enter her head.[35]

Spiel goes on to show that while the first big wave of anti-Semitism hit Germany in the wake of Romanticism and the German wars of liberation and such affected the baptised salon ladies of Berlin, the *Vormärz* in Vienna was an age with remarkably little anti-Semitism. This was to change rapidly at the end of the 19th century. Fanny's thoughts about her second home Austria might reflect Spiel's attitude towards England, to which she felt thankful but which she nevertheless intended to leave in order to return to Austria. In her own way she also argues in favour of her own steadfastness as a Catholic when she describes the Holocaust as the result of unfinished assimilation:

> It was a race against time which was not to succeed. A process of speeded up assimilation took place, but it was still not fast enough to be over by the time the Middle Ages re-awoke with a cruelty increased a hundredfold in the 'Third Reich'. The distance was still too great between the way of life which had already been attained and that which was being striven after, between the refined sons of the old-established tolerated families and the rough hordes of the Polish, Russian and Romanian borderlands who now also wanted a place in the sun. … the hundred years they needed to make their choice were not granted to them. Not even half that number! When the most cold-blooded mass murder of history began, they were the first to fill the gas-chambers.[36]

While Spiel advocated assimilation in the Diaspora, she was sympathetic to the State of Israel. When she worked in Austria as war correspondent for the *New Statesman* in 1946, she wrote a sympathetic article about the illegal emigration of Jewish DP's to Palestine.[37] She visited Israel "a few months before the Six Days' War".[38] During this war she assisted the Israeli embassy in Vienna by translating incoming news from Israel from English into German and forwarding them to the Austrian press "while the full-bodied advocates of Zionism still wallowed in their beds".[39]

As the title of her second autobiography *Which World is my World?* indicates, Spiel's return to Austria was not a success story. Again she vigorously tried to gain acceptance from the Austrian literary establishment. She was even prepared to turn a blind eye to the Nazi past of some of her friends like the author Alexander Lernet-Holenia and Heimito von Doderer. But when she was not elected president of the Austrian PEN-club, she felt let down by most of her friends and resigned from all political activities. She once again took a forceful political stand during Kurt Waldheim's election campaign for presidency. Waldheim had belittled his role in the *Wehrmacht* and with his lies became the symbol of the majority of Austrians' refusal to admit their complicity in Nazi crimes. In newspaper articles and interviews, Spiel publicly denounced Waldheim and the wave of anti-Semitism that went along with his election campaign. In her autobiography there are frequent hints at her deep disappointment with Waldheim's campaign and his subsequent election, but she does not mention her fight against it. In 1988 she was invited to give the opening speech of the Salzburg Festival—a great honour for a writer. However, she refused to speak in the presence of President Kurt Waldheim. "I could not bear to step on to the platform in his proximity and shake his hand. This is a man I reject", she explained in an interview.[40] She did, however, insist that she had not acted in solidarity with the Jewish community but as an individual.[41] Her critical outspokenness contributed to the positive reception of her autobiographies, which were published in 1989 and 1990 and soon became her most successful literary works. They were particularly well received by left-wing intellectuals and Jews.[42] Although Spiel never wanted to be part of the Jewish victims' collective, she had shared their fate. She had grown up among Jews and despite her attempts to assimilate into English society remained part of the emigrants' community from Austria and Germany, the majority of which were Jews. Therefore she shared the ambivalent attitude towards Austria (and its reluctance to come to terms with its Nazi past) with the Austrian Jews who found many of their sentiments, opinions and attitudes reflected in her autobiographies. But Fanny von Arnstein, too, remains an enduring role model and promise for Jewish Austrians.

NOTES

1. Hilde Spiel, *Fanny von Arnstein. A Daughter of the Enlightenment 1758–1818* (New York and Oxford: Berg Publishers Ltd., 1991).
2. Hilde Spiel, *Rückkehr nach Wien* (Munich: Amalthea, 1968); Hilde Spiel, *Die hellen und die finsteren Zeiten. Erinnerungen 1911–1946* (Munich: List, 1989); Hilde Spiel, *Welche Welt ist meine Welt? Erinnerungen 1946–1989* (Munich and Leipzig: List, 1990).
3. Spiel, *Fanny von Arnstein*, 334.
4. Spiel, *Erinnerungen 1911–1946*, 20. All translations from the German by the author.
5. For a description of Spiel's maternal ancestors see: ibid., 16–20.
6. Former name: Hans Flesch von Brunningen. With the establishment of the Republic (1918) the use of aristocratic titles like "von" was outlawed in Austria.
7. Spiel, *Erinnerungen 1946–1989*, 210.
8. Spiel, *Erinnerungen 1911–1946*, 27.
9. Ibid., 29.
10. Sonia Wachstein, *Hagenberggasse 49. Erinnerungen an eine Wiener jüdische Kindheit und Jugend* (Vienna: Böhlau, 1996), 63.
11. Ibid., 63–64.
12. Spiel, *Erinnerungen 1911–1946*, 32.
13. For Spiel's favourable portrait of Eugenie Schwarzwald see Hilde Spiel, "Jewish Women in Austrian Culture", in Josef Fraenkel ed., *The Jews of Austria. Essays on their Life, History and Destruction* (London: Valentine Mitchell & Co., 1967), 97–110, 109–10.
14. Spiel, *Erinnerungen 1946–1989*; 202.
15. Andrea Schwab, Interview, 22. 2. 1989, quoted in Wiesinger-Stock, *Hilde Spiel*, 52.
16. Hans Tietze, *Die Juden Wiens. Geschichte—Wirtschaft—Kultur* (Vienna, 1933, reprint Himberg/Vienna: "Wiener Journal"-Verlag, 1987).
17. Spiel, *Erinnerungen 1911–1946*, 184.
18. Hilde Spiel, *Früchte des Wohlstands* (Munich: List, 1981).

19. "Ein grünes Grab", in Spiel, *Erinnerungen 1946–1989*, 102–35.
20. Ibid., 210.
21. Spiel, *Fanny von Arnstein*, viii.
22. Spiel, *Erinnerungen 1946–1989*, 200.
23. Wiesinger-Stock, *Hilde Spiel*, 118.
24. See footnote 2.
25. See footnote 13.
26. Spiel, *Fanny von Arnstein*, 328–9.
27. Ibid., x.
28. Ibid., 17–18.
29. Ibid., 341.
30. Ibid., 339–340.
31. Andrea Schwab, Interview, 22. 2. 1989, quoted in Wiesinger-Stock, *Hilde Spiel*, 52.
32. Sandra Wiesinger-Stock, Interview with Felix de Mendelssohn, 11. 3. 1993, in ibid.
33. Spiel, *Erinnerungen 1946–1989*, 260.
34. Ibid.
35. Ibid., 325.
36. Spiel, *Fanny von Arnstein*, 339.
37. See also Spiel, *Rückkehr nach Wien*, 134–8.
38. Spiel, *Erinnerungen 1946–1989*, 245.
39. Ibid.
40. Wiesinger-Stock, *Hilde Spiel*, 181–2.
41. Ibid., 182.
42. Ibid., 132.

JELENA KON

Edit Jankov

There are many examples showing how easily women that played some significant role in the past are forgotten. Unless an enthusiastic historian or activist (again a woman) reveals their achievements and merits, nobody will remember them. One Jewish women of significance to the history of Novi Sad but nearly forgotten, was Jelena Kon.

The first registered women's organization in Novi Sad was founded by Judit Horovic in 1867. It oversaw the successful humanitarian work of Jewish women within the Jewish community. In this multiethnic city, other women's organizations were established at the end of the century, each of them functioning within a certain ethnic group (Hungarians, Germans, and Serbs). Then, in 1925 a special institution was founded in Novi Sad by Jelena Kon.

Jelena Kon moved to Novi Sad from Austria, after marrying Julije Kon, a wealthy tradesman, who played an active role in the Jewish community. In the twenties, during the economic crisis, Jelena wanted to help her fellow citizens in need beyond the usual activities.

She set up a charity body. It was called the *Kora hleba Centre* ('A slice of bread' in free translation), kindergarten and kitchen open for children and mothers in need. Up until that time, several humanitarian organizations had been operating in the city within certain ethnic groups. However, beside the local Novi Sad branch of the Red Cross, an international organization, the second most significant ecumenical organization was this one, run by Jelena Kon. One might have expected her to limit activities to the Jewish community, leading a life of a non-working middle-class wife. She, however, decided to open the doors of the institution run by her to everyone in need, regardless of religious or national affiliation. For the managing board members she chose people from various communities, mainly women who already worked for some other women's humanitarian or cultural bodies (not just Jewish). As part of her fundraising activities, she organized cultural events and humanitarian concerts.

Regarding its activities, the Slice of Bread Centre was a modern institution for that time, with medical services, a kindergarten, a milk kitchen for schoolchildren and infants.

In a financial report submitted to the local government in 1933, we read that in that year 11,920 kilos of bread were handed out to poor citizens of Novi Sad. The detailed report reveals that parents took their children, aged between one and six years of age, to the kindergarten every morning and picked them up in the evening. The children received three meals and medical supervision, and they were taught proper behaviour. Children with no fathers had priority. Poor children, those who did not receive a hot meal at home, were given lunch and could stay in the heated premises until their classes at school started.

The Slice of Bread Centre was housed in a building erected in 1933 from donations given by the Kons, Queen Maria Karadjordjevic, and many wealthy citizens.

The building was designed by architect Djordje Tabakovic in the Modern style. Above the entrance gate a sculpture, created by sculptor Mihaly Korn, illustrates the purpose of the place.

Jelena Kon and her husband Julije were killed during World War II in the Novi Sad raid of January 1942 on the banks of the Danube, along with other Jews, Serbs and Romani.

Today, the building near the Danube houses one of the city's kindergartens. There is no mark whatsoever outside the entrance door indicating that once a modern humanitarian centre operated here, even the original inscription has been removed.

The ecumenical initiative and humanitarian work are among Jelena Kon's merits for which she deserved recognition. For the same reason, we should not allow her memory fade.

AN UNTOLD STORY ABOUT THE FEMINIST ASSOCIATION[1]

Andrea Pető

Is there an expression that says: "History is knocking at one's mailbox?" On 12 October 2004, struggling with the forty e-mails pouring in every day, I found one that came from a certain Pauline and a László.

I would like to share this personal story with you, as it renders a gender-sensitive reading of memory and oblivion.

The characters of this story are the women members of three generations: the grandmother, her daughter and her son, and their children.

I almost deleted the e-mail, as we live in an era of viruses. But then I decided to open it, as there were no suspicious-looking attachments. I read the following text with widening eyes: "Dear Professor, you have written a number of books on topics that I and my husband are also researching"—here followed a long list of my books that have been published in English. My eyes were widening, I was swelling with pride: finally, someone seemed to be reading the hundreds of pages I have written. Then came the question: "Could you tell us how you managed to get documents from the secret police? I think that many documents related to Nazism and communism are hidden from researchers. Do you know who hides them and where? You may have heard about my husband's grandmother, an early feminist, who took an active part in the Resistance"—I caught my breath at this point—"...her name is Mrs. Meller née Eugénia Miskolczy. My husband is engaged in research to immortalize her courage and her activities, her fight for peace and freedom. Do I need to say that she was a martyr?

The Hungarian Nazis beat her to death. We know very little about her, and perhaps you have..."—the sentence was edited at this point, but it was left unfinished. "We look forward to hearing from you, best wishes, Pauline, on László Strasser's behalf."

I replied immediately, of course. I like writing letters anyway. I read a lot about Mrs. Meller in the National Archives, while I was writing my book on the post World War II women's movement in Hungary.[2] The documents of the Feminist Association are there among the organizational materials. What fascinated me in her life story was that she organized feminist gatherings even after the prohibition of public meetings. Then the Hungarian Nazis came and took her away, and they either beat her to death or shot her. Reading the letter from her grandson, I had a suspicion: how did we know what had happened to her? When her grandson, or to be more exact, his recently retired, ambitious wife wrote to me, Mrs. Meller suddenly came alive. Sometimes those who make history do not seem completely real to those of us who write history. Júlia Rajk[3] seems to be living because his son, Laci is present, and so her values and past are living. But what has remained with us of Mrs. Meller? And of the whole feminist movement? Why didn't we organize Untold Stories sessions with the relatives of the feminists: with Mrs. Szirmai's granddaughter, or with Lilla Kunvári, the granddaughter of Bella Kunvári, the last secretary of the organization? There is nothing more harmful in the women's movement than discontinuity. I immediately got down to the keyboard and began to explain that I only dealt with the post-1945 period, but as I had just been asked to write an article about women in the Resistance movement, I had written about Mrs. Meller again. "What has happened to the family archives? Do you have them?", I asked naively.

The answer arrived on that very day, at 2 am according to their time. Pauline was also camping next to her computer, online, like me—the only difference was that she was in Australia. She said that they had a few documents: an article from the journal called *The Hungarian* (Magyar) and a few photos. It seemed she had confidence in me. She also described her earlier experiences in Hungary. She complained about one of the committed researchers of the feminist past in Hungary: she said that she did not believe that her grandmother had been beaten to death by the Arrow Cross, the Hungarian Nazis, and continued this way:

> I still think that for members of the younger generation it is difficult to believe that such cruelties did happen, as they did not live in this period. People do not want to remember, they do not want to know about these things. But this is what is going on now, too, in Kosovo, Africa or elsewhere. Just as it happened in Kistarcsa,[4] too.

Uhm. Do we really have to go through dreadful things to remember them? Is it true that we do not want to remember? I had just got an invitation from Ida, to commemorate the 100th anniversary of the founding of the Feminist Association. What was it if not a will to remember? But to what extent was it possible to create a site of memory *(lieux de memoire)* in spite of the existing frames of memory? This was the major theoretical question of this short story of commemoration.

But Pauline's letter went on describing their visit to Budapest, and how they had met the researcher of the period and the topic. Poor Pauline and László struggled enough to get here from Australia, to find the traces of their grandmother now that they had retired, and the person who had spent years researching this feminist woman and her colleagues regarded them only as subjects, and as a scholar, she looked down on them and humiliated them. I am not surprised, of course. We all know the "great progressivists".

Next day, at noon, Pauline informed me that she had arrived home from photocopying, and she was sending me the material by mail. In this e-mail, which she sent from the middle of Australia, she was pondering on the reasons of Attila József's death: she thought that the talented Hungarian poet had not committed suicide. Why was she so interested in Attila József? Oh yes, because Eugénia had been in charge of editing the pamphlet written by Attila József and Gyula Illyés[5], in which they had protested against the assassination of the two communist journalists, Imre Sallai and Sándor Fürst in 1932. Why didn't I know about this? I felt guilty. I checked this in a biography of Attila József, but it only mentioned Illyés. And there was a quite ugly reproduction of the volume entitled *Medvetánc* in the collection of Attila József's poems, dedicated to Eugénia. I found out later that this volume was on sale in a second-hand bookshop: it cost 300,000 forints.

Nothing happened for a while, but I was trying to systematize my arguments: why was it that I had always avoided dealing with the Feminist Association. I had read too many apologetic articles about it; this was the main "Hungarian topic", a marketable theme on the international women's studies market; and I had always been bothered by the uncritical jubilation of the illusion of a neglected feminist past.

The letter from Australia arrived finally. It was an odd, quadrangular letter, which was a bit bloated, too. It looked like a strange, square ball, which had not decided whether to go flat fully or not. I was opening it with trembling hands. It turned out that the photocopies had been folded in a way that made their edges curl up. I was arranging the strangely-shaped sheets: a broken, bespectacled, elderly woman was looking at me from the photos. A woman wearing black dresses, who insisted on being photographed in front of her typewriter. Compared to the youthful photo on her admission card to the Palatinus Open-air Pool,[6] the contrast was a better accusation against the Horthy regime than anything else. This woman had been incredible, I thought, for the first, but not for the last time: she cut her photo from the publication for the Conference on Women's Suffrage, held in Budapest in 1913, to make an admission card with a photograph to the Palatinus. She must have stored the remaining leaflets at her home, after the time when the Hungarian feminists received the progressive world in the capital for the first and last time. Until when were Jewish people allowed to go to the Palatinus, by the way? Interestingly, Pauline never mentioned that Eugénia was Jewish, and none of the documents she sent refer to this fact either.

Upset by the photos, I sat down to write again: I asked Pauline if that was all that was left of the grandmother's documents, did they have memories of her, recollections of stories and events? On 7th November, Pauline promised to find out everything she could. She said would also ask László's sister, Zsuzsa.

I got another e-mail from Pauline that very day. It contained an attachment, an article from 1994, in which someone expressed concern about the availability of materials concerning Hungarian Jews for researchers. I answered as a rationally thinking, professional researcher was supposed to: I had to see what exactly they wanted to research to be able to help them. We shouldn't worry in a general sense until then. Later I regretted writing this. There they sat in the middle of nowhere, at least that was what Australia seemed to me, and for them the archives meant the source of the knowledge they are deprived of. They assumed that the archives would be able to answer all of their questions. After all, everything has a written record in the archives, it is just that the documents are hidden. But what is this everything? Is the life of a woman engaged in politics—everything? I only suspected it then, but now, when I am writing this, I already know, that this is the Great Dream: the magic of the archives. However, as we shall see from this story, the archives are quite a swindle.

The members of the Meller family livened up reading our letters. Or at least that was what I assumed. Anyway, the next series of letters let me knew that they were thinking about giving the legacy to the National Library on the occasion of the 100th anniversary. But László rejected the idea, because, as Pauline said, he had vivid memories of how copies of the journal issued by the Association: *Nő és Társadalom* (Woman and Society), literally disintegrated in his hands in the Ervin Szabó Library. Well, so much for the memory of the nation. Since there were distressingly few documents left, why had not we managed to achieve the digitalization of all these materials during the last fifteen years?

I made an attempt at finding something on the Internet. Perhaps the search engine would show something about Mrs. Meller. But I could only find Vilma Glücklich's biography.[7] Google also found that in 1918 a delegation of five people have visited the seriously ill Endre Ady in his Veres Pálné Street apartment: they presented him with a leather-bound salutation composed by Lajos Hatvany on behalf of the Republic.[8] One of the five members of the delegation (and the only woman) was a certain Mrs. Meller. This was the most certain way to be remembered by the nation: one has to salute men, in the company of men.

The events accelerated in Australia, too. The Strassers got a letter from Budapest, dated 4th November 2004. It came from Mrs. Jenő Kucsma, an employee of the Red Cross search service in Budapest. This meant that it had taken exactly seven days for this letter to get to Australia. They even got it from the wrong address it had been sent to, as Pauline and László had moved recently.

But the letter was interesting. Under the reference number 34467/16191 it told them that Mrs. Artúr Meller had survived the war, and had been put under the guardianship of an appointed orphanage on 12th October 1945, at 21 Városmajor Street. A strange coincidence, as Mrs. Kucsma probably had no idea who Mrs. Meller was. It was like the well-known joke about Lenin's Swiss hostess, who was asked about the Russians who had lived in her house in 1916. She said they had moved out all right, and since then she had not heard anything about them.

But I did not leave it at that: I called Mrs. Kucsma. A confident, educated voice answered the phone. The situation was even odder than I would have thought. The Association of the Hungarian Jewish Religious Communities did not have any answer for the search initiated a year ago. Of course, I remarked to myself, they became Lutherans in 1920. It was as if they had died at that time. Then there was Kistarcsa, this was where she sent her last postcard from: but this trace did not lead anywhere either. There is no list of the people imprisoned there, either in the Military Archives or anywhere else. Mrs. Kucsma was reading the documents for me, one after the other. One of them came from the Budapest Municipal Archives. Artúr Meller bought the property in 1917. He died in 1938. At the Twelfth District offices they recorded on his certificate of ownership that he had been a Jew in 1944. Later, on 13 August 1945, according to the registration records, Mrs. Meller applied for a credit for reconstruction, but this was not authenticated, as it was not she who signed the document. But they recorded the guardianship on 12 October 1945, and Vilmos Meller became Mrs. Meller's guardian. When the house became perilous in 1948, it was Vilmos Meller who arranged for the renovation, and he signed the assessment of damage—Mrs. Kucsma was listing the facts. It was not her possessions that were put under guardianship, as often happened during wartime, until it turned out whether the owner was alive or dead, but it was she herself.

"Perhaps the administrator made a mistake," I said. Mrs. Kucsma promised that she was going to check this in the documents of the orphanage. And she really meant to, I could hear that in her voice.

She was making apologies for not knowing Mrs. Meller. But she had heard of Anna Kéthly.[9]

Mrs. Meller received the Silver Liberty Medal, having been nominated by Anna Kéthly. This was a great distinction; in the Hungarian People's Republic, those who received it could even go to a university without taking the entrance exam. And it was not awarded for anything either. According to the Protocol of the National Assembly:

> Mrs. Meller, née Eugénia Miskolci, is a member of the Executive Board of the Women's World Association for Peace and Freedom, she organized the left-wing civil women's movement which struggled against the war and Nazism, and she went on with her activities during the war. After the Nazi occupation the Gestapo carried her off and accused her of having contact with the Russians.

I read an article in the *Magyar,* written by Judit Kovács on the occasion of this distinction. This was what she wrote: "She was a thin, agile, tiny, mouse-like old woman with grey hair." Well, she got it all right. Eugénia became a martyr, and then she was compared to a mouse. Who told this to the journalist? Probably her two unmarried daughters, who had lived with her: they both survived the war. "She always wore grey clothes, and she was a bit hard of hearing. She kept staying at the General Headquarters of the League against the Death Penalty, in the Seemann Café." Oh yes, as the waiter says: the conspirator gentlemen are in the rear room. And what about the conspirator ladies? The article went on: "They did not talk to her about important things there, as she could only hear things that were said out loud, and there must have been quite a few detectives among the guests." Poor lady, I thought to myself, it was probably only women who went deaf. Then the article revealed why she had got the distinction. On the one hand because some members of the Feminist Association recognized the true way in 1919, and they became communists. On the other hand because Mrs. Meller resisted the dissolution, even if the association had very few members by that time. She was a member of two international organizations, and thus she "enabled the voice of progressive Hungary to be heard in the world". Judit Kovács left no doubt about who was progressive in Hungary and who was not. So here came the Sallai and Fürst story. According to the article, both the International Women's Suffrage Alliance and the League for Peace and Freedom protested against the Hungarian government's actions, and it was Mrs. Meller who took care of the list of signatures. When the police of the Horthy regime wanted to arrest her, she tore the list up and swallowed the pieces. When she was interrogated, she referred to her deafness, saying that she did not remember anyone: "She could not hear their names when they were introduced to her, and she was too ashamed to ask them again, as she had not known any of them before." That is a very feminine trick. During the second questioning, her civilian courage was no longer sufficient. Mrs. Meller was beaten up, and then she was taken to a prison hospital in Kistarcsa. It is from here that she sent the last postcard, in June 1944. In this she writes (beaten up!): "I teach and learn a lot."

The red tail was also there in the end of the article: "The Patriotic Popular Front (Hazafias Népfront) may rightly consider the union created in the spirit of humanism and against fascism by so many well meaning and progressive people in Hungary at the time, to be a tradition to be fostered." Well, the Patriotic Popular Front did not seem to need Mrs. Meller's progressive tradition at all.

I knew from the organizational documents kept in the National Archives that the leaders of the association had a fierce debate after 1945 about whether it had been worth taking such a huge risk by disregarding the ban on public meetings.[10] The personal and generational conflicts within the organization made it even weaker. Dr Lilla Wágner, who later wrote a beautiful appreciation of Mrs. Meller when she received the reward, belonged to the younger generation, and disapproved of the fact that Mrs. Szirmai was appropriating the organization and that in the accounts sent by her to organizations working in other countries, she mentioned neither her nor Mrs. Meller. She wrote to Mrs. Szirmai:

> Since Mrs. Meller has died, I feel that we ought not to forget to mention at least her name, commemorating her courage. I left no stone unturned so that we can do that suitably. I had to draw the conclusion from the consistent silence that it is only Mrs. Meller's death that is becoming

> institutionalized, and not the things with which she induced it, even if indirectly.[11]

It is certain that it was the Feminist Association that took the medal from Ferenc Nagy. They later sent it to Eugénia's son, Vilmos, with the instruction that in case he were to die with no surviving relatives, he should make arrangements for the medal to be subsequently returned to the Feminist Association. It seems the Feminist Association was seized with the hybris of making history on its own.

In the meantime I found out that the other grandchild lived here in Budapest, in Pasaréti Street. I called him: a confident male voice told me that he had been told everything by his relatives in Australia, and that he would be glad to meet me.

I visited András Meller on 15 November. He was born in 1946, and said that he had nothing to tell. He did not know stories about his grandmother. He explained sadly that his father, who had been a lieutenant artilleryman on the Italian front during World War I, did not talk to him either about this or about the labour service, although he had been curious as an adolescent. But they did not talk about such painful stories. And they did not talk about his grandmother's activities after 1945 either. His mother and father met in a house under foreign protection while they were in hiding. After the liberation, they kept postponing their marriage for as long as they could, because they were hoping that Mrs. Meller would come back—she was old, but very tough. But she did not come back. Only the Red Cross claimed that she did, and then they immediately had to put her under guardianship according to the papers. It was awful.

András told me whatever little he knew. When he was 15, he had to go to an orthodontist, and his mother exhorted him to tell the doctor that he was Mrs. Meller's grandson. The doctor dragged him through the whole clinic, and told everyone that this boy here is Mrs. Meller's grandson! But nobody knew who this Mrs. Meller was, and it was a very embarrassing situation, the grandson said. We were looking at the photos in the sitting room, surrounded by the Mellers' biedermeier furniture. He knew who the people were in most family photos, but there were many beautiful women looking at us from the pictures, wearing corsets whom he did not know. The aesthetization of memory: it is not the story that matters but its visual representation. As if history was present, when in fact it is not.

E-mail is a tricky genre: I found out that András gave an account of my visit at 11 pm that night to the Australian branch of the family. I found it by chance later on the bottom of another, forwarded message. He called me Dr Pető in this letter, which was funny: the grandson happened to be as old as my mother. He praised my "good questions" in his account, but admitted that he could not really answer them. He remarked, a bit reproachfully, that I was only interested in the post-war period. This was true: I was interested in the constructions of memory. He also gave a summary of the questions he could not answer. These were the following: what was Eugénia's relationship to her husband and her children like; and was she more of a politician or a housewife. Well, these were important questions. Who knew the answers if not the grandson? But he said that his aunt used to enjoy that her mother was waiting for her in a hansom cab after school and took her to the poor outskirts of the city, where she made public speeches.

The family's dog died while I was there. I already regretted having said with my usual directness as I entered, that I wholeheartedly hated dogs, and they told me proudly that there were two boys in the feminist's family: András and Frici, the dog. Anyway, poor Frici, the dog died just then, while I was there, so half of the letter was about my visit, and half of it about the death of the dog. Dr Pető and Frici—but understandably with more enthusiasm about Frici. It gave me some satisfaction that Zsuzsa, László's sister asked in another letter who Frici was, given that he played such a central role in the correspondence. But at least the family members began to talk to one another, even if only about Frici in the first round.

Zsuzsa's letter appeared in my mailbox on 18 November: she was the other grandchild, Lászlós's sister, who also lived in Australia. She wrote a lot about her grandmother, whom she had known personally. Pauline forwarded me this letter, censored, and attached a long list of errata, rectifying Zsuzsa where they thought she was wrong. This was quite a deterrent: I was seriously thinking about giving up the whole research. Especially as a week later Pauline forwarded me Zsuzsa's original letter by mistake. Well, they must love each other, I thought. Did I really need this?

In the meantime I got the official letter of invitation for the conference from Ida. I was reading the text: Zsuzsa did not know anything about her grandparents' marriage. "People did not know anything about other people's marriages at that time", she wrote. She also said that her parents, who were not as wealthy as the Mellers, always kept a domestic servant and a governess. She thought that her grandmother was a "responsible intellectual" rather than a politician. She had faint memories of her grandmother being a member of the Feminist Association, although she remarked correctly that she had no evidence of this, only a photograph of many unknown women, to whom her grandmother was speaking about something. Well, it was worthwhile to sacrifice one's life for this, I thought to myself, but she went on like this:

> She looked very modest, a low-key person, and I think she was quite cold. At the same time, she did not neglect her children. At that time, many women left bringing up their children to others, and spent their time visiting people and shopping. Eugénia was not like that. She seemed to be wearing similar grey dresses all the time, and she was completely free from vanity. There was no enmity between Eugénia and her children, and they appreciated each other to the necessary extent, although it is true that Laura [her mother] did not like to express her feelings. And it is true that the children slept in one bedroom, and they did not like being alone.

The picture she depicts of the grandfather is quite dreadful. He got up in the morning, drank his brandy, went to work, had lunch at home, and then chatted his time away in a café, had dinner, and went to bed. He was an entrepreneur—while his wife was agitating for social justice as a member of the Social Democratic Party. But they also had family gatherings in cafés, Zsuzsa said, and then many of them came together, chatted, and there was ice-cream, too. As that was what really mattered for a little girl: the ice-cream.

Pauline did not only censor Zsuzsa's letter but wrote comments on it too, on the very same day. She thought that although she did not know Eugénia at all, she could not be cold, but she could only survive that way after losing her sisters and brother.

Interestingly enough, answering the question I asked about their religious affiliations, Zsuzsa wrote only about the Sunday school. She did not even mention the fact that they were Jewish. Did they not think about the conversion and its implications at all? Or why they were bored by the music of Bach in the Lutheran church in the Castle? Why was this completely forgotten, silenced?

But oblivion is even more essential, general and structural, and we are also responsible for it. After 1945, the only acceptable frame of memory was the one related to communism. Mrs. Meller was respected because of the case of Sallai and Fürst; she had a place in the communist Pantheon. But at the same time she was a social democrat, and a feminist, with a suspicious bourgeois background, and she was Jewish—and this was simply too much. Even though she had died at the best time, during the Resistance. Those in the family who survived and stayed in Hungary did everything to sustain continuity. During the elections of 1945, almost everyone on the Budapest Twelfth District list of Imre Csécsy's Radical Party was from the Meller family, but later there was no room for them. Questions were not asked, and other considerations determined who could remember and what.

So now I am going to present what I know now:

Eugénia Miskolczy was born on 14 January 1872. Her father was Adolf Mickolczy, a craftsman born on 12 June 1839 in Hódmezővásárhely. Her mother, Laura Weiss was born on 5 July 1849 in Buda. They got married in 1870, in Buda. Her brother József died in 1876, at the age of 6. Her sister Irén died in 1879, at the age of 5. The fourth child, Laura, was born in 1879; she died of tuberculosis in 1883, when Eugénia was 11. Eugénia married Artúr Meller, who worked as an inspector at the National Bank of Hungary, in July 1896. They had four children: Vilmos was born in 1896, Laura in 1898, Erzsébet in 1899 and Rózsa in 1901. The family lived at 49 Bajcsy-Zsilinszky Street (as it is called today).

Eugénia was one of the founders of the Feminist Association in 1904. She was a member of its Political Committee. She published articles in the journal called *Women and Society*. She was a very good public speaker: she held lectures for the Óbuda Democratic Circle, in

Szeged and in Transylvania. She was one of the organizers of the 7th World Congress of the International Woman Suffrage Alliance, held in Budapest in 1913. She gave a lecture on women's issues at the Society of Social Sciences (Társadalomtudományi Társaság) in 1915. At the banned feminist conference in 1916, she gave the "undelivered speeches" as a form of resistance to the ban. She was a member of the National Council (Nemzeti Tanács) in 1918, delegated by the feminists. She participated in the Paris Peace Congress in 1926, as a member of the Hungarian delegation. She was a member of the Social Democratic Party. She was the author of the pamphlet protesting against the execution of Imre Sallai and Sándor Fürst in 1932. After the German occupation in 1944, she was arrested, and she disappeared. The president of the Republic honoured her with the Silver Liberty Medal in 1946.

Epilogue

In its 27 November 2004 issue, the Hungarian daily newspaper of highest daily circulation, *Népszabadság* covered the conference organized by the WomanMate Foundation and the Association of Hungarian Women Internet Users, commemorating the 100th anniversary of the founding of the Feminist Association. The detailed account emphasized that there was no women's movement in Hungary today, and even the people who were working at it were unable to formulate the problems in an intelligible way. The article was illustrated by a huge photograph, which showed a moment of my speech. It was exactly the moment when I was trying to explain why I was not dealing with the Feminist Association, and for this part I chose the best known photograph of Róza Bédy Schwimmer: the one that shows her delivering a speech in front of the Parliament. The caption under the photo read: "Andrea Pető is talking about Róza Bédy Schwimmer, one of the founders of the Hungarian feminist movement." Poor Mrs. Meller née Eugénia Miskolczy was again deprived of something that should have been hers. But one thing gave me comfort: the only photo that was left to us of the activity of the Feminist Association between the two world wars depicted Mrs. Meller, and it was very similar to the photo about me in this newspaper. She was lecturing at the City Hall. Anyway, at least in this photo there was behind me, if not Mrs. Meller, then Róza Schwimmer. Perhaps we can go on from here.

NOTES

1. The paper was read in Hungarian in the Untold Stories Series of the Esther's Bag Foundation. For the history of the photos see Andrea Pető, "A Photograph", in Andrea Pető and Berteke Waaldijk, eds., *Teaching with Memories. European Women's Histories in International and Interdisciplinary Classrooms* (Women's Studies Centre, University of Galway Press, 2006), 46–50.
2. Andrea Pető, *Hungarian Women in Politics 1945–1951* (New York: Columbia University Press, East European Monographs Series, 2003).
3. Andrea Pető, *Rajk Júlia* (Budapest: Balassi, 2001). Júlia Rajk (1914–1981) wife of Laszló Rajk, the former minister of interior executed in 1949 after a show trial. She became a steadfast opponent of Stalinism in Hungary and a supporter of the dissent movement.
4. Internment camp close to Budapest.
5. Attila József (1905–1937) poet and Gyula Illyés (1902–1983) a writer.
6. In Budapest on the Margaret Island.
7. Vilma Glücklich (1872–1927) one of the founders of the Feminist Association.
8. Endre Ady (1877–1919) poet, Lajos Hatvany (1880–1961) writer.
9. Anna Kéthly (1881–1976), leader of the Social Democratic Party after 1945, in 1956 deputy prime minister. She died in exile.
10. Request concerning the reestablishment of the Feminist Association. Hungarian National Archives (MOL) XIX-b-1-h. 5632-732.
11. MOL P 999 1. cs. p. 434.

FINDING OUR/MY HISTORY: THE CASE OF MANYA WILBUSHEWITZ SHOHAT

Shulamit Reinharz

A key question posed to the members of this section concerns how the writing of biography affected us. This question has intrigued me in the past, and thus several years ago, I did a survey of biographies by women about women, to see what the biographer wrote about her task. The resulting article[1] documented several interesting phenomena such as the mental health benefits to the writer of a biography of a woman. A moving example is the case of Ruth Benedict who turned to the exploration of women's lives in order to salvage her own mental health. In my case, the biographical work I have done has strengthened my sense that it is worthwhile to be an activist and that sometimes one has to be courageous. This section is also particularly fitting coming, as it does, after the film we saw: *Forever yours*—a Norwegian documentary directed by Monica Csango (2005), which deals with the need to know. Once a biographer is on the trail of someone she finds interesting, she can become obsessed, driven to unearth the secrets of the other woman's life and her own.

Here is the story of my experience.

In 1979–1980, I took a leave from my position on the faculty of the University of Michigan in order to spend a year on a *kibbutz* where I would study the process of aging. Upon my return to the United States, I decided that the book I would write should contain an introductory chapter about the history of *kibbutzim* in general, so that readers would understand the particular *kibbutz* I studied.

At the same time, I had begun to teach Women's Studies, declared myself a feminist and had published my first book, *On Becoming a Social Scientist* (1979), which deals, in part, with new ways of knowing. Because of this confluence of experiences, I decided to ask a question that stemmed from "feminist distrust".[2] This concept connotes an attitude toward widely accepted historical information. The attitude is one of suspending belief that the information one has been taught to rely on is true. For example, sociology students are taught that August Comte was the first sociologist. But I approached that fact with "feminist distrust" and asked how it was that the English-speaking world was so heavily influenced by a French writer. That query led me to ask who had translated his works, which in turn led me to Harriet Martineau. Not only did Martineau translate Comte, but she condensed his six volumes into three, and then Comte had them retranslated into French, claiming that the translation was better than the original. And so I asked: Whereas almost all books on the topic state that the first *kibbutz* is Degania, a *kibbutz* which exists to this day on the banks of the Sea of Galilee (in Hebrew, Kineret), was there a *kibbutz* before Degania? Moreover, is there a woman's history connected to the beginning that I do not know?

A little bit of digging in encyclopaedias led to my coming upon the name, Manya Wilbushewitz Shohat, who was credited with having been a member of the Second *Aliyah* (Jews who came to Palestine between 1904 and World War I) from Russia, and who experimented with the idea of "collectives". With this as the thread, I began to explore further and a whole new world opened up. By contacting people who might know something about this woman, I found photographs, letters, objects and even places. I travelled all over Israel hunting for material about her frequently with my husband, an historian and an Israeli by birth.

In the years that followed, I have given many public talks on Manya Shohat, I have written a few articles and chapters about her, and this year, a book of her collected writings appeared, published with my husband and another colleague in Israel. Unfortunately, the book on the *kibbutz* has not yet appeared because I became so obsessed with Manya. I have her framed photo on my desk.Why did/does she intrigue me so? First of all, she was an activist her entire life, probably from the time she was fifteen until the day she died at eighty. Second, she liked to write, primarily letters and essays. Thus, I was able to compare and contrast what she *did* with what she *said*. Third, she was charismatic. People admired (and in some cases, hated) her and whoever received a letter from her, kept it. Fourth, she was fearless, almost to the point of naiveté. She was direct.

Manya identified with women strongly; she wanted peace with the Arabs and worked on that objective although it was not popular. She was only partially successful in all that she did, mostly starting huge projects, but she did not get involved in creating organizations of which she would be the leader. In that sense she was a free spirit. She had an aesthetic sensibility, primarily a love of embroidering. She had close relations with her brothers, and had two children and a husband who was not faithful to her. She wanted to save people and help people; she was willing to work very hard physically. She travelled extensively and had strong relations with some American women leaders. The more I learned about her, the more mysterious she became.

Manya is both known and unknown in Israel. Half a street in Tel Aviv is named for her; there has been a stamp and a film about her, and an occasional newspaper article about her daughter. Now that there is a book, several symposia have been held. But her position in history will remain tenuous unless it is tied to a specific phenomenon. Otherwise she is a "woman out there who did something." Unlike Golda Meir, she was not prime minister. Unlike Hannah Szenes, she did not parachute into Hungary behind enemy lines. And so, I am trying to make it known that what she did do is highly significant. She created the first *kibbutz*, and Degania arose from those who had been with her the previous year at Sejera. Manya is not the only unsung heroine who contributed to the eventual formation of the State of Israel, and through her, I have learned about many others. Eventually, all of us who are working on these women will be able to write a new history of Eretz Yisrael and the early state.

NOTES

1. Shulamit Reinharz, "Feminist biography: the pains, the joys, the dilemmas", in Amia Lieblich and Ruthellen Josselson, eds., *Exploring Identity and Gender: The Narrative Study of Lives* (Thousand Oaks, CA.: Sage, 1993), vol. 2, 37–82.
2. Shulamit Reinharz, "Feminist distrust: problems of context and content in sociological work", in David Berg and Kenwyn Smith, eds., *Exploring Clinical Methods for Social Research* (Beverly Hills, CA: Sage Publications, 1985), 153–72; reprinted in David Berg and Kenwyn Smith, eds., *The Self in Social Inquiry* (paperback version, 1988).

JOHANNA BISCHITZ, KATALIN GERŐ, AND BUDAPEST'S JEWISH WOMEN'S ASSOCIATION (1866–1943)[1]

Julia Richers

> Johanna Bischitz has died! This news spread in the capital like wildfire on 28th March [1898]. Her death filled everybody with dismay.... There has not been a crowd of mourners as huge as this since Kossuth's funeral, and we will never see such obsequies again, where so many people fill the streets to follow the coffin as at the funeral of Johanna Bischitz.[2]

The much lamented Johanna Bischitz (1827–1898), whose coffin was allegedly accompanied by thousands, like that of the Hungarian national hero Lajos Kossuth (1802–1894) several years previously, was the founder and president of Budapest's largest Jewish women's organization, the Pest Jewish Women's Association. She was one of the most prominent representatives of Jewish charitable work at the turn of the century—if not the most prominent one. Studying the role of Jewish women in Budapest's public life during the second half of the 19th century, one is certain to come across her name. Yet, who was she and what was the purpose of this organization which was to become a rather influential and important association in Hungary?[3]

Johanna Bischitz was born Hani Fischer in the Hungarian town of Tata in 1827. Her father was Moritz (Mór) Fischer (1799–1880), director and owner of the world-famous porcelain factory of Herend.[4] He was a prominent Orthodox lay leader and grandfather of the American rabbi and Zionist Stephen Samuel Wise (1874–1949). Johanna was the third of ten children.[5] During the Hungarian Revolution of 1848–1849, she cared for wounded Hungarian soldiers whom her father had accommodated in his house. Due to his tremendous economic success and international reputation, Fischer received an order of merit from Emperor Francis Joseph in 1863 and was ennobled in 1867.[6] As a Hungarian custom and a sign of ennoblement he added "farkasházi" to the family name. In October 1852, Johanna married the widower David Bischitz (1811–1897), a well-off merchant and landowner from Sárbogárd, a town in the county of Fejér, and moved to Pest. She became the stepmother of three children from her husband's previous marriage and gave birth to another four children.[7]

Accustomed to a well-off life in the countryside, Bischitz was shocked by the desolate living conditions of poor inhabitants in Buda-Pest. With the waves of industrialization, urbanization, and mass migration in the middle of the nineteenth century, poverty and misery turned into one of the city's most obvious problems.[8] Jewish as well as non-Jewish inhabitants of this fastest growing capital in Europe were facing rapidly increasing social hardship. The Jewish author József Kiss (1843–1921) noted:

> Misery and penury are so horrible. Never before had charity so much to do as today. … Hundreds starve to death. The number of beggars and orphans living without a shelter, sleeping rough even in nasty weather or at freezing temperatures, has increased in the entire country. In some places parents sold their children because they could not give them bread.[9]

The situation Kiss described was by no means exaggerated. Numerous contemporaries observed with great dismay the new urban phenomenon of large-scale pauperization.

This situation was to become a crucial factor motivating the foundation of several charitable associations in the capital. But did a kind of "female" or even female Jewish poverty emerge at that time as well? Or what gave rise to the urge to found a women's association, dedicated to support particularly Jewish women in need? It is likely that society's frequent failure to care for specific female problems and, subsequently, the want of gender-adequate communal structures were determining factors. While Jewish boys were always taught in Heders, Talmud Torah schools or other religious educational facilities, even if their families were extremely poor,[10] girls principally did not have any access to this kind of supportive infrastructure. The newly founded self-help societies, such as the association for Jewish craftsmen and agricultural peasants (MIKÉFE), were not open for female members of the community either. Hence, poverty clearly had a much more negative effect on Jewish girls than it had on Jewish boys. Poor women and girls were more often subject to total neglect, to prostitution, to commit infanticide of unwanted children[11] or—as József Kiss and, more prominently, the Jewish contemporary Bertha Pappenheim (1859–1936) pointed out—even to white slave trade.[12]

Wolf A. Meisel (1816–1867), Pest's chief rabbi from 1859 to 1867, was one of the first men within the Jewish community who recognized that the discrimination of women had become a fundamental problem. Not only did he consider this an ethical question but he also realized that there was a strong causal link between gender, family background, educational level and poverty. This situation had to be redressed, as he stated in his "Memorandum" of 1863:

> In order to give girls a better education—who often fall morally and religiously just because of a lack of sufficiently paid jobs—so that they acquire the ways and means to maintain themselves in an honorable and sufficient manner, and in order to act beneficially on behalf of the female part of society, I propose founding a women's association because I believe it could be fruitful for this purpose.[13]

It is not certain whether Meisel knew that there already had been a Jewish women's association in Pest in the late 1840s. Indeed, even today little is known about this first women's society. The newspaper *Der Ungar* published a short note on 6 February 1847 saying:

> The Association of Israelite Women, whose main aim is to set up a labor house for poor, unemployed Israelites, has been founded.[14]

President of the association was Katalin Pollak, vice-president was Therese Lackenbacher. Members of the executive board were, among others, Charlotte Barnay, wife of the community secretary, Ignaz Barnay (1813–1878), Rozália Kunewalder, wife of the community president, János Kunewalder, and Elisabeth Schwab, wife of Pest's previous chief rabbi, Löw Schwab (1794–1857).[15] It was the first time in the history of the Pest Jewish community that its female members took on an active and concrete role in public life. A look at the *Sefer Zihronot* shows, however, that the association did not survive the Hungarian Revolution of 1848–1849.[16]

In the 1860s, the time had come for Rabbi Meisel to start a new initiative. He quickly discovered Johanna Bischitz to be an ideal and energetic ally for his plans. Together with another eleven women—most of them members of the well-off Jewish upper class in Lipótváros[17]—they called a first meeting on 19 February 1866. It was chaired by the new community president, Jakab Lányi (1816–1879). This gathering led to the election of an ambitious committee appointed to draw up the by-laws and to recruit further members. Only one month later, on 20 March 1866, the association was officially founded. First, Mária Gottesmann was elected president and Johanna Bischitz vice-president, but some years later, from 1873 until her death in 1898, Bischitz presided over the association for twenty-three years.

In 1866, the city council of Pest was not at all enthusiastic about the women's subsequent application for legal permission to establish the association. The relatively detailed expert report produced by the Commission for Associations rejected the application in the very first lines because it was of the opinion that there were already enough charitable organizations in Pest "supporting the poor in accordance with Christian fraternal love, irrespective of their religion".[18] Ignoring Jewish needs such as religious support or a *kosher* kitchen, the commission held that "no special religious association" was required for the poor Jewish population of Pest.

The commission suggested that, instead of founding a Jewish women's association, the twelve women who signed the application make themselves useful in the already existing institutions of their Jewish congregation or seek admission to the non-denominational charitable organizations in the city, where "they surely would be received with open arms due to being well off and highly educated".[19] Despite the commission's negative report the city council finally approved of the foundation of the Jewish Women's Association—possibly because of some anticipation of the emancipation laws to be adopted in 1867. However, contrary to non-Jewish women's organizations, the Pest Jewish Women's Association was not voted any financial help by the city council, which assumed that the Association would be able to finance its projects independently.

A first glance at the almost complete annual reports of the Association, which existed from 1866 to 1943, suggests the character of a rather unspectacular, seemingly fully "assimilated" women's organization. A quick assessment of the documents does not yield a specifically "Jewish profile" of the association. Looking more thoroughly into the history of the Pest Jewish Women's Association and its institutions, such as the Girls' Orphanage, the Orphan Girls' Asylum, and the hugely successful *kosher* public Soup kitchen, provides, however, a completely different picture. A wide range of the most varied activities surface once the information given by the association's own documents is linked with the numerous reports of contemporary journalists, observers and city officials. The following is an attempt to give an overview of the various activities of the Pest Jewish Women's Association as well as to probe into the particular self-conceptions and self-identifications of the Jewish protagonists from the Association's foundation until the turn of the century.

According to the very first official by-laws the main aims of the Association were "to support those bashful poor, especially females, and first of all the ill, the disabled, the pregnant, the widows and the orphans", to support Jewish midwives, to found and maintain an orphanage for girls as well as several "charitable institutions for poor girls and women of Jewish faith", primarily to contribute to "raise their morality and develop their vocational skills".[20] The Association intended to counter the Jewish girls' abjectness not only by providing them with a high-standard vocational education but also by preparing them for employment suiting their abilities.

Since Christian orphanages did not accept Jewish orphans as a matter of principle,[21] the first priority of the Association was to establish the Jewish Girls' Orphanage, which was opened as early as 6 October 1867 in 27 Damjanich Street.[22] At that time, nobody could anticipate that the home for a modest number of twelve girls would soon have to be enlarged to accommodate hundred-twenty girls. Besides offering a profound, modern schooling and vocational training, the Orphanage's main aim was to provide religious education as well.

According to the by-laws, each day was to begin with prayers, repeated at noon and in the evening. The director of the institute had to make sure, that "all the religious rules are strictly observed".[23] She had to ensure that the candles for the Sabbath prayer were prepared, that everybody finished work early on Sabbath eve and that the meal was pre-cooked. The director had to guarantee that all dietary laws were strictly observed. The Orphanage served *kosher* meals only.[24] The Sabbath prayers were held in the small prayer house of the orphanage, but on important festivals the governesses had to take the children to the synagogue, so they could "attend the children's service and listen to the sermon".[25] *Purim, Hanukkah,* and the annual commemoration ceremonies for the deceased patrons were celebrated in the large common room of the orphanage, usually attended by the chief rabbi, too.

Information on the biographies and professional advancements of the orphan girls is scarce. The existing statistics in the association files do not provide any indication concerning the girls' backgrounds, family circumstances or the reasons of them being orphans. This is why the surprisingly detailed records in the autobiography of Katalin Gerő (1853–1944) are of great value. She was born in the village of Hévízgyörk northeast of Budapest in 1853. Her mother's family members had been successful and respectable farmers since the eighteenth century. The early death of her mother left her father, a Polish freedom fighter and intellectual, with six children and little experience in running a farm. As a result, he quickly became impoverished and abandoned his children. In the middle of the 1870s, Katalin Gerő decided to leave her village and move to Budapest. In the Hungarian capital she lived together with her younger brother, Károly Gerő (1856–1904), who later became a well-known playwright. She first earned a living sewing and finally, after escaping organized prostitution, made contact with the Pest Jewish Women's Association. In early 1898, Johanna Bischitz offered Gerő the position of director of the Jewish Girls' Orphanage. She accepted the offer and held this position for many years.

Gerő is also known as the cofounder of a society called Deborah, the first Zionist girls' association in Budapest. On the occasion of the foundation of this Zionist organization in 1901, Theodor Herzl

(1860–1904) sent an admiring personal note to her, congratulating on her enthustiastic commitment.[26]

Gerő proudly stated in her autobiography that during her time at the Orphanage she took care of more than 1,300 Jewish girls. Even after they left the orphanage, Gerő tried to stay in contact with as many of the girls as possible. With some of them she corresponded until shortly before she died in embattled Budapest in 1944 at the age of 91.[27] Not only the letters but also her memoirs provide important insights into the backgrounds of the orphan girls and their lives. She wrote:

> I know the background and story of each. There is the child of a porter who was hit by a tramway—next to her the daughter of a factory owner who went bankrupt. There stands the orphan of a lawyer who defended the law and here the daughter of a man who broke the law. The child of a landlord who committed suicide after having gone under, and the child of a housekeeper who died of tuberculosis. The daughter of a doctor who healed wounds, and the daughter of a drunkard who inflicted wounds.[28]

These Jewish girls came from all social strata and from all over the country. Each of them had her story, telling about personal misery and urban poverty. Gerő noted all details with meticulous care. Her memoirs tell about all kinds of misery in the big capital: child labor, alcoholism, cholera and other epidemics, violence, prostitution, homelessness, or the squalid conditions of overcrowded basement dwellings.

As the number of Jewish orphan girls in need did not decrease, the Orphanage had to move to a bigger place in 5 Jókai Street in 1901. It brought about some positive changes, too: an exceptionally modern teacher-training school was attached to the institution, and the formerly separate Orphan Girls' Asylum was incorporated in the same complex. The latter differed from the Orphanage insofar as it only admitted "half-orphans". According to the definition of the Association, girls were regarded as half-orphans if they did "have a mother or father, but because of the inability of either to earn a living could still be regarded as orphans in a wider sense".[29] Thus, this institution cared for the poorest strata of Budapest's Jewish population. While the regular Orphanage looked after girls from all social strata, the girls in the Asylum mostly came from absolutely resourceless and underprivileged families that could provide their children neither sufficient food, clothing nor even a minimal education.

In addition to accommodating orphaned Jewish girls in the Orphanage or in the Asylum, the Association aimed to help women and children in need—as far as funds permitted. Applications for benefits were to be handed in at the Association's office in 7 Valero Street (today: Kürt Street). This was the place where anybody in need could ask for immediate help. Applications were not only decided in light of the statements made on a form, but members of the committee in charge of granting benefits visited the "homes of misery"[30] in order to see the needy personally and to prevent abuse. The demand for this charity was much higher than expected, casting a true light on the real poverty of a remarkably big number of Jews. The then well-known journalist Adolf Silberstein described the charitable efforts of the Jewish Women's Association in one of his articles as follows:

> This [support] is around 15,000 forints a year. Whoever might consider this too much, should go and visit the little house in Valero Street on an allotment day. If the person's heart does not go out to the imploring, helpless women standing there in masses, he or she has either never seen misery or is completely insensitive.[31]

The Association did not only help innumerable Jews asking for support but consciously tried to concentrate also on the "outside", i.e. to present itself to the non-Jewish environment as an exemplary charitable association free of denominational separatism. Repeatedly, the annual reports write about solidarity aid-programs such as the one during the devastating flood in 1876. The Jewish Association also attempted to overcome the intangible, yet existing barriers that segregated Jews from non-Jews in the city. In creating common spaces where both could meet on a daily basis, they fostered exchange, acceptance and integration. An important common space was the *kosher* Soup kitchen of the Association.

With regard to size, growth and sheer numbers, the *kosher* Soup kitchen was the most influential institution of the Jewish Women's

Association. A first modest "feeding house" organized by the Association in its administrative building in 7 Valero Street opened its gates on 15th November 1869. The capacity of this very first soup kitchen in Buda-Pest was very limited, being able to serve not more than thirty people a day. However, thanks to remarkably big donations, it could move to considerably larger facilities in 53 Dob Street a year later. In 1886, it had to be moved again to an even bigger property on 13 Külső Dob Street (later 57 Dob Street).

From the beginning, the Soup kitchen was kosher: "Strictly following the religious rules set for a Jewish household."[32] This was particularly important since the poor Jews in Pest were not able to eat in any of the other soup kitchens founded later by the city. In the Soup kitchen of the Women's Association, they were offered a bowl of hot food at least once a day, prepared according to the Jewish dietary laws. Posters advertising the *kosher* Soup kitchen were put up in various synagogues and in highly frequented places in Pest.[33] The hot meals offered by the Soup kitchen were not reserved for people of Jewish faith but available to "all the hungry, regardless of their religion".[34] The fact that not only Jews benefited from the kitchen is evidenced by a letter to the city council written by the Women's Association in 1872, reporting that a third of the men and women eating in the *kosher* kitchen were Christians.[35] Since the city council failed to organize soup kitchens for a long time, the total number served was to increase continually in the following years: In 1876, 65,294 people frequented the *kosher* Soup kitchen. In 1886, this number increased to 88,591 and grew further to 141,130 in 1896. The highest number ever was reached in 1915, at the time of World War I, when 287,465 starving people were served a hot meal.[36]

The Pest Jewish Women's Association ran its *kosher* Soup kitchen in a very effective and highly hygienic manner. Its exemplary management had a considerable influence on the organization of the soup kitchens established later by the city. In 1874, the first communal soup kitchens opened, relying literally on the regulations drawn up for the Jewish institution. For obscure reasons, these communal kitchens operated for a short period only. Four years after having opened, they closed in 1878 and were not reopened for several years to come. Once again, the Jewish Women's Association had to provide food for all the poor and hungry in the respective districts of the capital. Although the city reopened some of its kitchens in several areas of Budapest in 1885, the *kosher* Soup kitchen was the only one open to the hungry all year round. The other kitchens closed with the end of the cold season. The Women's Association proudly wrote in one of its reports:

> By founding the new soup-kitchen we set up an institution, which is—with its wide-ranging sphere of operation—not only an indispensable benefactor for the increasing numbers of the poor but its organization and structure are also unrivalled in the Monarchy. Our institutions belong to the sights of interest in the capital.[37]

Yet, the rapid increase in the population of Budapest between the 1880s and 1890s affected the Association, too. Its records reflect the growing problems with seismographic sensitivity. The members watched with great concern, as industrialization grew and the number of poor and ever poorer people migrating to Budapest escalated. This led to further slums and pauperization, putting new burdens on charity in general and on the Women's Association in particular.[38] Its members launched a variety of collection drives to make up for the deficit in the Association's finances. The new methods ranged from fund-raising balls for the rich elite to four hundred charity boxes going around the city. This "charitable robbery"[39], as it was jokingly referred to, turned out to be one of the most effective measures to provide funds for the Association's various institutions. For the women in the Association these collections had yet another significance: It was a form of "public-relations". They wanted to attract all attention to the Association within and outside the Jewish congregation and win over as many people to the "good cause" as possible. They regularly organized charity lotteries, fancy dress-balls, high-society balls, and concerts as well as recitals, theatre plays and similar performances that were advertised in the Budapest newspapers. They even succeeded in booking famous personalities: Franz Liszt or Lujza Blaha played several times for the Association, and known writers like Tamás Kóbor, József Kiss or Sándor Bródy participated in readings there, too.

The charity events organized by the Pest Jewish Women's Association soon became *jours fixes*, attended by Jewish as well as non-Jewish high society. Not only did membership grow from 1,700 members in 1870 to 4,000 in later years but also the list of honorary members, who donated huge amounts of money or supported the Association by other means, grew longer and longer. Hardly any prominent Budapest personality was missing: mayors, lordmayors, and politicians, even prime ministers. Johanna Bischitz turned out to be a brilliant networker for this purpose, excellent at making social and professional contacts and highly efficient in finding donators for the Association. She also managed to make contacts with famous personalities outside Hungary. For example, she convinced Baron Moritz de Hirsch (1831–1896) in Paris, one of the great Jewish philanthropists of his time, to set up a foundation in Hungary and donate the almost incredible sum of 120,000 gulden per annum.[40]

The Jewish elite was, of course, among the honorary members and sponsors, too. Mór Wahrmann, president of the Pest Israelite Congregation was a supporter of the Association, as were Miksa Falk, editor-in-chief of the newspaper *Pester Lloyd*, Károly Reusz, chairman of the Pest Hevra Kaddisha, Zsigmond Kohner, future president of the congregation or Lajos Adler, president of the congregation's charity branch. Besides the regular subsidies given by the well-off persons from the Jewish community, the *Tzedakah*, the special form of Jewish charity obligating Jews to help the poverty-stricken, was also of great importance. The *Tzedakah* included all the donations given to the Women's Association on festive occasions such as weddings, births, anniversaries, on funerals or on Jewish holidays and festivals. Without all of those considerable sums, the realization of quite a few projects planned by the Association would not have been possible at all.

The Association's activities also fostered exchange between the Jewish and non-Jewish population. Not only the *kosher* Soup kitchen but also the active and regular contact with other charitable organizations in the city provided the opportunity to establish common grounds. The Jewish Women's Association worked together with the capital's Kindergarten for Poor Children, with the Fröbel Women's Association and with the National Association for Women's Education which had been the leading organization dealing with education and job training of women since 1868.[41] The Mária Dorottya Association, working to help women find employment, figures in the Association's files, too.[42] This network of connections widened in later years, as the Association became involved in the activities of the Feminists' Association, one of the most influential organizations within the Hungarian feminist movement.

At first sight, the "committee women" of the Association appear to be simply bourgeois or noblewomen dabbling in charity. Nevertheless, it is obvious that—looking at the scope of their activities—these women assumed responsibilities exceeding and transgressing their original gender roles, formulating future-oriented policies. They certainly did not belong to the "radical" elements of the women's movement; and neither the public nor other women's associations regarded them as belonging to those groups. Still, they saw their efforts in promoting the education of girls and women as an activity ensuring a proper and stable position for Jewish women in a city that was faced with rapid transition. In their own way, they succeeded in utilizing and redefining their restrictive, gender-specific social arena for their own aims.

The question remains in how far the Women's Association actually favored a smooth "assimilation", i.e. the steady loss of Jewish roots, or whether it aimed to integrate Jewish life into the non-Jewish environment. The tangible activities of the Association suggest the latter. One of the annual reports notes that with its intentionally "inter-religious charitable activities the Association has mustered everything in order to strengthen the Association from within [the Jewish community] and gain increased recognition from the outside."[43]

This strategy allowed it to move successfully between the two "worlds" for a relatively long time, and even create a "third space".[44]

The Association's original aim was to help the impoverished Jewesses and Jews who could not benefit from most of the non-Jewish social services such as the soup kitchens occasionally run by the city. The Women's Association wanted to relieve this state of distress by establishing institutions of its own. By providing *kosher* Soup kitchens, running two religious Orphanages and offering financial support, it created an infrastructure that enabled Jewesses and Jews to carry on their daily religious lives in the Hungarian capital.

Thus, the bourgeois protagonists in the Women's Association maintained a remarkably deep-rooted connection to the poor of their community and to their Judaism. Jewish charity has often been depicted as a means to pay for a "guilty conscience" assimilated Jews had for neglecting their religious roots.[45] Concerning the women involved in the ample projects of the Pest Jewish Women's Association, the contrary was the case. The activities of the Women's Association can be regarded as a "modernized *Tzedakah*". The women of the Association tried to adapt it to a modern, rapidly changing situation. Thus, the seemingly assimilated bourgeois Jewesses largely helped to preserve Jewish tradition among the underprivileged members of the Jewish community. At the same time, the activists did not only act within the private sphere of the family but were the first women to eminently take part in the public, and often troublesome, life of Budapest.

Many of those women considered this kind of activity to be a form of "autoemancipation"—for charity was the only accepted form of female public activism at the time. In this sense, the Women's Association was example-setting and pioneering by creating and supporting a public presence and work of Jewish women in Budapest. It is more than remarkable that the Women's Association was able to maintain this extraordinary presence from its establishment in 1866 for many decades to come, as well as to adapt to the rapidly changing times and build fruitful alliances with other organizations.

The Association as well as its long-term president, Johanna Bischitz, were honored several times for their restless efforts and hard-won accomplishments. In 1871, the Austro-Hungarian empress Elizabeth visited Bischitz in the Jewish Girls' Orphanage,[46] and in 1879 Bischitz received the Golden Medal with Crown from Emperor Francis Joseph. Bischitz was probably the first woman in Hungary to be so honored.[47] It was also very exceptional that in 1889 the capital's Kindergarten for Poor Children, an association very active in supporting orphaned children, erected a marble bust of Johanna Bischitz in the courtyard of the association's main building.[48] It was in honor of her large support of, and commitment to this organization. The bust was one of the very first statues in the urban space to be erected for a woman. In addition, Bischitz also gained international recognition: She was awarded the

Natalie medal by the Serbian royal family, and in Belgium she was decorated with the medal of the *Société royale et centrale des sauveteurs de Belgique* from King Leopold I.[49] In 1895, the Bischitz family was ennobled, presumably on the grounds of the accomplishments of its outstanding and courageous female family member. As a consequence, the family chose the name "hevesi" to be added to its family name, indicating that the family originated from the area of Heves. From 1906, the family called itself Hevesy-Bischitz and later just Hevesy. Its most famous later representative was the chemist George de Hevesy (1885–1966) who was awarded the Nobel Prize in his field in 1943, a grandchild of Johanna Bischitz.[50]

Katalin Gerő's exceptional and highly interesting biography was also appreciated already in her life-time. The Jewish author József Kiss dedicated his poem "Mese a varrógépről" (Tale of the Sewing-machine) to her. The novelist Elek Benedek (1859–1929) wrote a best-seller titled *Katalin* about her. Shortly before her death, Hollywood's Warner Brothers and Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer were both interested in producing a film about her life. The project, however, was not pursued further. Instead, an utterly distorted memory was evoked: In West Germany a short version of her memoirs was published after World War II in which Gerő was depicted as a hard-working, brave, and pious philanthropist who was—above all—passionately anti-Bolshevik. Any reference to her Jewish background was omitted and replaced by an alleged pious allegiance to Protestantism.[51]

To summerize, an analysis of the everyday history of the Pest Jewish Women's Association in general and its protagonists in particular, traces the ways Jewish women were living and acting at the time. In addition, it offers insights into a frequently disregarded segment of Budapest Jewry. It reveals the large number of Jewish women and men in need, availing themselves of the help offered by the Association's institutions. It is important not only to acknowledge the presence and history of the "nameless" people and groups but also to rethink abstract categories such as "Budapest Jews" and "Jewesses". The socio-economic differences and individual experiences of the young women described in Gerő's autobiography, for instance, highlight the worlds separating the rich members of the Association like

Johanna Bischitz from the poor girls and women leading an existence far below the minimum standard of living. The differences were huge; yet, they should not be regarded as a gap or segregation. On the contrary, these different women met each other day by day on the streets of Erzsébetváros or in the Association's various institutions. This long-lasting connection is confirmed by the popularity and extraordinary reverence, paid by all strata of society to a woman like Johanna Bischitz at her funeral.

Bischitz became the most prominent representative of Jewish charitable work in Hungary in the second half of the 19th century. She was one of very few women that tackled women-specific issues long before there was a women's movement in the country. She was respected not only already during her life-time but remained well-known until the beginning of World War II. However, after 1945 her biography, as well as the entire history of Jewish women's associations and its protagonists, was almost completely forgotten in Hungary. Only in the last few years have historians recovered traces of the history and role of Jewish women as pioneers of modern charitable work and as activists in women's movements and feminist organizations.

NOTES

1. Revised version of the essay originally published in Zsuzsanna Toronyi, ed., *A zsidó nő* [The Jewish woman] (Budapest: Hungarian Jewish Museum and Archives, 2002), exhibition catalogue.
2. From the obituary notice in the Jewish weekly *Egyenlőség*, no. 14, April 3, 1898, 8.
3. This historical outline is based on my MA thesis on the Pest Jewish Women's Association, supervised by Prof. Dr. Heiko Haumann (University of Basel): "Der Pester israelitische Frauenverein von 1866 bis 1914. Ein Beitrag zur jüdischen Frauen- und Alltagsgeschichte aus kulturwissenschaftlicher Perspektive" (University of Basel, 2001). See also my dissertation "Der Traum von Budapest. Räumliche Dimensionen jüdischer Lebenswelten in Budapest Mitte des 19. Jahrhunderts" (University of Basel, 2005, forthcoming); Julia Richers, "'Jótékony rablás' csupán? A Pesti Izraelita Nőegylet tevékenységi körei (1866–1943)" [Generous robbery only? The Activities of the Pest Israelite Women's Association, 1866–1943],

in Zsuzsanna Toronyi, ed., *A zsidó nő* [The Jewish Woman] (Budapest, 2002), 65–75; Julia Richers, "Johanna Bischitz", in Francisca de Haan, Krassimira Daskalova, and Anna Loutfi eds., *A Biographical Dictionary of Women's Movements and Feminisms. Central, Eastern, and South Eastern Europe, 19th and 20th Centuries* (Budapest and New York: CEU Press, 2006), 58–61.

4. Cf. Ilona Ruzicska, *A herendi porcellán* [The Herend Porcelain] (Budapest, 1938); Gabriella Balla, *Herend Porcelain. The History of a Hungarian Institution* (Herend: Herendi Porcelán Manufaktúra, 2003).
5. Béla Kempelen, *Magyar zsidó családok* [Hungarian Jewish Families] (1937–1939, Budapest: Makkabi, 1999), 132–3.
6. Magyar Országos Levéltár (Hungarian State Archives, MOL) A 57 Libri regii, vol. 67, 913–7 (April 22, 1866); MOL K 19 Királyi könyvek, vol. 71, 251 (May 4, 1870).
7. Cf. Károly Pfeiffer, *Fejér vármegye 1848. évi zsidóösszeírása* [The 1848 Jewish census of Fejér County] (Székesfehérvár, 1940), 43; László Vincze, "Hová jutottak el ezek az emberek! Töredékek a Bischitz-család történetéből" [Where did this people arrive! Fragments from the history of the Bischitz family], in *MIOK Évkönyv* (1983–1984), 489–509.
8. Cf. Gerhard Melinz and Susan Zimmermann, *Über die Grenzen der Armenhilfe. Kommunale und staatliche Sozialpolitik in Wien und Budapest in der Doppelmonarchie* (Materialien zur Arbeiterbewegung; 60) (Vienna and Zurich: Taschenbuch, 1991); Gábor Gyáni, *Bérkaszárnya és nyomortelep. A budapesti munkáslakás múltja* [Tenement building and slums. The past of the Budapest workers' flats] (Budapest: Magvető, 1992); Susan Zimmermann, *Prächtige Armut: Fürsorge, Kinderschutz und Sozialreform in Budapest. Das "sozialpolitische Laboratorium" der Doppelmonarchie im Vergleich zu Wien 1873–1914* (Historische Forschungen, vol. 21) (Sigmaringen: Thorbecke, 1997).
9. Rudolf Szentesi [József Kiss], *Budapesti rejtelmek* [The mysteries of Budapest], 2 vols (Budapest, 1874).
10. Even the poorest Jews reckoned the boys' religious education as the "utmost good". If parents were resourceless, the congregation financed schooling.
11. In her detailed account of her travels in Hungary, the English contemporary Julia Pardoe (1806–1862) noted already in the 1840s the relatively high number of Jewish women in Buda-Pest's prisons. About the reasons of their detention she wrote: "I was greatly shocked to find that four-sixths of the women there in confinement had been guilty of infanticide, a crime which is frightfully prevalent throughout the country." Julia Pardoe, *The*

City of the Magyar, or Hungary and her Institutions in 1839–40, 3 vols (London, 1840); here vol. 2, 102.

12. Cf. Bertha Pappenheim's numerous articles on Jewish women and slave-trade, reprinted in Bertha Pappenheim, *Sisyphus. Gegen den Mädchenhandel—Galizien*, ed. Helga Heubach (Freiburg i. Br.: Kore, 1992). For prostitution in Budapest, cf. Susan Zimmermann, "'Making a living from disgrace': The Politics of Prostitution, Female Poverty and Urban Gender Codes in Budapest and Vienna, 1860–1920", in Malcolm Gee, Tim Kirk, and Jill Steward, eds., *The City in Central Europe. Culture and Society from 1800 to the Present* (Hants, Vermont: Scolar Press, 1999), 175–195; Victor Karady, "Bonnes à tout faire et prostituées dans la Hongrie d'ancien régime", *Actes de la recherche en sciences sociales* 104 (1994): 3–17.
13. Memorandum Sr. Hochwürden des Herrn Dr. W. A. Meisel. Pest, 1863.
14. *Der Ungar*, no. 30, February 6, 1847, 237.
15. For a more detailed list of board members see *Első Magyar Zsidó Naptár és Évkönyv* [First Jewish calendar and yearbook] (Pest, 1848), 42.
16. The last entry dates from March 5, 1848. Cf. Magyar Zsidó Levéltár (Hungarian Jewish Archive, MZsL), PIH-I-C-2 Minutes from March 5, 1848, no. 1034.
17. To get a socio-topographic profile of the women working for the Association compare the correspondent chapter of my MA thesis. For a remarkable "discourse analysis" about this stratum of the Budapest Jewesses: cf. Miklós Konrád, "A pesti zsidó nő mint allegória. A zsidó nő ábrázolása a századforduló magyar irodalmában" [The Jewish woman as an allegory. The portrayal of Jewish women in Hungarian literature at the turn of the century], *Café Bábel* 21, no. 2 (1997): 81–94.
18. Budapest Főváros Levéltára (Budapest City Archive, BFL), IV.1303.f./XI.90/1866.
19. Ibid.
20. Cf. Statuten des Pester israelitischen Frauenvereines (1866), § 1.a–c; Statuten des Pester israelitischen Frauenvereines (1870), § 1.d.
21. Cf. *A Pesti Izr. Nőegylet évi jelentése olvastatott az 1881-ik évi junius hó 8-án tartott közgyülésben* [The annual report of the Pest Israelite Womens' Association] (Budapest, 1881), 13. The annual reports (évi jelentések) are hereinafter abbreviated as ÉJ.
22. Cf. *Magyar Izraelita* [Hungarian Israelite], no. 28, October 10, 1867, 222–3.
23. Normativ für das Mädchen-Waisenhaus (1894), 22.
24. The Orphanage's *kosher* kitchen is described in detail in *Magyar Izraelita*, no. 37, December 12, 1867, 295.
25. Normativ für das Mädchen-Waisenhaus (1894), 25.

26. Cf. Theodor Herzl, *Briefe und Tagebücher*, ed. Barbara Schäfer, 7 vols (Frankfurt am Main and Berlin: Propyläen, 1993); here vol. 6, 244, 736.

27. I would like to thank Zsuzsanna Toronyi of the Jewish Archive in Budapest for giving me access to Gerő's highly valuable and important correspondance which gave me deep insights into her large network of social contacts and helped me to understand her role within the Pest Jewish Women's Association.

28. Katalin Gerő, *Életem* [My life] (Budapest, 1929); quotations here according to the German edition: Katharina Gerö, *Erfülltes Leben* (Leipzig, 1933), 281. See also Katalin Gerő, *A szeretet munkásai. A Pesti izraelita Nőegylet története* [Workers of love. The history of the Pest Jewish Women" Association] (Budapest, 1937).

29. ÉJ 1885/86, 14.

30. ÉJ 1893/94, 15.

31. Adolf Silberstein, "Wohlthätige Frauen", *Pester Lloyd*, no. 106, April 17, 1884.

32. *Pesti izr. Nőegylet népkonyhájának szabályzata/Normativ für die Volksküche des Pester isr. Frauenvereins* (Budapest, 1894), 15.

33. These posters announced that the women at the soup kitchen provide a bowl of a delicious, hot meal and bread for everybody, regardless of religion, for only 3 crowns. The text is quoted from ÉJ 1879/80, 19.

34. Normativ für die Volksküche (1894), 11.

35. Cf. BFL IV. 1303.f./IX. 85/1872.

36. Cf. ÉJ from the years mentioned here.

37. ÉJ 1887/88, 11.

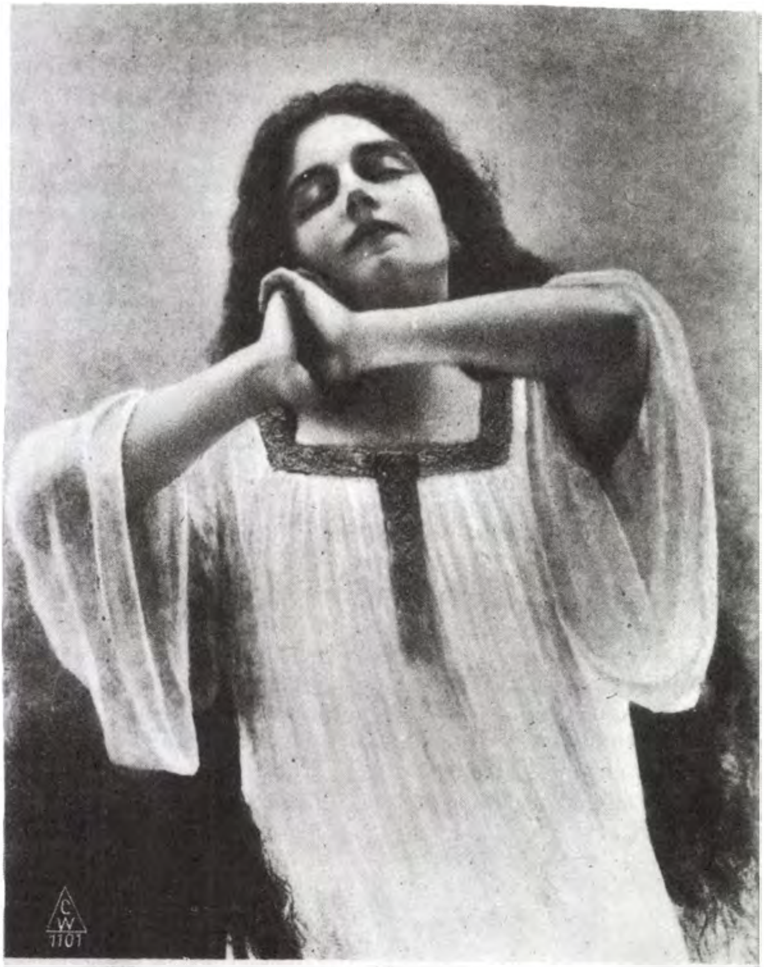
38. There was a rapid increase in the number of the Jewish population of Budapest in this period: It was around 40,000 in 1860 and already 200,000 at the beginning of the twentieth century. Cf. data in Gyula Zeke, "A budapesti zsidóság lakóhelyi szegregációja a tőkés modernizáció korszakában (1867–1941)" [The domicile segregation of the Budapest Jewry in the era of capitalistic modernisation], in László Bányai, László Csorba and others, *Hét évtized a hazai zsidóság életében* [Seven decades in the life of the Hungarian Jewry], 2 vols (Budapest: MTA Filozófiai Intézet, 1990), here vol. 1, 162–84.

39. Silberstein, "Wohlthätige Frauen".

40. In recognition of Baron Hirsch's large donations, the name of the Orphan Girls' Asylum was changed into "Baron Hirsch Orphan Girls' Asylum" in 1897/98.

41. Cf. Susan Zimmermann, *Die bessere Hälfte? Frauenbewegungen und Frauenbestrebungen im Ungarn der Habsburgermonarchie 1848 bis 1918* (Vienna and Budapest: Napvilág, 1999).

42. Cf. ÉJ 1897/98, 9 et al.
43. ÉJ 1878/79, 12.
44. Cf. Jonathan Rutherford, "The Third Space: Interview with Homi Bhabha", in Jonathan rutherford ed., *Identity. Community, Culture, Difference* (London: Lawrence and Wishart, 1998), 207–21; on the spatial dimension of Jewish life in Buda-Pest see my dissertation.
45. With regard to the exceptional munificence of the Jewish bourgeoisie, György Haraszti formulated a theory according to which this stratum only took part in the charitable work organized by Jewish associations because of their guilty conscience for neglecting their Jewish roots. Cf. György Haraszti, "Zsidó jótékonyság és mecenatúra a századfordulón" [Jewish charity and patronage in the *fin de siècle*], in *Két világ határán* [Between two worlds] (Budapest: Múlt és Jövő, 1999), 239–81; here 256.
46. Cf. a newspaper report in *Pester Lloyd*, March 19, 1871.
47. Cf. MOL K 148 Elnökségi iratok 1879 IB 670 (3330/879); *Budapesti Közlöny*, No. 111, May 13, 1879, 3748.
48. A photography of the marble bust was published in *Vasarnapi Újság*, no. 48, December 1, 1889, 785.
49. References to the celebrations in *A Pesti Izr. Nőegylet jelentése a harminczegyedik igazgatási évről 1896–1897* (Budapest, 1897), 30.
50. Concerning the family history of Bischitz-Hevesy and György Hevesy in particular, see Anna Gergely, "Adalékok Hevesy György családtörténetéhez" [The family history of George de Hevesy], *Fizikai Szemle* 7 (July 1999).
51. Cf. "Katharina Gerő", in Monika Brass, *Frauenherzen, Frauenhände. Das Buch grosser Frauengestalten* (Stuttgart: Union Verlag, 1957), 95–126; Marianne Fleischhack, "Katalin Gerő", in *Erfüllte Leben. Sechs Lebensbilder* (Berlin: Evangelische Verlagsanstalt, 1971), 69–100.



דיְ פערלאָזענע.

אַך וועמען קאָן איך, גאָט פֿערטרויען
מײַן שווערעס האַרץ און שווער געמיהט
עלענד בּין איך, ווי פֿון שטײַנער
און ער מײַן חתן ליעבּט מיך ניט.

THE WORK OF ILKA GEDŐ (1921–1985)[1]

István Hajdu

Ilka Gedő is one of the most significant, but at the same time one of the least known figures of twentieth-century Hungarian art. Although from her early youth onwards she had close contact with contemporary artists, historians of art, writers, and philosophers, her universally significant artistic œuvre is unparalleled. This is probably why her work has not really been thoroughly researched until now. Analogies could necessarily help the interpretation of Ilka Gedő's lifework if that art were just a variation of contemporary artistic gestures, however, that is not the case. Her œuvre is off the mainstream, it deviates from it and it has the traits of an outsider and, as such, it is an *irritation*—the 1946–1949 self-portrait series, for example, is definitely an *irritation* within Hungarian art. At the same time, however, this art is not a pronounced innovation that would provoke the desire for analysis because of its newsworthiness; it is the result of an absolutely conscious synthesis. The oil paintings from the period between 1970 and 1985 capture the tension between intellectual and emotional aspects and are both unprecedented and without peer in Hungarian painting.

Martin Heidegger wrote the following:

> That a work of art reveals its creative nature does not inevitably mean that it was created by an obviously great artist. Neither is this the case when a work shows the achievement of a talented artist who thus enjoys great respect amongst the public at large. A work of art does not have to show *"N.N. fecit"* but it simply has to reveal "factum est". What must become known in it is the non-covert nature of the existent and also that the work of art can happen only as such. Namely, that rather than being non-exis-

> tent it does exist. This is the initial push in a direction that the work as this particular work exists, and the continuous nature of this elusive push constitutes within the work the permanence of its being at rest in itself. This push, this "existence" of the created nature of the work, in other words, that it exists, manifests itself most intensively when the processes and the conditions under which the artist and his work emerged are unknown.[2]

While it is somewhat peculiar and *historically* ironic that Heidegger's thoughts are quoted in relation to Ilka Gedő, there are, however, two reasons for doing so. One is that this hermeneutic statement by Heidegger has had a fundamental influence on the interpretation of art. In providing orientation, it cautions the observer to attain an understanding of the work, to examine it as a primarily self-contained phenomenon, to know and then to ignore the circumstances under which the artists created it. In response to this, we really cannot say that this is an erroneous view, as the analysis of the actual works often does not call for that. In fact, sometimes an analysis even means that we have to reject the need for or the possibility of explaining the circumstances that underlie the artwork. However, on other occasions, there is an express need for an understanding of the elements that lie beyond, come after and precede the artwork's "stability of having come to a rest in itself", i.e. the facts of *"N.N. fecit"*.

Ilka Gedő's art, especially the period following 1946, as well as the works created in her second artistic period, can only be understood well by analyzing the circumstances around them. This is even truer as throughout her life the artist had always tended to analyse her life. Indeed, the continuous analysis of personal time(s) and personal space belongs to the very essence of her later work. The other reason why I refer to Heidegger's *The Origins of a Work of Art* is that one of its most important examples is a Van Gogh painting that depicts a pair of shoes. Van Gogh was an important point of orientation for Ilka Gedő.

"Promised a bag of gold to your mother"[3]

Ilka Gedő was born into an assimilated Jewish family of intellectuals on 25 May 1921. Her father, Dr. Simon Gedő (1880–1956) was a teacher of Hungarian literature and German at the Budapest Jewish Grammar School for boys. He was also a historian of literature and translated extensively from German into Hungarian. Her mother, Elza Weiszkopf (1890–1954) was a clerk. In the 1980's, Ilka Gedő's husband wrote a short history of the Gedő family.[4] Based on this study we can highlight the most important facts and circumstances of the artist's background.

> Simon Gedő studied at the Arts Faculty of Budapest University. He probably started his studies at the turn of the century. Although he encountered the more or less left wing and progressive youth circles of the times, Simon Gedő, so it seems, … remained aloof from politics. He was a close friend of Gyula Juhász, one the greatest poets of twentieth-century Hungarian literature. Three letters published in the critical edition of the complete works of Gyula Juhász bear testimony to this.[5] … In addition to Gyula Juhász, he knew a number of famous people, such as, for example, the Palágyi brothers … Béla Zalai, whom he mentioned often, Vilmos Szilasi, Piroska Reichardt, Dezső Kosztolányi. Among Simon Gedő's friends, Milán Füst also played a significant role. Just after our marriage, we visited him several times. …The Gedő family had contact with several artists. In connection with showing Ilka's artistic attempts and early works, I know that the Gedő family knew Róbert Berény and Rudolf Diener-Dénes. In this regard the married couple Olga Szélpál–Máriusz Rabinovszky[6] can be mentioned; … Olga Máté, the wife of Béla Zalai, who was a photographer of some significance, took a few photographs of Ilka as a baby girl that still exist. Olga Szélpál visited us in Fillér utca when we lived there as a newly married couple. Simon Gedő maintained more friendly contacts with Mr. Zalai, while Elza Weiszkopf with Olga Máté. … The Gedő family had an important relationship with Dezső Bokros-Biermann. I assume that he was Simon's friend, although I know from Ilka's anecdotes that at one time, when Ilka was about sixteen-seventeen, he was a regular visitor to the family. The reason why I think Bokros-Biermann came from Simon's social circle is that in one of the books on Dezső Bokros-Biermann there is a beautiful drawing in black ink of Simon Gedő. … It belongs to the portrait of Simon Gedő, in fact, its most important feature is that he was a real teacher. He had a teacher's dignity as it is described in Dezső Kosztolányi's novel *Aranysárkány* (The Golden Dragon). He was a teacher left behind from that time when even grammar school teachers were rightly regarded as professors. He was a person committed to teaching, had a very lofty way of thinking, and was a very refined and handsome man. He always liked to be well dressed

and he placed great emphasis on being elegant. However, there was a ceremonial and, consequently, a ridiculous aspect to his personality. … This might be the reason why he was totally unable to maintain discipline among his pupils. He was the type of teacher who is tormented to death by his students and appreciated by only one or two of his best pupils. As adults taking a mature view, many of his former students remembered him with love, in spite of the fact that when they were his pupils they "took his blood". In addition to the few works he wrote, a lot can be said about him on the basis of the library he left behind, which up to this very day constitutes more than half of the books retained in our home. I might start by saying that the great classics of German literature are represented almost in their entirety. … There were two complete series of Goethe's works in Simon's library, as my father-in-law was a Goethe scholar … who bought most of his library when he was attending university, and during these university years he was able to fully support himself by giving private lessons, by having other sources of income and possibly through scholarships as well. Among the papers he left behind some interesting evidence of these other sources of income was found that is worthy of note because it sheds some light on social conditions in Hungary prior to the Treaty of Trianon. When he was a university student, he covered the theatre life of Budapest by sending reports to the Árva county newspaper (it may be remarked that Árva county was one of the poorest and smallest counties in Hungary). … His doctoral thesis is an interesting topic, "Imre Madách as a lyric poet". I know about a number of his other writings, only a few of which were published in print. In addition to having translated the Hassidic tales of Martin Buber, there is an essay by him on the difference between poetry and prose narratives. … A few of his articles were published in Jewish periodicals. He was the first to have written about Franz Rosenzweig in Hungary, an obituary I think. An interesting study by him, entitled "Goethe's views on the Jewry and the stories of the Old Testament" was published in print. This is a collection of all of Goethe's comments on the Jewry of the Old Testament or the stories of the Old Testament. This highly interesting study really deserves republication. Last, but by no means least, it is worth mentioning Simon's attitude to religion. He was deeply committed to Judaism, but he followed it in his own way. This is a rather self-contradictory in view of the fact that Judaism is strongly based on emphasizing community feeling. … The sacred does not appear to one individual but only to a community. Ilka told me that her father set out and went for a walk every Saturday, but he did not go to the synagogue where he would have

> met the colleagues he more or less hated and whom he regarded as haughty, selfish, and acquisitive. … He took a stroll in the Buda hills, taking along that book of the Torah that contained the weekly reading for the given week, the text of which he read during this stroll. His large collection of Bibles should be mentioned here. … Considering the large number of Bibles, surprisingly few volumes of Jewish literature are to be found in the library. However, some of the Christian mystics are there in German, for example Angelus Silésius and Meister Eckehart. When I became acquainted with Ilka[7] and her parents, I came to know Simon as a rather respected figure who, in fact, was excluded from his family and had become lonely. Ilka and her mother were very close, whereas Simon hovered above them at an ethereal altitude. He was somewhat of a black sheep. His discrepant position, e.g. his low esteem within the family and his having been left out from the intellectual circles, all this could have been attributable to the fact that he considered himself to be very sickly, he was always very much worried about his health. Ilka thought that this was hypochondria.

The fact that Simon Gedő had the opportunity of becoming a member of the literary scene at the beginning of the 1910's is well indicated by his correspondence with Gyula Juhász. But even more convincing proof of this is the correspondence Simon Gedő had with Dezső Kosztolányi, of which a very confidential and friendly document was preserved.[8] This is a letter written by Dezső Kosztolányi to Simon Gedő in which he asks his friend to be a "harsh" critic of the volume of poetry he had sent to him. …

> On her childhood photographs Elza very much looks like a wild gypsy girl, with a longish face and rather dark hair. … Ilka told me that she inherited her red hair from a distant aunt. Apart from her hair, Ilka took after her mother. … However, more important than the similarity in physiognomy was Ilka's mental character in which emotions, together with extreme intelligence, played a great role. Ilka, undoubtedly inherited this emotional attitude from Elza.

The life of Ilka's mother was embittered by thwarted ambition. She sought compensation for her unsuccessful attempts at literature and translating literary works[9] by taking a keen interest in literature. She collected the volumes of Endre Ady and the poets of the literary monthly the *Nyugat*. She held Dezső Szomory, Dezső Kosztolányi and Milán Füst in high esteem, and, since she could read German, English and French, she was well acquainted with the literature of the 1910's and 1920's. Ilka Gedő inherited her sensitivity to moral issues from her father and, as indicated in the Endre Bíró quote, her commitment to poetry from her mother. She knew an innumerable number of poems by heart and, as shown by her later diaries and notebooks, her readings became incorporated into her life as if they created the scenes or plots, real or were analogous to them.

One can hardly escape the impression that Ilka's mother, as so often happens in life, thought that her only child, Ilka, would have the *luck* and the opportunity to bring to life and realise the very aspirations that she had originally cherished so dearly in her daughter's talent, that manifested itself very early. Elza Weiszkopf may have seen the source and fulfillment of her own dreams.[10] She admired and adored her daughter who continuously sketched with an affection that befitted a child prodigy, and she strove to raise her child, who was both obedient and grateful to her, to become an open, receptive, and emancipated person. Due to rare good luck, dozens upon dozens of sketchbooks and folders have been preserved in the artist's estate that make it absolutely clear: Ilka Gedő worked diligently to comply with her mother's modest wish to see her own aspirations come true in her daughter. The first pages that reflect more tangible results than the all-promising world of children's drawings originate from 1933. These small drawings with wavy lines represent a transition leading from instinctive creation to the preparation of more conscious studies. A conspicuous piece among them is a drawing showing an orchard coloured in green and yellow on which the rhythm of colours seems to be almost completely calculated and deliberately planned. Three sketchbooks containing more than seventy pencil, pen and watercolour drawings date back to 1934, when Ilka Gedő was thirteen years old. They are a clear indication of the artist's early-maturing talent that had already emerged at elementary school without any master. Probably, it is among these drawings that her first self-portrait[11] appears. These drawings are composed of faint lines that hardly touch the surface and barely visible traces of watercolour, showing just the eyes and the left side of the chin, achieved with a mystic expressiveness that is almost reminiscent of the composer, Arnold Schoenberg's self-portraits. To be sure, I do not believe that this is a conscious self-analysis, but it is clearly indicative of the strength of this young girl's ego.

These three sketchbooks are also important in other respects. The bodyweight studies, with faces left blank, depict quite exactly the clumsiness of the immobile together with the bitterness it entails, showing that the creator of these drawings is capable of expressing irony. Another reason is that one of these sketchbooks[12] contains a series of watercolours that reflect an artistic attempt that was never developed further: this is an attempt at stylization, creating something reminiscent of a mural painting depicting a scene. Ilka Gedő might have wished to recapitulate certain recollections from art history but may have been dissatisfied with results and thus abandoned that line.

However, the motif of *framing the frame* does appear here, through which she may have instinctively referred to the *work as being a quotation*, its being separated from reality. This framing of the frame was to return 35–40 years later with a new meaning to constitute a vision-creating component of her paintings. The framing of the frame is also important in the watercolours of the years that followed.[13]

Ilka Gedő aimed at educating herself, with neither masters nor companions, with a certain measure of spontaneity, naïveté and lack of suspicion. She made drawings of everything that came before her eyes, but mainly of people, most often as lonely models, but often observing them as participants in a scene. In the summer of 1938 she wrote back to her parents from a holiday in the Bakony mountains:

> The day before yesterday, as I was making some sketches of the peasants working with forks, I got some encouraging comments from them. One of the slim old peasants wearing boots, who had been rude and made belittling remarks until then, told me that I was learning an awful lot and that when I go back to Pest, that knowledge would be very much appreciated there! Etc., etc. The hostess of the house I am staying at recognised one of the figures, saying that anyone who saw this drawing would say that this is old É. ... I spend little time with the children. They live a life completely different from mine. They get up later, they hang around, or play.[14]

(This latter statement, only seemingly detached, would be repeated several times in the tragedy of accusations and self-accusations some ten years later.) The adolescent Ilka Gedő observed and aimed at the truthfulness and accuracy of figuration, although her emotions, displaying a strong empathy and a detached irony, are also reflected in these drawings. The drawings, watercolours and folders that have been preserved from the years 1937–1938 reveal that she already had a complete technical mastery of drawing, and this in spite of the fact that she had never received regular tuition until then.[15] She drew with perfect routine. It is clear that her hand moved incredibly fast, and if needed, she could fill the empty spaces of the sheet without hesitation. It is conspicuous, however, that the figures, be they alone or be they part of a scene, and provided that they are depicted from the front or from the semiprofile, are faceless, and the physiognomy of the faces is barely indicated (one of the few self-portraits of this period, drawn with two lines, is like that[16]). Most of the time, the artist's models are shown from the rear, or at most with a twisted body, showing only half of the body and pressing these figures diagonally into the space of the picture. The lines gradually become harder, and the "kindliness" of the earlier years is lost. We can see that up until the years of 1937–1938 the drawings display a measure of stylistic sentimentalism. This originates partly from the young artist's overflowing sentimentalism. It could also be possible, however, that this shows the influence of Viktor Erdei, the painter and graphic artist, who was a good friend of the Gedő family and who may have mediated to Ilka Gedő the Austrian- or German-type psychological inclination of turn-of-the-century painters such as Stuck or Lenbach.[17] After 1937–1938, the lines in the drawings become more severe and the space becomes simpler and emptier. The curiosity mixed with empathy, the friendliness and intimacy seem to lose some of their intensity, and the ironic rendering becomes stronger and sometimes gives way to sarcasm. This is the case even when the subjects of the drawing are members of the artist's family. In 1939, she passed the final examination for grammar school and the question arose as to what she should do. A weight was lent to this question not only by the logic of building a career, but also by historical events in Hungary. In 1938, the first Jewish Act was passed and then in 1939 the second, which meant that life also became hard for Ilka Gedő. What was to be done? Where should Ilka continue her studies? Common sense would have suggested Budapest. The artist's mother left no stones unturned and mobilised everybody. She was primarily looking for advice, and "authentication", and secondarily letters of recommendation for her daughter[18] whose talent she never doubted for a moment. Her conviction was supported by, amongst other things, a letter by Anna Lesznai, who in response to the letter in which Ilka Gedő asked for orientation replied:

> ... I found great joy in your letter; you are a humane, lovely and intelligent girl, and this is one of the reasons why you can become a genuine artist. In addition to acquiring the technique of the profession, drawing and painting a lot, you should strive to develop in yourself genuine humanity, understanding, forgiveness and patient discipline, because these are the traits that may also best serve your art.[19]

In response to the question of whether she should enroll at a college of art and, if so, to which one, she got a less sympathetic, but at the same time just as pointless reply from Róbert Berény:

> Dear Miss Gedő, for a talented person all teachers are good. In fact, it is more correct to say that to receive instruction from a teacher who is not excellent is a waste of time.[20]

It was, of course, also considered that she should leave Budapest to study art at the academy. On the one hand, however, as she had missed the enrolment deadline for the *Beaux-Arts*,[21] she could only have gone to a free school or to a summer course; on the other hand, the Gedő family would hardly have been able to afford the costs. She stayed in Budapest and in the autumn of 1939 she enrolled in the private school of Tibor Gallé.[22] Gallé regarded her drawings, conjuring up the world of Daumier, as very good,[23] but he could not give her anything professionally. After a few months, Ilka Gedő left the school.[24] Anyway, in the drawings that were made at the turn of 1939–1940 it becomes conspicuous that, with circling gestures possibly reminiscent of Daumier, the forms become too elaborate and one has the impression that these drawings were made in two phases: the first hastily drawn figuration being pressed into another visual dimension.

Ten-twelve years later, after she had abandoned her career, transcending Good and Evil, she wrote a shocking and heart-rending document that also reveals a sparkling literary talent in which she rethinks her childhood and the years of adolescence:[25]

> From the period of childhood drawings up until I passed the final examinations of grammar school and became an adult I had been drawing incessantly. Memory flashes from my past: she was ten years old and on vacation in Tyrol and she was walking about hunting for motifs in a completely unfamiliar village. She was 11 years old when she worked with implacable devotion on the shore of Lake Balaton. She was 15 when she drew men playing chess and women sitting on the benches with the determined rage of an ascetic, stretching herself to the limit to produce drawings that resemble and look like the original. In the teeming crowds of the Saturday markets, she tried the impossible, to represent the fleeting movement, flushing with an anger when someone tried to peek into her sketchbook, overcoming all the shame and nausea that she felt when she attracted too much attention. She was 17 years old when she was alone in a Bakony mountain village on the deserted slopes, and she was drawing from morning till night, following the cutter in the summer heat step by step on the slopes, always waiting for the same particular movement. She turned up unexpectedly at strange farmsteads to be received by children. Why did she not try to draw the peasant women walking with a rolling gait? Where were the Sunday couples? Why did she not have any interest in them? Fatigued, she slept like a day labourer. Weeks later she got home and she put all the drawings of the harvest on the sofa showing them to her mother. With what a boyish gesture! "A művész anyja"—Aranyat ígértél nagy zsákkal / Anyádnak és most itt csücsülsz[26] [The artist's mother: promised a bag of gold to your mother/ and look where you are slumped now] ... She was 19 years old. In the autumn that followed the grammar school final examinations, she went to the private school of Tibor Gallé. She fell in love with the master, a man aged 45 with two children, and she confessed this to him in a small, mad, lofty and lyrical letter; she humiliated herself in front of him, made herself ridiculous in front of people, began to smoke, made half-witted phone calls, she ran in the street to avoid being late for a date, started to lie to her mother at home, with whom she had, until then, been making excursions, with whom she

> slept and read in the same bed and with whom she also worked. ... On one occasion, after she had met him for a short while in the street she could not part with him, and he told her that a woman was not supposed to behave like this. ... This is the age at which E. [Endre Bíró—the author's note] started university, and L. V. [Lajos Vajda—the author's note] started his three-years of study at the Academy, which he continued with a three-year stay in Paris. And all the others started their careers conscious of their calling and of their being masculine, with all their misery and all their bonds to their mothers, and all their feelings of inferiority. They started even though they knew that this world is not the world of "individual histories", it is not the world of the oldest individual history, but only of what comes after matrilineal societies. It is the world of European history at the depth of which there is the conception and manger and several other things ... But a twenty year-old girl could say "I don't give a damn!", if she was strong and talented enough, she could say she did not care about history, social attitudes and the circumstances that, to tell the truth, do have some influence on people, even the not least talented ones. She could try to elevate herself with the oldest of trades, and she does so. The myth lives, the focus of the life of a lively and young woman painter becomes how she could sacrifice her virginity. The drawing chalk falls out of her hand...[27]

In 1939–1940, she found new models in the Jewish home for the elderly close to Marczibányi Square. Similar to her other work done in this period, it becomes conspicuous that the figuration is not just visual but shows a strong sensitivity for the body and the biological side of things. All this suggests the irony of caricatures, as if, in addition to Daumier, Ilka Gedő wanted also to follow Toulouse-Lautrec. As was earlier the case, the figures shown from the back or showing half of their backs may be seen in a diagonal composition. Instead of "man's fate" that can be depicted through faces and romanticism, the figures shown from their back reveal enigmas, inexpressible and unknowable stories. At the same time, the drawing gradually becomes more grandiose and almost monumental. At this time, Ilka Gedő participated in OMIKE [National Hungarian Cultural Association of Jews] exhibitions. It can be safely assumed that this was a good opportunity for a good friend of the Gedő family, the sculptor István Örkényi-Strasszer (1911–1944) who was the head of OMIKE's free school, to give Ilka Gedő some good advice. Maybe this is the reason why a more relaxed form of figuration comes to the fore here. In 1942 she received a commemorative award of 50 pengős from the Israelite Community of Buda in "recognition of her artistic achievement".[28] In the same year she participated in an exhibition entitled "Freedom and the People" organised by the Socialist Artists Group at the Steelworkers' Union headquarters. In addition to the Socialist Artists Group, the most important painters of the Gresham circle, as well as several artists from Szentendre also participated in this group exhibition. Thus, who could say who recommended that the then twenty-two year-old Ilka Gedő participate in an exhibition that proved to be one of the most important of the epoch, not only for political but also for purely artistic reasons? It is at this time that Ilka Gedő got in touch with a ceramic artist from Hódmezővásárhely, and, with some shorter or longer intervals, she experimented with the manufacture of trinkets up until the beginning of 1944. However, she seems to have taken little interest in either this activity or in its 'results'. She regarded it simply as a means by which she could achieve independence and earn a living. She continued to draw continuously, and she also tried out oils, but she became increasingly uncertain. In 1943 she wrote a letter to Ernő Kállai, one of the most significant art critics of the era, a theoretician who had the widest horizon, and requested that he view her works. But Kállai did not have the time.[29] This meant that Ilka Gedő was forced "to measure out" her way alone. However, the artist often made trips to Szentendre, a lovely little town on the banks of the river Danube in the vicinity of Budapest. There she became acquainted with some young artists, among them Endre Bálint, and Júlia Vajda, the widow of Lajos Vajda. It can hardly be denied that these artists, even if indirectly, probably served to some extent as role models for her. In the summer of 1944, the Gedő family was forcefully relocated to the ghetto. They moved into a flat at 26 Erzsébet boulevard, where they were able to stay with some relatives, and where they were able to survive the Holocaust and move back to Fillér street, where they had lived earlier from the start of the 1930's. In 1944–1945 Viktor Erdei, Tibor Gallé and István Örkényi-Strasser perished in the holocaust. Wherever Ilka Gedő went, she drew, including the ghetto, where she also made drawings. It is not at all surprising that these works are not at all different from those made outside the ghetto. But why should these works have been any different? Later on in her life she never spoke a word nor made a single reference to the ghetto...

"...Her tears drop into the dough..."[30]

The three years that span from the spring of 1946 to the autumn of 1949 probably represent the most eventful and most important period in Ilka Gedő's life. This is true in spite of the fact that Ilka Gedő had been drawing regularly and continuously since the age of eleven until 1949. This three-year period was the beginning and the, only seemingly unexpected, end of something, although we know that the artist began again to create art sixteen years later. Ilka Gedő's broader social world was shaped by the memories of persecution, the hardships endured in the ghetto and during the siege of Budapest in 1944 and 1945, as well as by the absurd and cruel start of the totalitarian communist dictatorship in 1949. The artist's inner emotional life was characterised by ambivalent emotions and an absence of empathy and understanding from friends, intellectual contemporaries, and "gurus". Both the broader and closer environments of the artist represented worlds of rejection. Aged 26–27, Ilka Gedő decided that she had had enough, and she would no longer draw. Although she had attained a mastery over art, she decided she would not belong to art anymore. This is an 'archetypal' situation, painful and frightening, and as it is indeed archetypal it is still true. We are utterly familiar with it: being clasped results in, or demands, a warped discipline, and this often brings about more tension and coercion than the terror coming from the outside world. Under such circumstances, the joy of work is spoilt and destroyed by a shared consciousness that has arisen from the clan spirit. This is an issue of collectivism versus individualism, collective spirit versus individual strivings, a choice between a collective ego or the individuality of the self. We should think of the absolutely predictable pattern of a machine-made Persian carpet in which any deviation from the pre-set pattern is a sin. With a certain measure of abstraction, and considering Ilka Gedő's first artistic period drawing to its close, this story can be explained in terms of a sensitive artist having been deterred from art and having been paralysed through a lack of understanding. Obviously, all this is true, but it is not the complete truth. A very important component is missing from this explanation, and this is the sense of identity, the autonomy and the strength of the Ego becoming unsure, the Ego withering away, the Ego becoming *ill fated* in the sense of Simone Weil.[31]

On New Year's eve 1945, Ilka Gedő became acquainted with Endre Bíró, her future husband, who introduced[32] her into one of the most characteristic and intriguing circles of post-war Budapest intellectual life[33] whose influence can, in an indirect way, be felt up to the present day. This is in spite of the fact that the circle never possessed any formal power or influence, and indeed, for one reason or another but always with the same end-result, it has continually been the subject of some animosity. The two central figures of the circle were Lajos Szabó[34] and Béla Tábor. The members of this circle strove to work out and to use an odd blend of methods. This system included ideas from Buddhism, a spiritualised Marxism, Jewish philosophy, Schopenhauer, Christian mysticism, theosophy, Freud and from the most recent insights of the natural sciences, and it paid a special attention to the visual arts. This should not come as a surprise as this circle was in many respects connected with two major Hungarian artistic groups of the post-war years, the *Európai Iskola* (European School) and the *Elvont Művészek Csoportja* (The Abstract Artists Group).[35] These two groups attached utmost significance to the work of Lajos Vajda. The two leading lights and gurus, but mainly Lajos Szabó, generally determined the topics and the dramaturgy of the group's regular meetings. Thus, a "hierarchic community of artists",[36] arose that did not have any formalised structure but "represented a sort of open school or, with a certain amount of conceit, a multidisciplinary research group".[37]

In the first years, Ilka Gedő silently watched and sketched the members, regarding them as models and regarding herself more and more as a model. Always and everywhere she was drawing. However, the joy felt over depiction and figuration, something that was present even in the saddest pieces of her 1944 ghetto drawing, was gradually giving way to bitter sarcasm. Small signals and scant gestures indicated that time was running short and that the "child prodigy" would abandon creating art soon; within one or two years she would make a decision—to no longer be the silent viewer. There was absolutely no solution to her conflicts; there was no way out of them. Her feelings were hurt everywhere, and thus, at least so it seemed to her, she was forced to make a tragic compromise: committing a semi-suicide she killed off the artist in herself…

The primary reason for the artist's decision was the mental traditionalism of this "circle" and its ever more generalised and radical views on the necessity for art to become "modern", as well as strong and painful emotional conflicts. However, the most important reason for the decision to give up art was the, as yet unexplored and, because of that, important issue of what we might call the dilemma of being an artist and, more specifically, the dilemma of being a female artist—a woman artist. This is what Ilka Gedő writes about in her diary notes around 1951:[38]

> In my life, in my fate, in my past my "talent" was somehow interconnected with a certain lack of belonging to a given gender. If the bond to the mother (father)[39] has the meaning of a life-axis, then if someone is an artist, and her work is also related to it, then this is the axis upon which the rope of the draw-well is rolled up, then with letting down the bucket is unrolled again, and then rolled back again. It can be logically assumed that this axis could not have been missing from my life either and it connects me with my mother. However, as she was in some sense not really a woman (her look, way of life and behavior), my relationship with her lacked sin, beauty, and mystery. It could be said that it was in sublimation of this that I was working for her. This is why my "gender" remained undefined for an unpredictably long time. All the inner movements that were related to artistic work in my life, all the skills, processes, moods, emotions and raptures were the skills, processes, etc. of being genderless. With my relationship to E. [the artist's husband-author's note] this undefined something, this gender role had become immensely more pronounced, but is the case when we compare it to a more pronounced gender role. … Now I am experimenting with an explanation that could clarify the situation even to a psychoanalyst: there is an unbridgeable gap between artistic work and femininity.

In this artistic period the most important issue for Ilka Gedő was her self. It is probably not an exaggeration to say that her hand and eyes were being led by this continuous scrutiny of her gender, a scrutiny that was both intended and meant to be detailed. It was through her self-portraits that the artist attempted to dissolve this completely absurd but nevertheless completely traceable uncertainty concerning her gender. A critical change can be seen in the astonishingly large number of self-portraits drawn in pencil, charcoal, and pastel. Not only the face and the body as a material were transformed, but the mirror was also modified, and in this study this latter aspect is more important. It is as if the still very young 26–27 year-old artist were putting on a mask: with acrimonious masochism, she viewed and depicted herself as a person without an age. The sensitively woven fine or strong lines of the earlier graphics were replaced with ruder (we might say more manly) lines that sometimes seem to be ornamental. As she was drawing her hair in a decorative form around her wax and gypsum like and shrunk face, it seems as if her hand had also been led for some moments by the hand of Munch *(Self Portrait no. 6, 1947)*. Depiction becomes tenser, more emotional even though the eyes (that elsewhere and earlier were depicted in an enchanting or ecstatic way) are almost extinguished. In the not too extensive literature on the artist, Alberto Giacometti and Antonin Artaud[40] are most often mentioned in connection with the self-portraits. The comparison of Ilka Gedő's drawings with Giacometti's work, made in the mid-1950's, is just an another example of the commonplace that similar ideas are often born under completely different circumstances both in terms of time and space. There are a lot more reasons to mention the attractive and apparently conspicuous Antonin Artaud analogy, primarily with regard to artistic formulation. Apart from the fact that Artaud was seriously ill, I believe that there is, however, a basic difference between the two artists in terms of their methods and more importantly in terms of their objectives. While Artaud's self-portraits from 1945 treat and project to the observer the psychological automatism of classical surrealism as a means of motor movements and ecstasy and at the same time auto-therapy, the works of Ilka Gedő are analytic in ways that are also true of the works (so much loved by Ilka Gedő) of Rembrandt and Van Gogh. Rather than being the continuous duplication and repeated presentation of a single human face, an activity that can result in a changing probability of success, Ilka Gedő's drawings much rather represent an examination of the self in terms of a general image of man. We might say that her self-portraits are epic; indeed, they are narrative in terms of recording those of the artist's impressions that she, at those times, had obtained in terms of the various role definitions that she had largely not expressed in words. In the drawings made towards the end of this three-year period, a tormented and anguished artistic expression appears that is permeated and softened by a floating lyrical subject that is substantially more cruel than honesty and that makes even sheer self-destruction—as with Attila József for example—"pardonable". The dark or medium-tone warm earth and skin colours of the crayon and pastel drawings and the system of lines in light cold white or silver colours also bear testimony to an organic-analytic method.

In Hungarian visual arts, there was no parallel to the completely autonomous gesture manifested in works like (*Nude Self-Portrait*, 1947; *Self-Portrait no. 11*, 1948; *Self-Portrait from Fillér utca*) for decades to come. Only in the works of János Major and later on András Baranyay and, from another aspect, in those of Tibor Hajas will this gesture be echoed by coincidence. Let us remind the reader here of another difference between Antonin Artaud and Ilka Gedő. Artaud experienced repetition as a means of achieving rapture and this in turn impelled him to further repetitions so that, amongst other things, a state of trance could be attained and from that aspect his works are manifestations of psychedelic art. In contrast to this, Ilka Gedő's self-portrait series does not rely on automatic, maniac, and trance-oriented mechanisms at all, but rather-in the strict sense of the word-the life threatening documentation of the obligation to document the self[41] and of an *excruciating role-play*.

The life and death questions for Ilka Gedő, questions that by 1949 had turned out to be unanswerable for her, can be formulated as follows: Who is an artist? And what is his or her task? These questions lead to others: Does the artist have a gender? In addition, if the artist happens to have been born a woman, can she be or remain an artist? The issue here is not the social function of art (as an empathic reader of Attila József the artist must have realised how doubtful the results of a search for the social function of art is), it is rather focussed on "being an artist", i.e. how probable it is that you can succeed morally, mentally and in practical terms if you live as an artist. Also, for Ilka Gedő, one of the most accessible twentieth-century renderings of this basic dilemma was given by Thomas Mann in his long short-story, Tonio Kröger.[42]

With some measure of bitterness, Thomas Mann is forced to recognise that his recommended solution very much follows the ideas of the *petit bourgeoisie*. This is the reason why Ilka Gedő could not use it either. For stylistic and also for mental reasons the artist was unable to embrace the socially and politically committed messianic artistic approach. Another possible path could have been the faith-based and metaphysically grounded image of the artist as a martyr:

> Yet our real and true lives are rather humble, the lives of us painters, who drag out our existence under the stupefying yoke of the difficulties of a profession which can hardly be practised on this thankless planet on whose surface "the love of art makes us lose true love".[43]

However, this concept of the artist for all its loftiness, in Budapest at the end of the 1940's, could only be obsolete. Only in the first half of the 1950's was there a Hungarian artist, Béla Veszelszky (a friend of Ilka Gedő) whose work could personify and make this approach relevant again. Just because of its finiteness and fatefulness, an œuvre and a fate like Van Gogh's that were so much thoroughly and traditionally male and Messianistic could not have functioned for Ilka Gedő as a paragon to be followed. Van Gogh could only serve as a point of orientation for the artist in an indirect way, for finding a location for her self between the artwork and artist.

> A crucified Madonna-Gioconda-Saskia-Gruschenka![44] What sort of a picture could this be. The stretched out arms elevate the breasts, and the imagination necessarily mixes up the clasped feet with the stretched out arms. What face, what expression does this figure have? Moreover, where is there some place for the long hair? Does the figure's hair curl from the right shoulder to the left shoulder? Does a veil, a canvas, or a cloak cover the body? Watch out, or it will fall off! The female body transforms the cross into a phallic symbol. The thieves until their very last moment when they breathe their last, until the muscles that move their eyeballs function, will look at the crucified female's thighs and breasts and some of the people that stand around will guffaw. Who will be the ones that will remove this body from the cross, who will wash

> this body, and dress it and put it into the grave? The more bashful viewers of the scene will rather go home.[45]

Indeed, according to her personal situation she was no longer the Madonna, but naturally the nurse *(La Berceuse)*.[46] This is how Ilka Gedő addresses her beloved Van Gogh with a monologue written in the genuine spirit of poetry:

> A whole world is against me. The Tungsram factory will immediately radiate out of itself a small A-bomb factory onto the land on the other side of the road that smells of marjoram and is bordered by fallen fences, a land where your fruit trees are standing with their twisted trunks giving birth to God. This is where the terrible yellowness of your sunflowers will soon open itself up. But I know, that in that mysterious and deserted suburban district one or two blocks away, there is another land smelling of marjoram. I walk there with planes flying above my head faster than the speed of sound so that, under the shelter of the wings of birds flying more slowly than creation, I can do the job that reminds people of their homes. Teach me what sacrifice I have to make so that I can become like you. This is what I would say if I were not seated with large breasts in an armchair by the side of a cradle, so that I can remind you of your home. You did not create it, I know. You only depicted the created nature of the world by the figuration of reality, you stuck to the forms found in nature, and you experienced a terrible fear that you might lose the "reality" of form. ... Van Gogh wrote at the start of his career: "I have two choices: I become either a bad painter or a good one. I chose the second possibility."

This is how she continues:

> I either become a good painter or a punched paper for some body exercise. Which of these two options should I choose? The answer is very simple: you should be both a good painter and a good *Berceuse* (nurse). You cannot be good at one without the other. That is what wise people usually say, but is that not somewhat wishy-washy? Nevertheless, I may ask where my message is. Maybe it can still be found. ... What if this whole artistic effort was fictitious? Maybe drawing was just an excuse to hide away from people. What could be the message of a woman painter? What are its specifics? To be a painter is a profession whose bodily and spiritual traditions have been handed down over the

> centuries by men since the time the Egyptian pyramids were built. Should I take over the way of life, the craftsmanship and the world outlook from these men? Of course I should, but then also their geniality.[47]

All these problems became really tormenting after the birth of her first son.[48] She was driven to desperation over the helplessness and fear with which she faced the looming role conflict. Up until then, finding her unique place and identifying with her unique role had seemed to be simpler although not completely exempt from conflict, in spite of the fact that she had known for a long time that she was different from her contemporaries.[49] The question of how the personality is influenced by such issues as, for example, whether harmony can be achieved between being a woman and being a woman artist, as well as the manifold problems of having been chosen for a "mission" are universal and typical of our epoch. An example of this is the life and œuvre of Sylvia Plath. At the very beginning of the 1950's, in fact, on almost the same days as Ilka Gedő, Sylvia Plath wrote down her own tentative replies to these questions in her diary, and those replies are strikingly similar to those of Ilka Gedő.[50] Between 1947 and 1949 some relatively large-scale drawings were prepared that could have anticipated a change and a solution to these dilemmas in that these works were not self-portraits and they were not figurations of living models. A seemingly disproportionate small table served as a topic. An unassuming topic that served as a genre in it without the creation of a "setting", almost in the way that Van Gogh's chair or pair of boots did. It is a slight exaggeration to see a symbol in the subject of figuration appearing in these drawings. However, we can be sure that these works are important from several aspects. Even though the drawings are only figurations of reality to a small extent, they could have served as the basis for the start of a process of objectification. They could have given rise to experiments in texture and composition. Had these experiments been applied to the self-portraits their significance would have been largely diminished by the topic of the selfportraits. With the many ways of depicting the surface, with the rhythm of changing from facture to texture and a minimal, but very forceful structure, the table drawings do not primarily represent figuration, depiction and analysis, but rather point to a concept and synthesis of form that leads to abstraction. No matter what they seem to be, or what "effect" and consequences they have, the Ganz Factory drawings, created in the years 1946–1947, have the same features, meaning that they are involuntarily quasi-abstract works.

Ilka Gedő was granted permission to visit the Ganz factory with the recommendation of the Free Trade-Union of Artists. At the factory she made charcoal, crayon and pencil drawings of the workers working at conveyor belts or in the storage rooms.[51] In these works, space and large forms are presented as a novelty. Among the planes and the blocks man is reduced to a schematic figure. An organic system that had become stuck between the geometric forms seems to be dissolving, the forms that appear in space seem to devour the figures. In a world that is rendered in brown, yellow, blue and black both the object and man get the same intensity of light. No trace of sociological interest or social critique can be found in these pictures. We cannot even suspect such an intention, and the post-impressionistic "factory genre" is unreservedly sad and depressed without any hope. However, the "circle", the artist's friends did not notice this, in fact they accused her of being "outmoded". An artist that had by then become increasingly uncertain and sceptical about her values was absolutely embittered about this lack of understanding. In the same way that she had been left alone with her queries concerning moral, existential issues and problems of identity, now she felt that her method and approach had been rejected as well. This is so much the case that even twenty-five years later she did not clearly see the significance of her self-portraits and of the table series.[52] Before abandoning art finally or, perhaps, a second afterwards, she turned to Ernő Kállai once more (this attempt to seek advice proved to be somewhat more successful than the first in 1943) concerning the artist's query about how to solve the contradiction between figuration and abstraction, an issue that has by now become entirely anachronistic, but also a problem upon which whole careers have been based upon for decades, Ernő Kállai responds with a sympathetic openness.[53] However, it was already too late. An "absolution" from this dilemma, the well-intentioned advice, was no longer necessary.

Translated by Dávid Bíró
Translation reviewed by Michael Webb

NOTES

1. Revised version of the essay originally published in Zsuzsanna Toronyi, ed., *A zsidó nő* [The Jewish woman] (Budapest: Hungarian Jewish Museum and Archives, 2002), exhibition catalogue.
2. Martin Heidegger, *A műalkotás eredete* [The origin of the work of art] (Budapest: Európa Könyvkiadó, 1988), 101. The original text in German: "Das Hervorkommen des Geschaffenseins aus dem Werk meint nicht, am Werk soll merklich werden, daß es von einem großen Künstler gemacht sei. Das Geschaffene soll nicht als Leistung eines Könners bezeugt und dadurch der Leistende in das öffentliche Ansehen gehoben werden. Nicht das N.N. fecit soll bekanntgegeben, sondern das einfache 'factum est' soll im Werk ins Offene gehalten werden: dieses, daß Unverborgenheit des Seienden hier geschehen ist und als dieses Geschehene erst geschieht; dieses, daß solches Werk ist und nicht vielmehr nicht ist. Der Anstoß, daß das Werk als dieses Werk ist und das Nichtaussetzen dieses unscheinbaren Stoßes macht die Beständigkeit des Insichruhens am Werk aus. Dort, wo der Künstler und der Vorgang und die Umstände der Entstehung des Werkes unbekannt bleiben, tritt dieser Stoß, dieses «Daß» des Geschaffenseins am reinsten aus dem Werk hervor." (*Der Ursprung des Kunstwerkes* [Stuttgart: Philipp Reclam, June 1995], 65–66.)
3. Quote from Attila József's poem: *You brought a stake* (Attila József, *Winter Night* [Budapest: Corvina, 1997], 125). The line is taken from strophe: "You brought a sharp stake, not a flower/ you argued, in this world, with the other/ promised a bag of gold to your mother/ and look where you are slumped now."
4. Dr. Endre Bíró (1920–1987) biochemist, translator. Under the title *My Memories of the Gedő-Weiszkopf Family*, he wrote a short history of Ilka Gedő's family in 1986. One copy of the manuscript is in the artist's estate, while another one is in the archives of the Institute of Art History of the Hungarian Academy of Sciences.
5. Bíró's *My Memories of the Gedő-Weiszkopf* Family highlights this contact between Simon Gedő and Gyula Juhász. In a letter to Gyula Juhász this is what Gábor Oláh writes about Simon Gedő (letter no. 110): "He is an interesting figure, this sad man, namely his soul is so healthy but his body is so sick. Where is the truth here in the Latin saying *'Mens sana in corpore sano.'?* I know it from him that one of your poems was included in a German-language anthology. Congratulations, little satire. Simon also recommended that I should contribute something. I do not know whether anything will come out of it. I do not know the translator, Mr. Horváth.

Does he translate well? Gedő recommends my poem The Moor. What is your opinion?" In letter no. 111 Gyula Juhász mentions the "noble, sad and wise Gedő, a great soul, a noble heart [the poet's italics], a true man, a man with a sad and moving fate." *Juhász Gyula Összes Művei, Levelek 1900–1922* [The complete works of Gyula Juhász: Correspondence 1900–1922] (Budapest, 1981).

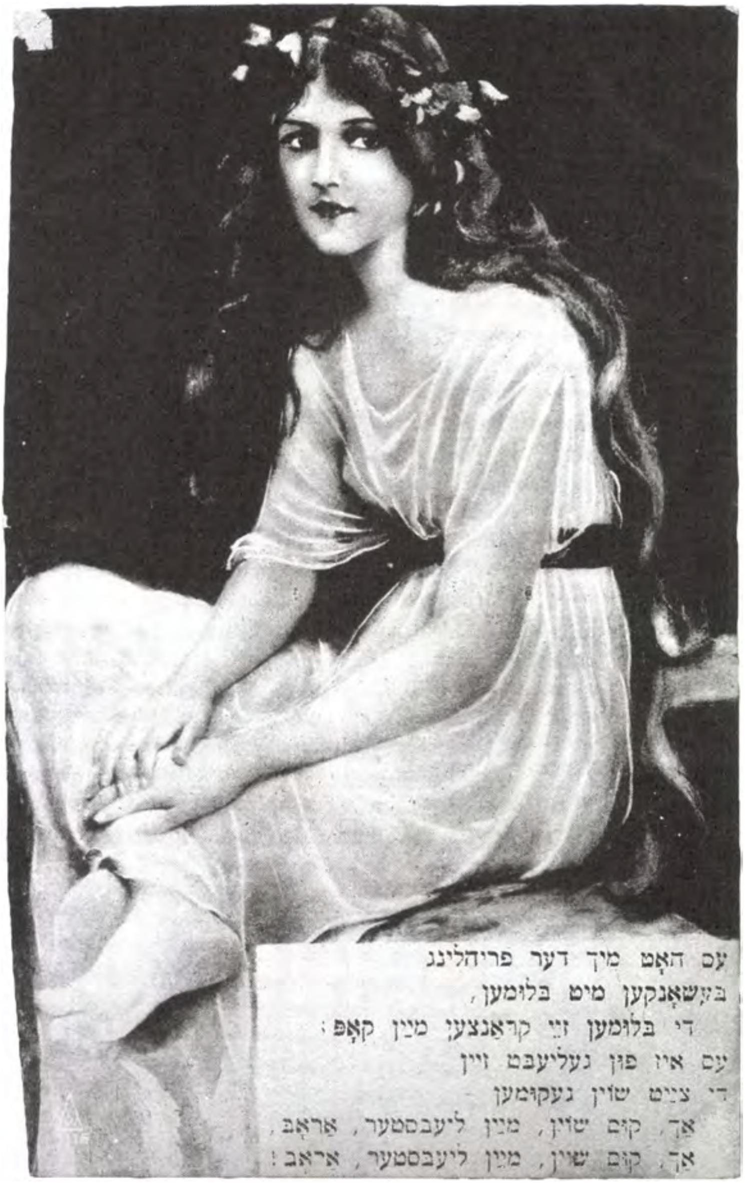
6. Olga Szélpál (1895–1968) was a eurhythmics artist and a dance teacher. Máriusz Rabinovszky (1895–1953) was an art historian. In 1936 and 1937, Ilka Gedő participated in the vacations organised by Olga Szélpál at Lepence, a small village near Visegrád. These vacations were also something of a summer school. On one occasion, Rabinovszky half jokingly, reprimanded the young Gedő, telling her that she was drawing so much just because she wanted to be a loner and to find an excuse for not having to be together with the others. She could never forgive this remark. See Ilka Gedő's Notebook no. 250 that is found in the estate as well as Endre Bíró's: Visszaemlékezés Gedő Ilka művészeti pályájára [Recollections on the artistic career of Ilka Gedő] (Budapest, 1986), manuscript, in the artist's estate, 36.
7. On the New Year's Eve of 1945 [author's note]
8. Dezső Kosztolányi, *Levelek—Naplók* [Letters and diaries] (Budapest: Osiris, 1996), 137–8. Simon Gedő may have come to know Dezső Kosztolányi through the poet, Gyula Juhász and the translator, Henrik Horváth (1877–1947).
9. The short story by E. T. A. Hoffmann entitled *Das fremde Kind* [The strange child] was published in 1921 in her translation illustrated by her elder sister's Aranka Weiszkopf's (artistic name Aranka Győri) drawings.
10. See Bíró, *Visszaemlékezés*. In this text, which has a source value, Endre Bíró aimed to give not only a picture of the artist's career but he also to comment on the background thereby unintentionally exercising a large influence on the small number of attempts at interpretation that were made after 1986. In a way that can be rightly understood, he enhanced or decreased the significance of certain aspects of Ilka Gedő's career. The aim of this was to attribute the various stages of her artistic career, including artistic crisis she experienced in 1949, to factors lying outside the family sphere, thus emphasising external factors, e.g. political explanations, and de-emphasising the effect of personal conflicts.
11. Sketchbook no. 7, 17 (in the artist's estate).
12. Sketchbook no. 6 (in the artist's estate).
13. Sketchbook no. 9, 42–43 (in the artist's estate).
14. Postcard in the artist's estate.

15. Ilka Gedő did not attend a free school before 1939. "In the rather brief preface to the catalogue of the Székesfehérvár Exhibition Victor Erdei (1879–1944) and the open school of István Örkényi Strasser (1911–1944) are mentioned. Ada was Victor Erdei's wife and the younger sister of Frigyes Karinthy [one of Hungary's most famous writers and humorists]. She more or less 'adopted' Ilka, for example she spent holidays with them in Szentendre, perhaps even on several occasions. Ilka never said that Erdei would have given her regular lessons, though he obviously looked over and commented on her attempts." See Bíró, *Visszaemlékezés*, 36
16. Notebook no. 13 (in the artist's estate).
17. Viktor Erdei (1879–1945) was a painter and graphic artist who has now been almost entirely forgotten. Lajos Fülöp, and in his wake Artúr Elek and Aurél Kárpáti, believed that Viktor Erdei was a significant artist who, blessed with a deep psychological talent, followed his autonomous career path. See the catalogue text of Viktor Erdei's 1907 exhibition in Lajos Fülep, *Egybegyűjtött írások* [Collected writings], vol. I (Budapest: Art History Research Group of the Hungarian Academy of Sciences, 1988), 339–344 and *Fülep Lajos levelezése* [The correspondence of Lajos Fülep], vols. I and II (Budapest, 1990 and 1992), at several places. See also Artúr Elek, "Erdei Viktor", in *Művészek és Műbarátok* [Artists and friends of art] (Budapest: Art History Research Group of the Hungarian Academy of Sciences, 1996), 144–145. Ilka Gedő must have for some moments been entangled in the web of sympathies and antipathies, although this was then not yet fatal. An interesting fact that might be indicative of this is that Erdei, who was in friendly contact with the highly influential Lajos Fülep in the 1900's, was regarded to be a highly significant artist by Artúr Elek. However, as indicated by the letters of Milán Füst preserved in Ilka Gedő's estate, a writer with whom the Gedő family was in close contact, from whom they received advice and whose views they held in high esteem, had a rather negative opinion of Artúr Elek's taste and talent. (See Milán Füst, *Napló* [Diary], vol. II [Budapest: Magvető, 1976], at several places).
18. As indicated by letters preserved in the artist's estate the help of number of people was sought including Raphael Patai the editor of *Múlt és Jövő* [Past and future], Pál Pátzay, Aladár Edvi-Illés and Rudolf Diener-Dénes.
19. Anna Lesznai's letter to Ilka Gedő preserved in the artist's estate.
20. Róbert Berény's card dated 12 May 1939, preserved in the artist's estate.
21. See the correspondence, preserved in Ilka Gedő's estate, with Olga Székely-Kovács (1901–1971) a painter living in Paris.
22. The painter, Tibor Gallé (1896–1944) founded his private school in 1935.
23. See Bíró, *Visszaemlékezések*, 36.

24. As indicated by documents preserved in the artist's estate Ilka Gedő also visited the school of Gusztáv Végh (1889–1937), a graphic artist and book designer. However, it is not by chance that there is no trace of this either in Endre Bíró's *Visszaemlékezések* or elsewhere.
25. Based on her earlier diaries and letters, Ilka Gedő prepared a strange compilation for Lajos Szabó, writing down her own words and immediately commenting on them. This anguished and deeply honest text is a self-tormenting psychological description of a state of mind that at the same time gives an exact reflection of the artist's readings. Notebook no. 250, located in the artist's estate, has 96 pages all written in small letters.
26. Attila József, *Karóval jöttél* (You Brought a Stake). Notebook no. 250 shows that Ilka Gedő was very fond of Attila József's poems. She identified herself with the poet so much that phrases borrowed from him are not put in inverted commas in the text.
27. Notebook no. 250, 4–5 and 23: To be a painter is "a hard job anyway, and neither did I study it with someone else giving me a helping hand, as Lajos Vajda helped Endre Bálint, or by having a friend or by belonging to a certain guild, circle or school".
28. The notification on this and the congratulatory lines are in the artist's estate.
29. "Dear Miss Gedő! I would be very glad to view your work. At a suitable time, you might bring them to the editorial office. However, for the time being, I am very busy. This means I must ask for your kind patience, as I can't tell you when I am going to have time. (Cordially, Ernő Kállai) Could you please send me a card as a reminder so that I do not forget the thing." The date on this card, preserved in the artist's estate, is 7 April, 1943. There is no trace in the documents evidencing that Ilka Gedő ever met Ernő Kállai.
30. Quote from Attila József's poem *Medallions* (Attila József, *Winter Night* [Budapest: Corvina, 1997), 38. The line is from the strophe: "The housemaid's tears drop into the dough, / this house is burning, no kisses for you! / If you hurry, you'll still get home/ smouldering eyes will light the way."
31. Cf. Simone Weil, "Szerencsétlenség és istenszeretet" [Ill-fate and the love of God], in *Ami személyes és ami szent* (What is personal and what is sacred) (Budapest: Vigilia, 1983).
32. It was more or less at this time that she decided to quit her studies at the Academy, studies that she had barely started.
33. Ilka Gedő was not completely unknown to this company. At the beginning of the 1940's she got to know Endre Bálint and Júlia Vajda who were also regular participants in these talks.

34. On Lajos Szabó and his circle see a book on Lajos Szabó in Hungarian and German: Attila Kotányi, ed., *Eikon—A képíró Szabó Lajos spekulatív grafikái / Eikon—Die Spekulativen Bildschriften von Lajos Szabó* (Budapest: Ernst Múzeum, 1997).
35. See Péter György and Gábor Pataki, *Az Európai Iskola* [The European School] (Budapest: Corvina, 1990).
36. Attila Kotányi's formulation referred to Endre Bíró's study.
37. Bíró, *Visszaemlékezések*.
38. Notebook no. 250, in the artist's estate, 15–16.
39. From many aspects an obvious analogy can be set up between Ilka Gedő and Franz Kafka. Here it is worth referring to the quality of the artist's relationship to the artist.
40. See Júlia Szabó, "Ilka Gedő's Drawings and Paintings", in *Ilka Gedő*, exhibition catalogue (Székesfehérvár: István Király Múzeum, 1980) or Péter György and Gábor Pataki, "Egy művészi felfogás paradoxona" [The paradox of an artistic conception], in *Gedő Ilka művészete 1921–1985* [The art of Ilka Gedő, 1921–1985] (Budapest: Új Művészet Alapítvány, 1997); Júlia Szabó, "Gedő Ilka művészi munkássága" [Ilka Gedő's artistic œuvre], in *Gedő Ilka művészete*.
41. "Unentrinnbare Verpflichtung zur Selbstbeobachtung: Werde ich von jemandem andern beobachtet, muß ich mich natürlich auch beobachten, werde ich von niemandem sonst beobachtet, muß ich mich um so genauer beobachten." (The inescapable obligation of self-observation. If someone else observes me, I must of course observe myself. If I am not observed by anyone else, then I must observe myself even more thoroughly.) This is a diary entry by Franz Kafka dated 7 November 1921, in Franz Kafka, *Tagebücher* (Frankfurt am Main: Fischer Verlag, 1974), 342–3.
42. The figure of Tonio Kröger had a symbolic value for Ilka Gedő . See Notebook 250, 4.
43. Quoted by the author from *Van Gogh levelei*, Officina Könyvtár, 68–70 (Budapest, 1944), 96. The English translation of this letter is quoted from *The Complete Letters of Vincent Van Gogh*, vol. III (London: Thames and Hudson, 1988), 496.
44. The person mentioned is one of the figures in Dostoevsky's novel, *The Brothers Karamazov*, having a symbolic value to Ilka Gedő. This novel "lived" a peculiar life in the "circle's" discussions as a moral topic.
45. Notebook no. 250, 57.
46. Or in a better case Saskia… see Notebook no. 250.
47. Notebook no. 250, 52–54.
48. Dániel Bíró, Egyptologist.

49. "In the other girls I really saw persons different from me, but I did not discover that they were the different women, the real ones. I just felt that they were less sensitive than me, that they were more cheerful and more lively. This caused a covert, blunt and half-conscious suffering in me without anger and suspicion. This was a silent suffering like that of Tonio Kröger's, driven by envy. I hardly remember anything that would have suggested that this rather strong awareness was related to an awareness that these girls would be much more attractive to boys … Until the age of nineteen I did not notice the opposite sex, it was nonexistent, yes it was just like this." Notebook no. 250.
50. It really is stunning that Sylvia Plath, a person having an in all respects a different social background and "social status" from those of Ilka Gedő, should formulate her doubts and fears in an identical way, word for word.
51. Some of them were shown in 1947 in the Municipal Picture Gallery at the Second Free National Exhibition.
52. "Ilka! Irmhild and I were sorry to hear that you underestimate the pencil drawings. Is this because they are the least 'relevant' because they are seemingly the most worthy to be included in museum collections?—To me, these drawings seem to be pop concept speculations realised in the various series of silvery photo negatives (to be sure, pencil together with some colour does not permit such an imaginary transposition)—I have always said to myself that the greatest difficulty for you, an artist who spent a year in Paris, might be the fact that nothing, or at most, and indirectly, very little could be felt back in Hungary of the cruel objectification of 'capitalist realism', of this cruel survival of the fittest that manifested itself in pop art for five-ten years here in the West. This trend diminished the value of the whole post-war postimpressionist 'painterly painting', and reduced those artists who did not adapt to unemployed beggars." Attila Kotányi's letter to the Bíró family from Düsseldorf, dated 26 June 1973. Thus, the manuscript is in the artist's estate.
53. This exchange of letters is published in the 1980 catalogue of the Székesfehérvár exhibition.



עס האָט מיך דער פריהלינג
בעשאָנקען מיט בלומען ,
די בלומען זײַ קראַנצען מײַן קאָפּ ;
עס איז פון געליעבט זיין
די צײַט שוין געקומען
אַך, קום שוין, מײַן ליעבסטער, אַראָב ,
אַך, קום שוין, מײַן ליעבסטער , אַראב !

THE FEMALE PROGRESSIVE WORKSHOP: AN ATTEMPT AT A COLLECTIVE BIOGRAPHY[1]

Borbála Juhász

I would like to write about a group of Jewish women born in the 1870's and 1880's who were active in feminist politics. Either in associations or by supporting the cause of female emancipation through their writings or their worldview, they were the spokespersons of emancipation or women's movements. Vilma Glücklich (born 1872) and Rózsika-Róza Bédy-Schwimmer (born 1877) were the internationally acknowledged founders of the Hungarian feminist movement. Szerén Buchinger (born 1884) and Mariska Gárdos (born 1885), two journalists with a commitment to social democracy, were important figures of the socialist woman's movement.

In the biography, we might find several common elements—in addition to women's activism. For instance, the women were among the first female university students, the first to pursue academic careers. They all took up journalism, edited newspapers, and actively participated in all kinds of committees and associations promoting women's issues. It was their leftist or radical liberal approach that led them to become involved in the Aster Revolution and the Hungarian Soviet Republic. They were punished for such activities; indeed, with the exemption of Vilma Glücklich, they were forced into temporary or permanent exile. Even before their departure from Hungary, they were active on the international scene. For instance, Rózsika Bédy-Schwimmer organized an important women's conference in Budapest in 1913, and during World War I she became a spokesperson for pacifism. She received the World Peace Prize for her work in 1937. (She was denied US citizenship because of her pacifism and her refusal to sign a statement that she would defend the new homeland if she were required to do so.) Perhaps it was her international status that led foreign authors, also women, to write papers about her.[2] Vilma Glücklich, for her part, was secretary-general of the Geneva-based International Women's League for Peace and Freedom. She organised its 1924 conference in Washington. Szerén Buchinger was the speaker of the first International Woman's Day, celebrated in Hungary on March 8, 1914.

Our heroines unequivocally followed the best Hungarian progressive traditions. The formative years of their youth fell during the two decades when Hungary miraculously caught up with the rest of Europe and most of the intellectual, cultural and architectural heritage that we now treasure was established. The liberal, soul-searching, and questioning attitudes of Hungary's golden age, coupled with a struggle for social reform and based on anti-feudalism, knowledge, and an openness to new ideas and solutions, are an integral part of both Hungarian and Jewish cultural history—as many writers have pointed out.[3] This "not belonging anywhere" becomes the source of understanding, because Jewish intellect is less bound by tradition and identity and it therefore sees the false side of every aspect. It is possible to derive the skill to relativise and to abstract from socio-psychological isolation, the Jewish "neurosis". It is the strange talent to "dedicate ideas to realistic life-changing elements", Péter Hanák wrote, quoting Anna Lesznai.[4]

The motor of middle-class development in Hungary was the emancipated Jewry—in an intellectual sense, too. It comes as no surprise, therefore, that for women socialized during the Gründerzeit emancipation, or the liberation from oppression, was linked to something else, namely women's emancipation.

Vilma, Rózsika, Szerén and Mariska were equals of their male contemporaries in every respect. Even so, in their youth they had no right to vote, and although they could attend universities, nevertheless they were restricted as to the courses they were permitted to take. Their feminist conviction[5] was not just a manifestation of their sense of justice but a belief in the resourcefulness of women. The contemporary Valéria Dienes said in one of her memoirs: "The essence of my feminism was a belief that women should be granted the right to vote not because they are just like men but because they are different from them, and they will do exactly what men do not do. If they were to do the same as men, why should we need them?"[6] Maybe that is why pacifism and a love of peace, as "typically" female virtues, surfaced in the lives of several of the women, even though in the eyes of most people such principles were considered tantamount to treason at the beginning of World War I.

They had different ideas about how to fight most effectively for women's rights. The suffragist approach, focussing on women's right to vote, characterized the bourgeois feminists. Their political ammunition included the written word and the unions. Vilma Glücklich and Rózsika Bédy-Schwimmer were both members of the National Association of Female Clerks, a branch of which separated off to form the Association of Feminists in 1904. Glücklich was the secretary-general of the International League of Women for Peace and Freedom, and Bédy was the secretary of the international women's movement in London in 1914. She was also editor of the publication *The Woman*. The left-wing members of the women's movement naturally focussed on worker's education and social issues, linking the women's issue with child protection. As well as being party activists, they also wrote articles and organised meetings and conferences. Szerén Buchinger and Mariska Gárdos edited a publication called *Working Woman* and Gárdos organized the Women's Section within the Hungarian Social Democratic Party. She was the founder of the Association of Hungarian Working Women.

Alongside their feminism, all of the women, whether they were socialists or not, had a natural concern for ordinary people. (Péter Hanák demonstrated how at the turn of the century the Hungarian radicals did not use the term "people" as did the German "völkisch" writers or the Russian "narodnyiks"—or, indeed the Hungarian "folkish" writers of the 1930's). For the Hungarian radicals, it simply meant, in leftist fashion, "the poor" or "the workers".[7]) "I am a socialist… emotionally. As I made myself a prayer, that's how I made myself a political credo separately. Honest rich people do not deserve to be mistreated, and palaces should be built … for poets. The notion of the homeland is beautiful, no one should dare to mishandle it", Flóra confesses, a fictive heroine of Sándor Bródy's play *The Schoolmistress*.[8]

My writing adventitiously picked some of the radical women who drew near to the woman's movement. Some are remembered because they played important roles during socialism or because they published memoirs, like Mariska Gárdos, a founder of the Democratic Alliance of Hungarian Women. The names of others were remembered only abroad or by a small circle of feminists in Hungary who failed, however, to do research on such women despite saying things like "Oh, sure, Róza Bédy-Schwimmer! Someone should write about her!". Meanwhile, others went down to posterity as muses, as well-known intellectual wives or iridescently colourful artists, and as creative people—or maybe in all these roles. Such women include Anna Lesznai, Zsófia Dénes, Adél Brüll, Laura Polányi, Zseni Várnai, Margit Fried (alias Ego), and Renée Erdős.

From their collective biography, we see that it was their progressive public commitment that made them feminists and committed activists of women's emancipation.

NOTES

1. Revised version of the essay originally published in Zsuzsanna Toronyi, ed., *A zsidó nő* [The Jewish woman] (Budapest: Hungarian Jewish Museum and Archives, 2002), exhibition catalogue.
2. See the works of Suzanne Zimmermann, an Austrian historian living in Hungary, and the Dutch historian Minnekke Bosch.
3. The young writer Lea Polgár dates her saga analyzing the ways of Jewish assimilation to this period. *Álmatlanság* [Insomnia] (Budapest: Múlt és Jövő, 2001).
4. Péter Hanák, "A másokról alkotott kép", in *A Kert és a Műhely* [The garden and the workshop] (Budapest: Gondolat, 1988), 107. The italics are Anna Lesznai's and appeared in the special issue of *Huszadik Század* titled "The Jewish Question in Hungary" in 1917. Anna Lesznai was at that time married to Oszkár Jászi. On the questionable views of Oszkár Jászi on the Jewish question see János Gyurgyák, *A zsidókérdés Magyarországon* [The Jewish question in Hungary] (Budapest: Osiris, 2001), 495.
5. I use the word "feminist" according to my own interpretation. Due to Hungarian cultural historical peculiarities, the word "feminism/feminist" does not sound unambiguous. These days, the public is unacquainted with the history of feminism and it is rejected in conservative circles. For more on

this, see Mária Neményi, "Miért nincs Magyarországon nőmozgalom?" [Why there is no womens' movement in Hungary?], in Miklós Hadas ed., *Férfiuralom* (Budapest: Replika könyvek, 1994), 235–45. The communist party also interpreted feminism as something negative after 1945, as a transcended bourgeois civil initiative. On the dissolution of the feminist organization see Andrea Pető, "A cél közeledett mihozzánk. A Feministák Egyesületének végnapjai" [The goal drew closer. The final days of the Feminists' Association], in *Nőhistóriák.A politizáló magyar nők történetéből 1945–1951* (Budapest: Seneca, 1998), 57–71. Therefore, the left preferred to use the term "woman's movement". For the history of Western feminism, see Katalin Lévai's book titled *A nő szerint a világ* [The world according to the woman] (Budapest: Osiris, 2000).

6. The conversation with Erzsébet Vezér was published by the Petőfi Literary Museum, and the above quotation can be found in Júlia Lenkei, "Az észtornász. Dienes Valéria" [The brain-gymnast: Valéria Dienes], in *Asszonysorsok a 20. században* [Women's fates in the twentieth century] (Budapest: Department of Sociology and Communication of the Budapest Technical University and the Women's Secretariat of the Ministry of Social and Family Affairs, 2000), 137.
7. Péter Hanák, "A kert és a műhely. Reflexiók a századforduló bécsi és budapesti kulturájáról" [The garden and the workshop. Reflections on the Viennese and Budapest fin de siecle culture], in Hanák, *A kert és a műhely*, 57.
8. *Bródy Sándor válogatott drámái* [Selected dramas of Sándor Bródy] (Budapest, 1957), 104.

דאָס געבעט.

גאָט, דו האַר פֿון אַלע וועלטען,
מײַן געבעט נעהם צו,
שטאַרק מײַן גלויבען אין מײַן האַרצען,
שענק מײַן זעלע רוה.

"YOU'RE THE EXCEPTION..." THE FIRST JEWISH WOMEN PSYCHOANALYSTS[1]

Anna Borgos

The complex history of psychoanalysis is inseparable from the social and political history of the twentieth century. The career of (mostly Jewish) women analysts is an instructive segment of this history. Their life courses are intertwined with the social changes, and reflect the ideologies related to gender roles, too.

In the beginning of the twentieth century, the medical profession and dealing with psychic illnesses seemed to be a relatively popular and attainable professional identity for women. On an international level, the proportion of women was higher among psychoanalysts than in any other scientific field. (In the 1930s, it was 30% in Europe, while only 5% of doctors were women.) Before 1930, the number of women in the analytical movement grew faster than the number of men (even though there were always far fewer women in the movement than men). Although most of the psychoanalytical institutions were led by men, there were more and more women in leading positions from the 1920s: they worked as teachers, instructors, editors, etc. Many of them became really successful in the 1930s, when they emigrated to the United States or London (like Anna Freud, Melanie Klein, Helene Deutsch or Therese Benedek). Altogether, 35% of the early women analysts gained significant institutional positions and professional recognition as they made remarkable contributions to the theory and clinical practice of psychoanalysis.[2]

If we examine the background of the increased presence of women in psychoanalysis, we can identify several factors. Firstly, women began to "conquer" the profession in a period when (due to a lively women's movement that had a huge impact on public thinking) women began to have more options in several fields: those of work, education and the public sphere.[3] As for Hungary, from 1895, women could go to universities to study arts, medicine and pharmacy. Secondly, marginalized groups, women among them, generally have more chance to enter new professions and disciplines (photography is another characteristic example of this phenomenon in the early twentieth century).[4] It is more difficult to find a place in an institutional system that already has a set hierarchy, and especially to actively participate in the process of institutionalization. And thirdly, the notion of psychoanalysis, healing the psyche is linked with traditionally feminine values like the capacity for attachment, empathy, intimacy or emotionality.

Being Jewish was an important "intermediate variable": most of the first psychoanalysts were of Jewish descent, regardless of their gender or geographical region. At the same time, like in most scientific fields during the first decades of the—century, the proportion of Jews among women was even higher than among men. It seems that (assimilated, middle-class) Jewish people were more open to the changes in women's positions and roles, more men wanted to have educated female partners, and they were more able—in fact, they were often compelled—to be socially mobile.

So-called "feminine values" gained a momentum during women's professional specialization, too. If we look at the first female analysts, we can see that their activity was largely connected to the theories of femininity or womanhood, the analysis of children or the examination of the early mother-child relationship. This tendency reflects women's major social roles of the age. At the same time, the meaning and significance of the analyst's gender was different for the first generation of women psychoanalysts than it is for contemporary feminist theorists, as Nancy Chodorow also elucidates.[5] It seems that the question of their gender was less significant for them (either as therapists or as theorists) than was their Jewish origin. This is explained by their more favorable, equal and autonomous position, both professionally and socially, on the one hand, and by the given historical conditions on the other hand. "Sex" cannot be regarded as an absolute, ahistorical category: it is always embedded in specific social and cultural conditions.

Women's representation in classical psychoanalytic theories and therapy reflects and reinforces other forms of the cultural representation of women in the era. The masculinization of production and activity was part of the public discourse. Women were the objects of science and art dominated by men; they were the "Others", riddles to be solved, people fulfilling traditional gender roles. On the other hand, this was the era when they began to see and understand the possibilities and conflicts changes in the social space had brought about, and to take part in inducing these changes. Sigmund Freud attempted to resolve this contradiction in the sentence quoted in the title of this study. In his 1933 lecture entitled "Femininity", answering a question he supposed they would ask, he said the following to woman analysts listening to his speech: "All we had to say was: 'This doesn't apply to you. You're the exception; on this point you're more masculine than feminine.'"[6]

Although Freud's theories related to women and femininity[7] contain several preconceptions, he definitely supported women who wanted to work as analysts (he helped them join the Psychoanalytical Society). Several of his women colleagues contributed a lot to the theory and practice of psychoanalysis: Helene Deutsch, Karen Horney, Lou Andreas-Salomé, Marie Bonaparte, Sabina Spielrein, and later Anna Freud and Melanie Klein. (However, he made it obvious in the sentence cited from his lecture on "Femininity" that he regarded them as exceptional women.)

Freud's views on women's intellectual and professional capabilities were rather ambiguous. He valued intellectual independence, but at the same time expected people to be loyal to his theoretical concepts, and could hardly tolerate dissidents. Despite being polite to women and supporting the openness of institutions to them, he regarded and valued them basically as the mediators of psychoanalysis who can help disseminate and popularise its theories. In the following, I explore what positions these "exceptional women", the first practicing European psychoanalysts could find and shape for themselves during the early years of the institutionalization of the profession.

Most of Freud's female disciples (like Anna Freud or Helene Deutsch) identified with his theories: even with his views and terminology concerning women.[8] Some of them, however, detached themselves from his theories: e.g. Sabina Spielrein, Karen Horney, Joan Riviere and to some extent Lou Andreas-Salomé (the latter three were not Jewish, I will comment on this later).

Clearly, it was Anna Freud who was most identified with her father and his theoretical views. Even so, she did not write on problems related to femininity; instead, her work focused on child psychology and "female" care. Like her father she identified public and professional performance with masculinity. She analysed children from the 1920s. Freud began to analyse her in 1918, and the analysis lasted for four years. Their relationship was characterized by a form of mutual dependence. It was difficult for anyone to fill his place for Anna Freud. In the end, it was partly the continuation of his life's work, and partly her very close friendship ("Boston marriage") with the American Dorothy Burlingham that filled this place.

She was the secretary of the International Psychoanalytical Association, and the director of the Vienna Psychoanalytical Training Institute from 1935. Her first major work was the *Introduction to the Technique of Child Analysis* (1927) (which led to a conflict between herself and Melanie Klein), and with this book she founded the field of child psychopathology. Her second and perhaps most significant book is *The Ego and the Mechanisms of Defense* (1936), which was a present for her father for his 80th birthday. Her psychological work with ill and underprivileged children seemed to be more important for her, though, than her theoretical work. In 1941, she and Dorothy Burlingham founded a boarding kindergarten in war-stricken England, and they organized an informal training program and supervision for its workers. After the war, she established the famous Hampstead Clinic (the present-day Anna Freud Institute) with Kate Friedländer, which later became a training and research institution as well.[9]

The analytical training institute of the Vienna Psychoanalytical Society was led by Helene Deutsch (Rosenbach) from its founding in 1925 until 1935, when she emigrated to the United States. She (with two other women) graduated from the medical university of Vienna in 1907. She was a political activist, too: she took part in founding the women workers' movement. She was analysed by Freud (professionally and personally) from 1918. She taught several people of the next generation of analysts. She migrated to Boston in 1934, and led the Boston Psychoanalytical Institute between 1939 and 1941. She worked as an analyst and wrote until her eighties. She wrote about George Sand (1929), the psychoanalysis of neuroses (1930), but her main work was *The Psychology of Women*, published in 1944. She dealt with typically "female" subjects: female sexuality, menstruation, sexual intercourse, pregnancy, childbearing, infertility, the mother-child relationship and the menopause. She basically adopted Freud's terminology (e.g. female passivity, masochism, narcissism, penis envy). She idealized motherhood: she attributed an almost phallic power to mothers. She thought about intellectuality as a basically masculine sphere.[10] In her case, the contradiction between her theoretical views and her own career is especially conspicuous.

Melanie Klein (Reizes) was born in Vienna, but she lived and worked in Budapest for more than a decade from 1910 (she was Sándor Ferenczi's patient), and she wrote most of her works in London, after 1926. She was the founder of the object relations theory; she thought that the pre-Oedipal phase and the role of the mother (as the person who defines the relationship between the baby and the outer world and the baby's ability to love) was of central importance. According to Klein's model, the baby links its good and bad experiences to part objects, e.g. the presence or lack of the mother's breast during the first few months of its development; she called this phase, filled with aggressive fantasies, the paranoid-schizoid position. In a later phase (which she called the depressive stage) the split is followed by the integration of good and bad objects.

Karen Horney (Danielsen), who was born in Hamburg, worked in the Berlin Psychoanalytical Institute. She emigrated to the US in 1934, and became an active member of the analytical society in Chicago and New York. We have to highlight her very original theory of neurosis: she saw it as much more continuous with normal life than previous theorists, and indeed, regarded it as a way of interpersonal control and coping. Her most original writing on women is a study entitled

"The flight from womanhood",[11] which disputes Freud's concepts of femininity. Its basic question is whether the image about women's psychosexual development is realistic, and to what extent it reflects a male point of view, the standpoint of the observer's gender.

According to Horney's analytical experience, women's desire to be men had very little to do with their early penis envy. She interprets the flight into men's roles as an escape from the guilty conscience caused by the Oedipal desires on the one hand; on the other hand, she says (and this is her really modern critical view) that the flight from being feminine is also a consequence of women's very real social subordination: "Until now, because of our masculine civilization, women have had hardly any chance to sublimate according to their nature, as only men could work in 'decent' professions. This had a definite impact on women's feelings of inferiority, as they had no chance to perform well in the professions ruled by men." Instead of interpreting the penis envy as an essential phenomenon, Horney understood it as an envy toward powerful positions associated with men, linking psychological and social factors. The flight from womanhood in fact means the flight from being powerless; and men's motivation to perform well can be interpreted as the compensation of their "womb envy": the desire to leave a trace in a more direct way.

According to the interpretation of Carolyn Heilbrun,[12] for Horney, not being Jewish, it was easier to abandon Freudian theories. Jewish women analysts were accepted (as Jews and as intellectual women) within the institution of psychoanalysis in a society where anti-Semitism got more and more intense. They did not risk this acceptance and safety by becoming intellectual heretics, and thus basically remained faithful disciples. This might be true for Riviere and Salomé, but Spielrein is an example who contradicts this motif.

The first woman president of the British Analytical Society was *Joan Riviere (Verrall)*, from 1926. For many years, she was also the editor (responsible for translations) of the *International Journal of Psychoanalysis*. She was one of the four women in the training committee, which had six members (the other three women were Ella Freeman Sharpe, Sylvia Payne and Melanie Klein). She was analysed by Ernest Jones between 1916 and 1920. She felt a strong transference-love towards Jones, which he could not deal with: in fact, he occasionally fell out of his role as analyst at the beginning. Jones commended Riviere to Freud's attention, saying that she was a "typical case of hysteria".[13] After Freud, Melanie Klein began to analyse her. They later worked together in London.[14] She translated many of Freud's works into English, and she played a crucial role both in the institutionalization of psychoanalysis in England, and in making Klein's system of thought known in Vienna. There is a clear connection between her remarkably modern study written in 1929 ("Womanliness as a Masquarade")[15] and her life. According to Riviere, the masquerade of womanliness is the self-defense of the intellectual woman in the masculine system of the profession, where she can gain power due to her knowledge, but she must compensate this: she must repress her desires of achievement and rivalry, as she is not supposed to challenge the system in which she holds a certain position if she wants to evade anxiety. Riviere's career was characterized by her fight to found her position in the profession on the one hand, and her role as a translator and mediator between the most decisive figures and theories of psychoanalysis on the other.

Sabina Spielrein was also initially a patient: she was treated by Jung. They became lovers and colleagues subsequently. Their love relationship may have helped her recovery, but it resulted in difficult emotional entanglements, "a secret asymmetry,"[16] which was made even worse by Jung's incorrect behavior. Spielrein had a major effect on the theories of Freud and Jung (Jung's concepts of the "anima" and the "shadow" as well as Freud's theory on the death drive), and she was also a mediator between the two. She worked at the University of Zurich, with Freud in Vienna, in Berlin (at Max Eitingon's hospital), in Geneva, where she analysed Piaget, and then she held seminars at the department of child psychology of Moscow University and ran a psychoanalytical clinic for children. During the 1930s, when totalitarianism began to rule the political climate and psychoanalysis was also subjected to persecution, Spielrein returned to Rostov, her city of birth. She was there in June 1941, when Hitler attacked the Soviet Union, and Spielrein was killed in a pogrom with her family.[17] Spielrein is a prominent example of women who had complex roles in the history of psychoanalysis: as patients, lovers, creative colleagues of male analysts, and as mediators between them.

Lou Andreas-Salomé was productive in combining aptitudes that are considered feminine and intellectual capital/power.[18] This power was partly manifested in her intellectual relationships with talented men (like Nietzsche, Paul Ree, Martin Buber, Freud and her husband, Fred Andreas) or in her sexualized intellectual relationships (with Rilke and Victor Tausk). She had many roles: she was both active and reflective, inspiring and mediating. Salomé was an independent, autonomous woman who made a full and most autonomous use of the channels that were open to women in the era. She can be regarded as a representative of the "New Woman," although she did not connect her philosophical and psychological investigations with social issues. Her "affirmative femininity" provided a place for her among the male analysts, but did not threaten them. She met Freud in 1911, when she was past fifty, at a psychoanalytical congress in Weimar, and this is when she became involved in psychoanalysis. Freud appreciated her abilities, but his impression about Salomé reflects his dichotomizing approach to gender roles (the perfect blending "of feminine charm, intuition and longings with the relentless sharpness of a masculine intellect").[19] Salomé began to practice psychoanalysis intensively, but she herself did not undergo analysis. Her views on eroticism and narcissism differed from Freud's theories: to her, these concepts had a somewhat specific (and essentialist) meaning. Salomé's erotic psychology (which she had begun to develop before getting involved in the institutionalized psychoanalysis) unified the effects of Nietzsche's romanticism, Solovyov's Russian religious theory and psychoanalysis. According to her, eroticism is an "all-embracing phenomenon" for women, "the culmination of their human essence". Narcissism is not a pathological state, but positive self-love, "an affective identification with existence", the highest stage of development, the source of love, creation and ethical behavior.

Hungarian Jewish women analysts

The life course of the first generation of Hungarian women psychoanalysts says a lot about the historical, political and ideological processes and changes in twentieth century Hungary.[20] Their paths, although they differ in many respects, are quite similar, as they are all located at the problematic cross-sections of various identities as for their origins, gender and profession. The twentieth century "receptions" of being Jewish, a woman and a psychoanalyst are all problematic: all of these were restricted and refused, ranging from being silenced to the danger of being killed. The fact that so many of them had to change their residence, language, name or profession says a lot. The following is a short outline of the historical periods and the changing position of psychoanalysis. Its theories became known during the first decade of the twentieth century, in and through leftist liberal groups; the Hungarian Psychoanalytical Society was founded in 1913; then followed World War I, the Hungarian Soviet Republic and its defeat, retaliations and emigrations. During the 1920s, the climate became more and more conservative and nationalist, anti-Semitic and partly anti-Freudian. At the same time, the Budapest school of psychoanalysis was reorganized, and it worked successfully. During the 1930s, fascism grew stronger: anti-Semitic laws were passed, and this was followed by a new wave of emigration at the end of the decade: several analysts fled the country. Then, after World War II, there was the trauma of the Holocaust and mourning. During the 1940s and '50s, analysts had to choose: they either committed themselves to communism (which was either their own choice or they were constrained to do so), or they were ignored. Anti-Freudian ideologies dominated, and the analytical society was dissolved in 1949; psychoanalysts tried to reach a compromise or find informal ways to practice their profession. Finally, the pressure began to ease during the 1960s and '70s, and psychoanalysts had more chance to work.

The first Hungarian women psychoanalysts also worked mostly, but not exclusively in the field of child psychology and on subjects like the mother-child relationship and the psychology of femininity. The scope of their activity included the study of schizophrenia, ethnopsychology or the formation of training analysis.

Vilma Kovács (Prosnitz) is regarded as the "guardian angel" of the Hungarian Psychoanalytical Society. Like many others, she began as a patient: Sándor Ferenczi began to analyse her at the end of World War I, as she suffered from neurotic symptoms of anxiety. After she recovered, she began to work on analyses under Ferenczi's supervision.[21] She became a member of the analytical society in 1924, and she became Ferenczi's closest colleague. She supported the society financially, too: with her help, the society could open its public consulting room and library in 1931. Her main field of interest was the technique of analytical training. Based on Ferenczi's methods, she organized the Hungarian system of training and supervision. She wrote articles on the significance of the active technique and mutual transference.[22] She was entitled to administer Ferenczi's scientific legacy. Her career exceeded working as an analyst: she was also a supporter and organizer of institutions, which strengthened the status and effectiveness of psychoanalysis in Hungary.

Alice Bálint (Székely-Kovács) (Vilma Kovács's daughter) began her analytical training with Hanns Sachs in Berlin, in 1921, together with her husband, Mihály Bálint. She also studied ethnology. She finished her analytical training with Sándor Ferenczi in Budapest. She focused mainly on issues related to child psychology, although she did not analyse children; her work had en effect on Anna Freud, too. She wrote on the connections between the physical development and the emotional surroundings of babies, as well as on the significance of child- and reality-centered upbringing.[23] She can be regarded as one of the pioneers of object relations theory. Her educational and consultative activity was also remarkable. She propagated the use of psychoanalytical ethnography in child psychology. Together with her husband, she migrated to England in 1939; they settled in Manchester, where she died unexpectedly three months later. According to Mihály Bálint, they always shared their thoughts and worked together.

Lilly Hajdu's life story is an especially tragic emblem of how politics and the history of psychoanalysis were interlocked in the twentieth century, how history and rigid ideologies interfered in scientific life, and how these define someone's personal and professional life course. She began to work in Miskolc, and then at the Budapest mental ward led by Ernő Moravcsik (as a colleague of the writer Géza Csáth, treating the poet Gyula Juhász). After World War I, she became the director of an institute treating mentally handicapped people (called the Frim Institute), which she transformed into her own institute, together with her husband, the doctor Miklós Gimes. Her therapeutic and theoretical work focused on the psychoanalytical treatment of schizophrenia.[24] Her husband, who was being trained as an analyst, was deported during World War II. Lilly Hajdu survived the holocaust: she spent years hiding and escaping. After the war, like several traumatised survivors, she joined the Communist Party. Together with Imre Hermann and Ferenc Mérei, she used every effort to make psychoanalysis accepted, to "save" it against the autarchy of Pavlov's doctrines. She was the president of the Hungarian Psychoanalytical Society from 1947 until its dissolution in 1949. During the 1950s, she worked in the Hungarian Institute of Neurology and Mental Disorders—she was the director of the institute for three years. She was retired in 1957, but kept on working in her private practice. In 1958, she had to outlive another tragedy: her son, Miklós Gimes Jr. was executed with Imre Nagy and others. Her daughter had migrated to Switzerland in 1956. Lilly Hajdu would have followed her, but she did not get a passport from the authorities. The third refusal of her request was the last straw for her: she committed suicide in 1960.[25]

Lillián Rotter was an expert dealing mostly with psychoanalytical child psychology and pedagogy. She was trained as an analyst by Imre Hermann, whose theories of attachment, ego psychology and early object relations theory influenced her work. She published her most original ideas on women's psychosexual development. Contrary to the classic Freudian arguments about women's penis envy, passivity and their predisposition to masochism, which were followed for example by Helene Deutsch, Rotter thought that women's subjectivity and sexuality were much more autonomous.[26] According to her, there is another, less visible process taking place besides the penis envy: girls recognize that they can induce changes in the penis. This experience has a magical character for them, which implies control and activity instead of passivity. They experience the activity of the libido in a mediated way, pertaining to men's desires. This, according to Rotter's analytical experiences, often arouses fears in men. For this reason, women *act* as though they are passive and weak, so that they should not threaten men's narcissism. (Cf. Joan Riviere's similar theories.) Women's narcissism is, however, also satisfied when they "get hold of" the man/penis. Rotter's train of thought is paradoxical, though, as she saw the feeling of being attractive to men and utilizing their emotions as the key motive of women's autonomy, power and sexual pleasure. This means that a woman's desire is not evoked by men but by the desire men feel towards her. With this, she maintains the image of women as the "obscure (and narcissistic) subjects of desire" (even though she interprets this as a possible instrument to gain power), and she questions the idea of active, "subjective" femininity. During the 1930s, Rotter held popular seminars for young mothers in the consulting room of the Hungarian Psychoanalytical Society. When it was dissolved, she could only work in a laboratory. Later she worked at the child protection department of the city council, took part in organizing a psycho-hygienic counseling service, and continued her private practice as an analyst. She began to hold case discussion seminars in 1965. She wrote a study on Goethe, but it was not published, and has not been found yet.[27]

Edit Gyömrői is a record holder in changing her residence, language, name and profession.[28] She became interested in psychoanalysis very early (in the 1910s) through her uncle, István Hollós. In 1918, she participated in the fifth psychoanalytical congress held in Budapest. After the fall of the Hungarian Soviet Republic, she migrated to Vienna. She lived in Berlin in the 1920s, and was trained as an analyst by Otto Fenichel. She left Germany in 1933, as anti-Semitism was getting stronger, and lived in Prague for a while. Then she returned to Budapest and took over the treatment of the poet Attila József from Samu Rapaport. Together with her husband, she migrated to Ceylon in 1938, with the "second emigration wave". She began to study Buddhism (she even took her doctorate), worked on ethno-psychoanalytical research projects, and became involved in the local leftist and women's politics, too. She moved to London in 1956, with her fourth husband. She was a practicing psychoanalyst in the Anna Freud Institute until she was eighty years old. During the 1950's, she wrote two novels in German.[29]

Kata Lévy (Freund) was a child psychologist who was analysed by Freud in Budapest and in Vienna until 1920. Her brother, Antal Freund was a philosopher; he also owned a beer factory, and he was the most important supporter of psychoanalysis in Hungary. She offered psychological counseling for teenager girls in the Jewish High School during the 1930s. She migrated to England in 1954, together with her husband, the physician Lajos Lévy. She worked as a child analyst at the Hampstead Clinic in London; she was a colleague and friend of Anna Freud. As they had lost everything during the war, the couple got financial support from a psychoanalytical fund.

Margit Mahler (Schönberger) came from a family of doctors in Sopron. She had already become an Austrian citizen when she began to be trained as a child psychiatrist at a clinic in Vienna, in 1923. Ferenczi recommended her to Helen Deutsch, with whom she began her analytical training in 1926. She studied from several analysts subsequently. Because of Nazi persecution, she left Austria in 1938: she emigrated to England and then to the US with her husband, the chemist Paul Mahler. She joined the Analytical Society in New York, and worked as a child counselor at the psychiatric institute and as a professor at the Columbia University. Her main fields of research were the pre-Oedipal mother-child relationship, the stages of symbiosis and separation.

Teréz Benedek (Friedmann), who came from a family of merchants in Eger, took part in organizing and directing the analytical society in Leipzig. She began to work at the children's ward of the University of Bratislava, and was trained to be an analyst by Sándor Ferenczi. She migrated to Leipzig in 1919, and organized the analytical society. In 1936, she followed her husband to Chicago, where she participated in training analysts. Her theoretical work focused on psychosomatic endocrinology; in the 1950s she published a book on women's psychosexual cycle.[30]

Lucy Liebermann was a clinical psychologist who had trained to be a pianist, but because of a tendovaginitis, she became interested in movement therapy and then psychoanalysis. She graduated from the Hungarian training college for teachers of the handicapped in 1926, and began to work in the college's research laboratory, which was led by Lipót Szondi, and in the State Institute for People Living with Speech Defects. She finished her education as a psychotherapist in 1932: she was trained by Mihály Bálint. In 1937, she organized and led an educational counseling service at the Child Clinic of Budapest University, while she was also teaching at the training college for teachers of the handicapped. At first, she dealt with the psychological background of speech and movement impediments, and then she began to work on research in the field of child psychology: she studied childhood personality disorders and suicides, and explored the use of group therapy. She was a founding member of the Hungarian Association of Psychology, and held various functions in its executive committee.

This short summary perhaps gives an outline about how women began to participate and find their place in psychoanalysis, and how they shaped and enriched psychoanalytical theory and practice. Their life stories and careers are emblematic of the life course of middle-class professional women in the early twentieth century, and form a significant part of the era's social and scientific history. It is worth finding their place in the "canon" of psychoanalysis.

NOTES

1. Revised version of the essay originally published in Zsuzsanna Toronyi, ed., *A zsidó nő* [The Jewish woman] (Budapest: Hungarian Jewish Museum and Archives, 2002), exhibition catalogue.
2. See Lisa Appignesi and John Forrester, *Freud's Women* (London: Penguin Books, 2000); Nellie L. Thompson, "Early Women Psychoanalysts", *International Review of Psycho-Analysis*, 14 (1987): 391–406; Estelle Roith, "Freud's Women Disciples", in Roith, *The Riddle of Freud. Jewish Influences on His Theory of Female Sexuality* (London and New York: Routledge, 1988).
3. On women's participation in higher education in the early twentieth century, see Viktor Karády, "A társadalmi egyenlőtlenségek Magyarországon a nők felsőbb iskoláztatásának korai fázisában" [Social inequalities in Hungary in the early phase of women's participation in higher education], in Miklós Hadas ed., *Férfiuralom. Írások nőkről, férfiakról, feminizmusról* [Patriarchy: Writings on women, men and feminism] (Budapest: Replika Kör, 1994), 176–95.
4. See Csilla E. Csorba, *Magyar fotográfusnők* [Hungarian women photographers] (Budapest: Enciklopédia Kiadó, 2000).
5. Nancy Chodorow, *Feminism and Psychoanalytic Theory* (New Haven: Yale UP, 1989).
6. Sigmund Freud, "Femininity" [1933], in *The Standard Edition of the Complete Psychological Works of Sigmund Freud*, ed., trans. James Strachey (London: The Hogarth Press and the Institute of Psycho-Analysis, 1953–1974), vol. 22, 112–35.

7. Some of Freud's writings about women and female sexuality: "Three Essays on the Theory of Sexuality" [1905]; "Fragment of an Analysis of a Case of Hysteria" [1905], in *The Standard Edition*, vol. 7, 1–122; "The Taboo of Virginity" [1918], in *The Standard Edition*, vol. 11, 191–210; "Femininity" [1933], in *The Standard Edition*, vol. 22, 112–35.
8. See Carolyn G. Heilbrun, "Freud's Daughters", in Heilbrun, *Hamlet's Mother and Other Women* (London: The Women's Press, 1991), 30–37.
9. On Anna Freud, see "Anna Freud: The Dutiful Daughter", in Appignanesi and Forrester, 272–306; Elisabeth Young-Bruehl, *Anna Freud: A Biography* (New York: Summit Books, 1988).
10. On Helene Deutsch, see "Helene Deutsch: As If a Modern Woman", in ibid., 307–28; Janet Sayers, *Mothers of Psychoanalysis: Helene Deutsch, Karen Horney, Anna Freud, Melanie Klein* (New York: Norton, 1991).
11. Karen Horney, "The Flight from Womanhood" [1926], in Harold Kelman ed., *Feminine Psychology* (New York: Norton, 1973), 54–70.
12. Heilbrun, „Freud's Daughters", 34–35.
13. Appignanesi and Forrester, 352–65.
14. Stephen Heath, "Joan Riviere and the Masquerade", in V. Burgin, J. Donald, and C. Kaplan eds., *Formations of Fantasy* (London, New York: Routledge, 1989), 45–61.
15. Joan Riviere, "Womanliness as a Masquerade" [1929], in *Formations of Fantasy*, 35–44.
16. See Bruno Bettelheim, "A Secret Asymmetry", in Bettelheim, *Freud's Vienna and Other Essays* (New York: Vintage, 1989), 57–81.
17. On Spielrein, see Bettelheim; Aldo Carotenuto, *A Secret Symmetry. Sabina Spielrein Between Freud and Jung* (London: Routledge, 1980); Alexander Etkind, "Sabina Spielrein: Tiszta játék egy orosz lánnyal" [Sabina Spielrein: A pure playing with a Russian girl], in Etkind, *A lehetetlen Erósza* [Eros of the Impossible] (Budapest: Európa, 1999), 246–322.
18. On Salomé, see Alexandr Etkind, "Világok és korok határán: Lou Andreas-Salomé élete és munkássága" [At the crossorads of worlds and centuries: the life and work of Lou Andreas-Salomé], in Etkind, 21–77; Biddy Martin, *Woman and Modernity: The (Life)Styles of Lou Andreas-Salomé* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1991); Viktor Mazin, "The Femme Fatale—Lou Andreas-Salomé", *Journal of European Psychoanalysis* (2002 Winter–Spring): 155–72; Anikó Juhász, "Lou Andreas-Salomé nőképének és nárcizmus-elméletének néhány vetülete" [Lou Andreas-Salomé's images of women and theories of narcissism"], *Pro Philosophia Füzetek*, 35 (2003), 3–34.
19. See Heilbrun, 31.

20. The source of biographical data, if not marked otherwise: Pál Harmat, *Freud, Ferenczi és a magyarországi pszichoanalízis* [Freud, Ferenczi and psychoanalysis in Hungary] (Budapest: Bethlen Gábor Könyvkiadó, 1994).
21. Judith Dupont, "A Kovács–Bálint dinasztia" [The Kovács-Bálint dynasty], in Vilma Kovács, *Fortunatus öröksége* [Fortunatus' legacy] (Budapest: Párbeszéd Könyvek, 1993), 7–22.
22. Kovács, *Fortunatus öröksége.*
23. See Zsuzsanna Vajda, "'A gyermekszoba a legtitokzatosabb dolgok egyike'. Bálint Alice munkásságáról a közelmúltban újra megjelent két könyve kapcsán" [Children's rooms are mysterious places. On the work and writings of Alice Bálint], *Pszichológia* no. 2 (1992): 131–51.
24. Lilly Hajdu, "Adatok a skizofrénia analíziséhez" [Data to the analysis of schizophrenia], in Sigmund Freud, Almásy Endre et al. [1933], *Lélekelemzési tanulmányok* [Studies in psychoanalysis] (Budapest: Párbeszéd Kiadó and T-Twins Kiadó, 1993).
25. On Lilly Hajdu, see Sándor Révész, *Az egyetlen élet. Gimes Miklós története* [The only life: The story of Miklós Gimes] (Budapest: The 1956 Institute and Sík Kiadó, 1999); Regula Schiess, *Wie das Leben nach dem Fieber*, with Gábor Magos and Juca Gimes (Giessen: Psychosozial Verlag, 1999).
26. See Lillián Rotter, "A női genitalitás pszichológiájáról" [The psychology of female genitality], in *Lélekelemzési tanulmányok*, 55–64.
27. On Lillián Rotter, see Andreas Benz, *Lillian Rotter: Sex-Appeal und Männliche Ohnmacht. Psychoanalytische Schriften* (Freiburg: Kore Verlag, 1989).
28. Christiane Ludwig-Körner's volume on women analysts in Berlin contains a chapter on Gyömrői: Christiane Ludwig-Körner, *Wiederentdeckt. Psychoanalytikerinnen in Berlin* (Berlin: Psychosozial Verlag, 1999), 119–48. See Anna Borgos, "Alkotás, gyógyítás, változás. Gyömrői (Gelb, Rényi, Glück, Újvári, Ludowyk) Edit életútja" [Creation, healing, and change: Edit Gyömrői (Gelb, Rényi, Glück, Újvári, Ludowyk)], *Thalassa* nos. 2–3 (2005): 185–94.
29. One of them, *Reconciliation* was published in Hungarian in 1979, the other, *Against the Current* is still in manuscript.
30. Therese Benedek, *Psychosexual Functions in Women* (New York: Ronald Press, 1952).

THE JEWISH WOMAN AS AN ALLEGORY; THE PORTRAYAL OF JEWISH WOMEN IN HUNGARIAN LITERATURE AT THE TURN OF THE CENTURY[1]

Miklós Konrád

I

"Budapest, May city. My pen is unable to depict all your beauty. You are like a fair woman whose features are all graceful and familiar, who captures and detains with her unspeakable brilliance. am a prisoner of this city, this burning woman who invites a kiss."[2]

These are the lines of the star of literary life at the turn of the century, the Jewish writer Sándor Bródy, or Alexandre Bródy to be exact, since they were published in a French language anthology. The volume, published on the occasion of the millenary celebrations, was supposed to present, in a glorious light, the "modern" Hungary treading the path of industrialization and economic development with neophyte enthusiasm. Budapest was the most spectacular proof of this boom. Regarding its population, in 1867 it was the seventeenth largest city in Europe but by 1900 it was the eight already, surpassing Rome, Hamburg or Liverpool with its 733,000 inhabitants and slowly approaching Vienna. The metropolis was young, self-confident, and proud of its Western allure, its palaces, its underground—the first on the Continent—and its more than five hundred cafes.

For the first time in Hungarian literature, writers took notice of a city that was increasingly theirs; they left their country environment for it, and they were born there in growing numbers. Budapest became a real metropolis, both administrative and literary centre: it was hardly possible or desirable to stay away.[3] Budapest, the framework of authorial life, the exalted or condemned city—or rather its inhabitants—became for the first time the object of their studies. The working girl, the schoolmistress, the coquette, the upper middle class housewife—that is the "modern woman"—entered Hungarian literature whose authors and readers now came mostly from the emerging bourgeoisie. The writers, especially if they were popular, increasingly felt the pressure to reflect a picture that strengthened their readers' view of the society they were living in.

One distinguished type emerged from among these female personages: the wealthy banker's wife, the elegant lady from Lipótváros (the 5th district of Budapest), that is: the Jewish upper class woman. Why she of all people?

Finally emancipated in 1867, Hungary's Jewish population—which rose from half a million at the time of the Emancipation to almost one million in 1910—played a fundamental role in modernizing economic structures, introducing Western cultural norms, and establishing Budapest as an industrial, financial and cultural metropolis. By the turn of the century, the Jewish upper class controlled some 90 percent of Hungary's modern banking system and industrial plants.[4] By that time, it had become obvious that, contrary to the vision of the future put forward at the time of the Hungarian *Vormärz*—which foresaw the Hungarian nobility as the future backbone of the country's modern middle class—it was, in large part, the Jews who constituted Hungary's modern commercial and industrial middle classes, and particularly the financial upper classes. In the 1900s, Hungarian Jewry's social influence was unparalleled in Europe.

The Jewish upper class was therefore of symbolic importance. Naturally, if we associate the all-embracing lemma of "modern" with the Jews, and the Jewish women, we must also note that Jewish female society also had other representatives who were all the more modern that they questioned middle class order and morals. Jewish women were in a majority among the founders of the nascent feminist movement and played an important role in the social democratic party, as well as in progressive intellectual societies like the so-called Sunday Circle.

Even though the writer Sándor Vay alias Sarolta Vay did not hesitate to call feminists the "most damned type of modern women"[5] and even though anti-Semites equated feminism with Jewish women (as they so often did in the case of progressive movements and Jews), nevertheless the most striking phenomenon, generating the most curiosity or antipathy, was the rise of Jewish middle and upper classes, which were generally identified by contemporaries with Budapest, or rather, its business centre, the Lipótváros. The confusion was understandable, but largely wrong. The majority of Budapest's Jewish inhabitants—203,687 persons in 1910 representing 23.1% of the total population—were in fact lower middle class people. As for the "Lipótváros", if everybody used it as a synonym for upper class Jews, by the 1910s, the metaphor did not really reflect the reality any longer. Although in 1910, 28.9% of metropolitan Jewry lived in the 5th district, "the cream of the crop of the Lipótváros society—wrote three Jewish writers in a little book on the district published in 1913—are precisely those who do not live in the Lipótváros, but rather around the Városliget park."[6]

The "Lipótváros" was a rather closed world. Closed, as are all elites that indicate their acquired or inherited position by emphasising their detachment from the lower classes, and closed because it was Jewish. Defined by the traditional elite whose prestige rested upon features that gained actually sense in their contrast with characteristics attributed to the Jews, the prevailing mentality established an intellectual partition wall around even the most acculturated Jews, which limited and perverted the formation of personal relations. "A real baron who is not a poor man and yet mingles with rich Jews is in itself a suspicious phenomenon",[7] says a Jewish journalist in a novel by Ferenc Herczeg published in 1903. As for the impoverished nobility who attended the soirees of upper middle class Jews in hope of some kind of financial benefit, "they sink deeper in the eyes of their former society—wrote Ferenc Molnár—than countesses ending up at music-halls".[8]

At the same time, one should add that the same distancing was also manifest among the Jewish upper classes, either by desire to avoid potential humiliation, or by bourgeois disdain towards the traditional noble elite, or even by simple indifference. Among other indicators, the tendency of endogamy within the Jewish upper middle class reflected their reluctance to mix with the traditional elite. As the Jewish journalist, Ödön Gerő wrote about the Lipótváros: "Even its time diverges from that of the outside world. That one has days and nights, it has *jours* and *soirées*. ... [local people]) attend the evenings of the

Hubay quartet, it is only because Popper plays the violoncello part."[9] Is it necessary to point out that Jenő Hubai was not Jewish but David Popper was?

Furthermore, there was a question of visibility in everyday life. The Jewish businessman enthroned dreadfully in his office, invisibly for the masses of employees, returned home by fiacre or automobile, or had himself driven to the Lipótváros Club whose very few Christian members played the questionably honourable role of the honorary goy. The lack of over-refinement in his attire, simplicity in his taste—even if it originated in the pseudo-Puritanism, which was forced upon him by middle class morals and if his social status paradoxically required him to flaunt his wealth in certain situations—did not make it possible for Lipótváros mythology to crystallize in the character of the Jewish man.

The situation was different in the case of women. Although the topology of their urban presence also implied some kind of segregation—namely the absence of men—the uncompromising ritual of shopping on Váczi Street or Kossuth Lajos Street in the morning, walking along the esplanade in the afternoon, or the mounted walk along Stefánia Boulevard, made them more visible to the eyes of "others". Jewish upper middle class ladies had other almost obligatory pursuits, which they shared with women of the traditional Hungarian elite and which established a regular connection between them. These were, for example, the numerous charity societies, the specific locations of female socialization, whose meetings "are attended, as one knows, by the Pest *société mixte*".[10]

As the main representative, the substantive attribute, not to say the "object" of her social group's wealth, it was one of the roles of the Jewish upper class woman, elegant and richly bejewelled, to show off, to make her husbands prosperity felt. Alone or at the side of her husband, it was she who was noticed. In his book about Budapest, the French André Duboscq devoted a few pages to the "Jewish question" (in a favourable sense towards Jews), but when he described his urban walks, he mentioned only women. "Jewish women stand out with the voluptuousness of their becoming curves and rather gaudy outfits. They flag their hats with feathers and ribbons. One might see them everyday at the promenade."[11]

Finally, Jewish women—as contemporaries emphasized accommodatingly—seemed to take on this role rather willingly. Identifying with their role, they even accentuated it, making it spectacular, and laying themselves open to both admiration and aversion. As Jenő Heltai wrote about two Jewish upper middle class women from the Lipótváros:

> The husbands were simple but wealthy Jews. Simplicity and Jewishness did not show on their wives. Their wealth was all the more obvious.[12]

(That their Jewishness did not show does not mean it was not visible, since Heltai noticed it. The aspiration of Jewish upper middle class women to get rid of their Jewishness—proven impossible by the fact that none of the authors let it go unremarked—belonged in fact to their characteristic traits in the eyes of the contemporaries.

This way a symbolism was born, contrasting the Jewish woman—whose proud beauty has been gladly referred to by literary clichés ever since Walter Scott and Chateaubriand—and the Jewish man, whom the descriptions—this was certainly the case in the turn of the century Budapest literature—portrayed as ridiculous and unhandsome, the absolute opposite of the perky Hussar. His "simplicity" when coupled with wealth, became "vulgar". As the philosopher Bernát Alexander wrote half ironically, half bitterly:

> We cannot walk nicely, cannot greet well or salute finely, we are not polite enough; we yell, push, we are brash, our clothing is not fashioned to the latest trend, we love thick watch-chains and so forth.[13]

The views expressed about the Jewish upper middle class woman, much more so than in the case of her husband, offered a mirror of the dominant society's response to the rise of the Jewish bourgeoisie.

All portrayals, including the literary ones, are partial, all generalizations are partially false. Naturally, there were exceptions. Did this Jewish upper middle class woman really exist? Obviously not all elegant middle class female citizens, all "modern women" were Jewish. But we see what we want to see. And this is what interests us, not so much "reality" but rather its representation: the picture of the Jewish woman in literature—drawn mostly by non-Jewish authors, as the reflection of the "Jewish question" that was, as another French author noted in 1908, "one of the most important questions arising now in Hungary".[14] This Jewish woman was real though, but just as much a metaphor. The picture drawn of her did not just refer to her but was an allegory of this "Jewish question".

II

Because of our approach, we do not aim to draw the portraits of real life women. Besides, in the turn of the century Budapest, we would search in vain for archetypes as Rahel Varnhagen, whose extraordinary personality overrode her own story to reflect other people's lives. The lover of the great poet Endre Ady, Adél Brüll, alias Léda, just to mention the most obvious example, was more a Parisian (or "Nagyváradean") woman than a Budapester.

This way, although some background seems to be useful, we shall limit ourselves to a more than curt introduction.[15] "A comfortable home, large household, system and organization all around",[16] wrote the younger sister of György Lukács and daughter of the ennobled banker József Lukács about her childhood spent in Budapest at the turn of the century. Jewish upper middle class life: spacious apartment full of bric-a-bracs, devoted servants, banker, businessman, lawyer, doctor or reputable intellectual husband, homemaker wife, the real mistress of the house, whose job was the beautification of the home, and whose days were spent instructing the personnel, shopping, strolling along the promenades, visiting, and playing the piano. The children—increasingly cared for by French or English, rather than German nurses—received thorough nurturing, girls were under strict surveillance, but middle class morals allowed boys to have affairs with bonnet-makers or the maid as long as the flirt remained discreet.

All these were characteristic not only of the Jewish middle and upper middle classes, but there were some especially typical attributes indicating the modernity of their lifestyle. Included among these were the birth and death rates, which were far lower among Jews in Budapest than among non-Jews, the consistent practice of birth control and the aging of the population being classical indicators of modern societies. The decrease in the birth and death rates was certainly even more significant within the richer metropolitan Jewish categories, although there are no statistics on this topic. Divorce, another characteristic of modern Western societies, was also more frequent among Budapest Jews than among other denominations.

With special regards to women: the level of education among Jewish males was higher than the average, but the proportion of Jewish women at universities exceeded even that of Jewish men. The doors of Hungarian universities—at least the medical and humanities departments—opened their doors to women in 1896. During the next ten years, 48.6% of female students were Jewish, while in 1895–1896, "only" 29.5% of male students were Jewish[17] (Jews represented 20.4% of Budapest inhabitants in 1900). The first woman to attend the medical university, Sarolta Steinberger and the later feminist Vilma Glücklich, attending the department of philosophy, were both Jewish.

The increasing ratio of Jewish women in secondary schools and universities was naturally noticed by contemporaries, and linked with the frightful challenge of modernity, as the words of one female character of Mihály Babits' novel, *Halálfiai* (Deathwards) indicate:

> We will work... study... women can learn, too... I am starting a new life,... ... Nellike's faint heart got frightened: all this was so extreme! [...] To go to secondary school, like the Jewish misses![18]

Evidently, this resulted in Jewish women's dominance in professions where the presence of women was still new: in Hungary in 1910, 52.6% of private female medical doctors, and 38.5% of female journalists and editors were Jewish. As Viktor Karády wrote:

> By any measure, Jews played in Hungary a primary role in legitimating the behavioural model of the Western middle class woman.[19]

As Babits wrote about the young non-Jewish hero of *Halálfiai* who arrives in Budapest around 1900 to continue his studies: "At that time, Imrus almost despised Christians. ... He declared that he would be proud to be considered a Jew. Anyway, all his fiends were Jewish, since, he said, Christians and 'gentlefolk' were all brainless and uncultured."[20] As Jews played a significant role in distributing modern culture, from the incipient forms of mass culture to most of the avant-garde movements, the metropolitan Jewish middle and upper middle class was equally overrepresented among the consumers. As a renowned antisemitic author wrote about the 1900s: "According to all contemporary testimonies it is almost exclusively the Jewish intelligentsia that purchases books, just as it is also the one filling theatres and concert halls. Writers and publishers all bustle up to adapt to its taste."[21] Jewish audience—female audience: if Gyula Krúdy wrote about the poet and editor in chief of *A Hét* (The Week), József Kiss, that "he writes his poems for women who do not correspond on the green envelope of Pictorial Family Papers any more",[22] it was not just a habitual question since the editor in chief knew very well that "the weekly may count on one reliable and eager audience, under any circumstances: the ladies".[23]

The entertaining literature that flourished at the turn of the century contrasted the pursuit of knowledge and attraction towards intellectual novelties of Jewish upper middle class women with the minor intellectual curiosity and ignorance of their husbands regarding new trends. As Jakab Berzsenyi or rather "Jacques de Berzsenyi", one of the main characters of Zoltán Ambrus' novel portraying the Lipótváros upper class self-ironically remarks: "The only obsolete thing I tolerate in my apartment is myself, personally."[24] His endeavour to persuade his daughter Elza about his interest in classical scholarship is not really convincing:

> Do not think that I am not interested in literature. I do like nice essays, I am just reading the history of Enlightenment by a certain Schultz, it is a very informative book, I will lend it to you, I fall asleep over it anyway.[25]

A character of a Ferenc Molnár short story complains to her girlfriend how little understanding her husband shows for that crucial accessory of the Lipótváros *soirées* who is "the modern", namely the young man who is specifically invited to be impertinent to women, mock the rabbi, spit on the carpet and damage the furniture:

> My husband wanted to throw him out the last time, but I stopped him from doing so. My husband, you know, spends all day at the office and does not have any time to study literature, so he does not understand this character. But we had lots of fun.[26]

If the wife's condescending attitude towards her husband is meant to be funny, her attitude also reveals the implicit critic of the author: in their snobbish thirst for novelties, the Lipótváros "trendys", Molnár suggests, were inclined to confuse literature with fashion. Was it not their primary aim to distinguish themselves from others (first of all from other Lipótváros women) in this permanent competition in which the introduction of the newest cultural trends, rather than reflect true intellectual curiosity, served as an indicator of social standing?

> I always have to create new things for women—complained an uninspired 'modern' in Molnár's short story—because they are tired of Lohengrin with the blonde beard, ... they are tired of the Dorian Grays and the Oscar Wildes and all those new fashions, but they still want more and more because Lipótváros is not a sweet little whitewashed and fox-grape-showered super-sober Calvinist rectory, but a demanding culture-intelligent society wishing constantly for something new.[27]

Be they Jewish as Ferenc Molnár and Ödön Gerő, or not, as Zoltán Ambrus and Gyula Szini, these (male) authors were inclined to reduce the erudition of these women to a ludicrous thirst for the new. As Ödön Gerő wrote about the Lipótváros:

> Recently even philosophy became a drawing-room topic. Since the books of Nordau have established drawing-room wisdom, women are threading in the maze of sophisms.[28]

Gyula Szini was even more categorical:

> The *haute financière* chit-chats about Nietzsche and Schopenhauer, debates free love with pleasure if you mix in follies-jokes, adores English-German ditties and in fact knows nothing about nothing.[29]

Do these views correspond with reality? This, as we have already mentioned, does not belong to our topic. In any case, one perceives between the lines of these opinions the male society's aversion to the new and intellectually competitive generation of women fighting for emancipation. Regarding the satirizing of the husbands' illiteracy, suffice it to say that the erudition of certain Jewish upper middle class men was proverbial. It was the case of Zsigmond Kornfeld, one of the most influential bankers of the turn of the century or József Lukács, whose broad knowledge almost frightened the young Albert Gyergyai. As for the allegedly false erudition of their wives and daughters, if József Lukács's daughter was indeed disturbed by the superficial chat of her mother talking about books she never read, the new generation of Jewish upper class girls made a deep impression even on the young literary critic Marcell Benedek, who wrote in his diary around 1910:

> One or the other put me to shame because of their literacy as Görgy Lukács once did.[30]

III

We have already quoted Zoltán Ambrus' book, *Baron Berzsenyi and his Family*, published in Budapest in 1902. It is worth dwelling upon it for a while. The novel portrays in easy style the daily life of an ennobled, converted upper class Jewish family, it achieved significant success and was reprinted five times in the first year of its publication. At first it strikes one as a set of clichés formed of Jewish upper bourgeoisie—this would be interesting in itself—although it provides a much more refined picture, partially contravening these clichés.

The mother's portrait ("Sadly fat, ... still looks good at concerts, diamond pendants as big as my fist. Otherwise insignificant"[31]) is depicted as the Jewish upper class woman usually was: deeply snobbish, she ardently longs for the recognition of the aristocracy, which naturally rejects her, while she fears to be considered Jewish, which she naturally is by everyone. Paralyzed by her constant concern about the way the others, that is, the non-Jews look at her, she is unable to get rid of her stiffness in the most intimate situations. She scolds her husband in the evening as they sit tête-à-tête in their boudoir for daring to call her "sweetie": "I have asked you a number of times not to call me that. What will people think? Say 'my dear'."[32] In bed in the evening, she reads the Gotha Almanach, amazing even her husband, and would like his name, changed from the Jakab to Jacques, to be retranslated into the hyper-Hungarian Zalán, "because Jacques is Zalán in Hungarian, isn't it?"[33] When somebody refers to her husband by his real name, she almost blacks out: "Jakab! Jakab Berzsenyi! Why not 'that kike' right away?"[34]

Similarly to her mother, the beautiful and cold Blanka, her older daughter, hastens to look as arrogant and as little Jewish as possible, she is a rather roughly made character, serving as the counterpoint to the portrayal of her younger sister. Elza is a lovable and contradictory personality, she ironically criticizes the behaviour of the members of her class, not sparing any touchy subjects. One of these is the charity work of the Jewish upper middle class. Wealthy Jews were all the more active in philanthropic works that they saw it as the most appropriate disproof of the accusation of miserliness directed against Jews. Disclosing the diligently cultivated but also hypocritical charity work which primary aim was not so much to alleviate misery as to imitate the aristocracy, Elza mocks her mother and sister who go "to beg for the poor": "It is posh to give, but it is chic to beg. To give, you only need money, but begging also requires Christian humility. In a word: Mrs. Metternich does it and that's enough for Mom."[35]

Elza is not less ironic about one of her girlfriends, who comes from an ennobled and converted family like her and "is only happy when country chaps mistake her for Countess Thurzó".[36] Criticising her older sister, she points out the inclination of the Jewish upper class—so often mocked by contemporary Christians and even more harshly attacked by Jews themselves—to model their behaviour after the traditional elite, "to mimic the gentry" to use the term of the period:

> All this is not so ridiculous as your eternal fear of being ridiculous. To live all your life according to others' tastes when this means a constant inconvenience, is there anything more ridiculous than this?[37]

Reality is ambivalent. It should logically follow from Elza's behaviour that she accepts her Jewish origins, which she usually does. On some occasions, though, she takes offence at the tiniest hint regarding her Jewishness. To her sister, who is irritated by Elza answering a question with another question because "it is a Galician custom", she declares:

> You can call me whatever you want: Khazar, Assyrian, Polish, or Spanish. But do not forget that your ancestors did not arrive in this country on horseback, either.[38]

But to her cousin, who reminds her that their grandmother "was not Catholic yet", she retorts, scandalized: "I won't stand for such jokes!"[39]

Elza also talks about her fate as a woman. A conversation about the social standing of actresses offers her the occasion to disclose her desires. This is by the way the only topic where her older sister shares her views. As Blanka remarks regarding actresses:

> They are independent, they earn money, they live a feverish, nice life and let us admit it, we envy them.[40]

Worshipped in both Vienna and Budapest, and admitted to the most exclusive circles, the actresses embodied a twofold ideal. Having achieved financial independence, they were freed from men's control while their special status allowed them to live a rather free sexual life in a society which otherwise considered extra-conjugal sexuality as some kind of anarchistic element and admitted its practice only in the case of men. Elza, who secretly hangs on the "licentious" writings of Marcel Prévost and Jean de la Vaudère, admires and envies actresses, because "if they misbehave, they are overlooked, not like the ones art does not absolve".[41] She longs for an independent life, and explains to her cousin how "terrible" she considers the thought of devoting her life to one man, and sacrificing it for him. As it appears, the converted young girl sees the source of her emancipational endeavours in her Jewish background.

> You know—she explains—the love of freedom is very strong in me. This might be the consequence of the fact that our foremothers, the poor oriental slaves partook in everything but freedom.[42]

Zoltán Ambrus' novel painted a picture of the Jewish upper middle class and its women whose nuances we can hardly track down in the mirror held up by politicians or committed intellectuals. "Jacques de Berzsenyi", to say a word about the "hero" of the novel, accepts in the public life the values of the traditional elite, but gives voice in private to the successful businessman's contempt for that very same elite, he is both a snob longing to play cards with aristocrats and a proud self-made-man despising those who were born with a silver spoon in their mouths, a converted Jew who avoids mixing with other (converted) Jews while always cracking Jewish jokes and showing solidarity with the miserable Galician Jewry. Ambrus' portrayal provides an image of the Jewish elite's ambivalent attitude towards both the values and representatives of the traditional elite and their own Jewishness that very few of his contemporaries were able to show. The non-Jewish author's sympathy for his Jewish characters, especially Elza, is obvious. The novel, as we have mentioned, was met with great success. Given that the reading public was far from being exclusively Jewish, it indicates that there was—at least at that time—an audience which transcended religious affiliations and consisted not only of the entrenched camps of Jewish and Christian middle classes.

In 1903, one year after the publication of Ambrus' book, another entertaining novel consisting mainly of dialogues came on the market. *Andor és András* (Andor and András) did not deal specifically with the Jewish upper middle class, it told the story of two journalists' complicated friendship in this Hungary of the turn of the century where "everyone is liberal but nobody can stand the Jew".[43] One of them, Andor, is Jewish and the other, András, is the offspring of an impoverished noble family. This work of Ferenc Herczeg was reprinted four times between 1903 and 1911, then another three times between 1925 and 1934. A German translation was published in Vienna as early as 1904.

The reader gets acquainted with the Szingers of Szilas, an ennobled but this time unbaptized Jewish family, through Andor, the Jewish journalist. The family lives in a mansion on Andrássy Street—"Everything *was gut und teuer ist* can be found there—and most of all gold-plating, lots of gold-plating".[44] The mother is fattish and insignificant, the complete opposite of her daughter, Ada:

> Her hair is bronze-coloured, her lips narrow and cold, but her eyes, usually cast down, are fiery, ingenious and evil. … Her father and mother naturally adore her but are unable to live with her in any kind of spiritual community. The daughter is the real head of the house. … Everything belongs to Ada and everything is here for the benefit of Ada.[45]

"Ingenious and evil"—the tone has been set. The Ambrus-type empathy towards his charming and loveable, warm-hearted heroine is ruled out here. Ada is unquestionably intelligent, and acerbically so, for example when she exposes to András the hypocritical nature of the relationship between the Christian and Jewish upper classes:

> Balls like this are held for our guests, not for ourselves. They amuse themselves, because they gossip about us. … I particularly hate our domestic Christians! … The Christians, who come to us, always want something from us. A wife, money or whatever. They do not come for the company. You do not want anything because you are still very young. Later you will also want something. And if not, you will drop away.[46]

Ada's antipathy towards Christians mirrors the blurred but apprehensible antipathy the author fosters towards his heroine. Herczeg slips through the sensible description of the young woman—isolated because of her father's wealth and her Jewishness, and torn between the desire to please and her hatred of hypocrisy—into a portrayal where the reader does not know any more when Ada is sincere and when she is not. In the end, one must suppose that she is never sincere. Unable to accept herself, Ada chooses interchangeable and hypocritical roles. She is hypocritical in the affection she demonstrates towards her father, she is hypocritical towards men. It is only in Andor's company that she is able to express her sincere feelings. Andor loves her, but perhaps because he is unattractive—"if I were a girl I would not pick me either"[47]—or perhaps because he is poor, Ada refuses him, while still expecting him to constantly assure her of his fidelity. What binds them together is the supposedly Jewish "intellectuality" alienating them from "real" life. "You always argufy, Andor. I do the very same. That is why we will never live a normal life."[48] Herczeg gets Ada out of her emotional dead-end by picking her a solution that condemns her at the same time. Ada marries the "arch-Catholic" baron Koller. He does not love her, nor does she love him, but instead of the passion she is incapable of feeling anyway, he offers her the prospects of a "colourful and enjoyable life".[49] As Ada confesses to Andor at their last meeting, she has realized that she is "totally heartless".[50]

Compared to Ambrus, the change of perception is obvious. It is naturally possible to refer to Herczeg's misogyny and note that he portrayed the Jewish journalist in more positive tones. Still, Zoltán Ambrus' tone is much more positive compared to Herczeg's. But could it be any other way? Ferenc Herczeg—as opposed to Zoltán Ambrus—wrote primarily for that part of the middle class that was soon to label itself "Christian" to express its rejection of the Jewish bourgeoisie. Nevertheless, the two novels were similarly successful; the game appeared to end in a tie.

IV

After the quite years of the 1890s, antisemitism began to grow in the 1900s. Exacerbated by the sufferings of World War I and the traumas of the successive revolutions in 1918–1919, antisemitism dramatically entered the Hungarian stage with the pogroms of the White Terror in 1919 and the introduction, the following year, of the *numerus clausus* law. Naturally, antisemitism did not wait for the interwar period to draw a connection between urban civilization supposedly destroying the traditional values of the Hungarian *Volk* and the Jews, or more specifically the supposedly corrupt and licentious Jewish women considered to be the depositaries of all modern debauchery. As one of the most "talented" antisemitic pamphleteers wrote in 1899: "Everything, everything has degenerated. ... The national genius, the primordial force is unable to produce anything; our senses are numbed by street noise, the giggle of the salon, the heated atmosphere of the music-hall, the embrace of Hebron's roses. ... The family is taught the ideas of free love and union libre mostly by Hebron's butterflies winnowing on the wings of woman's emancipation. They are the ones who take open prostitution to the streets. ... Nothing else but their lecherous blood drove them there."[51]

The most spectacular expression of this perception is to be found in Dezső Szabó's novel titled *The Swept Away Village*. Published in 1919, the book, together with Gyula Szekfű's *Three Generations*, became the staple reading of a whole generation who identified with this extreme right "modernity" rejecting both traditional conservatism and leftist radicalism. A kind of reversed *Bildungsroman*, the novel follows the path of the non-Jewish writer Miklós Farkas from the beginning of the 1910s until the end of World War I Farkas goes to Budapest to get to the top, he is picked up and then destroyed by an urban civilization represented as the materialisation of the Jewish spirit.

There is no Jewish woman among the main characters. There is no need for that, since she is everywhere: as the allegory of the depraved and depraving modernity, she is the discarnate metaphor of all temptation and evil. She is the tempting audience of Miklós Farkas ("Every slut of the Lipótváros has to be in heat with me"[52]), she is the projection of Budapest literature ("And what is their literature? An eternal buzz around woman's pubes"), she is the one in whom the "pure man torn from his mother is lost and rots",[53] she is the city, "Pest the prostitute",[54] the "modern Sodom",[55] who corrupts Christian women by forcing them to become like her, "decadent, versatile, modern and hysterical".[56] She is the city that the author naturally contrasts with the chastity of the village community: "As if I have stepped back from the dirt, the hysterical poses and bored geniality into my virginity, the ancestral purity of my youth",[57] Farkas bursts out when he returns to his native village.

Sexuality is as strongly present in the novel as it was said to be all pervading in this modern literature *enjuivée* that Dezső Szabó so vehemently condemned. "Pest the prostitute", as opposed to the "virginity" of the village: the absolute opposition stems from the antagonistic nature of "Jewish" and "Hungarian" sensuality. Szabó contrasts the healthy, fertile, inartificial eroticism of village women with the lewd, egoistic, insatiable because unappeasable sexuality of the Budapest bankers' wives marching on the sidewalks "with eyes neighing at males".[58]

To be able to seduce and destroy, the Jewess had to be temptation herself. The portrayal of a rich, young Jewish woman is so rich in phantasms that it is worth quoting the whole description:

> In this lushly wealthy girl everything was love, the conceiving will of embrace. Her big, oriental eyes lay down in front of things as open loins and the watery warmth of conception steamed from them. Her generous breasts beleaguered her dress and invited desire. Her cushiony hair, as if in the heat of eternal embrace, fluttered loosely, her pelvis lilted in endless recipience, kisses rose from her thick lips as bees from the lips of the overswarmed beekeeper. This girl was the exuberating warmth of continuing life, the absolute embrace, the conceiving kiss.[59]

While it seemingly calls for procreation, the irresistible temptation is a trap. If the man, the Hungarian succumbs, he rushes into disaster. Barren because she is insatiable, insatiable because driven by noxious desire, the Jewish woman, the city, brings about nothing but destruction, her kiss is deadly. The "hysteric Pester beasts, from whom ... every flash of male flesh was a secret, lusty expansion", volunteered as nurses to care for the injured in the war: "Foot-soldiers or heavily wounded could die as for them but they tussled for those emanating strong promises. ... The lunatics of the loins, the ones rushed by the blood needed love up to their chins, and ever-fresher waves of male flesh. The wife of a distinguished Jewish banker was secretly banned from the hospital because she was found with a semi-recuperated lieutenant in the rear during a quickie. The hot females buzzed in the heavy air of disease like giant blow-flies to sip the still remaining man from the victims of war in a vampire-like embrace, and the accursed, sick desire exposed its filthy nudity on the tragic bed of death".[60]

The symbol is fundamental. The image of Jewry establishing its reign by feeding on the life-force of Hungary thereby led to complete exhaustion—by the end of the novel Farkas becomes impotent—found in this representation of the Jewish woman its ultimate expression.

Traditional anti-Judaism established the picture of the Christian child as the victim of the Jewish blood ritual. Economic antisemitism created the image of the haematophagous Jewish loan-shark—be it either a wandering merchant or a banker. Dezső Szabó's racial antisemitism offered the image of the vampire Jewess. A *"Femme fatale"* in the literal sense, she was, in that respect, definitely "modern".

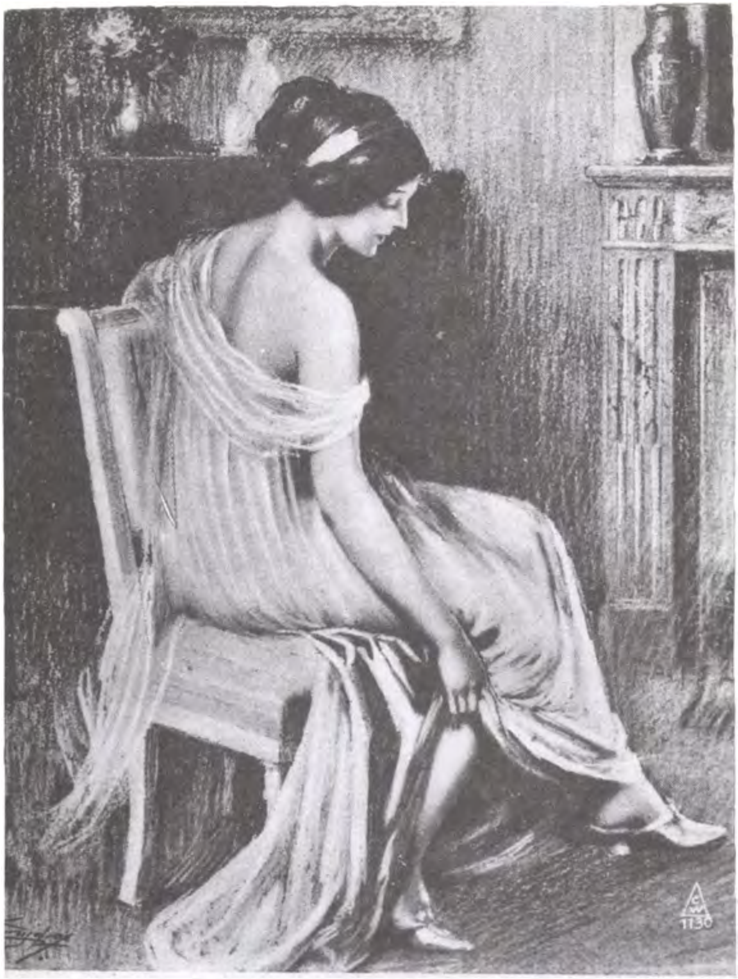
NOTES

1. Revised version of the essay originally published in Zsuzsanna Toronyi, ed., *A zsidó nő* [The Jewish woman] (Budapest: Hungarian Jewish Museum and Archives, 2002), exhibition catalogue.
2. Maurice Gelléri, *La Hongrie millénaire. Le passé et le présent* (Budapest, 1896), 136.
3. Aladár Komlós, *Irodalmunk társadalmi háttere* [The societal background of our literature] (Budapest, [1948]), 73.
4. Andrew C. Janos, *The Politics of Backwardness in Hungary 1825–1945* (Princeton, 1982), 114.
5. Quoted by: *A nő és a társadalom* [The woman and the society] (1910/1), 5.
6. Miksa Bródy–Árpád Pásztor–István Szomaházy, *Lipótváros* (Budapest, 1913), 27.
7. Ferenc Herczeg, *Andor és András* [Andor and András] (1903; Budapest, 1925), 48.
8. Ferenc Molnár, *Az éhes város* [The hungry city] (1901; Budapest, 1993), 286.
9. Ödön (Vilmos) Gerő, *Az én fővárosom. Képek Budapest életéről és lelkéről* [My metropolis: Pictures from the life and soul of Budapest] (Budapest, 1891), 4, 13.
10. Bródy–Pásztor–Szomaházy, 24.
11. André Duboscq, *Budapest et les Hongrois. Le pays, les mœurs, la politique* (Paris, 1913), 27.
12. Jenő Heltai, *Az asszony körül* [Around the woman] (Budapest, 1908), 26.
13. Bernát Alexander, "Zsidó problémák" [Jewish problems], in József Patai ed., *Magyar Zsidó Almanach* [Hungarian Jewish year book] (Budapest, 1911), 186.
14. René Gonnard, *La Hongrie au XXe siècle. Étude économique et sociale* (Paris, 1908), 72.
15. On the lifestyle and cultural characteristic of Jewish middle class see Viktor Karády, "A zsidóság polgárosodásának és modernizációjának főbb tényezői a magyar társadalomtörténetben" [The main factors of the embourgeoisement and modernization of the Jews in Hungarian social history], in Balázs Fűzfa–Gábor Szabó Gábor, *A zsidókérdésről* [On the Jewish question] (Szombathely, 1989), 95–135; Gábor Gyáni, *Hétköznapi Budapest. Nagyvárosi élet a századfordulón* [Everyday Budapest: City life at the turn of the century] (Budapest, 1995); Gábor Gyáni, "Domestic Material Culture of the Upper-middle Class in the Turn-of-the-Century Budapest", in *CEU History Department, Working Paper Series* I, (1994), 55–71; Panni Láng, "Egy budapesti polgárcsalád mindennapjai" [The everyday

life of a Budapest middle class family], *Történelmi Szemle*, no. 3 (1985): 76–93; Popperné Mici Lukács, "Emlékeim Bartók Béláról, Lukács Györgyről és a régi Budapestről" [My remembrances of Béla Bartók, György Lukács and the old Budapest], in Ferenc Bónis ed., *Magyar zenetörténeti tanulmányok Kodály Zoltán emlékére* [Hungarian musical history essays in memory of Zoltán Kodály] (Budapest, 1977), 379–410.

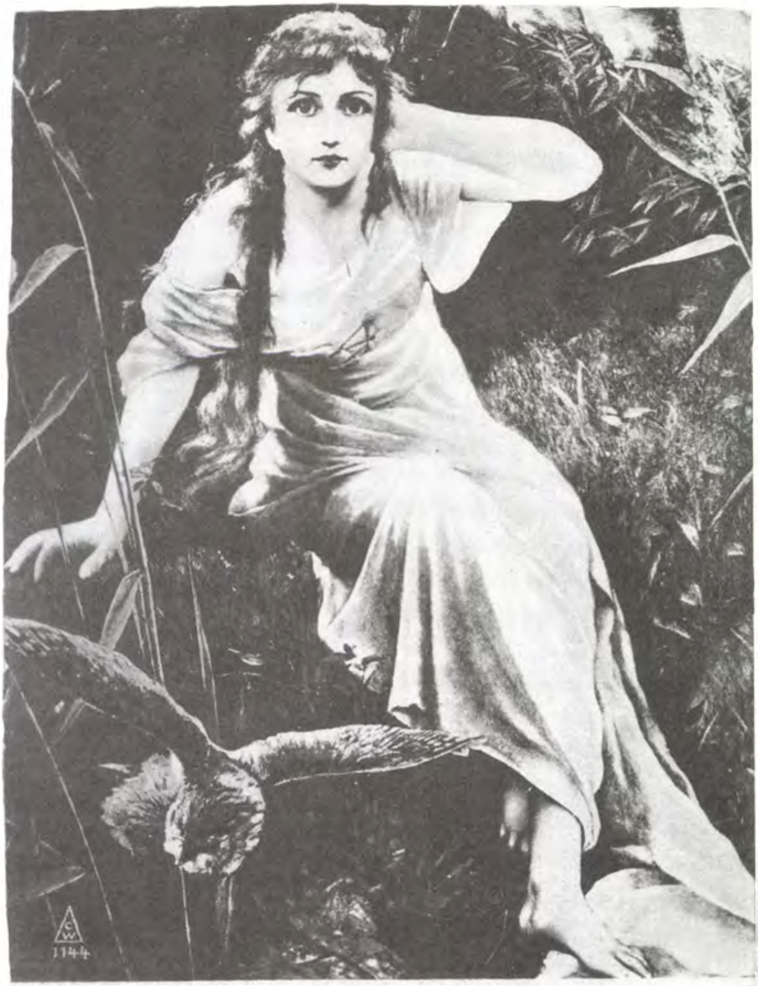
16. Popperné, 398.
17. Viktor Karády, "A társadalmi egyenlőtlenségek Magyarországon a nők felsőbb iskoláztatásának korai fázisában" [Social inequalities in Hungary in the early phase of women's higher education], in Miklós Hadas ed., *Férfiuralom. Írások nőkről, férfiakról, feminizmusról* [Patriarchy: Writings about women, men, and feminism] (Budapest, 1994), 181.
18. Mihály Babits, *Halálfiai* [Deathwards] (1927; Budapest, 1984), 56.
19. Karády, "A társadalmi egyenlőtlenségek", 187.
20. Babits, 363–64.
21. Gyula Farkas, *Az asszimiláció kora a magyar irodalomban. 1867–1914* [The age of assimilation in Hungarian literature. 1867–1914] (Budapest, [1938?]), 124.
22. Gyula Krúdy, "Kiss József estéje" [The evening of József Kiss], in *Írói arcképek* [Writers' portraits], vols. I–II (1922; Budapest, 1957), vol. I, 478.
23. Péter Kardos, "Mit ér a nő, ha férfi?" [What good is a woman if she's a man?)], in *Ignotus, Emma asszony levelei. Egy nőimitátor a nőemancipációért* [Letters of Madame Emma: A female impersonator for woman's emancipation] (Budapest, 1985), 10.
24. Zoltán Ambrus, *Berzsenyi báró és családja* [Baron Berzsenyi and his family] (1902; Budapest, 1906), 316.
25. Ibid., 103.
26. Ferenc Molnár, *A hétágú síp* [The syrinx] (Budapest, 1911), 43.
27. Ibid., 9–10.
28. Gerő, 10–11.
29. Gyula Szini, "Fiataljaink" [Our young ones], in Anna Fábri–Ágota Steiner eds., *A Hét. Politikai és irodalmi szemle 1890–1907* [The Week: Political and literary review 1890–1907], vols. I–II (1905; Budapest, 1978), vol. II, 258.
30. Marcell Benedek, *Naplómat olvasom* [Reading my diary], (Budapest, 1965), 181.
31. Ambrus, 1.
32. Ibid., 169.
33. Ibid., 80.
34. Ibid., 133.
35. Ibid., 121–2.

36. Ibid., 248.
37. Ibid., 268.
38. Ibid., 34.
39. Ibid., 221.
40. Ibid., 29.
41. Ibid., 31.
42. Ibid., 128.
43. Herczeg, 32.
44. Ibid., 28.
45. Ibid., 35.
46. Ibid., 39–40.
47. Ibid., 41.
48. Ibid., 51.
49. Ibid., 135–6.
50. Ibid., 141.
51. Géza Petrássevich, *Magyarország és a zsidóság* [Hungary and the Jews] (Budapest, [1899]), 175–6, 173–4, 62.
52. Dezső Szabó, *Az elsodort falu* [The swept away village], (1919; Budapest, 1995), 38.
53. Ibid., 41.
54. Ibid., 38.
55. Ibid., 97.
56. Ibid., 85–86.
57. Ibid., 40.
58. Ibid., 156.
59. Ibid., 258.
60. Ibid., 165.



ביַ'ם קאַמין.

דאָס לעבען איז רײַכטום,
דאָס לעבען איז שיק:
דער יענער, וואָס ווײַבט איהם
דער ווײס ניט פון גליק!



(לעגענדע).

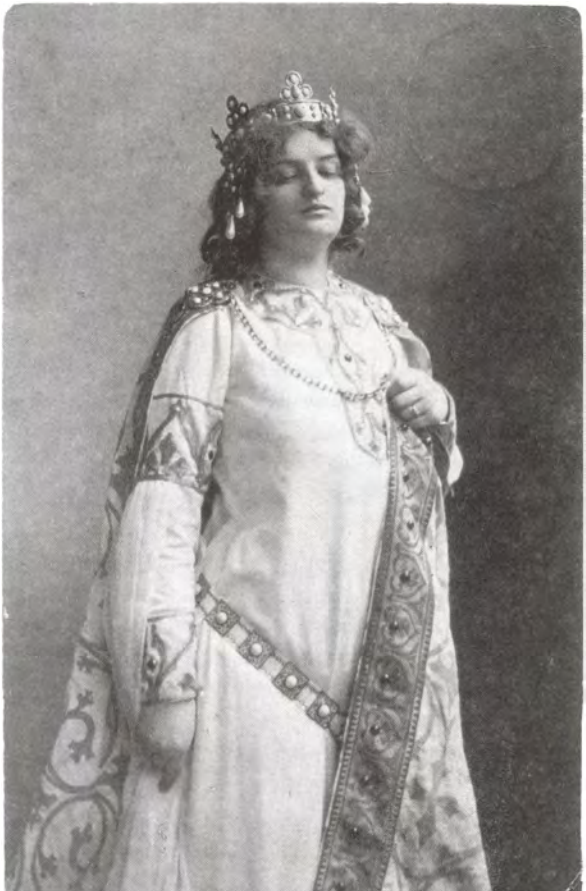
געשאַרפֿט די בליקען ,
צעוואָרפֿען די לאָקען ;
עס האָט זי אַ פֿליצלינגע
בשורה דערשראָקען . —

CENTROPA AND WOMEN'S STORIES

Eszter Andor and Dóra Sárdi

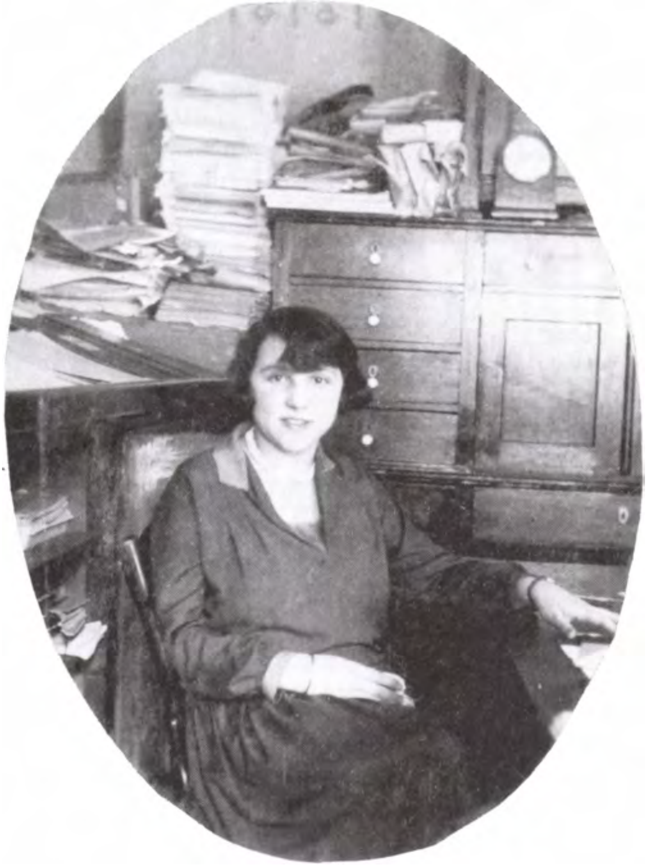
Centropa's signature project is Witness to a Jewish Century, a searchable online library of Jewish family stories and family photos. Our main goal is to preserve Jewish history by combining interviews with elderly Jews still living in East Central Europe and their old family pictures. Our work is based on oral history.

What is unique in our project is on the one hand that we want to hear each interviewee's full family and life history and do not concentrate on just one part of their lives, like the Holocaust, and on the other that we also collect the photos of that life and stories about the people on those photos. What we can gain through oral history is insight into certain areas of everyday life and experience that remain hidden to other types of historical or sociological research. From these personal testimonies we have built a rich and detailed database on twentieth century Jewish life in East Central Europe as seen through the eyes of those who lived it.



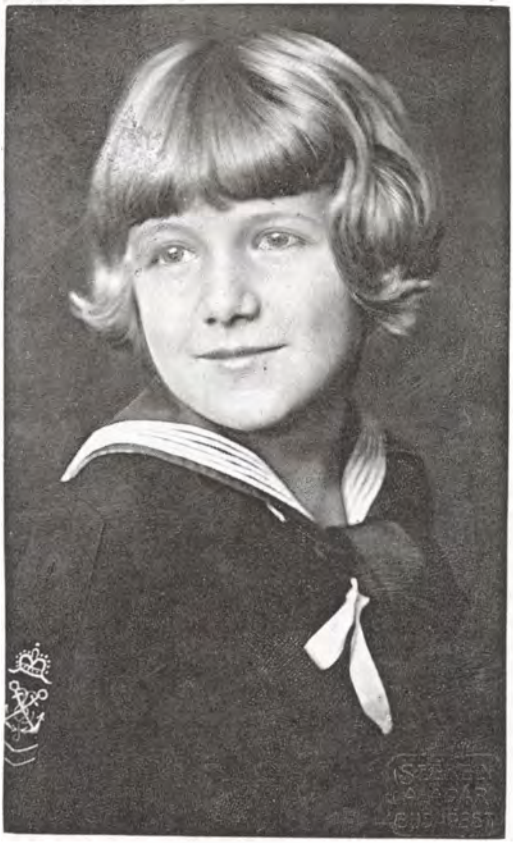
Interviewee: Lea Merényi
Interviewer: Gábor Gondos
Photo taken in Barmen (Germany)
Year: 1909

"This is my maternal grandmother, Elza Merényi in one of her roles. My grandmother was an opera singer of Hungarian origin. I don't know when she went to Germany."



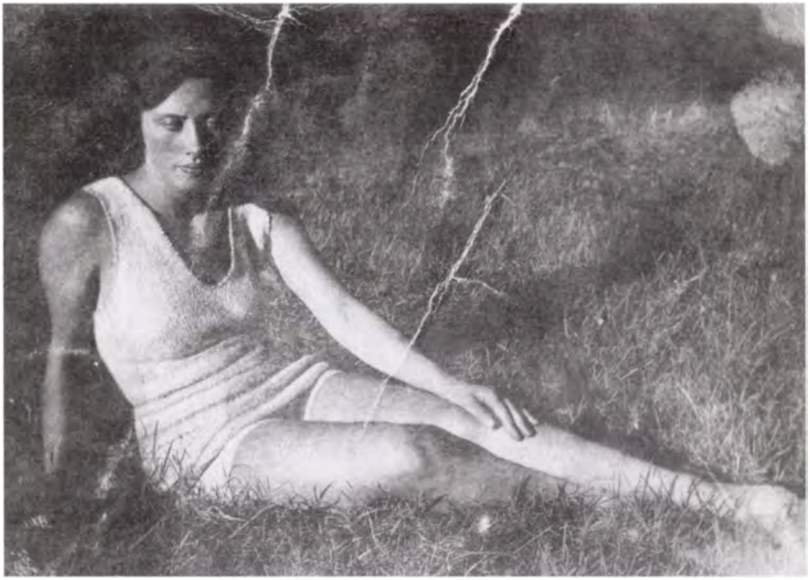
Interviewee: Katarína Löfflerová
Interviewer: Martin Korčok
Photo taken in Pozsony (today Bratislava, Slovakia)
Year: 1926

"The picture was taken in Pozsony; I was working at an insurance company in Pozsony during the summer vacation. I was an active tennis player, and my parents decided that I should work; in exchange for my work they would buy me a tennis racket. Casual workers were not paid, they only said thanks. So I didn't get any money, but my parents bought me the tennis racket."



Interviewee: Zsófia Teván
Interviewer: Balázs Mészáros
Photo taken in Békéscsaba (Hungary)
Year: 1920s

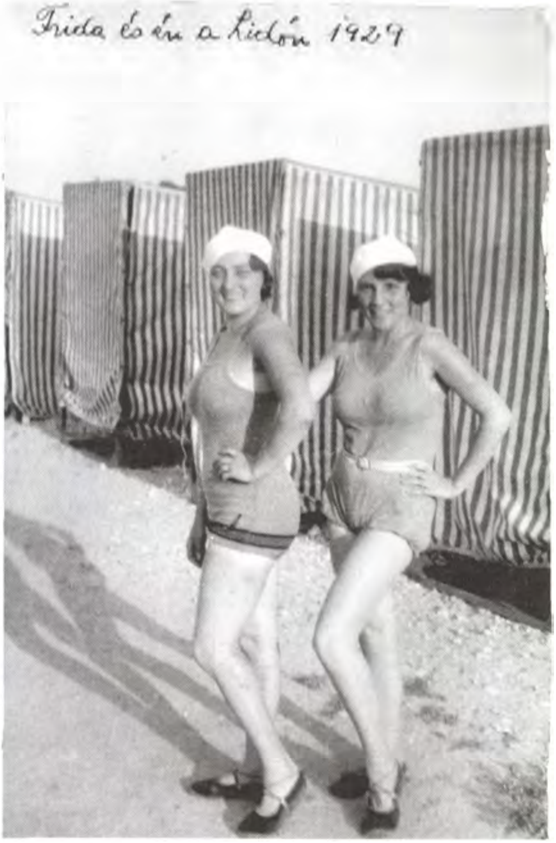
"This is me. The picture was taken in Budapest, but I don't know why there, because we didn't go to Budapest often, we lived in Bekescsaba. We probably had our picture taken there so that we could remember the trip. One of my uncles, Jozsef Deutsch lived here. Perhaps we visited him. It must have been while I was at elementary school."



Interviewee: Adrienne Sárdi
Interviewer: Dóra Sárdi
Photo taken at the Danube Bend (Hungary)
Year: 1920s

"In this picture you can see my older sister, Cora, at the riverbank. The Danube meant very much to us; we rowed very often, and we also swam in it many times. Mom also rowed and she was an excellent swimmer. She taught us to swim, in the Danube of course.

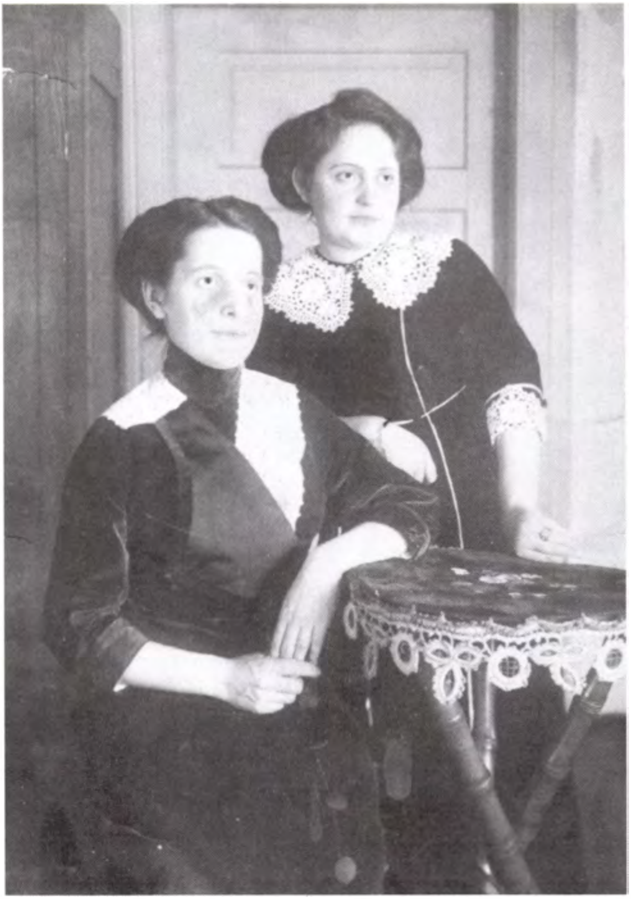
Cora was an artist, a paintress. She was very talented and beautiful. She set up her canvases at home, in the living room, and she mixed the colours on her palette. But she painted outdoors mostly, in the Danube Bend the most often. She painted many watercolour paintings, many of these still exist. Cora got married and left for the Soviet Union with her husband in 1930. She sent us word in 1935 from Solikamsk [Russian city close to Perm]."



Frida és én a Lidón 1929

Interviewee: Katarína Löfflerová
Interviewer: Martin Korčok
Photo taken at the Lido in Pozsony (today Bratislava, Slovakia)
Year: 1929

"This is the Lido in Pozsony. The picture was taken by a photographer; he had us stand in this pose. The photographers walked around the town and parks equipped with huge cameras and camera-stands. They sent us the photo later, because it took a while until it was ready. The girl on the left was one of my friends at that time. She was Jewish. She was my first friend who was already married."

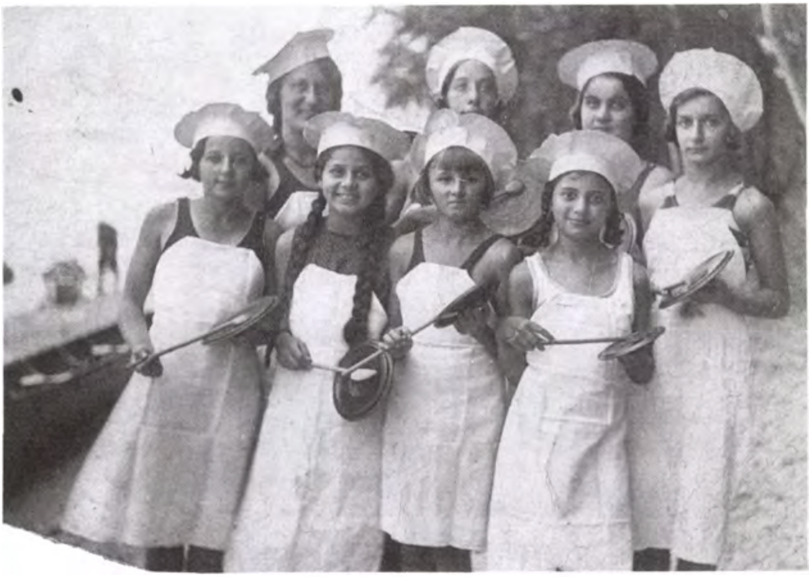


Interviewee: Katalin Kallós Havas
Interviewer: Attila Gidó
Photo taken in Dés (today Dei, Romania)
Year: 1920s

"In the picture you can see my mother (on the right) and her sister from Brassó [today Brasov, Romania], Irén. In the 1960s I visited my aunt Irén, who had emigrated to Israel. She gave me this picture at that time, because I didn't have any other memories of my mother."

Interviewee: Éva Vári
Interviewer: Dóra Sárdi
Photo taken in Debrecen (Hungary)
Year: 1926

"This is me and my wonderful mother, Margit. This picture is very artistic, I don't know the occasion it was taken, but I like it very much. This is the only picture which shows me as a small child with my mother."



Interviewee: Adrienne Sárdi
Interviewer: Dóra Sárdi
Photo taken in Horány (Hungary)
Year: 1926

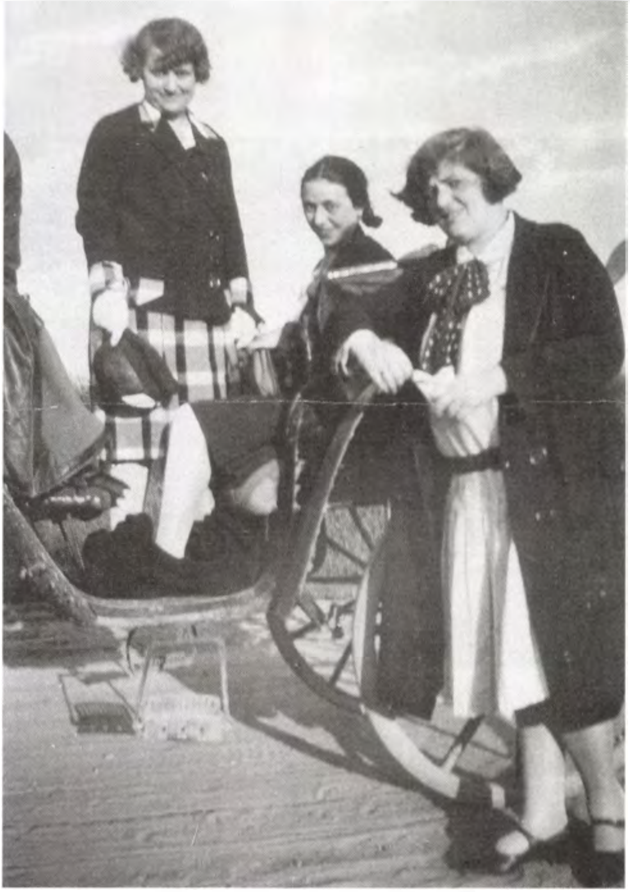
"We used to go to Horány in the summer. There were small grounds near the Danube, where one could rent houses. There were several kinds of grounds, ours was a good Jewish company. Mom and I regularly spent weeks there, dad rarely came there. Mom rowed, she swam excellently. She taught me to swim, in the Danube of course. In the summer we performed musicals. This picture was taken on the occasion of a so-called trash-can dance."

Interviewee: Katalin Andai
Interviewer: Eszter Andor
Photo taken in Budapest (Hungary)
Year: 1931

"This is me with my classmates in front of the former building of the Jewish high school, on Munkácsy Street. The building was in quite a bad shape, but we loved to be there. I remember that there were fewer classrooms than classes. So, one of the classes was always in the synagogue. We loved this, because if we sat down, the pew was so tall, we couldn't be seen from behind it, and we could do what we wanted, because the teacher didn't see us."

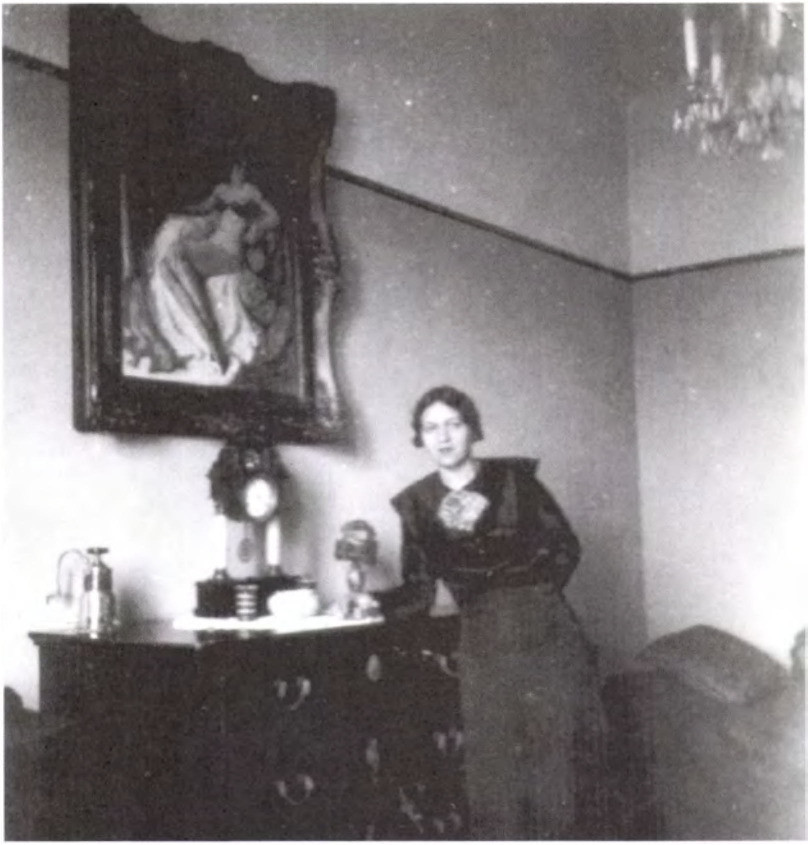
Interviewee: Marta Jakobovicova
Interviewer: Martin Korčok
Photo taken in Homonna (today Humenné, Slovakia)
Year: 1930s

"This picture was probably taken at the beginning of the 1930s, in Homonna. My mother, Ilona Jakobovics is sitting in the middle. I am on the left, my sister, Katalin Jakobovics is on the right."



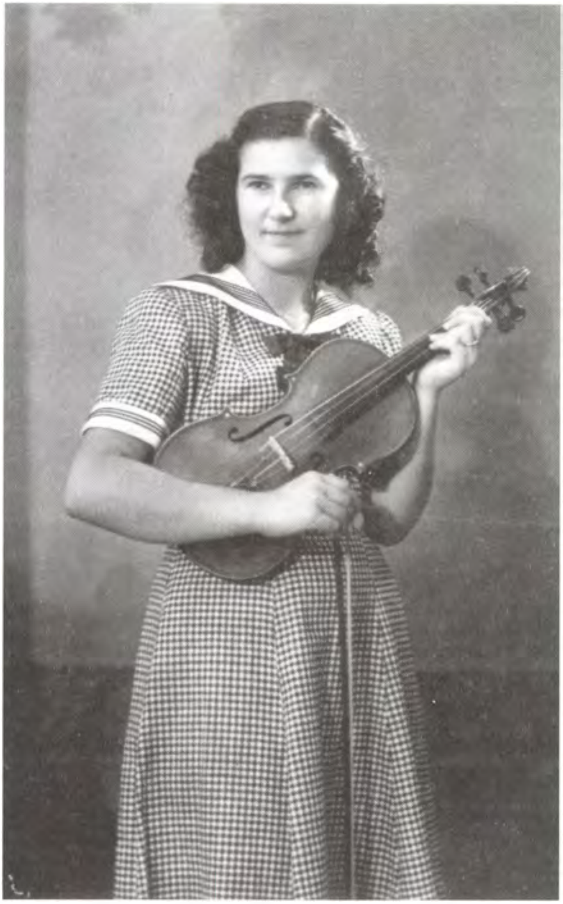
Interviewee: Magda Szamosi
Interviewer: Klári László
Photo taken in Nagykőrös (Hungary)
Year: 1930s

"In this picture the three sisters-in-law are sitting in our carriage and standing in front of it. This carriage was in the shed and we played in it many times while we were children. I don't remember whether we used it or not. I remember that we went to the vineyard by car, but not with the carriage of course."



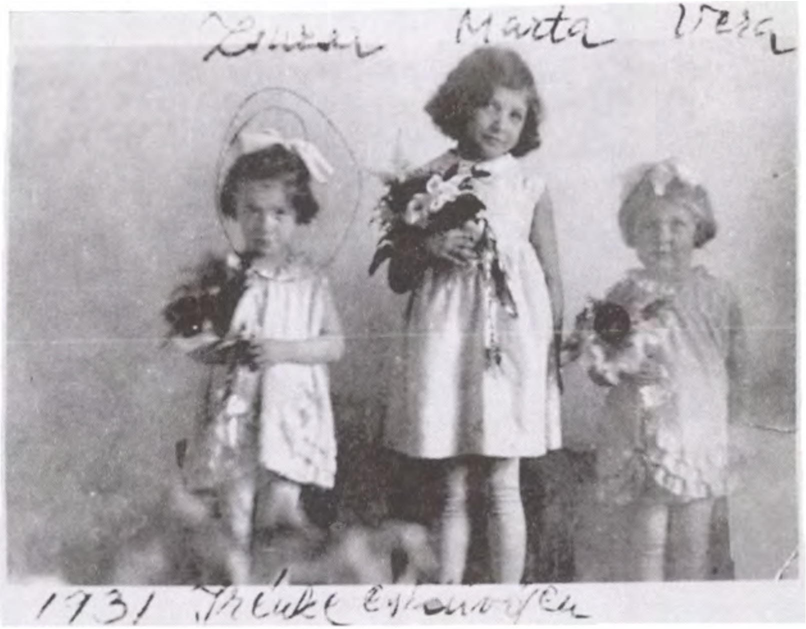
Interviewee: Katalin Andai
Interviewer: Eszter Andor
Photo taken in Budapest (Hungary)
Year: 1930s

"This is my mother, Margit Brichta. My mother was an avant-garde woman; in 1927 she had her hair bobbed, which was frowned upon, and she also smoked. She was fashionable, she wasn't coquettish or anything, just fashionable. She was very independent. The way she dressed, the way she behaved… I noticed early on that my father's family gave her the dirty look, because she didn't fit into that family; they were conservative in many ways."



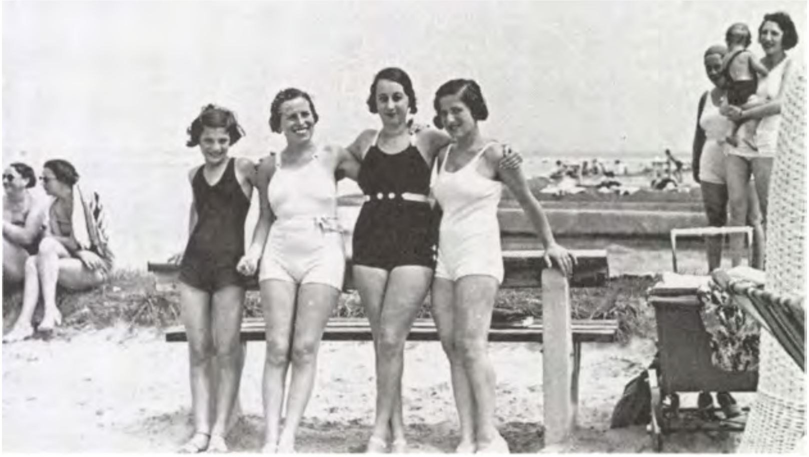
Interviewee: Hilda Neumannová
Interviewer: Zuzana Pastorková
Photo taken in Budapest (Hungary)
Year: 1930s

"In the picture you can see Irénke Schultz, the older of my two younger sisters. Her hair is very short here. My father was angry with her for having her beautiful long hair cut, but my sister wanted to have a modern hairdo. At the time, looped-up hair was fashionable."



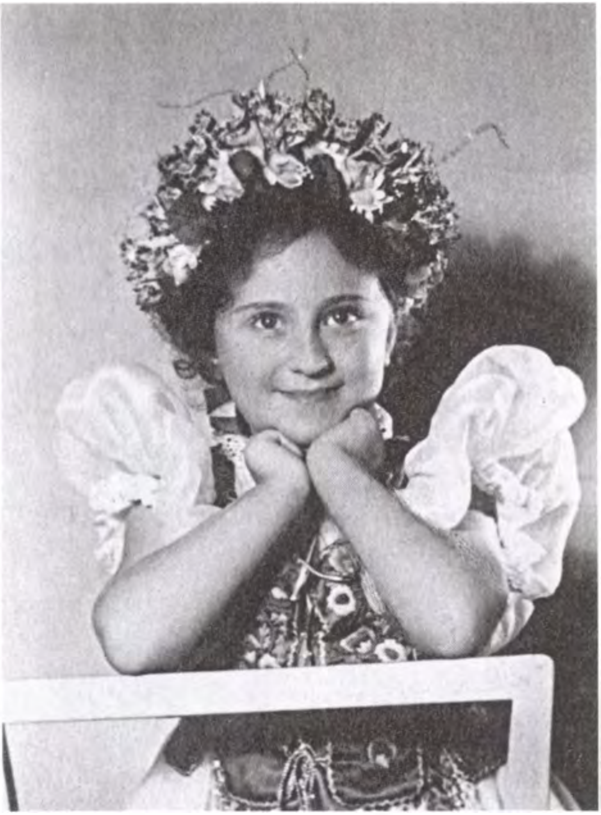
Interviewee: Zsuzsa Dóczi
Interviewer: Viktória Siklós
Photo taken in Sárbogárd (Hungary)
Year: 1931

"This picture was taken on the wedding of my mother's sister. The little girl on the right is the daughter of my mother's other sister, and I am standing on the left. The third girl is also a relative, but I don't know exactly what kind of a relative she is. We were the bride's maids here."



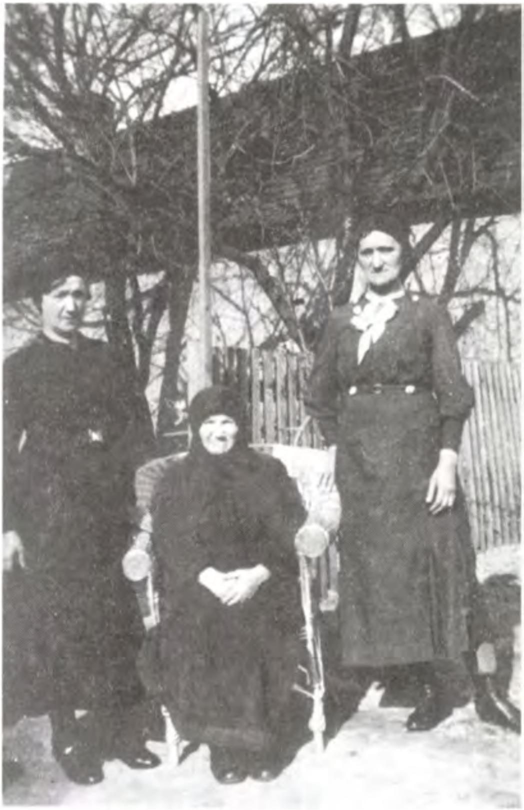
Interviewee: Anna Gazda
Interviewer: Katalin Bihari
Photo taken at Lake Balaton (Hungary)
Year: 1934

"In the picture I am 12, and it was taken at Lake Balaton, where my 25 year-old sister, Magda took me on holiday. Magda is standing on the right, I am on the left, and Magda's two friends are between us. The bathing suits were typical at that time."



Interviewee: Vera Bihari
Interviewer: Dóra Sárdi
Photo taken in Budapest (Hungary)
Year: 1930s

"In this picture I am wearing Hungarian national dress as a little girl. I don't remember whether my parents rented the dress from a shop or my mother made it for me. I know that I liked to wear such dresses very much. As I remember, we always dressed like this on the 20th August. We celebrated the first Christian king of Hungary on this day. It wasn't a problem for me that as a Jew I was celebrating a Christian holiday in Hungarian national dress. This was natural at the time."

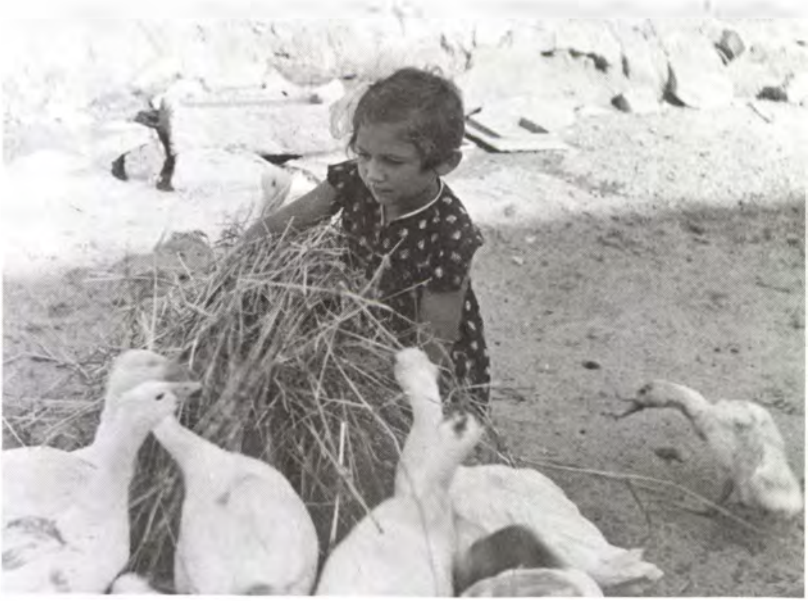


Interviewee: Szidónia Illés
Interviewer: Onică Roxana
Photo taken in Halmi (today Halmeu, Romania)
Year: 1935

"In this photo you can see my mother, Bella on the left, grandma Braha in the middle, and my aunt Blanka on the right. Grandma Braha was an educated, cultured woman, and she was also religious. Her mother tongue was Yiddish. She dressed traditionally, she wore a wig. She had a wig made of artificial hair, but when she went to the synagogue she had to put a scarf on her head. Grandma ran the registry office; her task was to register births, marriages and deaths."

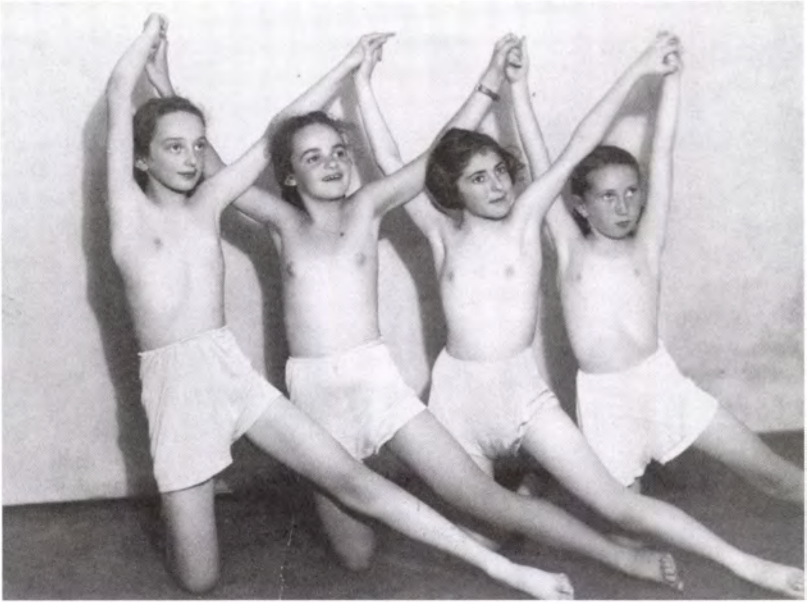
Interviewee: Ruth Greif
Interviewer: Andreea Laptes
Photo taken in Nagyszeben (today Sibiu, Romania)
Year: 1935

"This is me in front of our house. Next to me is our dog, Leo; I liked him very much, then a car hit him."



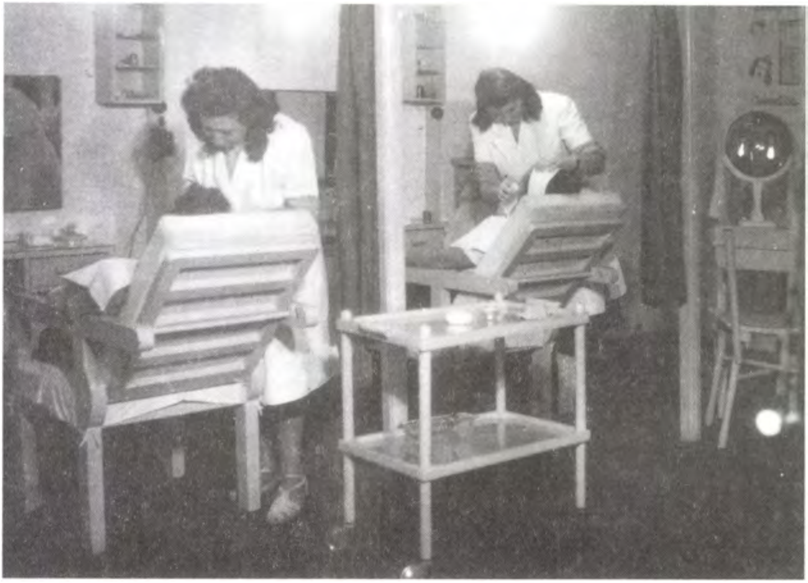
Interviewee: Györgyike Haskó
Interviewer: Judit Réz
Photo taken in Romhány (Hungary)
Year: 1938

"This photo was taken on the occasion of a summer holiday in Romhány, when I was 'feeding' the geese. Our maid was a girl from Romhány, and my mother sent her to Romhány with us. Her father didn't live there, but her mother did, and they had a house on the main street of the village. It was a farmhouse with a big barn-floor and stacks. They were peasants; she had several siblings, so it was a nice big family."



Interviewee: Ruth Greif
Interviewer: Andrea Laptes
Photo taken in Brassó (today Braşov, Romania)
Year: 1940s

"In the picture I am with my friends at a gymnastics class. From left to right: Beáta Farkas, myself, Mia Felier and Piroska Hubert. At that time gymnastics was one of my hobbies. My teacher was Borbála Farkas, she was also Jewish. She had studied art of movement in Budapest, and she was very talented. She held the classes in her home; several girls took classes from her."

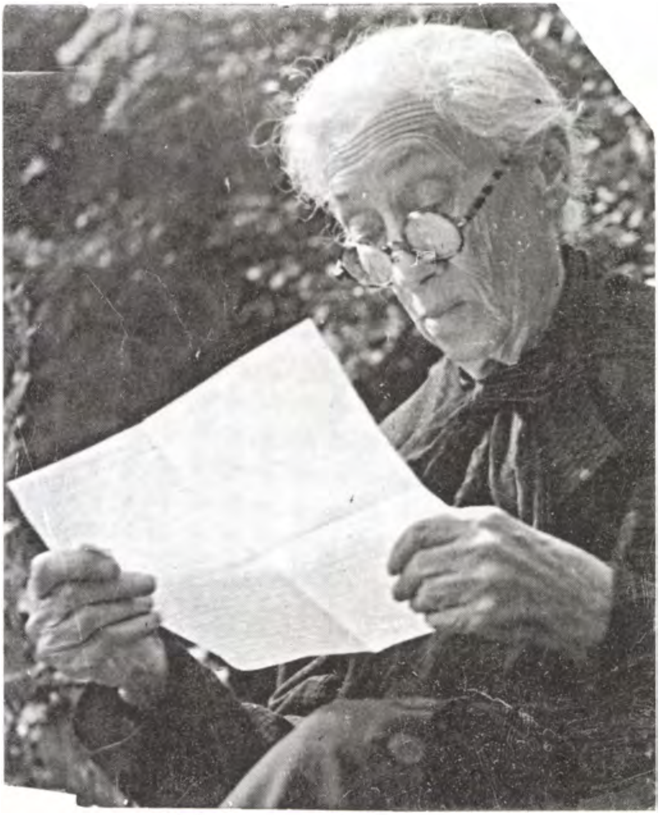


Interviewee: Júlia Scheiner
Interviewer: Ildikó Molnár
Photo taken in Marosvásárhely (today Tîrgu-Mureş, Romania)
Year: 1941

"I am in the picture—with my apprentice, whom I taught cosmetics. I opened a beauty salon in the spring of 1940 on Main Square, on the ground floor of a two-storey house. The place was very nice and spacious, the furniture was off-white, the vases, the ashtray and the curtains were ivy green. We had the furniture made, but I don't remember where. It was very stylish and beautiful."

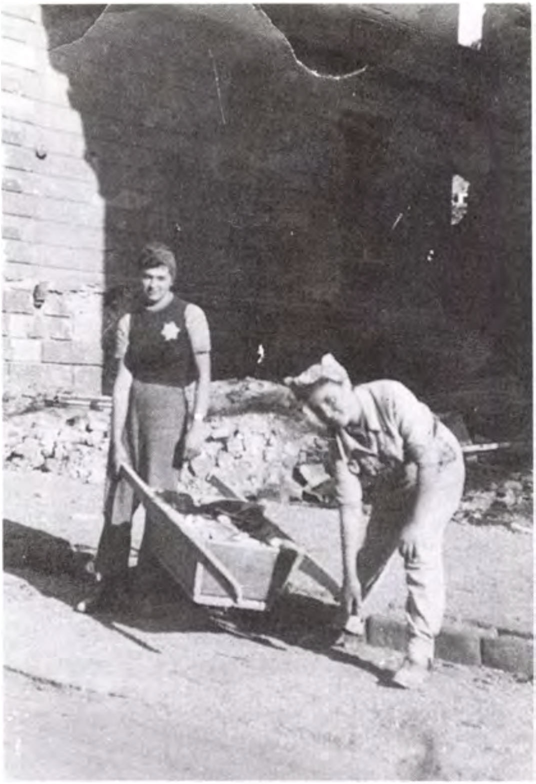
Interviewee: Katalin Andai
Interviewer: Eszter Andor
Photo taken in Budapest (Hungary)
Year: 1941

"This is my mother, my sister and me. When my mother was 45, she decided to have another child. I was 21 years old already, and then my only sister was born. When my mother became pregnant she sat down with me and asked me if I wanted her to keep it, because I would have to help raise the child."



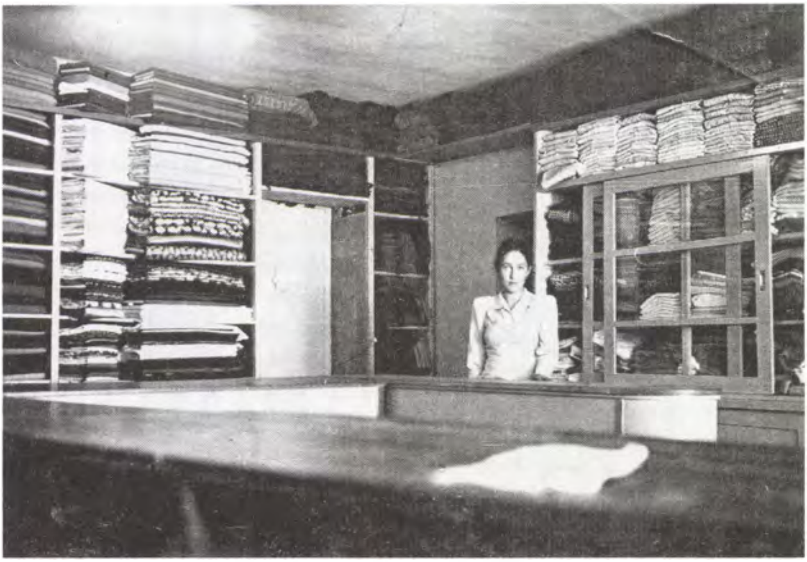
Interviewee: Zsófia Teván
Interviewer: Balázs Mészáros
Photo taken in Békéscsaba (Hungary)
Year: 1940s

"This is my maternal grandmother reading her the letter of her son, my father. My father died in 1945 in Bergen-Belsen [today Germany], he had been on forced labour before; he sent a letter from there. I took the picture, I graduated as a photographer assistant in 1942. I was very close to grandma. I was raised by them for a long time, so I was very close to her. She died in 1944. I found it out a couple of years ago, that she didn't even make it to Auschwitz; she died on the train."



Interviewee: Magdolna Pálmai
Interviewer: Zsuzsanna Lehotzky
Photo taken in Budapest (Hungary)
Year: 1944

"This picture was taken in September 1944, while we were carrying debris. I am in the picture with Klári, with whom I worked: later on we were together under forced labour. In October, after the Arrow-Cross takeover, they gathered together Jewish women aged between 15 and 45 and drafted everyone into forced labour. We had to leave quickly, so the neighbours gave us stuff, clothes to one of us, food to another, what we needed, but there was one who gave us a backpack, too. We received a shovel and a spade, which we carried with us all the way."



Interviewee: Magdolna Gárdonyi
Interviewer: Katalin Bihari
Photo taken in Kiskőrös (Hungary)
Year: 1947

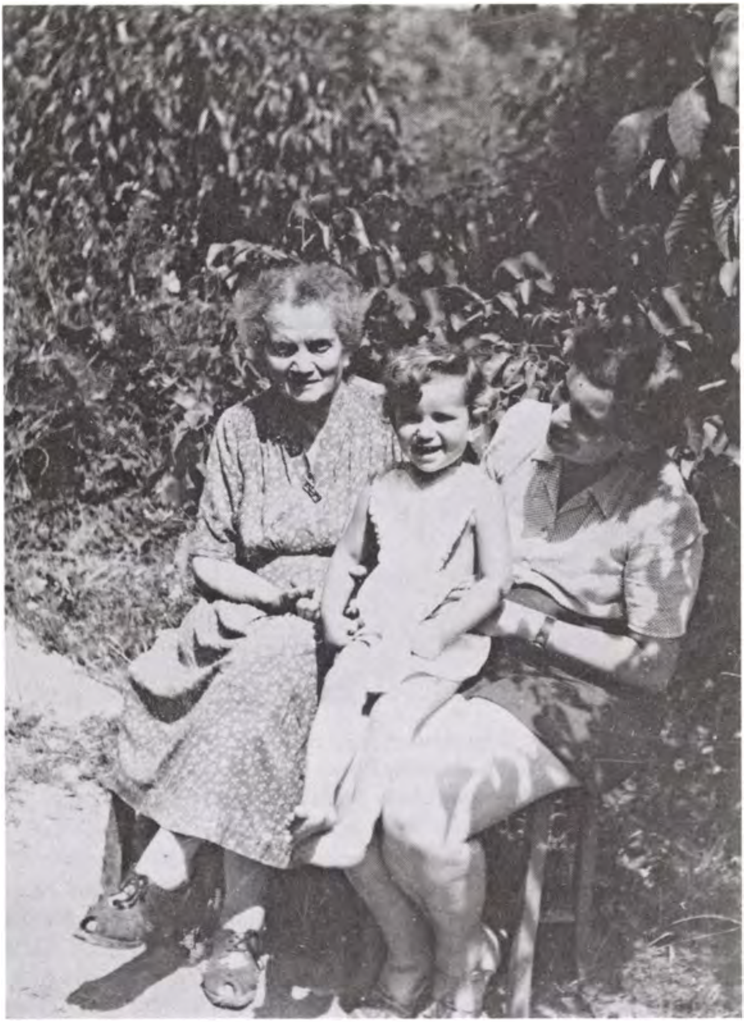
"In the picture I am in the textile shop in our house in Kiskőrös. You can see how tidy it was and how much merchandise there was. My future husband came home from a Russian prisoner of war camp in 1945, and he came to live there with his sister. Before the war he had worked for a textile merchant Jewish family in Kiskőrös. In 1947 he opened a shop in our house. He ran the shop with his sister for a couple of months, but his sister got married and he also had to get married. He might have thought that there was a girl and if he married her he would also get the house, because then we decided to get married."

Interviewee: Magdolna Pálmai
Interviewer: Zsuzsa Lehotzky
Photo taken in Budapest (Hungary)
Year: 1940s

"In the picture I am in my twenties, on Frank Mountain. At the beginning of the 1940s we used to make excursions with young social democrats to the Buda hills. We took some food with us on such excursions. We lay down the blanket and everyone put what he had brought in the middle. There were some who were better off, they brought better food, and there were poorer ones. We shared the food so that everyone got a bit of everything."

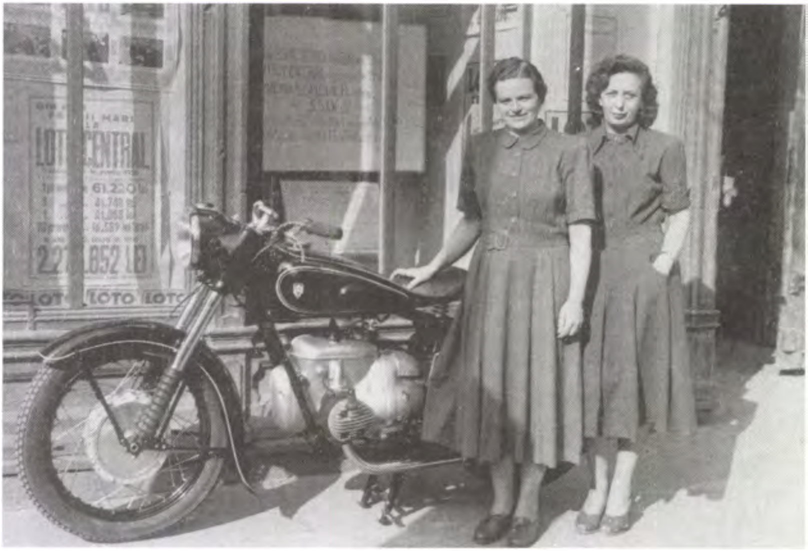
Interviewee: Hedda Vince
Interviewer: Júlia Gál
Photo taken in Göd (Hungary)
Year: 1950s

"This is the collective of the Standardization Office. I am on the right, at the top. The picture was taken at the firing range of a so-called freedom-fighter's training ground. I started to work at the Standardization Office in 1950, first as an administrator, then as a product engineer; I made confection standards. I was on several committees; I went to international negotiations, where we discussed the uniform sizes. I had a responsible position."



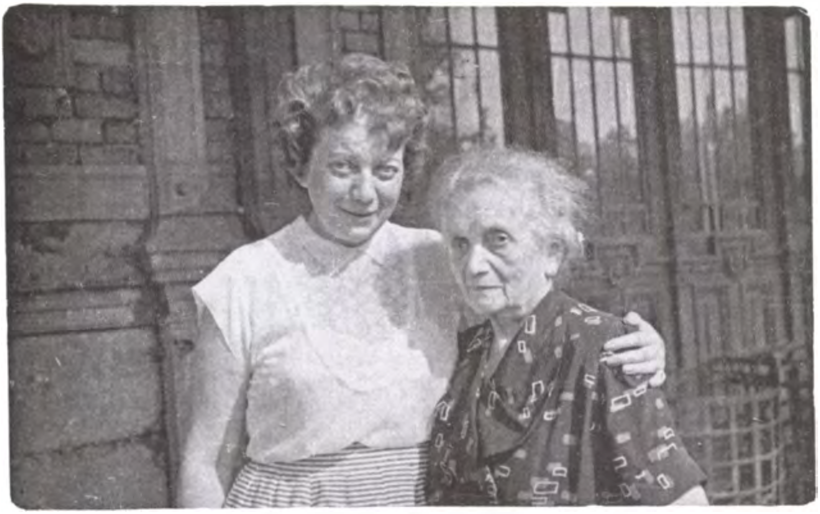
Interviewee: Erzsébet Gönczi
Interviewer: Dóra Sárdi
Year: around 1954

"This is my mother, my daughter Juli and me."



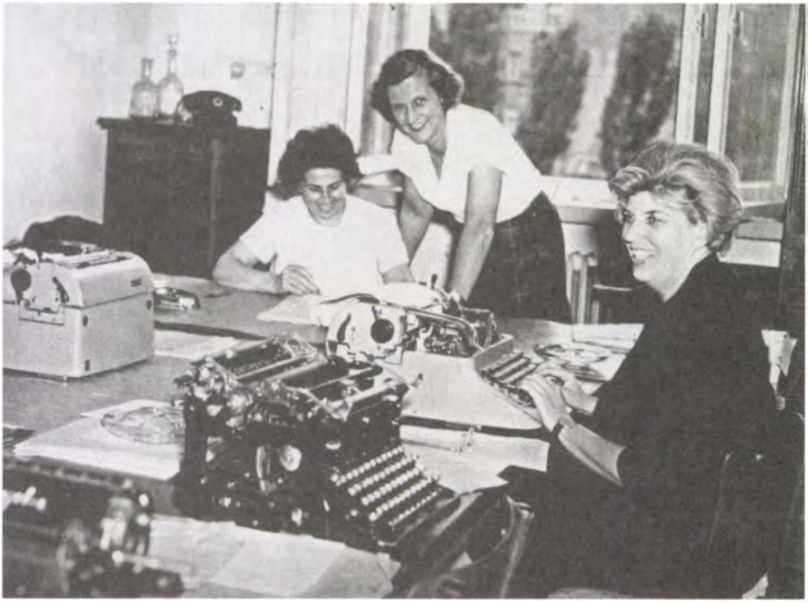
Interviewee: Júlia Scheiner
Interviewer: Ildikó Molnár
Photo taken in Marosvásárhely (today Tirgu Mureş, Romania)
Year: 1956

"The picture was taken in front of the lottery shop on Main Square. This is a woman from Székelykál [today Caluseri, Romania] next to me, with whom we played the lottery together. This woman always came to clean, and she always brought something: eggs, or this and that. She got me into playing lottery. We won this German motorbike. This was the first prize in Romania, until then they only got money."



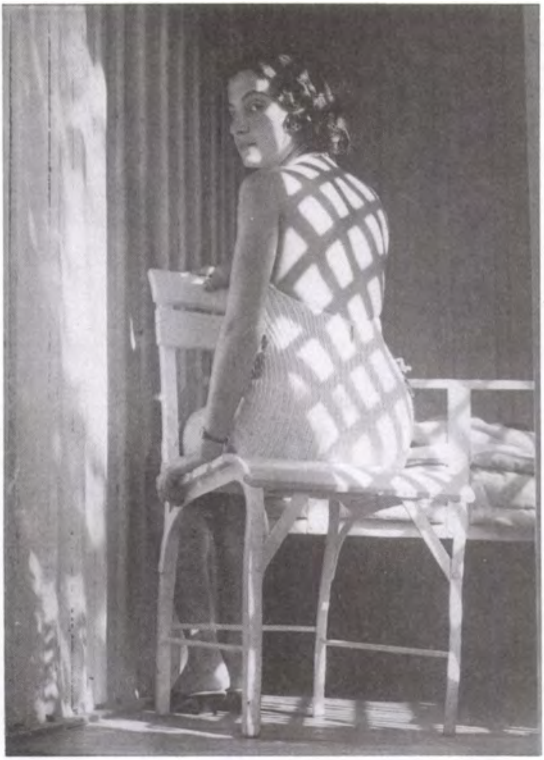
Interviewee: Erzsébet Gönczi
Interviewer: Dóra Sárdi
Photo taken in Budapest
Year: 1960s

"My sister, Anna and my mother are in the picture."



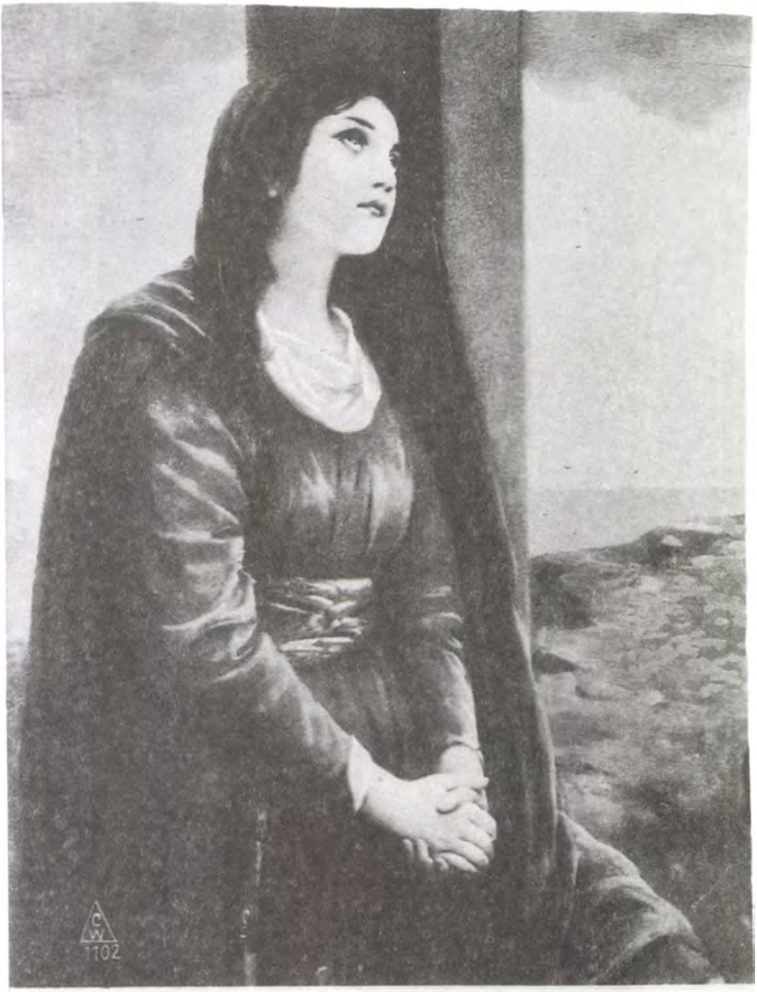
Interviewee: Marianne Kaszás
Interviewer: Katalin Bihari
Photo taken in Sofia (Bulgaria)
Year: 1968

"This photo was taken in Sofia in 1968, in the translator's office of the 9th VIT (World Festival of Youth and Students). I am sitting on the right. I was the secretary of the writer and publicist, Iván Boldizsár (1912–1988) at that time, on the editorial staff of the *New Hungarian Quarterly*, and they asked my boss to "lend" me for this time."



Interviewee: Lea Merényi
Interviewer: Gábor Gondos
Photo taken at Lake Balaton (Hungary)
Year: around 1934

"This is me at Lake Balaton. There was a literary society, the Vajda János Society, which popularized the poems of a famous nineteenth century romantic poet, János Vajda (1827–1897). We complemented the presentation of the poems with dance. We went on a tour with them to the Balaton. I was very happy about it, they took me around the Balaton, and this was my first possibility to get to know something of Hungary."



אין פערצווייפלונג.

זי לעגט די הענד צוזאַמען
און ווענדט צו גאָט איהר בּליק
און פֿרעגט ווי אַ קינד אַ מאַמען —
פֿערמאָגט די ערד דען גליק?...

CONTRIBUTORS

Eszter Andor graduated in English language and literature from the University of Pécs, she then completed an MA in history at Central European University and in Jewish Studies at the Oxford Centre for Hebrew and Jewish Studies. She has been working for Centropa since 2000 as co-director. Together with her colleague, Dóra Sárdi, she has done many life history interviews for Centropa, worked out the methodology of Centropa interviewing, helped set up new Centropa teams in the countries of the region, held training seminars for them and reviewed interviews coming in from fourteen countries until the teams could work on their own. She reviews and edits interviews done with Hungarian Jews in Hungary and in the neighboring countries. She is also repsonsible for the content and updating of Centropa's Hungarian language website, www.centropa.hu.

Anna Borgos was born in 1973. She is a fellow at the Research Institute for Psychology, Budapest (www.mtapi.hu). She holds a PhD in psychology (University of Pécs). She has been exploring and publishing articles on the work of Hungarian women intellectuals (writers, writers' wives and psychoanalysts) in the early 20th century. Her book, *Portrék a Másikról* (Portraits of the Other), was published in 2007 by Noran (Budapest). She is also engaged in feminist and LGBT history and activism; she is a founding member of the lesbian association Labrisz. She co-edited a volume of lesbian autobiographical writings, *Előhívott önarcképek. Leszbikus nők önéletrajzi írásai* (Developed

Self-Portraits. Lesbian Women's Autobiographical Writings). She is a co-editor of the Hungarian periodicals Café Bábel and Thalassa.

Lara Dämmig studied Library Science in Berlin. Today she works for a Jewish organisation in Berlin. She was an active member of the East Berlin Jewish community. In the 1990s, she was instrumental in organising a Rosh Chodesh group and an egalitarian minyan. She was also involved in interreligious dialogue. She has published several articles on Jewish women's lives in Berlin, German Jewish history and Jewish feminism. She is one of the founders of Bet Debora and was an organiser of the conferences in 1999, 2001 and 2003 as well as co-editor of the *Bet Debora Journals*. She and Elisa Klapheck edited *Bertha Pappenheim—Gebete/Prayers* (2003).

Judit Gazsi was born in 1960. She is a gender expert at the Ministry of Social Affairs and Labour, Department of Gender Equality, and president of the Esther's Bag Foundation. She graduated from ELTE University, majoring in history, and also got a degree from the University of Crafts and Design Institute of Management. She worked for the Central European University and the Soros Foundation Hungary in Budapest. She was a researcher at ELTE University, Department of Ethnic and Minority Studies, taking part in research examining gender and exclusion. She was a researcher at the University of Miskolc, Gender Studies and Equal Opportunities Centre, where she was part of the European research team examining social exclusion from the point of view of gender. She was the project manager of the Gender Mainstreaming Pilot Project of the Ministry of Youth, Family, Social Affairs and Labour supported by the European Commission.

István Hajdu was born in Budapest in 1949. Since 1974, he has regularly published articles, reviews, studies and interviews on fine art. He was a journalist at Magyar Nemzet from 1986–1990 and an art critic for the magazine Beszélő from 1991–1995. His writings have been published in anthologies, academic papers and catalogues and he has conceived several exhibitions. In the mid-1980s, he began working in television, becoming a presenter and programme editor in the 1990s. From 1997, he directed several documentary films on contemporary

Hungarian artists. From 2001, he has been a columnist for the magazine Magyar Narancs. He is also chief editor of the contemporary art magazine Balkon, which he co-founded in 1993. He was awarded the Németh Lajos Prize in 2003.

Since 1979, he has published fourteen books, e.g.: *Csiky Tibor* [Tibor Csiky], 1979; *Hencze Tamás* [Tamás Hencze], 1980; *Csataképek* [Battle Scenes], 1982; *Piet Mondrian*, 1987; *Les Ateliers de Budapest*, 1990; *Vetett árnyék* [Drop Shadow], 1994; *Előbb-utóbb. Rongyszőnyeg az avantgardenak* [Sooner or Later. Rag Carpet for the Avant-garde], 1999; *Magyar képzőművészet az ezredfordulón, a Raiffeisen Gyűjtemény* [Hungarian Fine Art at the Turn of the Millennium, the Raffeisen Collection], 2002; *Gedő Ilka* [Ilka Gedő], 2002; *Bak Imre* [Imre Bak], 2003; *Hencze Tamás* [Tamás Hencze], 2004.

Edit Jankov is an activist at the Jewish Community in Novi Sad, primarily as the leader of the Women's Division. She has participated at Buncher Leadership Program, at an ICJW conference in Budapest and at an Interfaith Conference in Sarajevo. She edited a book published in 2006, comprising life stories of Jewish women living in Vojvodina Region.

She has been involved in the work of the Women's Studies and Research Center in Novi Sad. She presented a paper at the First International Feminist Theology Conference, organized by the Center, with the title "Women among the Ancient Hebrews and Jewish Religious Tradition Today", as well as at the second such conference, when the title of her paper was "What does Esther Tell us Today?". She is also member of the Nansen network, a Norway based Peaceful Conflict Resolution Program. She is employed at the Foreign Programs Department with Vojvodina TV.

Esther Jonas-Maertin was born in 1974. She studied Jewish Studies, History, Religious Studies and German in Potsdam and Leipzig, lecturing on Jewish History, Judaism, and Yiddish Literature. She has published several articles and a book: *"Hoere Israel, wie ein Wasser quillt." Identität und Differenz in der Poesie von Malka Li.* She is currently working on a dissertation about the meaning of Israel in Yiddish poetry.

Borbála Juhász was born in Budapest in 1967. She received her MA in History and English from ELTE University in 1992. She then earned an MA in Modern History from CEU, Budapest. Her thesis was about the role of women in the 1956 revolution. She was a founding member of Esztertáska, a Jewish women's organisation in Hungary. She is specialised in women's history and gender politics, and took part in several EU WP5 gender research programs. She worked in the Equal Opportunities Office as head of the gender equality section. Currently, she is on maternity leave and works as a volunteer for a women's NGO in Gödöllő, Hungary.

Miklós Konrád was born in 1967 in Budapest. He is a research fellow at the Institute of History of the Hungarian Academy of Sciences, and studies the Hungarian Jewry in the Dualist era. His main publications are: "Le mouvement d'embourgeoisement de la noblesse et les Juifs dans la Hongrie du XIXe siècle", *Revue des Études Juives* (159 (2000), janvier–juin); "La femme juive de Budapest comme allégorie", *Revue des Études Juives* 161 (2002), janvier–juin; "A neológ zsidóság útkeresése a századfordulón", *Századok* 139, no. 6 (2005); "Jewish Perception of Antisemitism in Hungary before World War I", *Jewish Studies at the Central European University*. IV, 2003–2005 (Budapest, Central European University, 2006).

Eleonore Lappin was born in Vienna in 1951. She studied English, German and Comparative Literature in the United States and Israel. Since 1989, she has been a staff member of the Institute for the History of Jews in Austria, which is based in Sankt Pölten, Austria.She has also taught at Tel Aviv University, the Hebrew University of Jerusalem, the University of Graz, and the University of Innsbruck. Her main fields of research are: Social History of Jews in Vienna (1918–1938); Autobiographies of Jewish Austrians, Jewish Forced Labour in Austria (1944/45); Post War Trials against Nazi Perpetrators; Politics of Memory in Austria since 1945, Jewish Press.

Her recent publications are: "Frauen und Frauenbilder in der europäischen jüdischen Presse von der Aufklärung bis 1945", co-edited with Michael Nagel, in *Die jüdische Presse. Kommunikationsgeschichte im europäischen Raum* (Bremen, 2007); "Ungarisch-jüdische Zwangsarbeiterinnen und Zwangsarbeiter in Niederösterreich 1944/45", coauthored with Susanne Uslu-Pauer und Manfred Wieninger, in *Studien und Forschungen aus dem niederösterreichischen Institut für Landeskunde* (St. Pölten 2006); "Pädagoge, Psychoanalytiker, Psychologe und Marxist. Siegfried Bernfeld (1892–1953)", in Sabine Hering ed., Jüdische Wohlfahrt im Spiegel von Biographien (Frankfurt/Main, 2006).

Chia Longman was born in 1972. She is a postdoctoral researcher of the Research Foundation-Flanders, and affiliated with the Centre for Intercultural Communication and Interaction at Ghent University, Belgium, where she also lectures in gender and anthropology. Her research interests include feminism and multiculturalism in Europe and identity politics among women in religious traditionalist minorities, particularly Orthodox Jewish women. In 2005, she received a research award from the Hadassah-Brandeis Institute. She has published articles in various Dutch and international journals such as Social Compass, Social Justice and Social Anthropology and is editor of the Dutch Journal for Gender Studies. She is also co-editor—with G. Coene—of *Own Emancipation First? On the Rights and Representation of Women in Multicultural Society* (in Dutch, Gent: Academia Press, 2005) and—with R. Pinxten and G. Verstraete—of *Culture and Politics: Identity and Conflict in a Multicultural World,* Oxford & New York: Berghahn Books, 2004.

Andrea Pető was born in 1964. She is associate professor at the Department of Gender Studies at the Central European University, an associate professor at University of Miskolc, where she directs the Equal Opportunity and Gender Studies Center, Hungary

Her books are *Nőhistóriák. A politizáló magyar nők története (1945–1951)* (Budapest: Seneca, 1998); *Women in Hungarian Politics 1945–1951* (New York: Columbia University Press/East European Monographs, 2003); *Rajk Júlia* (Budapest: Balassi, 2001), *Geschlecht, Politik und Stalinismus in Ungarn. Eine Biographie von Júlia Rajk.* Studien zur Geschichte Ungarns, Bd. 12 (Gabriele Schäfer Verlag, 2007); *Napasszonyok és Holdkisasszonyok. A mai magyar konzervatív női politizálás alaktana* [Women of Sun and girls of Moon. Morphology of contemporary Hungarian women doing politics] (Budapest: Balassi, 2003).

Shulamit Reinharz is the Jacob Potofsky Professor of Sociology at Brandeis University where she has been on the faculty since 1982. In the 1990s, she headed the Women's Studies Program at Brandeis University, introducing many new courses including a graduate degree program. In 1997, she opened the Hadassah-Brandeis Institute, whose mission is to develop fresh ways of thinking about Jews and gender worldwide. In 2001, she stepped down from the Women's Studies Program and opened the Women's Studies Research Centre at Brandeis, which aims to integrate research, art and activism. For the past two years, she has written a weekly column for the Jewish Advocate, the Boston area Jewish newspaper.

Her books include: *On Becoming a Social Scientist* (1979), *Psychology and Community Change* (1984), *Qualitative Gerontology* (1987), *Feminist Methods in Social Research* (1992), *American Jewish Women and the Zionist Enterprise* (2005), *The JGirl's Guide* (2005), and a book in Hebrew on the letters of Manya Shohat. Her upcoming books are *International Intermarriage* and *Today I am a Woman! Bat Mitzvah as a Key to Understanding Jewish Communities around the World.*

Valérie Rhein was born in Basel, Switzerland, in 1965. She received an MA in History and German from the University of Basel. She is a member of staff at the Basel Department of Education, where she is responsible for communication. Rhein has worked as an editor and freelance journalist for Swiss and Jewish newspapers, writing primarily on social questions, women's issues, local politics, and Judaism. She is the co-author of a book about Jewish women in Basel, and she is co-founder and chairperson of Ofek, a pluralistic organisation within the local Jewish community (www.ofek.ch). A co-founder of Jom Ijun, an annual day of study inspired by England's "Limmud Conference" (www.jomijun.ch; www.limmud.org), she was a Martin Buber Fellow at Paideia, the European Institute for Jewish Studies in Sweden, in 2002/2003 (www.paideia-eu.org).

Julia Richers was born in 1975. She has a doctorate in East European History and is currently working and teaching as a postdoctoral researcher at the History Department of the University of Basel, Switzerland. Her research interests include Jewish history in Eastern

Europe, especially in Hungary, gender studies and memory in post-communist societies. Her dissertation dealt with the Jewish community in Budapest in the middle of the 19th century, the integration strategies of women and men as well as the spatial dimension of Jewish life in an urban setting (forthcoming). She has published several articles on the topic. Her interest in space, peripheries and frontiers led her to a new research project focussing on the Soviet space program and the cosmos as social utopia and cultural history.

Dóra Sárdi She was born in 1974. She graduated in Hungarian language and literature from the University of Budapest and she also attended Jewish studies at University of Budapest. She has been working for Centropa since 2000 as co-director.

Together with her colleague, Eszter Andor, she has done many life history interviews for Centropa, worked out the methodology of Centropa interviewing, helped set up new Centropa teams in the countries of the region, held training seminars for them and reviewed interviews coming in from fourteen countries until the teams could work on their own. She reviews and edits interviews done with Hungarian Jews in Hungary and in the neighboring countries. She is currently involved in the educational program of Centropa which help history teachers in sencondary school to teach Hungarian Jewish history and the history of the Hungarian holocaust through films made from the photos and interviews from the Centropa Archives.

Alice Shalvi was born in Germany, educated in England and has lived in Jerusalem since 1949. She was a faculty member in the Department of English Literature at the Hebrew University of Jerusalem from 1950–1990 and also served as principal of the Pelech Religious Experimental High School for Girls from 1975–1990. From 1984–2000 she was the founding Chairwoman of the Israel Women's Network, the country's major advocacy group on women's rights and status. In 1997 she was appointed rector of the Schechter Institute for Jewish Studies, where she became the first woman to head a rabbinical school. The recipient of numerous awards and honorary doctorates, in 2007 she was awarded the prestigious Israel Prize for her lifetime achievements in the areas of education, women's rights and civil rights in general.

Zsuzsa Toronyi was born in 1970. She is an archivist, museologist and curator at the Hungarian Jewish Museum and Archives. She lectures on Jewish history at the John Wesley Theological College and on the history of Jewish ceremonial art at the Rabbinical Seminary of Budapest. She is a member of the Esztertáska Workshop and has been the curator of several exhibitions: "Dimensions of the Past" (2000); "The Jewish Woman" (2002); "Our Museum" (2006); and co-curator of "Juden in Ungarn" (Jüdisches Museum, Frankfurt am Main, 1999); and "From Deprivation of Rights to Genocide" (Hungarian National Museum, 2006). Her books are *Zsidó társadalomismeret* [Jewish Social History—a coursebook for elementary and secondary schools] (Budapest: Körtánc Alapítvány, 1997); *Jerusalem anno... Old Jewish Postcards* (Budapest: Magyar Könyvklub, 1999); and *Segédlet a héber nyelvű iratok levéltári leírásához* [Manual for the Description of Hebrew Documents] (Budapest: Magyar Zsidó Múzeum és Levéltár, 2006). She has also edited *Makor. Magyar Zsidó Levéltári Füzetek* (Makor. Sources from the Hungarian Jewish Archives).

The essays in this collection grew out of the conference "Diversities—Bet Debora in Budapest—4th Conference of the European Jewish Women, Activists, Academics, and Rabbis" held at the Central European University, Budapest. The authors are academics and activists from Israel, the United States, Hungary, Belgium, Germany, Switzerland, and France. They offer insights into how European Jewish women negotiate everyday situations in a historical perspective between religion and modernity, orthodoxy and employment, political engagement and religious laws. The various essays analyse the factors shaping the gendered memory of Ms. Meller, Fanny von Arnstein, Hilde Spiel, Jelena Kon, Manya Wilbushewitz Shohat, Johanna Bischitz, Ilka Gedő, and the first generation of Hungarian feminists and female psychoanalysts.
The book is essential reading for academics and students of Jewish Studies, History and Gender Studies.

ESTHER'S BAG
FOUNDATION

2200 Ft

9 789635 067428