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Writing, and Reading, about Salman Schocken¹

In the past fifty years, a number of works about Salman Schocken and his activities have appeared, including books on the Schocken Verlag and the Schocken department stores, all of which have been published in German, and an English-language biography. These studies range from specialized monographs to volumes for the general reader, but whatever their focus, they reflect the captivating drama of the Schocken story. A review of these studies illustrates important features of the historian's enterprise, including the roles of archival and eyewitness sources, the transmission of the historian's craft from one generation to the next, and the importance of knowledgeable reviewers for an accurate assessment of historical writing.

In den letzten fünfzig Jahren wurde eine Vielzahl von Publikationen zur Person Salman Schocken veröffentlicht. Darunter befinden sich Monografien, sowie Bücher für den allgemeinen Leser und außerdem solche, die sich mit dem Schocken Verlag sowie den Schocken Kaufhäusern befassen. Neben Publikationen in deutscher Sprache, wurde auch eine Biografie in englischer Sprache veröffentlicht. Die genannten Veröffentlichungen haben eines gemeinsam: sie gewähren Einblick in die dramatische Geschichte Salman Schockens, die viele Leser in ihren Bann zieht. Ein Überblick dieser Publikationen unterteilt die wichtigsten Facetten des Handwerkes eines jeden Historikers: unter anderem die entscheidende Rolle von Archiven und Augenzeugenberichten, das Weitergeben von Erfahrungswerten und methodischen Kenntnissen an die nächste Generation, sowie die Bedeutung sachkundiger Rezensenten für eine sorgfältige Beurteilung geschichtswissenschaftlicher Arbeiten.

Historians have long understood that the writing of history itself has its own history, and that this secondary history has much to say about the writers, and the readers, of the primary accounts. A telling case in point is the trajectory of studies over the last fifty years about Salman Schocken – German Zionist, department store magnate, bibliophile, publisher, and cultural philanthropist.

Although Schocken was in many ways unique in almost every facet of his life, his approach to Jewish culture had much in common with that of German Zionism. It drew some its strength from the movement, and also contributed significantly to it.

¹ An earlier version of this paper was presented at the Internationale Tagung "Salman Schocken – Archäologie eines deutsch-jüdischen Lebens und seines Kontextes" at the Staatliches Museum für Archäologie Chemnitz, October 7–9, 2013. I would like to express my thanks to the organizers of that conference for their invitation, which prompted this retrospective overview, and for their permission to publish this revised version in *MEDAON*.

German Zionism was unusual because of the interaction between its view of Jews as a *Volk* (rather than mainly a religious group), and the growing German inclination to regard the *Volk* as the basis for political identity. This trend in Germany called into question the view held by most German Jews that they were ‘German citizens of the Jewish faith’ (as expressed in the name of the largest German-Jewish organization, the *Centralverein deutscher Staatsbürger jüdischen Glaubens*). If Jews could not be part of the German *Volk*, the Zionists argued that they could see themselves as a *Volk* of their own, with their own rich heritage.²

The connection between Jewish culture and Jewish identity was the basis for Schocken’s early entry into Jewish publishing, as head of the Zionist Association’s Committee for Jewish Cultural Work in 1916. It was also an important motive for his launching in the late 1920s of his own publishing house, the Schocken Verlag, which played an outsized role in the life of German Jewry during the challenging years between 1933 and 1938.

The first historical survey of Schocken’s life and work appeared in an account published by his long-time associate Siegfried Moses in 1960.³ Then, twelve years later I published the first major study devoted entirely to the history of the Schocken Verlag.⁴ Since then the field of Schocken studies has grown considerably, and now, after a half-century, it is possible to look back on a number of important works, particularly four book-length studies devoted entirely to Schocken or to his main activities, and several volumes that have appeared on individual stores within the Schocken chain.⁵

The study that stands first on this list, in both its timing and its significance, is the history of the Schocken Verlag that Volker Dahm published a few years after my own.⁶ It is a masterful achievement by an accomplished historian. It is also definitive, in the sense that it provides a comprehensive foundation for any work that will be done on this subject in the future.

² This relationship between Zionism and Jewish identity is the subject of my study *Zionism in Germany, 1897–1933: The Shaping of a Jewish Identity*, Philadelphia 1977. German Zionism was also unusual among the western branches of the movement for its formal embrace of Aliyah, emigration to the homeland in Zion, as a personal obligation. This contrasted with the more widespread view in the West that the Zionist homeland would serve primarily as a refuge for the much larger and more severely challenged Jewish communities of Eastern Europe.

³ Moses, Siegfried: *Salman Schocken – His Economic and Zionist Activities*, in: *Leo Baeck Institute Year Book*, 5 (1960), pp. 73–104.

⁴ Poppel, Stephen: *Salman Schocken and the Schocken Verlag: A Jewish Publisher in Weimar and Nazi Germany*, in: *Leo Baeck Institute Year Book* 17 (1972), pp. 93–113; and in: *Harvard Library Bulletin* 21,1 (January 1973), pp. 20–49; translated as: *Salman Schocken und der Schocken Verlag*, in: *Philobiblon: Vierteljahrsschrift für Buch- und Graphik-Sammler* 17 (1973), pp. 231–56.

⁵ A search of library catalogues under the subject category or keyword “Schocken” produces many results that do not fall within the scope of this review. The largest number are works with “Schocken” in the title because they have been published by Schocken Books in New York. A few relate to books about Salman Schocken’s brother Julius, a merchant in Bremerhaven, and his wife, Jeanette, and the dedication of their residence, and the establishment of a literary prize, in their memories: Happel, Hans Eberhard: *Schocken – Eine deutsche Geschichte*, Bremerhaven 1988; Lehrke, Gisele et al.: *Jeanette Schocken Preis – 20 Jahre Bremerhavener Bürgerpreis für Literatur. Eine Dokumentation*, Bremerhaven 2010. Many of the entries for “Schocken” in Worldcat.org are auction catalogues relating to sales of parts of Schocken’s personal library after his death.

⁶ Dahm, Volker: *Das jüdische Buch im Dritten Reich. Sonderdruck aus dem “Archiv für Geschichte des Buchwesens”*, 2 vols., Frankfurt a. M. 1979–1981.

Dahm's book, *Das jüdische Buch im Dritten Reich*, is actually a dual history, in which the story of the Schocken Verlag is firmly situated within the larger context of Jewish publishing in the Third Reich—with attention to Jewish authors and booksellers as well as publishers. Regarding the Verlag itself, Dahm first laid out the basic story in chronological order, and then built on that framework with a topical consideration of such important subjects as production, distribution and marketing, and censorship. The book is full of thoughtful analysis, including an assessment of the response by German Jewry to the Verlag's publications.

From a practical point of view the achievements of the Verlag rested on the financial support that Schocken provided, from the fortune generated by his successful department store chain. Those stores are the subject of Konrad Fuchs's 1990 study *Ein Konzern aus Sachsen*.⁷ Like Dahm, Fuchs understood the need to put the Schocken story in its larger context—in this case the revolutionary emergence of the department store in Europe generally, and in Germany particularly, and the social dislocation and political opposition that followed.

Also like Dahm, Fuchs has a satisfying narrative arc to follow, tracing the Schocken store enterprise from its origins to its end. But for all their similarities, these books diverge in one major regard—the scale is completely different. Dahm produced a long, five-hundred page book⁸ about what, after all, was a small publishing house that operated for less than a decade. On the other hand, Fuchs's shorter, three-hundred page history covers a giant enterprise that lasted for fifty years. To be sure, German business history is a much better developed field overall than German-Jewish book publishing, so Fuchs's contribution fits into a well-established context, while Dahm had to provide one of his own.

One of the broader contexts for Fuchs's book is the history of commercial architecture as a whole, and Fuchs's study of the Schocken *Konzern* is flanked by a number of works on specific stores in the Schocken chain.⁹ Schocken's innovative approach to business strategy included an innovative approach to design and architecture, leading to his choice of Erich Mendelsohn to design the large stores opened in the firm's later years, in Nürnberg (1926), Stuttgart (1928), and Chemnitz (1930).¹⁰

Thilo Richter's account of the Chemnitz store, designed by the modernist architect Erich Mendelsohn, is in essence a biography of a building that still stands,

⁷ Fuchs, Konrad: *Ein Konzern aus Sachsen. Das Kaufhaus Schocken als Spiegelbild deutscher Wirtschaft und Politik 1901–1953*, Stuttgart 1990.

⁸ I refer to the size of the second, 1993 edition, rather than the more elaborately illustrated first edition, whose two-columns-per-page format makes it not comparable with the more conventional layout of Fuchs's book. See Dahm, Volker: *Das jüdische Buch im Dritten Reich*, 2nd rev. ed., München 1993. The figures for page count are rounded.

⁹ In addition to the single-store accounts that I mention in what follows, others appeared, respectively, on the Cottbus store: Scharnholz, Lars: *Kaufhaus Schocken Cottbus*, Leipzig 2000; and the Freiberg store: Düsing, Michael: *Das Freiburger Kaufhaus Schocken. Eine Spurensuche*, Freiberg 2007.

¹⁰ See Dahm, *Das jüdische Buch*, 1993, pp. 237–38. Oddly, although Schocken's association with Mendelsohn appears in almost everything written about Schocken, Fuchs does not mention Mendelsohn at all. I have given the dates of the stores' openings as stated in Fuchs, *Ein Konzern*, 1990, pp. 138–152, rather than the dates of their construction as listed in Dahm.

now repurposed as a museum of archeology.¹¹ The fate of the Stuttgart store, also designed by Mendelsohn, was less fortunate: it was demolished in 1960 by its owners, the Horton chain, to make way for a nondescript big box that provided more floor space. The plans to tear down the Stuttgart store aroused considerable opposition. Even though the preservationist effort to save this landmark failed, the episode left lasting memorials in the form of a cluster of books on the store and its demise.¹²

One can speculate that the movement to save the Stuttgart store, which was launched partly by the department of architecture of the local Technische Hochschule, and the zeal to record it, were part of the rebellion by the postwar generation against the perceived materialist complacency of its elders and their desire to obliterate memories of the past.¹³

All the books mentioned so far are by German authors, and were published in Germany. This should not be surprising. After all, there is no question that the Schocken story is a German one, whether it's seen as part of German-Jewish publishing, or German commerce, or German architecture.

What is surprising is that the book I come to next, *Der Schocken Verlag/Berlin*, was published outside of Germany. It appeared as a companion to a 1994 exhibition on the Verlag that was mounted by the National Library of Luxemburg, in conjunction with a conference on Jewish self-perception in Germany.¹⁴

¹¹ Richter, Tilo: Erich Mendelsohns Kaufhaus Schocken. Jüdische Kulturgeschichte in Chemnitz, Leipzig 1998.

¹² These include fairly straightforward accounts by Palmer, Renate: *Der Stuttgarter Schocken-Bau von Erich Mendelsohn. Die Geschichte eines Kaufhauses und seiner Architektur*, Tübingen 1995, and Ralle, Petra: *Konsequenz Abriss. Das (un-)vermeidbare Ende des Kaufhauses Schocken von Erich Mendelsohn in Stuttgart*, Stuttgart 2002, as well as a somewhat quirky volume by Herbstreuth, Peter, et al.: *Schocken: Veronika Kellndorfer*, Stuttgart 2001, published in connection with a commemorative exhibition in 2001, which is more of an historical-esthetic meditation than a conventional narrative.

¹³ See Ralle, *Konsequenz Abriss*, 2002, p. 13, for other possible motivations for the demolition.

¹⁴ Schreuder, Saskia/Weber, Claude (eds.): *Der Schocken Verlag Berlin. Jüdische Selbstbehauptung in Deutschland, 1931–1938*, Berlin 1994. Both projects were initiatives of Dr. Claude Weber, the head of the Library's philosophy department. Since the volume contains only limited information on its origins and context, I provide here in a slightly paraphrased form the fuller description given to me by its co-editor, Dr. Saskia Schreuder (e-mail, August 26, 2013): "The initiative [for the exhibition] came from Dr. Claude Weber, head of the philosophy collection at the BNL [Bibliothèque nationale de Luxembourg]. Dr. Weber is [a] philosopher [...] interested in Jewish culture history. He has a huge collection of Schocken books. Dr. Weber and I were friends. I was working at this time on my thesis about Jewish literature in Nazi Germany. During a conversation about this subject Dr. Weber proposed to organize a congress on Jewish self-perception. The symposium *La prise de conscience de l'identité juive / Jüdische Selbstwahrnehmung / Jewish self-perception (1870–1939)* took place on October 2–6, 1994 and was organized by the BNL in cooperation with the Leo Baeck Institute London, the Lehr- und Forschungsgebiet Deutsch-jüdische Literaturgeschichte des Germanistischen Instituts der Technischen Universität Aachen and the faculty of Hebrew Literature and Comparative Literature of the University of Haifa. The scientific directors were Prof. Dr. Charlotte Wardi (University of Haifa), Prof. Dr. Hans Otto Horch (RWTH Aachen), and Prof. Dr. Werner E. Mosse (LBI London). In addition to this congress Dr. Weber and I composed the exhibition "Dem suchenden Leser unserer Tage" *Der Schocken Verlag/ Berlin. Jüdische Selbstbehauptung in Deutschland, 1931–1938*. Claude Weber and I wrote the comments to the objects, [and] we were assisted by Silke Schaeper, who worked at the Schocken Archives in Jerusalem and Frank Grunert, a philosopher from Münster, Germany." The Schocken Verlag also had a place in an exhibition about Jewish publishing during the first five years of the Third Reich presented by The Schiller National Museum in Marbach in 1983. See Belke, Ingrid et al.: *In den Katakomben. Jüdische Verlage in Deutschland, 1933 bis 1938*, Marbach am Neckar 1983, which is listed in Worldcat.org, but which I have not myself seen.

Here the Verlag comes alive, through the adroit selection of objects for display, informative descriptions, and engaging topical essays. The project was unusual not only because of its location outside of Germany, but also because of the prevalence of Israeli contributors.¹⁵ Their presence calls attention to a curious fact. Despite Schocken's importance for the *Jews* of Germany, and his connection with important developments in the *Jewish* settlement in Palestine, until 2006 there was no full-length *Hebrew* work devoted entirely to Schocken,¹⁶ and the one that appeared then was a translation of the American biography of Schocken that I come to next.

In the books that I've described so far, although Schocken appears as a dominant, guiding figure, it is primarily through his actions that he is known. The reader learns variously that Schocken was a challenging blend of indecision and conviction, a devotee of order, and an energetic connoisseur, but generally attention to Schocken's personality is secondary.

By contrast this personality is a primary focus of the fourth book on my list, Anthony David's 2003 biography, *The Patron*.¹⁷ Published in the United States, in English, David's book is doubly distant from its subject—in place and in language. That may be the reason that it works so hard to appeal to the general reader, with a breezy, colorful, journalistic style—and a casual approach to historical data.

In this regard the contrast with Dahm's book, for example, could not be greater. Dahm's intention was to reconstruct events as they actually occurred, accurately and dispassionately.¹⁸ His narrative is exhaustive, even perhaps overwhelming for the general reader in its detail. By contrast, David's goal is to make Schocken accessible, even if that means supplying fanciful filler, indulging in psychological speculation, or echoing sensationalist gossip. The book is loosely written, badly edited, marred by errors, and not rigorously documented. From a scholarly perspective it is simply not clear what is reliable and what is not. The field of Schocken studies has not been well served by its publication, and Salman Schocken, a stickler for detail, deserves better in the way of biography. Despite all of David's

¹⁵ Four of a total of twelve. Five of the other contributors were German, including Volker Dahm, who provided the keynote essay. Of the remaining three, two were from Luxemburg and one from Austria. The exhibition later was shown in 1997 at the Jewish National Library in Jerusalem as well, though in a smaller version. (E-mail communications from Saskia Schreuder, August 26, 2013, Silke Schaeper, August 24, 2013, and Matthias Hambrock, August 13, 2013.) It is telling that the Israeli presentation followed, rather than preceded, the German one.

¹⁶ A volume of the correspondence between Schocken and Agnon may be regarded as an exception, but it may be that this book owed its publication more to the heroic standing of the Nobel-Prize-winning Agnon in Hebrew literature, rather than any particular interest by Israeli readers in Schocken himself. Agnon, Shmuel Yosef/Schocken, Salman: Sh. Y. Agnon – Sh. Z. Shoken: hilufe igrot, Jerusalem 1991.

¹⁷ David, Anthony: *The Patron: A Life of Salman Schocken, 1877–1959*, New York 2003, translated as: *Sefer ha-ma'asim: haye Zalman Shoken*, Tel Aviv 2006. David seems to have very much taken to heart the criticism that Gershom Scholem leveled against my 1972 article: that it was excessively dependent on the Archive's contents, and that it lacked an appreciation of Schocken's personality. See David, *The Patron*, 2003, p. 408. In all fairness, I should mention that when I interviewed Scholem in my effort to augment the archival sources he was gracious, but not particularly forthcoming in this regard. Dahm discusses the danger of "Aktenblindheit" in Dahm, Volker: *Das jüdische Buch im Dritten Reich. Teil I: Die Ausschaltung der jüdischen Autoren*, Verleger und Buchhändler. Sonderdruck aus dem "Archiv für Geschichte des Buchwesens", Frankfurt a. M. 1979, pp. 6–7.

¹⁸ See Dahm, *Das jüdische Buch*, Teil I, 1979, p. 7, and Dahm, *Das jüdische Buch*, 1993, pp. 13–14.

efforts, for a real understanding of Schocken's personality it's still worth reading the admittedly briefer, but quite poignant memoirs by his business associate Siegfried Moses, and by his son, Gershom.¹⁹

The foregoing account of the main works on Schocken leads to a number of generalizations. First, the attention that Schocken and the Verlag have drawn is a telling reflection of how dramatic and captivating the story is. To offer an example from my own experience: When I was studying Hebrew in college in the early 1960's the instructor decided that it was time for the class to dig into some serious modern Hebrew literature. So on his next trip to New York he stopped in a Jewish book store, and brought back some yellowed copies of Agnon's novella, *Bilvav Yamim (In the Heart of the Seas)* -- according to the title page published by Schocken in Berlin in 1935. So somehow these remnants of the salvaged inventory of the Verlag had found their way to the Lower East Side of New York.

How could it be, I wondered, that two years into the Nazi regime someone was still publishing Hebrew books in Berlin?²⁰ It was this question that I tried to answer many years later in my own research, and that Volker Dahm answered in a much more profound way in his.²¹

A second generalization relates to the nature of the documentary foundation for Schocken studies. The story of the Verlag and Schocken's other activities is almost entirely the story as it has been preserved in the Schocken Archives in Jerusalem. This archive owes its existence to Schocken's departure from Germany at the end of 1933, and his insistence that he be kept fully informed of developments relating to the Verlag and to the stores. Without this archive it is hard to imagine Schocken

¹⁹ Schocken, Gershom: Ich werde seinesgleichen nicht mehr sehen, in: Der Monat 20 (Nov. 1968), pp. 13–30. For Moses' memoir, see note 3 above.

²⁰ I knew the name "Schocken" quite well because of the visibility of Schocken Books, the U.S. offspring of the Verlag, but what Schocken was doing in Berlin in 1935 was a mystery. I was familiar with Schocken Books because its publications increasingly found their way into the personal library that I was building up as part of my growing interest in Judaica. There was also an aspect of the book trade that favored such awareness. In the early 1960's regular trade paperbacks (as opposed to "pulp" fiction) were still a somewhat new phenomenon and as part of the so-called "paperback revolution" my college bookstore displayed them by publisher. Thus Schocken had its own visible separate section on the shelves. The design of the books was also distinctive, with an eye-catching letter-S logo on the spine. Schocken Books also launched a Schocken Library series, an English-language version of the Verlag's Bücherei, presenting selected titles in a standard format. These also had a special place on bookseller's shelves, akin to that enjoyed by the Random House Modern Library, or the Dutton Everyman series. This marketing strategy in the U.S. echoed the similarities between the Schocken Bücherei and Insel Bücherei in Germany. Schocken's overall strategy in the U.S. initially presumed important similarities between American Jewry and German Jewry that would make it appropriate to carry over major elements of the Verlag's publishing program into the U.S. In my case it worked perfectly, down to the specific detail of the allure of the Franz Rosenzweig saga as presented in the Schocken volume edited by Rosenzweig's Lehrhaus colleague Nahum Glatzer, *Franz Rosenzweig: His Life and Thought*. My awareness of the Schocken story was reinforced a year after my experience with Agnon's novella, when I met Nathan Rome, a grandson of Salman Schocken, while we were both students at the Hebrew University in Jerusalem as part of the same program for American undergraduates. As we shared stories of our contacts with local families, Nathan told of his visits with Dr. Hans-Jakob Katzenstein, the director of the Schocken Library, which led to descriptions of the Library itself and its origins. This was my first introduction to the human dimension of what until then I had known only in institutional terms.

²¹ For Dahm's Fragestellung see Dahm, *Das jüdische Buch*, Teil I, 1979, p. 3.

studies developing as they have.²²

Any description of the archive also needs to include the people around it at the Schocken Library in Jerusalem where it is housed. These individuals created an immensely congenial environment for visiting researchers. Dr. Hans-Jakob Katzenstein, the Library's director at the time that Dahm, Fuchs, and I did our research, had worked with Schocken himself, and provided an important bridge from past to present by filling in gaps in the Archive's record. Likewise, the archivist at the time, Miriam (Nussbaum) Gabbay, had put the documents in their final order, and was an exceedingly helpful guide to their contents.²³

The people who have written about Schocken and his activities write with great enthusiasm. Certainly there is ample reason for this in the subjects themselves. But I think that in part this enthusiasm is also due to how great a place the Archives are to do research, and the pleasure involved in the vicarious discovery of Schocken's world there.

A third generalization relates to the transmission of history and historical scholarship from one generation to the next, and the important encouragement by senior mentors for the younger generation of scholars whose works I have described.

My own experience is a telling example: The episode of the Agnon novella stayed with me, and in a graduate school research paper at Harvard I had the opportunity to revisit the subject of German Jewish cultural activities in Nazi Germany. I knew that Professor Nahum Glatzer at nearby Brandeis University had close ties to Schocken, as a published author with the Verlag in Germany and its successor in the United States, and I sent my paper to him for comment. He in turn introduced me to Theodore Schocken, the head of the U.S. firm. Perhaps consciously following the example of his father as patron, Mr. Schocken offered his support for me to write a history of the Verlag, enabling me to spend several months in the Jerusalem Archive, and opening the doors for oral history interviews with all the major figures associated with the Verlag, who fortunately were all then still alive.

Foremost among these was Moritz Spitzer, one of the two editors of the Verlag, who lived within walking distance of the Archives. For all their completeness, the Archives could not tell the whole story, and Spitzer generously provided a fuller account, rich with the vivid detail that only direct experience could provide. Volker Dahm had a similar experience, as is clear from Spitzer's frequent appearance in Dahm's footnotes as a key source of information.²⁴ The first generation of Schocken researchers, of which I was a part, benefited tremendously from having such living links to history through people who had actually participated in the events we were describing. Inevitably, with the passage of time, writers on Schocken will lack this

²² See Dahm's comments in Dahm, Volker: *Das jüdische Buch im Dritten Reich. Teil II: Die Ausschaltung der jüdischen Autoren, Verleger und Buchhändler*. Sonderdruck aus dem "Archiv für Geschichte des Buchwesens", Frankfurt a. M. 1981, pp., 305–306.

²³ See Dahm, *Das jüdische Buch*, Teil I, 1979, p. 307 n.6, and Dahm, *Das jüdische Buch*, Teil II, 1981, p. 310, and Fuchs, *Ein Konzern*, 1990, pp. 7–8.

²⁴ See Dahm's warm appreciation of Spitzer in Dahm, *Das jüdische Buch*, Teil II, 1981, p. 308.

direct contact, and they will face the challenge of having to rely on the historical record alone.

It is one thing to do research, but it is quite another to have it published, and there's an important story to be told here as well -- about what the context of two different publications on Schocken says about important changes in German-Jewish historiography. My article was accepted first by the *Leo Baeck Year Book*, whose long-time editor, Dr. Arnold Paucker, served as a generous and gracious supporter of young scholars seeking a first-class venue for their publications.²⁵ In this role Dr. Paucker was a key figure in engineering the transition of the Leo Baeck Institute as a whole from a commemorative association of German Jews to a lasting and dynamic institution for future generations of scholars, authors, and readers engaged with the German-Jewish experience.²⁶

This transition was clearly visible in a shift in the *Year Book's* content. Siegfried Moses's sensitive and thoughtful overview of Schocken's life and works appeared in the *Year Book* for 1960. Although there was no explicit acknowledgement of this, much of Moses's article was in fact a personal memoir, based on his close association with Schocken as a board member and General Counsel (*Justitiar*) for the Schocken department store *Konzern*.²⁷ Of the articles published in that 1960 *Year Book*, two-thirds (ten out of fifteen) were likewise written by authors who had participated in, or were contemporaries of, the events they described. By the time my article appeared twelve years later, the balance had shifted, and only one-third (four out of twelve) fell into this category.

While Arnold Paucker was reshaping the Leo Baeck Institute's agenda through the *Year Book*, Dr. Fred Grubel was trying to do the same thing from his position as Director of the Institute's New York branch. It was Grubel who launched Fuchs's study of the Schocken *Konzern* by pointing him to the resources of the Schocken Archive, and suggesting that he use them as the basis for his research.²⁸ Further, it was Grubel who encouraged Dahm to produce a revised edition of his treatise on the Schocken Verlag that would be more accessible for a general readership.²⁹

A fourth and final generalization relates not to the life of Schocken, but rather to the lives of the people who have written about him. It is a striking fact that many of

²⁵ With regard to receiving support for publication I was blessed many times over. After my article had found a place in the *Leo Baeck Year Book*, it was also accepted by the *Harvard Library Bulletin*, a journal with an entirely different readership. My introduction to the *Harvard Library Bulletin* came from Dr. Charles Berlin, who, as head of the Hebrew Division (now the Judaica Division) at the Harvard Library, took a personal interest in fostering the work of young scholars using the Library's resources. The *Bulletin's* editor, Edwin Williams, in turn brought the article to the attention of a kindred journal in Germany, *Philobiblon*, which published a German version.

²⁶ This transition is well described in the fifty-year anniversary history of the Leo Baeck Institute: Hoffman, Christhard (ed.): *Preserving the Legacy of German Jewry: A History of the Leo Baeck Institute, 1955–2005*, Tübingen 2005.

²⁷ Oddly enough, Moses's personal connection with Schocken is not mentioned at all, either in the article itself, or in the brief biographical description of the author that accompanied it. For the identification of Moses as Schocken's *Justitiar* see Dahm, *Das jüdische Buch*, 1993, pp. 280, 283, 287. For Moses's board membership, see Fuchs, p. 95.

²⁸ See Fuchs, *Ein Konzern*, 1990, p. 7.

²⁹ Grubel had an English edition in mind. See Dahm, *Das jüdische Buch*, 1993, p. 12.

these turned to the subject as part of academic careers. I've already mentioned the timing of my history of the Verlag, which began as a graduate school paper. Dahm's monumental history is a revised version of his 1977 Munich University dissertation.³⁰ The list goes on. Of the three books about the Schocken store in Stuttgart that I've mentioned, two had academic origins: Petra Ralle's as the master's thesis for her architecture degree³¹ and Renate Palmer's as the master's thesis for her degree in art history.³² And finally, Anthony David's biography of Schocken is a reworking and expansion of his 1998 dissertation at the University of Chicago.³³

Thus, there was a close association between the growth of Schocken studies and the emergence of a post-war generation of academic researchers. With the phenomenal growth of Jewish studies since then, particularly in centers in the United States, Israel, and Germany, the interest in Schocken is likely to continue to flourish. So far my focus has been on the people who have *written* about Schocken. Of equal interest are the *readers* of these books, and the sources of their interest. Apart from its context in German-Jewish history, the story of the Verlag is, after all, a story about books. Hence it is no surprise that the early publications on the subject were addressed to bibliophiles—the readers of the first version of Dahm's study in the *Archiv für Geschichte des Buchwesens*, and the readers of my study that was republished in the *Harvard Library Bulletin* and in the German bibliophile journal *Philobiblon*.

The next step was to bring the story to a wider readership. I've already mentioned Fred Grubel's encouragement of Volker Dahm in this regard. Even though the English version of Dahm's book that Grubel suggested never materialized, Grubel fostered the publication of a revised, partly shortened second edition in German, which was more accessible to a general readership, particularly through the elimination of matters of specialist bibliophile interest.³⁴

Like Dahm's second edition, Fuchs's study of the Schocken stores also appeared in the general book trade. Although the volume would not necessarily appeal to a casual reader of history, it certainly is a must-read for anyone interested in German-Jewish history or German business history.

Likewise, the books focusing on individual Schocken stores have a large, built-in readership, ranging from residents of the cities where they stood to anyone interested in twentieth-century architecture, urban planning, or landmark preservation.

As for Anthony David's book, its target market is the general reader of biography,³⁵ and hence, for better or worse, this is the Schocken study that is likely

³⁰ See Dahm, *Das jüdische Buch*, Teil I, 1979, p. 4, n. 2.

³¹ "Diplomarbeit," see Ralle, *Konsequenz Abriss*, 2002, p. 11.

³² "Magisterarbeit," see Palmer, *Der Stuttgarter Schocken-Bau*, 1995, p. 12.

³³ Skinner, *Anthony David: Salman Schocken and the Jewish Renaissance in Germany*, University of Chicago Dissertation, 1998. Skinner subsequently adopted a pen name consisting of his first and middle names only.

³⁴ See Dahm's discussion of the relationship between the first and second editions, and his acknowledgement of Grubel's assistance, in Dahm, *Das jüdische Buch*, 1993, pp.11–13.

³⁵ David seems to have found his *métier* in biography, with three subsequent books about, respectively, the Palestinian notable Sari Nusseibeh, and two Israeli industrialists.

to have the broadest appeal. Ordinarily such an accessible point of entry might lead interested readers to the more rigorous, detailed, and specialized studies that preceded it. Unfortunately, in this instance this is unlikely because of a significant linguistic disconnect: David's book has appeared in English and Hebrew, but so far not in German, the language of all the other major works of Schocken studies. There is little prospect for any bridging of this language gap from the German side, since there would not be a viable market for a translation of Dahm or Fuchs into English.³⁶ Of course having David's book in German would be a solution, but in view of its lack of rigor and poor quality otherwise Schocken scholars might see this as regrettable.³⁷

The issue of the quality of David's book calls attention to another special set of readers -- the reviewers whose *writing* about books is intended to guide the choices of other *readers*. In this regard the reception that was accorded to David's *Patron* is highly instructive, since the reviews were quite mixed.³⁸ At first this might seem only to confirm that there is always room for disagreement about any subject. In this case, however, the divergence of opinions has some interesting implications for how the book was read.

The most visible review in the U.S. was the enthusiastic article published by the Israeli writer Amos Elon in the *New York Review of Books*, a periodical targeted to the educated, well-read, and broadly-engaged general reader.³⁹ Except for a few somewhat extraneous personal introductory reflections, Elon's review mostly recapitulates the material in David's book, and in doing so generally embraces David's view of Schocken. Indeed, so focused is Elon on the book's subject that he seems to have been distracted from the reviewer's responsibility of criticising the book. Without substantiation he praises it as "superb," and written "with verve and psychological insight," appropriately "critical and sardonic about Schocken but [...] show[ing] a sympathetic understanding of his often towering contradictions."⁴⁰

A measure of just how enthralled Elon was by *The Patron* is the title of his review: "The 'Jewish Bismarck'". This epithet, quoted by David, came from Hannah Arendt, who was a brief, and disaffected, employee of Schocken Books in New York during the late 1940s. According to David she had coined it earlier as an allusion to Schocken's physical appearance, but David extends it to apply to Schocken's autocratic manner as well. Schocken was undeniably autocratic, and also large-headed, but the nastiness of the epithet, from someone whose pen sometimes outran propriety, goes beyond the requirements of description. It is bewildering that Elon should have chosen to dignify a phrase, however snappy, of which David had already made too much. (There may have been a personal animus behind Elon's

³⁶ See Dahm's comments on the language barrier in Dahm, *Das jüdische Buch*, 1993, p. 11.

³⁷ I found that this generally negative view of David's book was widely shared, for example, by those with whom I discussed the matter at the international conference on Schocken that I describe in the conclusion to this article.

³⁸ The reviews discussed here are all those that I could locate in standard reference databases.

³⁹ Elon, Amos: The "Jewish Bismarck", in: *The New York Review of Books*, April 8, 2004, pp. 48–51, reprinted in *Le Monde diplomatique*, German edition, January 14, 2005.

⁴⁰ Elon, *The "Jewish Bismarck"*, 2004, p. 48.

fondness of the “Bismarck” quip, as a reflection of his experience in dealing with Schocken while Elon was a European correspondent for the Israeli newspaper *Ha’aretz*, which Schocken owned.) In any case, the review by Elon, whom David acknowledges as a friend and mentor, is not one to be consulted for an independent, informed, critical evaluation of David’s book.

Elon’s review was preceded by several others. Three of these appeared in journals that provide librarians with innocuous capsule summaries of books, and recommendations for purchase decisions. These reviewers appeared to approach the book entirely on its own terms, and they uniformly offered favorable views. *Kirkus Reviews* called the book “a thoughtful, well-written memorial to an important but overlooked figure in modern Jewish letters—and a real treat for bibliophiles.”⁴¹ *Library Journal* opined that “David’s book can be enjoyed by the lay reader, but libraries with strong Jewish studies or publishing collections should seriously consider [it].”⁴² Finally, *Publishers Weekly* called the book “serious and illuminating,” but cautioned that “the writing can barely keep pace with the colorful character that was Salman Schocken.”⁴³

The engagingly written review by Mindy Aloff in the *New York Jewish Daily Forward*, though substantially longer than the trade summaries, likewise passively summarized the book, and likewise betrayed the risks inherent in approaching a book without an independent, knowledgeable perspective. Aloff described *The Patron* as a “monumental ... biography” and “absorbing chronicle,” and, looking for the catchy item, repeats David’s gossip about Schocken’s private life and his depiction of Arendt’s criticisms of Schocken’s editorial judgment. She concludes on a strongly favorable note: “David displays authority in research, honest grace in literary tone, analytic brilliance and an insider’s feeling for all contentious parties.”⁴⁴

By contrast, the 2004 review in the *Los Angeles Times*, a large general-circulation daily, by Michael Andre Bernstein, was more restrained in its praise, welcoming David’s book as an “engrossing” full-scale English biography of a compelling subject who had so far escaped the attention that he deserved.⁴⁵ Bernstein demonstrated some independent knowledge of his subject, adding a note about the (somewhat ironic) return of the Schocken imprint to German ownership almost forty years after Schocken’s death, with Bertelsmann’s 1998 purchase of Random House, to which Schocken’s heirs had earlier sold Schocken Books, the U.S. offspring of the Verlag. But he follows David in overstating the significance of the Verlag’s achievement for the overall progress of Hebrew letters.

The generally laudatory reviews that greeted *The Patron* in the general press were completely at odds, however, with the treatment accorded to David’s book by scholarly reviewers.

⁴¹ Kirkus Reviews, October 1, 2003, p. 1207.

⁴² Kaplan, Paul: Review, in: *Library Journal*, November 15, 2003, p. 75.

⁴³ *Publishers Weekly*, December 15, 2003, p. 66.

⁴⁴ Aloff, Mindy: Man of the Book: Reading a Life of Salman Schocken, in: *Jewish Daily Forward*, December 12, 2003, p. 15.

⁴⁵ Bernstein, Michael Andre: Preserver of Jewish Culture, in: *Los Angeles Times*, August 8, 2004, p. R4.

The first of these, by the distinguished American-Israeli author and translator Hillel Halkin, appeared in *The New Republic* at the end of 2003, months before Elon's.⁴⁶ The world of Jewish publishing is one that Halkin knows intimately (with a familiarity that includes a year working at Schocken Books in New York), and the strength of his grounding in Jewish literature, history, and culture is evident in the review. Given Halkin's interest in Jewish literature, it is not surprising that he particularly celebrates Schocken's support of the Hebrew author and later Nobel Laureate S.Y. Agnon, and muses about Schocken's ownership of Kafka's literary rights.

While conceding that in form David "has written an engaging and well-paced biography," Halkin identified a number of substantive faults. Foremost among these is David's "often uncritical acceptance of Schocken's own appraisal of himself and his surroundings," particularly with regard to Schocken's pursuit of a usable past as a foundation for a secular Jewish nationalism, which Halkin describes as suffering from "a preposterous naïveté." Tellingly, Halkin notes that "if David's lack of Hebrew (or so I take it to be from the absence of references to Hebrew sources in his notes) helps to explain his ignorance of the achievements of nineteenth- and early twentieth-century Jewish scholarship, it still does not quite excuse it." Moreover, Halkin adds, "David could also use more perspective on Schocken's attitude toward Zionist and Israeli politics" rather than viewing the discourses of the 'twenties and 'thirties from the perspective of our own day.⁴⁷

The second scholarly review, written by Steven Aschheim, a professor of modern Jewish history at the Hebrew University in Jerusalem, appeared in the *Times Literary Supplement* at the end of February 2004, a good month before Elon's *New York Review* article.⁴⁸ Aschheim generally follows David's account of Schocken, even regrettably echoing Arendt's sensationalist "Bismarck" quip, and he praises David for demonstrating "in insightful and often moving fashion, why Schocken's life merits critical attention." Nevertheless, in the same breath he notes that David does this "despite [...] numerous errors of detail and editorial sloppiness," and, like Halkin, criticizes David for overstating the singularity of Schocken's search for a usable past.

The Hebrew translation of David's book, which appeared in 2006, generated two reviews. The one in the general circulation daily *The Jerusalem Post* was fairly neutral, and celebrated David's book—which it describes as an "uneven but ultimately fascinating biography"—for bringing Schocken to the attention of Hebrew readers.⁴⁹

A second review, by Michael Brocke, professor of Jewish studies at the University of Duisburg-Essen, was much less forgiving.⁵⁰ Its title says it all: "Needs Revision" ("*Besserungswürdig*"). Brocke points to errors of fact and interpretation,

⁴⁶ Halkin, Hillel: Money and Soul, in: *The New Republic*, December 29, 2003, pp. 34–37.

⁴⁷ Halkin, Money and Soul, 2003, p. 37.

⁴⁸ Aschheim, Steven E.: The Lost Tycoon, in: *Times Literary Supplement*, February 27, 2004, p. 6.

⁴⁹ Rosenfelder, Reuven: Review, in: *Jerusalem Post*, September 7, 2006 (review of Hebrew edition).

⁵⁰ Brocke, Michael: *Besserungswürdig*, in: *Kalonymos* 9 (2006), pp. 6–7 (review of Hebrew edition).

weaknesses in documentation and in the use of sources, and bad editing, and notes the sad irony of all this in view of Schocken's own care for detail and precision. Brocke also takes issue with the facile "Bismarck" epithet.

Of all the scholarly reviews, the one published in the *Jewish Quarterly Review* by Michael Brenner, a German academic and author specializing in modern German-Jewish history, is the most comprehensively damning, and is worth quoting at length.⁵¹ While Brenner concedes that David's "biography reads well and is more thrilling than many a mystery novel" he laments that:

"[...] the reviewer is faced with a rather unpleasant task: to warn the reader of the numerous mistakes, misspellings, and misunderstandings that mar an otherwise fascinating biography. The sloppiness is at times so apparent that one cannot resist a smile [...]. After these and other inaccuracies one begins to doubt the basis of the most astonishing quote in the whole book, in which Salman's son Gershom utters a sigh of relief after his father's death, which he calls 'the happiest day of my life -- that is, after getting my driver's license' (p. 403). The reader is left to wonder from where this oral testimony from Gershom's son Amos Schocken is taken. Was it given to the author, was it recorded, written down? Another example is the way David describes Schocken's thoughts and feelings. Do they come from a diary, from letters and other sources, or does the author's imagination transform him at times into a novelist who begins to identify with his subject? ... It is unclear if this and similar sentences ... are simply products of David's fantasies. Perhaps an editor more familiar with the subject could have prevented most of the mistakes from slipping into a printed book. But then, one is tempted to ask, shouldn't the basic knowledge of German and Jewish cultures be prerequisites for the biographer of one of the most colorful German-Jewish intellectuals and entrepreneurs? There can be no doubt: This biography opens many doors into the fascinating world of German Jewry at its best. It is also enjoyable reading. The price for this literary pleasure, however, is a compromise of scholarly standards. No one would have regretted this more than the *Bildungsbürger* Salman Schocken."⁵²

This survey of the reviews of David's *The Patron* suggests that their divergence stems not simply from matters of taste or preference, but from real differences in the knowledgeability of the reviewer. Praise comes easily if it is unburdened by knowledge. Reviewers who lack an independent, informed understanding of a book's subject are at the mercy of its author, and are left to approach the book entirely on its own terms. Although there is admittedly a difference between general and scholarly readerships, whether of books or their reviews, even the general reader deserves a review that capably, fairly, and critically evaluates the work at hand.

To return to the subject that opened this essay, one of the lessons of history, and of the writing of history, is that the historian -- and by extension, the reviewer -- owes a duty of care to the past and to the record of the past.

This survey of a half-century of Schocken studies suggests a number of other conclusions as well. A subject can be studied usefully in many ways -- in greater detail or less, on a general scale or in a specific aspect; and it can be presented

⁵¹ Brenner, Michael: Review, in: *Jewish Quarterly Review* 96 (2006), pp. 457–460.

⁵² Brenner, Review, 2006, pp. 459–460. For all of Brenner's criticisms, apparently the lure of the "Jewish Bismarck" epithet is too insidious even for him to avoid, since it finds its way into his review in the opening summary of Schocken's life.

engagingly to readers with a wide variety of interests and perspectives, and to those who are near to, or far from, the subject in geography, language, or time. An intrinsically dramatic story makes for a captivating narrative. High-quality historical records by themselves draw the attention of researchers. Living witnesses can provide invaluable guidance and a crucial complement to the documentary record. The transmission of history, and of the historian's craft, depends on the nurturing by one generation of the next, for which the academic realm can provide a supportive matrix. Finally, reviewers serve readers best when the reviewers themselves can bring to bear an informed and critical understanding.

Any survey of the immediate past inevitably points to the future, and in this case raises the question of what is in store for Schocken studies going forward.

One indication comes from a remarkable three-day international conference devoted to Schocken and related subjects that the State of Saxony's Museum for Archeology in Chemnitz convened in October, 2013, where I presented an earlier version of this paper.⁵³ The occasion for the conference was the installation of the Museum in the last remaining Mendelsohn-designed Schocken department store building, which will also house a permanent exhibition on Schocken's life and works. The thirty papers that were presented, by scholars from Germany, Switzerland, England, Poland, the Czech Republic, the United States, and Israel, raised as many questions as they answered, and revealed an extraordinarily vibrant community of research and interest.

Whether there is room for any more full-length books devoted entirely to Schocken or his ventures is an open question, but that would hardly mean the end of attention to these subjects. The Schocken story touches on so many other stories as well, and the Archive contains much that is useful for research on related matters, as is evident in the recent history of *Der Jüdische Verlag*, with which Schocken was deeply involved.⁵⁴

Certainly there is also much more work to be done by way of comparative history, where further study of Schocken and use of the Archive could play a significant role -- particularly in examining how the emergence of Jews from traditional cultures related to their innovative contributions in the realms of commerce and publishing.

One thing seems certain: the Chemnitz conference, which draws on a rich history of writing about Schocken, will itself prove to be part of an ongoing story.

⁵³ A link to the Conference's program may be found at <http://www.archaeologie.sachsen.de/4387.htm> (referenced on December 11, 2013). A plan to publish the Conference's proceedings is under consideration.

⁵⁴ Schenker, Anatol: *Der Jüdische Verlag, 1902–1938. Zwischen Aufbruch, Blüte und Vernichtung*, Tübingen 2003.

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