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Abstract

This chapter demonstrates how women's bodies were appropriated (in times of adversity) to promote Jewishness and Jewish ethnic/racial body aesthetics in a variety of locations, including Europe (Germany, Poland, Hungary), Tel Aviv, Argentina, and the United States.

Keywords

Judaism, Jewess, ethnic/racial body aesthetics, media

Disciplines

Film and Media Studies | German Language and Literature | History of Religions of Western Origin | Religion

Chapter 7

Recognition for the “Beautiful Jewess”:

Beauty Queens Crowned by Modern Jewish Print Media

Kerry Wallach

In the days leading up to the Miss America competition on January 15, 2011, many Jewish blogs and web publications, along with more traditional print media, were abuzz with excitement. Would Loren Galler Rabinowitz, crowned Miss Massachusetts in 2010, become the second Jewish Miss America (following Bess Myerson, Miss America 1945)? Nearly every article about her highlighted the same qualities: she had graduated from Harvard; she was a national ice skating medalist and a talented pianist; she had plans to attend medical school; and she happened to be Jewish. Although she rarely described herself as Jewish in pre-competition interviews despite repeated references to a grandmother who had survived the Holocaust, Galler Rabinowitz acknowledged openly that she did not fit the customary pageant mold: “I’m not tall, I don’t have blond hair . . . I’m 5-foot-2, I’m curvy. I’m first generation American, but I have a lot of determination.”¹ One Jewish blog post added, “She’s adorable, her teeth are fabulous, and she’s a genuine *mensch*.”² To be sure, she was positioned as a highly qualified Miss America contender, albeit one who did not necessarily look the part. Still, it comes as no surprise that America is still waiting for its second Jewish Miss America.

In the more than ninety years since the 1921 founding of the Miss America pageant, which in turn prompted an international beauty contest craze, Jewish women such as Galler Rabinowitz have competed for national and international beauty queen titles, some with more success than others. With a few notable exceptions, such as Bess Myerson, the most successful

contestants in the large-scale contests were those who neither appeared stereotypically Jewish nor referenced their Jewishness publicly. In tracing the paths of several prominent Jewish beauty queens and their reception in various Jewish print media, this chapter aims to illuminate the ways in which the act of publicizing and politicizing the nexus of female beauty and Jewishness shaped the international Jewish community's construction of Jewish beauty. Particularly for German Jews of the late 1920s, who found themselves caught between a flourishing renewal of Jewish culture in the 1920s and the imminent Nazi rise to power, a great deal was at stake in bestowing another title upon beauty queens, of also labeling or metaphorically crowning them Jewish beauties. Indeed, questions about which physical features could be considered constitutive of Jewish female beauty continued to drive the inner-Jewish discourse about beauty queens from their reception in the international Jewish press in 1929 to Galler Rabinowitz's in the American Jewish media in 2011.

Global constructs of beauty norms have also been applicable to Jewish beauty queens. With a few notable exceptions, so-called Western nations have consistently chosen beauty queens who have appeared less discernibly Jewish and more in line with mainstream aesthetics. For the most part, Jewish contestants who won national and international beauty contests in the early twentieth century did not look "visibly Jewish" insofar as they did not possess many stereotypically Jewish features. In fact, the most successful among them were careful not to reveal their Jewishness before receiving a national title. Smaller-scale local pageants, in contrast, provided opportunities for women to display and even flaunt their supposedly Jewish looks in public. Time and again, local Jewish communities found ways to celebrate "Jewish-looking" women, in addition to expressing pride for other beauty queens with a Jewish background.

Jewish print media were especially likely to privilege a Jewish agenda and use women's bodies as vehicles for promoting Jewish aesthetic virtues. From among other print media sources aimed at Jewish readers, this chapter takes the Jewish press in Weimar Germany (1919–33) as a point of departure for analyzing how the politicization of Jewish ethnic beauty existed as a transnational phenomenon entirely distinct from national pride in Germany and other countries. For example, the best-selling German-language Jewish family newspaper of the time, the *Israelitisches Familienblatt*, offered no coverage whatsoever of the Miss Germany contest. Instead, it championed what it perceived to be Jewish aesthetic victories in other locations. Among the places in which Jewish women reigned in the early twentieth century were Europe, the United States, the “Universe,” a modern-day “Land of Judea” in Warsaw, Tel Aviv, and Buenos Aires. In the following, I demonstrate that the act of identifying beauty queens as Jewish also related directly to the construction of a global Jewish aesthetic identity. In the process of forming this identity, women were objectified and mobilized for expressly Jewish purposes, sometimes at the expense of their personal liberties.

Identifying Jewish Beauty

The search for beauty that is distinctly Jewish is complex and contingent on context. In the United States, at least, the category of “Jewishness” transcends the usual parameters of national, racial, ethnic, and religious distinctions. Physical beauty, which we might understand as embodied aesthetically pleasing qualities, constitutes a further category of analysis not easily defined because what is pleasurable to one person may be unpleasing to another. Even stereotypically Jewish features, which for our purposes could be defined as physical characteristics regularly identified in or ascribed to people with Jewish heritage, also encompass

a broad range of traits that vary according to region and ethnic background.³ Whereas some Jewish features might be considered beautiful—often exotically so—others are coded as undesirable and deemed in conflict with normative hegemonic beauty standards.

Within the cultural history of the United States and Europe, several distinctive bodily attributes have come to signify Jewishness, though not unproblematically. Jews and non-Jews alike tend to perceive dark hair, dark eyes, and physiognomic features such as “ethnically Jewish” noses as readily identifiable markers of Jewishness. Images of “the beautiful Jewess”—*die schöne Jüdin* (German) or *la belle juive* (French)—have long circulated in the Western social imaginary, frequently with negative connotations. Cultural theorists from Jean-Paul Sartre to Sander Gilman have elucidated the cultural and literary roles of beautiful Jewish women, who tend to be perceived as sensual and “oriental” or exotic.⁴ Prominent literary figures such as Sir Walter Scott’s Rebecca in *Ivanhoe* and Oscar Wilde’s Salomé in his play by the same name provide concrete representations of the extraordinary prominence held by beautiful Jewish women in nineteenth-century literature, for example.

Throughout history, the bodies of Jewish women have been paraded in front of various viewing publics and beauty contest judges, though their Jewishness has not been readily apparent in most cases. In fact, one of the first queens chosen for her beauty was a Jewish woman: the biblical figure of Queen Esther (circa 485 B.C.E.). According to biblical legend, the Persian King Ahasuerus selected Esther not because of or in spite of her Jewish background, which she had not disclosed initially, but rather due to her beauty and charm. This biblical story thus set an important precedent by positioning a Jewish woman as the most beautiful in the land; notably, Jewishness did not play a role in her victory. From Esther forward, many beautiful women chose not to publicize their Jewish background but rather wanted to be judged solely on their external

appearance, talent, and character. Only with the evolution of modern media were live beauty contests transformed into a more elaborate evaluation process involving initial photographic submissions and subsequent live presentations of finalists' bodies, talents, and personal stories.

The growing popularity of European beauty contests in the 1920s was closely linked to the beauty culture perpetuated in the United States, where ethnic and national tensions frequently played out in the public eye without the same outbursts of anti-Semitism that occurred in Europe. As the German-language, Jewish author and critic Joseph Roth wryly noted in 1930, beauty contests existed primarily “to determine the ‘national’ type and export it to America.”⁵ According to Roth, unsuspecting beauty queens of the late 1920s did not realize that they were the byproducts of a commodificatory process analogous to that of European colonialism. Roth argued that the only reason they were no longer called “beauty slaves” was because of changing times. Though he made no comment on Jewish beauty queens in particular, his observations about the privileging of national agendas over women's issues raised important questions about the political position of Jewish beauty queens.

Before the creation of the State of Israel in 1948, the conception of the Jewish woman as a “national type” was by nature a transnational, even global construction. Precisely because beautiful Jewish women did not represent a Jewish country, they were adopted as representatives for the Jewish people as a whole. Due to the unique position of Jews in global society, but also because of various manifestations of anti-Semitism, Jewish beauty queens were often excluded from opportunities afforded other early twentieth-century beauty queens. Some were pursued openly by rioting masses screaming anti-Semitic slurs; others were more subtly denied lavish prizes or opportunities to promote products for certain commercial sponsors. Several novels published in 1930 by European Jewish authors even offered literary reflections of power

struggles between beauty queens and their respective sponsors.⁶ Although not selected to represent specific commercial products, the images of Jewish beauty queens were nevertheless used to promote Jewish agendas.

But Jewish self-respect often came at the price of women's liberties. Whereas twentieth-century beauty queens might not have revealed their Jewish identity prior to winning, modern-day print media aimed at Jewish audiences deployed images of beauty queens to create a sense of community and pride vis-à-vis Jewish body aesthetics, which often came under fire or were underrepresented in the general media. These women were, in a sense, "enslaved" by Jewish periodicals for the purposes of promoting Jewishness at large. Indeed, it is useful to consider the reception of Jewish beauty queens in light of the theoretical framework adopted by postcolonial studies.⁷ Though Jews have defined Jewish beauty in response to the historical non-Jewish Other, which was itself a sort of colonizing force at times, beauty pageants also effectively demonstrated that Jews could win in at least one arena. For German Jews in particular, beauty contests enabled the construction of an ethnic Jewishness that could triumph over codified German or "Aryan" aesthetic norms, such as blond hair and blue eyes. In other words, every time a Jewish woman won a beauty contest, she disproved anti-Semitic allegations of Jewish inferiority. Jewish victories were perceived as acts of empowerment on the part of what postcolonial discourse would term subaltern or second-class Jewish subjects—yet at the same time, women were exploited in the struggle against the oppressors of Jews.

In using women to politicize and promote Jewishness on national and international levels, modern Jewish media created spectacles out of women's bodies. When Jewish women won international beauty contests such as Miss Europe or Miss Universe in 1929, the German-Jewish press argued that these women could trump the German beauty culture from which Jews were

often excluded. International beauty contests finally offered the prestige of public visibility as Jews that Jewish women were usually denied in Germany. Local and regional beauty contests, several of which were organized by Jewish newspapers in Warsaw, Tel Aviv, Hamburg, and Buenos Aires, created opportunities for Jewish women to be recognized and acknowledged as both beautiful and Jewish, with the ultimate goal of promoting Jewishness. The crowning of a Jewish Miss America in 1945 functioned as the culmination of an era in which European Jewish beauty could shine, while also serving to salvage the memory of Europe's recently decimated Jewish population. Nonetheless, although Bess Myerson earned worldwide recognition as a Jewish Miss America, her victory responded more to American interest in memorialization than the needs of the global Jewish community.

Miss Hungary and Miss Austria take the Jewish Universe by Storm

In 1929, two Central European Jewish beauty queens exemplified the aesthetic values for Jewish women that were promoted by the German-language Jewish press: modern, elegant, and not particularly visible as Jews. In light of rising anti-Semitism, Jewish women were instructed to appear modest and ambiguous enough so as not to draw attention to themselves as Jews. In fact, it was only after these women were crowned as national beauty queens that the Jewish press claimed them on behalf of Jewry. Beauty pageants were first mentioned prominently in the German-Jewish press in 1929, the first year in which two beautiful Central European Jewish women received international acclaim. The Jewish press sought to capitalize on the fact that Erzsébet "Böske" Simon (Miss Hungary, 1909–70) and Lisl Goldarbeiter (Miss Austria, 1909–97), who were crowned Miss Europe and Miss Universe, respectively, were both of Jewish

descent.⁸ Images of several other varieties of Jewish beauty queens also appeared in German-language Jewish media in the months following Simon's and Goldarbeiter's numerous victories.

With a broad readership of both women and men, the *Israelitisches Familienblatt* lionized the accomplishments of Jewish beauty queens on behalf of German Jews and European Jewry more broadly. In interwar Europe, the Jewish community consisted of a diverse array of Orthodox, Zionist, liberal, and acculturated Jews. Whereas some were deeply observant, the majority maintained ties to Jewishness through cultural or community connections, if at all. The Zionist movement in favor of the creation of a Jewish state gained support worldwide during the 1920s, and after the Nazi rise to power in 1933, it became a priority for a significant percentage of the Jewish population in Germany. The *Familienblatt's* supposedly non-partisan ideological underpinnings were not overtly Zionist in 1929, despite the Jewish "nationalist" agenda it supported in advocating for the superiority of Jewish beauty over that of other national and ethnic groups. The only Jewish paper in Germany to cover the victories of Jewish beauty queens extensively, the *Familienblatt*, devoted over ten articles to beauty queens from at least five different countries during a relatively short period, from February 1929 to May 1930. Though only a few of these women hailed from Germany, the *Familienblatt* upheld them as the embodiment of aesthetic ideals worthy of emulation. Unlike some of the women crowned Miss Germany who wore their hair braided, anticipating admiration in the 1930s for the "Aryan-style" *Gretchenzopf* (long braids) over the *Bubikopf* (pageboy bob), many Jewish beauty queens participated in the bobbed hair craze of the 1920s. Both Simon and Goldarbeiter wore their way light brown hair relatively short.⁹

Like the biblical Esther, Miss Hungary did not reveal her Jewishness until after she had already been selected as the national winner. Böske Simon was first crowned Miss Hungary in

Budapest, and then defeated women from seventeen countries to win the Miss Europe pageant in Paris in February 1929, which understandably earned her international attention from non-Jews and Jews alike. The general Hungarian press celebrated Simon's European victory as having brought honor to the Hungarian people. Parisian accolades notwithstanding, upon Miss Europe's return to Budapest, after it had become known that she was Jewish, Simon was terrorized by rioting anti-Semitic students, who taunted her with pejorative names such as "Miss Palestine" and prevented the local movie theater from showing a news reel about her victory.¹⁰ Even before it got news of these acts, the *Canadian Jewish Chronicle* anticipated anti-Semitic reactions to Simon's victory and used the occasion to debunk stereotypes about Jewish beauty. The article begins: "No longer will anti-Semitic jesters, and even Jews themselves, be able to point at a black-haired, dark-complexioned girl and say: 'There is a pure Jewish type!'" It goes on to describe Simon as "at once an intellectual and spiritual type" and the daughter of educated European Jewish professionals. More than once, this article cites rampant anti-Semitism in the United States as a reason why Simon could not win the title of Miss Universe.¹¹

Indeed, Lisl Goldarbeiter was also attacked and was even physically mobbed by angry crowds after being crowned Miss Universe, although not until she returned to Europe. Motivated by anti-Semitism and by the failure of Romanian contestant Magda Dimitrescu to win, the September 1929 Bucharest crowd that greeted Goldarbeiter reportedly screamed, "Magda is our weight! We want no slender beauty queens here!"¹² According to *Time* magazine, this expression of solidarity with the Romanian contestant was accompanied by a blatantly anti-Semitic remark: "Let's make her eat some pork!"¹³ Other sources such as the *New York Times* did not include this last remark, focusing more on Goldarbeiter's slender physique than on her Jewishness as a target of hate speech.

The German-Jewish press, for its part, emphasized the significance of Simon's and Goldarbeiter's victories for European Jewry in general, while objecting to the maltreatment of these women by non-Jews. For those with anti-Jewish proclivities, the crowning of beauty queens of Jewish descent served to reinforce anti-Semitic stereotypes about Jewish decadence and opulence because many beauty queens received lavish prizes such as fur coats and opportunities for film contracts.¹⁴ In response to Simon's negative reception in Budapest and to the slanderous articles published in the anti-Semitic *Völkischer Beobachter*, the *Familienblatt* editor Heinz Caspari rebutted accusations that Simon had been showered with luxuries in Paris. He claimed that the beauty queen never received her \$5,000 prize, and in lieu of the elegant clothes she modeled for Parisian fashion salons, she was merely given some powder compacts. For each prize she received, he explained, she was forced to promote a particular company. "She was exhibited as if she were in a zoo," the *Familienblatt* reported, alongside further explicit comparisons of beauty queens to objects and slaves, echoing Joseph Roth's contentions.¹⁵

{Place figure 7.1 approximately here.}

Yet despite its astute critique of the appropriation of beauty queens for ulterior purposes of commercialization, the German-Jewish press also co-opted these women to advance an agenda of Jewish aesthetic ascendancy. In the caption of a large front-page photograph of Simon (figure 7.1), the *Familienblatt* focused on the great pride she had reportedly declared for her Jewishness in a Hungarian-Jewish newspaper.¹⁶ Further, the paper assiduously reported that Böske Simon came from a religious Jewish home in which the Sabbath and holidays were strictly observed; supposedly her main desire was not to have a theater or film career, but simply to marry a Jewish man.¹⁷ Later, the paper announced her engagement, which it gave as the reason she declined participation in the Miss Universe competition, and featured a photograph of

her civil wedding to a Hungarian Jewish businessman.¹⁸ Not surprisingly, all of the *Familienblatt*'s observations about Simon's personal life were made in keeping with a relatively conservative approach to how Jewish women should construct their lives and careers. That said, many beauty queen contestants from a wide range of backgrounds have been expected to set traditional goals such as getting married and having a family.¹⁹

The Jewish press also charted Lisl Goldarbeiter's pageants and used them, along with Simon's, to interpret the significance of Jewish beauty, although Goldarbeiter herself does not seem to have identified much with the Jewish community until the late 1930s.²⁰ After submitting a photograph to the popular Viennese newspaper *Neues Wiener Tagblatt* and attending only one high tea event, Goldarbeiter was crowned the first Miss Austria in January 1929. Soon thereafter, she came in second to Simon in the Miss Europe competition, before winning the title of Miss Universe in Galveston, Texas on June 11, 1929. Though Goldarbeiter hardly openly acknowledged her own Jewishness, the *Familienblatt* persisted in explaining that her father was a Viennese Jew with a small clothing business and that a Jewish girl had been crowned the most beautiful in the world.²¹ Again, the Jewish press was concerned above all with promoting the Jewish people as aesthetically superior worldwide.

The beauty contests of the late 1920s rewarded women for their beauty on the basis of Jewish ethnicity, thereby discounting the significance of religious affiliation. This functioned as a reversal of the nineteenth-century model, which bestowed special privileges upon exceptionally "beautiful Jewesses" (such as the Berliners Henriette Herz and Rahel Varnhagen) only upon their conversion to Christianity. Still, the *Familienblatt* distanced itself from stereotypes about the power of physical beauty by offering a bizarrely hypocritical disclaimer about its interest in Simon and Goldarbeiter: "From a Jewish point of view, beauty of the face and body are not the

determining factors in appraising the Jewish woman.” Here a Jewish newspaper claimed to be uninterested in the corporeal qualities of beauty queens, yet precisely the bodies of these women sparked the (Jewish) public’s interest in them in the first place. The *Familienblatt* further maintained that it was interested solely in the fact that Hungary and Austria had extended crowns to Jewish women even though both countries openly discriminated against Jewish men on a regular basis. The article concluded: “And now, a real Austrian or Hungarian man ‘cannot tolerate a Jew[ish man] / But he gladly chooses their daughters.’”²² By concentrating on issues of gender difference, the German-Jewish press avoided dealing with the historical implications of linking Jewishness to extraordinary female beauty in Europe—namely, that numerous beautiful Jewish women had been persuaded to break with Jewish religious traditions in order to become better integrated into the majority culture.

At the same time, both general and Jewish newspapers created a mythology surrounding the “natural” beauty of Miss Universe in particular, though it was Goldarbeiter’s supposedly modest behavior, not her appearance, that the Jewish press ultimately declared Jewish, in addition to her father’s lineage. Along with mainstream Viennese newspapers, the *Familienblatt* contended that Lisl Goldarbeiter “never once used make-up, lipstick, or other beautification products.”²³ Böske Simon, too, was described as “so natural” that she refused to use cosmetics.²⁴ Within Jewish contexts, these statements were connected to the contemporary discourse as to whether it was safe and appropriate for Jewish women to wear extravagant or ostentatious clothing, jewelry, and make-up. In Weimar Germany, the Jewish press cautioned its readers not to flaunt their wealth or appear too conspicuous in public, especially when attending synagogue on Jewish holidays.²⁵

But the *Familienblatt*'s remark about Goldarbeiter foregoing make-up also notably undermined its disclaimer about the irrelevance of surface-level beauty for Jewish women, suggesting that so-called "natural" beauty played a major role in her warm reception by Jewish media. In its claim that she had become Miss Austria without the help of cosmetics, the *Familienblatt* tacitly argued that her ability to win renown for Jewish people was based solely on her unique look and, ironically, on her "genteel appearance" (*vornehme Erscheinung*), an allusion to Goldarbeiter's ability to pass for a bourgeois, non-Jewish Austrian.²⁶ In Goldarbeiter's case, beauty did not appear stereotypically Jewish at all: with chestnut-colored hair and grayish blue eyes, she was described as "aristocratic" and "ethereal."²⁷ Yet the *Familienblatt* pronounced her a "true Jewish daughter" when, out of modesty, she declined a profitable offer to appear onstage in New York in only a bathing suit; again, this reference to Jewishness correlated not to her appearance but to the restraint she exercised in her career.²⁸

The German-Jewish press thus upheld "Jewish beauty" as a site for the convergence of naturally pleasing features, bourgeois mannerisms, and engagement with Jewish customs and communities, all of which ultimately worked to promote the Jewish people as a whole. The most attractive "Jewish daughters" of Austria and Hungary were fancied as representative of the only "nation" that would fully accept them: the Jewish people. They styled themselves as queens by imitating aristocratic mannerisms, and by concealing their Jewishness. Whereas victorious Central European beauty queens did not appear legibly Jewish, they embraced some degree of Jewishness in their private lives, and they were certainly coded "Jewish enough" to aid in the Jewish project of gaining recognition for the Jewish people.²⁹

Reclamation of Jewish Spaces: Warsaw's Miss Judea and Tel Aviv's Purim Queens

Central European women were not the only ones charged with the task of representing the Jewish people. Several smaller, local contests held in Warsaw and Tel Aviv in the late 1920s named entirely different types of women the most representative Jewish beauties for their respective locations, thereby working toward reclaiming historically Jewish national spaces such as the biblical Land of Judea and Eretz Israel, or the Land of Israel. These local contests differed vastly from national and international pageants in that they were publicized only to a small group of Jews who for the most part supported claims of Jewish beauty. Winners of the Miss Judea contest in Warsaw and various Purim queen competitions in Tel Aviv were appointed specifically as representatives of Jewish beauty. Their bodies symbolized Jewishness in different ways, ranging from dark coloring to “exotic” features. {Place figure 7.2 approximately here.}

The 1929 Miss Judea contest, organized by the Polish-language Zionist daily newspaper in Warsaw, *Nasz Przegląd* (Our Review), showcased “typical Jewish beauty” not generally rewarded in general European pageants. In contrast to other European beauty queens, the majority of the finalists in line to become Miss Judea supposedly represented the perfect “Jewish type” and looked somewhat “oriental.” Most had darker hair and olive-colored complexions. Indeed, historian Eva Plach has argued compellingly that the Miss Judea pageant was “infused with a powerful language of race and nation, a language which was at once designed to strip Jewish features of their perceived pathology while celebrating the very concept of a ‘Jewish racial type.’”³⁰ The first and only Miss Judea, Zofia Oldak (or Zofja Oldakówna), who was crowned as a “typical Jewish beauty,” in fact possessed different coloring than her Central European Jewish counterparts. Moreover, she was pictured in both the Polish Jewish press (figure 7.2) and the German *Familienblatt* wearing the luxurious white ermine coat she had

received from a sponsor—no cash prizes or other gifts came with her ostensibly honor-bearing title—further exhibiting the freedom of Polish Jewish women to display wealth within Jewish circles.³¹

Unlike those Central European beauty queens who happened to have Jewish lineage, Miss Judea was chosen because of her discernibly Jewish looks. Miss Hungary and Miss Austria were both elected not because they embodied stereotypically Jewish beauty, but rather because they were perceived as the most beautiful women in their respective nation states. Just as Miss Hungary was praised for her ethnic Hungarian beauty, Miss Austria's cultured mannerisms were deemed exemplary of the bourgeois Viennese aesthetic. Oldak, in contrast, possessed features and coloring that perfectly constituted a kind of Jewish female type that could be read as East European: she was described as having dark large eyes, strong eyebrows, and dark hair. In part because of her dark coloring, Miss Judea was received in Warsaw as an icon of Jewish national pride. With the visage of the "oriental type," Oldak was adopted as the face of the diasporic Jewish nation. Her uncovered head and long hair corresponded to Zionist ideals of health and "Eastern" beauty, though her hairstyle did not fit the mold of the bobbed modern woman, which was also popular in Poland. On the day she was chosen, Miss Judea was reportedly greeted with cries of "Long live Miss Judea! Long live the Jewish nation!"³²

The national Jewish pride stoked by Miss Judea's victory prompted both inner-Jewish political turmoil in Warsaw and sympathy from the German-Jewish press. At the same time, although Oldak greatly appealed to certain Zionist groups, she caused a series of scandals within the Warsaw Jewish community. When a Jewish leader hosted a banquet in her honor at which he sang selections from *The Song of Songs*, Orthodox groups were scandalized by the profanation of religious texts and used this occurrence as an excuse for banning Oldak from attending religious

services in Warsaw. Yiddish-language periodicals in Poland satirized the scandal and made light of the power she held over the Polish-language Jewish press. In Germany, the *Familienblatt* reported that Miss Judea was spurned both by pious Warsaw factions and by certain Zionist factions. In accordance with the paper's unaffiliated nature, it made no mention of Oldak as a symbol of the Jewish nation, but in condoning the selection of an icon chosen for her "typically Jewish" appearance, the paper reiterated its desire to see representatives of Jewish beauty win such contests.³³ It reminded Jewish readers in Germany that women whose appearances were coded as discernibly Jewish were recognized and rewarded for their "Jewish looks" in several countries outside of Germany.

Other local contests to find a modern Queen Esther figure offered Jewish communities in Tel Aviv the opportunity to redefine and celebrate Jewish beauty. These competitions also presented an occasion to pay tribute to the survival of the Jewish people. Beginning in 1926, Tel Aviv hosted annual masquerade balls on the occasion of the Purim holiday, which traditionally uses readings from the Scroll of Esther to commemorate Esther's triumph over enemies of the Jewish people. Not surprisingly, the German-Jewish press first caught wind of these contests in 1929, after it had become clear that stories about beauty queens would sell more newspapers. Tellingly, the increasingly Zionist-leaning *Familienblatt* termed each Tel Aviv beauty Purim queen "Miss Palestine," as if she were representing a whole country in an international forum, though the actual goal of the contest was to find a Queen Esther for the annual Purim parade.

As part of its ethnographic attempt to showcase the diverse spectrum of Jewish looks, particularly in other countries where open displays of Jewishness seemed to be accepted, the *Familienblatt* featured Tel Aviv Purim queens in several different articles. Tzipporah Tzabari, born in Yemen and chosen as Queen Esther in 1928, was deemed extremely newsworthy. As

Bat-Sheva Margalit Stern has suggested, Yemenite Jews were perceived as “synonymous with ‘authentic’ biblical Jews, and Yemenite women, in particular, became the archetype of the ‘genuine’ Eretz Israel woman.”³⁴ For the *Familienblatt* and German Jews, too, Tzabari represented a kind of Jewish beauty that corresponded to the renewed interest in authentic Jewish culture that emerged during the Weimar Republic. Numerous articles on Yemenite and other Middle Eastern Jews testified to German-Jewish interest in “exotic” and authentic Jewish traditions.³⁵ Though it also mentioned Tel Aviv’s 1929 Purim queen, Chana Polani, who, like Tzabari, was selected from candidates all over the land as “the most beautiful and typical Jewess,” the *Familienblatt* expressed greater interest in Tzipporah Tzabari.³⁶ It planned an illustrated feature on Tzabari, noting that she had been offered an acting contract by a major Berlin film studio.³⁷

Such German-Jewish investment in beauty queens from Warsaw and Tel Aviv underscored the Central European fantasy of reclaiming Jewish national spaces during the interwar period, both in Zionist and figurative contexts. Perceived as representative of authentic Jewish beauty, the bodies of East European and Yemenite beauty queens exemplified the supposed superiority of Jewish ethnic heritage. Drawing on the need for a home where Jewish cultural heritage could flourish openly as such, interwar Jewry was able to make a strong case for spaces such as the ancient Land of Judea or the biblical Land of Israel to come under Jewish control.

German-Jewish Beauty from Hamburg to Buenos Aires

Within a German national context, German Jews in the late 1920s and early 1930s were inspired to find exemplary women and children who represented German-Jewish ethnic pride.

Interestingly, this same desire could be found among Argentinian Jews with strong ties to Germany and Western Europe. German Jews nominated and voted on local Purim queens and beautiful Jewish children, and in doing so consciously resisted contemporary notions of Jewish racial inferiority in a country that notably never crowned a Jewish Miss Germany. For Purim in March 1929, the *Familienblatt* sponsored a contest to find a local German version of Queen Esther. To become Miss Familienblatt, readers submitted photos of themselves wearing outfits made from fabric printed with pages of the *Familienblatt*.³⁸ Literally wrapped in this Jewish newspaper, the winners Hildegard Holland of Hamburg and Grete Sommer of Duisberg had their images reprinted in the *Familienblatt* a few weeks after Purim.³⁹ A 1930 derivative of traditional beauty contests asked mothers to send in photographs of their attractive Jewish children. This prize contest's description explained that one of its chief aims was to defy anti-Semitic attacks on Jewish aesthetics, declaring "the typical Jewish child is infinitely more beautiful, purely expressive, and noble of race than the nationalistic racial theorists can even imagine."⁴⁰

In locations where anti-Semitism persisted in comparable ways, such as Buenos Aires, Jewish periodicals reacted similarly to the German-Jewish *Familienblatt*. Anytime a Jewish woman was crowned as a prominent beauty queen, the Jewish press expressed its pride in her Jewishness, even if she had removed all traces of it in the public eye. As historian Sandra McGee Deutsch has uncovered in her research on Argentinian Jewish women, a beauty queen named Ana Rovner advanced relatively far in competing to become Miss Argentina in 1932, earning titles such as Miss Once and Miss Capital. Neither Rovner nor the mainstream media revealed her Jewish background to the public, though Jewish papers such as *Mundo Israelita* expressed support for the Jewish beauty queen. General-interest Argentinian papers instead focused on the

fact that the blond, light-skinned Rovner—whom they argued was of German descent—could “symbolize Argentine womanhood and represent whiteness.”⁴¹

Indeed, beauty queens who looked “non-Jewish” possessed the ability to symbolize a kind of racially pure whiteness that—through at least the mid-twentieth century—often was set in opposition to Jewishness. In Germany, no Jewish woman successfully passed as “non-Jewish enough” to become Miss Germany, though contests organized by the German-Jewish press gave Jewish women the opportunity to earn recognition among a national readership of German Jews. The German heritage attributed to the blond Ana Rovner was enough to advance her career as a Buenos Aires beauty queen. That she was perceived as non-Jewish and even German was paradoxically what enabled her to represent Argentinian women. Whereas non-Jewish (and white) women prevailed in the majority of national beauty competitions, including Miss America, through at least the mid-1940s, numerous scholars have argued that the reign of white beauty queens in the United States ended with the crowning of a Jewish Miss America in 1945.⁴²

Embodied Memorialization: Miss America 1945

After the Nazi attempt to obliterate European Jewry, the act of crowning a Jewish beauty queen became entangled with the politics of memory and the process of dealing with the past. Bess Myerson did not conceal her Jewishness, in contrast to most of the Jewish women who became beauty queens in Europe and Argentina. On the contrary, the fact that she was Jewish likely played a role in her victory. Not only part of an agenda to uphold Jewish values or ethnic characteristics, the crowning of Bess Myerson as Miss America on Saturday, September 8, 1945 instead represented an attempt by the pageant organizers and judges—perhaps for the sake of the

American public—to salvage the memory of European Jewry. At the same time, it also transformed Bess into “instantly the best-known Jewish woman in the world.”⁴³

During a historical moment when worldwide media were replete with stories of liberated Nazi death camps and images of emaciated survivors, tall and musically talented Myerson represented a different kind of surviving Jew: part proud European remnant, part all-American woman. The first and thus far only Jewish woman ever to receive the title of Miss America, Myerson (born 1924 in Bronx, New York) was the daughter of Russian Jewish immigrants and was raised speaking Yiddish at home in the Sholem Aleichem Cooperative Houses in the Bronx. She entered the Miss America pageant in order to win its first scholarship of \$5,000, having already won the title of Miss New York City. Media images of Myerson showcased her long legs, warm toothy smile, and dark hair and eyes, but it was her name that truly marked her as Jewish. Unlike many American Jews, she resisted pressure to make her name less ethnic-sounding, purposefully rejecting the proposed name “Betty Merrick.”⁴⁴

In the United States, both the general media and the Jewish media mobilized Myerson’s image, though with quite different outcomes. In light of the profiles of previous winners of the Miss America pageant, Myerson seemingly exploded dominant discourse around how a beautiful American woman should look and what kind of background she should have. Writing about beauty pageants in general, Sarah Banet-Weiser suggests that “the array of bodies on a beauty pageant stage serve as visual testimony for ascribing political subjectivity: each woman ‘represents’ the abstract characteristics of membership in the national imaginary of the United States. . . . The pageant contestants thus ‘prove’ the diversity of the American public, representing both the promise and the fantasy of citizenship.”⁴⁵ Indeed, the valorization of the Jewish body of Bess Myerson may have symbolized the relative acceptance of Jews in the

United States, and it surely preempted accusations of judging tainted by anti-Semitism. But it primarily served as a symbolic act of redemption following the Nazi genocide. Seen in this light, the fantasy that the crowning of Bess Myerson had signified a shift in American attitudes toward minority groups was in fact based on the shaky foundation of a one-time exception made in response to a widespread expectation of memorialization.

Predictably, New York Jewish print media focused on the fact that Myerson was both Jewish and cultivated. Her upbringing in the Bronx, combined with her music degree from Hunter College, made for the perfect image of Myerson as a nice Jewish girl. Her win caused a sensation in the New York City area in particular. The New York–based, Yiddish-language *Forverts*, aka the *Jewish Daily Forward*, ran captioned photographs of Myerson three days in a row during the following week, for example. Not unlike the German *Familienblatt*'s reception of the Hungarian beauty queen Böske Simon, one caption in the *Forward* clearly stated that Myerson was not interested in a film career.⁴⁶ Several other American Jewish newspapers emphasized Myerson's musical accomplishments on piano and flute in addition to her college degree.⁴⁷ The German-language exile paper *Aufbau*, which enjoyed a large Jewish readership in New York, expressed wonderment that an average Jewish girl could grow up to become Miss America, "the typical American girl."⁴⁸ But Myerson was not exactly the "typical" American girl; rather, at 5'10" (or 5'11", depending on the source), her long legs embodied immigrant upward mobility, wholesome values, and the promise of a new generation of young Jews—particularly in the wake of the final days of World War Two.⁴⁹

Exactly who stood to benefit from this act of memorialization was another matter. Though Myerson was celebrated by international Jewish audiences all over the world, the circumstances of her victory suggest that she was chosen only nominally in what could be read

as an act of American solidarity with the worldwide Jewish community. According to Myerson's biographer Susan Dworkin, celebratory cries of "Mazel tov!" rang out when Myerson won in Atlantic City. Jewish survivors reportedly remember hearing of Myerson's victory while still in European DP camps.⁵⁰ Yet despite its supposed investment in supporting Jewish interests, the Miss America pageant scheduled its final awards ceremony on a Saturday, the Jewish Sabbath, which also happened to be the first day of Rosh Hashanah, the Jewish New Year. Regardless of their levels of observance, Myerson and Jewish members of the audience might have wished to celebrate this important holiday at home with their families. That Myerson was crowned Miss America on a Saturday—and on Rosh Hashanah—suggests that the contest organizers were indifferent to Jewish religious and cultural concerns, even as they "overcame" anti-Semitism and crowned the first Jewish Miss America. But at the same time, this first day of the Jewish year 5706 marked a new age in which widespread public knowledge of a contestant's Jewishness would no longer prevent her from winning a major national beauty contest.

Conclusion

From the 1920s to the immediate postwar period, the process of crowning beauty queens and identifying them as Jewish underwent several major shifts. The act of mobilizing images of Miss Europe and Miss Universe in 1929 for the sake of European Jewry initially served an agenda of upholding the Jewish people as distinct from (or even superior to) dominant ethnic, religious, and national considerations. By way of symbolic reclamation of biblical Jewish spaces such as Judea and the Land of Israel, particularly in the guise of the triumphant Queen Esther, various Jewish print media—including Polish Zionist papers and the German-Jewish *Israelitisches Familienblatt*—demonstrated growing allegiance to a Jewish nationalist agenda.

With its extensive coverage of Jewish beauty queens, the *Familienblatt* mobilized images of women to promote a global Jewish aesthetic. In doing so, it subjected Jewish women to an act that, in its appropriation and imposition of aesthetic norms, resembled colonization: women became objects that were commodified, exported, sold, and promoted for Jewish ethnic and national marketing purposes. Their images were advertised and mass-marketed to young girls all over the world. Jewish body aesthetics were thus imported from the general public sphere of beauty contests into the Jewish press, where they were presented to Jewish readers in a different light. The idea that Jewish women were some of the most beautiful in the world was reinforced by this press coverage, which effectively put Jewish beauty on display and instructed readers how to interpret it. Contests featured in the best-selling *Familienblatt* further confirmed the need to counteract racial stereotypes about Jews in Germany. In Buenos Aires, too, “German beauty” was considered superior to Jewish beauty in the 1930s.

Finally, the crowning of a Jewish Miss America in 1945 functioned as a symbolic act of remembrance, though her case remained distinct from the European contests of the 1920s and represented a unique moment in Miss America pageant history. Myerson was crowned as a Jewish beauty in part because of her heritage and her appearance. No longer a representative of the Jewish aesthetic that prevailed in Germany and Central Europe before the war, her body instead offered a site of recuperation and memorialization, ostensibly for the Jewish people on some level, but in practice for Americans at large, suggesting an implicit desire to distinguish between America and the rest of the war-torn 1945 world.

Becoming a postwar beauty queen in a sense became similar to a “postcolonial” act, to expand the satirical argument of Joseph Roth. Arguably an iteration of reparations made to Jewish war victims, identifying beauty queens as Jewish also salvaged and promoted a Jewish

minority aesthetic in the wake of the Shoah. At the precise moment when everyone, and especially Jews, wanted a heroine to help them envision the future of the Jewish people, they were given a modern Queen Esther in memory of those who were murdered. Following in the footsteps of the Jewish beauty queens of the interwar period, Bess Myerson continued the tradition of promoting Jewish beauty and redefining what it meant to be a Jewish beauty queen. And similar to coverage in Jewish print media of the 1920s, various Jewish presses of 1945 performed the act of depicting and disseminating postwar Jewish aesthetic ideals to a diverse Jewish readership. Despite the progress made in the 1940s and subsequent decades, the United States has yet to crown its second Jewish Miss America. With the ever-shifting aesthetic paradigms that result from increasing globalization, perhaps a time will come when national beauty standards will be more likely to celebrate what we might broadly term ethnic beauty.

¹ Christopher Muther, “Miss Mass. Refuses to Miss Out,” *The Boston Globe*, January 13, 2011, http://www.boston.com/lifestyle/articles/2011/01/13/miss_mass_refuses_to_miss_out. Notably, in a postcompetition statement for *Moment*, an independent Jewish magazine, Loren Galler Rabinowitz addressed her Jewishness more explicitly than in the *Boston Globe*: “Being the only Jew in most of the arenas I enter—be they skating rinks or the Miss America stage—has forced me to confront, head-on, the positives and negatives of being different in a world where there is a high premium on fitting in. By bravely taking up the work of our predecessors, that is, the fight against bigotry and prejudice, my generation of Jews is redefining success on its own terms.” Daphna Berman, “What Does It Mean to Be Jewish Today? What Do Jews Bring to the World? A Moment Magazine Symposium,” *Moment*, May/June 2011, 45, <http://www.oldsite.momentmag.net/moment/issues/2011/06/symposion.html>.

² Jessica Leigh Lebos (aka Head Yenta), “A Jewish Miss America—What Are the Chances?,” *Yo, Yenta!*, January 12, 2011, <http://www.yoyenta.com/?p=3551>.

³ My use of the term “ethnic” follows recent works in German-Jewish cultural studies that interpret Jewish ethnic difference as a culturally constructed phenomenon; such constructions are often grounded in racial, genetic, and/or cultural differences. See, for example, Jay Geller, *The Other Jewish Question: Identifying the Jew and Making Sense of Modernity* (New York, 2011); and Lisa Silverman, *Becoming Austrians: Jews and Culture between the World Wars* (New York, 2012).

⁴ See Jean-Paul Sartre, *Anti-Semite and Jew*, trans. George J. Becker (New York, 1995), 48–49; and Sander L. Gilman, “Salome, Syphilis, Sarah Bernhardt, and the Modern Jewess,” *The Jew in the Text: Modernity and the Construction of Identity*, ed. Linda Nochlin and Tamar Garb (London, 1995), 97–120. On the “beautiful Jewess” in German literature, see Florian Krobb, *Die schöne Jüdin: Jüdische Frauengestalten in der deutschsprachigen Erzählliteratur vom 17. Jahrhundert bis zum Ersten Weltkrieg* (Tübingen, 1993).

⁵ Joseph Roth, “Die Schönheitskönigin,” *Werke 2. Das journalistische Werk 1929–1939*, ed. Klaus Westermann (Cologne, 1989), 170. Originally published in *Münchener Neueste Nachrichten* on February 14, 1930.

⁶ One novel serialized in the German-Jewish newspaper *Israelitisches Familienblatt* by Dutch Jewish author Levy Grunwald describes the power that a fictional American beauty queen holds over a Jewish factory owner in New York. Levy Grunwald, *Die Schönheitskönigin, Israelitisches Familienblatt*, 1930, serialized in nos. 27–39, trans. from Dutch into German by the *Israelitisches Familienblatt* editor Heinz Caspari. Following the actual victory of the Viennese-born Jewish beauty queen Lisl Goldarbeiter in the 1929 Miss Universe contest, a novel by Viennese Jewish author Kurt Sonnenfeld depicts the victory world tour of a fictional Austrian beauty queen named Anna Littmann, who has just been crowned Miss Universe in New York. Kurt Sonnenfeld, *Fräulein Narziss: Der Roman einer Schönheitskönigin* (Vienna, 1930).

⁷ Within postcolonial studies, I refer to the work of the theorists Frantz Fanon, Homi K. Bhabha, and Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak, among others.

⁸ Very little biographical information is available about Böske Simon. Recent Hungarian blog posts and web articles suggest that she divorced and remarried, and that she died in 1970. Additionally, several sources describe her as blond-haired and pale-faced.

⁹ The first woman crowned Miss Germany in 1927, Hildegard Quandt (also: Kwandt), notably wore her hair in long dark blond braids despite the extreme popularity of the *Bubikopf* among other contestants. Though the 1928, 1929, and 1930 Miss Germany winners all wore their hair short, 1931 marked a return to more traditional long braids. On the Miss Germany contest, see Veit Didczuneit and Dirk Külow, *Miss Germany: Die deutsche Schönheitskönigin* (Hamburg, 1998). On Nazi praise for the *Gretchenopf*, see Elisabeth Brainin, Vera Ligeti, and Samy Teicher, *Vom Gedanken zur Tat: Zur Psychoanalyse des Antisemitismus* (Frankfurt am Main, 1993), 124; and Geller, *The Other Jewish Question*, 85–86.

¹⁰ H[einz] C[aspari], “Arme Miß Europa!,” *Israelitisches Familienblatt*, April 4, 1929, 2. See also “Anti-Semites Annoy ‘Miss Europe,’” *The New York Times*, March 31, 1929.

¹¹ Renee Straus, “A Jewess Becomes Miss Europe: A Sketch of Elizabeth Simon,” *Canadian Jewish Chronicle*, April 5, 1929, 5. Although she originally planned to enter the competition, Böske Simon did not compete in the Miss Universe contest in Galveston, Texas.

¹² “‘Miss Universe’ Jeered in Rumania as Too Thin: Austrian Jewish Beauty Seeks Refuge in Cathedral and Police Rescue Her,” *The New York Times*, August 30, 1929.

¹³ “Rumania: Miss Universe Mobbed,” *Time*, September 9, 1929.

¹⁴ On the nexus of beauty queens and the 1920s film industry, see Mila Ganeva, *Women in Weimar Fashion: Discourses and Displays in German Culture, 1918–1933* (Rochester, NY, 2008).

- ¹⁵ H[einz] C[aspari], “Arme Miß Europa!,” *Israelitisches Familienblatt*, April 4, 1929), 2. Another article elaborated on the promotion offers she had received, noting without criticism that “[Simon] was also besieged by representatives of various manufacturing plants who offered her their products if she would only use them. Cars, soaps, dresses, everything that a fashionable woman might be apt to recommend to her friends were brought to the Hotel Raphael, where she was staying. She took advantage of one of the cars.” Straus, “Jewess Becomes Miss Europe,” 5.
- ¹⁶ “Die schönste Frau Europas—eine Jüdin,” *Israelitisches Familienblatt*, February 21, 1929, 15.
- ¹⁷ “Miß Europa möchte heiraten,” *Israelitisches Familienblatt*, March 14, 1929, 14.
- ¹⁸ “Miß-Europa-Epilog,” *Israelitisches Familienblatt*, April 24, 1929, 3; and “Miß Europa hat sich verheiratet,” *Israelitisches Familienblatt*, January 9, 1930, 56.
- ¹⁹ Criticizing this trend, the feminist theorist Laura Mulvey derisively described the 1970 Miss World competition as “a public celebration of the traditional female road to success.” This observation held true for the majority of twentieth-century beauty contests. Laura Mulvey, *Visual and Other Pleasures*, 2nd ed. (Basingstoke, UK, 2009), 3.
- ²⁰ Lisl Goldarbeiter and her parents fled Vienna to escape persecution in conjunction with the Nazi annexation of Austria. Lisl’s father, a Viennese Jew, was ultimately murdered by the Nazis. Lisl and her mother Louise, who was Protestant, supposedly possessed “Aryan” papers and therefore were not interned in the Jewish ghetto in the Hungarian city of Szeged, where they were living when the deportation of Hungarian Jews began in 1944. For additional biographical information, see the documentary film *Miss Universe 1929—Lisl Goldarbeiter: A Queen in Wien*, directed by Péter Forgács (Budapest, 2006), DVD.
- ²¹ “Auch ‘Miss Austria’ eine Jüdin,” *Israelitisches Familienblatt*, February 21, 1929, 15.
- ²² Ibid.
- ²³ Ibid. See also, for example, “Schönheitskönigin der Welt—Ohne Schminke, ohne Puder, ohne Lippenstift,” *Wiener Allgemeine Zeitung Sechs-Uhr-Blatt*, June 13, 1929.
- ²⁴ Straus, “Jewess Becomes Miss Europe,” 5.
- ²⁵ On the controversy surrounding Jews and conspicuous dress, see Kerry Wallach, “Weimar Jewish Chic: Jewish Women and Fashion in 1920s Germany,” *Fashioning Jews: Clothing, Culture, and Commerce*, ed. Leonard Greenspoon (West Lafayette, IN, 2013).
- ²⁶ “Lisl Goldarbeiter als schönste Frau der Welt erklärt,” *Israelitisches Familienblatt*, June 20, 1929, 16.
- ²⁷ “International: Lovely Lisl,” *Time*, June 24, 1929.
- ²⁸ “Die moralische Schönheitskönigin,” *Israelitisches Familienblatt*, June 27, 1929, 16.
- ²⁹ I borrow the term “Jewish enough” from historian Darcy Buerkle. See Darcy Buerkle, “Gendered Spectatorship, Jewish Women and Psychological Advertising in Weimar Germany,” *Women’s History Review* 15, no. 4 (September 2006): 625–36, here 631.
- ³⁰ Eva Plach, “Introducing Miss Judaea 1929: The Politics of Beauty, Race, and Zionism in Inter-War Poland,” *Making Holocaust Memory*, Polin: Studies in Polish Jewry 20, ed. Gabriel Finder et al. (Oxford, UK, 2008), 368–91, here 369.
- ³¹ “Die Vielumstrittene Fr. Sofie Oldack,” *Israelitisches Familienblatt*, May 7, 1929. A photograph of Miss Judaea also appeared in the Polish Zionist feminist publication *Ewa* on April 7, 1929.
- ³² Plach, “Introducing Miss Judaea 1929,” 374; the author writes extensively about the role of the Miss Judaea pageant in supporting a Zionist national agenda. See also Eddy Portnoy, “Move Over, Miss Polonia,” *Guilt and Pleasure* 2 (2006): 113–19, http://www.guiltandpleasure.com/index.php?site=rebootgp&page=gp_article&id=90.
- ³³ See “Prophete rechts, Prophete links . . . Zweifrontenkrieg gegen die polnische ‘Miß Judäa,’” *Israelitisches Familienblatt*, April 24, 1929, 3; and “Miss Judäa in Acht und Bann,” *Israelitisches Familienblatt*, May 23, 1929, 16.
- ³⁴ Bat-Sheva Margalit Stern, “Who’s the Fairest of Them All? Women, Womanhood, and Ethnicity in Zionist Eretz Israel,” *NASHIM: A Journal of Jewish Women’s Studies and Gender Issues* 11 (Spring 2006): 142–63, here 146. See also Nili Aryeh-Sapir and Michal Held, “‘Vatilbash Malkhut’: ‘Malkat Esther’ shel Karneval Purim B’Tel Aviv – Sipur Ishi V’iguno B’heksher Tarbuti” (‘And she dressed royally’: ‘Queen Esther’ of the Tel Aviv Purim Carnival – A Personal Story and its Anchoring in a Cultural Context), *Massekhet* 8 (2008): 97–114 (in Hebrew).
- ³⁵ See, for example, E. C. “Die yemenitischen Juden,” *Israelitisches Familienblatt*, February 6, 1930, 70, which included five different illustrations of Yemenite Jews.
- ³⁶ On Tel Aviv’s Purim queens, see Batia Carmiel, *Tel Aviv in Costume and Crown: Purim Celebrations in Tel Aviv, 1912–1935* (Tel Aviv, 1999), here vii. Incidentally, the *Familienblatt* also reprinted an unidentified photograph of Chana Polani (also: Chana Mejuches-Polani or Hana Meyuhas-Polani) in its Purim 1930 issue; see “Purim in Tel-Awiw,” *Israelitisches Familienblatt*, March 13, 1930, 86.

- ³⁷ “Miss Palästina,” *Israelitisches Familienblatt*, March 14, 1929, 14. My spellings of Hebrew names are English transliterations. In the *Familienblatt*, Tzabari’s name is (mis)spelled as “Zippora Zabbarit.” This article from March 14 references a March 21, 1929 issue of the *Familienblatt*’s illustrated supplement, in which Tzabari’s photograph was slated to appear, although this supplement is missing from all the microfilm versions that I was able to access.
- ³⁸ “Zu Purim: ‘Miss Familienblatt,’” *Israelitisches Familienblatt*, March 7, 1929, 16.
- ³⁹ “Unser Purim-Wettbewerb,” *Israelitisches Familienblatt*, April 11, 1929, 12.
- ⁴⁰ “Unser neues Preisausschreiben: Das schöne jüdische Kind,” *Israelitisches Familienblatt*, September 11, 1930, 13. On prize contests such as this one, see Kerry Wallach, “Was auf dem (jüdischen) Spiel stand: Die Preisausschreiben der jüdischen Presse in der Weimarer Republik,” in *Nicht nur Bildung, nicht nur Bürger: Juden in der Populärkultur*, ed. Klaus Hödl (Innsbruck, 2013), 45–62.
- ⁴¹ McGee Deutsch suggests that Ana Rovner was in fact of Russian and not German descent, but that identifying her Russian background would have marked her as Jewish. Sandra McGee Deutsch, *Crossing Borders, Claiming a Nation: A History of Argentine Jewish Women, 1880–1955* (Durham, NC, 2010), 68–69, here 69; see also 274n91.
- ⁴² See, for example, Sarah Banet-Weiser, “Miss America, National Identity, and the Identity Politics of Whiteness,” *“There She Is, Miss America”: The Politics of Sex, Beauty, and Race in America’s Most Famous Pageant*, ed. Elwood Watson and Darcy Martin (New York, 2004), 67–89.
- ⁴³ Hasia R. Diner and Beryl Lieff Benderly, *Her Works Praise Her: A History of Jewish Women in America from Colonial Times to the Present* (New York, 2002), 287.
- ⁴⁴ Susan Dworkin, *Miss America, 1945: Bess Myerson’s Own Story* (New York, 1987), 93–94.
- ⁴⁵ Sarah Banet-Weiser, *The Most Beautiful Girl in the World: Beauty Pageants and National Identity* (Berkeley, CA, 1999), 159–60.
- ⁴⁶ “Ven di idishe shehneyt Bess Myerson,” *Forverts/The Jewish Daily Forward*, September 11, 1945, 8.
- ⁴⁷ See “Miss America 1945,” *The Jewish Standard*, October 5, 1945, 8; and “Juedin aus New York wird ‘Miss America of 1945,’” *The Jewish Way*, September 16, 1945, 3.
- ⁴⁸ V[era] C[raener], “Miss America 1945: Bess Myerson—Kind jüdischer Immigranten,” *Aufbau Reconstruction*, September 14, 1945, 32.
- ⁴⁹ Jennifer Preston reports that Bess claimed to be an inch shorter than her actual height of 5’11” on the contest registration forms. See Jennifer Preston, *Queen Bess: An Unauthorized Biography of Bess Myerson* (Chicago, IL, 1990), 28.
- ⁵⁰ Susan Dworkin, *Miss America, 1945*, 149 and 7. Myerson herself claimed that there had been members of the Atlantic City audience in September 1945 with numbers on their arms who had survived the camps, though the validity of this claim has not been confirmed. I am indebted to historian Kathy Peiss for her recounting of this anecdote, which pertains to a statement Myerson made while filming a 2002 TV documentary. See *Miss America*, VHS, directed by Lisa Ades (Clio Inc. & Orchard Films Production for American Experience, PBS Home Video, 2002).