

Gender and Autobiography in Modern Jewish History

Dr. Eliyana Adler
JWST 419A
HIST 319A
T/Th. 11-12:15

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T 9-10, Th 12:30-1:30
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Autobiographies are at one and the same time one of the most informative and one of the most misleading historical sources available. They present an unparalleled opportunity for viewing the past through the lens of participants and eye-witnesses. Yet they also represent the views of flawed and complicated individuals, many of whom use their testimonies to justify their own actions.

In this course we will read autobiographies critically and carefully in examining the tremendous changes wrought by modernity in the Jewish community. In particular we will look to memoir literature to illuminate the role of gender in Jewish life over the past two hundred years.

Recent decades have seen a flurry of translations of important Jewish memoirs from the past, as well as of composing new ones. At the same time the field of autobiographical studies has opened up and provided serious scholarly discussion around the writing and reading of memoir literature. We will rely on both of these innovations in pursuing our study of gender in modern Jewish history.

Readings:

Pauline Wengeroff, *Rememberings: The World of a Russian Jewish Woman*
Mark Raider, ed. *The Plough Women: Records of the Pioneer Women of Palestine*
Primo Levi, *Survival in Auschwitz*
Kate Simon, *Bronx Primitive: Portraits in a Childhood*
Paul Cowan, *An Orphan in History*
Electronic Reserves (jwst419aadl)

Responsibilities:

Academic integrity is assumed at all times. Please pledge your work and speak to the instructor about any questions regarding proper citation of published, unpublished or internet sources.

Attendance and participation-15
5 short response papers-25
Autobiography paper-35
Final paper-25

Regular attendance and participation are an integral part of an upper-level discussion based course. Students can receive up to ten percentage points of their final grade for regular and informed participation. An additional five will be awarded for a brief oral presentation on the student's research project.

Students will be expected to hand in five short response papers and two longer essays. The response papers (2-3 pages) are due on the assigned days and should deal with all of the assigned readings. Each student will choose one autobiography to write a paper about (7-10 pages). The final examination, in essay form (5-7 pages), is due on the last day of class. More information on these projects will be forthcoming.

For all of these assignments students should use the University of Chicago footnoting method. Late papers will be graded down a half of a grade per class session late.

Schedule:

9/1

Introduction

9/6

Autobiography Defined

*Olney, James, "Autobiography and the Cultural Moment: A Thematic, Historical, and Bibliographic Introduction," *Autobiography: Essays Theoretical and Critical*, pp. 3-27.

*Gusdorf, Georges, "Conditions and Limits of Autobiography," *Autobiography*, pp. 28-48.

9/8

Modernity Defined

*Chajes, J. H., "Accounting for the Self: Preliminary Generic-Historical Reflections on Early Modern Jewish Egodocuments," *The Jewish Quarterly Review* 95:1 (Winter 2005): 1-15.

9/13

Genesis of a Genre: East European Jewish Autobiographies

*Gottlober, Abraham Ber, "I Served Haskala in Russia," *The Golden Tradition* pp. 113-119.

*Lilienblum, Moses Leib, "The Sins of My Youth," *The Golden Tradition*, pp. 120-129.

*Mintz, Alan, "The Haskalah Background," *'Banished from Their Father's Table': Loss of Faith and Hebrew Autobiography* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1989), pp. 25-54.

*Biale, David, "Eros and Enlightenment," *Eros and the Jews: From Biblical Israel to Contemporary America* (New York: Basic Books, 1992), pp. 149-175.

9/15

Engendering a Genre: A Woman's Voice

Response Paper #1: Autobiographical Essay on Experience of Gender

Wengeroff, Pauline, *Rememberings: The World of a Russian Jewish Woman in the Nineteenth Century*, pp. 1-67.

9/20

Women's Writing

Wengeroff, *Rememberings*, pp. 69-150.

*Bree, Germaine, "Autogynography," *Studies in Autobiography*, ed. James Olney (New York: Oxford University Press, 1988), pp. 171-179.

*Magnus, Shulamit, "Kol Ishah: Women and Pauline Wengeroff's Writing of an Age," *Nashim* 7 (2004): 28-64.

9/22

Accounting for Wengeroff

Wengeroff, *Rememberings*, pp. 151-213.

Cooperman, Bernard Dov, "Afterward," *Rememberings*, pp. 253-293.

9/27

Jews and Revolution

*Trotsky, Leon, "A Social Democrat Only," *The Golden Tradition*, pp. 441-447.

*Broido, Vera, *Daughter of Revolution*, pp. 9-57.

*Schapiro, Leonard, "The Role of the Jews in the Russian Revolutionary Movement," *Essential Papers on Jews and the Left*, pp. 300-321.

9/29

Zionism: A Different Revolution

*Levin, Shmarya, *Forward from Exile*, pp. 225-239, 369-387.

* Shapira, Anita, "Native Sons," *Essential Papers on Zionism*, pp. 790-821.

10/4

Rosh Ha-Shana- **No Class**

Rader, Mark, *The Plough Women*, pp. 3-102.

10/6

Women in the Zionist Enterprise

Response Paper #2: Women in Zionism: Same or Different Revolution?

Rader, Mark, *The Plough Women*, pp. lix-lxxiii, 109-145, 227-234 ,247-258.

10/11

Youth on the Edge

*Shandler, *Awakening Live: Autobiographies of Jewish Youth in Poland Before the Holocaust*, pp. 263-274, 391-403.

*Moseley, Marcus, "Life, Literature; Autobiographies of Jewish Youth in Interwar Poland," *Jewish Social Studies* 7:3 (2001): 1-51.

10/13

Yom Kippur-No Class

10/18

Film as Autobiography

View film "The Divan"

10/20

Autobiography and film

Discuss choosing text for autobiography paper.

Response Paper #3: Autobiography and Film

*Bruss, Elizabeth, "Eye for I: Making and Unmaking Autobiography in Film," *Autobiography: Essays Theoretical and Critical*, pp. 296-320.

10/25

Holocaust and Film

View film "Because of that War"

Levi, Primo, *Survival in Auschwitz*, pp. 5-91.

10/27

Holocaust-Writing the Unwritable

Levi, Primo, *Survival in Auschwitz*, pp. 92-157.

11/1

Holocaust: Comparative Suffering

*Ida Fink, Isabella Leitner, Livia E. Bitton Jackson, Gisella Perl, *Different Voices: Women and the Holocaust*, pp. 40-45, 65-68, 73-83, 104-118.

*Meed, Vladka, *On Both Sides of the Wall*, pp. 82-93.

*Ringelheim, Joan, "Women and the Holocaust: A Reconsideration of Research," *Jewish Women in Historical Perspective*, pp. 243-264.

11/3

The Soviet Jewish Experience

*Ginsburg, Semiona, *Journey into the Whirlwind*, pp. 20-47, 226-230.

*Shikheeva-Gaister, Inna, "A Family Chronicle," *In the Shadow of Revolution*, pp. 367-390.

11/8

The Soviet Jewish Experience Continued

Response Paper # 4: Autobiography and Truth

*Ehrenburg, Ilya, *Men, Years-Life: Post-War Years, 1945-1954*, pp. 124-135, 293-309.

* Adams, Timothy Dow, "Design and Lie in Modern American Autobiography," *Telling Lies in Modern American Autobiography*, pp. 1-16.

11/10

Immigration and Resettlement in America

*Kazin, Alfred, excerpts, *Writing Our Lives*, pp. 133-154.

*Turek, Richard. "At Home in the Land of Columbus: Americanization in European-American Immigrant Autobiography," *Multicultural Autobiography: American Lives*, pp.

11/15

Immigration Retold

Response Paper #5: Varieties of Immigrant Experience

Simon, Kate, *Bronx Primitive*

11/17

Fiction as Autobiography

*Yeziarska, Anzia, "How I Found America," *Hungry Hearts*, pp. 250-298.

*Wexler, Laura, "Looking at Yeziarska," *Women of the Word*, pp. 153-181.

11/22

Contemporary Voices-Ethnic Identity

Cowan, Paul, *An Orphan in History*, pp. 3-98.

11/24

Thanksgiving- **No Class**

11/29

Contemporary Voices

Autobiography paper due

Cowan, Paul, *An Orphan in History*, pp. 101-255.

12/1

Contemporary Voices: A Medley

*Rich, Adrienne, "Split at the Root," *Nice Jewish Girls*, pp. 73-90.

*Gornick, Vivian, excerpt from *Fierce Attachments, Writing Our Lives*, pp. 315-323.

*Haar, Sandra, "Seeds of Doubt: Constructing A Sephardi Identity," *Bridges* 6:1, pp. 36-42.

*Greenberg, Steve, "A Gay Orthodox Rabbi," *Queer Jews*, pp. 36-43.

12/6

Presentations

12/8

Presentations

12/13

Conclusions

Final Essay: Gender, Autobiography and History