

Jewish history, and the history of immigration will find much of value in this work. And although I was not persuaded by the author's thesis, I applaud the effort to reexamine these issues in order to reassess whether Muslim-Jewish relations both in North Africa and France may have been more fluid and complex than previously believed.

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Mollie Lewis Nowen. *Oy, My Buenos Aires: Jewish Immigrants and the Creation of Argentine National Identity*. Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 2013. 157 pp.  
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Latin American Jewish history is a subject of growing interest among American and Israeli scholars. The linguistic, cultural, and religious singularity of the region as well as its political history, marked by coups and military governments, seems to serve to expand the understanding of the Jewish Diaspora beyond the extensively studied American and European experiences. Of all the countries of the region, Argentina continues to draw most of the attention. This is not by chance: Argentina, and especially its capital, Buenos Aires, is home to the largest Jewish community among the Spanish- and Portuguese-speaking countries (which includes Spain and Portugal). Along with this renewed interest in the region, we can also see the opening of new perspectives that have provided the possibility of approaching a series of overlooked topics like unaffiliated individuals, women, political activism in non-Jewish organizations, popular culture, book publishing and circulation, etc. Mollie Lewis Nowen's book is a good exponent of this perspective.

The book aims to explore the ways in which Jewish immigrants of Ashkenazic origin helped create the new *porteño* (demonym for Buenos Aires) vein of Argentine national identity, while they sought to preserve their own ethnic identity. To this end, Nowen focuses on the period of the largest Jewish immigration, during which the city of Buenos Aires became the privileged setting of the integration of immigrants into mainstream national life. Thus, through the history of Jews, the book also explores the explosive growth of a city, the ways in which it was reconfigured by migration, and, thanks to its centrality, the forms in which the city of Buenos Aires reshaped the country's identity. The volume is organized upon a series of analytical axes that help illuminate the ways in which individuals lived and articulated their multiple identities: the relations between Jews and non-Jews, gender roles, generational differences (where the distinctive uses of Yiddish and Spanish were a central issue), and class contrasts. The book draws on a systematic reading of the available literature and different types

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of primary sources, including census data; police records; and a wide arc of works of poetry, short stories, novels, and illustrations.

The book is divided into seven chapters that address the main aim through different objects: space, demographic and residential changes, identity narratives, social and cultural practices, and individual trajectories. Chapter 1, “Argentina, Land of Immigrants,” presents ideas on immigration promoted by the leadership that dominated the political scene from the late nineteenth century until the first decades of the twentieth. The chapter highlights the progressive consolidation of the city of Buenos Aires as the reference of national identity, in opposition to the idea of the rural countryside as the basis of Argentina’s culture. “Freedom,” “progress,” and “civilization,” highly valued terms for the political and intellectual leadership, were associated with Buenos Aires, and, through its port, with Europe and its inhabitants. However, the contrast between the imagined immigrant and his concrete presence produced ideological and cultural tensions. The chapter studies the arrival of Jewish immigrants in this context and analyzes its demographic and residential dynamics through statistical data. The second chapter portrays the gradual replacement of the Jewish agricultural colonies by the city of Buenos Aires as a magnet for Jewish migration. During this period, the city became the undisputed center of Argentine Jewish political, cultural, social, and institutional life. The urban landscape is the setting for the emergence of characters typical of the interwar period, such as the *cuentenik* (wandering peddler), whose presence contrasted that of the young professionals and traders, already adapted to the local language and culture and moving up the social ladder. It was also the city in which a Jewish white-slave-trade mafia coexisted with several political, cultural, and social organizations (some of whom specifically aimed to stop this criminal group and clear the name of the community).

Chapter 3 pays special attention to the identity markers that distinguished immigrants in their successive passages: from Europe to the agricultural colonies and from the colonies to the capital. In the transitions from *gringo* to gaucho and from gaucho to an inhabitant of the city, Jews carried and “negotiated” a series of identity markers (related to food, clothing, language, etc.), some of which distinguished them from non-Jews, while others integrated them with the general society. In chapter 4, space regains importance. If the city was the new landscape that defined Argentine identity, and immigrants were the ones who reshaped the character of the city, then the spaces of sociability and cultural creation become important objects of analysis: “Spaces are more than just physical locations—they are imbued with meanings by the people who inhabit and observe them” (66). The author identifies a street, Corrientes, around which an intense public space formed by Jewish institutions, newspapers, cafés, shops, etc., took shape.

Chapters 5 and 6 focus on a series of practices and spaces of tension and encounter that allow the author to detect different forms of integration and participation in urban life. The first one finds crime to be an approach to seeing the city in motion. In this account we find, in different areas of the city, Jewish criminals cheating or stealing from non-Jews and Jews alike, as well as Jews as victims of robberies by Jews and non-Jews. This perspective aims to understand integration not only through areas such as politics, business, or culture, but also through

crime, where Jews could be victims or victimizers. Chapter 6 analyzes daily life through entertainment and social and family events, such as dances, banquets, or picnics. These activities provide a very eloquent image of some of the forces that organized Jewish social life: gender, generation, and class. Halfway between public and private spheres, these activities were the places where women found a more public role, different generations showed their conflicting interests, and social classes contrasted sharply. Finally, the last chapter studies the trajectories of eight different public individuals of the period, including journalists, writers, political activists, an artist, and a powerful cultural entrepreneur. Some of them were well known inside and outside Jewish circles, while others only within Jewish life. Without pretending to be representative of the whole, this selection provides an entrée to understanding the conditions of integration and personal and professional development, which, at least potentially, immigrants and first-generation Jews encountered.

The interest that Mollie Lewis Nowen's book has for the field of Jewish studies in general, and Latin American Jewish studies in particular, lies both in its theoretical approach and the empirical material used for the analysis. The book presents actors, spaces, and practices not assessed by previous works, and in so doing, it shows us a fundamental and unknown facet of Jewish life not only in Argentina, but also in the wider global Jewish Diaspora.

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Benjamin Pollock. *Franz Rosenzweig's Conversions: World Denial and World Redemption*. Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2014. 265 pp.  
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Benjamin Pollock's *Franz Rosenzweig's Conversions* revisits and revises our understanding of a legend central to modern Jewish thought: the all-night conversation in Leipzig (*Leipziger Nachtgespräch*) among Franz Rosenzweig, Eugen Rosenstock, and Rudolf Ehrenberg. On July 7, 1913, so we have believed for decades, Rosenstock and Ehrenberg convinced Rosenzweig of the groundlessness of his academic agnosticism and relativism, persuading him to convert to Christianity and setting the stage for his return to Judaism later in October 1913. According to Pollock, however, archival evidence suggests that the conversion that occurred during the *Leipziger Nachtgespräch* in reality led Rosenzweig from a world-denying theology (a position, in other words, based on faith, not reason) to a theology in which the world assumes a central role in redemption. At stake in works like *Star of Redemption* (1921) is not a choice between reason and faith, but rather the "moral and spiritual status of the world" (216). Pollock's main contention is thus that we can understand Rosenzweig's thought as "the most compelling metaphysical alternative to Gnostic dualism," as a system that