

AJL-GCC
Review of New Adult Books
Sept. 2004 - May 2005

Non-Fiction

Appelfeld, Aharon. ***The Story of a Life***. Schocken Books, 2004. "...exquisite, and at times exquisitely sad" memoir of the author's life, covering his childhood as an orphan during the Holocaust, his move to Palestine as a teenager, and his adult life as one of Israel's most noted writers.

Appelfeld, Aharon. ***A Table for One: Under the Light of Jerusalem***. Paintings by Meir Appelfeld. Toby Press, 2005. This coffee-table-like book is filled with insights into the acclaimed author's creative process, with stunning paintings of Jerusalem by his son.

Apple, Sam. ***Schlepping Through the Alps: My Search for Austria's Jewish Past with Its Last Wandering Shepherd***. Ballantine Books, 2005. The author, a writer from New York, travels to Austria to follow a Yiddish folk-singing shepherd.

Bacon, Ursula. ***Shanghai Diary: A Young Girl's Journey from Hitler's Hate to War-Torn China***. M Press, 2004. A young German Jewish girl details how she and her family were refugees in Shanghai during WWII. Clinging to the hope of emigrating to the US, they survive deplorable conditions, poverty, disease and Nazi/Japanese occupation.

Crowe, David. ***Oskar Schindler: the Untold Account of His Life, Wartime Activities, and the True Story Behind the List***. Westview Press, 2004. The definitive biography of Oskar Schindler; "...essential in understanding one of the most extraordinary figures from the Holocaust" (Booklist).

Eisner, Will. ***The Plot: the Secret Story of the Protocols of the Elders of Zion***. W.W. Norton, 2005. A final effort by the noted graphic novelist combines history, education and entertainment in a fictionalized discussion of the Protocols.

Freedman, Samuel G. ***Who She Was: My Search for My Mother's Life***. Simon & Schuster, 2005. The author of *Jew vs. Jew* chronicles his search to discover everything he can about his mother, who died at age 50 of cancer.

Goodman, Hirsh. ***Let Me Create a Paradise, God Said to Himself***. PublicAffairs, 2005. A memoir of the author's childhood in apartheid South Africa and his subsequent move to Israel in 1965 when he was 20. It contrasts his eager military service in the 1967 war with his son's negative experiences while serving more recently in the disputed territories.

Goodman, Matthew. ***Jewish Food: The World at Table***. HarperCollins, 2005. Recipes from around the world, interspersed with engaging essays on different Jewish cultures.

Halkin, Hillel. ***A Strange Death***. PublicAffairs, 2005. (forthcoming, May 31, 2005). "A mesmerizing recreation of a village in Palestine and its characters..." Tells the story of the Zionist village of Zichron Ya'akov which, in 1917, was at the heart of an espionage mystery involving the British and the Turks. Reads like a fast-paced thriller.

Ioanid, Radu. ***The Ransom of the Jews: The Story of the Extraordinary Secret Bargain Between Romania and Israel***. Ivan R. Dee, 2005. This book unlocks the fascinating and little-known story of how Israel traded cash and agricultural products to bring Jews out of Romania. The author relied on archival documents and interviews with diplomats who were involved in the trade.

The Jewish 1960's: An American Sourcebook. Brandeis University Press, University Press of New England, 2004. A collection of some of the finest essays, speeches, and journalistic accounts by Jewish writers, prominent rabbis (including Arthur Lelyveld), civil rights activists, and Zionists, covering all things Jewish and otherwise during the turbulent decade.

Jones, Gerard. ***Men of Tomorrow: Geeks, Gangsters, and the Birth of the Comic Book***. Basic Books, 2004. Comic books and superheroes owe their existence to the early generation of American Jews who had one foot in the "old country" and one in the new world. The author "draws on years of research and interviews to reveal how the collision of Yiddish and American culture shaped the modern vision of the hero."

Katz, Dovid. ***Words on Fire: The Unfinished Story of Yiddish***. Basic Books, 2004. "...a wholly enjoyable and many-faceted history of Yiddish..." (Booklist)

Lelyveld, Joseph. ***Omaha Blues: A Memory Loop***. Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 2005. A memoir by the former New York Times executive editor and son of Cleveland rabbi Arthur Lelyveld that explores his childhood and reflects on "familial eccentricities as he sorts through his dying father's belongings." This will be a much-discussed book in Cleveland this year.

Moriah, Avner. ***The Moriah Haggadah***. Jewish Publication Society of America, 2005. With an asking price of \$150, Publishers Weekly calls this illuminated haggadah "well worth the cost." Moriah, a Jerusalem-born painter, recounts the Passover story in "striking image and vibrant hue."

Rees, Laurence. ***Auschwitz: A New History***. PublicAffairs, 2005. New insights drawn from interviews with survivors and former camp guards. "Journalistic in style...based on impeccable scholarship..." "accessible and authoritative."

Reisner, Rosalind. ***Jewish American Literature: A Guide to Reading Interests*** (Genreflecting Advisory Series). Libraries Unlimited, 2004. Organized by genres (e.g., mysteries, thrillers, historical fiction, romance, Holocaust literature, biography/autobiography), this important new guide also notes award winning titles, those of interest to teens, and titles appropriate for book clubs. It also presents guidelines for building a Jewish literature collection and tips for advising readers.

Schwartz, Howard. ***Tree of Souls: The Mythology of Judaism***. Oxford University Press, 2004. This anthology by a noted folklorist assembles 670 tales along with commentary by the author. Organized into ten categories of myth, it has an extensive general index and an index of biblical verses. "As a resource, *Tree of Souls* is phenomenal...[and] will take its place next to the translation of Bialik and Ravnitsky's *Sefer Ha-Aggadah*."

Stavans, Ilan, ed. ***The Schocken Book of Modern Sephardic Literature***. Schocken, 2005. This thorough collection of essays, poetry and fiction provides a rich portrait of the “other Jews, Sephardim who long for...their lost ancestral home, even as they create a vibrant, multi-faceted literary tradition in exile.”

Strom, Yale. ***A Wandering Feast: A Journey Through the Jewish Culture of Eastern Europe***. Jossey-Bass, 2004. Strom and his partner travel through the Jewish cultures of Eastern Europe, gathering *klezmer* music and traditional recipes along the way.

Weiner, Ellis. ***Yiddish with Dick and Jane***. Little, Brown, 2004. Here’s the *emess*. Dick and Jane have grown up, and the whole *mishpocha* are having a lot of *tsuris*. *Bubbe* has been feeling *ibbledick*, sister Sally’s dates are all *shlemiels*, and their married friends are all cheating with each other—such a *shanda!* The story is hilarious, and the funny glossary is a great reference.

Zsolt, Bela. ***Nine Suitcases: A Memoir***. Schocken Books, 2004. The English publication of one of the earliest Holocaust memoirs, first published in serial form in 1946.

Fiction list AJL 2005

LF=Literary Fiction, SS=Short Stories M= Mysteries & Thrillers, P=Popular, HF=Historical Fiction

Abraham, Pearl. ***The Seventh Beggar***. Riverhead, 2004. Rabbi Nachman’s tales provide the inspiration and core (the entire text of the collection is included) of the spiritual journey of a young man in the Orthodox world and his nephew at MIT. LF

Arkin, Frieda. ***Hedwig and Berti***. Thomas Dunne Books, 2005. A much-delayed 2nd novel by an 87-year-old writer relates the tale of refugees fleeing Nazi Berlin & their subsequent life in England & the U.S. --satisfying and unnerving. LF

Auslander, Shalom. ***Beware of God: Stories***. Simon & Schuster, 2005. “The freshest voice in Jewish literature since Philip Roth!” LF, SS

Charlesworth, Monique. ***The Children’s War***. Knopf, 2004. A chilling and beautifully written look at a young girl left on her own in France during World War II, how she survives, comes of age, and gains wisdom born of suffering. LF, HF

Chessman, Harriet Scott. ***Someone Not Really Her Mother***. Dutton, 2004. In this lovely and poignant story, told in the voice of four family members, a nursing home resident/Holocaust survivor and her family explore memories as the present fades with her Alzheimer’s. P

Cozarinsky, Edgardo. ***The Bride From Odessa: Stories***. Translated from the Spanish by Nick Caistor. Farrar, Straus, & Giroux, 2004. Born in Buenos Aires

and a long-time resident of Paris, the film-maker/author brings a cosmopolitan outlook and keen sense of history to this collection of appealing, sensual stories. LF, SS

Edghill, India. ***Wisdom's Daughter: A Novel of Solomon and Sheba.*** St. Martin's Press, 2004. Better than her *Queenmaker*, this easy read should appeal to lovers of *The Red Tent*. HF, P

Feldman, Ellen. ***The Boy Who Loved Anne Frank.*** W.W. Norton, 2005. Imagine what might have happened to Peter if he had survived the war. LF

Foer, Jonathan Safran. ***Extremely Loud and Incredibly Close.*** Houghton Mifflin, 2005. Oskar's boots, as he likes to say, are very heavy – his father perished on 9/11. His quest to discover the secret of a mysterious key intertwines with the story of his grandparents, who survived the firebombing of Dresden. The narrative, embellished with photographs and some unusual graphics, is funny, beautiful and heartbreaking. LF

Furman, Andrew. ***Alligators May Be Present.*** University of Wisconsin Press, 2005. Matt Glassman, an academic with a shaky hold on mental health, takes a job as a book review editor at a Florida Jewish tabloid and spends healing time birding in the Everglades with a surrogate grandpa. Birding becomes a metaphor for life, but all must beware of the alligators lurking below the surface. Furman, a professor at FAU, has published several very gracefully written books on contemporary Jewish American literature. LF

Goldreich, Gloria. ***Walking Home.*** Mira, 2005. A successful, attractive PR executive seems to “have it all,” but when she tries to take time off to care for her dying parents, Holocaust survivors, she finds she needs to reevaluate her whole life. P

Goldstein, Jan. ***All That Matters.*** Hyperion, 2004. In this sentimental first novel by a rabbi and self-help author, a suicidal young woman finds her bliss with the help of her grandmother, a Holocaust survivor. P

Gur, Batya. ***Bethlehem Road Murder: A Michael Ohayon Mystery.*** Harper, 2004. The social and political realities of Israel take center stage in the fifth title, one of the best, in the series. M

Helprin, Mark. ***The Pacific and Other Stories.*** Penguin, 2004. A wonderful collection. SS

Hoffman, Roy. ***Chicken Dreaming Corn.*** University of Georgia, 2004. A standard tale of an immigrant Jewish family making their life in America in the first half of the 20th century, but set in Mobile Alabama. HF

Isaacs, Susan. ***Any Place I Hang My Hat***. Scribner, 2004. The author is at the top of her game, with the tale of a political journalist provoked by the appearance of a senatorial candidate's illegitimate son at a snooty campaign fundraiser into rekindling her search for her own mother. P

Kahn, Sharon. ***Which Big Giver Stole the Chopped Liver?*** Scribner, 2004. M

Kaminsky, Stuart. ***The Last Dark Place: An Abe Lieberman Mystery***. Forge, 2004. M

Kanon, Joseph. ***Alibi***. Henry Holt, 2005. An engrossing drama and brilliant evocation of postwar Venice in which an Army war crimes investigator falls in love with a Jewish woman. HF

Keizer, Gregg. ***The Longest Night***. Putnam, 2004. M

Keret, Etgar. ***The Nimrod Flip-Out***. Chato & Windus, 2005. Translated from the Hebrew. Short satiric bizarre bits, by Israel's hottest young writer. Previous book is *The Bus Driver Who Wanted To Be God & Other Stories*. LF,SS

Kertesz, Imre. ***Liquidation***. Translated by Tim Wilkinson. Knopf, 2004. A surreal journey through the lives of a group of friends who struggled through the Holocaust and communist tyranny only to be further battered by the aftermath of the fall of communism. A short intense read, challenging but worthwhile, by the Nobel Prize winner. LF

Krauss, Nicole. ***The History of Love***. Norton, 2005. Alma, a 14-year-old New Yorker, searches for the story behind her name with the help of a book called "The History of Love." Creating an intriguing book-within-a-book narrative, Krauss's novel is funny and affecting. LF

Krich, Rochelle. ***Grave Endings: A Novel of Suspense***. Ballantine Books, 2004. The 3rd Molly Blume mystery again provides an entertaining mix of L.A. lore, Orthodox Jewish tradition, and the adventures of the spunky heroine. M

Lester, Julius. ***Autobiography of God: A Novel***. St. Martin's Press, 2004. Always provocative, Lester will shock his audience with this book about a woman rabbi -- a blend of magic realism and intense spiritual debate set in a contemporary story of murder on campus. LF

Neugeboren, Jay. ***News from the New American Diaspora: And Other Tales of Exile***. University of Texas Press, 2005. Set in Ukraine, Brooklyn, Florida, Massachusetts and elsewhere, these evocative and well-crafted stories focus on the varieties of Jewish spiritual and physical dislocation and alienation. SS

Prose, Francine. ***A Changed Man***. Harper Collins, 2005. A 32-year old-tattooed skinhead has a change of heart and arrives at the offices of the World Brotherhood Watch offering to help them "save guys like me from becoming guys like me." LF

Ragen, Naomi. ***The Covenant***. St. Martin's Press, 2005. When Elise Margulies' husband and daughter are abducted by terrorists, Elise turns to her grandmother Leah, who contacts the three women who swore an oath of loyalty with her in Auschwitz. A tense, emotional thriller that examines the price of facing down evil and finding the strength to continue. M, P

Raphael, Lev. ***Tropic of Murder: A Nick Hoffman Mystery***. Perseverance Press, 2004. M

Reisman, Nancy. ***The First Desire***. Pantheon, 2004. When Goldie, the oldest of 5 siblings, disappears from home, this already dysfunctional family has to find the resources to deal with the loss of its strongest member. Set in Buffalo 1920-1950s, and told from the point of view of several characters, the result is a introspective, lyrical work. New York Times 100 Notable Books. Koret Foundation Jewish Book Award Finalist. Author's first novel. LF, HF

Roe, Caroline. ***Consolation for an Exile***. Berkley Prime Crime, 2004. The 8th in this series. M

Russell, Mary Doria. ***A Thread of Grace***. Random House, 2005. A panoramic novel that follows a group of Jews and Italian resistance fighters during the last three years of World War II. Slow moving, but ultimately engrossing and filled with historical detail. LF, HF

Shabtai, Yaakov. ***Uncle Peretz takes Off: Short Stories***. Translated from the Hebrew by Dalia Bilu. Overlook Duckworth, 2004. Originally published in Hebrew in 1972, these stories capture the characters and spirit of the *Yishuv* under British rule. LF, SS

Silva, Daniel. ***Prince of Fire***. Putnam, 2005 In Silva's fifth outing featuring art restorer/Mossad operative Gabriel Allon, Allon's cover is blown and he is called home, only to become caught up in a vicious trap. Silva's series increases in popularity with each book. M

Stern, Steve. ***The Angel of Forgetfulness***. Viking, 2005. Three distinct intertwining narratives tell the tale of a raggedy angel residing on earth, his human son Nathan- a struggling writer-and an alienated 60s era student, Saul. Saul's elderly aunt Keni, the love of Nathan's life, is the link among the story's fragments and it is her memories of life among the tenements that brings this book to life. Starred review in Booklist. LF, HF

Wilson, Jonathan. ***An Ambulance is on the Way***. Pantheon, 2005. Funny, poignant stories about men -- very different from his previous books. LF, SS

Yellin, Tamar. ***The Genizah at the House of Shepher***. Toby Press, 2005. Rich with historical detail, this exploration of a family's history through the tale of a mysterious book is a debut novel. LF

Zacharius, Walter. ***Songbird***. Atria Books, 2004. The author, a well-known publisher, wrote this romantic Holocaust story, his first novel, at the age of 80. HF