

A queer way out: the politics of queer emigration from Israel

by Hila Amit, Albany, NY, SUNY Press, 2018, 252 pp., \$85, ISBN: 9781438470115

Kim Jezabel Zinngrebe

To cite this article: Kim Jezabel Zinngrebe (2020) A queer way out: the politics of queer emigration from Israel, *Journal of Modern Jewish Studies*, 19:1, 110-111, DOI: [10.1080/14725886.2019.1706325](https://doi.org/10.1080/14725886.2019.1706325)

To link to this article: <https://doi.org/10.1080/14725886.2019.1706325>



Published online: 06 Jan 2020.



Submit your article to this journal [↗](#)



Article views: 69



View related articles [↗](#)



View Crossmark data [↗](#)

BOOK REVIEWS


A queer way out: the politics of queer emigration from Israel, by Hila Amit, Albany, NY, SUNY Press, 2018, 252 pp., \$85, ISBN: 9781438470115

At the heart of *A Queer Way Out* lies an investigation of the motivations, experiences and narratives of queer Jewish Israelis seeking to live abroad. Hila Amit takes her readers on the journey of her research participants with seven chapters that mirror the various stages of that journey: the first three chapters start with an analysis of Israel as the place of origin, an exploration of queer Israelis' experiences of frustration and their desire to leave; chapter four looks at the preparations for and the process of leaving; the final three chapters investigate the aftermath and effects of leaving. The chapters move between different scales of time and space: Israel, "the homeland"; the cyber territory or "interim" space of online groups such as "New Hebrew Diaspora"; and the diaspora. Thereby, both real and imagined communities, their inter-connections, and fluid boundaries are taken into account.

The author's main argument is that queer Israelis seek to live abroad not only due to their continuous discrimination in the country, but also based on their political opposition to the State of Israel. In their decision to live abroad, Amit argues, they undermine the Zionist project which relies on sexual normalcy and pronatalist strategies for its demographic struggle for Jewish supremacy. By articulating and acting upon their vulnerability and avoiding the Zionist demand to perform as strong masculine *sabras* (Jews born in Israel), they not only undermine the Zionist project, but also demonstrate alternative ways of resistance to those pursued by Israel's political left-wing which, Amit claims, also demands acts of masculinist "heroism" from its adherents.

A Queer Way Out deconstructs the standard emigration story and undermines the dualist grand narrative of *aliya* ("going up"/inbound migration) vs. *yerida* ("going down"/outbound migration), the strong *sabra* vs. the "weak Old Jew" in the diaspora. By exploring how queer emigrants experience sense of self and belonging, Amit sheds light on some of their struggles including issues of identity, citizenship, queer family formation and parenting. I particularly enjoyed Amit's attention to language as an indication of the complex relationship of her research participants with Israel as they struggle to create a new Hebrew culture abroad. Nevertheless, I wonder whether it is these struggles, rather than the interlocutors' exit from Israel, that entail even more of what Amit conceives as "radical activism."

Being a Mizrahi Lesbian queer writer based in Berlin, the findings of the book are informed by Amit's own personal story, which she openly reflects on as being closely intertwined with that of her interlocutors as well as the development of her analysis. A strikingly wide range of methods is employed here including interviews with 42 queer Israelis based abroad, digital ethnography, life narratives, participant-observation, popular media, state propaganda and literary texts. Given the current rise in debates about pink-washing and hetero-nationalism in Israel, this book could not have been published in a timelier manner. It is highly recommended for academic and general readers interested in the intimate relations between sexuality, identity, and the politics of emigration.

Kim Jezabel Zinngrebe
 SOAS, University of London
 k.j.zinngrebe@gmail.com

© 2020 Kim Jezabel Zinngrebe
<https://doi.org/10.1080/14725886.2019.1706325>



Ego-histories of France and the Second World War: writing Vichy, edited by Manuel Bragança and Fransiska Louwagie, New York, Palgrave Macmillan, 2018, 333 pp., £62.99 (hardback), ISBN: 9783319708591

In this excellent edited collection, Manuel Bragança and Fransiska Louwagie have brought together some of the leading scholars on the Vichy regime and German Occupation of France in the Second World War to discuss their academic trajectories. Taking as its methodology the concept of “ego-histoire” coined by French historian Pierre Nora in 1987, in which Nora assembled a cast of his historian colleagues to discuss their academic experiences, this book offers chapters written by established academics from France, the UK, Australia, Israel and the USA. The book begins with an initial section comprised of a fascinating introduction by the editors, setting out the methodology of ego-history, before then providing an interview conducted via email with the eminent expert of the Vichy regime, Robert O. Paxton. The second section of the book features chapters by French historians such as Henry Rousso, responsible for the groundbreaking study of memory of the Vichy years which he termed the “Vichy syndrome,” and Denis Peschanski. The next section of the book includes chapters by British scholars, while the fourth is dedicated to US-based academics and the final section to academics from further afield, notably Israel and Australia.

What is notable in the book is a divide – whether intended or not – between more traditional (by training) historians, including the British scholar Robert Gildea, and academics from more of a literary and cultural training in French Studies. In many cases, the ego-histories of these scholars reveals a gradual journey towards studying this period of French history, frequently prompted by familial connections. Although every chapter provides an illuminating insight into the motivations and experiences of academics who have made it their lives’ work to study aspects of this darkest of periods in French history, this reviewer found those by Margaret Attack, Peter Tame, Colin Nettlebeck and Bertram M. Gordon to be the most thought-provoking. There is nonetheless much to learn from this book for any student of the Occupation of France and indeed the Holocaust – and its aftermath – in the French context.

There are but three potential criticisms. First, whilst it is understandable that the editors wished to assemble established scholars at the apex of their careers to discuss their experiences, such a project might also have gained something from inviting contributions from less-established academics (including both Daniel Lee and Ludovine Broch, thanked in the acknowledgements). Second, the book might usefully have explored the interconnections between research and teaching for these academics: where, if at all, have their personal histories and trajectories influenced their teaching careers? Third, the chapters have a tendency to repeat some of the same lines on Nora’s methodology of ego-history and rehearse the same quotations from L.P.