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At the end of the Intercollegiate Menorah Society's Summer School in August 1930, Cecil Roth's students charged that he failed to provide them with adequate bibliographic guidance on Jewish history. This was a significant charge because the Menorah Society, and its Summer School, in particular, followed an agenda based on the belief that Jewish continuity would come through knowledge of Jewish history and culture, rather than religion, and it utilized an academic model to foster Jewish identity. In defending himself Roth, who served as the Institute's lecturer in History, revealed his contempt for contemporary Jewish historical writing:

As far as the facts of Jewish history go, there are in English three or four books: all, I regret to say, most inadequate and (as you know very well) extraordinarily indigestible. In other languages, matters are a little better: but I know from experience that it is useless to recommend a polyglot literature to a monolingual class. Of course, I have pointed out what there is available, but without much enthusiasm. It's not merely a question of style or language so much as of the point of view.¹

Roth maintained this position even following the Menorah Summer School. Why he did so will be the focus of this essay.

Often derided as 'popularizer', an 'apologist', or 'filiopietistic' by many in the academic world, Roth's career has not always been assessed positively by his fellow historians.² Roth's posthumous historical reputation has also suffered because he found himself outside the 'mainstream' in Jewish historical writing during much of his life.³ During the inter-war years, and certainly in the aftermath of World War II, one of the dominant trends in Jewish historical writing was distinctly Zionist in orientation, and 'Zionocentric' historians often regarded the diaspora (*galut*) as fraught with the twin dangers of violence and assimilation. Ghetto life, which shielded Jews from cultural contamination even as it restricted their freedom of movement, was also said ironically to have enabled creativity. Roth was a Diaspora centered Jewish scholar, "wedded to the image of the cosmopolitan and interactive Jewish culture whose boundaries are constantly and creatively redrawn,"⁴ and his vision of the impact of the Diaspora is revealed in his presidential address to the Jewish Historical Society of England in 1938, "The Jews, then, are a European people—more truly than are more than one of the peoples of the Western world. As a European people, moreover, they have been active for untold generations in every manifestation of Western cultural life."⁵ Roth was thus at odds with the developing 'Zionocentric' vision of Jewish history, which came to dominate much of the historical discourse in the post-1945 world.⁶ Moreover, in legitimizing the *Galut*, Roth the historian helped to provide a justification for the development of a dual identity for modern Jewish life that was both national and Jewish simultaneously.

In order to understand the origin and expression of Roth's vision we need to examine his relationship with his American audience. Throughout much of his professional career, the Anglo-Jewish historian Cecil Roth maintained a warm relationship with American Jewish intellectuals. It was while working with American Jewish academics and professionals—in presenting lectures and publishing books and articles—that Roth enunciated a vision of Jewish history that gave pride of place to the Diaspora as a positive force in Jewish history.⁷ He produced this vision during two clearly definable stages of his career: the late 1920s and early 1930s when his emphasis was on the development of a theoretical set of issues, and the years after 1945, when Roth entered into a prolonged discussion about documentary material concerning the early modern Anglo-American world.

The time between these two periods was not one of an ideological souring in Roth's relationship with American Jewry. It was, rather, the result of his achieving a certain level of professional stability when he was appointed to a permanent academic post at Oxford University in 1939, while the outbreak of World War II in September 1939 physically impeded extensive Transatlantic activities. After 1945 Roth once again embarked on an extensive epistemological discussion about Jewish historical writing with an American correspondent. By examining each of these periods, we will better understand both Roth and also the forces shaping Jewish historical writing at this time.

Cecil Roth and the Menorah Summer School of 1930

Cecil Roth's appointment as lecturer in History for the Intercollegiate Menorah Society's Summer School program seemed an odd fit. Roth had not published anything about American Jewish history, and his Oxford dissertation was a study of sixteenth century Florence.⁸ Still Roth and the Intercollegiate Menorah Society's chancellor, Henry Hurwitz had something fundamental in common: their mutual understanding of the importance of history to the continuity of Jewish life. The Menorah Society was founded at Harvard University in 1906 and spread to nearly 80 college campuses over the next 20 years. Its goal was to promote the academic study of Jewish history and culture among Jewish students. It was in fact a precursor of B'nai Brith Hillel, with which some of its chapters eventually merged. That the society and its chancellor would see history as occupying a special role in the development of Jewish identity and in perpetuating Jewish life in the United States is almost self-explanatory. To the Menorah Society, Jewish continuity depended upon American Jews developing a strong sense of who they were, which was impossible without understanding where they came from. In order to develop a vibrant American identity, while still maintaining fidelity to Jewish particularism, American Jews had to be cognizant of the historical forces that shaped Jewish identity in the diaspora. Thus a knowledge of history was believed to be crucial for American Jewish life, and yet by the 1920s the leadership of the Menorah Society were decrying the state of Jewish historical scholarship, especially the material available in English.⁹

Henry Hurwitz's summer school curriculum was tied to his sense of the importance of Jewish literacy, not just history, to the development of Jewish identity. In his passion to sponsor a 'Jewish Renaissance' in the US, Hurwitz believed it was first necessary to sponsor an intellectual foundation in American academia, where the Intercollegiate Menorah Society operated. Previous Menorah events had sought to inspire Jewish students by bringing such intellectual luminaries as Israel Zangwill to teach. By the 1930 summer school Hurwitz had moved away from keynote speakers, like Zangwill, toward a more in depth curriculum based on Jewish history and texts.¹⁰

It was Hurwitz's appreciation of Jewish history that initially drew him to Roth, and which would eventually lead to his choice as the summer school's lecturer in History. The story begins in 1925, when as a newly minted PhD, Roth was invited by Rabbi Stephen Wise to serve as a visiting professor at the Jewish Institute of Religion in New York. Several things came out of Roth's brief tenure at the JIR in 1925–1926. Roth apparently came to believe that as far as teaching was concerned, there were few sources available in English for students to read.¹¹ Indeed, the only curriculum material so far discovered from teaching at the JIR indicates that when it came to secondary readings on Jewish history, Roth assigned specific articles from the Jewish Encyclopedia, which was then already 20 years old.¹²

Although he did not obtain a permanent academic post in the United States, his work at the JIR introduced him to Henry Hurwitz, the chancellor of the Intercollegiate Menorah Society and editor of the *Menorah Journal*. In 1927 Hurwitz asked Roth to consider writing a series of articles that would demonstrate that the Jews 'have been an integral part of Western Civilization', and therefore by extension American history. Hurwitz also encouraged Roth to write a more detailed appraisal of what they called the 'Genizah school', which would give "the much needed critique of Jewish historical writing, and propounding the right spirit and method that should be applied today to the research and writing of Jewish

history.” The series could then be capped off by an article (or articles) containing Roth’s “own analysis and summary of the periods of Jewish history.”¹³

The series of articles Hurwitz commissioned from Roth on the state of Jewish history and historical writing began appearing in 1928; “Creating Jewish History for Our Own Needs,”¹⁴ and “European History and Jewish History: Do Their Epochs Coincide?”¹⁵ were published by January 1930 and helped establish Roth’s reputation among his American audience. These articles were in many ways the ideological clarion call of Roth’s historiographical vision. They proclaimed that, on the one hand, the German approach associated with historians like Heinrich Graetz, which often emphasized Jewish suffering above all, the Jewish experience. These articles also pointed to what would become a principal theme in Roth’s writing: the contribution of the Jews to the history of western civilization. Roth would come to regard these issues as two sides of the same coin.¹⁶

Roth believed that Jewish history was the product of a creative interaction between Jewish and non-Jewish society and that this interaction allowed Jewish intellectual and social creativity to contribute to the wider non-Jewish world on a number of levels. Since he had delineated this position in the *Menorah Journal*, the publication of the Intercollegiate Menorah Society, it should not be too surprising that Hurwitz wanted to further harness Roth’s talents, which fit easily with Hurwitz’s crusade to promote the study of the ‘interest and dignity of the Jewish past’. Hurwitz wanted a Jewish history that moved beyond filiopietism and yet still emphasize the significant contributions Jews made to the American scene. In addition, Hurwitz and his association wanted Jewish history to emphasize the positive attributes of Jewish history, and not be an unending list of massacre and misery.¹⁷ It is interesting that while Roth’s work would be part of the Menorah Society’s wider project to create a new Jewish history, what Hurwitz got out of Roth was not a narrative of American Jewish history, but an analysis of the role of the diaspora on the development of Jewish life. This actually worked well for both men, since Roth was trying to attract the attention of American publishers, and Hurwitz was trying to develop a curriculum that would attract students.

When Hurwitz invited Roth to join the faculty of the Menorah Summer School in January 1930, Hurwitz admitted that he had only succeeded in “getting together some money specifically for the Menorah Summer School.” But he told Roth that his dream was to develop the summer school into “a permanent all year-round institute for research in Jewish history, literature, and law, in our humanistic spirit, and also for scientific investigations in modern Jewish life and problems.”¹⁸ Since both men shared a great deal with respect to Jewish history, it was, to quote Hurwitz, “the most natural thing in the world that we should turn to you to be our historian. For you have the point of view that is ours also, and the capacity of expression both orally and in writing that we need.”¹⁹ Simply put Hurwitz hoped Roth bring it into the classroom what he had done in writing, in the *Menorah Journal*, and, Hurwitz wanted Roth to demonstrate not only the importance of Jewish history to ‘our needs today’, but also to offer “some observations on how cavalierly Jewish history is treated in the general histories....”²⁰

As preparation for the summer school progressed Hurwitz returned again to Roth’s importance to its success. In March 1930 he flattered Roth by informing him that:

It is primarily because we look to you as the head and front of the Summer School performance. History, after all, is our main theme; all others are tributary to it, or courses from it. And you are the historian, as I have told you before, who, most of all I know expresses the spirit and intent of what we seek in Menorah.²¹

Roth also believed that English speaking Jewry, particularly United States Jewry, had become a vital part in the maintenance of Jewish life in the modern world.²² One of the points that resonated clearly with Hurwitz was Roth’s belief that English speaking Jewry had the potential to exceed even the Yiddish

speaking Jews of Eastern Europe as a creative political and intellectual force in Jewish life. Roth lamented that despite this potential those few histories that deigned to mention English speaking Jewry were “written for the most part from the continental standpoint and in the Continental method.” The ‘continental method’, was Roth’s code for the German Jewish school of historical writing.

Given the paucity of courses available to college students in Jewish history, Roth’s summer school class had the potential to mold the perspectives of a future generation of scholars of Judaic studies. Roth seemed cognizant of this as he prepared his lectures. In late March he wrote Hurwitz:

As to the lectures: I think I had better plan a course of twenty-five to thirty, or five a week...What, however, of the subject? In your cable you spoke of historiography: while in your letter you seem to envisage history. The former, as a matter of fact, would necessarily be somewhat technical, and insufferably boring to students who don’t know much of the latter....²³

Reflecting both the needs of the students, who were likely ignorant of the subject, and his own predilections, Roth concluded that his best approach was to develop a course titled “An Approach to Jewish History.” Roth wanted his course to concentrate upon “main tendencies, especially those tendencies which are generally left neglected.” In order to cover the entire span of Jewish history in only 25 lectures, he also suggested that he would only become a “trifle more detailed with 1492.”²⁴

A few days later Roth submitted a proposed abstract for his course, whose first line demonstrated his general contempt for the existing state of Jewish historical writing, “The object of this course will be to provide an intelligible general introduction to modern Jewish history [emphasis added].” Roth’s basic theme for this course was in detailing how the “Palestinian agriculturalist of two thousand years ago developed into the city-dwelling English or American Jew of today.”²⁵ In his description of the purpose of the course Roth reflected something of what Herbert Butterfield called the “Whig Interpretation of history.” The Whig historian, according to Butterfield, studied the past only in reference to contemporary life, constantly looking for the agency, or perhaps the hand of providence, in history. The Whig historian’s search for the origins and causes of contemporary structures often led him (or her) to select only those facts that supported the idea that current circumstances were the inevitable end result of historical progress.²⁶

Certainly Roth can be accused of a certain degree of ‘Whiggishness’. Roth’s summer school course reflected both his Oxford education and Anglo-centrism: Roth stated that “[a]n attempt will be made to break away from the Continental standards of historical writing of the past century.” Meanwhile, the:

angle of treatment will be that of the English-speaking world, Literature will be dealt with as a manifestation, and not as the essence of Jewish life. The romance of the history will not be suppressed, but it will not be needlessly exaggerated.

He concluded that the course would both integrate Jewish history into the broader sweep of European history (something he had already begun in his published and soon to be published *Menorah Journal* pieces), and introduce students to the “sources of Jewish history.”²⁷

One of Roth’s talents, according to Jonathan Sarna, was always to be cognizant of his audience.²⁸ So it is important to recognize that Roth’s last point, teaching American Jewish students about the synergy between Jewishness and Americanism, was not only one of Hurwitz life long obsessions, it resonated with an American audience becoming increasingly bold in their declarations of Americanness.²⁹ Having developed all his themes, carefully proclaimed his goals, and determined his lecture topics, Roth found himself in territory familiar to anyone trying to teach a survey course on the entire span of Jewish history: specifically time constraints. Roth planned a course of 25 self-contained lectures, which included such

topics as “The Jews of Medieval England” [lecture five], and “The Marranos and their Importance [lecture 12].” Yet despite his devoting an entire lecture to the “Resettlement in England” [lecture 14], his desire for an English-speaking focus was not entirely attainable. For example, it was not until lecture 22 that Roth devoted himself specifically to American Jewry (although to be fair, in this one lecture he was already giving more time to US Jewry than any extant Jewish history text).³⁰

In early May, as Hurwitz paid Roth an advance on his teaching salary, he pronounced himself satisfied with Roth’s course outline, although he did increase the 25 h to 29 h, plus an inaugural lecture to open the entire summer school. Interestingly, Roth proposed as a title for the inaugural lecture either “Problems in Jewish history” or “Paradoxes of Jewish History.” Hurwitz chose the latter title, arguing that “I have a feeling that people are fed up on Problems.” He did tell Roth, however, that “you can talk about all the problems you want to....”³¹

Roth’s inaugural lecture to the Menorah Summer School, on July 7, 1930, was indeed entitled “Paradoxes of Jewish History.” The lecture, subsequently published in the *Menorah Journal*, was Roth’s, and by extension Hurwitz’s, call for a new understanding of the significance of Jewish life in the diaspora.³² In the lecture, Roth’s Whiggish interpretation of Jewish history was clearly evident. Rather than regard Jewish history as survival despite persecution, Roth postulated that Jewish survival was imperiled by success. Comparing the contemporary American Jewish scene with Jewish life in Renaissance Italy, the Jewish community of twelfth century Spain, and the Alexandrian Jews of the first century of the Common Era, Roth postulated the impending downfall of Jewish life in the United States. He argued that despite its vast numbers the Hellenistic Jewish community of Alexandria had disappeared, leaving behind only literary traces. For example, while Hillel remains a living force in Jewish life, Philo of Alexandria “has become an antiquarian diversion, familiar only to assimilated Jews like ourselves.”

Was Roth anticipating the death of American Jewish life? Actually Roth’s analysis had more nuance than that. Roth first asserted his “deep-rooted belief...in the eternity and indestructibility of Israel.” Yet Roth was not blind to the rapid levels of assimilation, personified by the ‘Americanization’ of many of his students. His postulation of a declining graph of Jewish observance (first generation immigrants maintaining strict adherence, second generation discarding those rituals that were ‘inconvenient’, and the third generation Jewish only by birth) is part and parcel of the conventional wisdom of American Jewish life. If you follow the numbers alone, Roth asserted, then there were grounds for panic. Yet Roth refused to accept this assessment, commenting “The Jewish people has withstood the action of thirty centuries and it is not to be imagined that it will suddenly collapse at the thirty-first.”

Roth believed, and we have no reason to doubt his sincerity, that the “Jewish people will assuredly live—but not necessarily that particular section with which we are in touch, however vast and however wealthy it may be.” Simply put, despite economic success, and access to education, their “is no proof that it is we who will escape in any general catastrophe.” The preservation of the Jewish people, according to Roth, lay in the preservation of Jewish tradition. He said, “...if we want to secure our own personal perpetuity as Jews, to guarantee our own identity, it is up to us to take steps: not on our people’s behalf—they can exist without us—but on our own.”

What role did Zionism play in solving this Jewish problem? Roth’s attitude toward Zionism was, during the inter-war years, complex. In 1930 he did not believe that Zionism was the answer to the problem of assimilation, for “Zion has not been able to save itself from overthrow on repeated occasions, nor [as in the case of Alexandria] ...has it been able to preserve the communities of the countries in closest touch with it from complete decay” (25). Roth did not see salvation in purely religious terms. He believed that “there are numerous bodies of Jews meticulous in their orthodoxy which have entirely disappeared” (25). The solution, therefore, was that, “...if it is possible to generalize in such matters, one may perhaps make one categorical statement. It has never happened that any body of Jews imbued with their ancestral culture

has withered away.” Thus Roth tied his philosophy of Jewish history, in his inaugural lecture to Hurwitz’s campaign for a Jewish Renaissance. The linkage is explicit near the end of the lecture:

Jewish learning, while it continues to be cultivated seriously, is the one tried preservative. It is, indeed, the solitary means through which the alternative panaceas, religion and nationalism, have themselves been preserved to our own day. It remains the only thing upon which it is possible for us to rely for our own continuity. (25)

Roth called his approach to the subject “Historical Judaism,” which he regarded as “more than a mere religion, more than a nationality, more than a philanthropic Brotherhood” (26). In words that echo Mordecai Kaplan, he described Judaism as a ‘civilization and a culture’. To Roth, the arguments taking place between Reform Judaism and ‘its opponents’ obscured the real problem facing contemporary Judaism. Any Judaism, whether liberal or traditional, that lacked the “cultural background which was to our fathers the inseparable adjunct of our national and religious life...” was doomed to disappear. In a final tribute to Hurwitz’s organization, which it must be remembered served as his patron, Roth asserted that his historical Judaism was an “informed Judaism”, whose symbol was the Menorah. He was therefore especially “proud to be able to participate in a practical manner in the present Menorah Summer School.”

In addition to helping him develop his ideas about the significance of the Diaspora in Jewish history, Roth’s performance during the Menorah Summer School helped solidify his reputation among his American audience, and it led to further publication contracts, including for one of his best selling books, *A Bird’s Eye View of Jewish History* (later published as *A Short History of the Jews*). But Roth’s growing engagement with American Jews was about to be interrupted, first, by his appointment to a full time position at Oxford University in 1939, and, more dramatically, by the advent of World War II in September of the same year. Traffic across the Atlantic grew ever thinner. But, no less important, in 1936, Roth was nominated for the presidency of the Jewish Historical Society of England.³³ Although previously he had published extensively on Anglo-Jewish history, his engagement with this particular subject intensified, thanks in part to his role in the Society; he was also then writing what would become one of his most famous books, *The History of the Jews in England* (first published in 1941).

Cecil Roth and Jacob Rader Marcus

On November 6, 1961 Jacob Rader Marcus, the “Dean of American Jewish historians,” wrote Cecil Roth, the Doyen of Anglo-Jewish history, to ask a favor.

I am happy to be able to tell you that the American Jewish Archives has just moved into a handsomely remodeled and accoutered building on the Hebrew Union College campus here in Cincinnati. The rapidly growing scope of our activities has long made new quarters much needed, and now that we have them, I am confident that we will be able to serve the field of American Jewish historical research with increasing effectiveness.

A planned dedication ceremony was scheduled for the spring of 1963, and Marcus told Roth he could:

contribute substantially to the lustre of the occasion by preparing for the dedication a 2,500 word (10-page) article dealing with the significance of American Jewish history and the role of American Jewish archival institutions—notably, of course, the American Jewish Archives—in providing the means for a grasp of history.

Marcus not only offered Roth an honorarium of \$100 for the article, he promised to ‘widely Distribute’ it. Marcus requested an essay written on a “high intellectual level, yet with a somewhat popular reading public in mind.”³⁴ This essay was published as a pamphlet in 1963, entitled “On the Study of American

Jewish history.”³⁵ This essay was not one of Roth’s most brilliant, or indeed, well known. It is, however, one of only a few pieces Roth wrote exclusively about American Jewish history. Why Marcus thought Roth could add luster to the dedication of the new AJA facility and Roth’s perspective on the significance of the event provide an important window into the development of both the American Jewish Archives and American Jewish historical writing during a period when the field was still nascent.

The career of Jacob Rader Marcus (1896–1995) was closely tied to the Hebrew Union College in Cincinnati. Marcus, who was ordained at HUC in 1920, obtained his doctorate at the University of Berlin in 1925 and returned to HUC as a faculty member shortly thereafter. In 1947 he founded the American Jewish Archives, to serve as a central repository for the records of American Jewry.³⁶ Marcus shared much with Roth. As historians they both loved in-depth analysis of specific documents. In Roth’s case he tended to favor illuminated and artistic material, such as Haggadot, while Marcus found memoirs, wills, and common correspondence more to his liking. Despite coming from two diverse intellectual traditions Marcus was the product of a German, Wissenschaft education while Roth was shaped by Oxford—both men devoted much of their historical careers to bringing Jewish history to the masses, rather than limiting their historical focus to the academic world. Marcus and Roth were also Diaspora centered historians, arguing that interaction with gentile society acted as a spur to Jewish creativity.³⁷

Although scholars have recently begun to study the role of publishing in the development of historical memory, along with the politics, economics, and the intellectual underpinnings of historical consciousness, few have considered the importance of archives. In a recent commentary in the Times Literary Supplement Sudhir Hazareesingh pointed out an interesting relationship between a country’s memory, in this case France, and its archival institutions. Hazareesingh argues that “France’s problems with its collective memory are not merely political and academic, they are also (and perhaps above all) administrative.” He specifically contrasts his utilization of provincial archives, where the overriding philosophy was one of access to material, to the situation at the center (Paris), where “facilitating access to public documents is not, and has never been, a priority for the mandarins of the Ministry of Culture who administer France’s national archives.”³⁸ The result is often either a stifling of historical inquiry, or at the very least its retardation for lack of access.

When Marcus established the American Jewish Archives, there was no single place for the collection and study of American Jewish history, and American Jewish historical writing was still overwhelmingly characterized by apologetics and filiopietism. The collection and preservation of primary source documents, Marcus believed, was the first step toward the development of a more sophisticated historical writing. In his quest to build this archival repository Marcus appealed to a number of individuals for assistance. One well known group were his ‘boys’ in the Reform rabbinate, most of whom had been his students. Interestingly enough, Marcus tapped few historians to help him obtain collections, or even discussed matters with them. There are two exceptions to this. The first were a group of his students, men such as Bertram Korn (1918–1979), Malcolm Stern (1915–1994), and Stanley Chyet (1931–2002). The other exception was Cecil Roth. Although Roth did not help Marcus directly obtain many collections, he did serve as an important foil for identifying and clarifying areas and subject matter that Marcus would explore.

According to Lance Sussman, Marcus always understood American Jewish history to be hemispheric, rather than strictly national (or North American).³⁹ In studying the early period of American Jewish history (pre-1776) Marcus and Roth found common ground, for Roth extensively studied the Marrano diaspora of the early modern era. In this context, Marcus often asked Roth (the requests were reciprocated) about documents and documentary collections. As early as 1947, Roth was informing Marcus about documents discovered in England, in this case a 1785 letter by Joseph Salvador describing South Carolina.⁴⁰ The letter, held in the British Library, was eventually published in Marcus’s journal *American Jewish Archives* in 1965.⁴¹

Marcus poured over Roth's books—such as *The Great Synagogue, London, 1690–1940*⁴² and *History of the Jews in England*,⁴³ for information on Transatlantic connections.⁴⁴ Meanwhile, Roth asked Marcus for information, and copies of material, listed in Marcus's New Acquisitions section of *American Jewish Archives*. The area where Roth and Marcus's interests intersected most, however, was in the study of the 17th and 18th centuries. Marcus approached that era as the precursor, or foundations, of American Jewish history. He systematically collected and analyzed documents from Curacao and Surinam, as well as the colonial merchants and settlers of the North American continent. Roth's subject was the Marrano diaspora and Anglo-Jewish trade from the British perspective. In October 1951 in a discussion of some pertinent documents, Roth made the following observation to Marcus, "As a Jewish sea-captain in the eighteenth century he is of exceptional interest to me. But as a Jamaican he belongs to you...."⁴⁵

As a by-product of their exchange of information, Marcus and Roth were beginning to enunciate a concept that would not become part of general historical methodology until the 1970s, that of Atlantic historical writing, whereby one figure cannot be understood unless placed in multiple contexts. This is not to claim that their concept of Atlantic historical writing was particularly well developed, or even influential. Although historians, such as Marcus, usually examined the movement of Jews to the western hemisphere during the 17th and 18th centuries from a comparative perspective—that is to say including material on the entire Atlantic basin—a methodological framework for this approach was slow to emerge.⁴⁶ Marcus often expressed his disdain, or frustration, for the existing literature on American Jewish history. For example, in February 1953 Roth asked Marcus:

I'm lecturing now on Jewish Emancipation, with ample reference to the U.S. Is there no book with a plain, Unemotional, unrheterical non-journalistic account of American Jewish history as a whole to which one can refer one's pupils? I've an entire library on the subject, but can't find any single 'serious' volume covering the entire field.⁴⁷

Marcus replied, echoing Roth's assessment of 20 years earlier, "There is absolutely nothing on American Jewish history that you can depend [on]."⁴⁸ Marcus in fact often drew a direct relationship between his building of an archival collection and the development of a more mature American Jewish historical writing. In June 1952 he told Roth:

I intend to put out a volume of excerpted memoirs of American Jews in the nineteenth century, and possibly the twentieth. A number of these works were printed but never published. They are private prints. Would you please let me know the titles of what you have in this line?⁴⁹

Although this project did not reach fruition, Marcus's three volume *Early American Jewry*, which was comprised of memoirs from the 18th and early 19th centuries, was published by the Jewish Publication Society between 1951 and 1953. Upon reading one of the volumes Roth congratulated Marcus on the quality of the work and then made an interesting lament:

A thing that perplexes me is that you can produce for the 18th century a better selection of this sort of stuff than we can: if you look at my A–J letters,⁵⁰ you will see how poor we are—and how I had to raid Trans-atlantic sources. I don't see a single English collection to compare with the Lopes, Franks, or Hendricks letter-books. And I ask you the reason why.⁵¹

In the margins of the letter Marcus wrote, "They are there!" a charge he echoed in his reply to Roth.

You are asking where are the Anglo-Jewish letters. The answer is they are in England. You just have to dig them out. Why not run a little article in the *Jewish Chronicle* and ask people to write and tell you what they have.⁵²

Certainly Marcus practiced what he preached. He sent out numerous post-cards and flyers advertising the existence of the AJA and asking for material to be donated.⁵³ He would return to his theme about the importance of finding and publishing documents on Anglo-Jewish history several times over the next years in his correspondence with Roth. When, therefore, Marcus made his request of Roth in 1961 to write the essay that would eventually be named “On the Study of American Jewish history,” the two men had not only been correspondents for over a decade, they had shared considerable thought on the centrality of archives in the development of historical writing. Roth submitted a draft of the essay at the end of November. It was then vetted by Stanley Chyet, who was serving as Marcus’s associate director, and then published in 1963.⁵⁴ Roth began by asserting that:

During the present generation, American Jewish history has become an academic discipline of fundamental and universal importance. This is rightly so, for if the Purpose of historical study is to explain the present, then the history of the greatest agglomeration of Jews that has ever existed in the world must demand closest attention.

After contrasting the quantitative distinction of U.S. Jewry with the communities in Italy, Spain, and England, Roth moved on to laud the qualitative accomplishments of American Jewish life.

Moreover, this great American Jewry has brought into being institutions and situations unprecedented in Jewish history—institutions and situations whose evolution and achievements demand examination.

Roth argued that the:

Study of the role and record of American Jewry—that is, the study of American Jewish history—is, in fact, fundamental to the study of the Jews as well as the history of America in our time.

And he called for an American Jewish historical writing that went beyond “mere antiquarian and sentimental interest.” Instead, American Jews “should be interested in their own antecedents—the history of those from whom they are descended and of the group to which they belong.” Although many historians believed that American Jewish history lacks ‘romance’, (Roth does not identify the miscreants), he argues that the drama of American history contains romance and heroism “to satisfy the most exacting schoolboy taste.”

“Unfortunately,” Roth lamented, “the documentary basis on which any account of all this may rest is scattered,” overtaken by events and the rapid pace of American Jewish life in the post 1945 era. Roth, who almost always kept his audience in mind, then suggested that all was not lost:

Before American Jewish history even in the Colonial period could be properly recorded and compiled, it was obviously Necessary to bring together in a central place and in a convenient fashion all the relevant records—not only from the United States, but from all the countries with which early American Jewry had contacts from which it derived.

Roth asserted that the AJA’s greatest success during its first decade was not only in collecting material, but in sponsoring publication of documents and historical work (Roth threw several roses in Marcus’s direction). Roth drew a direct linkage with the discovery and accessibility of archival documents and the furtherance of historical knowledge. Indeed, Roth argued, and again he does not name the malefactors, that prior to the foundation of the AJA “it had been imagined by many scholars that whatever there was to say about this had already been said.” Roth then provided a brief, although information packed, litany of the types of material Marcus had assembled, along with a few references to the origins of the material.

According to Roth “there is thus more material of this sort now assembled for the early history of the Jews in America than for any other country.” Roth also argued that as far as he knew it would be impossible to create a similar repository in Great Britain. Indeed, in a reference to his earlier discussion with Marcus about the availability of source material, “We are left in the paradoxical position that we in England sometimes have to apply to Cincinnati for material regarding our own history.” After outlining in more detail the types of sources available at the AJA, Roth assured his readers that, “It is of these materials, preserved in Cincinnati, that the history of the Jews in America will be compiled in the future.” In a sentiment echoed years later by Hazareesingh, Roth then addressed the importance of access. “To study properly the history of the Jews in the United States would until recently have necessitated a vast amount of travel.... Now such research can be carried out, at least largely, in a single place, in Cincinnati.” He then concluded with a tribute, “For the first time in its millennial trek, the Jew of today and tomorrow will, in America at least, have the material for an authentic history. It is a comforting prospect.

Roth sentiments were closely aligned with those of Marcus, who had himself written several years earlier in a publicity brochure that sought donations of documents, “A people that is not conscious of its past has no assurance of a future.”⁵⁵ Sadly, the planned ceremonies for which Roth’s article had been intended never took place. Marcus informed Roth that since the College-Institute had a deficit of a quarter of a million dollars, “the authorities decided not to let me go ahead with the dedication of the Archives.”⁵⁶ Roth’s zeal was not deterred. In March 1963, Roth wrote Marcus asking for assistance in the establishment of an “Anglo-Jewish Archives, modelled [sic] to some extent on yours....” Roth wanted to know if Marcus might come to England to “give us a pat on the back in public and a shot in the arm in private?”⁵⁷ The cooperation between the two historians ran deep.

Conclusion

In October 1933, Roth provided Professor Abraham Cronbach (1882–1965) of the Hebrew Union College, with a short list of how living in the Diaspora affected Jewish religious rituals:

An Anglo-Jewish service is essentially Anglican (even down to its time-table), whereas a French or Italian one is essentially Catholic. Moreover, what one may call ‘Toraholatry [sic]’ (i.e. exaggerated respect for the Scroll) is very much more pronounced in Catholic countries than it is in Protestant. In Italy, indeed, the Scroll is surmounted by a crown, indistinguishable from the crown of the Madonna.⁵⁸

Explicit in Roth’s statement is the assumption that Jewish culture and religion adapt to the national and religious environments in which Jewish communities are found. How this transformation takes place forms the backdrop of Roth’s numerous publications. Although this belief in the adaptation of Jewish life to its Diaspora setting was not unique to Roth, he was perhaps its greatest popularizer. In his work on US Jewry, a community that did not experience pogroms, nor suffer sustained violence, Roth’s formula for the maintenance of Jewish life amidst affluence was to adopt Jewish literacy as an American value. Roth, however, did more than argue for Jewish literacy. By asserting that American Jews could find a distinct form to their identity based on a detailed knowledge of Jewish texts and history, Roth also helped provide a justification for living in the Diaspora itself.

After his retirement from Oxford University (1963) Roth did not remain in England. He spent the last seven years of his life dividing his time between Israel and New York City. It is likely that both locations appealed to Roth as they reflected the twin epicenters of Jewish life in the post-Holocaust world, and, it is worth noting, Roth had strong scholarly and familial ties to each. Indeed, Roth was no stranger to the land of Israel, both intellectually and practically. His brother Leon (1896–1963), was a professor of Jewish Philosophy at the Hebrew University of Jerusalem. In addition, Roth had long regarded Israel as one of the centers of Jewish scholarship and cultural identity. Certainly the re-establishment of the Jewish commonwealth after so many centuries intrigued the historian in Roth. In 1951, he wrote to Henry

Hurwitz after visiting his brother, “It [Israel] can never be anything other than interesting; it must be the most vital land in the World at present. Much to criticize, but the balance good.”⁵⁹

Irene Roth, Cecil’s wife, maintained that her husband’s decision to relocate to Israel after his retirement was based his desire to oversee several projects he was engaged with, notably, the *Encyclopedia Judaica*, for which he served as general editor. Roth’s brother Leon had also resigned from his position at the Hebrew University in 1951, and, according to Irene, Cecil was “anxious that the Roth family should remain associated with Israel’s academic life.”⁶⁰ At the same time, Roth’s continued attachment to living in the Diaspora, in this case New York City, unquestionably one of the major centers of Jewish life in the world, leaves no doubt that this scholar of note had not given up on the Diaspora as a place of creativity.

NOTES

1. Letter, Cecil Roth to Henry Hurwitz, August 8, 1930, Ms coll. #2, 50/3, The Jacob Rader Marcus Center of the American Jewish Archives, Cincinnati, Ohio (hereafter AJA).
2. On Roth’s place in modern Jewish historical writing see Todd Endelman, “Writing English Jewish History,” *Albion* 27, 3 (Autumn 1995):628. On the milieu that Roth came out of see Robert Liberles, “Postemancipation Historical writing and the Jewish Historical Societies of America and England,” in *Reshaping the Past: Jewish History and the Historians* (Studies in Contemporary Jewry, vol. 10), Jonathan Frankel ed. (New York: Oxford University Press, 1994): 66–92.
3. See David B. Ruderman, “Cecil Roth, Historian of Italian Jewry: A Reassessment” in *The Jewish Past Revisited: Reflections on Modern Jewish Historians*, David N. Myers and David B. Ruderman, eds. (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1998): 128–42.
4. David N. Myers, “Introduction” in *The Jewish Past Revisited: Reflections on Modern Jewish Historians*, David N. Myers and David B. Ruderman, eds. (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1998), 9.
5. Cecil Roth, “The Challenge to Jewish History,” *Transactions of the Jewish Historical Society of England* XIV (1935–1939): 32–33.
6. David N. Myers, *Re-Inventing the Jewish Past: European Jewish Intellectuals and the Zionist Return to History* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1995).
7. See Frederic J. Krome, “Creating ‘Jewish History for Our Own Needs:’ The Evolution of Cecil Roth’s Historical Vision, 1925–1935.” *Modern Judaism* 21(2001), which details how Roth’s relationship with United States Jewry enabled him to develop his talents as a Jewish historian.
8. See Chaim Raphael, “In Search of Cecil Roth,” *Commentary* 50, 3 (Sept. 1970): 75; on the academic background see Krome, “Creating ‘Jewish History for Our Own Needs.’”
9. Daniel Greene, “The Crisis of Jewish Freedom: The Menorah Association and American Pluralism, 1906–1934,” (Ph.D. diss., University of Chicago, 2004), 201–03. My thanks to Danny Greene for sharing the fruits of his research with me. On the Intercollegiate Menorah Society see Seth Korelitz, “The Menorah Idea: From Religion to Culture, from Race to Ethnicity,” *American Jewish History* 85, no. 1 (March 1997): 75–100 and Lauren Strauss, “Staying Afloat in the Melting Pot: Constructing an American Jewish Identity in the Menorah Journal of the 1920s,” *American Jewish History* 84, no. 4 (December 1996): 315–31.

10. On the status of Jewish studies see Paul Ritterband and Harold S. Wechsler, *Jewish Learning in American Universities: The First Century* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1994).
11. See Krome, "Creating 'Jewish History for Our Own Needs,'" 219–21 for a more detailed discussion.
12. Announcement to students, January 4th, 1926, 32/1, AJA. On the Jewish Encyclopedia see Shuly Rubin Schwartz, *The Emergence of Jewish Scholarship in America: The Publication of the Jewish Encyclopedia* (Cincinnati: Hebrew Union College Press, 1991).
13. Letter, Henry Hurwitz to Cecil Roth, July 29, 1927, Ms. coll. # 2, 50/3, AJA.
14. *Menorah Journal* 14 (May 1928): 1–16.
15. *Menorah Journal* 16 (April 1929): 293–306.
16. See Krome, "Creating 'Jewish History for Our Own Needs,'" 228–29.
17. On the struggles to create an environment for such a history see Greene, 213–23.
18. Letter, Henry Hurwitz to Cecil Roth, January 24, 1930, Ms. coll. # 2, 50/4, AJA.
19. Letter, Hurwitz to Roth, January 24, 1930.
20. Ibid.
21. Letter, Henry Hurwitz to Cecil Roth, March 15, 1930, Ms. coll. # 2, 50/4, AJA.
22. For a discussion of the place of America in Jewish historical writing see Krome, "Creating 'Jewish History for Our Own Needs,'" 223–26.
23. Letter, Roth to Hurwitz, March 23, 1930, Ms. Coll. # 2, 50/4, AJA.
24. Ibid.
25. Letter, Roth to Hurwitz, March 26, 1930, Ms. Coll. # 2, 50/4, AJA.
26. See Herbert Butterfield, *The Whig Interpretation of History* (New York: W. W. Norton, 1994 edition).
27. See the March 26 letter, note 11 above.
28. Jonathan D. Sarna, *JPS: The Americanization of Jewish Culture, 1888–1988* (Philadelphia: Jewish Publication Society, 1989), 163–64.
29. On the concept of the synergy between America and the Jews see Jonathan D. Sarna, "The Cult of Synthesis in American Jewish Culture," *Jewish Social Studies* 5,1–2 (1998–1999) 52–79.
30. Letter, Roth to Hurwitz, April 16, 1930, Ms. Coll. # 2, 50/4, AJA.
31. Letter, Hurwitz to Roth, May 9, 1930, Ms. Coll. # 2, 50/4, AJA.

32. Cecil Roth, "Paradoxes of Jewish History," *Menorah Journal* 14(October 1930): 1–26. Interestingly, when the article was republished in 1953 as the lead piece in a collection of Roth's article he re-titled it "Parallel and Paradox in Jewish History." See Cecil Roth, *Personalities and Events in Jewish History* (Philadelphia: Jewish Publication Society of America, 1953).

33. Letter, Arthur Franklin to Cecil Roth, June 12, 1936, Roth Collection, Hartley Library, the University of Southampton, England discusses the nomination.

34. Letter, Jacob Rader Marcus to Roth, November 6, 1961, American Jewish Archives Collection, AJA. The American Jewish Archives Collection refers to the administrative records held at the AJA, much of which is Marcus's own professional correspondence.

35. Cecil Roth, "On the Study of American Jewish History," (Cincinnati: American Jewish Archives, 1963). Copies of the pamphlet are held at the AJA.

36. On Marcus see the extensive editors introduction in *The Dynamics of American Jewish History: Jacob Rader Marcus's Essays on American Jewry*, edited by Gary Phillip Zola (Hanover and London: Brandeis University Press, 2004), xiii–xxxi and Jonathan Sarna's essay in the same volume.

37. As a sidebar it is worth noting that few are aware of the interaction between these two, and their conversations on Jewish history, because the Roth collection at the Anglo-Jewish Archives, (at the Harley Library, University of Southampton) contains no correspondence with Marcus.

38. TLS March 21, 2003, 13.

39. Lance J. Sussman, "'Historian of the Jewish People': A Historiographic Reevaluation of the Writings of Jacob R. Marcus," *The American Jewish Archives Journal* 50, nos. 1 & 2 (1998): 10–1.

40. Letter, Roth to Marcus, August 18, 1947, American Jewish Archives Collection, AJA.

41. Cecil Roth, "A Description of America, 1785," *American Jewish Archives* 17, No. 1 (April 1965): 27–

42. London: E. Goldston, 1950.

43 Oxford: The Clarendon Press, 1941.

44. See for example, Letter, Marcus to Roth, August 31, 1949, American Jewish Archives Collection, AJA.

45. Roth to Marcus, October 17, 1951, American Jewish Archives Collection, AJA.

46. Although it is a master narrative, Jacob Rader Marcus's three volume, *The Colonial American Jew, 1492–1775* (Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 1970) contains little historiographical analysis. For some of the most recent historiographical developments see Jonathan Israel, *Diaspora with Diaspora: Jews, Crypto-Jews, the World Maritime Empires (1540–1740)* (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 2003). Some recent scholarship develops an analytical framework for Atlantic historical writing by examining a specific subject, such as Black-Jewish relations, within the broad rubric of early modern Jewish history.. See for example Jonathan Schorsch, "American Jewish Historians, Colonial Jews and Blacks, and the Limits of Wissenschaft: A Critical Review," *Jewish Social Studies* 6, no. 2 (March 2000): 102–32 and Jonathan Schorsch, *Jews and Blacks in the Early Modern World* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2004). See, too, especially *Jewish History* 20.2 (2006): passim.

47. Letter, Roth to Marcus, February 1953, American Jewish Archives Collection, AJA. The letter was logged into the AJA on February 10, 1953, but does not have a send date.
48. Letter, Marcus to Roth, February 24, 1953, American Jewish Archives Collection, AJA.
49. Letter, Marcus to Roth, June 6, 1952, American Jewish Archives Collection, AJA.
50. *Anglo-Jewish letters* (1158–1917) (London, Soncino Press, 1938).
51. Letter, Roth to Marcus, June 22, 1953, American Jewish Archives Collection, AJA.
52. Letter, Marcus to Roth, July 8, 1953, American Jewish Archives Collection, AJA.
53. A collection of these flyers is held by the author.
54. Stanley F. Chyet (1931–2002) was a rabbi and professor of American Jewish history at Hebrew Union College–Jewish Institute of Religion. He served as Marcus’s assistant in Cincinnati for a number of years prior to moving to HUC–JIR’s Los Angeles Campus. See Stanley F. Chyet, *American Jewish Archives Journal*, 54, No. 2 (2002):136–7.
55. Jacob Rader Marcus, “The Archives Story,” a pamphlet published by the American Jewish Archives, copy held by the author.
56. Letter, Marcus to Roth, March 26, 1963, American Jewish Archives Collection, AJA.
57. Letter, Roth to Marcus, March 25, 1963, American Jewish Archives Collection, AJA.
58. Letter, Roth to Abraham Cronbach, October 31, 1933, MS # 9, Box 5, Folder 9, Abraham Cronbach Collection, AJA.
59. Letter, Roth to Hurwitz, May 2, 1951, MS # 2, Box 50, Folder 6, Intercollegiate Menorah Society Collection, AJA.
60. Irene Roth, *Cecil Roth: Historian without Tears* (New York: Sepher–Hermon Press, Inc. 1982), 201.