

## Introduction

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When it appeared in 1952, *Life is with People* was the first major anthropological study of East European Jewish culture in the English language. To read it today is to recover a distinctive moment in American Jewish life, for this book represents a turning point in the relationship of American Jews to their East European Jewish past. Created in the wake of World War II, *Life is with People* encouraged its readers, demoralized by the annihilation of European Jewry, to take pride in the distinctiveness of their heritage. Attempts to minimize Jewish difference had failed to stem anti-Semitism. The task, now a sacred duty, was to recover the inner life of East European Jewry, its values and the distinctive culture they animated. *Life is with People* succeeded beyond all expectations. The volume has never gone out of print. An enduring landmark text in American anthropology, *Life is with People* continues to be cited as an authoritative account of East European Jewish culture.

*Life is with People* offered itself to readers of the time as a primary source on the culture it described. In identifying Jewish life in Eastern Europe with a timeless *shtetl*, this celebration of a lost world was more literary than historical in character. Today we can view the book as a primary source of another kind. *Life is with People* can be read as an early example of Holocaust memory as well as an exemplar of a particular moment in postwar anthropology.

## I

Before World War II, the established Jewish community had largely dealt with anti-Semitism by playing down Jewish cultural specificity. So too did American anthropologists such as Franz Boas, who repudiated racial theories of cultural difference. When it came to Jews, distinguishing features were a liability, not a cause for celebration. A major issue was their source and mutability. Some anthropologists attributed differences to the biological inheritance of distinct races and argued that such differences were permanent. Others, like Boas took the opposite approach. They repudiated the idea of distinct races and all that followed from it.

Boas was a German Jewish immigrant and leading figure in American anthropology during the first half of the twentieth century. He insisted that Jews were not a race. Apart from religion, he explained, they were indistinguishable from other people. Cultural differences would disappear as social barriers fell. Boas devoted the better part of his career to demonstrating what was wrong with purportedly scientific theories of race and the anti-Semitic beliefs based on them. A tireless fighter against social injustice, he believed to the end in the power of genuine science to reveal the truth and make the world a better place. In 1942, during a luncheon at the Columbia University Faculty Club organized in support of refugee scientists fleeing the Nazis, "Boas suddenly collapsed in Levi-Strauss' arms, and died even as he was in the middle of a sentence about a new idea on race."<sup>1</sup> Ironically, the strategy that Boas used to counter anti-Semitism--by denying Jewish particularity--left little for anthropologists to study. If Jews did not exist as such, how could ethnographers describe their culture? Not until his students took issue with this

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1. Alexander Lesser, "Franz Boas," *Totems and Teachers: Perspectives on the History of Anthropology*, ed. Sydel Silverman (New York: Columbia University Press, 1981), p. 20. See also George W. Stocking, Jr., ed, *The Shaping of American Anthropology, 1883-1911: A Franz Boas Reader* (New York: Basic Books, 1974).

question after World War II could they even imagine a book like *Life Is With People*.

With the rise of the Third Reich and the outbreak of the war, the worst had happened. Science had been distorted to support heinous crimes against humanity. Degrading stereotypes of Jews had become a tool in their annihilation. The futility of combating anti-Semitism by trying to disprove theories of race prompted American social scientists in the thirties and forties to shift their tactics. They now treated intolerance as a problem in the social psychology of prejudice, the authoritarian personality, and intergroup relations. There were quotas limiting how many Jews could be admitted to the most prestigious universities and to medical schools. Even an anthropologist as distinguished as Edward Sapir had been denied membership in the prestigious Yale Graduates Club during the thirties because he was a Jew. Organizations of American Nazi sympathizers gained strength, diatribes based on such tracts as *Protocols of the Elders of Zion* fueled anti-Semitic agitation, and Jews were blamed for most of what ailed America, including the Great Depression and World War II itself--and eventually America's entry into the War. If the attitudes and stereotypes that fueled hate could be understood, social scientists believed they could be changed.<sup>2</sup> Only then might Jews hope to be accepted, integrated, even assimilated into American society.

As the enormity of the devastation of World War II gradually became known, the ambivalence of American Jews to their European past was put to the ultimate test. It was one thing to reject East European Jewish culture while it was still flourishing on the other side of the ocean. But once the living communities that sustained that way of life were exterminated, ambivalence towards the world they had created became a desecration of their memory. In 1943, Maurice Samuel performed what he characterized as an "act of piety" in his book *The World of Sholom Aleichem*. His evocation of a "world that is no more" was "an exercise in necromancy, or calling up the dead."<sup>3</sup> In 1945, Abraham Joshua Heschel delivered, in Yiddish, the essay that became *The Earth is The Lord's: The Inner World of the Jew in Eastern Europe* at the annual conference of the YIVO Institute for Jewish Research: "When he finished speaking, the audience of several thousands was moved to tears, and a spontaneous Kaddish [mourner's prayer for the dead] was uttered by many who were committed secularists and nonbelievers."<sup>4</sup>

The annihilation of six million Jews was irreversible. Nevertheless it was felt, the *world* that had been destroyed with them could be recovered. Indeed it was now a moral requirement that this world not suffer a double death, first by disappearing with its creators and then by fading from the memory of those who survived. Heschel called out to his readers: "A world has vanished. All that remains is a sanctuary hidden in the realm of spirit. We of this generation are still holding the key. Unless we remember, unless we unlock it, the holiness of ages will remain a secret of God...We are either the last Jews or those who will hand over the entire past to generations to come." For Heschel, "Judaism today is the least known religion," while for Samuel, "Sholom Aleichem is almost unknown to millions of Americans whose grandfathers made up his world." Jewish survival now depended on repairing the break. A destroyed world could "still live in the

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2. It was in this spirit that, towards the end of the war, the American Jewish Congress supported Kurt Lewin's Commission on Community Interrelations and the American Jewish Committee organized its Department of Scientific Research, directed by Max Horkheimer. Both Lewin and Horkheimer were to play a role in the *Life Is With People* project.

3. Maurice Samuel, *The World of Sholom Aleichem* (New York: Knopf, 1943), p. 3. The Schocken paperback appeared in 1965.

4. Deborah Dash Moore, "Preface," *East European Jews in Two Worlds: Studies from the YIVO Annual*, ed. Deborah Dash Moore (Evanston, IL: Northwestern University Press and YIVO Institute for Jewish Research, 1990), p. viii. Moore reprints Heschel's "The Eastern European Era in Jewish History." The essay originally appeared in Yiddish in the *Yivo bleter* 25, no. 2 (1945), in English translation in the *YIVO Annual of Jewish Social Science*, no. 1 (1946), and in an expanded version as *The Earth is the Lord's: The Inner World of the Jew in Eastern Europe* (New York: Henry Schuman, 1950). See Jeffrey Shandler, "Heschel and Yiddish: A Struggle with Signification," *Journal of Jewish Thought and Philosophy* 2 (1993): 245-299.

imagination," if writers and scholars would "reconstruct the warm, breathing, original creation." Their task was to create an enduring memorial to what in the aftermath of the war had become a "tragic culture." They were to bring it back to life in the texts they created.<sup>5</sup>

Like the books that directly inspired it, including *The World of Sholom Aleichem*, *The Earth Is the Lord's*, and Bella Chagall's memoir, *Burning Lights*, *Life is with People* memorialized the life that was lived, not the process by which it was obliterated.<sup>6</sup> Indeed, a major task of *Life is with People* was to make readers feel that they could step through its pages and onto the streets of the Jewish town mapped out in its text. The vividness and immediacy of this account, often written in the present tense, creates the sense that the life it describes is still going on. It is the quality of "being there" that the book attempts to convey, not the quality of "having been there."<sup>7</sup> Its subject is the living culture of a lost world recovered from the memory of those who grew up in it.

*Life Is With People* is indebted to a strong Yiddish literary tradition not only for its tone and style, but also for its preoccupation with the *shtetl* as the locus of Jewishness.<sup>8</sup> Champions of the Haskalah (Jewish Enlightenment) such as Mendele Moykher-Sforim hoped to reform Jewish life by exposing the foibles of Jewish provincialism, which they considered an impediment to the integration of Jews into the larger society. As highly sophisticated Jews writing from metropolitan centers, they were far from the pastoral world imagined in their novels. So detailed, if ideologically charged, are their accounts of a way of life they repudiated that later readers would confuse the ethnographic burlesque with ethnography proper. They would mistake biting satire for faithful description.<sup>9</sup> One reviewer of *Life is with People*, when it first appeared, wrote that "With all due respect to Ruth Benedict, Margaret Mead, and the authors of *Life is with People*, it can be safely asserted that the greatest 'anthropologist' of the *shtetl* was the Yiddish novelist and writer Mendele Mocher Seforim."<sup>10</sup> Maurice Samuel claimed that "We could write a *Middletown* of the Russian-Jewish Pale basing ourselves solely on the novels and stories and sketches of Sholom Aleichem, and it would be as reliable a scientific document as any 'factual' study; more so, indeed, for we should get, in addition to the material of a straightforward social inquiry, the intangible spirit which informs the material and gives it its living significance."<sup>11</sup> *The World of Sholom*

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5. Heschel, *The Earth is the Lord's*, p. 107; Samuel, *The World of Sholom Aleichem*, pp. 3, 7. "Tragic culture" appears on the cover of the Schocken paperback edition of Samuel's book.

6. Bella Chagall's memoir was published in Yiddish as *Brenendike likht* (New York: Book League of the Jewish Peoples Fraternal Order, IWO, 1945), a year after her death. Two English translations have appeared, *Burning Lights* (New York: Schocken Books, 1946) and *First Encounter* (New York: Schocken Books, 1983), which includes additional material.

7. See Roland Barthes, "Rhetoric of the Image," *Image, Music, Text*, trans. Stephen Heath (New York: Hill and Wang, 1977), p. 45. See also Yosef Hayim Yerushalmi, *Zakhor: Jewish History and Jewish Memory* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1982).

8. See Dan Miron, *A Traveler Disguised: A Study in the Rise of Modern Yiddish Fiction in the Nineteenth Century* (New York: Schocken, 1973) and the Schocken series of Yiddish classics in translation.

9. See Dan Miron, "Folklore and Anti-Folklore in the Yiddish Fiction of the Haskala," *Studies in Jewish Folklore: Proceedings of a Regional Conference of the Association for Jewish Studies Held at the Spertus College of Judaica* (Chicago, 1 May 1977), ed. Frank Talmage (Cambridge, MA: Association for Jewish Studies, 1980), pp. 219-249.

10. Moshe Decter, "The 'Old Country' Way of Life: The Rediscovery of the Shtetl," *Commentary* 13, 6 (1952): 604. This journal is published by the American Jewish Committee, which sponsored the writing of *Life Is With People*. The reviewer was a doctoral student at the time. For a critique of this view, see Dan Miron, *Der imazsh fun shtetl: dray literarishe shtudyas (The Shtetl Image: Three Literary Studies)* (Tel Aviv: I.-L. Peretz Publishing House, 1981).

11. Samuel, *The World of Sholom Aleichem*, pp. 6-7. In his foreword to Robert S. Lynd and Helen Merrell Lynd, *Middletown: A Study in American Culture* (New York: Harcourt, Brace & World, 1929), Clark Wissler characterizes the book as a serious attempt to approach "an American community as an anthropologist does a primitive tribe" and experiment in "the social anthropology of contemporary life." It is one of the earliest anthropological studies of an American community. *Life Is With People* is indebted to *Middletown*, which focussed on a midwestern city, as well as to *Yankee City*, which dealt with a New

*Aleichem* attempted to do just that. These statements perpetuate a longstanding assumption, no longer accepted, that Yiddish literature is tantamount to a museum of the world it describes. Inspired by Yiddish literary classics, translations of which were proliferating in this period, *Life is with People* also had to compete with them, but without their satirical sting.

When *Life is with People* appeared, Mead cited it as an exemplar of the new anthropology. If American anthropology had emphasized fieldwork in small "primitive" societies, the new anthropology focused on contemporary cultures and complex societies. If fieldwork was impossible because communities had been destroyed or were off limits due to the war, then anthropologists would study culture "at a distance" by interviewing people in New York City who remembered life back home. If anthropologists had tended to produce technical descriptions of kinship and ritual intended for other anthropologists, this book would speak to the people it was about. It would present the broad outline of a composite portrait, not the details of an individual photograph.<sup>12</sup> It would do this by delineating the cultural patterns of East European Jewish culture. Rather than make an inventory of customs, it would attend to the ways in which cultural practices form personality. And, it would take as its first responsibility the needs of those who were the subject of the book. *Life is with People* was above all an example of insider ethnography. Most of the researchers who worked on it were themselves Jewish and they drew heavily on their own experience, however remote it might be from the world they finally described.

## II

Though a great popular success, *Life is with People* poses several vexing problems, among them the identification of East European Jewish culture with the *shtetl*. During the fall of 1948, as the researchers struggled over what to call the culture they had been studying, they identified *shtetl* with the prototypical "enclave community" that carried the "core culture" of East European Jews. *Shtetl* became, in their thinking, a microcosm of the East European Jewish culture area, visualized as a sea of Christian culture dotted with little Jewish islands. Encapsulated in self-contained *shtetlekh*, the perfection of this hermetic world was sustained, the team argued, by isolation, hostility, and resistance to change. So palpable was this sense of the *shtetl*'s hermetic seal that Elizabeth Herzog, one of the book's authors, suggested that the researchers ask their informants "Were you ever curious about the world outside the *shtetl*? Did you ever want to go outside the *shtetl* and walk around?"<sup>13</sup>

At the same time, the *shtetl* lacked material reality. At one point in their discussions, Mark Zborowski, the senior author of *Life is with People*, stated that the *shtetl* can be of any size, since it was not a place but a state of mind, a comment that echoed Louis Wirth's classic statement that "The ghetto as we have viewed it is not so much a physical fact as it is a state of mind."<sup>14</sup> Zborowski's view that the informants themselves did not think of the *shtetl* as a physical town but strictly as a social entity made its way into *Life Is with People*--"My *shtetl*' is the people who live in it, not the place or the buildings or the street...." (p. 62).<sup>15</sup>

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England city. The Yankee City research began during the 1930s under the direction of W. Lloyd Warner, appeared in several volumes in the decades that followed, and was abridged as *Yankee City*, ed. W. Lloyd Warner (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1963).

12. The world that emerges from R. Abramovitch, *Di farshvundene velt/The Vanished World* (New York: Forward Association, 1947), an encyclopedic compendium of photographs, is quite different from the portrait of *Life is with People*.

13. Jewish Group Minutes, April 28, 1949, Box G50, Folder 3, Margaret Mead Papers, Collections of the Manuscript Division, Library of Congress. There are two sets of minutes from this meeting and the wording varies. I would like to thank Mary Catherine Bateson for permission to quote from this material. Unless otherwise indicated, all references to archival material are to this collection.

14. Jewish Group Meeting, June 29, 1949, Box G50, Folder 4; Louis Wirth, *The Ghetto* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1928), p. 287.

15. There is rich evidence of a strong attachment to place in poetry, song, and humor, in accounts of

The attractiveness of the term *shtetl* was based on several problematic assumptions. First, the team identified *shtetl* with Jewish community. Second, they imagined its spatial organization in terms of isolation, self-containment, and homogeneity. Third, they envisioned it as timeless. As a result, the authors did not distinguish clearly between *shtetl* (town), *kehile* (corporate Jewish community), and an anthropological notion of communities as "basic units...of organization and transmission within a society and its culture."<sup>16</sup> The book argued further that for its inhabitants, "'My *shtetl*' means my community, and community means the Jewish community," an identification they attribute to the exclusion of Jews from "membership in the larger community" (pp. 22-23). However, a single *kehile* often had jurisdiction not only over the Jews in a particular town but also over smaller Jewish settlements in the environs. The statement "No *shtetl* is complete without a cemetery, a House of Prayer--or at least a minyan [prayer quorum], and a mikva [ritual bath]" (p. 63) is true of a *kehile*, not of a *shtetl*.<sup>17</sup>

Their assumption to the contrary, Jewish settlements were not isolated. Market towns formed a vital economic link between the city and countryside. Jewish traders, peddlers, craftsmen, preachers, and musicians moved around from location to location, establishing communicative channels over areas large and small. Their ability to do business was enhanced by town exogamy, the preferred form of Jewish marriage, and kinship networks that extended over a wide area.

Nor did Jewish social organization take the form of self-contained islands. The reach of Jewish kinship organization, political-jural jurisdiction, religious life, educational institutions, and economic activity lined up neither with each other, nor with a single town or the Jewish portion of a town. Hasidic life was not confined within the boundaries of a town or a *kehile*. Quite the contrary--a *rebe*'s disciples were spread across many localities and travelled long distances to visit him on holy days. Extensive Hasidic networks cut across the *kehile* structure, and in towns where an influential *rebe* lived, Hasidim might well dominate the communal leadership.<sup>18</sup> Specialized institutions such as the *yeshiva* (school for the advanced study of the Talmud) were located in particular towns--for example, Volozhin and Mir. They drew their student body from a wide

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return visits to home towns by those who had left for America, in the many memoirs and memorial books commemorating destroyed Jewish communities, and in memory paintings and literary tributes to hometowns produced by immigrants. See Jack Kugelmass and Jonathan Boyarin, eds. and trans., *From a Ruined Garden: The Memorial Books of Polish Jewry* (New York: Schocken Books, 1983) and Jack Kugelmass, ed., *Going Home*, a special issue of *YIVO Annual* 21 (1993).

16. Conrad M. Arensberg, "The Community as Object and as Sample," in *Culture and Community*, by Conrad M. Arensberg and Solon T. Kimbal (New York: Harcourt, Brace & World, 1965), p. 15. This landmark essay first appeared in 1961. Arensberg, who directed the work of the Jewish research group, published *The Irish Countryman: An Anthropological Study* (New York: Macmillan) in 1937. Devoted to "an anthropology of modern Ireland," a radical move in the anthropology of the period, the book was dedicated to W. Lloyd Warner, a social anthropologist who turned to the study of American communities after doing fieldwork among Australian aborigines. The Jewish research team was also relying on the notion of folk society formulated by Robert Redfield in the context of his work on peasant communities. See Robert Redfield, "The Folk Society," *The American Journal of Sociology* 42, no. 4 (1947): 293-308. Though later revised, this early formulation is the one which informs *Life Is With People*.

17. Compare with Jacob Katz, *Tradition and Crisis: Jewish Society at the End of the Middle Ages* (New York: Schocken, 1971 [1961]), which deals with Jewish communal organization in Central and Eastern Europe in the period before the partitioning of the Commonwealth of Poland and Lithuania. To some degree the "golden age" of Ashkenazic Jewry, *kehile*, and "traditional Jewish community" are to historians what *shtetl* is to anthropologists.

18. The account of Hasidism in *Life is with People* is based to a large extent on interviews with people who were not Hasidim (and often hostile to Hasidism), neo-romantic anthologies of Hasidic tales, and some historical accounts. For the range of scholarship on the history and historiography of Hasidism, including new approaches, see Gershon D. Hundert, ed., *Essential Papers on Hasidism: Origins to the Present* (New York: New York University Press, 1991). For an anthropological study of Hasidic communities today, see Jerome R. Mintz, *Hasidic People: A Place in the New World* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1992).

region. Immanuel Etkes has argued that such extralocal structures helped to offset the decline of the *kehile* during the late eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. They provided alternative forms of leadership and new elites.

Nor did Jewish residential patterns within towns and urban neighborhoods exhibit the homogeneity, isolation, and timelessness that *Life is with People* would have us believe. Jewish settlements are historical formations and in their history lie clues to the logic of their forms. The book's claim that the *shtetl* was what it was and lasted as long as it did because of Jewish poverty and persecution, exclusion and isolation--and because it resisted change, which the authors view as corrosive--does not hold up to historical scrutiny.

The *shtetl* that emerges from *Life is with People* is doubly timeless. It has no history of its own and it resists the historical forces of the world around it. The researchers spoke repeatedly about the *shtetl* being abandoned, rather than changing. In their view, it was not the *shtetl* that deteriorated, but Jews who walked away from it--the *shtetl* disappeared only after the Bolshevik revolution and the extermination of its inhabitants by Hitler (p. 21, 34). According to *Life is with People*, the *shtetl* was the most authentic form of Jewish culture and it was not possible to transform it without it becoming less Jewish. Most important, the preoccupation with what is essentially Jewish, the identification of it with the *shtetl*, and the insistence on its timelessness precluded the possibility of any new East European Jewish cultural formation, whether a Jewish way of being modern or a new way of being Jewish. To be less like the *shtetl* was *de facto* to be less authentically Jewish.

The interviews suggest otherwise. Significant numbers of informants--and for that matter, the European-born members of the Jewish research group itself--reported active involvement in Jewish political parties and social movements.<sup>19</sup> They attended Yiddish and Zionist schools, participated in Jewish theatre groups, and were familiar with Yiddish and modern Hebrew literature, as well as with European literature more generally. Orthodox Jews formed their own movements, political parties, and institutions, including new types of schools--those who were Zionists joined the Mizrachi movement and those who were anti-Zionists joined the Agudath Israel, the political party devoted to protecting Orthodox values. Strongly supported by the Gerer Hasidim, the Agudah became the largest Jewish political party in interwar Poland.<sup>20</sup> Still others actively resisted both.

The team viewed these activities in terms of modernization, Enlightenment, westernization, urbanization, secularization, industrialization, assimilation, nationalism, and political mobilization. Characterized as an attack on the core culture identified with the *shtetl*, these processes were therefore outside the scope of their research: as *Life is with People* states, "Because the core culture is the subject of study, no effort has been made to cover all the shades and levels of acculturation as expressed during the twentieth century in such developments as secularized schools, modifications of dress, political and labor activities, and generally increased participation in the life of the larger society" (p. 23).

Consider for a moment the unstated assumptions of this characterization. A hallmark of the *shtetl* that emerges from *Life is with People* is its resistance to change, whether through inertia, obliviousness to the world around it, or concerted defense measures. However, in the face of

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19. See Eli Lederhendler, *The Road to Modern Jewish Politics: Political Tradition and Political Reconstruction in the Jewish Community of Tsarist Russia* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1989); Jonathan Frankel, *Prophecy and Politics: Socialism, Nationalism, and the Russian Jews, 1862-1917* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1981); Zvi Gitelman, *Jewish Nationality and Soviet Politics* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1972); and Ezra Mendelsohn, *Zionism in Poland: The Formative Years, 1915-1926* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1981).

20. See Gershon C. Bacon, "Agudath Israel in Poland, 1916-39: An Orthodox Jewish Response to the Challenge of Modernity," PhD dissertation, Columbia University, 1979.

alternatives, particularly those of the Jewish Enlightenment, adherence to tradition can never be the same. Defensiveness does not simply protect the status quo. It actually produces something new--theologically, socially, culturally, politically--even as it imagines itself in conservative terms. It is in this sense that Orthodox Judaism is "new," arising, according to Jacob Katz, during the late eighteenth century, when its assumptions were seriously challenged.<sup>21</sup>

Consider also the term acculturation. For anthropologists such as Melville Herskovits, best known for his affirmation of the African heritage of African Americans, cultural interchange left Jews with a culture so derivative it could not be called Jewish. Those who worked on *Life is with People* viewed the result as a coalescence so unique and stable that they could think in terms of the unacculturated *shtetl*. Zborowski clarified the logic of this paradox: an earlier process of acculturation produced the base or core Jewish culture, while a later process of acculturation chipped away at its edges.<sup>22</sup> In this way, the team positioned their subject in a conceptual space between two acculturations--*after* the creative process of cultural interchange that produced the coalescence they saw in the *shtetl* and *before* the deleterious impact of the many forces loosely designated as modernization.<sup>23</sup>

This conceptual space is not to be confused with historical location, for there is no historical moment to which we can refer the *shtetl* of *Life Is with People*--not in the period described by their informants and not prior to it. Rather, in the clearing they created, the team was free to infer the "unacculturated" *shtetl* from their "acculturated" informants and to locate it within a timeless, spaceless "core." Approaching change as recent, initiated from without, the team denied the possibility of distinctive forms of Jewish modernity, for even the Haskalah was seen as an "attack from within" (p. 161). In this way, the *shtetl* became the bearer of the "unacculturated" core culture of the East European culture area during the period 1880 to 1914 and in some areas, until World War II, and the cultural baseline for studying the acculturation of East European Jews in America.

The problem of whether or not *Life is with People* offers an accurate portrait of the *shtetl* notwithstanding, there remains a larger issue. Is *shtetl*, a highly charged literary and historiographic construction with a life of its own, the most productive point of departure for an anthropology or a history of East European Jewish life?

The term *shtetl* carries a range of meanings in Yiddish. At its most denotative, *shtetl* refers to "town" (any kind of town, whether or not Jews live there). The word is a diminutive of *shtot* (city). At its most connotative, *shtetl* refers to the hermetic Jewish world conjured up in Yiddish literature. Yiddish is also rich in terminology for a wide variety of settlement types, an

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21. Jacob Katz, "Orthodoxy in Historical Perspective," In *Studies in Contemporary Jewry*, no. 2, ed. Peter Y. Medding (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press for the Institute of Contemporary Jewry, Hebrew University, 1986), pp. 3-17. See also, Norman Lamm, *Torah Lishmah: Torah for Torah's Sake in the Works of Rabbi Hayyim of Volozhin and His Contemporaries* (New York: New York University Press, 1988); Immanuel Etkes, *Rabbi Israel Salanter and the Mussar Movement: Seeking the Torah of Truth*, trans. Jonathan Chipman (Philadelphia: Jewish Publication Society, 1993); and Ehud Luz, *Parallels Meet: Religion and Nationalism in the Early Zionist Movement* (Philadelphia: Jewish Publication Society of America, 1988).

22. Mark Zborowski, "The Children of the Covenant," *Social Forces* 29, no. 4 (1951): 352.

23. The volume opens with the themes of "isolation from the non-Jewish world and complete penetration of religious precept and practice into every detail of daily life" (p. 34). It ends with "dynamic equilibrium" (p. 412). Dynamic equilibrium and "field of forces," notions taken from Gregory Bateson and Kurt Lewin, are more consequential here as a textual strategy than as a basis for analysis. General claims that the *shtetl* was "not a static universe" (p. 409), that it was a "whole" made up of "conflicting and interacting parts" (p. 429), and that "through the centuries, the tradition has been both tested and invigorated by the impact of influences from without" (p. 429) have limited analytic consequences. They do however provide a rationale for integrating inconsistent data, and, as disclaimers, they tacitly acknowledge the book's overwhelming emphasis upon continuity (pp. 158-165).

indication of the diversity and complexity of Jewish residential patterns. The monumental Yiddish Thesaurus (1950) and the thousands of memorial books honoring particular towns and cities distinguish town (*shtetl*) from city (*shtot*), village (*dorf*), and Jews living in the countryside (*yeshuvnikes, gut bazitsers*).<sup>24</sup> They differentiate the Jewish community and neighborhood (*vishev oyfn shtetl, di yidishe gas, di yidishe apt* [Opatow]) from the Christian ones (*der goyisher gegnt, goyishe gasn, kristlekhe aynvoyners*). The informants who were interviewed for *Life Is With People* also made such distinctions. Like Zborowski, many of them grew up in large cities such as Lwow, Lodz, Warsaw, and Cracow.

In English, the meaning of *shtetl*, the only Yiddish term for settlement in common use, narrows to the world of Sholom Aleichem, the world of our fathers, the world of *Life Is With People*, an exclusively Jewish world, a vanished world. In the last chapter of *Life Is With People*, entitled "As the Shtetl Sees the World," the *shtetl* becomes a protagonist in its own right. Now it is the *shtetl* that views, believes, and acts, so fully has it been reified (treated as a thing) and anthropomorphized (treated as a person). If the term *shtetl* were reserved in English for the literary construction, greater precision might be exercised in historical and anthropological accounts of Jewish settlement, including but not restricted to the "Jewish town."

For this reason, what follows below is not a history of the *shtetl*, but of Jewish settlement--in cities, towns, and countryside. In this account, the "Jewish town," defined as a market town in which Jews formed a substantial percentage of the population, is seen as a particular historical formation and critical link between city and countryside. Notwithstanding its importance, the "Jewish town" is not the only place that Jews lived in significant numbers and created a recognizably Jewish way of life. Nor is the "Jewish town" to be confused with the *shtetl* which has come to signify all that is most Jewish about East European Jewish culture.

### III

During the thirteenth century, German colonists established towns in Poland according to Magdeburg Law, which determined their basic plan, social organization, and autonomy. Jewish communities developed their corporate character and settlement patterns in the context of these towns. Three aspects of towns in the Commonwealth of Poland and Lithuania (1569-1772), especially those owned by magnates, made them particularly conducive to Jewish group life: their cultural and religious diversity (Italians, Scots, Armenians, Tatars, Greeks, and Hungarians also lived there), their corporate structure, and the right to do business.<sup>25</sup> The various autochthonous groups (Poles, Lithuanians, Ukrainians, Byelorussians, Latvians, Estonians) were largely peasants on the land.

Cities and towns were laid out around the *rynek*, or central marketplace, and each national, religious, and occupational group generally occupied its own street or neighborhood and governed itself according to its own cultural traditions. In a feudal society that granted privileges to groups of subjects (estates and orders) rather than rights to individual citizens, a local Jewish community would constitute itself as a corporate body (*kehile*) that controlled its own religious, civil, and even criminal matters, and represented its members to the municipality and the king.

Living together in compact neighborhoods fostered Jewish communal life. Jews had established their own quarters even in antiquity. They occupied their own street, *di yidngas* (Western Yiddish), by the eleventh century in Regensburg and Koln and by the thirteenth century in Cracow. Jews tended to form their residential enclaves near the market place, the town center,

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24. Nahum Stutchkoff, *Der oytser fun der yidisher shprakh* (Thesaurus of the Yiddish Language) (New York: Yiddish Scientific Institute--YIVO, 1950). See entry 109. *gegnt*.

25. See Chimen Abramski, Maciej Jachimczyk, and Antony Polansky, eds., *The Jews in Poland* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1986).

and the main thoroughfares. The competing interests of the crown, nobility, burghers, peasants, and clergy, who were often intolerant of the Jewish faith, also affected where Jews lived and how they earned their living.

During the sixteenth century, as towns became more important and the Jewish population grew, competition with Christian merchants sharpened and more localities were granted the privilege of excluding Jews from living in their midst. Not only were these *ad hoc* restrictions selectively enforced in the years that followed, but Jews could live in suburbs or nearby towns and enter the city for markets and fairs. On occasion they formed an incorporated town--for example, Kazimierz, a Jewish suburb of Cracow, to which Jews were expelled in 1495. They might find a haven in juridical enclaves that were like private estates within or on the outskirts of the city--in the *jurydyki* and *libertacje* that were under the control of the *szlachta* (Polish gentry) and clergy. Or they might be restricted to a limited number of dwellings or to particular streets.

As the royal cities declined, Jews gravitated to the new private cities established by the nobility, particularly in the southeastern parts of the Commonwealth. A town's commercial center often developed wherever it was that Jews had been allowed to settle. As a town grew, it might expand to the point of surrounding the Jewish suburb. As several scholars have shown, even where Jews were concentrated, specially around the market, their houses were more or less interspersed with those of their Christian neighbors. Nor did all Jews in a particular town necessarily live in the Jewish neighborhood.<sup>26</sup>

The economy of the Commonwealth was based on the *arenda*, the term in Polish (as well as in Yiddish and Hebrew) for leases on fixed assets or prerogatives (land, mills, inns, breweries, distilleries) or special rights to collect custom duties and taxes. During the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries, Jews had engaged in the *great arenda*, collecting toll and excise taxes and managing the mint, salt mines, distilleries, and potash manufacture under royal license. The state hired agents to do this for them because it did not yet have its own apparatus for collecting these revenues. By the mid-sixteenth century, the nobility was competing for these profitable leases, though in Lithuania Jews continued to hold them until late in the seventeenth century.

Indeed, M.J. Rosman argues at the conclusion of his detailed study of the relationship of Jews and nobility in Poland during the eighteenth century that despite later efforts to change the role of Jews in the economy of estates, "up till World War I, and in some regions until World War II, many East European Jews continued in much the same role their great-great-great-grandfathers had filled under the magnates. They were still leasing estates, forests, and taverns; still marketing nobility and peasant produce in the towns; and still selling finished goods in the countryside. The magnate-Jewish connection, crystallized in the sixteenth century, continued to resonate in the twentieth."<sup>27</sup> A clearer picture of the *arenda* and its history is specially relevant to a reading of *Life is with People*, for it is in this context that the "Jewish town" emerges.

As the nobles established and enlarged their own estates, they established new cities, towns, and villages in the new territories of the Commonwealth, mainly to the east and south. They encouraged Jews to enter the *agricultural arenda*, that is, to lease landed estates or particular branches of them, such as forestry. The economy shifted to the manorial system as landed estates started producing grain and other agricultural commodities for export to Western Europe and

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26. See Gershon David Hundert, "Jewish Urban Residence in the Polish Commonwealth in the Early Modern Period," *Jewish Journal of Sociology* 26, no. 1 (1984): 25-34; and Bernard D. Weinryb, *The Jews of Poland: A Social and Economic History of the Jewish Community in Poland from 1100-1800* (Philadelphia: Jewish Publication Society of America, 1973).

27. M. J. Rosman, *The Lords' Jews: Magnate-Jewish Relations in the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth during the Eighteenth Century*, Center for Jewish Studies, Harvard Judaic Texts and Studies, VII, Harvard Ukrainian Research Institute, Monograph Series, (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1990), p. 212.

developing processing industries, especially the brewing and distillation of alcoholic beverages. While a nobleman might manage the estate on which he lived, he generally disdained commerce and would lease his other estates, some of them vast and in remote areas, to Jews. Faced with increasing competition from burghers in the towns, Jews welcomed the chance to bring their capital and commercial skills to the management of the latifundia. A latifundium was made up of complexes of manors, towns, and villages, as well as a residence for the owner or manager.<sup>28</sup>

The *arenda* system broadened the area of Jewish settlement, further diversified Jewish occupations, and integrated Jews into the rural economy, a process that was facilitated by the decentralization and fragmentation of state power that occurred as the nobles gained the upper hand in the Diet and pursued their own commercial interests. By the eighteenth century, half to two-thirds of the Jewish population in the Commonwealth lived on private holdings and by the eve of the partitions, the Jewish presence in the countryside had reached its peak--in some areas, a third of the Jewish population lived in villages. Their jobs as innkeepers, brewers and distillers, peddlers and itinerant craftsmen brought them into close contact with their Christian neighbors. Their function as middlemen who marketed the peasants' products on behalf of the nobility was also a source of friction. Their role as innkeepers implicated them in peasant alcoholism and indebtedness.

It is during a 150 year period starting in the late seventeenth century that the "Jewish town" emerged. By the end of this period, during the last quarter of the eighteenth century, Jews had become a substantial segment of the population of towns and cities in the former Commonwealth of Poland and Lithuania and as much as sixty per cent of the residents in some towns. Jewish houses were increasingly interspersed with those of their Christian neighbors, even though the municipality and the *kehile*, each for their own reasons, wanted to maintain a more homogeneous Jewish neighborhood--the *kehile* was concerned with physical safety and with strengthening its waning authority.<sup>29</sup>

Weakened by the wars, pestilence, and famine of the mid-seventeenth century, the Commonwealth of Poland and Lithuania was partitioned in three stages (1772, 1793, 1795) by Prussia, Austro-Hungary, and Russia. After the Congress of Vienna in 1815, Russia also acquired the Kingdom of Poland. Very few Jews had lived in Russia proper before the partitions. As a result of the successive annexation of territories of dense Jewish settlement, Russia suddenly ruled the largest Jewish population in the world--the numbers would multiply exponentially in the next seventy-five years.<sup>30</sup>

After the partitions, Catherine the Great and her successors expelled Jews from villages and banned them from innkeeping. Although the estate system almost disappeared with the impoverishment of the nobility and the emancipation of the serfs, the Jewish presence in their old rural occupations persisted to some degree. Their numbers dwindling with increasing industrialization and urbanization, Jews even took up some new occupations in the countryside. Agrarian reforms instituted in the independent republics after World I left little place for Jews in the impoverished rural economy. After their emancipation, peasants farmed the land and, though the peasants were largely self-sufficient, Jews still provided many needed services and products.

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28. Rosman, *The Lord's Jews*, pp. 10-17.

29. See Isaac Levitas, *The Jewish Community in Russia, 1772-1844* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1943).

30. Jews in Russia lived primarily in two areas: first, the Pale of Jewish Settlement, which was formally delineated in 1835. They were concentrated in the westernmost parts of the Pale, the former provinces of Byelorussia, Lithuania, and the Ukraine. The Pale also included areas further east and south. Second, Jews continued to live in Congress Poland, which, though annexed in 1815, was not part of the Pale. See Steven Zipperstein, *The Jews of Odessa: A Cultural History, 1794-1881* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1985) and Michael Stanislawski, *Tsar Nicholas I and the Jews: The Transformation of Jewish Society in Russia, 1825-1855* (Philadelphia: Jewish Publication Society, 1983).

In *Lite* (the northeastern area of Jewish settlement in Eastern Europe, including parts of Poland, Lithuania, and White Russia) and Galicia (Austro-Hungary), rural Jews continued to lease estates from the nobility, manage their inns and forests, and hire tenant farmers or sublet the land to sharecroppers.

Many Jewish artisans and traders were in desperate straits by the end of the nineteenth century--though several Jewish entrepreneurs played an important role in the industrialization of the former Commonwealth, for example, in the textile industry of Lodz. Increasingly concentrated in towns and cities, Jews formed the dominant urban group, their numbers as high as 74% of the population in the case of Pinsk in 1897. A disproportionately large Jewish artisanal class worked independently or in small, family-run workshops that were for the most part unmechanized. Competing with each other as well as with factories, Jewish artisans toiled long hours for low wages and with simple tools. It is from their ranks that the Jewish labor movement recruited its followers. Many migrated to larger cities in the hope of better economic opportunities. Others emigrated.<sup>31</sup>

What were the repercussions of these migrations for Jewish life in small towns and large cities during the period covered by *Life is with People*? An observer during the late nineteenth century noted that the Jewish quarter of a large city like Warsaw might harbor ways of life that had declined or even disappeared from small towns.<sup>32</sup> Some eighty years later, Abraham Duker would note that "a city like Krakow appeared to the present writer in 1934 to be as observant as any small town in the northern part of Congress Poland. The number of 'enlightened' people might have been larger in the large cities, but strangely enough, election to the *kehillot* and general representative bodies showed that Orthodoxy was weaker in many small *shtetlach* than in some large cities."<sup>33</sup> As these observations suggest, not all that *Life is with People* attributed to the *shtetl* was confined to it or even specific to it.

Lucy Dawidowicz's *The Golden Tradition: Jewish Life and Thought in Eastern Europe* (1967) can be read as a corrective to *Life is with People*.<sup>34</sup> A compilation of memoirs, letters, and other primary sources, this book examines how East European Jews tried "to harmonize tradition and modernity." Dawidowicz is explicit: "East European Jewry was not, as the sentimentalists see it, forever frozen in utter piety and utter poverty."<sup>35</sup> This statement is an indictment of

31. See Arcadius Kahan, *Essays in Jewish Social and Economic History*, ed. Roger Weiss (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1986).

32. An observation made in 1867 and reported by Jacob Shatzky, *Di geshikhte fun yidn in varshe* (The History of the Jews in Warsaw), vol. 3 (New York: Yiddish Scientific Institute--YIVO, 1953), p. 333.

33. Abraham G. Duker, "A Shady Portrayal of the Shtetl" (Review of *Life is with People*) *Congress Weekly* 19, no. 23 (22 September 1952), p. 24.

34. Several books were written as correctives to the image of East European Jewish life represented by *Life Is With People*, including Lucjan Dobroszycki and Barbara Kirshenblatt-Gimblett, *Image Before My Eyes: A Photographic History of Jewish Life in Poland Before the Holocaust* (New York: Schocken Books, in cooperation with the YIVO Institute for Jewish Studies, 1995 [1977]). Celia S. Heller, *On the Edge of Destruction: Jews of Poland Between the Two World Wars* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1977) characterizes Polish Jews as a caste, a notion she takes from Aleksander Hertz, *The Jews in Polish Culture*, trans. Richard Lourie (Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 1988 [1961]). At the time she contributed descriptions of her home town (Stoczek) to the research for *Life Is With People*, her name was Celia Stopnicka Rosenthal and she was a sociology student at Columbia University. Diane K. Roskies and David G. Roskies, *The Shtetl Book* (New York: Ktav, 1975) takes Tishevits as a model *shtetl*, defined as a market town. More recently, see Ghitta Sternberg, *Stefanesti: Portrait of a Romanian Shtetl* (New York: Pergamon Press, 1984); Steven J. Zipperstein, "The Shtetl Revisted," in *Shtetl Life: The Nathan and Faye Hurvitz Collection* (Berkeley: Judah L. Magnes Museum, 1993), pp. 17-24; and Annamaria Orla-Bukowska, "Shtetl Communities: Another Image," *Polin* 8 (1994): 89-113.

35. Lucy S. Dawidowicz, *The Golden Tradition: Jewish Life and Thought in Eastern Europe* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1967), p. 5, 6.

"lachrymose history," a term of disapprobation coined by the eminent Jewish historian Salo Baron. Bleak pictures of Jewish life, with a strong emphasis on Jewish insularity and persecution, served the reformist objectives of the Jewish Enlightenment and Emancipation movements in the nineteenth century and Zionism in the twentieth century.

Diaspora nationalists such as Max Weinreich, a distinguished Yiddish linguist, attacked the "ghetto theory" of Jewish life, which attributed Jewishness to exclusion and separateness. Instead, "Ashkenazic reality is to be sought between the two poles of absolute identity with and absolute remoteness from the coterrestrial non-Jewish communities. To compress this into a formula, what the Jews aimed at was not isolation from the Christians but insulation from Christianity."<sup>36</sup> During the 1960s, Uriel Weinreich established the Language and Culture Atlas of Ashkenazic Jewry. This monumental project documents in infinite detail the geographic distribution of variation in the Yiddish language and the culture of its speakers across a vast Ashkenazic culture area, extending from Alsace to Smolensk and from the Baltic to the Black Seas. Historical process has deposited itself in space. The task of the Atlas is to map its movements.<sup>37</sup>

Such work acknowledges the heterogeneity of the societies in which East European Jews lived and the interaction of Jews with their neighbors.<sup>38</sup> Most important, this kind of work recognizes an ongoing process of cultural creation that is no less Jewish for being new, as well as newness where loyalty to tradition is strongly asserted.

#### IV

*Life is with People* was part of a much larger enterprise, the Columbia University Research in Contemporary Culture Project, inaugurated in 1946.<sup>39</sup> The Office of Naval Research, which funded the study, hoped it would shed light on the national character of enemies and allies in the postwar period. The plan was to study culture at a distance by interviewing immigrants in New York City. Nothing at the inception of the larger research project anticipated *Life is with People*. Jews were not even on the list of groups to be studied. How then did the book before us emerge? And, how did the *shtetl* become the site of all that is most Jewish about East European Jewish culture? The answers lie in the history of the project.

At the end of the war, the Office of Naval Research set up a program of research in human relations. They hoped that the study of everyday group dynamics might illuminate why nations and groups become belligerent, pathologically aggressive, and destructive. Ruth Benedict was on the advisory committee that awarded grants. During the war, she and Mead had persuaded the Office of War Information and Office of Strategic Services that anthropologists were uniquely qualified to delineate national character. They were eager to help in the war effort and many anthropologists found work in these offices.

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36. Max Weinreich, "The Reality of Jewishness Versus the Ghetto Myth: The Sociolinguistic Roots of Yiddish," in *To Honor Roman Jakobson: Essays on the Occasion of His Seventieth Birthday* (The Hague: Mouton, 1967), p. 2204. See also, Max Weinreich, *History of the Yiddish Language*, trans. Shlomo Noble (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1980).

37. *The Language and Culture Atlas of Ashkenazic Jewry* (Tuebingen: Max Miemeyer Verlag) is being published in 11 volumes, under the direction of Marvin I. Herzog. The first volume, which deals with historical and methodological considerations, appeared in 1992. The second volume, which deals with research tools, is scheduled to appear in 1995. Subsequent volumes focus on aspects of Eastern and Western Yiddish, Yiddish-Slavic bilingual dialectology, and folk culture (volume 10).

38. See Jacob Katz, *Exclusiveness and Tolerance: Studies in Jewish-Gentile Relations in Medieval and Modern Times* (New York: Schocken, 1969 [1961]). There is a vast literature on this subject. See George J. Lerski and Halina T. Lerski, comp., *Jewish-Polish Coexistence, 1772-1939: A Topical Bibliography* (New York: Greenwood Press, 1986).

39. The project is described in detail in Margaret Mead and Rhoda Metraux, eds., *The Study of Culture at a Distance* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1953).

During both world wars, American anthropology as a social science was on the line.<sup>40</sup> Sociology, psychology, and political science had clearly demonstrated their relevance to intelligence testing and conscription, the social psychology of propaganda, the interactional dynamics of a fighting unit, and the psychology of leadership and political movements. Even physical anthropology, particularly anthropometry (comparative study of the body, based on measurement), had been used to design cockpit seats and flight clothing. What was the immediate relevance of anthropological studies of Zuni mythology, Samoan adolescence, Nootka grammar, Balinese trance, and Iatmul kinship to wartime priorities? It was felt that as long as anthropologists studied peripheral problems in peripheral places, the discipline itself would remain on the margins of power.<sup>41</sup> Anthropologists had to practice their discipline at the center. Furthermore, honorable anthropological principles such as cultural relativity (seeing each culture in its own terms) met their test in Nazi Germany. It was all well and good to avoid ethnocentrism (the bias of one's own assumptions) when studying other cultures. But surely genocide was a limiting case. Nothing, not even the relativity of each culture, could justify the annihilation of a people. Working after Hiroshima and after Hitler, anthropologists could not afford a position of moral neutrality.

With the chance to extend their work in the Office of War Information into the postwar period, Benedict and Mead hoped to ensure a seat for the discipline at a peace table that already included sociology and psychology and to employ anthropologists still cut off from their fieldwork sites by the ravages of war. Time was short and Benedict and Mead looked at earlier projects for ideas. They were to find a model for what they wanted to do in the "Seminar on the Impact of Culture on Personality," conducted at Yale's Institute of Human Relations in 1932-33 by Edward Sapir and John Dollard.<sup>42</sup> With Mead's help, Benedict quickly submitted a proposal entitled "Cultural Study of American Minorities of Foreign Origin." Retitled the Columbia University Research in Contemporary Cultures project, the revised application and successor projects were funded generously over several years, attracting about \$250,000. Mead describes the project in her original foreword to *Life is with People*.

Benedict did not include Jews in the initial grant application. Neither ally nor enemy, Jews were anomalous. Unlike the Chinese, Russians, Poles, and French, they were not one of the nations of strategic interest to the United States and their postwar peace efforts. During the war years, Benedict had interviewed exiles from Rumania, Poland, Hungary, Holland, and Italy for her reports to the Office of War Information. Many of them turned out to be Jews. Benedict found them responsive, articulate, and a good match for "her disciplined anthropological comparativeness with their experience of having lived in a world which included always at least two cultures, that of Jews and that of the particular nation among whom they lived," according to Mead's foreword (p. 14). But, Benedict thought that to determine what was truly Rumanian or Polish about the culture described it was necessary to factor out Jewish cultural elements.

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40. See Virginia Yans-McLaughlin, "Science, Democracy, and Ethics: Mobilizing Culture and Personality for World War II," in *Malinowski, Rivers, Benedict and Others: Essays on Culture and Personality*, ed. George W. Stocking, Jr., History of Anthropology, vol. 4 (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1986), pp. 184-217.

41. See Ruth Benedict, "Recognition of Cultural Diversities in the Postwar World," *American Academy of Political and Social Science, Annals* CCXXVII (July 1943): 101-7, reprinted in *An Anthropologist at Work: Writings of Ruth Benedict*, by Margaret Mead (New York: Atherton Press, 1966 [1959]), pp. 439-448. According to Benedict, what American anthropologists typically study "has ranked as a somewhat esoteric pursuit," in contrast with the British Empire and Germany, where anthropological studies had practical and national relevance. In her view, "The war is changing these conditions and the postwar world will intensify them" (p. 439).

42. After Sapir's death in 1939, Mead's colleague Lawrence K. Frank arranged for the seminar records to be transferred to her Institute for Intercultural Relations. These materials are now part of the Margaret Mead Papers at the Library of Congress.

Based in New York City, home of the largest Jewish community in the world, the Research in Contemporary Cultures project attracted many researchers who were Jewish, quite a few of them born in Europe, some of them emigres and refugees. Many of them had difficulty finding work and were eager to join the research team. Benedict met Zborowski at an anthropology convention in 1947 and found his ideas about the development of Jewish culture interesting. Born in 1908 in Uman, a city of 60,000 in the southern Ukraine, Zborowski had moved with his family to Lwow during the Bolshevik Revolution and then to Lodz, both of them large Polish cities. He had studied anthropology at the Sorbonne, and fled France in 1941. In 1946, several years after arriving in the United States, he began working as an assistant librarian at the YIVO Institute of Jewish Research in New York City. He could speak, read, and write Russian, Polish, German, French, Yiddish and Hebrew, in addition to English. His anthropological training and his firsthand knowledge of East European Jewish culture made him an invaluable resource. Benedict invited him to serve as a part-time consultant on the project. Zborowski was to play a central role in the emerging Jewish component of the research.

The plan was amended to include "Czech Jews, Russian Jews, Polish Jews, to parallel our studies of Czech, Russian and Polish cultures" and facilitate comparisons, Mead's foreword explained (p. 15). It was changed again as the researchers realized that "Eastern European Jews had in fact a living culture, which was essentially all of a piece whether they paid their taxes and marketed in Polish or Ukrainian or Hungarian, or were ruled by Czar or Emperor" (p. 16). The recently formed Jewish research group was given a new charge--to delineate the East European Jewish culture area. As Mead explained to her colleagues during one of the General Seminars, "We have selected the Jewish group for study because they are articulate, capable of moving on two or three different cylinders at a time, cross-cultural." Now however their initial problem was reversed. It was the non-Jewish material that had to be factored out: "But you must know whether you are getting *Jewish* or some other culture material. They will be an excellent cultural instrument once we have what is Jewish completely outlined," Mead assured the researchers.<sup>43</sup> Benedict died in 1949 and Mead took over as director of the entire project. Conrad Arensberg, an anthropologist known for his work on American and Irish communities, was the convener for the Jewish research group. He was replaced by Mead toward the end of their research. The Jewish research group interviewed more than a hundred individuals, read extensively, analyzed movies and literature, and observed Jewish communities in New York City. They also met regularly to discuss their work and kept detailed minutes. Their last meeting was on October 13, 1949.

With the Jewish research concluded and project funds running out, it was time to write up the study. What kind of study would it be? The Jewish research project had moved a long way from the concerns of the Office of Naval Research.<sup>44</sup> By March 1949, Mead was already looking elsewhere for money. Where she turned for funding would depend on the kind of publication she envisioned.

A decision was taken not to produce an academic monograph or a series of individually authored chapters. Mead wanted readers to recognize themselves and their parents in the pages of a "unified book."<sup>45</sup> Who would fund the writing of a volume directed to Jewish readers and to the American public more generally? Mead turned to the American Jewish Committee's Department of Scientific Research. This department grew out of conferences on anti-Semitism held during

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43. Minutes of General Seminar, January 22, 1948, Box G13.

44. Those concerns were acknowledged in a 1951 report on the Jewish soldier, his attitudes to bravery and pain. The report dealt with the American Jewish serviceman, after briefly presenting "the historic attitude in the *shtetl*." See R. Landes, "The Jewish Soldier," in "A Report on National Character," prepared by Columbia University Research in Contemporary Cultures (1951) for the Working Group on Human Behavior under Conditions of Military Service, pp. 136-155, Box G12. Zborowski prepared the report on the Polish soldier and Ruth Bunzel on the Chinese soldier.

45. Jewish Group Minutes, May 19, 1949, Box G50, Folder 3.

World War II that had involved American anthropologists.<sup>46</sup> Mead argued that her project would help mobilize "positive attitudes towards the traditional Eastern European Jewish culture, which is part of the cultural legacy of contemporary American culture" and thereby serve "indirectly to refute or to illuminate current stereotypes about the Jew."<sup>47</sup> These aims matched the AJCommittee's larger goals of "domestic defense," "counterpropaganda," strengthening "moral resources," and "furthering the process of the wholesome integration of the Jew into the American scene," a major aspect of the agency's activity.<sup>48</sup> Mead's proposal was also compatible with the AJCommittee's methods--refute allegations against Jews, reveal their irrational sources and the psychology of prejudice, offer positive images of Jews and their culture, and strengthen Jewish self-identification.<sup>49</sup> The AJCommittee funded the "*shtetl* study," as it was now called.

Zborowski's assignment was to write the book--tentatively titled "It Was in Our Town"--together with Elizabeth Herzog, under the direction of Mead. Herzog was a professional writer with "social science background and varied experience in social research, especially in the area of opinion and attitude analysis, combined with her skill as a writer" (p. 17). The book was completed by November 1951. The book delivered what Mead, whose brother-in-law was Leo Rosten, had envisioned. Mead consulted him as questions arose. His entry for *shtetl* in *The Joys of Yiddish* (1968) reads like a page from *Life is with People*, so completely did their views converge.<sup>50</sup> Both of them relied heavily on what had become canonical texts--*The World of Sholom Aleichem* and *The Earth Is the Lord's*. Mead pitched the project to the AJCommittee as a way to present those aspects of the *shtetl* "that are such a valuable contribution to human civilization...for example, the warmth, the group solidarity, the mellow and sophisticated conception of the universe and of human nature, the affirmative joy in being Jewish."<sup>51</sup> This affirmation of Jewishness, which was received with special poignancy in the wake of World War II, marked a departure in approach on the part of the American Jewish Committee, which before the war was dominated by a German-Jewish leadership and program of assimilation. As Naomi W. Cohen observes in her history of the AJCommittee, the lay leadership in the late thirties was more concerned with securing for Jews their rights as American citizens than with protecting Jewish heritage, which only came into play in religious terms.<sup>52</sup> The annihilation of European Jewry and the demoralization of American Jewry forced the agency, following the lead of John Slawson, to have second thoughts about this approach. While it reads like a novel or script for a film, *Life is with People* is nonetheless a form of applied anthropology addressed to the exigencies of war and its aftermath.

Mead had to convince a press to publish the book. By January 1950, she was circulating "It Was in Our Town: The Jewish Culture of Eastern Europe," as the prospective book was called. Meeting resistance, Mead hastened to note that "the recent two-volume publication by Dr. Louis Finkelstein, *THE JEWS* (Harper) completely omits the culture and the social structure that form the subject matter of this book" and offered to "write a preface of any length."<sup>53</sup> She also

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46. See Naomi W. Cohen, *Not Free to Desist: A History of the American Jewish Committee, 1906-1966* (Philadelphia: Jewish Publication Society of America, 1972).

47. "Suggested Project on Jewish Culture," submitted by Margaret Mead, March 3, 1949. RG 347, AJC Records, Gen-10, 73, Box 211, File: Mass Media, Books, "Life is with People," Archives of the YIVO Institute for Jewish Research.

48. Memorandum from Samuel H. Flowerman to John Slawson, March 17, 1949. Archives of the American Jewish Committee. According to Flowerman, the project was originally designated "Cultural Study of American Minorities of Foreign Origin."

49. See Samuel H. Flowerman and Marie Jahoda, "Can We Fight Prejudice Scientifically: Towards a Partnership of Action and Research," *Commentary* 2 (July-December 1946): 583-587.

50. Leo Calvin Rosten, *The Joys of Yiddish: A Relaxed Lexicon of Yiddish, Hebrew, and Yinglish Worlds Often Encountered in English...from the Days of the Bible to Those of the Beatnik* (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1968).

51. Mead, "Suggested Project on Jewish Culture."

52. Cohen, *Not Free to Desist*, pp. 193-226.

53. All quotations are from letters to publishers in Box G13.

anticipated a wide readership:

This is, therefore, the study of a culture which has just vanished but is still an integral part of the lives of many hundreds of thousands of people in the United States; all those with Eastern European Jewish ancestry, all those who draw in some way on Eastern European tradition, all who have married into this tradition or work with Jews who share it. It provides a background of understanding both for Americans of Jewish backgrounds and for gentiles who have had little chance to learn about Jewish culture. We have presented it with the type of objectivity which we use in anthropology in treating any culture, but have been fortunate in having one of our authors, Dr. [sic] Zborowski, an anthropologist who lived in the Shtetl as a child and who can speak both professionally and with deep feeling about his own culture.<sup>54</sup>

International Universities Press offered a contract for the book on February 16, 1951 and published it in hardcover as *Life is with People: The Jewish Little-Town in Eastern Europe* the following year. Not until the paperback edition in 1962 would the subtitle be changed to *The Culture of the Shtetl*. By 1971, an entry for *shtetl* appeared in a serious reference work in English, the *Encyclopedia Judaica*. Zborowski was its author. The term had become well established in the social science literature, in no small measure thanks to *Life is with People*.

Though not part of the original plan, *Life is with People* is the most visible, durable, and successful product of the Research in Contemporary Cultures project. During the Cold War, Mead succeeded in studying politically sensitive topics with impunity by getting the government to fund the research and insisting that the researchers protect the anonymity of informants and maintain detailed and unclassified records of the research process. As a result, the Research in Contemporary Cultures project may well be the best documented undertaking in the history of American anthropology. It is certainly the fullest record we have of how researchers went about making an anthropological study of Jewish culture. For this reason, those who created this book reveal in unprecedented detail how anthropologists work.

From their process, we can reconstruct how *Life is with People* came to take the form it did and why they settled on the *shtetl* as the book's organizing idea. The first determining factor is the kind of anthropology that the researchers, and specially Mead, practiced. The second consideration is the double logistical challenge they faced. However difficult it might be to study culture at a distance, the problems were compounded when methods developed for studying small communities on Pacific islands were applied to "complex societies" and vast diasporic formations like East European Jews.

*Life is with People* combined the goals and methods of salvage ethnography and the study of living communities in situ. During the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, American anthropologists who studied Native Americans did salvage ethnography to capture a way of life prior to contact with Europeans and efforts to annihilate or assimilate them. They recorded what was about to disappear and reconstructed from memory what could no longer be observed.<sup>55</sup> In a sense, they too were studying culture at a distance because they depended so heavily on what their informants remembered, rather than on what they could observe. Salvage ethnographers of this period also tended to take as their unit of study a culture area, rather than a discrete community.

But, salvage ethnography as anthropologists had practiced it, did not suit Mead's desire to observe the daily life of a functioning community. For Mead, *shtetl* approximated the model of community that she had developed while working with living societies on South Pacific islands.

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54. Letter from Mead to Lottie Maury, February 6, 1951, Box G13.

55. For a critique of this approach, see Johannes Fabian, *Time and the Other: How Anthropology Makes Its Object* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1983).

In her view of the history of anthropology, the "use of single informants of a broken culture whose members no longer function as a living society" had preceded the study of a small community *in toto*. Nonetheless, "the use of the second method has tended to alter our theory of the way the first should be used."<sup>56</sup> That is, after anthropologists had done fieldwork in living societies, salvage anthropology would never be the same. Citing *Life Is with People* as a case in point, Mead continued, "If one has to learn a culture and to know a community together, then when there is no community but only material on the culture, a model of the possible community is present in one's mind, guiding one's questions, structuring one's imagination."<sup>57</sup> In the case of *Life is with People*, *shtetl* served that purpose. The researchers had to keep in mind the model of a living society they could never actually experience, as they attempted to reconstruct its culture from the memory of immigrants in New York.

However, the notion of living society that Mead had developed during her work in the South Pacific was not well suited to the study of complex societies widely dispersed over a large culture area. Her ideal site was a small community, envisioned as a minimal unit for the organization and transmission of culture. Though she acknowledged the relationship of a community under study to other communities and larger administrative units, her overwhelming emphasis was on the inner functioning of a self-contained entity: "All events that occur outside the village network, however much impact they may have upon it, are treated as external to the system."<sup>58</sup> While the Pacific Islands she studied seemed to meet her requirements perfectly, the East European Jewish culture area did not. The research team addressed this problem by combining the two approaches. First, they posited the *shtetl* as a cultural island and identified it with the entire East European Jewish culture area. They then proceeded in the mode of salvage ethnography to reconstruct by means of interviews what could no longer be observed. Finally, they wrote about that world as if they had done fieldwork in a living community.

The research team that produced *Life is with People* did not start with *shtetl* as the focus of their research. *Shtetl* became a textual way to achieve coherence, totality, and authority in the representing of East European Jewish culture. The team had gathered a massive amount of data from many people who bore no connection to one another except that they stemmed from the same (vast) culture area. They drew on novels, memoirs, histories, movies, and previous studies. How were they to constitute the large picture from so many small pieces? How were they to create a coherent characterization from the accounts of so many unrelated individuals? Their solution was to construct a synthetic community, a hypothetical *shtetl*. They arrived at *shtetl* as the key organizing unit for writing the book toward the end of the research and used it primarily as a heuristic device for presenting the research findings, rather than as the prerequisite and basis for organizing the research effort itself. This is a clear example of how the cultural whole called *shtetl* was achieved textually.<sup>59</sup>

The dematerialization of the *shtetl* is largely an outcome of this process, even though the research team justified it on historical grounds.<sup>60</sup> Studying culture at a distance, American-born interviewers had never actually visited the places their informants described and depended for their images on literature, black and white movies, and conversations with immigrants in New York City right after the war. How were they to draw a coherent portrait of a prototypical community that no one--not the informants and not the researchers--had ever visited? Zborowski's

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56. Mead and Metraux, *The Study of Culture at a Distance*, p. 41.

57. Mead and Metraux, *The Study of Culture at a Distance*, p. 48.

58. Mead and Metraux, *The Study of Culture at a Distance*, p. 50.

59. This formulation is taken from Robert Thornton, whose work is cited by George E. Marcus and James Clifford, "The Making of Ethnographic Texts: A Preliminary Report," *Current Anthropology* 26, 2 (1985): 268. Thornton's notion that "societal or cultural wholes exist only in texts," while extreme, is strongly supported by this analysis of *Life is with People*.

60. It is also part of a more general tendency in the postwar period to spiritualize both loss and recovery, to speak of "the life of the spirit," in the wake of physical destruction. See Salo Baron, "The Spiritual Reconstruction of European Jewry," *Commentary* 1 (November 1945-June 1946): 4-12.

view that the *shtetl* was to be defined in terms of "esprit," not in terms of any distinctive physical, demographic, economic, or administrative features, made it easier for the team to accomplish its task of portraiture. It authorized them to override explicit terminological distinctions that informants themselves made between *dorf* (village), *shtetl* (town), and *shtot* (city) and to put aside regional formations that might cloud the general patterns of the core culture. Their appeal to a long historiographic tradition to explain the *shtetl*'s lack of materiality--"A long history of exile and eviction strengthens the tendency to regard the dwelling place as a husk" (p. 62)--should be read not only against evidence to the contrary, but also in terms of the circumstances of the research.

The *shtetl* of *Life is with People* thus arose from a convergence of these logistical challenges, a particular moment in anthropological theory, a style of ethnographic writing, and literary conventions for characterizing Jewish traditional society, particularly in the immediate postwar years. Much has happened since Mead's vision of the new anthropology of the 1940s. The new anthropology of the 1990s has different goals and different methods--it is no longer interested in cultural wholes, patterns, and cores, it no longer aims for ethnographic synthesis, it is no longer secure in its authority to tell the cultural truth. It knows too much about how it produces knowledge, texts, and authority. It has learned this from a close reading of classic ethnographies like *Life is with People*.

How it happened that all of East European Jewish culture came to be identified with the *shtetl* illuminates not only a reading of *Life is with People*. It also bears on the reliability of the hundreds of articles and books that depend upon it for an authoritative account of East European Jewish culture. Reviewers of the period praised the book, while pointing out inaccuracies.<sup>61</sup> A. Ben-Ezra, noting that the book "has been severely and justly criticized in Yiddish publications," made several corrections. "Boys are named at the circumcision ceremony and not on the Sabbath in the synagogue (p. 320)." Mordecai is not Esther's uncle (p. 403); "Esther's father was Mordecai's uncle (Esther 2.15)."<sup>62</sup> Abraham Duker, while praising the book for "its quality of *heimishkayt* (at homeness)," was the most exhaustive in his inventory of errors: "The statement that the Torah scroll contains punctuation and cantillation marks is an unforgivable error."<sup>63</sup>

Reviewers consistently attributed these gaffs to shortcomings of the researchers. Duker was emphatic: "Mere competence in interviewing or in other cultures is not sufficient....The 'combined insight' of interviewers and specialists in different cultures and specializations of which Dr. Mead makes so much in her foreword is of no earthly use without the participation of real specialists in Jewish religion, customs, cultural and local history as well as literature and folklore" (p. 24). The East European Jewish culture area was not a Pacific Island that had never been studied before. Duker also indicted the American Jewish Committee, its responsibility for the accuracy of research it sponsored, and its generous use of public funds to support projects that lacked sufficient oversight. He was clearly irritated that so much money was available for this project, while worthy organizations like the Conference on Jewish Relations, the Yiddish Scientific Institute-YIVO, as it was then known, and the American Jewish Historical Society went begging.

Calling for the leadership of such projects to be broadened, Duker also indirectly took Zborowski to task, for it was on Zborowski that Mead had relied most heavily for the truth of *Life is with People*. Her introduction to the volume declared that "The crucial person in our seminar group was Mark Zborowski, who combined in one person the living experience of *shtetl* culture in the Ukraine and Poland and the disciplines of history and anthropology through which to interpret

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61. There were also assessments of the entire approach. See Alfred R. Lindesmith and Anselm L. Strauss, "A Critique of Culture-Personality Writings," *American Sociological Review* 15, 5 (1950): 587-600.

62. A. Ben-Ezra, Review of *Life Is With People*, *Jewish Social Studies* 15, 2 (1953): 184.

63. Abraham G. Duker, "A Shady Portrayal of the *Shtetl* [Review of *Life Is With People*," *Congress Weekly* 19, 23 (September, 1952): 23.

his memories and readings, and the new materials which members of the project collected from interviews and written materials" (pp. 16-17). Benedict and Mead had no reason to doubt his trustworthiness.

However, within two years of the publication of *Life is with People*, allegations began to circulate that Zborowski had been an agent of the Soviet secret police.<sup>64</sup> He was implicated in the death of Trotsky's son, among others. By November 1955, the story was leaked to the press.<sup>65</sup> Zborowski's colleagues were in a quandary. Should they believe the allegations? Whatever the truth, should they stand by him? Mead never wavered in her loyalty. The American Jewish Committee immediately distanced itself from Zborowski for fear of guilt by association and stopped all promotion and publicity for *Life is with People*, "because of the author's past."<sup>66</sup> Nonetheless, the book established its own following, largely insulated from the Zborowski scandal. Silence was the best protection for those who wished to disassociate themselves from him, as well as for those who wanted to protect the book. It was also a refusal to participate in the redbaiting and witchhunting of colleagues whose political views and activities were deemed un-American or subversive during the McCarthy era.

Zborowski was never tried on these charges, though he did admit to having been an agent of the NKVD in Paris. He was however convicted of perjury in connection with the prosecution of others convicted of Soviet espionage and he did serve time. Upon his release he resumed his career in medical anthropology, made distinguished contributions to the study of pain, and worked at Mount Zion Hospital in San Francisco until he retired. He died in 1990 at the age of 82.

Even as late as 1964, after a decade of extensive coverage in front page stories in the English- and Yiddish-language press, a reviewer could write, apparently oblivious to Zborowski's past, that "The book before us is a remarkably successful effort to portray scientifically and yet in easily readable form, the pristine type of Ashkenazi culture *before* the impact of modern influences began to transform it." This was a culture that the writer, M.Z. Frank, addressing the readers of *Pioneer Women*, the magazine of a Zionist organization, credited with having produced--once pried loose from the ghetto--"Hollywood and the Israel Army of Defense, William Lawrence and the Weizmann Institute, Einstein and Freud, Trotsky and Kaganovich," and, one is tempted to add, Zborowski himself.

What bearing if any does Zborowski's past have for a reading of the book? Shall we take the position of Edward A. Shils that science is autonomous and the pursuit of truth distinterested? Writing in 1956 at the end of the "decade of secrets" and the abuses of the McCarthy era, Shils argued that the evaluation of scholarship must be protected from such external considerations as the political views of those responsible for it.<sup>67</sup> While Shils was defending academic freedom, Mead was insisting upon the responsibility of the scholar to understand himself as an instrument in the research process, particularly in projects dealing with problems of psychology, personality, and culture. Mead's concern has become a cardinal principle of contemporary anthropology.

A passage from Zborowski's 1951 essay "The Children of the Covenant" sounds a faintly

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64. I deal with this matter extensively in *Investigating Jews* (forthcoming).

65. Henry Kasson (pseud. for David Dallin), "The Zborowski Case," *The New Leader* (November 21, 1955): 13. The case against him was widely reported in the American English and Yiddish press. See the *New York Times* in 1958, 1959, and 1962.

66. Memorandum from Lucy Dawidowicz to John Lawson, December 16, 1960. RG 347, AJC Records, Gen-10, 73, Box 211, File: Mass Media, Books, "Life is with People," Archives of the YIVO Institute for Jewish Research. The AJCommittee had worked assiduously over the years to disassociate Jews from Communism, an association which was often a form of anti-Semitism, and to balance the fight against Communist elements where they really did exist with the protection of civil liberties. They were afraid their efforts would be discredited because of their association with Zborowski.

67. Edward A. Shils, *The Torment of Secrecy: The Background and Consequences of American Security Policies* (Glencoe, IL: Free Press, 1956).

autobiographical note:

It is possible to endure hardship, suffering, persecution, if one knows that all this is merely the preface to glorious fate, that one is a member of the Chosen People, party to a covenant with God which in the end will bring eternal peace and joy in the Promised Land. But if a shtetl Jew loses his sense of identification with the group and with his destiny, the promise of the pact becomes meaningless.<sup>68</sup>

Is *Life Is with People* one more example of Zborowski's ability to carry out his assignment perfectly? Is this account of East European Jewish life (for which he was by no means solely responsible) indistinguishable from an ethnography that he might have produced were he actually the insider that Mead assumed?

Indeed, is there any aspect of the volume we might explain in terms of Zborowski's biography that could not be accounted for just as persuasively without reference to his life? He was not alone in agreeing that the team focus on the "unacculturated" *shtetl* as the distinctive expression of East European Jewish culture, that they downplay history, that industrialization and political movements were "external" forces that corroded the *shtetl*. But once they did, the result had the distinct advantage of insulating the research subject from the most troubled areas of his own life--a cynic might even suggest that it provided a safe haven, a cover.

As is clear from his work on Jews in the United States while he was at the American Jewish Committee, Zborowski was equally adept at conceptualizing Jewish culture in terms of heterogeneity, change, political and social movements, conflict, and identity. What then so appealed to him about the *shtetl* of *Life Is with People*? Was it a world before Communism and before Stalin where the promise of the pact was meaningful and life was with people? Was it the prospect of an undivided self free of dark secrets, open and honest, connected with others in a common destiny?

## V

If *Life is with People* is not the authoritative account once thought, the book is a fascinating document of how American Jewry dealt with its sense of loss in the aftermath of World War II. In 1946 refugees were trying to start a new life. Thousands waited in displaced persons camps. The major war crime trials were just starting, though some trials had already taken place. War reparations, repatriation, and recovery of property had yet to be settled. There was a postwar peace to be forged. The struggle to establish the State of Israel had escalated.

Not until the 1960s and the Eichmann trial would the full enormity of the tragedy begin to enter public consciousness. The experience of witnessing the Eichmann trial on television was catalytic in redefining a period otherwise known as the Third Reich and World War II into the Holocaust as we know it today. The responsibility for directing its public memorialization was moving more firmly into the hands of those with the greatest authority to do so--the survivors, Eli Wiesel foremost among them. It would be several decades before the Holocaust would become a prominent feature of American public culture and anchor of American Jewish identity.<sup>69</sup> A United States Holocaust Memorial Museum or March of the Living or *Schindler's List* would have been inconceivable in America at the time that *Life is with People* was written.

The mode of memory work signaled by the term "vanished world" reached its apogee with *Fiddler on the Roof* during the 1960s. *Fiddler on the Roof* performed into life the universe

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68. *Social Forces* 29, 4 (1951), p. 364.

69. See James E. Young, *The Texture of Memory: Holocaust Memorials and Meaning* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1993); Jeffrey Shandler, "While America Watches: Television and the Holocaust in the United States, 1945 to the Present," Ph.D. dissertation, Columbia University, 1995.

evoked in the pages of *Life is with People*.<sup>70</sup> Both were inspired by Sholem Aleichem's *Tevye the Dairyman*, itself a classic. That later readers of *Life is with People*, better informed about East European Jewish life because of the interest it helped to stimulate, would find the book romantic, idealized, or sentimental indicates how much had changed in the memory culture of American Jews. The fear in the years just after World War II was that the world that had been destroyed would also be forgotten. Fifty years have passed since then. The day will come when no one will know first hand what life was like in the old country and no one will be left to bear witness to the annihilation of European Jewry. Given the urgency to remember the Holocaust, we also worry that posterity will finally know more about the way Jews died than the way they lived.

*Life is with People* bears reading and rereading in these terms. That *Life is with People* has weathered the storm of its critics and the stigma of Zborowski's past attests to its success as a point of entry for generations of readers interested in Jewish life in Eastern Europe before the Holocaust. Read in relation to the issues it raises, rather than as an authoritative account, *Life is with People* becomes a point of departure for new destinations unimagined by its authors.<sup>71</sup>

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70. Later paperback editions of the book were endorsed by Sheldon Harnick, the musical's lyricist: "*Life Is With People* told us about life in the Jewish villages as no other book. It should be read by all who have enjoyed *Fiddler on the Roof*." See also Richard Altman, *The Making of a Musical: Fiddler on the Roof* (New York: Crown, 1971) and Seth Wolitz, "The Americanization of Tevye or Boarding the Jewish *Mayflower*," *American Quarterly* 40 (1988): 514-536.

71. Some of those avenues are suggested in *The Modern Jewish Experience: A Reader's Guide* (New York: New York University Press, 1993) and *The Uses of Tradition: Jewish Continuity in the Modern Era* (New York: Jewish Theological Seminary of America, 1992), both edited by Jack Wertheimer.