

Episode 12 – Jews in the Romanian Culture

Hello again, I am your host, Adrian Iosifescu, and this is episode twelve of the History of Romanian Jews podcast. Today we will discuss Romanian Jews contributions to the Romanian culture.

Rabbis

A significant Jewish cultural life developed in Romania, growing significantly in the XVIII-th century, with the arrival of learned rabbis, many of them Hasids, from Galicia. The first Hebrew secular literature in the Romanian principalities was an extension of the Galician Haskalah at the beginning of the second half of the XIX-th century. Haskalah, from Hebrew word *sekhel* for 'intellect', refers to an attitude of attraction to general knowledge, secular learning and Western culture. Haskalah called upon the Jews to adopt local dress, to be patriotic and to strive for their rights.

The epitaphs at the Jewish cemetery in Jassy give evidence of a series of scholars, rabbis, and Dayanim (rabbinical judges) who came to Moldova, mostly from Poland. Even those rabbis who were native Romanians had to go to the Yesliiboth (Orthodox Jewish rabbinical seminary) in Poland, and were lost among the mass of rabbis there. Many of them left their positions to go to other countries or to end their days in Palestine. Among the rabbis in Moldova, two should be mentioned: **Jacob ibn Arvani, of Jassy**, described as a physician and a profound cabbalist by no other than Joseph del Medigo (1591-1655), a student of Galileo, who as the first Jewish Copernican rabbi and who who visited Jassy; and **Nathan Nata Hanover, rabbi of Fokshani and then Jassy**, author of *Jawan Mezula*, an excellent document on the sufferings of the Jews during Cossack insurrections.

A second generation was marked by the rise of mostly Romanian-born intellectuals, writing in Hebrew, Yiddish, German and Romanian. The Yiddish was especially used in the Moldovan towns and it was reinforced by waves of immigration and close relations with Galicia and Russia.

Jewish Hebrew Writers

Jewish authors writing in Hebrew who were natives of Romania or lived there from early youth do not appear until the second quarter of the XIX-th century. These were poets and prose writers, some of whom displayed a fair amount of originality, and handled the Hebrew language with ease and elegance: **Hillel Kahane** who also established the first Jewish school in Botosani, **Mendel Pineles** also known under the pen-name Shalosh, the poet **Moses von Waldberg**, a Baron, who also modernized the Jewish education in Jassy and **Benjamin Schwarzfeld**, a poet.

A word about the Schwarzfeld family who played an important role in the Romanian culture. Benjamin Schwarzfeld came from Stanisławów in Ukraine and settled in Iasi. He was among the pioneers of Haskalah in Romania. He wrote Hebrew poems and translated German poetry into

Hebrew which were then published in Hebrew periodicals. Benjamin's sons, Elias, Wilhelm, and Moses were journalists and historians, and may be regarded as the founders of Jewish historiography in Romania. Benjamin's nephew was the poet Benjamin Fundoianu, known later in France under the name Benjamin Fondane. Elias Schwarzfeld was a journalist, writer, historian, and political activist. Wilhelm Schwarzfeld was a journalist, philologist, and historian while Moses Schwarzfeld was a journalist, historian, and folklorist.

Jewish Romanian Writers

The first Jewish intellectuals, writers, and journalists writing in **Romanian**, in the second half of the nineteenth century, came predominantly from Bucovina and Galicia. As they settled in Moldavia or Walachia, they brought along a heritage acquired in their Hasidic families. Most of their earliest literary efforts were in Hebrew, but they integrated quickly, adopting Romanian for their journalistic and literary work even as they treated exclusively Jewish topics. This generation and the one immediately following included the first journalists and editors of Jewish newspapers, among them the scholar and publisher Iuliu (Julius) Yehudah Barasch as well as the Schwarzfeld brothers.

By the end of XIX-th century Romanian Jews were excelling in **Romanian poetry**: **Joseph Brociner**, the first Jewish poet who wrote in the Romanian language, **Ronetti Roman**, one of the most gifted of Romanian poets, **Avram Steuerman-Rodion**, poet, anthologist, physician and socialist journalist, **Berman Goldner-Giordano**, a poet and the writer of excellent epigrams, Avram Axelrad, Dumitru Iacobescu and **Felix Aderca**.

In **Romanian literary criticism**: **Henric Sanielevici** stands out as a journalist and literary critic, also remembered for his work in anthropology, ethnography, sociology and zoology.

In **Romanian linguistics**: **Dr. M. Caster**, haham of the Sephardic community and author of works on popular Romanian literature; **Aurel Candrea**, philologist, **Moses Gaster**, scholar, rabbi, Zionist, folklorist and **Lazar Şăineanu** renown philologist, linguist, folklorist and cultural historian. author of several works crowned by the Romanian Academy. Jews were the first philologists and linguists of the Romanian language.

In **Romanian mathematics**: David Emmanuel, mathematician and member of the Romanian Academy, considered to be the founder of the modern mathematics school in Romania.

In **Romanian medicine**: **Dr. Iuliu Barasch** (1815–1863), the first Jew who took a place in the general Romanian literature as the creator of the scientific Romanian language and popularized science for all Romanians.

In **Romanian theater**: Moise Ronetti Roman, born **Aron Blumenfeld** (1853–1908), wrote poetry, essays and plays. In his essays and particularly in his drama titled *Manasse* published in 1900, he was the first to treat the dilemmas of Jewish identity and the experience of assimilation as a literary theme. The play explores the intergenerational conflict between older, devout,

tradition-bound Jews and their more secular, modern, assimilated descendants. While very successful with its audience, the play was strongly criticized by the Romanian nationalist circles who took to the streets to block its staging on two separate occasions.

Talking about theater, the first professional **Yiddish theater** in the world opened in 1876 at Jassy, directed by **Avram Goldfaden**, the father of the modern Jewish theater. The Yiddish theater was a cultural institution of a secular nature. It was feared by the Orthodox Jews and criticized by the assimilated ones who thought it represented an obstacle to emancipation.

Sara Segal, aka Sophie Goldstein and Sophia Karp, was the world's first **Yiddish-language actress**. Sara, the daughter of a tailor in Galati, used to perform in her father's shop. At the age of 16, she joins the Yiddish theater troupe Goldfaden, (the only one in the world at that time, made up of three actors, one of them was Abraham Goldfaden) who came on tour to Galati. With an unprecedented success, the band Goldfaden played tours on the big stages in German and Russian cities. In 1902 she moved to New York where she appeared on the stage of the Romanian Opera House, and then to the Oriental Theater, which was actually the first Jewish theater founded in New York. In 1903, Sara together with Jacob Fischel and playwright Joseph Lateiner, she founded the Grand Theatre, the largest Jewish cultural institution in New York. Unfortunately, Sophia Karp never enjoyed success because she died on March 31, 1904, from pneumonia.

Another famous actress of Jewish origin **Maria Ventura** (1886–1954) whose debut in Paris with Sarah Bernhardt was remarkable. In Bucharest, she started at the National Theater in 1910 and continued to take the stage in Paris and Monte Carlo. She worked as a nurse during the first world war and join the French resistance during the second world war.

A special figure was **Cilibi Moise** (Efrayim Mosheh ben Sender; 1812–1870), a peddler who often visited the Wallachian fairs, and who composed aphorisms and maxims in Romanian, full of popular wisdom and humor. These were collected in numerous pamphlets beginning in 1858 and attracted a wide audience beyond the Jewish community.

The **Jewish press** in Romanian experienced its real blossoming after 1878 through a new generation of intellectuals trained in Romanian schools and through progressive assimilation of the Romanian language by wide sections of the Jewish population. This press dealt with all the ideological trends in Judaism, from extreme Romanization to nationalist isolationism.

Jewish journalism extends back as far as 1856, when the first **Yiddish journal** appeared at Jassy, Events of the Time, published by Kort Haitim and attempting to popularize the idea of emancipation among the Moldavian Jews. The first **Jewish newspaper in Romanian**, Israelitul Roman (Romanian Jew) edited by Julius Barash in 1857 was published in Romanian and Bucharest with columns in French written by Armand Levy and fought for political emancipation. Another journal was Timpul (Times) edited by N. C. Popper in 1859 in Romanian and Yiddish. The first Romanian-only newspaper, Vocea Aparatorului (Defender's Voice) appeared in Focsani in 1872. In Bucharest, Leopold Stein starts in 1872 Roumanishe Post, later Posta Romina (Romanian Post) in German and Romanian. In 1877 Anuarul pentru Israeliti

(Yearbook for Jews) is started in Bacau and then moved to Bucharest, the first encyclopedia covering Jewish historical topics, translations, Jewish personalities, religious topics.

The first newspaper to more than just a few issues was *Fraternitatea* (Brotherhood) edited by I. Auchbach and Elias Schwarzfeld, 1879-85. The weekly *Egalitatea* (Equality) edited by Moses Schwarzfeld, 1890-1940 was supportive of Zionism. Another long-lasting newspaper was *Curierul Israelit* (Israelite Courier) edited by M. Schweig, 1906-48.

It is worth mentioning also some Sephardic newspapers like *Viata Sefarda* (Sephardic Life) and *Gazeta Evreului Spaniol din Romania* (The Newspaper of the Spanish Jew in Romania) started around 1934.

Among the group of writers who embarked on their careers at the turn of the twentieth century were a significant number of poets who had renounced their earlier attraction to socialism. They sought to express the suffering of the Jewish poor together with their own torments as writers torn between their desire to pursue a Romanian literary career and the urge to give voice to the Jewish situation.

Several **symbolist poets** of this period who made subtle use of biblical motifs died as young men, such as **D. Iacobescu** (1893–1913), and **Barbu Nemțeanu** (1887–1919), or emigrated before being fully acknowledged, like **Leon Feraru** (1887–1961). Many of the Jewish poets of this generation were drawn to Heine's poetry; these writers imitated his mixture of lyricism and irony and his manner of identifying with the biblical universe and the tragedy of Jewish history. In addition to **translating** Heine, Jewish writers translated works of other major authors: Adolph Stern translated Shakespeare, Petre Solomon translated Celan, Rimbaud, Poe, Mark Twain and Maria Banuș who translated Goethe, Pushkin, Rilke, and Shakespeare.

In the field of **literary aesthetics and criticism**, the new Jewish cultural elite benefited from the enormous prestige of the Marxist ideologist **Constantin Dobrogeanu-Gherea** (1855–1920) who, despite his Jewish origins and his having learned Romanian only later in life, was one of the most authoritative Romanian literary critics of his time promoting ideologically engaged writing. He was followed, chronologically, by several literary critics and historians of various orientations who stood out for their erudition and originality, including **Henric Sanielevici** we mentioned before (1875–1951), **Ion Trivale** (1889–1917), and **Barbu Lăzăreanu** (1881–1957). It continued later **Ion Vitner** (1914–1991), **Savin Bratu** (1925–1977), **Vera Calin**, **Ovidiu Crohmălniceanu** and my uncle **Silvian Iosifescu**.

In the early decades of the twentieth century, the presence of Jewish scholars, writers, and journalists in elite literary circles such as the Junimea Society, and in the pages or editorial rooms of prestigious reviews like *Viața românească* (*Romanian Life*), *Facla* (*The Torch*), *Ideea Europeană* (*The European Idea*), *Viața Nouă* (*New Life*), *Sburătorul* (*The Flyer*), and *Adevărul Literar și Artistic* (*The Literary and Artistic Truth*) became commonplace. In fact, until 1930s, Jewish writers were reviewed seriously even in the obviously right-wing periodicals such as *Vremea* (*The Time*) and *Cuvântul* (*The Word*).

Of those for whom **Jewish national consciousness** was at the forefront of their concerns, **Abraham Leib Zissu** (1888–1956) is often considered a founding figure. His novels and short stories are concerned exclusively with Jewish topics and the intellectual crisis of his generation. Zissu advocated a complete Jewish identity, he said one should respect and be familiar with Romanian culture but attempts to achieve spiritual and cultural integration in Romania were harmful. The first effort to assemble Jewish writers who addressed Jewish and Zionist themes was the review *Puntea de Fildes* (The Ivory Bridge), of which two issues appeared in 1925 and 1926. The origin of this literary movement lay in the identity crisis in the Jewish intellectual universe, triggered by the revival of the Zionist movement after World War I, and by the ideological trends emerging within modern Judaism.

Zissu's closest disciple was the journalist and writer **Isac Ludo** (1894–1972). Through the reviews *Mântuirea* (The Redemption; 1919–1922), and *Știri din Lumea Evreiască* (News from the Jewish World; 1922–1940), Zissu and Ludo became leading advocates of a “Jewish literature” in Romanian, with Jewish themes. They targeted a mainly Jewish audience. From 1929, Ludo edited the social- cultural review *Adam*, a substantial publication dedicated to Judaism, to the works of Jewish writers worldwide, and to the social and political issues of Jewish life in Romania.

The most gifted among these writers realized quite early on that literature in the service of an ideological and thematic program would remain peripheral, and they turned to an exclusively literary artistic path, seeking in this way to be integrated into Romanian culture.

At the beginning of their literary careers, two of the most important Jewish writers, **Felix Aderca** (1891–1962) and **Beniamin Fondane** (Fundoianu) (1898– 1944), were very close to the circle dominated by Zissu. From the very beginning of their journalistic careers, they criticized some Jewish intellectuals' lack of authenticity as they ignored the Jewish tradition and avoided Jewish themes for the sake of assimilation.

Jewish writers represented a significant component of the **Romanian literary avant-garde**, an affiliation explained by the absence of xenophobia among Romanian modernists and by the solidarity among literary radicals. The internationalist spirit of the group promoted its affiliation with the European avant-garde movement, both in painting (**Marcel Iancu** [1895–1984], **Victor Brauner** [1903–1966], **Jules Perahim** [1914–2008], and others) and in literature. A significant number in fact emigrated, mainly to France, including **Tristan Tzara** (1896–1963), **Benjamin Fondane**, **Ilarie Voronca** (1903–1946), **Gherasim Luca** (1913–1994), and **Claude Sernet** (1902–1968). The Jewish poets who were attached to the avant-garde edited or regularly contributed to its journals, such as *75HP*, *Integral*, *Alge*, and especially *Unu* (*One*), edited from 1928 by the poet **Sașa Pană** (1902– 1981), the most dynamic and tenacious promoter of the Romanian avant-garde. Jewish writers of the generation that made its mark in the 1930s made a remarkable contribution to Romanian modernism, among them **Paul Păun** (1916–1994), **Jacques Costin** (1895–1972), **Sesto Pals** (1913– 2002), and **Aurel Baranga** (1916–1994). Modern Romanian poetry resorted quite frequently to themes and motifs of biblical inspiration, especially to Psalms. Biblical prototypes are to be found in the works of **Camil Baltazar**, **Felix Aderca**, **Enric Furtună**, **Maria Banuș**, and **Marcel Breslașu** (1903–1966). For example, Marcel Breslașu wrote in 1938 his own version of biblical The Song of Songs (*Cântarea Cântărilor*). References to kabbalistic symbols can be detected in the work of modernist poets such as Păun

and Sesto Pals. Avant-garde Jewish prose writers were drawn to expressionist and introspective styles and motives. Their tendency to perceive reality acutely and to stress individual emotions was intensified by their alienation as Jews.

An outstanding representative of Romanian modernist prose was **Max Blecher** (1909–1938), born in Botosani, whose two novels, *Intâmplări în irealitatea imediată* (Events from the Close Unreality; 1936) and *Inimi cicatrizate* (Scarred Hearts; 1936), display a highly refined style depicting inner life and a hallucinatory perception of the surrounding world.

Another remarkable poet was **Paul Celan** (Paul Antschel) born in November 1920 in Czernowitz in a German-speaking Jewish family. He lived through the Holocaust and eventually came to France, where he chose to write poetry in German. He made this decision in the Transnistria work camp. He wrote poetry, he said, to remain human. Celan was tormented by writing his poems in German while he was a Jew. He prefaced one of his last poems with an epigraph in Cyrillic, an alphabet used by the populations with a historical allegiance to the Orthodox Church, which read 'All Poets are Yids'. In 1969 Celan could no longer find comfort in language or bear his guilt over his parents killed in the Romanian Holocaust and threw himself into the Seine. His body was found a week or so later; he was 49 years old.

The Jewish environment, shaken by the changes accompanying modernization and capitalism, was reflected in the work of three important writers: **Ion Călugăru** (1902–1956), **Ury Benador** (1895–1971), and **Isac Peltz** (1899–1980), the first two of whom were themselves natives of Moldavian Jewish market towns. They developed both powerful realist representations, often with expressionist visions, of the charming or sordid universe of Jewish market towns like in *Copilăria unui netrebnic* (A Wretched Man's Childhood; 1936) by Călugăru and unforgiving descriptions of the social fauna in predatory big cities (*Calea Văcărești* (The Văcărești Road; 1933) by Peltz; *Gheto veac XX* (Ghetto Twentieth Century; 1934) by Benador. The modern Jewish "ghetto" did not preserve the mythical charm of the childhood market town, but became an alienating environment, destroying aspiration and ideals, populated by characters disfigured by the harshness of human relations and the loss of moral values, and suffocated by poverty and social contrasts. Especially for Benador (in the short story "Appasionata" [1935], for example), the image of the Jewish shtetl was rife with mystery and mystical fervor, in the Hasidic spirit.

In the tradition inaugurated by Ronetti-Roman, several Jewish writers published **essays on Judaism** (Zissu, Fundoianu, Mihail Sebastian (1907–1945)), on the nature of antisemitism (Aderca), or on the dilemmas of double identity (Sebastian, Benador).

Outstanding in this genre was the work of the journalist **Filip Brunea-Fox** (1898–1971), himself a member of the avant-garde. His reports on the traditional Jewish community in Maramureș were memorable, as was his distressing evocation of the pogrom in Iasi (*Orașul măcelului* (The Massacre Town); 1944).

Beginning with Aderca's novel *Orașele scufundate* (Sunken Towns; 1936), Jewish writers popularized **science fiction literature**, a trend that became particularly noticeable in the years of Communist rule—Vladimir Colin, (1921–1991), Horia Aramă (1930–2007), I. M. Ștefan (1922–1992), Radu Nor (1921–2006), Adrian Rogoz (1921–1996), and Dorel Dorian (1930–).

The integration of many Jewish writers into Romanian culture generated identity dilemmas and inner debates that often had a considerable effect on their work. Such questions and dilemmas became more acute in the 1930s. Debates touched on the dilemma “Jewish writer or Romanian writer,” and on the soul and inner structure of writers with dual cultural roots. Reflections of such torments were expressed by several Romanian writers aware of the problems agitating their Jewish colleagues. Some, like Peltz and Baltazar, identified themselves as Romanian writers exclusively; others, such as Benador, treasured their dual spiritual roots, just as Sebastian had done in an earlier essay, “Cum am devenit hooligan” (How I Became a Hooligan).

Naturally, Romanian society’s response to this process was not monolithic; besides acceptance and encouragement, there were constant attempts at delegitimation by nationalist circles. Xenophobic reactions in the traditionalist environment were provoked especially by avant-garde Jewish writers. Their rejection, usually defended by means of ethnocentric rhetoric or accusations of immorality, escalated in the 1930s and culminated during World War II. As political forces from the extreme right grew stronger, and especially after 1933, prominent Jewish writers were engaged in fierce confrontations not only in defense of their legitimacy and against antisemitism, but also with the nationalist Jewish press.

In 1934–1935, the most famous of such controversies involved Sebastian and Aderca. Shaken by the loss of their inner balance and of their lifetime convictions, for them, as for others, the attacks from the antisemitic camp were not the most difficult to bear, but rather the silence of their Romanian colleagues and friends. A scandal was set off by Sebastian’s novel *De două mii de ani* (For Two Thousand Years; 1934), which addressed the themes of dual cultural roots and the confrontation with antisemitism. The preface to the book, written by his former spiritual guide, the neofascist philosopher Nae Ionescu, was a clear and implacable theological justification of antisemitism. Although shocked by Ionescu’s preface, Sebastian accepted its publication, but he then refuted its antisemitic arguments in his essay “How I Became a Hooligan.” The denial of Jewish writers’ legitimacy, supported ideologically in “scientific” studies on the Jews’

racial inferiority and on the harmful “Judaic spirit,” as well as in aggressive press campaigns, also led to administrative measures: Jewish writers were excluded from the Romanian Writers Society in 1937. The ban prevented them from publishing in the Romanian press, their books were removed from bookshops, and lists with writers’ “true” Jewish names were published. In just a few years, all these writers, regardless of what they considered themselves or of how attached they were to Romanian culture, ended up excluded from Romanian literary life and—willingly or unwillingly—were confined to a symbolic ghetto. During World War II, they shared the wave of discriminatory laws and even the threats of deportation and death. As they were prevented from publishing, some continued their creative work focusing more than before on Jewish themes (Aderca wrote a play on the Dreyfus Affair, published posthumously) or kept journals (Sebastian, **Emil Dorian** [1893–1956], Banuș), creating exceptional testimonies on the Jewish intellectuals’ situation under the Antonescu regime, and on the Jewish community’s confrontation with everyday threats of deportation, deprivations, and antisemitic laws.

The dilemmas Jewish Romanian writers faced were extended, in different forms and in a completely different context, during the decade following the establishment of the Communist regime. The reintegration of many Jewish artists and writers into cultural life, and even their promotion to positions of cultural prestige and political authority, were acquired in exchange for an ideological conformism that jeopardized their work. Some, such as Ludo or Benador (who also participated in anti-Zionist campaigns), Banuș, **Veronica Porumbacu** (1921–1977), Breslașu, and Baranga, did not resist the new realist-socialist temptation that seemed to provide a perfect solution to the dilemmas of identity. Some of them paid for this commitment with artistic failure. The most gifted of them succeeded in regaining their authenticity, freeing themselves from servitude to socialist realism. The evocation of the Holocaust was notable even during this period when literature was dominated by the official ideology. The trauma of pogroms and of the Transnistrian camps or of Nazi camps for the natives of northern Transylvania, was reflected in numerous literary expressions in the first years after the war with outstanding achievements in the poetry of **Maier Rudich** (1913–1991), Banuș, **Ștefan Iureș** (1931–), Porumbacu, and in the prose of **Ieronim Șerbu** (1911–1972), Matei Gall (1920–), and **Alexandru Jar** (1911–1988). A first version of **Paul Celan**'s famous "Todesfuge" (Death Fugue) was released in Petre Solomon's translation (he himself was an outstanding Jewish poet and translator) when Celan was still in Bucharest. The Holocaust theme also appeared with literary complexity in the works of prose writers who made their mark later (**Norman Manea** [1936–], **Alexandru Sever** [1921–], **Virgil Duda** [1939–]), or in **Florin Mugur**'s (1934–1991) poetry. As they freed themselves from ideological restrictions, starting in the late 1960s, Jewish writers from Romania reassumed their Jewish identity. This process brought forth a group of writers showing a powerful originality, who stood in the foreground of Romanian literary life. Attempting to reinstate a tradition, these writers sought to build a bridge to the generation of Jewish writers between the two World wars, rediscovering their predecessors: Fundoianu, Sebastian, Aderca, Blecher, Peltz, Bonciu, Voronca. Their connection with the past was favored by a similar phenomenon in general Romanian literature—the emergence of Romanian literary critics who reinstated these Jewish writers' works, with new editions and critical exegeses, underlining also specifically Jewish features, perceived as a particular means of enriching the Romanian literary heritage.

The rediscovery of Jewish traditions can also be detected with several writers from the generation immediately after the war. **Alexandru Mirodan** (1927–) inaugurated the new spirit of returning to sources in dramatic works. In a variety of forms—lyrical motifs, biblical parables, choosing literary characters from the Jewish environment, evoking the Holocaust, memories, confessions, essays—the Jewish universe, dealt with directly or only suggested, can be detected in the poetry of Banuș, **Nina Cassian** (1924–), Mugur, in the modern prose of Manea, Duda, **Radu Cosașu** (1930–), **Sonia Larian** (1931–), **B. Elvin** (1927–), **Marcel Marcian** (1914–2007).

Some of them began to contribute to *Revista cultului mozaic* (Periodical of the Mosaic Religion), also motivated by solidarity with a community that, beginning in the 1980s, was the target of antisemitic attacks launched in the periodical *Săptămîna* (The Week), by the writer Eugen Barbu and of the xenophobe poet Corneliu Vadim Tudor.

Several books of memoirs from the period of war and antisemitic persecutions were also revealing. In *Sub camuflaj. Jurnal 1943–1944* (Under Camouflage: Journal 1943–1944), Maria Banuș evoked episodes from Antonescu’s dictatorship—the evacuation of Jewish homes, forced labor, the threat of deportation to Transnistria, the antisemitic universe, and the cultural life of the Jewish community in Bucharest during the war. The same atmosphere can be found in the memoir written by the theorist **Ion Ianoși** (1928–), *Secolul nostru cel de toate zilele* (Our Everyday Century; 1980), with its surprisingly straight approach to ethnicity and praise for the spiritual and moral advantage of being part of a “minority.”

Against this background, some Jewish writers of the younger generation initiated a process of rediscovering the Judaic tradition. For the prose writer and essayist Manea, the identity crisis and the theme of suffering and dehumanization in a concentration-camp universe acquired an existential intensity and became components of his creative vision. Moreover, during the Communist regime, he was the only Jewish writer to retaliate against antisemitic press attacks; in consequence, he was subjected to violent attacks ranging from the discrediting of his work to the disparagement of his ethnic origins. Manea’s fiction characteristically includes intellectual and personal reflections on the process of assuming an identity. Most revealing in this respect are his stories in *Octombrie, ora opt* (October, 8 O’clock; 1981) and his exceptional memoir written in exile, *A Hooligan’s Return* (2003).

Among writers who made their mark in the Communist era, quite a few wrote their finest books only after the fall of the dictatorship. Among Jewish writers who remained in Romania, **Radu Cosașu** became one of the most prominent with his collection of short stories *Supraviețuirile* (The Survivals; 2002–2006), praised by the literary critics for its ironic depiction of the Stalinist age, and including a significant number of episodes on Jewish families from Bucharest. His works portray families confronted with their sons’ “rebellion” and captivation by the new world; younger characters in these works mock Jewish customs as obsolete and “petty-bourgeois.”

In the younger generation, Andrei Corbea, Andrei Oișteanu and Andrei Cornea are prominent in the history of culture and cultural anthropology.

During the Communist years, and especially during Nicolae Ceaușescu’s dictatorship, an unusually large number of Jewish writers left Romania and settled in Israel, where they continued to write in Romanian. Among those who made this choice were the poet M. Rudich, the literary critic Iosef Eugen Campus, the poets Sebastian Costin (1939–1997), Eran Sela, Shaul Carmel, Solo Har-Herescu, the prose writer Iosif Petran (1932–2005), I. Schechter (1934–2007), the playwright Mirodan, later followed by the writers Duda, Sever, Mircea Săucan (1928–2003), Mirel Brateș, Andrei Fischof, Gina Sebastian-Alcalay, Bianca Marcovici, Tania Lovinescu and others.

After the fall of communism, they were able to publish their work in Romania. While editing the monthly *Minimum* (since 1987), Mirodan wrote *Dicționarul neconvențional al scriitorilor evrei de limbă română* (Unconventional Dictionary of Jewish Writers in Romanian; the two first volumes were published in 1986 and 1997), a captivating combination of literary erudition and personal reflection. Sever and Duda eventually published novels and essays with a marked receptivity toward Jewish surroundings and the fate of Romanian Jewry during the Holocaust.

Campus, Andrei Strihan, Ileana Vrancea, Eugen Luca, Elena Tacciu, Sergiu Levin (1928–2006), and Leon Volovici continued their literary careers in Israel.

Let's not forget the Jewish Romanian artists, starting with mid XIX-th century **Barbu Iscovescu**, **Nicolae Vermont** and especially **Daniel Rosenthal**, the painter of the 1848 revolution and continuing with **Iosif Iser**, ranked among the greatest Romanian painters of the first half of XX-th century. Next episode will discuss in greater detail the Romanian avant-garde and the contributions of Tristan Tzara, Marcel Ianco, Arthur Segal, Max Herman Maxy, Jean David, Victor Brauner, Jacques Herold and Jules Perahim.

In music we should mention the well-known classical pianists **Clara Haskil** and **Dan Mizrahi**.

Talking about music, we should mention the **Klezmer music**. Klezmer is a Hebrew word, a combination of the words "kley" (vessel) and "zemer" (melody) that referred to musical instruments in ancient times. It became colloquially attached to Jewish folk musicians. Klezmer is instrumental music for celebrations which was once performed in the Jewish communities of Eastern Europe at weddings or joyous religious celebrations, such as *Purim*, *Simhat Torah*, or for the inauguration of a new synagogue. The original home of Klezmer is Bessarabia (modern Moldova and Southern Ukraine).

Romanian culture contains a long list of anti-Semitic intellectuals in the history of Romania. It is indeed a long and impressive list headed by the famous Rumanian poets Mihail Eminescu and Vasile Alexandri, and including, Cezar Bolliac, Vasile Conta, Bogdan Haşdeu, Ion Slavici, Nicolae Iorga, Mircea Eliade, etc.

There is much less talk about a long list of philosemitic Romanian intellectuals, of which we would only mention I.L. Caragiale Alexandru Macedonski, Eugen Ionesco, Constantin Brancusi, Liviu Rebreanu, Gala Galaction, Constantin Rădulescu-Motru, Tudor Arghezi, Eugen Lovinescu, Perpessicius, Ion Vinea, Geo Bogza, etc.

From this list I would like to mention my two most favorite artists, the playwrights Ion Luca Caragiale and Eugene Ionesco. Both Eugen Ionesco and Constantin Brancusi became famous after they left Romania. Caragiale, who spent most of his life in Romania is little known outside the country and that's a shame because in my modest opinion he was a real genius; his plays constitute the most accomplished expression of the Romanian theatre, as venues for criticism of late-19th-century Romanian society. By-the-way, he was also a favorite review topic for my uncle, the literary critic.

Next week, in our last episode of this podcast, when we will discuss Jews and the Romanian Cultural Avangarde.
Until then be well.