

Berg pleaded her case with network president William S. Paley to no avail. In a last-ditch effort to save Loeb Berg even met with the Cardinal Francis Spellman, head of the New York Archdiocese and arbiter of local party politics. In Smith's account, this addendum to the Loeb affair uncannily echoes numerous radio and television plots involving "Molly's" habit of trying to "save the day" through her heartfelt acts of reconciliation and cross-cultural understanding. Channeling "Molly," Berg apparently hoped that one word from the powerful Cardinal would end the blacklist against Loeb (previously, at Ed Sullivan's request, the Cardinal had interceded on behalf of performers like Harry Belafonte and Lena Horne to appear on Sullivan's variety show), and thus enable Loeb to return. In the end, however, Berg reluctantly fired Loeb, in order to save the financial livelihoods of the show's other cast members and related workers. Desperate and in despair, in heavy debt and with no prospect of steady work, Loeb committed suicide in September 1955. The "controversy over Loeb's blacklisting," Smith writes, "haunted Berg for the rest of her life" (p. 163).

Unearthing the "facts" of Berg's remarkable career, Smith offers an engrossing narrative of a woman who became hugely popular—and powerful—during the first half of the twentieth-century. *Something on My Own* will be required reading for anyone who wishes to understand how Tillie Edelstein became Gertrude Berg, and how Berg invented "Molly Goldberg." In the process of self-fashioning, "Molly" won the hearts of Jews and gentiles, but not, alas, the steely heart of Cardinal Spellman.

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An Island Called Home: Returning to Jewish Cuba, by Ruth Behar. Photographs by Humberto Mayol. New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 2007. 297 pp. \$29.95.

Anthropologist Ruth Behar was born in Cuba in 1956. Her family left two years after the Castro Revolution. Her first return trip to Cuba in 1979 was as a graduate student. She hoped to do her doctoral research there, but the doors closed once again to U.S. visitors. Her visits resumed in the nineties when Castro attempted to bolster sagging morale and a sinking economy by allowing the "U.S. dollar and God" (p. 21) to make a comeback. Usually limited to fourteen-day stays, she got intimate glimpses of the Jews who did not leave. She traveled back as often as she could to stand side by side with Jews "who were learning how to be Jews" (p. 15) but not to use them for her fieldwork until she realized that being an anthropologist was her "passport" to return. She

teamed up with photographer Humberto Mayol in 2002 and over the next four years they traveled throughout the island documenting what they saw.

The book offers a brief historical introduction and an excellent chronology that tell why and how Jews from all over Europe and the Middle East flocked to Cuba in the early years of the twentieth century. These ethnically divergent immigrants (lumped together as *polacos* or *turcos* by the Cubans), who came to number around 16,000, created separate institutions and contributed to social change in the years leading up to Castro's revolution. Although they did have fledgling institutions, the twenties and thirties were uncertain times for Jews as waves of xenophobia influenced laws and Nazi rhetoric tainted the press. But in the forties and fifties these immigrants, who began to establish themselves in businesses and professions, were joined by entrepreneurial Jews born in the United States coming to make their fortunes on tropical soil. Together they built schools, synagogues, and social clubs. The triumph of Castro in 1959 caused an abrupt rupture in Jewish life. In a very brief span of time over 90 percent of the community left. The Jews who stayed were splintered, impoverished, isolated, and demoralized for many years. Only after constitutional changes in the nineties have Jews been able to practice their faith openly. With the help of outside institutions—the Canadian Jewish Congress, the Lubavitchers, the American Joint Distribution Committee, the Conservative Movement, and many others—the Jews of Cuba have reconstituted themselves, refurbished their synagogues, learned their history and rituals, reaffirmed their connections to the faith in conversions and communal marriage ceremonies and, in some cases, made Aliyah.

The first order of business for Behar are the ghosts left behind. In “Blessings for the Dead” she seeks and finds the tomb of a cousin who died just before his bar mitzvah in 1954. Then Elisa Behar's grave in Guanabacoa puzzles her for years. Finally, in a distant town, she meets the son of the man who had the ornate tomb built for his first wife. Statues of angels have been stolen from her grave just as bones of Jews are stolen by practitioners of African rituals. Behar visits cemeteries across the island, but she discovers that many Jews are not buried in Jewish cemeteries, particularly those who married outside the faith. Others lie in small cemeteries that have been closed or abandoned.

Support from the outside world has allowed Jewish survival. Through the years the much awaited Passover shipments create a common bond for Cuban Jewry. One chapter is devoted to a particularly adept *schmorrer* who advises Behar to visit Adath Israel (an orthodox shul supported by the Lubavitchers) on the day Mr. Fisher, a Canadian philanthropist, makes his biannual visit. Behar sees the joy and humiliation the congregants experience in receiving toiletries, food, and even underpants directly from their benefactor.

It is hard to be a Jew in Cuba. There are few kosher butchers. In one town the Jew she wants to interview is off searching for a leg of pork. It is hard to find a Jewish mate. Out of around a thousand Jews, perhaps twenty-five on the entire island have “both a Jewish mother and father” (p. 27). Many of those who stayed have strong ties to the revolution and revere Fidel Castro. One man seems to have reconciled the differences between communism and faith: he wears a shirt with a big photo of Che and a tallit to services. All the people she meets have figured out ways to survive. They walk for miles daily, tend their fruit and vegetable gardens, and repair ancient Ladas, Chevrolets, and Chinese bicycles. Despite their poverty these proud survivors offer their visitors hospitality and gifts: their stories along with coffee, rum, food and prized artifacts.

Behar doesn't hide her lifelong fear of Castro. One of her most uncomfortable interviews is with a Jew who has been an integral part of the Communist regime. Likewise, she is uneasy attending the May Day Parade with a descendent of one of the founders of the Communist Party in Cuba.

This book tells as much about the author as it does about the Jews of Cuba. Behar has spent her life considering herself an outsider. As an academic she has pursued that posture studying different cultures, hiding her Jewish identity, and wondering where she could take root. In this, her sixth book, Behar reveals the child whose roots are photographs in a suitcase. In Cuba she finds a home. She finds Jews who, like herself, are not always sure how to be Jews (p. 15). Sometimes Behar's reluctance to ask questions leaves the reader wanting to know more, but her tenacity in documenting even the smallest and most distant communities makes this study valuable.

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Jews and Sex, edited by Nathan Abrams. Nottingham, England: Five Leaves Publications, 2008. 234 pp. \$25.53.

Jews and Sex is an anthology of essays about cultural representations of Jewish sexuality in Israel, England, and the United States from the early twentieth century to the present. While a few of the contributors frame their essays theoretically, most of the essays are close readings of specific artists, films, or novels about or by Jews. Its breadth is the collection's greatest strength as it brings together perspectives from different genres, sexualities, and locales. The volume opens up new directions for cultural studies of Jewish sexuality.

The theoretical essays are the strongest in the volume. Geoffrey Dennis makes a clear and concise argument that both summarizes previous work of