

ARTICLES

“Israel! What a Wonderful People!”: Elliot Cohen’s Critique of Modern American Jewry 1924–1927

Daniel Greene

Between 1924 and 1927, Elliot Cohen critiqued American Jewish life for the *Menorah Journal* in a series of twenty-two magazine columns, each titled “Notes for a Modern History of the Jews.” In these columns, Cohen remarked on Jewish life by bringing together already published items from the Jewish press, announcements from Jewish organizations, and bits and pieces from rabbis’ sermons. Cohen never interjected his own voice into this series. Instead, he highlighted contradiction and ambiguity in his source material by carefully and often ironically juxtaposing quotations to construct a fragmented narrative that mocked the prevailing concerns of American Jewish community leaders and rabbis. Moreover, these painstakingly crafted columns sought to disprove American Jewish leaders’ grandiose claims about American Jews’ exceptionalism. Cohen’s columns combated stereotypes about Jews, questioned leaders’ priorities, and intended to capture the lived complexity of Jewish life in America. “Notes for a Modern History of the Jews,” while often humorous or satirical, represented Cohen’s search for “the truth” of American Judaism in the 1920s. In this search for truth, as I argue, Cohen sought to negotiate the meaning of modern Jewish life. In doing so, he exposed Jews’ everyday existence to be both as mundane and as extraordinary as that of their American contemporaries.

Cohen opened his first “Notes for a Modern History of the Jews” column in the February 1924 *Menorah Journal* with the following stream of previously published extracts:

“The Jews exist to safeguard monotheism for the world.”
—Rabbi Nathan Krass... Joseph Diamond and ‘Whitey’

Diamond have confessed to planning and helping execute the robbery and murder of two bank messengers in Borough Park, Brooklyn. Ellis S. Joseph, the world's foremost collector of rare animals, has arrived in New York with an assortment of 58 Australian camels, 97 kangaroos, 3 lions, 12 Tasmanian devils, 12 wombats, a leopard, a tiger, and many snakes. Miss Sophia Waldman of the George Washington University Girls Rifle Teams scored 100 in a match with the University of Maryland. Of two thousand actors engaged on the legitimate stage last year two hundred were Jews. The whist team of the Cosmos Club, claimants of the championship of Roxbury and Dorchester (Mass.), challenge any team. Harry Miller and H. Flashner are the captain and manager. Any club desiring games please address the Cosmos Club, care of Jewish Welfare Center, Intervale St., Roxbury. Nathan Rothschild, head of the London branch of the famous banking family, died recently leaving a collection of 70,000 fleas to the British museum.

After contrasting Rabbi Krass's lofty understanding of Jews' purpose in life with Jewish criminals, animal collectors, rifle champions, performers, card players, and flea collectors, Cohen continued on for another two pages, juxtaposing quotations on weighty matters of science with stories of Jewish strongmen, incidents of anti-Semitism, and with the "Santa Claus craving" common among Jewish children.¹ Such pastiche characterized Cohen's work during his tenure as the managing editor of the *Menorah Journal* between 1925 and 1931.²

Cohen's tone of criticism was not unique in his day, nor was the technique of combining already published fragments to create a new whole. Cohen idolized perhaps the greatest American satirist of the 1920s, *American Mercury* editor H. L. Mencken.³ In the first issue of the *American Mercury*, published just one month before Cohen's first "Notes" installment, Mencken authored his first "Americana" column, which extracted items from local presses in various states and coupled these items with Mencken's characteristically biting commentary.⁴ Mencken was fiercely iconoclastic in these columns, lashing out at individuals and institutions that violated his strong sense of right and wrong.⁵ Cohen moved one step beyond his hero's technique, removing his own voice entirely and letting the carefully placed press items comment on each other. The technique caught on elsewhere: three years after Cohen's final "Notes" column appeared, novelist John

incisive wit, Cohen's juxtaposition of artifact quotations used authors' own intended words to carry out a "subversive cultural criticism."¹¹ Reminiscent of cubism in the way that they take decontextualized "scraps" from already published mass media to compile a new whole, Cohen's columns also are akin to photomontage. Like photomontages—compositions of manipulated photographic elements that transcend "the limits of the straight photograph"—Cohen's columns startle the viewer/reader by presenting words in new and unexpected formats. In describing photomontage, curator Matthew Teitelbaum has explained that "by dramatically repositioning various figures and objects, montage suggests new paradigms of authority and influence." Such repositioning calls into question each individual object and its relationship to the other included elements. "In this sense, among others," Teitelbaum has asserted, "montage practice is about radical realignments of power."¹² Cohen's goals in compiling these columns—undermining simplistic stereotypes about Jews, critiquing the American rabbinate, and questioning the priorities of American Jewry as a whole—all contributed to his desire for a "radical realignment" of American Jewish life.

By positioning himself as the compiler of "truth"—after all, he was only quoting others' words—Cohen sought to expose the false rhetoric endemic to so much of American Jewish life. Seemingly adopting a radically empiricist position, Cohen created through re-use. Although the individual items on their own may have appeared randomly chosen or, worse, worthless, when carefully combined with other printed artifacts they took on a new life more powerful than any critique Cohen ever produced in his own words.

In order to understand the context for Cohen's "Notes for a Modern History of the Jews" columns, it is necessary first to examine Cohen's background and earlier writings for the *Menorah Journal*.¹³ Elliot Ettelson Cohen's upbringing differed markedly from that of many early-twentieth-century Jewish intellectuals. Unlike so many of his contemporaries, some of whom would come to be known as the "New York Intellectuals," Cohen was neither raised nor educated in New York.¹⁴ Born in Iowa in 1899 and raised in Mobile, Alabama, Cohen, described as a "prodigy from birth," matriculated to Yale at age fifteen.¹⁵

Cohen would later deny that his pedigree gave him a different perspective than his peers, noting that, like many of his

contemporaries in the New York intellectual scene, "There was only one thing important in my family. Books."¹⁶ Cohen's Jewish upbringing, though, was more complicated than he lets on. His scholarly father, an immigrant to the United States, opened a dry-goods store in Mobile. The elder Cohen studied Jewish texts at home, but also conducted business on the Sabbath. Other tensions between maintaining religious observance and accommodating to American ways pervaded Cohen's childhood home to the extent that he emerged, in the words of historian Lauren B. Strauss, "deeply scornful of both Reform and Orthodox Judaism, charging the first with displaying overweening zeal in imitating the trappings of American life and the second with spiritual stagnation."¹⁷ This dissatisfaction with all branches of religious Judaism, as we will later see, would inform both Cohen's early *Menorah Journal* writings and his "Notes for a Modern History of the Jews" columns.

Despite his denials, Cohen likely experienced his outsider status acutely. As journalist and Cohen's contemporary Midge Decter later suggested (although she remembered Cohen as one year younger than he actually was), "To be a fourteen-year-old who goes to college is traumatic. To be a fourteen-year-old Jew from Mobile who goes to Yale is triply traumatic."¹⁸

Cohen, then, was probably always somewhat estranged from the mainstream path not only of young American intellectuals, but also of young Jewish intellectuals in the 1910s and 1920s. As historian Paul Mendes-Flohr has written, "It is from this estrangement that the stranger's social objectivity emerges, for objectivity, as conceived by [Georg] Simmel, rests in a normative distance—a detachment from the norms which permits one to discern the formal structure of the relations governed by those norms."¹⁹ Cohen's presence at the same institutions as leading Jewish intellectuals coupled with his simultaneous distance from their more typical Jewish upbringings in New York City, as we will later see, would provide him with just enough social objectivity and distance to effectively and devastatingly critique American Jewish experiences in his contributions to the *Menorah Journal*.

Cohen served as the president of the Yale chapter of the Menorah Association in 1917–18, during his senior year. The Menorah Association, first founded at Harvard in 1906, charged itself with "the promotion, in American colleges and universities, of the study of

Jewish history, culture, and problems, and the advancement of Jewish ideals."²⁰ The expressly stated mission of the Menorah Association was to foster a Jewish cultural renaissance through both publications and campus-based societies that promoted intellectual Jewish interests. In 1915, the Menorah Association began publishing the *Menorah Journal*, which quickly became the most important English-language journal of Jewish opinion. Within the pages of the *Menorah Journal*, intellectuals attempted to advance understandings of the Jewish past and self-consciously debated the conditions of modern world Jewry.

Cohen's first published *Menorah Journal* article, "The Promise of the American Synagogue," won the award for the best essay written by a member of a collegiate Menorah society in 1917 and reflected his disdain for both the Reform and Orthodox movements. In the essay, Cohen, then only eighteen years of age, argued that Judaism must "appeal strongly to the modern man" or face doom. Orthodox Judaism faced the greatest future danger, Cohen argued, because its practices had become "foreign to modern American conditions." Reform Judaism confronted a different, but "equally gloomy" plight because social functions and charity services had begun to stand in for religious understanding.²¹ Cohen argued that, in order to become more modern, religion had to become more "democratic," by which he meant that Judaism had to find a way to appeal to a larger portion of American Jews, many of whom had the choice to disregard their religious background in favor of assimilation. Judaism could become well suited to this challenge, Cohen claimed, if synagogues and rabbis made some modifications to acclimate to modern conditions. Echoing Rabbi Mordecai M. Kaplan's rhetoric, Cohen described the ideal synagogue as "the community center of all Jewish activities."²² And, Cohen emphasized that the most necessary quality for a rabbi was sincerity. Indeed, the successful rabbi to the modern Jew would have to be a sage, a saint, and a proficient executive all rolled into one.

After graduating at age eighteen, Cohen remained at Yale for five years as a graduate student in English. The near impossibility of a Jew gaining an appointment to a university English department in the 1920s probably contributed to Cohen's failure to pursue his dissertation as avidly as he otherwise might have.²³ Cohen left Yale in 1923 and found his niche in New York, where he began to work at the *Menorah Journal* in April 1924 and served as managing editor from June 1925 until September 1931. He later would become the founding

editor of *Commentary* magazine, holding that post from 1945 until his death in 1959.

At the *Menorah Journal*, Cohen nurtured many young writers including Lionel Trilling. Years later, Trilling's wife Diana claimed, "Elliot quickly rescued [the *Menorah Journal*] from the parochialism into which it had settled under its previous editor, Henry Hurwitz. The magazine remained a Jewish magazine but he rid it of its insistent sectarianism and made it into a widely read journal of intellectual opinion."²⁴ Despite Diana Trilling's bold claim, the *Menorah Journal* already had established a distinguished reputation by the early 1920s and did not require "rescuing" when Hurwitz hired Cohen. Nonetheless, the quality of the magazine's content improved during Cohen's tenure. Cohen became a part of a cadre of editors, including Lionel Trilling, Marvin Lowenthal, and Herbert Solow, who brought a profound intellectual vibrancy that the journal had lacked before Cohen's tenure as managing editor. During the seven years that he edited the magazine, the *Menorah Journal's* focus shifted from reporting on campus-based activities to promoting works by young Jewish artists and writers recruited by Cohen.²⁵

Reflecting on his years working under him at the *Menorah Journal*, Lionel Trilling remembered Cohen as a genius, the greatest teacher he had ever known, and—perhaps remembering his "Notes" columns specifically—as a man obsessed with the "subtle interrelations that exist between seemingly disparate parts of culture."²⁶

Most often, Cohen seized upon the disparate parts of Jewish culture in his "Notes" columns to express his vigorous disdain for the American Reform rabbinate. He had, in fact, critiqued the rabbinate before ever setting foot in the magazine's offices. In 1922, Cohen wrote to Hurwitz regarding the Central Conference of American Rabbis (CCAR) annual conference in Cape May, New Jersey: "I wasn't exactly optimistic when I arrived—but if anyone had told me what the thing was really going to be like ahead of time, I would have branded him as a base slanderer of the Jewish people and the human race in general." Just twenty-three years of age at the time, Cohen claimed to know "pretty exactly" the problems of American Jewry. "And I'd like to get a chance," Cohen rather arrogantly notified Hurwitz, "to tell the three or four other intelligent Jews in this country what I found out." Cohen promised his critique would be "intemperate, malicious[,] violent and altogether impolitic and inconsiderate."²⁷

Cohen had no easy time writing the article he promised, confessing to Hurwitz three years later: "The thing has spoiled my days and haunted my night [*sic*]." ²⁸ Nonetheless, Cohen eventually produced an article that well articulated his own view of the American Reform rabbinate. He labeled the modern Jewish era "The Age of Brass," explaining, "By an Age of Brass we mean simply an age that substitutes rhetoric for knowledge, bold assertions for learning, vainglorious pretensions for soundly-based convictions, bluster for strength, and braggadocio for an inwardly felt security." ²⁹ In the article, Cohen attacked virtually all Jewish leaders as vacuous, narcissistic, and shallow, including those involved in business, social services, and religion. Cohen claimed that he did not want to blame "the present low state of the Jewish life in America" on the rabbis, but, in almost the same breath, indicted the American rabbinate for "a too meek acquiescence in the degradation of the rabbinical function to that of a spokesman—i.e., mouthpiece—of the ignorance, ambitions, and fears of the influential Jewish laity." ³⁰ As in his earlier *Menorah Journal* articles, Cohen expressed his longing for sincere leadership by the rabbinate. This leadership, in Cohen's ideal, would emerge as a product of a vibrant intellectual and cultural renaissance that defined the Menorah's mission.

Cohen also moved beyond his indictment of rabbis in "The Age of Brass" to write a searing critique of American Jewish life. For example, he revealed his distaste for the American Jewish press, which, he argued, uniformly and blindly celebrated Jewish achievement. He mocked the "interminable" American-Jewish weeklies:

By a logic of which only editors of Jewish weeklies are capable they advance Judaism and promote Jewish-Gentile understanding by printing accounts of how Jacob Dupkin, who once owned only one cart of junk, now owns practically all the junk there is, and of how Hattibelle Levine is assisting civilization by editing scenarios for the Goldilocks Film Corporation. ³¹

Cohen claimed that these celebrations of Jewish materialism and achievement came from fully Americanized Jews who had little knowledge of Jewish religion or culture, the things that he argued truly matter to Jewish continuity. The glorification of such empty

achievements led Cohen to stress the need for "a compensatory mechanism" to counteract the utter lack of meaning in so many American Jewish lives.

Where "The Age of Brass" attacked with anger and vituperation, "Notes for a Modern History of the Jews" worked by allusion and humor. As Lionel Trilling later remembered, "[Cohen] loved grace of all kinds, especially the grace of wit, and he himself was the wittiest man we shall ever know."³² This is especially vigorous praise, considering that Cohen produced these columns during some of Mencken's most productive years at the *American Mercury*. While Mencken's caustic humor usually came in his own voice, Cohen's came from laborious cutting and pasting of the contemporary sources of American Jewry, including most often the press and rabbinical sermons. Cohen's primary themes—undermining stereotypes about Jews, critiquing the American rabbinate, and questioning the priorities of American Jewry—were repeated over and over again in his "Notes" columns, despite the lack of a coherent narrative in his work.

One of Cohen's overt goals in these columns was to undermine stereotypes of Jews that contributed to anti-Semitism, an urgent task in an era of resurgent immigration restriction, anti-radicalism, and Anglo-Saxonism.³³ The Ku Klux Klan and the notoriously anti-Semitic Henry Ford made appearances in Cohen's first "Notes" installment of February 1924:

"We Jews are happy in America and contented with conditions. We don't care for Ford and the Ku Kluxes. We don't notice them."—*Louis Marshall*. "Louis Marshall devoted a large part of his annual report as President of the American Jewish Committee to a spirited attack on the Ku Klux Klan."—*The American Israelite*.³⁴

Although the reader's first reaction to such an obvious contradiction may be a disbelieving shake of the head, Cohen's fear about American anti-Semitism underlies this couplet of quotations. As he exposed the contradictions in the rhetoric of one of American Jewry's most outspoken leaders, Cohen also suggested that deflecting attention from the Klan could not mask real anxieties.

Cohen derided not only anti-Semitic organizations in the United States, he also combated specific, often age-old, stereotypes aimed at

Jews. For example, Cohen followed a quote from a non-Jewish business owner who had “never found [Jews] remarkable for cleanliness” with the following: “The president of the Pennsylvania State Association of Master Plumbers recently said that Jewish young men are the most scrupulously clean in the United States, judging from the amount of shower baths and fixtures sold to Jewish institutions.”³⁵ In this juxtaposition, the absurdity of the “evidence” for Jews’ superior cleanliness is exceeded only by that of the claim that Jews are dirtier than others. Only if one can believe the premise that sales of plumbing fixtures to Jews “proves” their cleanliness, Cohen has asserted, can one accept the harmful assertion about Jews being a dirty people.

An avid sports fan, Cohen saved his most vigorous attacks on anti-Semitism for the stereotype of Jewish men as weak and unathletic. Nativist sociologist Edward Ross, for example, wrote in 1913 that, “Hebrews are the polar opposite of our pioneer breed,” and described Jews as “undersized,” “weak-muscled,” and “exceedingly sensitive to pain.”³⁶ Cohen’s columns, in response to such beliefs, are littered with instances of Jewish physical triumphs in track and field, football, wrestling, and boxing.³⁷ Most common were simple reports of male athletic prowess. In the February 1925 “Notes” column, for example, Cohen included three items consecutively that announced Louis (Kid) Kaplan’s featherweight championship, Abe Goldstein’s loss of the bantamweight championship, and Benny Leonard’s lightweight championship.³⁸ Cohen most likely focused on Jewish fighters so often in order to emphasize Jewish men’s strength and athleticism, undermining the claim that Jewish men were feminine and weak.³⁹ Cohen’s focus on Jewish athletic triumph accomplished even more than negating a stereotype in the realm of athletics. For, as Sander Gilman has persuasively argued, the stereotype of Jewish weakness often stands in for beliefs about “Jews’ inability to serve as a citizen.”⁴⁰ By highlighting Jewish athletic triumphs, then, Cohen also asserted that Jewish men were potentially as strong as all other American laborers, and, should the call come, would serve in the military just as well as any other American citizen.⁴¹

Cohen’s combating of anti-Semitic stereotypes is also notable in that it seems to be directed simultaneously towards a non-Jewish readership and towards fostering Jewish pride.⁴²

While Cohen targeted many snippets at undermining anti-

Semitism, he directed the majority of his "Notes" columns to attacking grandiose claims to Jewish exceptionalism or to questioning the priorities of his Jewish readership. Cohen opened his June 1925 "Notes for a Modern History of the Jews" column, for example, by contrasting the *American Hebrew's* declaration of "sound and progressive" American Judaism with press notices about an Easter egg hunt for Jewish children at a temple in Alabama and an intermarriage performed jointly by a minister and a rabbi in St. Louis.⁴³

In a "Notes" column published the previous winter, Cohen quoted Rabbi Stephen S. Wise's claim that: "Wherever a Jew lives, Judaism is on trial; by every act of the Jew Israel is placed in the balance. Every Jew, Atlas-like, bears upon his shoulders the burden of the whole world's Jewry." Characteristically, Cohen found a suitably ridiculous item to "demonstrate" Wise's understanding of the "burdens" of being Jewish: "Lee Foster Hartman, member of the Mah Jong Standardization Committee, is the author of *Standardized Mah Jong*, the first volume to present the American Code of Laws for Mah Jong."⁴⁴ In employing such juxtapositions, Cohen argued that, despite claims to the contrary, Judaism was no more "sound and progressive" than any other American religion, and that the "burdens" of being Jewish, although felt acutely by some, were no more important than the standard rules of a leisure pastime for others.

Although ironic, often damning juxtapositions dominated Cohen's columns, there was clearly much more to "Notes for a Modern History of the Jews" than mockery and humor. By including disturbing news about Jewish crime, everyday stories of Jewish accomplishments, and amusing items about the responsibilities of writing the rules for Mah Jong alongside with grandiose claims about the well-being of American Jewry, Cohen hoped to represent American Jews as similar to other Americans. Lionel Trilling later explained Cohen's philosophy: "When it came to the Jewish present, we undertook to normalize it by suggesting that it was not only as respectable as the present of any other group but also as foolish, vulgar, complicated, impossible and promising."⁴⁵ Cohen's attempt to blur distinctions between Jewish Americans and other Americans speaks directly to one of the most urgent issues for intellectuals involved with the *Menorah Journal* during the 1920s. In an era of heightened anti-Semitism and increased suspicion against many ethnic Americans, Menorah intellectuals sought to demonstrate that

Jews could develop and nurture a particular Jewish culture while remaining patriotic United States citizens within a pluralist American society. Cohen's montages served this purpose well by including items about Jews' active participation in such secular "American" pursuits as the Boy Scouts, lifeguarding, and playing the harmonica.⁴⁶ Although seemingly chosen at random, Cohen's carefully considered inclusion of such pastimes portrayed Jews as well-aculturated American citizens, some of whom remained interested in Jewish culture and some of whom did not. At all times, though, Cohen strove to reject all claims that questioned Jewish loyalty to America.

Acceptance of a pluralist American society, however, does seemingly contradict Jews' belief in being the chosen people of God. Historian Arnold Eisen has argued that Jewish intellectuals responded to this dilemma of inclusive American pluralism versus Jews' special status by substituting "a secular reinterpretation of chosenness which emphasized the Jew's role as perpetual critic and outsider."⁴⁷ Cohen fits this model of a critical intellectual well, always remaining outside of the mainstream. Norman Podhoretz, who became the editor of *Commentary* in 1960, commented on the position of Jewish intellectuals, writing, "They did not feel that they belonged to America or that America belonged to them."⁴⁸ And, while Cohen remained outside of mainstream America, his experiences also were somewhat marginal from that of the Jewish mainstream. As historian Alan M. Wald has noted, Cohen and the group of young Jewish intellectuals whom he attracted to the *Menorah Journal* "had set down roots in the Jewish experience, although in a way that kept most distanced from official Jewish institutions and conventional religious practices."⁴⁹ Cohen responded to this sense of alienation as a Jewish intellectual by mocking Jews at both extremes—those who claimed Jewish distinctiveness above all else and those who championed assimilation too vigorously. By debunking the beliefs of those at each extreme, Cohen hoped to articulate the possibility of coexistence between American universalism and Jewish particularity.

Even as he hoped to normalize the Jewish experience and thus legitimate Jews as Americans, Cohen continued to criticize relentlessly the priorities of American Jews. Country clubs, fund-raising drives, and Jewish Christmas celebrations were some of Cohen's favorite targets to demonstrate the excessive materialism and waywardness

endemic to American Jewry.⁵⁰ The examples are numerous. Consider the following as representative of Cohen's critique. In a 1924 "Notes for a Modern History of the Jews" Cohen allowed the following item to stand on its own without comment from surrounding snippets: "'With four country clubs to its credit, Philadelphia Jewry is certainly entitled to rank as a leading Jewish center.'—*Jewish Exponent*."⁵¹ Just more than one year later, in an extended quotation from the *Kansas City Jewish Chronicle* about David A. Brown, an ice and ice cream manufacturer and powerful fund-raiser for Jewish causes, Cohen's choice of excerpt emphasized American Jewry's cultural and intellectual impoverishment: "'We don't know how much Talmud Dave Brown knows, or how steeped he is in Jewish theology, but never did any learned rabbi drive home in more understandable language the real and fundamental tenets of the Jewish faith. . . . [Through his fund-raising efforts,] he is going to show every other business man how to be a real, honest-to-God JEW.'"⁵²

In one of the more absurd juxtapositions included in his montages, Cohen quoted a non-Jewish doctor's claim that the Jew's nose "always will be indicative of his superior intelligence, of mature intellectuality, of steadfastness and will-power." Rather than ranting against a pseudo-scientific argument that attributed Jewish intellectuality to the shape of the characteristic Jewish nose, Cohen choose to undermine the idea that Jews were intellectually superior at all. He directly followed the excerpt about the Jewish nose with:

"A party of unusual variety as parties go, was given at the home of Mr. and Mrs. L. Geo. Feinstein, Saskatoon, Sask., on Sunday, March 9th. There were twenty-five married couples each of whom were dressed as children, the men in knee pants, blouses and ribbon ties, the ladies with short dresses, hair ribbons and short socks. A wonderful evening was spent in playing children's games and dancing. The prize for the funniest 'boy' was awarded to Mr. A. Gearman, a youth of 280 pounds and six feet four inches tall. He received a big toy balloon, while Mrs. Jay White, formerly of Toledo, O., was the cutest 'kid' and received six suckers. A Dutch lunch was served with the 'children' all sitting on the floor of the drawing room. The hostess received her guests in a short shell pink silk crepe dress, short pink socks and a large pink satin bow."—*Toledo*

Israelite.⁵³

With such outlandish parties occupying Jewish men and women's time, Cohen seems to ask, how could one believe in Jews' "superior intellect," or "mature intellectuality"? And, if such claims were belied by evidence of Jewish adults dressing as children for a "wonderful evening" of entertainment, they also contradicted the doctor's pseudo-scientific claims about the shapes of Jewish noses leading to all Jewry's superior intellect.⁵⁴

In a column published six months later, Cohen revisited claims about the Jewish nose: "Charles Wolf of Birmingham, Ala., has gone to Dr. Henry Shireson of Chicago to have his Jewish nose remodelled [*sic*]. 'No one with a Jewish nose,' he says, 'can earn a living in Birmingham; no person looking Jewish has any chance of a position in the public institutions.'" ⁵⁵ The stereotype had turned negative. Despite Cohen's claims to its absurdity, prejudice about Jewish appearance remained a central marker of Jewish difference, such that Jews like Wolf resorted to surgery to change their own appearance. Even as he attacked the spurious anti-Semitic belief about Jewish noses, Cohen lamented that many Jewish people not only had taken drastic measures in response to such prejudice, but also may have even internalized these claims themselves.

Jews' excessive and misguided materialism also reappeared often throughout Cohen's critiques. Perhaps one of his most damning indictments of Jewish materialism came in his October 1925 column:

"The synagogue is Judaism's shrine, to which all Jewry can freely come and lift its soul to God. It is not the luxury of the few, but, in spirit of Rab Hana, it throws open its door and proclaims, 'All ye who hunger, come and partake.'" —*Rabbi David de Sola Pool*. * * * *Rosh Hashonah and Yom Kippur Services*, B'Nai B'rith Hall, 9th and Union Streets (Los Angeles, Calif.). Reservations can be made at the B'Nai B'rith Hall, or California Jewish Review. Tickets are now on sale at the following places: Gittelson Bros. Theater Ticket Agencies, Lanherishim Hotel, Biltmore Hotel. Also Rubin's Theater Ticket Agency, Alexandria Hotel. Seats, \$5, \$7.50 and \$10.—*California Jewish Review*.⁵⁶

Not only were rabbis hypocrites, but the priorities of American Jewry

had become misguided. The spirit of openness and acceptance that should have characterized American Jewry, Cohen implied, had given way to crass materialism, as evidenced by the prohibitively expensive ticket prices ensuring that only a certain class of Jew could attend temple services on the most holy days of the year.

Finally, Cohen argued that most American Jews were in grave danger of complete assimilation, which Menorah Association members understood as the loss of Jewish cultural distinctiveness. In February 1926, Cohen juxtaposed the following four items to open his column:

"The future of Judaism in America belongs to that branch which accommodates itself best to American life. An American Judaism is in the making."—*Rabbi Barnett R. Brickner*. * * *
"The Christmas season should mean as much to the Jew as to the Christian."—*Rabbi Nathan Krass*. * * * "Jesus and I are spiritual brothers."—*Rabbi Alexander Lyons*. * * * "In essence the spirit of Chanukah and the spirit of Christmas are identical."—*Rabbi Ferdinand M. Isserman*.⁵⁷

Cohen lambasted the erosion of Jewish identity and once again attacked an American rabbinate too willing to accommodate the Christian majority.

Like many who published in the *Menorah Journal* during its heyday, Cohen longed for the development of a more meaningful American Jewish culture. The Menorah intellectuals sought to prevent assimilation by initiating a Jewish cultural renaissance. Cohen realized that this call for a renaissance meant forging a Jewish culture compatible with American freedoms. But how to accommodate American ways yet resist cultural absorption? At this stage in his career, Cohen found it easier to mock Jews' tendency to assimilate rather than to explain how a rebirth of Jewish culture could be achieved. The montage form of critique itself was perfect for exploring others' absurdities, but offered no way to explicate the hard choices between assimilation and revitalization.

Seven years before he began his "Notes" project, and while still an undergraduate at Yale, Cohen had attempted to explain his vision for positive change in his 1917 Menorah prize-winning essay. Most likely influenced by *Menorah Journal* articles by Horace M. Kallen, Randolph

S. Bourne, and John Dewey, among others, Cohen wrote:

Are we proposing to nurture in each city a culture foreign to the culture of the United States; shall we develop a culture out of step with the general trend of American ideas? A question of this kind is rather absurd. For America, it is generally recognized, has as yet nothing like a definite culture. . . . And the culture of America—a thing of the far future perhaps—will be developed only when the various racial groups within it have given the fullest and best expression to their individual inheritance—and not before.⁵⁸

Here, though, Cohen only articulated the precondition for a Jewish cultural renaissance common to many Jewish intellectuals' writing of the era: the belief that the development of a particular American Jewish culture in no way compromised Jews' American patriotism or citizenship.

Not until the late 1940s, when he had assumed the editorship of *Commentary* magazine, would Cohen explain his vision for a vibrant culture based on intellectual inquiry, a rich understanding of the Jewish past, and careful consideration of the problems of the Jewish present. As editor of *Commentary* magazine, he wrote: "To a human being, culture is not a luxury. It is a necessity—indeed the deepest necessity. It is not the marmalade added to the bread and butter of daily life. It is, rather, those components of our daily life that provide its hidden and essential vitamins. Lacking these vitamins, our community suffers from all kinds of spiritual diet-deficiency diseases."⁵⁹

Jewish culture in America, Cohen wrote, would have to include "religious thinking," and "poetry, fiction, music, and art." Cohen hoped that such a multifaceted Jewish culture would give Jews "something of what our fathers and grandfathers had—the pleasure and the joy of Jewish living." It is crucial to understand that Cohen never argued for a *separate* Jewish culture within America, but instead advocated an *American Jewish culture*. He wrote: "People continually ask whether a cultural product is 'Jewish' or 'American,' seeming to assume that these two traditions be mutually exclusive. This is mechanical because it approaches Jewish culture and American culture as if they were two simple physical objects. . . . But the fact about culture, most humanly

important fact, is that it is just in this area of human life that you can be in two places at once."⁶⁰

Even though he spent most of his energy at the *Menorah Journal* focusing on the shortcomings of American Jewish life rather than articulating a positive vision for Jewish cultural renaissance, it is not difficult to read a positive program into much of Cohen's critique. Jewish participation in Christmas celebrations, for example, was so abhorrent to Cohen because it denied the "pleasure and joy of Jewish living" that he would later advocate in *Commentary*. Because of his belief that intellect and reason were central to Jewish cultural survival, materialism and complete assimilation into Christian America remained repugnant to Cohen. Despite his obvious exasperation with the Jewish people, Cohen never lost the sense of wit and irony that guided his montage critiques. He closed his final "Notes for a Modern History of the Jews" in November 1927 by simultaneously celebrating and chastising Jews with one well-chosen quote from the Reverend James L. Gordon, who declared: "Israel! What a wonderful people!"⁶¹

Many of Cohen's readers, especially the rabbis, were not amused by his columns. Rabbi Horace J. Wolf of Rochester, New York, for example, condemned the "bad taste shown by the publication of such cheap material by a Journal which simultaneously solicited the support of the American rabbinate."⁶² Rabbi Wolf promptly cancelled his subscription. Many other rabbis also withdrew their own and their congregational support for the *Menorah Journal*, citing Cohen's "Notes" column among their many reasons for growing disillusionment. Even Nathan Isaacs, a professor of law at Harvard and one of the most prominent supporters of the Menorah Association, lambasted Cohen, writing, "You know as well as I do how much more you have loved acerbity than accuracy."⁶³ Cohen continued to edit the *Menorah Journal* for four years after his last "Notes" column. Between 1929 and 1931, he wrote a recurring feature entitled "Marginal Annotations," publishing under the provocative pseudonym "An Elder of Zion." Here Cohen continued to question the priorities of American Jewish leadership and to mock the prevailing concerns of many American Jews, this time using short episodic parables written in his own words rather than culled from already published material.

By 1931, Cohen's style and vision for the journal distinctly contradicted that of the magazine's editor, Henry Hurwitz. Cohen

resigned from the *Menorah Journal* in September 1931 and harshly criticized Hurwitz for allowing financial considerations and community pressure to sway the journal from printing what was “good” to printing what was “safe.” In his letter of resignation, Cohen restated the terms of his once promising partnership with the journal, and rearticulated his original hope for his “Notes” columns, explaining:

The organized Jewish life, we agreed, was by any decent standard chaotic, futile and sterile. Its leadership was ill-informed and inept; its ideology archaic and confused; its activities a hybrid of atavistic routine and puerile imitateness; its culture abysmal. It had lost all real sense of the past, and it promised no future. Of course, no magazine, however excellent, we agreed, could remake Jewish life—but a good Jewish magazine might have a certain influence.⁶⁴

Cohen then suggested that, rather than compromise its editorial policy, the journal should “admit defeat, re-affirm the faith, and close up shop.” The notoriously stubborn Hurwitz would have no part in this suggestion. Hurwitz reassumed the helm of the magazine, editing the *Menorah Journal* until his death in 1961. Although the journal continued to serve as a training ground for many Jewish scholars and refugees hoping to gain entrée into English language publications, the vibrancy of Cohen’s tenure as managing editor was never matched again.

Almost twenty years after his break with the *Menorah Journal*, Cohen continued to blame Hurwitz and others of his generation for a missed opportunity to forge a lasting Jewish cultural renaissance. Cohen remembered, somewhat bitterly, “Perhaps a little more vision on the part of the communal elders, a little more understanding of the genuine interest and enthusiasm that lay under the surface of the sheer youthful contrariness and *chutzpah*—perhaps that might have made a difference.” Although his legendary arrogance remained in evidence as he reconsidered his *Menorah Journal* days, Cohen also begrudgingly admitted that, “It might be not only more tactful but truer to place the chief responsibility for the failure on those giant social and political forces that swept everything under in the 30’s.”⁶⁵

Hurwitz also blamed his adversary, but he did not temper this feeling with any comment about the “forces” of the era. Hurwitz

remained so bitter that, following one angry letter to Cohen six weeks after his resignation, Hurwitz seems to have never mentioned Cohen again.⁶⁶ During the heat of their feud, though, Hurwitz accused Cohen of being unfit to edit a Jewish magazine, and bluntly stated Cohen's "chief drawback" as managing editor: "So far as I am aware," Hurwitz wrote to Cohen, "you have not read extensively in Jewish history and literature. In short, you are not at home in Jewish sources."⁶⁷

Hurwitz's attack may be the supreme irony, as Cohen's strategy in his "Notes" columns actually has roots in Jewish rabbinic tradition. In his reconsideration of Freud's *Moses and Monotheism* historian Yosef Hayim Yerushalmi has explained the practice of *melitzah*, or the pasting together of "a mosaic of fragments and phrases from the Hebrew Bible as well as from rabbinic literature or the liturgy, fitted together to form a new statement of what the author intends to express at the moment." *Melitzah*, Yerushalmi has noted, "in effect, recalls Walter Benjamin's desire to someday write a work composed entirely of quotations," dates back to medieval Hebrew poetry, and was adopted again during the *Haskalah*.⁶⁸ Yerushalmi has explained, "In *melitzah* the sentences compounded out of quotations mean what they say; but below and beyond the surface they reverberate with associations to the original texts, and this is what makes them psychologically so interesting and valuable."⁶⁹ Contrary to Hurwitz's insult, the "Notes for a Modern History of the Jews" series suggests that, perhaps, Elliot Cohen was more "at home" in Jewish sources and methods than he let on.

Daniel Greene is Posen Post-doctoral Associate in Judaic Studies at the University of Miami. He completed his Ph.D. in history at The University of Chicago (2004). Research for this article was made possible by a Starkoff Fellowship at The Jacob Rader Marcus Center of the American Jewish Archives. A version of this paper was presented at the Midwest Jewish Studies Association Conference in Chicago in October 2001. The author would like to thank Sander Gilman, Rebecca Rossen, Adam Stewart, Leora Auslander, Elliott Gorn, Fred Krome, Nathan Abrams, and Lisa Meyerowitz for their assistance.

NOTES

1. Elliot E. Cohen, "Notes for a Modern History of the Jews," *Menorah Journal* 10 (February 1924), 82–84.
2. Although some historians have written about the Menorah Association and the *Menorah Journal*, no single monograph covering its history exists. Even less has been

written about Cohen or his "Notes for a Modern History of the Jews" columns. The scant historiography on Cohen also does not put his work into a larger cultural context, which I attempt here.

On the Intercollegiate Menorah Association and the *Menorah Journal*, see Robert Alter, "Epitaph for a Jewish Magazine: Notes on the 'Menorah Journal,'" *Commentary* 39 (May 1965): 51–55; Lewis Fried, "The *Menorah Journal*: Yavneh in America, 1945–50," *American Jewish Archives Journal* 50 (1998): 77–108; Fried, "Creating Hebraism, Confronting Hellenism: The *Menorah Journal* and its Struggle for the Jewish Imagination," *American Jewish Archives Journal* 53 (2001): 147–74; Elinor Grumet, "The Menorah Idea and the Apprenticeship of Lionel Trilling," (Ph.D. diss., University of Iowa, 1979); Louis Harap, "The Menorah Journal—A Literary Precursor," *Midstream* 30 (October 1984): 51–55; Jenna Weissman Joselit, "Without Ghettoism: A History of the Intercollegiate Menorah Association, 1906–1930," *American Jewish Archives Journal* 30 (1978): 133–54; Seth Korelitz, "The Menorah Idea: From Religion to Culture, From Race to Ethnicity," *American Jewish History* 85 (March 1997): 75–100; Mark Krupnick, "The Menorah Journal Group and the Origins of Modern Jewish Radicalism," *Studies in American Jewish Literature* 5 (Winter 1979): 56–67; Lauren B. Straus, "Staying Afloat in the Melting Pot: Constructing an American Jewish Identity in the *Menorah Journal* of the 1920s," *American Jewish History* 84 (December 1996), 315–31; and Alan M. Wald, "The Menorah Group Moves Left," *Jewish Social Studies* 38 (Summer/Fall 1976): 289–320.

3. Alan M. Wald, *The New York Intellectuals: The Rise and Decline of the Anti-Stalinist Left from the 1930s to the 1980s* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1987), 32.

4. See *American Mercury* 1 (January 1924), 48–50. Like Cohen's "Notes" columns in the *Menorah Journal*, Mencken's "Americana" was a recurring feature in subsequent *American Mercury* issues.

5. Douglas C. Stenerson, *Critical Essays on H. L. Mencken* (Boston: G. K. Hall and Co., 1987). On Mencken, see also Fred Hobson, *Mencken: A Life* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1995). Hobson notes that one of Mencken's goals at the *American Mercury* was to "laugh at frauds" (243). Cohen certainly shared this ambition. Hobson also has noted that, during the late 1920s, Mencken began to collect quotes that had been published about himself. Mencken published a 132-page book of these quotations, titled *Mencken: A Schimpflexikon*. (See Hobson, 275.) The *Menorah Journal* and *American Mercury* had some contributors in common during this era, notably Waldo Frank and Carl Van Doren.

6. Dos Passos used the "Newsreel" technique in each book of the trilogy—*The 42nd Parallel* (1930), *1919* (1932), and *The Big Money* (1933). See Dos Passos, *U.S.A.* (New York: The Library of America, 1996). I want to thank Elliott Gorn for bringing Dos Passos's "Newsreels" to my attention.

7. Dos Passos, as quoted in Townsend Ludington, *John Dos Passos: A Twentieth Century Odyssey* (New York: Carroll and Graf Publishers, 1980, 1998), 257.

8. According to Hannah Arendt, Walter Benjamin's "greatest ambition was to produce a work consisting entirely of quotations." (Hannah Arendt, "Introduction," *Illuminations* [New York: Schocken, 1968], 4.)

9. Cohen's technique of compiling notes for a history seems to resemble Benjamin's *Passagen-Werk*, for which Benjamin collected more than one thousand pages of notes between 1927 and his suicide in 1940. (Susan Buck-Morss, *The*

Dialectics of Seeing: Walter Benjamin and the Arcades Project [Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1989], 5).

10. See James Clifford, *The Predicament of Culture: Twentieth-Century Ethnography, Literature, and Art* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1988), especially 129–34.

11. Clifford, *Predicament of Culture*, 129.

12. Matthew Teitelbaum, "Preface," in *Montage and Modern Life: 1919–1942*, ed. Teitelbaum (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1992), 8. See also Sally Stein, "'Good fences make good neighbors': American Resistance to Photomontage Between the Wars," in *Montage and Modern Life: 1919–1942*. On photomontage in Weimar Germany, see Maud Lavin, *Cut With the Kitchen Knife: The Weimar Photomontages of Hannah Höch* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1993). Höch, a Berlin Dadaist, created provocative photomontages that simultaneously employed "ironic distance" and "intimate identification" to express a "tension between anger and pleasure." (Lavin, 12, 29) Höch's photomontages, like Cohen's "Notes" columns, could thus simultaneously affirm and negate their principle targets of critique.

13. Biographical information gathered from the nearprint file "Elliot E. Cohen" at The Jacob Rader Marcus Center of the American Jewish Archives, Cincinnati, Ohio (hereafter "AJA") and from Elinor Grumet, "Elliot Cohen: The Vocation of a Jewish Literary Mentor," *Studies in the American Jewish Experience* 1 (Cincinnati, Ohio: American Jewish Archives, 1981). I also want to thank Nathan Abrams for sharing biographical information about Elliot Cohen.

14. Alexander Bloom has noted, "Of the first and second generations, only Elliot Cohen and Clement Greenberg, among the elders, and Robert Warshow, from the younger group, went to schools outside of New York or Chicago." (Bloom, *Prodigal Sons: The New York Intellectuals and Their World* [New York: Oxford University Press, 1986], 41.)

15. Wald, *New York Intellectuals*, 31.

16. Fern Marja, "Commentary's Number One Editor," *New York Post Home News Magazine* (February 17, 1949), 1.

17. Strauss, "Staying Afloat in the Melting Pot," 318.

18. Quoted in Bloom, *Prodigal Sons*, 162. Decter, married to former *Commentary* editor Norman Podhoretz, worked as secretary to the editor and later as managing editor at *Commentary*. Cohen was actually fifteen when he entered Yale, but this does not undermine Decter's point.

19. Paul Mendes-Flohr, *Divided Passions: Jewish Intellectuals and the Experience of Modernity* (Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 1991), 32.

20. Article II of the Intercollegiate Menorah Association constitution, as quoted in *The Menorah Movement: For the Study and Advancement of Jewish Culture and Ideals* (Ann Arbor, MI: Intercollegiate Menorah Association, 1914), 171. Eight years after founding the Menorah Society at Harvard, two of the original members, Henry Hurwitz and I. Leo Sharfman, compiled this source, intended to provide a comprehensive history of the Menorah movement to date. The book contains information regarding the history of the Menorah movement, speeches from college authorities welcoming the Menorah Association to campuses, reprints of speeches delivered at Menorah Association functions, and reports from constituent campus Menorah Societies. (Hereafter cited as *The Menorah Movement*.)

21. Cohen, "The Promise of the American Synagogue," *Menorah Journal* 4

(October 1918), 280–82. The *Menorah Journal* published Cohen's long essay in three parts and under two different titles: "The Promise of the American Synagogue: A Menorah Prize Essay," *Menorah Journal* 4 (October 1918) and *Menorah Journal* 4 (December 1918); and "The Ideal Rabbi," *Menorah Journal* 5 (February 1919).

22. Cohen, "The Promise of the American Synagogue," *Menorah Journal* 4 (December 1918), 369. Kaplan's most well known statement of his ideology appears in Kaplan, *Judaism as a Civilization: Toward a Reconstruction of Jewish Life* (Philadelphia: Jewish Publication Society, 1934, 1994).

23. See Strauss, "Staying Afloat in the Melting Pot," 318; Wald, *New York Intellectuals*, 31. Cohen's colleagues and some historians have also commented on Cohen's perpetual writer's block, although no one has convincingly demonstrated that writer's block led to Cohen's failure to complete a doctoral dissertation. Nor has any historian convincingly demonstrated very much about Cohen's early life at all, and his relative lack of original writing from his youthful days does not make doing so any easier. I am grateful to Nathan Abrams for clarifying my understanding of this point.

24. Diana Trilling, *The Beginning of the Journey: The Marriage of Diana and Lionel Trilling* (New York: Harcourt Brace and Company, 1993), 88.

25. Strauss, "Staying Afloat in the Melting Pot," 319.

26. Lionel Trilling, "On the Death of a Friend," *Commentary* 29 (February 1960), 93–94. Norman Podhoretz reflected on this quality of Cohen's thought as well. Recounting the first time he met Cohen at the *Commentary* editorial offices, Podhoretz has written: "In the first hour I spent with [Cohen] he jumped from literary criticism to politics, from politics to Jewish scholarship, from Jewish scholarship to the movies, from the movies to sports, and indeed spent a good deal of time trying to find out how much I knew about baseball." (Podhoretz, *Making It* [New York: Random House, 1967], 100.)

27. Cohen to Hurwitz July 24, 1922. Henry Hurwitz/ Menorah Association Collection (hereafter "HHMA") Box 7, folder 15. AJA.

28. Cohen to Hurwitz n.d. HHMA Box 7, folder 15. AJA. (This letter is not dated, but Hurwitz has handwritten "rec'd July 23, 1925" on it.)

29. Cohen, "The Age of Brass," *Menorah Journal* 11 (October 1925), 427–28.

30. Cohen, "The Age of Brass," 440, footnote.

31. Cohen, "The Age of Brass," 440.

32. Lionel Trilling, "On the Death of a Friend," 94.

33. See John Higham, *Strangers in the Land: Patterns of American Nativism, 1860–1925* (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 1955, 1994).

34. Cohen, "Notes," *Menorah Journal* 10 (February 1924), 82.

35. Cohen, "Notes," *Menorah Journal* 12 (June–July 1926), 307.

36. Ross, *The Old World and the New* (New York: Century Company, 1914), 289–90, as quoted in Peter Levine, *From Ellis Island to Ebbets Field: Sport and the American Jewish Experience* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1992), 11.

37. See, for example, Cohen's "Notes for a Modern History of the Jews" columns from August–September 1924, February 1925, April 1925, June 1925, December 1925, February 1926, April–May 1926, and December 1926.

38. Cohen, "Notes," *Menorah Journal* 11 (February 1925), 74.

39. Levine, *From Ellis Island to Ebbets Field*, 144–69.

40. Gilman, *The Jew's Body* (New York: Routledge, 1991), 53.

41. Cohen also played on the stereotype by reporting Jewish female athletic prowess In his April–May 1926 installment of "Notes," for example, Cohen closed with an excerpt about an eighteen-year-old Russian woman, Sonia Witkoff, who "can meet and beat any man in a Greco-Roman wrestling match and is also a serious opponent for any athlete in the world in the weight lifting and long distance running event." The following, and final, item of this installment reads, "'Grand and glorious are the achievements of the Jewess beautiful wherever she abides.'—*American Hebrew*." (Cohen, "Notes," *Menorah Journal* 12 [April–May 1926], 194.)

42. Determining the readership of the *Menorah Journal* from the magazine's archival materials is quite difficult. The editors acknowledged that the journal, originally intended for Jewish college students, had become too intellectual for the average Jewish undergraduate by the 1920s. The editors remained committed to reaching non-Jewish readers, although often admitted that they did not know exactly how to do so. The consistent publication of articles by non-Jewish authors, including many academics, suggests that some non-Jews who were interested in Jewish history and questions surrounding Jewish acculturation may have read the journal consistently.

43. Cohen, "Notes," *Menorah Journal* 11 (June 1925), 283.

44. Cohen, "Notes," *Menorah Journal* 10 (November–December 1924), 509.

45. Lionel Trilling, "Afterward" to Tess Slesinger, *The Unpossessed* (New York: Avon Books, 1966), 320.

46. Cohen included these three examples at the conclusion of his "Notes" column in *Menorah Journal* 10 (November–December 1924), 509.

47. Arnold M. Eisen, *The Chosen People in America: A Study in Jewish Religious Ideology* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1983), 12.

48. Podhoretz, *Making It*, 117.

49. Wald, *New York Intellectuals*, 33.

50. Cohen's criticism of Jews' Christmas celebrations abounds in his columns. The most damning of these, published in the February 1926 *Menorah Journal*, is included later in this article's text. (See note 57.)

51. Cohen, "Notes," *Menorah Journal* 10 (August–September 1924), 400.

52. Cohen, "Notes," *Menorah Journal* 11 (October 1925), 503.

53. Cohen, "Notes," *Menorah Journal* 10 (June–July 1924), 297.

54. For stereotypes based on the Jewish nose, see Gilman, *The Jew's Body*, especially chapter 7, "Are Jews White? Or, the History of the Nose Job."

55. Cohen, "Notes," *Menorah Journal* 11 (February 1925), 74.

56. Cohen, "Notes," *Menorah Journal* 11 (October 1925), 305.

57. Cohen, "Notes," *Menorah Journal* 12 (February 1926), 79.

58. Cohen, "The Ideal Rabbi" *Menorah Journal* 5 (February 1919), 39 Kallen most famously articulated this vision in "Democracy Versus the Melting Pot," *Nation* (February 18 and 25, 1915): 190–94, 217–20. See also his "Nationality and the Hyphenated American," *Menorah Journal* 1 (April 1915): 79–86. Bourne and Dewey each addressed similar themes in the *Menorah Journal*. See Bourne, "The Jew and Trans-National America," *Menorah Journal* 2 (December 1916): 277–84; Dewey, "The Principle of Nationality," *Menorah Journal* 3 (October 1917): 203–08.

59. Cohen, "Jewish Culture in America: Some Speculations by an Editor," *Commentary* 3 (May 1947), 413.

60. Cohen, "Jewish Culture in America," 413, 415; italics in original.

61. Cohen, "Notes," *Menorah Journal* 13 (June 1927), 511.
62. Horace J. Wolf to *Menorah Journal*. January 8, 1926. HHMA Box 62, folder 17. AJA.
63. Nathan Isaacs to Cohen October 27, 1931. HHMA Box 7, folder 17. AJA.
64. Cohen to Hurwitz September 17, 1931. HHMA Box 7, folder 17. AJA.
65. Cohen, "The Intellectuals and the Jewish Community: The Hope for Our Heritage in America," *Commentary* 8 (July 1949), 22.
66. There is not even any evident response in Hurwitz's personal papers to Cohen's suicide in 1959. Cohen became extremely depressed during the mid-1950s, and, to his *Commentary* colleagues, appeared unable to work. He was hospitalized for depression in 1956 and committed suicide in 1959. A short obituary appeared in the *New York Times*, May 29, 1959, 8. (See Podhoretz, *Making It*, 197; Bloom, *Prodigal Sons*, 318–20; Wald, *New York Intellectuals*, 289.)
67. Hurwitz to Cohen November 2, 1931. HHMA box 7, folder 17. AJA.
68. Yosef Hayim Yerushalmi, *Freud's Moses: Judaism Terminable and Interminable* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1991), 71.
69. Yerushalmi, *Freud's Moses*, 72.