

Lesbians and homosexuality in 1906-1920s:

<https://howlround.com/looking-lesbians-god-vengeance-and-indecent>

“In a post-Stonewall world, it might make sense to read the women as such, and yet, the history of *God of Vengeance* and of Yiddish language itself proves much more complex and—at least to me—more fascinating. In Vogel’s reimagining of the play’s history, including a number of scenes that take place in Yiddish (although performed in English), her characters talk about the “lesbians” in Asch’s drama. This seems logical except for one problem: Yiddish doesn’t have a word for “lesbian,” at least not in 1907. Only many years later will Yiddish take on the cognate “*lesbianke*.” For that matter, the word “lesbian” wasn’t even in common parlance in English at the time; rather, if any language around sexual identity was invoked it was the concept of the “sexual invert”: the mannish woman who preyed on her more feminine victim. This issue over diction might seem like a small and even pedantic observation, but in fact, the struggle over language in *God of Vengeance* and the question of what we call a same-sex relationship between two women in Yiddish in 1907 is what the play is really all about. Can something be “immoral” if we don’t have a word for it? Did the audiences who saw two women kissing on stage in 1907—or in 1922, for that matter—know what they were seeing if they didn’t have the language for it?”

Book: *We Can Always Call Them Bulgarians: The Emergence of Lesbians and Gay Men on the American Stage* by Kaier Curtin

<https://drive.google.com/file/d/10f9KgZRfONdsJMQfEdQJrpt3vpSU0kzV/view?usp=sharing>

Censorship in the 1920s - 1950s

- The “New Women” of the 1900’s (not pertaining to Jewish women, necessarily, but still interesting):

<https://www.cambridge.org/core/books/censorship-of-the-american-theatre-in-the-twentieth-century/bad-girls-tough-guys-and-the-changing-of-the-guard/F300C1903E0853A169965EBE699F0CE3>

-Film censorship was huge during this time period, as noted in the following that took place in the 30’s. Of course, it stretched into the 1950 with the HUAC trials and blacklisting of various artists. <https://forward.com/culture/12234/was-hollywood-s-famed-censor-an-antisemite-00948/>

-Sholem Asch’s statement to the HUAC: When Sen. Joseph McCarthy, chairman of HUAC, posed this question to Sholem Asch, the novelist response was “I’m a Yiddish writer. And when *The Freiheit* opened her pages to me, I accepted. After all, America was at the time allied with the Communists against Nazism. But after the war, when the relations between East and West became sharper, I stopped writing for *Freiheit*.”

Original God of Vengeance Cast on Broadway:

<https://www.broadwayworld.com/shows/cast.php?showid=317118>

New York Times Access:

<BoisePublicLibrary.org/NYTimes>

- Click link and log in with your library card number
- Create account
- Access the website through that link

God of Vengeance History:

<https://yiddishstage.org/10-things-you-need-to-know-about-god-of-vengeance>

A note of interest: The ACLU refused to help with any of the legal/appeal fees in regards to the *God of Vengeance* court case.

Sholem Asch -- post WWII -- did indeed ban the play from being produced.

<https://www.jta.org/1946/05/27/archive/sholem-asch-bans-his-own-play-prohibits-staging-god-of-vengeance-in-any-language>

History of Translation:

<http://www.lilith.org/articles/indecent/?single=1>

“Caraid O’Brien, an actor, playwright and translator who has translated “God of Vengeance” into English and played Hindel, explains why it has been decades since the play was staged: “In 1946, after the war, Asch asked theater companies to stop performing the play because he was afraid it would be misinterpreted or used as anti-Semitic propaganda. In the shadow of the Holocaust, he felt it was not the time to be presenting this play.” There have been many productions in English, with translations by O’Brien, as well as Joseph Landis, Donald Margulies, Joachim Neugroschel and others.”

Further Research Leads:

https://www.guthrietheater.org/globalassets/2-shows--tickets/201718/indecent/indecent_playguide.pdf

Real Life Characters (Or not):

Lemml: The character of Lemml appears to be entirely conceived for *Indecent*. Paula Vogel has had a love of *Our Town* and Thornton Wilder and it appears Lemml is very much created in the same vein as the stage manager from *Our Town*.

<https://www.villagevoice.com/2017/05/24/this-play-changed-my-life/>

-A quote about the character of Lemml, from an interview: However, he is a moving stand-in for all the schlemiels out there whose life has been changed because of art.

Rudolph Schildkraut:

https://www.jta.org/1930/07/16/archive/rudolph-schildkraut-noted-jewish-actor-dies-at-70?fbclid=IwAR17kn4qJ5CIX_WNRYjSwpgWz77dXpJg6KizpSu6Q76e529dOAS2KztiL8g

<http://www.museumoffamilyhistory.com/yt/lex/S/schildkraut-rudolph.htm?fbclid=IwAR0ESnc7Sax-cLcJ1rtB7baLk-T09K3Pu97BKLxjL-FHX2wpQUVsxG10Ro>

Dorothee Nelson aka Dorothee Nolan: Didn't find a whole lot on Dorothee, but she is very real (listed as a respondent in court case); 1st Broadway show was *God of Vengeance*. Later appeared in *Our Town*.

Morris Carnovsky: One of the founders of the Group Theatre (1931). He was swept up in the HUAC hearings and blacklisted in the 1950's. *God of Vengeance* was his Broadway debut. Later in life served on the Artistic Advisory Board of the Yiddish National Theatre (1980).
<https://www.britannica.com/biography/Morris-Carnovsky>

Harry Weinberger: American lawyer and producer. Activist. Producer of many of Eugene O'Neill's plays (and was also his lawyer on occasion).
<https://www.mtsu.edu/first-amendment/article/1315/harry-weinberger>

Rabbi Joseph Silverman: 1st American born Rabbi. He and his congregation led the charge of obscenity.

*Virginia McFadden (aka Virginia Macfayden) was a graduate of Smith College (Northampton, MA) and had zero stage experience.

Could not find much on Esther Stockton (*God of Vengeance* was Stockton's 2nd Broadway appearance). Also, did not find anything on Reina Popeska. Also could not find much on Freida Niemann and Elsa Heimas but have not given up on any of these five yet. Will update, if discovered.

What it means to be Jewish?

<https://www.thoughtco.com/what-is-jewish-2076773>

Cultural Judaism

"Cultural Judaism includes things such as Jewish foods, customs, holidays and rituals. For instance, many people are born into Jewish homes and are raised eating blintzes and lighting

Shabbat candles, but never step foot inside a synagogue. According to Orthodox and Conservative Judaism in America, or by traditional standards worldwide, Jewish identity is automatically bestowed on babies of Jewish mothers. In Reform Judaism, Jewish mothers or fathers, not just the mother's lineage, results in a Jewish child. This Jewish identity stays with them throughout life even if they don't actively practice Judaism.”

Religious Judaism

“[Religious Judaism](#) includes the [beliefs of the Jewish religion](#). The way a person practices the Jewish religion can take many forms, and partially for this reason, there are different movements of Judaism. The main denominations are [Reform](#), [Conservative](#), [Orthodox](#), and [Reconstructionist](#) Judaism. Many people who are born into Jewish homes affiliate with one of these branches, but there are also those who do not.

If a person is not born Jewish, s/he can convert to Judaism by studying with a rabbi and undergoing the process of conversion.”

<http://www.jewfaq.org/movement.htm>

Movements of Judaism

- Movements are sects or denominations of Judaism
- The oldest movements were Pharisees, Sadducees, Essenes and Zealots
- Medieval movements included Karaites and Rabbinical Judaism
- Rabbinical Judaism split into Chasidic, Orthodox, Reform and Conservative in the US today
- Other countries have similar movements differently named

“Orthodoxy is actually made up of several different groups. It includes the modern Orthodox, who have largely integrated into modern society while maintaining observance of [halakhah](#) (Jewish Law), the [Chasidim](#), who live separately and dress distinctively (commonly, but erroneously, referred to in the media as the "ultra-Orthodox"), and the Yeshivish Orthodox, who are neither Chasidic nor modern. The Orthodox movements are all very similar in belief, and the differences are difficult for anyone who is not Orthodox to understand. They all believe that [G-d](#) gave [Moses](#) the whole [Torah](#) at Mount Sinai. The "whole Torah" includes both the [Written Torah](#)

(the first five books of the Bible) and the [Oral Torah](#), an oral tradition interpreting and explaining the Written Torah. They believe that the Torah is true, that it has come down to us intact and unchanged. They believe that the Torah contains [613 mitzvot](#) binding upon Jews but not upon non-Jews. This web site is written primarily from the modern Orthodox point of view. The [2000 National Jewish Population Survey](#) (NJPS) performed by the Council of Jewish Federations found that 10% of American Jewish adults identify themselves as Orthodox, including 21% of those who belong to a synagogue.

Reform Judaism does not believe that the [Torah](#) was written by [G-d](#). The movement accepts the critical theory of Biblical authorship: that the Bible was written by separate sources and redacted together. Reform Jews do not believe in observance of commandments as such, but they retain much of the values and ethics of Judaism, along with some of the practices and the culture. The original, basic tenets of American Reform Judaism were set down in the Pittsburgh Platform. Many non-observant, nominal, and/or agnostic Jews will identify themselves as Reform when pressed to specify simply because Reform is the most liberal movement, but that is not really a fair reflection on the movement as a whole. There are plenty of Reform Jews who are religious in a Reform way. The NJPS found that 35% of American Jews identify themselves as Reform, including 39% of those who belong to a synagogue. There are approximately 900 Reform [synagogues](#) in the United States and Canada. For more information about Reform Judaism, see [The Union for Reform Judaism](#).

Conservative Judaism grew out of the tension between Orthodoxy and Reform. It was formally organized as the [United Synagogue of Conservative Judaism](#) in by Dr. Solomon Schechter in 1913, although its roots in the [Jewish Theological Seminary of America](#) stretch back into the 1880s. Conservative Judaism maintains that the truths found in [Jewish scriptures](#) and other Jewish writings come from G-d, but were transmitted by humans and contain a human component. Conservative Judaism generally accepts the binding nature of [halakhah](#), but believes that the Law should change and adapt, absorbing aspects of the predominant culture while remaining true to Judaism's values. In my experience, there is a great deal of variation among Conservative [synagogues](#). Some are indistinguishable from Reform, except that they use more Hebrew; others are practically Orthodox, except that men and women sit together. Some are very traditional in substance, but not in form; others are traditional in form but not in substance. This flexibility is deeply rooted in Conservative Judaism, and can be found within their own Statement of Principles, Emet ve-Emunah. The NJPS found that 26% of American Jews identify themselves as Conservative, including 33% of those who belong to a synagogue. There are approximately 750 Conservative [synagogues](#) in the world today.

Reconstructionist Judaism is theoretically an outgrowth of Conservative, but it doesn't fit neatly into the traditional/liberal, observant/non-observant continuum that most people use to classify movements of Judaism. Reconstructionists believe that Judaism is an "evolving religious civilization." They do not believe in a personified deity that is active in history, and they do not believe that [G-d](#) chose the [Jewish people](#). From this, you might assume that Reconstructionism is to the left of Reform; yet Reconstructionism lays a much greater stress on Jewish observance

than Reform Judaism. Reconstructionists observe the [halakhah](#) if they choose to, not because it is a binding Law from G-d, but because it is a valuable cultural remnant. Reconstructionism is a very small movement but seems to get a disproportionate amount of attention, probably because there are a disproportionate number of Reconstructionists serving as rabbis to Jewish college student organizations and Jewish Community Centers. Everyone I know seems to have had a Reconstructionist rabbi at college or in a community center, yet according to the NJPS, only about 2% of the Jews in America identify themselves as Reconstructionist. Reconstructionist numbers are, in fact, so small that the NJPS advises caution in interpreting the statistics. There are about a hundred Reconstructionist synagogues world-wide. See the homepage of the [Jewish Reconstructionist Movement](#).”

Orthodox vs Non-Orthodox:

Misc. notes

-pg. 47: *Ain't We Got Fun*. A popular foxtrot from 1921. Very symbolic of the Roaring 20's (Prominent later in the Great Gatsby and Dorothy Parker's 1929 "Big Blonde").

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=y041-eT6Qrl>

Pg. 7 - Balut: Working class suburb of Lodz (also referred to as Baluty or Baluty market)

Cossacks: A member of people of southern Russia and Ukraine, noted for horsemanship and military skill

Some info on Sholem's Asch's works of the 1940's and later. (Asch moved back to Israel in 1955 and prior was continually asked if he'd converted to Christianity):

<https://www.tabletmag.com/jewish-arts-and-culture/books/258285/sholem-aschs-jewish-gospels>

To Be Jewish in a America in the 1920's:

-Warren G. Harding elected president in 1920, running on the platform of: "America First" and "Return to Normalcy". (A conservative president after a Wilson, a liberal one).

-Emergency Immigration Act of 1921, limiting the amount of immigrants allowed in USA. Ran the risk of being deported due to political views. A conservative hatred of everything foreign.”

-Private and public, higher education institutions i.e. Yale, Princeton, Harvard, limited the number of Jews who could enroll.

<https://forward.com/opinion/354519/that-other-time-jews-were-hated-in-america-and-3-lessons-to-learn-from-it-n/>

