BOOK REVIEWS/COMPTES RENDUS

Fackenheim, Emil L. *An Epitaph for German Judaism: From Halle to Jerusalem*. Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 2007. xxxiv, 327 pp.

The most obvious feature of this highly anticipated personal document from one of the most significant and influential Jewish thinkers of the late twentieth century is its fractured, fragmented nature. This quality extends from its structure and style to the observations about philosophy and Jewish life today. The lack of wholeness and harmony, however, is neither accidental nor the result of some deficit, but the outcome of tensions brought together in a reflective and passionate life during times both terrifying and hopeful.

       The structure includes three parts (Germany, Canada, Israel) divided into twenty chapters bracketed by a "Preface" and an "Introduction" at the beginning and an "Epilogue" and "Appendices" at the end. The editor of this posthumous volume, Michael Morgan, has added an insightful "Foreword," as well as pictures and documents supporting the narrative. Morgan explains that the text developed slowly. It began in 1993 following an invitation to Fackenheim to return to Germany for an address in the city of his birth, Halle, and it was influenced by the personal crisis of having to place his wife, Rose, who was suffering from severe Alzheimer's, in a home. While a draft manuscript was completed in 2000, the final corrections were still being made in 2003, when Fackenheim died. It was left to Morgan to compile the materials while divining the intentions of his friend and mentor.

       The narrative of the text is punctuated by memories and memorials, reflections and outcries, laments and jokes. Stunning sentences set the tone and convey a depth of meaning: "All this happened to German Jews, not at the hands of enemies

but of men and women with whom, so to speak, they had sat on the same bench at school" (7). The text jumps forward and back, repeats, and is continually interrupted. Morgan suggests that this "style" first appeared in Fackenheim's masterwork, *To Mend the World*. There for the first time, the author directly confronted that neat, leisurely Hegelian historical/philosophical process of overcoming (*aufgehoben*) with the void of the Holocaust. This style reflects Fackenheim's overall message that there is no wholeness after that rupture, but that with the establishment of the state of Israel there is still hope, or even that impossible, albeit necessary "tikkun."

If there is an overall story, it revolves around a life lived in those three very different environments—Germany, Canada, Israel—but never fully at home. Fackenheim puts it this way:

> My life could be summed up in three trips, from Hamburg to London on May 21, 1939, from Toronto to Tel Aviv in October 1983, and from Halle to Berlin in May 1935. All three were important: the first to escape from the SS; the second, to reach Jerusalem; but—although I had then no way of knowing it—the decisive one was the train trip to Berlin. (252)

Emil loved Halle and reminisces about family and holiday meals, the sports club his father founded, a teacher and true German friend to the end, Adolph Lörcher. But beginning in 1933, the Nazis emerge gradually from the margins to establish "Planet Auschwitz." The trip to Berlin symbolized his determination to study Judaism (at Leo Baeck's *Hochschule für die Wissenschaft des Judentums*) in the very center of the Nazi threat.

For readers in Canada what is remarkable about the above summation is that the Canadian (and wider North American) environment is not seen in the *Epitaph* to have had any impact upon Fackenheim's thought or even to have given a context for it. This is true despite Fackenheim's role as the most important spokesman for that crucial North American identity narrative that Jacob Neusner termed, the "myth of

Holocaust and redemption [Israel]." In the recollection quoted above, Canada appears only as "from Toronto." This does not mean that the text does not speak of his welcome at the University of Toronto, or his tenure there, or of some of his friends, teachers, and colleagues, but his description of his Canadian period (1940-1983) is primarily filled with anecdotes, most of them positive.

Jerusalem was Fackenheim's last "home," but hardly a welcoming one. This "post-Holocaust philosopher" was not accepted into the Israeli academic establishment, teaching primarily "overseas" students at the Hebrew University. It appears that he was most appreciated by young German students coming to Israel to study about that which their parents had destroyed.

While the *Epitaph* does not include any elaborate philosophical commentaries, it does reveal the two pairs of tensions—between modern philosophy and Judaism, and between reflection and the realities of life—that drove Fackenheim's work. These coalesce around "the problem and fate of revelation in modernity" (243). Fackenheim was well trained and recognized for his work on the great modern German philosophers: Kant, Schelling, Hegel, and Heidegger. He also saw himself continuing in the footsteps of the German-Jewish figures, Rosenzweig, Buber, and Baeck. For many years, his teaching and research followed these two separate streams, his "two hats," until he saw the necessity of bringing them together with his *Encounters between Judaism and Modern Philosophy* in 1973. Fackenheim, moreover, was fascinated with Hegel and with the possibility of bridging philosophy and history or "thought and life." After his recognition in 1967 of the crisis that the Holocaust posed for philosophy, modernity, Christianity, and, most of all, for Judaism, he no longer believed a bridge between the two was possible. Still, he struggled to find some way of relating them, because, for the sake of its authenticity, philosophy could not ignore life, and for the sake of its meaning, life could not forego articulate reflection.

Fackenheim's "unscientific" conclusion to these tensions emerges in his two *midrashim* suggesting the renewal of the meaning of revelation today. One is his famous "commanding Voice of Auschwitz," or the "614th Commandment," with its four parts: Jews must survive; they must remember the six million; they may not despair of mankind; they may not despair of God" (253). The second is equally audacious, about a more than mere human mending witnessed by all those "*kedoshim*" (holy ones) caught in the midst of the Holocaust and those who soon after confirmed the Jewish return to Israel.

Fackenheim's *Epitaph* is his last work. As memoir, history, autobiography, and reflection, it is invaluable and unique; for what it surveys, for the passion of its recollections, for the quality of its insights, and finally, for the person who authored it. The philosopher offers the following consideration about "memoirs written *by philosophers*" early in the text: "As 'lovers of wisdom,' their thought must be judged by their lives: Socrates would have been even greater if, before drinking the hemlock—instead of talking with other philosophers—he had comforted his wife and children" (7).

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Fuks, Haim-Leib. *Cent ans de littérature yiddish et hébraïque au Canada*, traduit du yiddish, commenté et complété par Pierre Anctil. Sillery: Septentrion, 2005. 447 pp.

Le talent et la verve du poète, d'un côté; l'érudition et la méticulosité du lexico-bibliographe, de l'autre. Ces deux pans souvent diamétralement opposés chez ceux qui vivent de leur plume ne s'excluaient pourtant pas chez Haim-Leib Fuks (1896-1984). Il le laissait entendre dès la notice préliminaire versifiée du présent ouvrage : «Qu'ils soient sanctifiés / Mes poèmes aujourd'hui / seront les noms / de ces écrivains juifs / oubliés depuis des années et des années.» (p.16) Qu'ils soient sanctifiés, ces 429 auteurs (y compris Fuks lui-même, en tant