The Cambridge Companion to Jewish American Literature

For more than two hundred years, Jews have played important roles in the development of American literature. The Cambridge Companion to Jewish American Literature addresses a wide array of themes and approaches to this distinct yet multifaceted body of writing, among them literary history, immigration and acculturation, Yiddish and Hebrew literature, popular culture, women writers, literary theory and poetics, multilingualism, the Holocaust, and contemporary fiction. This collection of specially commissioned essays by leading figures discusses Jewish American literature in relation to ethnicity, religion, politics, race, gender, ideology, history, and ethics, and places it in the contexts of both Jewish and American writing. With its chronology and guides to further reading, this volume will prove valuable to scholars and students alike.
THE CAMBRIDGE COMPANION TO
JEWISH AMERICAN LITERATURE

EDITED BY
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MICHAEL P. KRAMER
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SHIRA WOLOSKY is Professor of English and American Literature at the Hebrew University in Jerusalem. Her publications include Emily Dickinson: A Voice of War, Language Mysticism, The Art of Poetry, and Poetry and Public Discourse, volume iv of The Cambridge History of American Literature, as well as numerous articles on poetics, literary theory, and feminism. She was a Guggenheim fellow in 2000.
CHRONOLOGY

1492 Expulsion of Jews from Spain. Columbus’ first voyage. Crypto-Jews said to be among his crew.
1654 Twenty-three indigent Sephardi Jews arrive in New Amsterdam from Brazil. Shearith Israel congregation founded in 1656.
1658 Newport, Rhode Island becomes home to Jews.
1722 Public conversion of Judah Monis at Harvard College.
1740 Parliament passes law allowing Jews to become citizens in British colonies.
1776 Declaration of Independence. Francis Salvador, Jewish patriot, killed in battle.
1790 Moses Seixas and Newport Congregation welcome President Washington to Newport. Approximately 1,500 Jews in the United States.
1820 Jewish population doubles to 3,000.
1825 Cornerstone ceremony for Ararat, Mordecai M. Noah’s planned Jewish colony near Buffalo, New York.
1826 Law passed in Maryland allowing Jews to hold public office.
1836 Jewish population stands at 6,000. Immigration of German Jews begins from Bavaria.
1843 Isaac Leeser founds The Occident in Philadelphia. B’nai Brith, a Jewish lodge, founded.
1854 Lévi-Strauss sells canvas pants to miners in California.
1860 Jewish population rises to 150,000. Wise publishes First of the Maccabees. Abraham Lincoln elected President. Civil War begins the following year.
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<td>Judah Benjamin, former US Senator, becomes Attorney General and, later, Secretary of State of the Confederacy.</td>
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<td>1882</td>
<td>Emma Lazarus, <em>Songs of a Semite</em>.</td>
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<td>1883</td>
<td>Fundraising event for pedestal to Statue of Liberty. Emma Lazarus contributes “The New Colossus.”</td>
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<td>1885</td>
<td>Pittsburgh Platform, renouncing Jewish nationality, adopted by Reform rabbis.</td>
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<td>1892</td>
<td>American Jewish Historical Society founded.</td>
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<td>1897</td>
<td>Founding of the Yiddish <em>Daily Forward</em> in New York.</td>
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<td>1898</td>
<td>Morris Rosenfeld, <em>Songs from the Ghetto</em>.</td>
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<td>1900</td>
<td>Jacob Gordin, <em>God, Man, and the Devil</em>. Over 1,000,000 Jews in the United States.</td>
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<td>1901</td>
<td><em>Jewish Encyclopedia</em> begins publication.</td>
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<td>1904</td>
<td>The Jewish Museum founded in New York City.</td>
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<td>1913</td>
<td>Lynching of Leo Frank.</td>
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<td>1914</td>
<td>World War I begins.</td>
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<td>1916</td>
<td>Funeral of Sholem Aleichem in Manhattan. Louis Brandeis, first Jewish Supreme Court Justice, appointed.</td>
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Hebrew newspaper *HaDoar* begins publication.


1924  Johnson Act restricts immigration.

1925  Anzia Yezierska, *Bread Givers.*

1926  Edna Ferber, *Show Boat.*

1927  Al Jolson stars in *The Jazz Singer.*

*The Goldbergs* begins on radio.

Stock market crashes. Great Depression begins.


Lamed Shapiro, *New Yorkish.*  
Charles Reznikoff, *By the Waters of Manhattan.*

1932  Fannie Hurst, *Imitation of Life.*  

1933  Israel Efros, *Vigvamim Shotkim* (Silent Wigwams).  
Charles Reznikoff, *Testimony.*  
Albert Einstein flees Nazi Germany, arrives in the United States.

1934  Henry Roth, *Call It Sleep.*  
Mordecai Kaplan, *Judaism as a Civilization.*  
Tess Slesinger, *The Unpossessed.*  
Daniel Fuchs, *Summer in Williamsburg.*  
Founding of *Partisan Review.*  
Baseball star Hank Greenberg decides not to play for Detroit Tigers on Yom Kippur.


1937  Meyer Levin, *The Old Bunch.*  
Delmore Schwartz, *In Dreams Begin Responsibilities.*  
Kadya Molodowsky, *In the Country of My Bones.*  
Jacob Glatstein, *Yidishtaytsn.*

Irving Berlin, “God Bless America.” The song is sung at both the Democratic and Republican conventions the following year.

1939  Nathanael West, *The Day of the Locust.*  
World War II begins. First reports of Holocaust reach the United States.
chronology

Jewish population nears 4,000,000.
1943 Jacob Glatstein, Gedenklder (Memory Poems).
   Founding of Commentary magazine.
1946 Isaac Rosenfeld, Passage from Home.
   Jo Sinclair, Wasteland.
   Sholem Asch, East River.
1947 Laura Hobson, Gentleman’s Agreement.
   Arthur Miller, All My Sons.
   5,000,000 Jews in the United States.
1948 Irwin Shaw, The Young Lions.
   Norman Mailer, The Naked and the Dead.
   Israel declares independence. War with neighboring Arab states.
1949 Arthur Miller, Death of a Salesman.
   Ephraim Lisitsky, Eleh toledot adam (In the Grip of Cross-Currents).
1950 Lionel Trilling, The Liberal Imagination.
   Your Show of Shows premieres on NBC.
1951 Alfred Kazin, A Walker in the City.
   Julius and Ethel Rosenberg convicted of espionage for the Soviet
1952 Leslie Fiedler, An End to Innocence.
1953 Isaac Bashevis Singer, “Gimpel the Fool.”
   Saul Bellow, The Adventures of Augie March. First National Book
   Award to Jewish writer.
1955 Herman Wouk, Marjorie Morningstar.
1956 Saul Bellow, Seize the Day.
   Abraham Joshua Heschel, God in Search of Man.
   Allen Ginsberg, Howl and Other Poems.
   The Diary of a Young Girl (Anne Frank) opens on Broadway.
   Karl Shapiro, Poems of a Jew.
   John Hollander, A Crackling of Thorns.
   Leon Uris, Exodus.
1959 Grace Paley, Little Disturbances of Man.
   Philip Roth, Goodbye, Columbus.
   First appearance of satirical comic strip “Feiffer” by Jules Feiffer.
1960 Eli Wiesel, Night.
1961 Tillie Olsen, Tell Me a Riddle.
   Allen Ginsberg, Kaddish and Other Poems.
   Joseph Heller, Catch-22.
chronology

Edward Wallant, *The Pawnbroker*.

Eichmann trial in Jerusalem.


1964 Saul Bellow, *Herzog*.

Civil Rights workers Michael Schwerner, Andrew Goodman, and James Cheney murdered in Mississippi.

*Fiddler on the Roof* opens on Broadway.

1965 Lionel Trilling, *Beyond Culture*.

Norman Mailer, *An American Dream*.

Bob Dylan, “Like a Rolling Stone.”

Neil Simon, *The Odd Couple*.

Joseph B. Soloveitchik, “The Lonely Man of Faith.”

Vatican Council repudiates Jewish collective guilt for execution of Jesus.

Sandy Koufax refuses to pitch in the World Series on Yom Kippur.


Louis Zukofsky, *All the Collected Short Poems*.

Susan Sontag, *Against Interpretation*.


The Six-Day War in Israel.

1968 Barbra Streisand stars in *Funny Girl*.

1969 Philip Roth, *Portnoy’s Complaint*.

1970 Saul Bellow, *Mr. Sammler’s Planet*.

1971 Adrienne Rich, *When We Dead Awaken*.


Cynthia Ozick, *The Pagan Rabbi*.


Lionel Trilling, *Sincerity and Authenticity*.

Leslie Fiedler, *To the Gentiles*.

First woman ordained as Reform rabbi.

1973 Adrienne Rich, *Diving into the Wreck*.

Maxine Kumin, *Up Country*.

Erica Jong, *Fear of Flying*.

Harold Bloom, *The Anxiety of Influence*.

*The Jewish Catalog: A Do It Yourself Kit*.

Henry Kissinger is first Jew to be appointed Secretary of State.

Yom Kippur War in Israel.

1974 Grace Paley, *Enormous Changes at the Last Minute*.

Chronology

David Mamet, American Buffalo.
1976
Irving Howe, World of Our Fathers.
Marge Piercy, Woman on the Edge of Time.
Nobel Prize for Literature awarded to Saul Bellow.
1977
Irving Howe, ed. Jewish American Stories.
Woody Allen, Annie Hall.
1978
Nobel Prize for Literature awarded to Isaac Bashevis Singer.
1979
Philip Roth, The Ghost Writer.
1980
Cynthia Ozick, The Shawl.
Geoffrey Hartman, Criticism in the Wilderness.
Jewish population close to 6,000,000.
1982
Kate Simon, Bronx Primitive.
1984
Robert Pinsky, The History of My Heart.
1985
Loe Segal, Her First American.
1986
Art Spiegelman, MAUS, a Survivor’s Tale.
Sanford Budick and Geoffrey Hartman, eds., Midrash and Literature.
Founding of Tikkun magazine.
1987
Philip Roth, The Counterlife.
Jorie Graham, The End of Beauty.
Jonathan Pollard convicted of spying for Israel.
1988
Wendy Wasserstein, The Heidi Chronicles.
1989
Howard Nemerov first Jew appointed Poet Laureate of the United States.
First Seinfeld episode.
1990
Irena Klepfisz, A Few Words in the Mother Tongue.
Joyce Antler, ed. America and I: Short Stories by American Jewish Women Writers.
1993
Rebecca Goldstein, Strange Attractors.
Opening of Holocaust Museum in Washington.
1994
Henry Roth, Mercy of a Rude Stream.
Tony Kushner, Angels in America.
Steven Spielberg’s Schindler’s List wins Academy Award.
1995
Melvin Bukiet, While the Messiah Tarries.
1996
Thane Rosenbaum, Elijah Visible.
President Bill Clinton attends funeral of slain Israeli Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin.

1997
Cynthia Ozick, *The Puttermesser Papers*.
Philip Roth, *American Pastoral*.
Allegra Goodman, *Kaaterskill Falls*.
Aryeh Lev Stollman, *The Far Euphrates*.
Diane Matza, ed. *Sephardic–American Voices*.

1999
Jaqueline Osherow, *Dead Man’s Praise*.
Marge Piercy, *The Art of Blessing the Day*.
Joseph Lieberman is Democratic Vice-Presidential candidate.

2000
Philip Roth, *The Human Stain*.
Saul Bellow, *Ravelstein*.

2001
Bob Dylan, *Love and Theft*.
Publication of *Jewish American Literature: A Norton Anthology*.