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SERIALLY SPEAKING

Using Women's Studies/Feminist Periodicals as a Resource for Researching Jewish Women*

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Abstract: Articles on Jewish women are frequently published in women's studies/feminist periodicals, where they may not readily come to the attention of Judaica researchers owing in large measure to the difficulties inherent in the indexing of this new interdisciplinary field. From her vantage point as publisher of *Feminist Periodicals: A Current Listing of Contents* and with a background in Judaica librarianship, the author has taken note of a wealth of material on Jewish women, covering both religious and secular aspects of Jewish women's identity, upbringing, and psyche; the status of Israeli women and feminism in Israel; the Holocaust, antisemitism, and women (including antisemitism within the women's movement); and creative expression by Jewish women on Jewish themes in the form of short stories, poetry, and art work. Examples from this material are provided, in order to encourage consideration of these periodicals as a resource in studying Jewish women.

Introduction: Becoming a Women's Studies Librarian

For many years I held positions as a Judaica librarian. I worked in the Hebraic Section, Library of Congress; in the Melton Library, Jewish Theological Seminary; and I was in charge of the Jewish Law collection of the New York University Law Library. When my husband took a faculty position at the University of Wisconsin in 1990, I initially explored possibilities for continuing in this field in the University libraries, but found that the

library system did not have the funds to create a position for a Judaica specialist. Just at the time I was looking, however, a position opened: Women's Studies Librarian for the University of Wisconsin System (initially acting, later permanent). Various administrative and publishing experiences in my background as well as Jewish feminist activities—and, frankly, being in Madison at the right time—led to my selection. I soon found myself running a unique office, with a statewide mandate to keep students, librarians, and women's studies and gender scholars apprised of new resources on women. The office had been created in the late 1970s, when women's studies programs were being developed on all the campuses of the University of Wisconsin System—there are 14 four-year campuses, 13 two-year campuses, and an extension division, serving some 160,000 students.

My predecessors soon realized that they would need to rely on publications to disseminate resource information to such a wide audience; thus, the University of Wisconsin System women's studies librarian essentially heads a publishing operation. Our staff produces a semi-annual, subject-arranged bibliography, *New Books on Women and Feminism*; a reviewing publication, *Feminist Collections: A Quarterly of Women's Studies Resources*; and a quarterly, *Feminist Periodicals: A Current Listing of Contents* (which reproduces the tables of contents of over 125 feminist/women's studies journals). In order to produce these publications, the office operates like a giant sieve, through which flows a steady river of items (sometimes approaching a torrent), and from which we sift the women-focused material.

With my Judaica background, I take special interest every time I see something on Jewish women—and this is often. I am particularly intrigued by the amount of attention to Jewish women in the periodical literature of those 125-plus periodicals.

These periodicals:

- investigate aspects of Jewish women's identity, with an emphasis on ethnic/secular Jewish womanhood, but also including articles on religious life and status in Judaism;
- explore the meaning of Jewish upbringing through autobiographical accounts;
- probe the psyche of Jewish women in therapy and as therapists;
- publish creative works with overtly Jewish themes, including short stories, poems, and art;
- deal with antisemitism, including antisemitism within the women's movement;
- cover the status of Israeli women and feminism in Israel, and of Jewish lesbians in the Jewish and women's communities;
- take a look at news of events of interest to Jewish feminists;
- analyze the works of Jewish women writers; and
- review books about Jewish women.

In this paper I provide a glimpse into the world of women's studies periodicals in order to help reference librarians keep this category of material in mind when assisting patrons researching topics concerning Jewish women. Background information on women's studies periodicals and their principal indexing tools is followed by illustrations of recent articles representing the coverage of Jewish women in this body of work.

*Updated version of a presentation made at the 30th Annual Conference of The Association of Jewish Libraries, Chicago, June 19, 1995.

Women's Studies Periodicals

For this analysis, "women's studies" and "feminist" are interchangeable terms. Both terms may be used to describe the body of material spanning publications from grassroots activist newspapers to academic journals on women. The original impetus for women's studies in the academy came from the women's liberation movement, and women's studies scholars continue to honor that origin. Women's studies is still a very young field. From twenty women's studies courses in 1969, there are today over 600 programs sponsoring over 30,000 courses.¹

The periodicals have seen a related growth curve. One cannot actually pinpoint the "first" feminist periodical of the modern women's movement, because there are organizational newsletters and women's peace publications that go back earlier. Many short-lived local activist publications appeared in the mid- to late 1960s, but none of them were represented in the first volume (1969) of *Alternative Press Index (API)*, the tool that continues to index such publications to this day. But the second volume of *Alternative Press Index* indexed five feminist periodicals: *Everywoman* (Venice, CA); *Women: A Journal of Liberation* (Baltimore); *Ain't I a Woman* (Iowa City); the *Journal of Female Liberation* (Cambridge, MA); and *off our backs* (Washington, DC). A series of articles in *Serials Review* 5 (October 1979) assessed feminist magazines, describing 37. In 1995, *Feminist Periodicals* recorded the tables of contents of 128 publications, from *Nora: Nordic Journal of Women's Studies* to *Hysteria: Women, Humor & Social Change*; *Minerva: Quarterly Report on Women and the Military*; *Signs: Journal of Women in Culture and Society*; and many "Women and . . ." periodicals (*Women and Criminal Justice*, *Women and Environments*, *Women and Health*, *Women and Language*, *Women and Performance*, *Women and Politics* . . .) Of the early feminist periodicals, only *off our backs* is still publishing.

Off our backs was also the first to carry significant material on Jewish women. In fact, vol. 2 (February 1972) had an entire thematic section on Jewish women, with an article on Queen Esther, a defense of Jewish mothers, an excerpt of "The Jew Who

Wasn't There: Halacha and the Jewish Woman," by Rachel Adler, and some creative writing.

Indexes and Bibliographies

By 1972, women's studies had its own index: *Women Studies Abstracts (WSA)*. Examples of articles on Jewish women published in women's studies periodicals indexed by *API* or *WSA* in the 1970s include "Women's Movement Leaders Are Jewish," by Julia Stein, in *Sister* (1975), and the first issue of *Feminist Studies* (1975) carried a report from Israel. *Frontiers* (Summer 1977) covered Jewish grandmothers, in a thematic issue devoted to women's oral history (Krause, 1977), and Ms. ran E. M. Broner and Naomi Nimrod's "A Woman's Passover Haggadah and Other Revisionist Rituals," in April 1977.

Most of the articles on Jewish women indexed in the early years of *API* and *WSA*, however, did not appear in women's studies periodicals, but rather in other alternative publications and Jewish publications. *API*, for example, did a good job of indexing *Chutzpah*, which published many articles on women in Judaism, and *WSA* cited articles by Trude Weiss-Rosmarin in *The Jewish Spectator* and *The Journal of Jewish Communal Services*, on the Jewish family and intermarriage; papers on diversity from the American Jewish Committee; the *Response* issue on the Jewish woman; and a smattering of citations from *American Jewish Historical Quarterly*, *Judaism*, *Gratz College Annual of Jewish Studies*, *Studies in American Jewish Literature*, and others.

Aviva Cantor's bibliography *The Jewish Woman, 1900-1985* (2nd ed., Fresh Meadows, NY: Biblio Press, 1987) provides substantial coverage of this period. The bibliography *Women and Judaism: A Select Annotated Bibliography*, by Inger Marie Ruud (NY: Garland, 1988), also includes citations concerning religious dimensions, from 11 of the feminist periodicals.²

One should not leave the 1970s without mentioning the most significant happening for the study of Jewish women in feminist periodicals: the founding of *Lilith* in 1976. In its 20-year history, *Lilith* has explored gender inequities in Jewish schools and

the Jewish establishment, women's writings from the Holocaust, the legacy of radical Jewish women, new feminist rituals, feminism among Orthodox women, and much more. *WSA* and a newer indexing annual, *Women's Studies Index (WSI; 1990-)* are both replete with citations to *Lilith* articles. *WSI* also indexes *Bridges* (1990-), a second important periodical entirely devoted to Jewish feminism. *Bridges* is especially useful for its coverage of class and lesbian issues.

Gradually, as the number of women's studies periodicals increased, *WSA* began to focus on such journals, and today it abstracts exclusively from them. *WSI* covers them as well. A third resource, *Studies on Women Abstracts (SWA; 1983-)* continues the practice of selectively abstracting articles about women from a variety of academic journals, occasionally covering Jewish women. Until recently, none of these indexes cumulated in print beyond a year at a time, nor were they available as databases. *WSI* and *WSA* are both now available in electronic databases.

Many of the women's studies journals are not covered by any of the standard indexes that are available electronically, such as *Humanities Index*, *Social Sciences Citation Index*, *SocioFile* (online version of *Sociological Abstracts*), *MLA*, and *PsycLit*, and one cannot therefore rely on them to provide adequate coverage of material published on Jewish women in women's studies journals. An article on Jewish feminists in *On the Issues* (Chesler, 1989), featuring women praying at the Kotel on the cover, is not included in any of the standard indexes. Nor could one find "Memories of a Cochin Jewish Woman," (Daniel, 1991), published in *Manushi*, a feminist periodical from India, in any of them.

Some women's studies periodicals are included in these databases, especially when there is an obvious match between the database and the journal as a whole (e.g., *Feminism and Psychology*, in *PsycLit*), but this approach to an interdisciplinary field creates barriers to successful retrieval even for experienced women's studies faculty. For topics on Jewish women, this hurdle may be even higher. Would one think to try *PsycLit* to find a critique of the Diaspora Museum from a gender perspective (Izraeli, 1993) published in *Psychology of Women Quarterly*, or *SocioFile* to research the meaning of adult bat mitzvahs, articulated in an article (Kahn, 1995) in *Affilia*, a feminist social work journal? I suspect not, and favor stressing the usefulness of *WSA* and *WSI* as wider gateways to the litera-

1. Catharine R. Stimpson, "Women's Studies," *Encyclopedia of Higher Education*, edited by Burton R. Clark and Guy Neave (Oxford: Pergamon, 1992), vol. 3, p. 1965.

2. For more recent coverage, especially of articles in Jewish periodicals as well as books, see Ann S. Masnik, *The Jewish Woman: An Annotated Selected Bibliography, 1986-1993* (With 1994-95 Recent Titles List) (New York: Biblio Press, 1996).

ture in women's studies periodicals. These women's studies tools are also more comprehensive than the broad-brush databases, such as *CARL/Uncover*, *ArticlesFirst*, and *Expanded Academic Index*, though each of these is better for women's studies retrieval than any of the standard indexes.

Articles on Jewish Women in Women's Studies Journals

What follows is a list of articles from women's studies journals that are suggestive of the range of topics covered and of the scope of the periodicals themselves. These are but a few of the hundreds of articles and thematic sections on Jewish women that have appeared in women's studies journals since 1972.

Because *Lilith* and *Bridges* are presumably held in Judaica collections and are familiar to Judaica librarians, the examples below are taken only from periodicals that are lesser-known from a Jewish perspective.

Except for citations to articles mentioned above, the material has all been published in the late 1980s and 1990s. I hope that the breadth of subjects addressed by the examples will inspire Judaica librarians, students, and researchers to dip into the well of women's studies periodicals.

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Ankori, Gannit. "Yocheved Weinfeld's Portraits of the Self," *Woman's Art Journal*, vol. 10 (Spring/Summer 1989): pp. 22-27. Illustrations include her painting: "You Look So Typically Jewish."

Aptheker, Bettina. "Teaching About Anti-Semitism and the Legacy of Jewish Women," *Women's Studies Quarterly*, vol. 21 (Fall/Winter 1993): pp. 63-68.

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Berman, Donna. "Tanat L'vat Yiftach: A Healing Ritual," *Sojourner: The Women's Forum*, vol. 22, no. 7 (March 1997): pp. 39-40.

Breitman, Barbara E. "Social and Spiritual Reconstruction of Self Within a Feminist Jewish Community," *Women & Therapy*, vol. 16, no. 2/3 (1995): pp. 73-82.

Broner, E. M.; Nimrod, Naomi. "A Woman's Passover Haggadah and Other Revisionist Rituals," *Ms. Magazine*, vol. 5 (April 1977): pp. 53-6. Reprinted in Broner's book *The Telling*.

Burman, Erica. "Experience, Identities and Alliances: Jewish Feminism and Feminist Psychology," *Feminism and Psychology*, vol. 4, no. 1 (1994): pp. 155-178.

Canadian Journal of Women and the Law, vol. 5, no. 2 (1992): Thematic section examining Clara Brett Martin, a pioneering early twentieth-century woman lawyer in Canada and role model. In 1989, a new building housing the Ontario Attorney General's Office was named for her, but later that same year a letter she had written came to light that was unequivocally antisemitic. The series of articles is an in-depth look at the concept of "heroine," and at antisemitism in the Canadian context.

Chesler, Phyllis. "The Walls Came Tumbling Down: How Jewish Feminists Made History," *On the Issues*, vol. 11 (1989): pp. 7-11.

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Dworkin, Andrea. "The Unremembered: Searching for Women at the Holocaust Museum," *Ms. Magazine*, [New Series] vol. 5 no. 4 (November/December 1994): pp. 52-58.

Field, Dorothy. "Going Out From Mitsrayim," *Violence Against Women*, vol. 2, no. 1 (March 1996): pp. 103-106. Personal experience of a Jewish survivor of child sexual abuse.

Fuchs, Esther. "Amalia Kahana-Carmon and Contemporary Hebrew Women's Fiction," *Signs*, vol. 13 (Winter 1988): pp. 299-310.

Goldenberg, Myra. "Choices, Risks, and Conscience," *Belles Lettres*, vol. 9 (Winter 1993/94): pp. 42-45, 48. Review of seven books about women and the Holocaust.

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"Jewish Feminists: the Other Daughters of Sarah," *Daughters of Sarah*, vol. 16, no. 2 (March/April 1990). This thematic issue of a Christian feminist periodical includes articles by Blu Greenberg ("Jewish-Christian Feminist Encounter"), Lillian Sigal ("Models of Love and Hate"), Tikva Frymer-Kensky ("The Bible, Goddesses, and Sex"), and others, plus poetry by Jewish women, and reviews of books about Jewish women.

"Jewish Women." Thematic issue of *Fireweed: A Feminist Quarterly* (Spring 1992) includes essays (e.g., "Spheres of Identity: Feminism

and Difference," by the Sephardic writer Carole Dahan), poetry ("Invisibility," by Gail Novack), and artwork (Jewish themes in works on fabric by Sima Elizabeth Shefrin), and more.

"Jewish Women in Canada." Thematic issue of *Canadian Woman Studies*, vol. 16, no. 4 (Fall 1996) includes articles on the meaning of rituals (by Norma Baumel Joseph and others), growing up Jewish in small-town Ontario (by Malcah Sufrin), introducing Jewish feminist thought in a women's studies classroom (by Deborah Yaffe), the experiences of a Bosnian Sephardic woman in Kahnawake, Quebec (by Judith Cohen), and poetry, book reviews, remembrances, and a selective bibliography.

"Jewish Women Writers," *Belles Lettres*, vol. 3 (Sept./Oct. 1987). Thematic section with selections from writings by Etty Hillesum, Daphne Merkin, Joyce Reiser Kornblatt, Leah Morton, Dorothy Norman, Ruth Whitman, Cynthia Ozick, Carol Ascher, and Natalia Ginzburg, and interviews with Irena Klepfisz and Melanie Kaye/Kantrowitz. The cover reproduces a photograph of Etty Hillesum, from *An Interrupted Life: The Diaries of Etty Hillesum, 1941-43* (New York: Pantheon, 1983).

Kahn, Nancy C. "The Adult Bat Mitzvah: Its Use in the Articulation of Women's Identity," *Affilia*, vol. 10 (Fall 1995): pp. 299-314.

Klepfisz, Irena. "Warsaw, 1983: Umschlagplatz," *Ikon*, vol. 10 (1989?): p. 66. Poem, in an issue focusing on autobiography and short fiction.

Krause, Corinne Azen. "Italian, Jewish and Slavic Grandmothers in Pittsburgh: Their Economic Role," *Frontiers*, vol. 2 (Summer 1977): pp. 18-28. A fuller version of this study was published by the American Jewish Committee in 1978, under the title *Grandmothers, Mothers and Daughters: An Oral History Study of Ethnicity, Mental Health, and Continuity of Three Generations of Jewish, Italian, and Slavic-American Women*, and by Twayne Publishers in 1991.

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Litt, Jacquelyn. "Mothering, Medicalization, and Jewish Identity, 1928-1940," *Gender & Society*, vol. 10, no. 2 (April 1996): pp. 185-198.

Morris, Bonnie J. "Celebrating Jewish Identity at Festivals," *Hot Wire* (January 1993): pp. 38-40. Includes photograph of women who celebrated a Seder together at the Gulf Coast Women's Festival.

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Parnet, Harriet. "An Approach Toward the Inclusion of Women Writers in a Course on the Israeli Short Story," *Feminist Teacher*, vol. 7 (Fall 1993): pp. 41-46.

Robinson, Lillian. "One Cheer for Chutzpah," *Women's Review of Books*, vol. 9 (January 1992): pp. 7-8. Review of *Deborah, Golda, and Me*, by Letty Cottin Pogrebin (New York: Crown, 1991).

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- Women's Studies Index*. Annual, and *Women's Studies on Disc*, semi-annual, machine-readable version. New York: G. K. Hall.

Jewish Feminist Periodicals

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P.O. Box 24839
Eugene, OR 97402
ckinberg@pond.net
<http://www.pond.net/~ckinberg/bridges>
semi-annual

- Lilith: The Independent Jewish Women's Magazine*, 1976-
250 West 57th Street
New York, NY 10107
lilithmag@aol.com
<http://www.lilithmag.com/>
quarterly

- Women in Judaism: A Multidisciplinary Journal*, 1997-
c/o Near and Middle Eastern Civilizations
University of Toronto
4 Bancroft Avenue
Toronto, Ontario
M5S 1C1
Canada
Refereed journal available only online at
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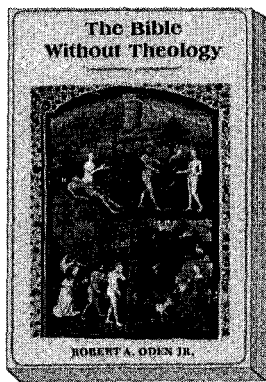
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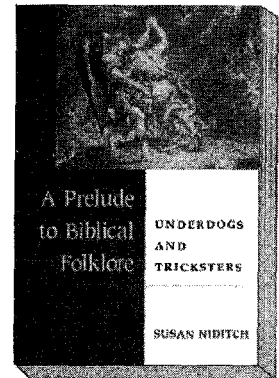
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