RACHEL CALOF’S TEXT(S): FAMILY, COLLABORATION, TRANSLATION, ‘AMERICANIZATION’

by

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As members of the Final Examination Committee, we certify that we have read the dissertation prepared by Kristine Paleg entitled Rachel Calof's Text(s): Family, Collaboration, Translation, "Americanization" and recommend that it be accepted as fulfilling the dissertation requirement for the Degree of Doctor of Philosophy.

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Final approval and acceptance of this dissertation is contingent upon the candidate's submission of the final copy of the dissertation to the Graduate College.

I hereby certify that I have read this dissertation prepared under my direction and recommend that it be accepted as fulfilling the dissertation requirement.

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ABSTRACT

Rachel Calof’s Story: Jewish Homesteader on the Northern Plains (Ed. J. Sanford Rikoon, Indiana University Press, 1995) is a first-person memoir of homesteading in North Dakota from 1894-1917, based on Rachel Calof’s Yiddish manuscript. I traced this text from inception to publication, especially the translation and editing process, comparing a new translation of the Yiddish manuscript with the English publication. Since the differences proved significant, my research investigated issues of oral history transmission and collaboration. In light of new scholarship in autobiography theory, particularly Paul Eakin’s “proximate collaborative autobiography,” I consider Rachel Calof’s Story a hybrid text, integrating both oral histories and written texts to portray a more complete picture of homestead life. Rachel’s son, Jacob, compiled the English version for publication, bringing a comprehensive knowledge of her life, and yet complicating objectivity because he was, indeed, her son. Recent scholarship in women’s and western studies focuses on situational context; investigation of diversity supplements an increasingly multi-faceted picture. Contemporary scholarship in immigrant literature emphasizes ambivalence rather than assimilation and changed how I considered the Calof story. I apply the Personal Narratives Group’s conceptualization of context, narrator-interpreter relations and multiple connotations of “truths.” The oral nature of the Yiddish language is also considered as influencing the translation.
I analyze specific themes at length: Rachel Calof's physical environment of home, prairie and transitional spaces; the rhetoric of frontier settlement; home in physical and religious terms; and finally, Americanization as an editorial emphasis which reduced ethnic and religious distinctions. Other multi-authored works, including those of Anne Frank, Laura Ingalls Wilder and Black Elk, reveal parallel collaborative tensions. Neither generational nor gender differences entirely explain alterations families and ethnographers make in editing transmitted works. Barbara Myerhoff's concept of the "third voice" particularly influenced my understanding the dialogic nature of manuscripts and oral histories. Finally, I question whether publishers and audiences are complicit in the demand for success stories even at the expense of stifling an author's voice. The English publication of Rachel Calof's Story was polished and unaccented; the original Yiddish manuscript was a stream of consciousness that might not have been published.
1.0.2. Summary of *Rachel Calof's Story* and overview of my research

*Rachel Calof's Story: Jewish Homesteader on the Northern Plains* is a first-person memoir of her life on a homestead in North Dakota in the late 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> century. While *Rachel Calof's Story* focused on her life as a homesteader between 1894 and 1917 in Devils Lake, North Dakota, she began the story as an orphan in the Ukraine. Her brothers and sister were dispersed among the relatives when her father left and Rachel spent much of her childhood with her paternal grandfather whom she considered a religious fanatic. She left his home for an aunt’s where she was the maid, but at least in close proximity to her brothers and sister. She described one infatuation with a “butcher boy” and apparently this alerted the family to the fact that they had to resolve this unmarried and poor relative’s situation. Rachel agreed to marry Abraham Calof who was already in the United States. Her journey was detailed, as was her first meeting with Abraham (Abe) in New York City. Within two weeks they traveled to North Dakota and she began telling the story of poverty, crowding and deprivation. Calof relatives surrounded her on all of the nearby homesteads. Among the experiences Rachel Calof described: her walk across the prairie to spend time with her fiancé who was working on a distant farm; her wedding; the lack of space and crowding. She told about the winters and went into considerable detail about some of the nine births that she experienced there. She elaborately described her postpartum experience with her first birth and her mother-in-law’s approach to protecting the mother and newborn child. Religious
ritual of birth and kashrut seemed to impose difficulties on the financially desperate families, but Rachel Calof also conveyed religious observance as a satisfying framework and she took pride in succeeding as a Jewish homemaker. Farming cycles and fuel supplies seemed to delineate other constraints. She detailed crises of sickness and domestic accidents and finally portrayed a picture of economic success. The story ends abruptly: after twenty-three years on the farm, the Calof family moved to St. Paul.

The Indiana University Press publication included a Preface by editor J. Sanford Rikoon and an Epilogue by Jacob Calof. Supplementary articles included Rikoon’s “Jewish Farm Settlements in America’s Heartland” and Elizabeth Jameson’s “Rachel Bella Calof’s Life as Collective History.”

Based on her manuscript written in Yiddish, the story was translated into English and published in 1995. I contextualized the Calof story in terms of its extended family, the Midwestern Jewish community and immigrant and ethnic literature of the frontier. Then I traced the routes of this manuscript from inception to publication, especially the translation and editing process. Since linguistic differences between the Yiddish manuscript and the English publication proved to be significant, my research interrogated issues of collaboration and translation. Recent scholarship in autobiography theory has shifted the emphasis from the individual subject to a focus on relational and contextual aspects of life-writing. In light of these new approaches, I consider Rachel Calof’s Story a hybrid text,
integrating both oral histories and written texts to portray a more complete picture of life on that homestead. Jacob Calof, Rachel's son, who compiled the English version for publication, brought to the work a remarkably comprehensive knowledge of her life, and yet complicated the objectivity of that collaboration because he was, indeed, her son. Also considered in my analysis, recent scholarship in women's studies, western studies and immigrant literature is focusing on the importance of the situational context, searching for the daily and prosaic information and approaching diversity as supplementing an increasingly multi-faceted picture. Immigrant literature theory emphasized ambivalence rather than the more monolithic stance of assimilationist projects. This ambivalence shifted the way I considered the Calof story. Another approach, developed by The Personal Narratives Group, elucidated women's voices in particular and I applied this in the chapter that considers the context and narrator-interpreter relations and the many-layered connotations of multi-authored “truths.” The nature of Yiddish as an oral language was considered as an additional factor in the layers of interpretation.

Specific issues analyzed at length include: Rachel Calof's physical environment of home and prairie and her establishment of success under those conditions; the rhetoric of frontier settlement as opposed to establishing a farm home; home in terms of physicality and spirituality; and finally, the Americanization process reducing the ethnic and religious distinctions in favor of an American success story. Collaborative tensions found in other multi-authored
works were considered in light of this story. Neither generational nor gender differences entirely explained the alterations that families and ethnographers made in editing transmitted works. Ethnographer Barbara Myerhoff's concept of the "third voice" was particularly influential in terms of understanding the dialogic nature of the manuscript and the oral history. Finally, the conclusion questioned whether publishers or audiences were not complicit as they demand uplifting success stories even at the expense of the stifling of the voice of the original author. *Rachel Calof's Story* was polished and unaccented; the original Yiddish manuscript, her own words, was a stream of consciousness that might not have been published.
1.0.2. Manuscripts and translations

Throughout the dissertation I refer to three versions of Rachel Calof's work. Citations from *Rachel Calof's Life: Jewish Homesteader on the Northern Plains*, translated by Molly Shaw, compiled by Jacob Calof and published by Indiana University Press, are indicated by page numbers in parenthesis and are referred to as the Indiana Press publication. These citations are often referred to as the English version.

The translation from the ink version of the Yiddish manuscript (pages 1-67) and the continuation in pencil (pages 68-255), as translated by Joe Rozenberg, appear in italics and are referred to by page number and the letter "Y." This is usually referred to as the Yiddish manuscript. Finally, the translation from the pencil version (duplicate page numbers, presumably earlier and unrevised versions) are also delineated by italics and referred to by page number and the letter "X." One addendum of five pages, written in Seattle, is also indicated by italics and referred to by page number and the letters "SE."

The original Yiddish text was not punctuated; the punctuation in the italicized quotations is inserted as I transcribed the sentences during the translation process. Words in quotation marks indicate Rachel Calof’s use of English words written in Hebrew letters.
1.1 Tales of the Text: Rachel Calof’s *My Story*

Rachel Calof’s *My Story* was originally written as a recollection in Yiddish. When Rachel was about sixty years old she sat down, perhaps at a kitchen table, and started writing the details of her life in long-hand. Sanford Rikoon, the editor of this memoir published in English in 1995, said in the “Acknowledgments”:

In 1936 Rachel Bella Kahn Calof purchased a five-by-seven-inch “Clover Leaf Linen” writing tablet and began to reconstruct her life story. Her remarkable journey began sixty years earlier, south of Kiev in the Ukraine. In 1894 she came to the United States to marry a man she had never met, and for the next twenty-three years she lived on a farm north of Devils Lake in rural northeast North Dakota. Her story recounts aspects of her childhood and teenage years in the Old Country but focuses largely on her life between 1894 and 1904 and her experiences on the homestead. (xi)

Rachel Bella Kahn Calof vividly described her life as a motherless child in a Jewish village in the Ukraine. She said, “When I reached the age of eight, I had already fully assumed the role of protector of my brothers and sister” (1). Her loyalty to her siblings and their experiences with a stepmother was detailed, as was her father’s move to America and the consequent separation of the Kahn children: “our father decided to break up his home and give up his children. His plan was to go to America as soon as he could get rid of us. He proceeded with his plans to dispose of us” (4). Rachel Bella went to her paternal grandfather’s, and later to a wealthy aunt located closer to her siblings. Her father’s boat apparently sank. As an eighteen year old, Rachel Bella recognized that her “prospects for the future were now very poor” (8). In a combination of accepting her fate and expecting God to provide, she said, “meanwhile God sits above and...
sees all that happens below, and God finally understood that He had to do something in my behalf. His plan for me was quite complicated" (8-9). She realized that marriage to a stranger, arranged for her by a great-uncle, would be better than staying in the *shtetl*, so she bravely used another girl's passport and made the journey. Abraham Calof met her in New York and they prepared to go to North Dakota where land was available to homesteaders. One of his brothers had been there, along with their cousins, for the past three years. Abe stayed in New York and apparently earned the passages for his parents and younger brother, who arrived three months before Rachel Bella. His parents and brother went on ahead to North Dakota while Abe continued to work and paid for Rachel Bella's passage.

Although Rachel Bella described her first meeting with Abe in New York as awkward, they nonetheless agreed to marry and traveled to North Dakota. Her first impression of the homestead was one of poverty and despair. While she certainly did not come from wealth in the Ukraine, she was very harsh in her description of her new relatives' situation. Her first impression of her future brother-in-law, at the train station: "I felt a sinking feeling when I saw this man [Charlie, Abraham's brother]. He was quite dirty and badly dressed with rags on his feet in place of shoes. He looked like a subnormal person to me, a suspicion which was confirmed the moment he began to talk" (22). She was even more critical of the women:

The appearance of these girls was truly shocking. They wore men's shoes and a rough looking garment. Only common peasants wore such clothes
in Russia. I was dismayed to see such attire worn by Jewish women. It was indecent. Poor as I had been all my life, I had always worn a dress like any self-respecting Jewish woman.” (22)

She did not realize that they had no shoes and wore the men’s shoes in her honor. Their living quarters were “dismal” and she confronted the fact that she was facing poverty and conditions for which she was wholly unprepared. During the winter, a lack of fuel forced them not only to share the 12 x 14 foot shanty with her in-laws, brother-in-law, and a calf, but each family also kept chickens under the bed. She also wrote about many of the better moments and she gave the impression of being a very spunky young woman. Religion seemed to give her some familiar constraints and stability even though her new family members had different approaches to Jewish observance, whether it was birthing rituals or marriage customs. Much of the book was devoted to her almost constant condition of pregnancy; she realistically portrayed the primitive conditions. Her alliance with her husband and their determination to build a home together increased as their family grew. A very short section of the book was devoted to their success; their move to St. Paul, Minnesota seemed quite sudden and unexpected.

My analysis began with a close reading of Rachel Calof’s Story, intended to contextualize the manuscript in terms of family, community and genre. The family context included her family of origin in the Ukraine, her nuclear and extended family in North Dakota, and finally, the post-homesteading move to St. Paul and the era of dispersion. A more academic aspect of the contextualization
was an investigation of the Jewish homesteading community in North Dakota during that time period. Toba Geller, a resident of Fargo, North Dakota, collected oral and written memoirs during the late 1970s that are currently located at the Jewish Historical Society of the Upper Midwest in St. Paul (JHSUM). I examined 135 of these memoirs, ranging from three to fifty pages of text, which allowed me to trace thematic patterns of the concerns of this community. Some texts were simply lists of names, births and deaths. Others were anecdotal to the extent that the settlers can hardly be identified. Most offered a limited portrayal of what was an extensive Jewish settlement.

Finally, I examined some of the theoretical underpinnings of immigrant and autobiography literature. Some of Calof’s strategies were consistent with first generation ethnic literary postures (Japtok). Other approaches suggested that Calof defied categorization in several ways. I thought primarily about first-generation writings and the different voices that she created over time, and differences between generations among those first arrivals. She did not reject all of the old country or religion, nor did she cling to them. In a time when assimilationist literature was the norm, she was proving that maintaining particularist beliefs was important to her, and not incompatible with financial, social and literary success in America. Specifically, knowing that the family subscribed to The Forward (a radical/socialist Yiddish newspaper) allowed me to consider claims that Calof’s My Life is similar to a “Bintel Brief,” a sort of Yiddish variation on “Dear Abby,” that generations of Yiddish speakers were familiar with.
throughout the United States. I also discovered that YIVO (a Yiddish institute) had autobiography contests and that there are many manuscripts in Yiddish in their archives in New York (Soyer). Finally, there was a trend of Jewish women immigrants writing autobiography in the early years of this century and significant critical material developed about this particular type of immigrant literature (Drucker, Shollar, Zierler). The critical framework was fairly clear. However, the close reading of the text generated surprising additional research directions.

Looking at the text first as a manuscript: how did this book come to be? Issues of translation, as well as audience, began to surface during the close reading of the text as I questioned the literal word choice in the translation from Rachel's Yiddish manuscript to the English publication. Judy Nolte Temple's recognition of unusual phrases and unlikely word choices stimulated this search. Simultaneously, while investigating the family context, I noted that there were multiple claims, or versions, of the family's involvement in this text production process. Sanford Rikoon said in the published version of Rachel Calof's Story that she wrote sixty-seven pages of Yiddish text (xii). He said no known previous version existed, nor any evidence of the existence of a diary. In the late 1970s, nearly thirty years after Rachel Bella Calof died, one of her daughters, Elizabeth Calof Breitbord, decided that her mother's text should be available to the family. Elizabeth arranged to have the notebook (or notebooks?) translated into English and typed for a "wider family circulation" (xii). Rikoon suggested that there were "particular difficulties" in the translation, but in an unexamined and problematic
statement he suggested that “we owe a great deal to Jacob Calof, who refused to use outsiders who might have changed any part of his mother’s story and who would not have known her ‘voice’ and narrative style” (xii). We were to accept at face value that there were no significant changes, as Rikoon said in his “Introduction”: “No passages were added or deleted from the original nor were any changes made in the content or chronology of her narrative” (xii). The English text was typed by two of Rachel’s granddaughters and distributed to the family and several archives. J. Sanford Rikoon found a copy of this typed English manuscript at the American Jewish Archives in Cincinnati donated by Elizabeth Calof Breitbord, who also restricted the use of the document without her authorization. The final paragraph of Rikoon’s acknowledgments implied that we were fortunate to have this version since the family had previously resisted wider publication, suggesting that this perhaps “reflect[s] Rachel Bella’s own notions of privacy” (xiii). My research suggested inaccuracies in this portrayal of the intended limited audience and the faithfulness of the translation. Furthermore, a text intended only for the family is inherently a different text from one prepared with the public in mind.

I did not initially suspect that there was any disagreement with Rikoon’s portrayal of the family as demurely preferring that Rachel Calof’s Story remain private. Originally, I thought that the Yiddish text should be available for scholarly reference without reservation. Although I was incapable of determining the accuracy of the translation without expert support, my contention was simply that
with the original untranslated Yiddish text unavailable to the general public, the
call – after publication – for privacy seemed to limit the credibility of an otherwise
open and revealing text. Thus, I started this research with the notion that the
original should be found and made available. Translated material was always
open to different understandings and if the original was not available for
verification and interpretation, then an opaque layer remained between the text
and the reader. But I was not making access to the manuscript a condition for
beginning my work; I did not have the original and it was time to proceed.

As I started the close reading, I began to piece together the family context
of this manuscript. I started to see Rachel Bella (or was she called Bella, or Baila,
as it said in the 1920 census form?) sitting in a kitchen and I wondered where
she wrote the story. Where did Rachel Bella live in 1936? I met with Stan Calof,
her grandson, Mac (Moses) Calof’s son, in his St. Paul home. He directed me
towards Jacob Calof’s son, David, in Seattle, and Elizabeth Calof Breitbord’s
daughter, Joyce, in Los Angeles. Rachel Bella Calof’s grandchildren have not
been able to tell me exactly where she lived in any given year. The latest address
I had for her was 1932, in St. Paul (Calof, JHSUM). After 1932, she lived in
sequence with her daughters, not with her husband.¹ So the exact location was
not available. Did she have a room of her own? Since I could not establish a
geographical location, it would be hard to get as specific as a room or a table.

¹ Abraham Calof, her husband, lived with his children in the Midwest between 1932 and his death
in 1942. However, there was one letter from Abraham, at the North Dakota Historical Society, that
gave his return address as Seattle. Even assuming the address was temporary, he obviously was
not exclusively in the Midwest. Jacob Calof, in the Epilogue of Rachel Calof’s Story,
euphemistically said that his parents “strayed from each other” (102).
According to Elizabeth’s daughter, Joyce, this manuscript, lived nearly fifty years in a chest at Elizabeth’s home. Joyce said that Rachel Bella Calof brought this chest with her on the journey to the United States. Rachel Bella did not mention a chest in her story. Not that I think that it was of critical importance that she have anything of her own in that shanty in North Dakota. But, since the shanty was portrayed as a place of absolute starkness, this image changed just a little by knowing her chest was there.\(^2\) I thought that Rachel Bella had absolutely nothing to connect her to the Old Country. Now I wondered whether she brought any candlesticks or anything else, for that matter, from the old country? After this story sat in the chest for nearly fifty years, Elizabeth, the owner of the chest and inheritor of the manuscript, decided that the story should be available to others. Nonetheless, it was Rachel’s youngest son Jacob (Jake), in Seattle, who produced the book. He called himself the compiler and he wrote the epilogue.\(^3\) Scholar Sanford Rikoon did tell us that Elizabeth was the moving force behind getting the story translated and distributed to the family members (xii). But Rikoon also said that the family was reluctant to have this published in a wider forum. The family, however, did not have a unified position. I think there were several positions and we were presented with Jacob’s and Rikoon’s. Elizabeth, however, was present in this story and eventually was heard.

\(^2\) Raychel Reiff’s article on Giants in the Earth provided insight on the roles the trunk played in the transition to the new home.

\(^3\) His use of the word “compiler” was first found in the English version typed by the granddaughters and distributed to the family and the archives. Sanford Rikoon also referred to Jake as the compiler in their correspondence.
As I continued the close reading of the text I began to sense discrepancies between these two siblings' versions of this tale of the text. Jacob, as I said earlier, treated the manuscript as a private glimpse into his family's past. At this point, early in the story, his sister, Elizabeth, disagreed with him on only one issue: whether or not there was a connection to their mother's relatives remaining in the Ukraine. He contended that there had never been any connection to the brothers and sister Rachel Bella left behind. Since the beginning of the manuscript was so intensely devoted to her "little orphans" (she was not the oldest child, but assumed a caretaker role), I had always been bothered by the lack of contact after Rachel Bella left Russia. This unease was compounded when I realized that she was writing in 1936, and we had no idea if any of her family survived the Holocaust. The information provided by Jacob Calof and elaborated upon by Sanford Rikoon identified the town in which the siblings were living as Balaya Tserkov, which was occupied by the Nazis in August 1943 when the town's remaining 3000 Jews were killed (Wiesenthal). The difference between Elizabeth's and Jacob's versions was that Elizabeth claimed that there was a photograph of the siblings and their families; not as the children that Rachel Bella left behind, but at least five to ten years later, if not more. The lack of correspondence seemed unlikely to me, even taking into consideration their
poverty on the homestead.⁴

Looking into this difference, small as it was, between the accounts by two of Rachel Bella’s children, I began to find a route to an alternative text, or at least, an additional interpretation. Rachel not only left St. Paul and lived in Seattle,⁵ but there was a period of time that she lived with Elizabeth in Duluth. Elizabeth had at least as much family information as Jacob did, perhaps more, since her mother was younger during the stay in Duluth, and Elizabeth was the one who received the manuscript from her mother. Certainly, Jacob could not claim a monopoly on the information in the family. The stay in Duluth was long enough for Rachel Bella to have joined local Jewish community service organizations (Calof JHSUM). The search for Elizabeth’s information, at that point focusing on the possibility that there were photographs of relatives left behind in the Ukraine, led me to the Jewish Historical Society of the Upper Midwest. There I found, uncited in any material I’ve seen thus far, a memoir from the Geller collection of the North Dakota Jewish homesteaders under the name of Elizabeth Breitbord - not part of the Calof files. The same day Linda Schloff, director of the Jewish Historical Society of the Upper Midwest archives, showed me a copy of the faded Yiddish manuscript. I photocopied over two hundred pages of the Yiddish manuscript. Elizabeth’s letter was not cross-referenced to

⁴ Subsequently, I discovered that she corresponded with her cousin, Manya Kahn, originally from Kiev, who came eventually to live with the Calof family. Manya Kahn Yaffe was Molly Shaw’s mother (Shaw interview). In addition, the photographs of the Calof family and farm in the archives at the Jewish Historical Society of the Upper Midwest were taken by an itinerant photographer and printed on postcards to be mailed.

⁵ It was not entirely clear if she ever lived with Jacob; she had two daughters living in Seattle some of the time between 1932 and 1952.
the extensive Calof file since her contribution predated the publication of her mother's story; the letter had been filed away along with hundreds of other responses to Toba Geller's research project on North Dakota Jewish farming families. As I was reading through the collection, I was stunned to find familiar characters: Abe and Rachel Calof.

Elizabeth described many of the same occurrences on the homestead, not in the lyrical words of her mother, but added a picture of her father not seen in the published version of the Calof family. She described Abraham as a lithographer in New York in 1893 and clarified the sequence of events bringing first Charlie (Abe's brother) to North Dakota and, subsequently, their parents. She wrote of many of the same storms and crop damage, but also showed her father as a horse tamer “always getting kicked by some horse” and “sure he was dying every time” (Breitbord n.pag.). Her father sometimes spent the “little money” they had on books. She credited “God’s help and my mother’s good sense” for their survival. However, the most definitive difference from her brother Jacob was found in the following statement:

My mother many years ago started a book on her own telling about her personal life. A book that’s stained with tears, as a bride of 18; the hardships; the personal troubles. She sent it to the Forward newspaper who were very interested in printing it in serials but she had written it on both sides of the paper and they couldn’t accept it that way and there was no one to re-write it. I kept it as a very dear reminder of her. (Breitbord n.pag.)
Despite my attempts, I have not yet been able to verify this with *The Forward.*\(^6\) Nonetheless, the manuscript apparently in its earliest form was written on both sides of the page in pencil and this was found to be unacceptable for newspaper serialization. Ostensibly, the process of Rachel’s recopying work began from this motivation: there are sixty-seven pages copied out in ink on one side of the page, in answer to the requirements suggested by *The Forward.* No textual support was found explaining the cessation of the recopying. Rachel’s granddaughter, Joyce, when I told her I had found this memoir and mentioned *The Forward,* replied “Oh yes, but they wouldn’t publish it because it was written on both sides of the page.” Obviously this version of the tale was passed down in at least one branch of the family.

Even while I continued to pursue the alternative texts and contexts issue, interviewing the grandchildren and haunting the archives, I came across yet another incongruity in the united tale as presented by Sanford Rikoon. My story about the text evolved into a Daughter’s version and a Son’s version. Rachel Bella may have had nine children, but the key players in the story of the memoir seemed to be Elizabeth and Jacob. Moving into the next generation, my conversations were with the Daughter’s daughter and the Son’s son. As I prepared for a phone interview with Elizabeth’s daughter, Joyce Aronsohn, I reread the acknowledgements Rikoon wrote. I was searching for the reference to

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\(^6\) Elizabeth’s daughter, Joyce, confirmed that this is her understanding of her grandmother’s intentions. The archives at *The Forward* were not intact, and those that have been transferred to YIVO were not available.
the pictures of Rachel Bella’s siblings since I was sure it was her mother, Elizabeth, who mentioned them. After finding those references, I continued reading, perhaps for the hundredth time: I seemed to finally understand something that I had previously missed. Another discrepancy was becoming apparent. Rikoon said Rachel Bella wrote “sixty-seven pages of Jewish.” In the back of my mind, I remembered this file at the Historical Society as being far longer. I returned to my photocopied file (at the time I wondered why I was photocopying over 200 pages of faded Yiddish text that I could not decipher). There were more than sixty-seven pages, or even double that, considering Rachel wrote on both sides of the page. But even more interesting than this inconsistency, I discovered a letter in English, undated, not addressed to anyone in particular, from Jacob Calof. Substantially vague, he did not indicate the pages to which he is referring:

My sister, Elizabeth Breitbord and our family friend, Molly Shaw, both of Los Angeles, literally translated my mother’s Jewish writing into English and sent their translation on to me in Seattle, where I endeavored, keeping faithfully to the autobiography, to put the story into a literary form.

I came into possession of the Jewish pages only after my sister’s death. She and Molly Shaw had put the narrative Jewish pages in order, but to my surprise, when I received all of my mother’s writings, these pages were also included. I can only surmise that she may have begun to write her memoirs on another occasion and that these pages are part of that endeavor. (Calof Yiddish JHSUM)

The file was in a state of disarray, with several numbering systems. I doubted that it could have been read from beginning to end. I could not determine which pages Jacob referred to as additional, and I’m assuming that these were neither
translated nor included in Rachel Bella’s published memoir. Furthermore, Jacob’s claim that Elizabeth “literally translated my mother’s Jewish writing into English” seemed unlikely since Joyce, Elizabeth’s daughter, said that her mother didn’t read Yiddish. Joyce remembered her father translating the letters that Rachel Bella wrote to her daughter, Elizabeth (Aronsohn). Thus, it was questionable that Elizabeth would have been translating the manuscript with family friend (and cousin) Molly Shaw, as Jacob suggests. Of course, his own disclosure of “put[ting] the story into a literary form” was the crux of his letter and further motivated my interest in finding the original manuscript.

Why did Jacob write that letter? At what stage was it included in a photocopy of the manuscript? Was he warning a future reader that more material existed than he had known about, or was translated? Was he obligated to write this letter to absolve himself of responsibility? Was he blaming Elizabeth for an omission, for neglecting to complete the task of translating, or for deliberately changing the content? I was left with more questions than answers, once again. It seemed to me now that finding the original was imperative, if only to compare the material that was included in the published text and to determine what was omitted. Jacob’s apology seemed too elaborate for insignificant material and drew attention to the handwritten manuscript. He took very seriously his responsibility of staying absolutely faithful to the original and, in this letter, he warned readers that something was amiss. At this point, the editor and compiler himself was leading us towards alternative texts.
While I continued to assume that Jacob Calof was interested in providing an accurate portrait of his pioneering mother, the fact that the original Calof narrative in Yiddish was not publicly available, and the faded photocopy in the archive was not an accessible facsimile, left the edited and translated version open to significant critical questions. In addition, the fact that the narrative was a reminiscence covering a span of sixty years made some of the material suspect. In her "Memories of Homesteading and The Process of Retrospection," Seena B. Kohl called this form a "dialogue between two points in an individual's life" (27). Sometimes information was coded so that myths could be maintained. Kohl also described the process of self-censorship and the "changes over time and with cultural distance" (31), all of which would have been present in the Calof story. Another point was that the personal "world view" was significant in shaping the outline of the story, if not the eventual outcome. Stan Calof, Rachel's grandson in St. Paul, suggested that the period of contemplation and composition was precisely the time that his grandmother's marriage was failing and she was moving from home to home among her children. The self-evaluation may indeed reflect the way that the writer approached the world, and it was also a legitimate summary of a given life.

I decided the accuracy of the details and the surrounding context must be examined further. Rachel Calof's approach to writing about the homesteading experience differed significantly from other published literature available. My Story must be examined as a text in terms of what was included and what was
not. While Calof discussed at great length her childhood nearly sixty years earlier, she did not detail the final twenty years of her life as she wrote the story (nor did she add to the manuscript to describe the next fifteen years that she lived after 1936). The text was rich in the story of homesteading and deprivation, but trailed off when the Calofs finally achieved success in farming and subsistence terms. The family also maintained its Jewish identity in times of crisis. Why did she stop the narrative with the move to town? Apparently she and her husband lived together in St. Paul for at least another fifteen years. However, the timing of the memoir was apparently the end of her partnership with her husband. Her son hinted at the separation in the Epilogue:

their bond of mutuality began to erode, replaced more and more by divergent views and activities. The ties of common danger and uncertainty, dependence on each other's skills, and shared emotional support seemed no longer essential in their relationship. Slowly, then, they began to drift apart. (101)

Or, perhaps, it was just the years of privacy deprivation that guided Calof at the end of her story. She may have wanted to tell about the difficulties of the homesteading experience, but found no reason to explain her marriage unraveling. I wondered if there was not further privacy deprivation after the separation, or if moving from one child's home to another was not awkward. I could not locate an address for her from 1932 to 1952, a significant amount of time.

Where was Rachel Calof “at home”? Was her exile continuous throughout her life? Her story seemed to be that of a sometimes bitter, sometimes
triumphant, woman. She documented extensively her successes, especially in the light of her relatives’ failures. But nonetheless, I cannot identify where she was finally an insider, unless it was at home, perhaps with her children, in that Shabbat vision of Jacob’s in the Epilogue:

The most vivid memory I treasure of her was the lovely picture she presented wearing her immaculate white apron over her best dress in her warm, spotless house, making her blessing over the Sabbath candles each Friday night. How noble and regal she looked. (103)

Elizabeth’s daughter confirmed the essential warmth and joy her grandmother embodied. Rachel Bella’s mobility and transitions were considered commonplace in her time; taking on a farm with no knowledge of farming was considered a good move. She left a manuscript that described a difficult journey. Did she finally find her way home? In one of the few secondary sources about the Calof story, Elizabeth Jameson, whose essay “Rachel Bella Calof’s Life as Collective History” concludes Rachel Calof’s Story, suggested that while Calof “did not achieve the happy ending of the fictional pioneers, who lived securely ever after on their hard-won land,” she nonetheless “gives us as neither a romantic nor a pessimist, with a matter-of-fact realism, the life she found worth living” (149).

I continued to work with the now multiple texts: other minor discrepancies generated further questions, while interviews with family members offered supplementary information; the additional material in the Yiddish file may have been no more than a revised beginning, or it could have proven to be information censored. As I worked on the text word-by-word and wondered about some of the word choices and the connotations lost in translation, finding the original
manuscript became the next task. The richness of the language was proving to be only one of many layers of stories in this text.
1.2 The Manuscripts' Journey

Rachel Bella Kahn Calof wrote her Yiddish manuscript, as far as we know, in 1936. The ink version was dated 1936; in addition, the end of the pencil version included the comment, "Now it's already 1936 and I'm still in Seattle" (253Y). She was no longer living with her husband, Abraham, in St. Paul. The original manuscript translator, Molly Shaw, remembered seeing Rachel (or, as she was known, "Baila") sitting in Molly's mother's apartment in Winnipeg, notebook in her lap, close to the radiator and drinking tea as she wrote. Rachel would have been visiting her daughter, Bess, who lived in the same apartment building. Molly's mother, Manya Kahn Yaffa, was Rachel Bella's cousin who came from Kiev to the Calof farm in North Dakota.⁷ We don't know if Rachel Bella wrote in additional locations, some of this time she was also apparently living in, or extensively visiting, Duluth with her daughter, Elizabeth ("Obituary"). In the manuscript, when Rachel described her "current" location it was Seattle, where she was alternating living with her oldest daughter, Minnie, and her youngest daughter Ceil (Calof 250-255Y).

A physical description of the existing manuscripts with which I am familiar may clarify the journey that these manuscripts have taken en route to publication. Rachel Calof's original Yiddish manuscript is currently held by her grandson.

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⁷ There she met Phil Yaffa and they married; however, it was not a marriage arranged in advance as Rachel Bella's was. Molly said her mother was a city girl and told her husband that she would become ill ("consumptive") and die if she were to remain on the farm, so they moved to Winnipeg (Shaw). They did have three children born in North Dakota, so apparently it was not an immediate move.
David Calof, a psychotherapist living in Seattle.\textsuperscript{8} David is the son of "compiler" Jacob (Jake) Calof, who died in December 2000. The manuscript is stored carefully in transparent plastic sleeves with the old paper somewhat crumbling and the pencil writing fading. The pages are written on both sides, with several numbering systems, including duplicate numbers. However, David Calof also has a manuscript that is sixty-seven pages long, on lined notebook paper, in ink and on one side of the page. This sixty-seven page ink manuscript is described in the 1995 Indiana University Press publication as the entire text; however, the pencil version is more protected, while the ink version is simply pages in a folder.\textsuperscript{9} These pages have journeyed considerable distances since they were first written approximately seventy years ago.

The Yiddish manuscripts are divided into sections written in ink and sections written in pencil. Even though the ink version is pages 1-67, I suggest that this is actually the last version completed since I am assuming this is a revision of earlier version(s) in pencil. I am also assuming that it is in Rachel Calof's handwriting, even though that is also subject to debate. The handwriting matches in both the ink and pencil versions. Within the family there was some disagreement on the issue of handwriting since David said that his father, Jacob, always claimed that his mother dictated this story to him and he wrote it down, making it a highly collaborative effort (David Calof). However, Jacob, in a

\textsuperscript{8} David Calof invited me to photocopy the original manuscripts in Seattle and opened his father's correspondence to my perusal and extensive photocopying.

\textsuperscript{9} Interestingly, a folder that is labeled with the numbering system of the Jewish Historical Society of the Upper Midwest, since this was once donated and then recalled.
newspaper interview in the Seattle Times, October 17, 1995, said that his mother had asked him to "translate her life story." Meanwhile, he said, "the Great Depression scattered the children in search of jobs," and Jacob left St. Paul and went to Seattle. He said in the interview "to the children's surprise, six years later their mother filled a 5-by-7-inch writing tablet with her words, telling her story with almost no revision." Ceil Stephens, Jake's sister, suggested that Jake was not around enough to have written it, and in fact, he was the one who would question family memories with "I don't remember that" and they would answer him: "you weren't around" (Stephens). Rachel's grandson, Stan Calof, added the information that Jake had moved out of his parents' home by the age of fourteen, so that he was unlikely to have been at home taking dictation (Stan Calof). Therefore, I assumed that this was Rachel Bella's handwriting, even though I had no letters of hers or anything that we knew she had signed. Furthermore, Jake's knowledge of Yiddish seemed to have been limited. No samples of Jake's handwriting in Yiddish existed; later he told Sandy Rikoon that he was not able to translate additional pages that he found included in the original manuscript entrusted to him upon his sister Elizabeth's death (Jacob Calof correspondence).

The ink manuscript was the most polished version and also included the most English words, indicating that it was probably the last version. While the ink manuscript corresponded most consistently with the wording and paragraph structure of the book, the decreasing correlation of the Yiddish manuscript with the final section of the Indiana Press publication was not simply a function of the
ink or the pencil manuscript. Those divergences will be dealt with later in this section.

Why would there be a segment, about one fourth of the work, written in ink? One possibility suggested by archival evidence is a letter from Elizabeth Calof Breitbord, Rachel Calof’s daughter, from September 27, 1975, that implied that Rachel Calof submitted the manuscript to the Yiddish newspaper, The Forward, and was told that they were interested in publishing her story in serial form, but that they would not work from a manuscript written on both sides of the page (Breitbord). A search at the YIVO Institute for Jewish Research in New York City, where the correspondence records from The Forward are held, did not verify this possibility. In any case, at least some family members remembered the story of the manuscript being submitted. Autobiography competitions at the time, not only on a national basis, but locally as well (Cohen correspondence), illustrated that writing about immigration and absorption was a popular topic. However, no evidence existed that Rachel Calof submitted her manuscript to the large YIVO competition in 1942, even though the structure of her story seemed to coincide with the guidelines for the competition (Cohen Appendix B).

Three quarters of the Yiddish manuscript was written only in pencil. Joe Rozenberg, working with me to retranslate and verify the contents of the manuscript, organized the pencil manuscript into pages 64 through 255.

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10 Joe and Rose Rozenberg of St. Louis Park, Minnesota, welcomed me into their home every week for six months to translate the 255+ page manuscript. Both learned Yiddish as their mother tongue in Poland before World War II. Jocelyn Cohen directed me towards possible Yiddish translators in the Twin Cities and Maurice Kreevoy put me in touch with Joe Rozenberg.
addition, assorted pages between 1-65 were written in pencil, and duplicates of those page numbers were included as well. In Joe’s retranslation of the material, we worked with the sixty-seven pages in ink first since those began with childhood in the Ukraine and went through early stages of settling in North Dakota. Our working process involved Joe reading the Yiddish and translating aloud word-by-word, sentence-by-sentence as I typed. I asked him often about the meanings and connotations of the words. He struggled throughout the manuscript with Rachel’s handwriting, her phonetic spelling, and words in English, Russian and German interspersed though written in Yiddish lettering. In addition, there was no punctuation: not a single period, comma or question mark. Nor are there paragraph breaks or chapter delineations.\textsuperscript{11} Another characteristic that might have indicated different composition times or settings was that some of the pages were lined, some unlined, and some written only near the lines. Some pages were traced over in ink. We continued next through pages 64 through 255, the ones in pencil. Finally, we returned to the approximately sixty assorted pages and found them to be ranging in time from childhood in the Ukraine, to North Dakota memories, and some a continuation after the organized pages’ conclusion in Seattle (all of these unrevised, I would suggest). Some of these assorted pages seemed to be earlier drafts; others were more contemplative and descriptive of her current life in Seattle.

\textsuperscript{11} A later chapter ("Personal Narrative in Translation") deals with Yiddish as a “language of fusion” and its function for many people as primarily a spoken language.
Another source for comparison was the manuscript in the Jewish Historical Society of the Upper Midwest's (JHSUM) collection at the Anderson Immigration Library at the University of Minnesota. The archives did not have an acquisition record for their copy of the manuscript. Although the photocopy of the manuscript was faded, differences suggested there were multiple copies in circulation. A significant difference was that the manuscript in JHSUM's archive had translator's notes on the copy, unlike the manuscript David Calof had in Seattle. No copy of the ink version remained in the archive. Some serious unresolved issues about the manuscripts persist.

What was certain, however, was that far more than the sixty-seven "exceptionally clear and clean" pages described by Sanford (Sandy) Rikoon in 1983...
the Indiana University Press publication existed in multiple manuscripts (xi). The entire manuscript was left by Rachel Calof with her daughter, Elizabeth, in a trunk in the early 1950s. Rachel Calof died in Seattle in 1952. Elizabeth attempted to get the manuscript published in the late 1970s in Los Angeles and apparently gave it to Prof. Stanley Chyet, of Hebrew Union College-Los Angeles, according to Norton B. Stern, editor of the *Western States Jewish Historical Quarterly* (Geller). No pronouncement on this particular manuscript was included in the Jewish archives correspondence, but Stern wrote to Toba Geller of the Jewish Historical Project of North Dakota that “my experience with Yiddish materials has been poor. This may be different, but the material I’ve translated in the past, has turned out to be third rate” (Geller). In addition, Elizabeth found that her mother’s manuscript was considered to be difficult to translate, whether because of the dialect (Jacob Calof correspondence), or what might have been more likely, the spelling.

Apparently, after Elizabeth’s unsuccessful efforts to have the manuscript translated by Yiddish experts, Molly Yaffa Shaw, the daughter of Manya Kahn Yaffa (Rachel Kahn Calof’s cousin), offered to help her cousin, once removed, Elizabeth; she went to Elizabeth’s house after work and translated what became the First English Version (Shaw).\(^5\) Elizabeth did not know written Yiddish to help

\(^5\) Molly Shaw said that she worked only from the pencil version and never saw an ink version. I don't know the full ramifications yet of this possibility. I suspect that a fuller examination would reveal details that were in the ink version (Rachel's revisions) and were found in the English translation. However, Jacob did not have access to the Yiddish manuscripts before the Second English Version was produced, nor apparently was he capable of editing the Yiddish, so this would not have been his work.
with the translation, but kept the Yiddish manuscript at her home and sent the
English translation to Jacob in Seattle (Shaw). The translation was sent
piecemeal to him as it was completed (Jacob Calof correspondence). This First
English Version no longer exists; Jake explained to Sanford Rikoon in their initial
contact: “I’m sorry to tell you that as Molly interpreted and Elizabeth sent me the
interpretation into English, I discarded Molly’s notes as I incorporated the
information into the book, believing they had no continuing value” (Jacob Calof
correspondence). Without the First English Version, it was impossible for me to
discriminate between Molly Shaw’s word choice and Jacob Calof’s. The source
of the divergences between the Yiddish manuscript and Jake’s Second English
Version became a matter for speculation. Some of the differences were certainly
a function of Jacob’s concept of “literacizing.” However, Jacob would not have
been responsible for the deletion of sections if indeed he did not receive the
entire translation. In addition, Jacob Calof did not have the Yiddish manuscript
for reference while he was “compiling,” so it would have been extraordinarily
difficult for him to put the notes in order if he had received sections out of
chronological order. Without the First English Version for comparison, and
considering Molly Shaw’s insistence that she translated the manuscript literally
for her cousin, Elizabeth Breitbord, it would seem that Jacob Calof, working in
Seattle, had introduced the changes.

The Second English Version was the result of Jake’s compiling, or, as he
said, “put[ting] the story into a literary form” (Jacob Calof JHSUM). This version
was typed by two granddaughters and distributed to the family members in brown three-ring binders (David Calof). Elizabeth seemed to be active in the dissemination of the Second English version. She sent a copy of this version to the American Jewish Archives in Cincinnati with the caveat that it was not to be used without her permission (Geller). The YIVO Institute received a copy from Professor Roger W. Weiss of the University of Chicago, who had received it from Elizabeth. He suggested to Elizabeth that YIVO should also receive a copy of the original Yiddish manuscript “whose idiom would be very revealing of the personal nuance of the writer and of the cultural level she had reached in Russia coming from the very deprived background she describes” (Weiss correspondence). However, even though Prof. Weiss wrote to YIVO suggesting that they request the manuscript, there is no record at YIVO that a copy of the Yiddish manuscript was ever sent. Elizabeth obviously wanted her mother’s story to be disseminated to Jewish archives, but in a limited and highly selective manner, and apparently not at all in the original Yiddish.16

Changes between the translation and the First Version of the English text must have been considered acceptable to Elizabeth since she had certainly seen the original translation as Molly Shaw produced it page after page. There is no evidence of Elizabeth objecting to an inaccurate rendering of the work. Much later, after publication of Rachel Calof’s Story and after Jacob Calof died, Molly

16 Perhaps other siblings were involved in keeping the Yiddish manuscript in the family. On the other hand, somebody did send a copy to the Jewish Historical Society of the Upper Midwest (JHSUM). Jacob’s role was ambiguous: once he contributed the manuscript to JHSUM, later he asked his nephew Stan to retrieve it (Jacob Calof correspondence).
said in an interview that Jake "embellished" the published product, "as he should have, since he was the son and he would know" (Shaw). However, also much later, Jacob's sister, Ceil Calof Stephens said that he put "more than his words" into it, though, that he incorporated his "attitudes" (Stephens).

What happened next can only be conjectured, based on archival evidence in St. Paul. Apparently the Yiddish manuscript went to Jacob upon Elizabeth's death in 1984. Jacob wrote an undated letter which is preserved in the JHSUM archives in the file with the copy of the Yiddish manuscript. Jacob's letter verified that his version, while based on the manuscript, was indeed a "literary" version of his mother's work. The letter described the additional pages he received with the manuscript — evidence, I think, that the original notes preceded the ink revision. Perhaps, simultaneously, the original manuscript was contributed to the archives; we know it was there in the late 1980s (Schloff). The donor of the copy of the Yiddish manuscript, still in the Jewish archives collection, was unidentified. Nor was it clear at what stage Jake would have inserted this letter into the file, if indeed, he thought his original manuscript had been returned to him. Does his letter mean he was aware of having left part of one copy in the archive?

In 1987, Sandy Rikoon found the typed English translation (Jacob's Second English Version) in the American Jewish Archives at Hebrew Union College in Cincinnati. He didn't write to Jacob until several years later, since he understood from the curator in Cincinnati that Elizabeth was unwilling to have the manuscript published. (Elizabeth died in 1984, well before Rikoon found the
manuscript.) He discussed this “find” with Linda Schloff, director of the Jewish Historical Society of the Upper Midwest, who had both the original Yiddish manuscript and the similar-but-different copy in the archives in St. Paul, and discovered that Jacob Calof would now be the person to approach. In October 1991, Rikoon sent an eloquent letter to persuade Jacob Calof that the manuscript warranted a wider readership (Calof correspondence). Jacob surveyed the family, asking many of the immediate and wider family members about their ideas of publication. By November 1991, Calof and Rikoon decided to start working toward publication of what would become Rachel Calof’s Story: Jewish Homesteader on the Northern Plains.
1.3 Publication and Reception: A Text for all Tales

On October 18, 1991, Prof. James Sanford ("Sandy") Rikoon began his letter to Jacob Calof with "Sholom Aleichem" and introduced himself to the Calofs. He described his research project on "Jewish farmers and farm communities in the American Heartland" and said that during his research of the history of agriculture and rural sociology he had read many diaries, journals and correspondence, including Rachel Calof's "My Story." He appealed to Jacob Calof:

Every time I go back and read the English version of 'My Story' that you compiled, however, I am struck by the fact that Rachel Calof's reminiscence is among the most important unpublished accounts of this chapter of American Jewish history. Her story is not only detailed about experiences far outside of the knowledge of most other people, but she is also a fine writer who seems to have captured (in her own style) many of the concerns and issues facing Jewish immigrants in the United States. It is simply a wonderful account. (S. Rikoon to J. Calof 1991).

Sandy suggested publication of Rachel Calof's memoir, possibly with an academic press, with his role being the adding of scholarly, contextualizing articles. Jacob forwarded Sandy's letter to some of the extended Calof family and in a letter dated November 7, 1991 replied to Sandy: "I am now prepared to cooperate fully with you in our common interest" (Jacob Calof correspondence); thus they began a lengthy correspondence that led to the production of the book titled *Rachel Calof's Story: Jewish Homesteader on the Northern Plains* published by Indiana University Press in 1995. The publication included Preface and Acknowledgments by Sandy Rikoon, "My Story" by Rachel Bella Calof, an Epilogue by Jacob Calof and two scholarly articles: "Jewish Farm Settlements in
America’s Heartland” by Sandy Rikoon and “Rachel Bella Calof’s Life as Collective History” by Elizabeth Jameson. Extensive footnotes were added to “My Story” to explain confusing issues without disrupting the flow of Rachel Calof’s narrative.

Pre-publication promotion of the book was highly successful. Mainstream and popular journals reported on the book, as well as academic journals.\textsuperscript{17} The Kirkus Review of August 1995 had a pre-publication review, later cited in subsequent promotions in which the reviewer found Calof’s story a “profile in courage.” The book received significant acclaim: a wide variety of publications reviewed the book and universities adopted it for classes in American Literature, Women’s, Judaic and Ethnic studies. Indiana University Press continued publication, with five editions by 2002, and a total publication run of 11,000 paperback copies, in addition to an original 150 clothbound copies (Schepers). A convergence of many factors caused this nearly universally positive reception. Immigrant life stories became acceptable and indeed, a trend. Concepts of ethnicity shifted and each individual witness brought further understanding of assimilation, or resistance thereof. Women’s studies, especially, expanded the definition of accepted notions of autobiography, including life-writing forms such as journals and diaries. Furthermore, scholars of Judaic studies found Rachel Calof’s Story, compelling in its narrative, a more comprehensive notion of Jewish

\textsuperscript{17} I read all of the prepublication publicity and reviews retrospectively and perhaps with a degree of skepticism. The reviews were about five years old when I started my research; it was already clear that little academic research was being done after the initial reviews were published.
immigration since it told a story, not of urban ghettoization and assimilation, but of homesteading and retention of a Jewish identity even when adherence to Jewish observance was strained beyond the ability of many of the frontier families.

In addition to the superb timing of the Calof book’s appearance, the story was itself spellbinding. The reviews were almost unanimous in the degree of acceptance and appreciation. Rachel Calof told her story in a clear voice, in compelling narrative, and we were taken as readers through a detailed journey, summarized by the motive “a life worth living.” For investigations of new scholarship and new western historical approaches, Rachel Calof’s Story was in the right place at the right time. The book was well-received on college campuses, but that was not the only venue where the book was adopted. In March 2002, a search for “Rachel Calof” on the Internet found 65 items ranging from academic conferences to syllabi to local religious and secular groups adopting her book for reading groups (altavista).

Nevertheless, despite the overwhelming acceptance of Rachel Calof’s Story, various problems emerged. The book fit everywhere, and yet nowhere was it genuinely subjected to a rigorous examination of its authenticity. The “voice” of Rachel Calof was clearly identified in the publication as translated, yet my research is the first to indicate a “literacizing” process had taken place that alters our understanding. In the field of Women’s Studies, the text represented clearly the voice of a strong, determined woman, yet much of Rachel Calof’s confusion
had been edited out to present exactly this picture. In Judaic Studies, the book's emphasis upon maintaining a kosher home was held exemplary, yet the degree to which "pikuah nefesh" (the overriding of Jewish law in the interest of saving a person's life) had been part of the Calofs' daily lives was not apparent because the translation and compilation confused several incidents. Ethnic Studies celebrated the ethnicity that was incorporated, yet did not investigate the degree to which the ethnic markers were actually erased in translation. Autobiography studies and literature studies, disciplines that worked most closely with the wording of the text, offered the key to understanding what was taking place in this popularly accepted memoir. Obviously, these textual directions warranted investigation.

In academic coursework, Rachel Calof's Story was found on undergraduate syllabi, typically in courses in the Departments of English Literature, American History, Judaic Studies and Women's Studies, but also in other more esoteric departments. In History, the focus was on family, gender and race (Wittenberg University, Ohio State University). In Women's Studies, a representative course in which the Calof text was used is "Themes in American Women's History: Women in the American West" (Lavender). In literature departments, Rachel Calof's Story was taught in courses on autobiography, such as "Autobiography as Women's History: Letters, Diaries and Memoirs" at North Dakota State University.
However, interestingly enough, *Rachel Calof's Story* was also found in courses in agriculture, the history of agriculture\(^{18}\) and the history of farming, and at Brandeis was taught in a freshman introductory seminar in ecocriticism (Brandeis). Ethnic Studies at Ohio State University offered a course “The Slavic and East European Émigré Experience in America,” described as exploring “the experience of Eastern European immigrants including Poles, Czechs, Hungarians, Slovenes, Croats, Serbs, Bulgarians, Romanians, Ukrainians, Russians and East European Jewish in the United States throughout the nineteenth and twentieth centuries” (Ohio State). *Rachel Calof's Story* appeared between Willa Cather’s “The Bohemian Girl” and Anzia Yezierska’s *Bread Givers*.

Academic conferences have featured panels focusing on frontier women and the Calof book is usually familiar to the audience. Papers on Calof have been presented at the Red River International Conference on World Literature, the Society for the Study of American Women Writers, the Third Biennial International Feminism(s) and Rhetoric(s) Conference, Discourses of Diaspora Conference sponsored by the Canadian Association for American Studies and the Western Literature Association Conference. Prof. Eleanor Kaufman of the University of Virginia’s Department of English is working on a project that focuses on “Jewish settlers in the western part of the United States around the turn of the

\(^{18}\) In “The History of Agriculture” at Truman State University, *Rachel Calof's Story* appeared in a course that was intended to help students “develop a historical perspective on food production practices”...albeit with a focus on “the human dimensions of agricultural production, examining how farming techniques both affect and are affected by the social, cultural, political, economic, and natural environments in which they exist.”
century.” Her work discusses Jewish homesteaders (hence Rachel Calof was featured but not the only homesteader discussed), in small towns, and “Jewish ‘cowboy’ narratives” (Kaufman). Additionally, I discovered at a conference that Professor Lisa Muir of Appalachian State University included a chapter on Calof in her dissertation. She also has an article on Calof appearing in a forthcoming collection of autobiography of the West (Muir).

The book was published seven years ago, and made significant inroads on campus, but academic research was curiously lacking. At this point, the only article published in an academic journal (other than the book reviews following publication) was Debra Shein’s “Isaac Raboy’s Der Yiddisher Cowboy and Rachel Calof’s My Story: The Role of the Western Frontier in Shaping Jewish American Identity,” in Western American Literature, Winter 2002. In view of the rapid acceptance of the book into the canon over seven years, the lack of academic publication on the subject seemed problematic. This incongruence was pointed out to me in a review of my grant proposal to the International Research Institute on Jewish Women at Brandeis University. A reviewer noted that, while they were not funding my proposal, my research was a very important direction since so many people teach this book, but very little commentary or supplementary research exists. Correspondence with a number of Professors of Jewish Studies, Women’s Studies and American Studies corroborated my sense of the lack of academic scholarship; Profs. Joyce Antler, Carole Balin, Wendy Zierler, Paula Hyman and Riv-Ellen Prell reinforced my impression that there
were no critical articles and very few discussion questions or introductions for study (Antler, Balin, Zierler, Hyman, Prell).

Outside of academia, *Rachel Calof's Story* was found in secular and religious, public and private, on-line and in-print settings. Finding the book in so many different places was impressive. *Rachel Calof's Story* was in the regular public library system on recommended book lists of non-fiction (Morton Grove, St Charles). The text was also on the Internet in a chat forum: “Non-FictionChat” which listed books called “For the Love of Non-fiction.” Geographical locations also functioned to promote the book: the text was found on a list of books about Russia (Access Russia), and perhaps less unusual was Calof’s position in regional history sections. Amazon.com included *Rachel Calof’s Story* in the North Dakota section. Did the presence of this text in such a wide assortment of contexts suggest that the book was not limited to a specific niche, but rather spoke to a more universal audience?

Without a doubt, the Jewish community overwhelmingly adopted *Rachel Calof's Story* as a “significant” book for teaching and disseminating. The text offered an alternative to the urban Jewish encounter that most Jewish immigrants experienced, her story offered a spunky young woman who nonetheless continued to follow Jewish observance, and the text was optimistic about life and the world. The book was taught and read in a variety of synagogue settings, and adopted on book lists, while Rachel Calof was promoted as a woman to emulate. Different synagogues and communities adopted the book for discussion. The
Brooklyn Heights Synagogue Arts Committee Schedule included a discussion of *Rachel Calof's Story*, along with Leonard Green's *The Last Jew in Berlin* and Bruce Feiler's *Walking the Bible* (Brooklyn Heights). The American Hebrew Congregation's Significant Books Program included *Rachel Calof's Story*, and subsequently this list was adopted by other congregations (Mason). The Seattle Jewish Bookgroup has been meeting for six years and included Calof several years ago. The Jewish Women's Archive suggested the book as a selection for local "Reading Series" and included a description of the book, discussion questions, a critical essay by Penina Migdal Glazer (a JWA Board member and Professor of History at Hampshire College) and a list of "Additional Resources."

In summary Prof Glazer said:

> Only a tiny fraction of Jewish immigrants turned to homesteading to form their new lives. In that sense, Rachel Calof's story is clearly a novelty and very distinct from most immigrant memoirs. But in her search for a better life, in her devotion to family and her willingness to work very hard, we recognize a more familiar pattern. This is not a book filled with self-doubt or ambivalence. It conveys her pride in her success and her desire for her descendants to know of the hardships that she and Abraham had to endure to build a life. It is a compelling story that enchants its readers. (n.pag.)

The Jewish Women's Archive's questions discussed Rachel's view on “self-respecting Jewish women,” contemplated whether Rachel Calof was an “introspective writer,” questioned the “significance of Judaism” in the story and asked the reader to consider the implications of Rachel Calof having written very little about “passing on traditional Jewish values to children” (Glazer n. pag.).
An International Women's Day celebration at a Canadian Jewish Community Center included Rachel Calof as an influential author. "Women Reading Jewish Women Writers" was a forum in which four women chose the work of one of their favorite Jewish women writers to read; writers who "had influenced them as readers, writers and activists" (Ludwig n.pag.). Among the choices was Leslea Newman's *A Letter to Harvey Milk* which "asks the question about how we get our stories, where they come from and who has the right to tell them." Helen Redner, director of Toronto's Jewish Book Fair also touched on the theme of the right to tell one's story. She read from *Rachel Calof's Story*.... [and] after the reading, Redner explained that when Calof's manuscript was found, her children debated whether or not to publish it, as Calof had always complained of a lack of privacy on the farm. In the end, her children did publish it, allowing audiences to discover Calof's story as a new immigrant. (Ludwig n.pag.)

Other writers featured were Grace Paley and Cynthia Ozick. In other words, in this forum, Calof made a phenomenal leap in terms of literary stature, moving from author of one unpublished manuscript to peer of Paley and Ozick in less than a decade. I suspect this overwhelming resonance was one of the reasons there may have been reluctance to do any research that might undermine the veracity of a text of nearly heroic proportions.

Interest has not been limited to the Jewish community. On Amazon.com, *Rachel Calof's Story* has a five star "Average Customer Rating." Amazon quotes Jay Freeman's mixed review from *Booklist* about

... this memoir, which serves as a powerful and often inspirational tribute to the human spirit. The grinding monotony, drudgery, and deprivation of the first years on the prairie are recounted here in numbing detail; the filth,
vermin and constant threat of disease suck out any pretense of romance from her story...Calof is far from a polished writer, and her insistence on recording even trivial details can be tiresome. Yet, the strength of her will and the nobility of her struggle come shining through. Her story is a quintessential American story, and one that all of us can benefit from reading. (Freeman n.pag.)

Acceptance of Rachel Calof's Story as a "quintessential American story" would be precisely what Jacob Calof intended and the promotion of the book was focused in this direction.

A North Dakota review appeared in the Devils Lake Journal, in September 1995, showing a picture of the Calof gravestone in the Jewish cemetery about twenty miles north of town. A Devils Lake resident, Mary Beth Armentrout, said in an interview that Jacob Calof told her the book was distributed throughout the United States, Canada, Scotland, Ireland, England and Israel. The review quoted a synopsis from Indiana University Press: "Never sentimental, her memoir is a vital record of struggle and triumph on the frontier" (Mead 3).

The popularity of Rachel Calof's Story can be attributed in part to intensive promotion by its publisher and to favorable early reviews. A Publisher's Weekly review appeared in August 1995, paired with a full-page Indiana University Press advertisement with Rachel Calof's picture featured in the center top of the page (Mantell 24). The New York Review of Books of November 1995 had a large two-color advertisement inside the front cover which featured Rachel Calof's picture in the upper left hand corner and included part of the Kirkus Review article, the "profile in courage" and the Publishers Weekly's recommendation, "although her circumstances were often pathetic, Calof never is" (75).
professionals might have read a review in *Choice: Current Reviews for Academic Libraries*, by E. Eisenberg, in Feb 1996, which overall was positive. The book was recommended for “general readers [and] undergraduates,” possibly an indication that this text was not considered a theoretical contribution to understanding the frontier (Eisenberg 1008).

Specific audiences were targeted: Women's Studies academic professionals read about Rachel Calof in the *Women's Review of Books* of November 1995. The Jewish national press and regional newspapers were targeted with advertising: In the winter of 1995 *Lilith* edition there was both a review and a large individual ad from the press with two pictures. Karen Bekker's review compared Calof to Jewish icon Gluckel of Hameln and said, “Rachel Bella Calof's autobiography is an inspiration for the strength, independence, and intelligence her life exemplifies” (Bekker 40). Calof was on her way to becoming an inspirational Jewish figure, placed in the context of wisdom from the past. Other Jewish publications which reviewed the book included *Pakn Treger*, a Jewish literary magazine devoted to Yiddish culture, and a variety of regional Jewish newspapers.20

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19 The Indiana University Press advertisement, while not focusing exclusively on the Calof book, gave it considerably larger space than some of the other books featured and included a picture. Another Women's Studies placement was the National Women's Studies Association conference program book advertisement in 1996; however, this was without a picture and one of twenty-five books in the full-page ad.

20 The *Atlanta Jewish Times's* article: “Go West, Young Jew,” February 1996, described her endurance and her “traumatic” life (Applebaum 45). The *San Diego Jewish Times*, April 1997, included a review by Dr. David Strom of San Diego State University. He summarized the difficulties Rachel overcame and his comments indicated relatively early the “broad appeal” that the book offered: “It is a great piece of pioneer literature; historians will read it. It is a female perspective in a world 'our mothers and fathers' didn't know. Feminists will read it. It reminds us
Academic reviews appeared in the relevant journals. In *North Dakota History: Journal of the Northern Plains* (Fall 1996), Barbara Handy-Marchello said that *Rachel Calof's Story* "presented North Dakotans with yet another fine book on settlement through a woman's perspective" (these books were apparently not in short supply), but while the "poverty and hope, hard work and success" were "fairly typical of many North Dakota pioneer stories" the fact that Calof's story was about a Jewish immigrant certainly differentiated it from the others. Handy-Marchello was especially impressed with the details of childbirth that Calof provided:

Rachel Calof has enriched the history of women pioneers with her attention to the circumstances of her childbirths. She takes the captivated reader through difficulties of delivery and postpartum depression without asking for sympathy. Revealing the complexity of her fine mind, Calof's indignation at the crude environs and the ineptness of those who attended her and the babies, and the constancy of pregnancy, is tempered by her acceptance of pregnancy as 'the most dependable state of affairs I knew.'(39)
She concluded her review by describing the accompanying essays and said they "place Rachel Calof's Story among the important first-person accounts of settlement in North Dakota and the nineteenth-century West" (39).

Anne Butler's book review in the Journal of American Ethnic History focused on the change from the previously "masculine Anglo thrust" of western history to a more inclusive history: "the rise of several scholarly forces have altered this vision and have broadened the scope of western history. A growing interest in women's lives, the experiences of immigrants, and the importance of ethnic identity in America all produced a beneficial impact on research connected to the history of the American West" (126). Her review included Linda Schloff's book, "And Prairie Dogs Weren't Kosher": Jewish Women in the Upper Midwest Since 1855, as well. The Calof book was described as "one hundred pages of wrenching narrative by Rachel Calof, followed by a touching epilogue by her son" (126). Butler discussed the academic essays and concluded "in every way this work stands out as thoroughly satisfying, appropriate for a broad and diverse readership." And while Butler found the scholarship interesting, "it is the voice of Rachel Calof that makes this book so riveting." She went on:

Writing in a straightforward, uncomplaining manner, Calof records a life of such hardship that one is staggered by its historical implications for all pioneers, all immigrants, all women. From the cruelty of her early life to the base housing conditions on the Dakota homestead to the horrific births of each of her nine children, Rachel Calof emerges as a woman of intelligence, courage and fortitude. Along the way, she gives witness to the struggle of Jewish immigrants to make themselves into successful farmers in a new world called North Dakota. In the process, the near loss of humanity and decency for the Calof clan exacted a fierce toll on all. (126)
The review noted the significant religious difficulties among the family members even though all were Jewish and came from relatively nearby places in Russia.

The conclusion:

In the evolution from rural immigrant bride to urban matriarch, Rachel Calof, despite her spirited optimism, yielded to the pain of emotional scars, broken health and a less than happy marriage. In sum, this gripping account raises troubling questions about the kinds of costs paid by immigrants who believed they saw social and economic opportunity in America's heartland. The futures these women and men built for their children may have produced deeper permanent mental and physical damage in first-generation immigrants than our celebratory pioneer heritage acknowledges. (126)

The reference to "costs paid by immigrants" in heroic versions of history such as Calof's was significant. My further analysis of Rachel Calof's Story revealed more of those costs than the book allowed us to see.

In her review in Western Historical Quarterly, Mary Hurlbut Cordier suggested that the language was "matter-of-fact parlance." She also said of the Calof story that people "found that survival took precedence over Jewish traditions," a generalization which was not supported entirely, or at least not monolithically in the Calof family. Cordier continued, "Rachel Calof's narrative differs from many other pioneer memoirs in several ways;" these included a description of her childhood, "conditions of her immigration" and meeting her husband. "While events in some pioneer memoirs are larger than life, Rachel's manner of writing about her hardships and triumphs presents a seemingly proportional picture of homesteading that asserts the integrity of her personal memories" (247). Later these very words suggested to me that the "manner of
writing" and the "integrity of her personal memoirs" described a work constructed to fit into these exact descriptions. In fact, I found that the translation of Rachel Calof's language was hardly simplistic in terms of vocabulary or sentence structure; the vocabulary was to be one of the triggers for my investigation of the work.

Glowing reception was typified by this review by H. Elaine Lindgren in *Great Plains Quarterly*, in 1996. Her introduction described *Rachel Calof's Story* as an "intimate, compelling story, written for her family, introduc[ing] the reader to a personal world seldom revealed in historical accounts" (135). She called Calof's childhood a situation that would today "be considered acute child abuse" and went on to describe the journey to the United States, the arranged marriage (over which Rachel nonetheless had veto power) and Abe's normalcy, especially compared to his "family whose life circumstances repelled her, and exposure to extreme poverty" (135). I thought that Lindgren had a point in her description of the book as a "narrative [that] moves from one crisis to another." She suggested that the "power" of the story was not in the "graphic details," but in "the intensely personal revelations of her reactions to these events." I suspected that we were disarmed by Calof's honesty and her seemingly "candid" approach to the world. I considered that Lindgren was right to point out that "even though her life was largely controlled by others, Rachel found ways to resist that domination" and to give examples of her speaking up for herself in ways that made us want to cheer her on. In addition, Lindgren showed us how the narrative "reaches beyond her
own reactions to provide a sensitive, insightful glimpse into the complex
dynamics of family life strained by conditions of subsistence” (135). I followed
Lindgren to her conclusion that praised the “threads of optimism” and the
“legacy” that Rachel left us: “one can win out even in the worst of situations, but
there are agonies associated with triumph” (135).

Later I could more clearly articulate my antagonism to this review. It was
not the review, of course. Lindgren did an excellent job of describing the Calof
book. That ending, however, that legacy of triumph, albeit tempered with pain
and suffering, but that clear-cut “thread of optimism,” was woven into the book in
ways that I knew were not in the original text. Lindgren said, “Jacob Calof’s
comments confirm the strength and courage we find in his mother’s words.” Of
course they did. He inscribed them within his mother’s text and his epilogue
simply reinforced what he himself had incorporated. Nonetheless, Lindgren’s
conclusion was exactly right: “This volume is among the finest work I have read
in illuminating women’s roles and the intricacies of family dynamics. It gives
strong support to a vital and more realistic settlement history” (136). The family
dynamics in Rachel’s Yiddish manuscript had additional layers about the family
that we needed to read in order to see the context of the story.

Linda Schloff, director of the Jewish Historical Society of the Upper
Midwest, in *Minnesota History* (1996-97), was the only reviewer that I’ve located
who recognized that the translation and editing might have added those
additional layers of optimism. In an otherwise highly favorable review, she said,
“Calof wrote this account in Yiddish 30-odd years after the events occurred. The translation was done by a family friend and by her son Jacob. It is impossible for this reviewer to ascertain just how felicitous the translation is” (180). However, she did not intend to discourage the audience from reading the book:

I have also read many long, unpublished accounts, numerous short family tales, and several score of oral histories as well as letters and organizational minutes. None compare with Calof’s story because none put conflict at the center of their accounts. Most want to dwell on the triumphs and soft-pedal the pain. I believe Calof’s is a more truthful rendering of the past – certainly it is more wrenching. (180)

Schloff corroborated the necessity for academic research precisely in the direction that I advocate: translation. Judy Nolte Temple’s original contention since she brought this text to my attention in a Fall 1998 graduate seminar “Women’s Narratives of the West” has been that Rachel’s “voice” had an inauthentic element; retranslation might make Rachel Calof’s voice more true to life. Both Schloff and Temple questioned the “felicitous” nature of the translation relatively soon after Rachel Calof’s Story’s publication. I found it necessary to begin questioning the sources, looking at the omissions and investigating the context of the translating and editing process. The weakest link in the process of the manuscript’s production into the book publication seemed to be in the lack of thorough investigation of the translation. Jacob Calof’s role in manuscript control was not entirely consistent. Sandy Rikoon understood the manuscript to be the sixty-seven page ink segment. Was Jacob not revealing the rest of the document? Retrospectively, the number of pages in the Yiddish manuscript Sandy saw seems inadequate to match the typed English version (the sixty-
seven pages covers roughly one-fourth of the published book). Alternatively, since another copy of the Yiddish manuscript existed in the Jewish Historical Society of the Midwest's archives, and Sandy had been in touch with JSHUM director Linda Schloff, it seems curious that the gap was never considered: sixty-seven pages as opposed to over two hundred. Lest it seem that Jacob Calof was deliberately concealing the existence of over two-thirds of the Yiddish manuscript, the correspondence between Jacob and Sandy usually indicated a willingness on Jacob’s part to send more documents (newly found pages) and Sandy’s reluctance, late in the publication process, to receive additional untranslated manuscript. Sandy’s original suggestion that publisher would want the manuscript’s translation to be verified by an outside translator was abruptly dropped from their correspondence; perhaps this issue was resolved in a telephone conversation. Sandy sent a portion of the Yiddish manuscript to a colleague at YIVO for authentication and that apparently satisfied the publishers (Jacob Calof correspondence). Jacob Calof wrote to archive director, Linda Schloff, indicating he intended to return the manuscript to the Jewish Historical Society of the Upper Midwest for scholars to use in the future, contradicting any suggestion that he was withholding information about the contents of the manuscript (Jacob Calof correspondence). Working with the entire Yiddish manuscript, I found some of the inexplicable passages were explained and several excluded incidents added to understanding of the text. Rachel Calof's
Story would not be less compelling, nor less heroic, by being subjected to rigorous study.
1.4 Reflexive Pause

1.4.1. “Dual citizens”

In *Translated Woman* Ruth Behar suggested that the “feminist ethnographer” is a “dual citizen” in the academic world. This “odd kind of bilingual woman...shuttles between the country of the academy and the country of feminism” (297). In my research, however, the duality was not one-sided, nor were the only “countries” negotiated those of the academy. The transitions between different worlds and translations between languages were similar both in myself the researcher and subject, Rachel Calof. Eighteen-year-old Rachel Bella Calof, a Jewish immigrant from the Ukraine, settled in North Dakota in 1894 and moved to St. Paul in 1917. I was born in Wisconsin the same decade she died in Seattle. We nonetheless converged in St. Paul forty years later. Every week she came alive as I went over her original Yiddish manuscript with a translator who explained her difficult script, word for word. I imagined her writing, imagined her sitting on a porch, imagined the farm in Devils Lake, North Dakota, and I wrote about her life from the collection of letters, memoirs and materials I gathered from her family and from archives from St. Paul to Seattle.

Our “dual citizenships,” while not identical to that which Behar proposed, linked Rachel Bella Calof and me in terms of immigration, language and citizenships. I was raised in the United States, but immigrated to Israel when I was eighteen years old. I learned Hebrew and spoke it for most of my adult life. I lived nine years as a kibbutz member in the Negev and eleven years in Beer
Sheva. On kibbutz I grew into an Israeli; supported by a vibrant community, I learned the cycles of planting and harvesting. I worked for several seasons as an agricultural advisor and farm manager for young Israeli soldiers establishing a new settlement, Amitai (an acronym honoring the Jewish heroes of the Warsaw ghetto uprising during World War II). Later, while living in Beer Sheva, I studied Political Science at Hebrew University.

The overlap in life trajectories between Rachel Calof and myself, I would suggest, allowed for momentary glimpses into her life, even though my view was sometimes obscured by language and positioning. Behar challenged the academic who “shuttles” and posed the question of how well she can “ultimately… translate the other woman’s tongue into a language they can understand” (297-8). Behar’s reference “they” was to the feminist community; I think that my responsibility moved to the larger community of all readers. This reflexive pause considered the connection between a Yiddish manuscript that I could not read and my positioning myself as a bridge between that manuscript and the readers of an English text based upon, but divergent from, the original document.

1.4.2. Language as barrier, language as key.

In spite of my lack of Yiddish, or perhaps because of it, I sought out the original manuscript and wanted to know precisely the words used there. I couldn’t quite hear Rachel Calof’s voice in the English published version and I wanted to
get a less obscured version of her view of events. Or, perhaps, I merely wanted to choose my own translator, one with less of an agenda than Rachel's son, Jacob (Jake), in terms of fixing mom's "accented" speech. In any case, the motivation for the search came from the text. Certain words such as "fanatic" and "subnormal" bothered me in the translation. Quite possibly, my insistence on finding the original came from my specific experience of being bilingual and an immigrant. Cultural anthropologist Katya Gibel Azoulay said, "just as language is a means of communication made possible and coherent through shared meaning, the limits of translation are best illustrated by the 'feel,' which is different for monolingual and bi-multilingual people...being fluent in more than one language inheres a sensitivity to multiple meanings not readily accessible to those who lack this competence" (187). Historian Kathryn Kish Sklar, writing a biography of Florence Kelley, discussed knowing German, but also knowing that she had to "avoid getting bogged down in German" in her project (20-21). I didn't know enough Yiddish to get "bogged down" in it, though I am fluent in Hebrew and, since the two languages use a common alphabet, could find my way around on a Yiddish page. The lettering was deceptively familiar to me. Hebrew script seemed to convey a language that I know, but when I attempted to find the recognizable words in the lines, Yiddish startled me with an unfamiliar
vocabulary. However, Hebrew influenced Yiddish considerably so that many words were identical, and thus were familiar to me, in both languages.

The curious language in *Rachel Calof’s Story*, the English publication, intrigued me. The linguistic clues in the English publication were specific and I often wondered as I read: what would that have been in the original? Other scholars have encountered similar lures. When Judy Nolte Temple wrote of her “curiosity” about a romantic interest in a poem by diarist Emily Hawley Gillespie, she said, “this line was an invitation to unbury the clues by finding the original books” (*Frontiers* 164). Literary scholar William Holtz described his journey beginning with being “piqued by the inauthentic adaptation of the screenwriters” adapting the *Little House on the Prairie* series for television (2). I would not suggest that I was at the stage of “dismantling a myth” as he described himself, but the words in the published text drew me to investigate the words that Rachel Bella used in her original manuscript. Words like “subnormal” and “fanatic” seemed awkward, although I would ultimately find that “fanatic” was precisely the word that Rachel used in Yiddish to describe her mother-in-law and her own grandfather. “Subnormal,” however, evolved into a complicated story and is analyzed in a different chapter. She did use the word “knockout” to describe her wedding, though that choice seemed curious to me at the time. She also transliterated the English word “boy friend” into Yiddish, an issue of hybrid

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22 Yiddish is written in Hebrew letters, but the grammar and vocabulary are Germanic in structure. 23 In *The Meaning of Yiddish*, Benjamin Harshav said that “the exact proportion of the components of Yiddish may differ considerably in various texts” but that one claim is that “Yiddish consisted of 70% German, 20% Hebrew, 10% Slavic” (32). 24 Ch. 3, “Personal Narratives in Translation,” in the section on “truths.”
language involving transitions from one social setting to another.\textsuperscript{25} These, however, were among the words that originally seemed unlikely in translation and triggered my search for the original.

The subsequent journey to locate Rachel's original manuscript, finding a translator and working with him would be a chapter in and of itself. The undertaking included a crucial stage not adequately addressed in the standard acknowledgements of a dissertation. Had I not found a translator willing to undertake the project as a voluntary effort, this dissertation would be entirely different. Joe Rozenberg was my lens, an additional voice and source of information, and finally my primary connection to this manuscript. He was born in Lodz, Poland in 1925 and grew up in an orthodox home. His wife, Rose, was born in the same city, but in a secular home, to the extent that they literally have different Yiddish vocabularies and references. He learned Yiddish in the religious setting of a “yeshiva,” learning Hebrew at the same time. Rose never learned Yiddish as a written language. They both spent the war years in the ghettos and concentration camps of Poland and Germany, moving to Sweden after the war, where they met and married. They lived in Sweden for another thirteen years before moving to Minneapolis, where we shared a similar feeling of being from somewhere else, not quite native. But if I was to take seriously the position that

\textsuperscript{25} I contend that the concept of “boy friend” was unlikely to be in her Yiddish vocabulary. This notion was as alien to her as the word she used. When she discussed a “boy” in the Ukraine, well before he could become a potential suitor, she did not call him a “boy friend.” He would not make that transition, even had he been found suitable: he would have then made the leap from boy to fiancé. There would be no “boy friend” stage involved. Moving to the United States changed these norms for Rachel Calof.
“every ‘translation’ creates a new text” (Frenk 138), I had to consider how many sources of Rachel Calof’s texts there were and, indeed, how many texts.

Since I was comfortable with a bilingual home and multiple texts in my own family, I was acutely aware that children of immigrants teach their parents to speak. For my daughter’s first five years, I was the immigrant parent in Israel. Since we came to the United States five years ago, her father has been the immigrant parent in the home. Isaac Metzker described the Jewish immigrants in New York City of the late nineteenth century: “On the lower East Side our parents spoke to us in Yiddish and we answered in English. As a result, a proverb circulated around the ghetto: ‘In America the children bring up the parents’” (24).

The same was true in present-day Israel. Native fluency in the language gave children who possessed the keys to the culture increased authority at home. However, this authority was fluid. My daughter did not remember her rejection of a mother who did not know all of the words in the Hebrew song and dance in her pre-kindergarten parents’ party. Nonetheless, mothers, like myself, absorbed the sensibility of not knowing, not quite fitting in, and the stifling of the words that did not come out quite right. I don’t know if Rachel Calof felt this way, nor do I know if Jacob Calof needed to translate for his mother or if he was embarrassed by her speech. Yiddish was her primary spoken language for all of her life. But there

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26 Susan Frenk was discussing the work of Jacques Derrida when she said: “Underlying Derrida’s writing on translation is a complex philosophy of language and meaning which has come to be known variously as ‘deconstruction’ or ‘post-structuralism’. Space does not allow us to discuss it fully here, or the important critiques made by feminists and other critics, but I would like to bring into focus the idea that every utterance in our interviews would be ‘untranslatable’ since it is shaped, framed, configured by and for both its immediate, contingent contexts and its cultural context, for which there is no equivalent in another language” (138).
was something awkward about the son “bringing up the parent,” revising her words to the extent that I’ve found Jake to have done. He was not just correcting her grammar or adding a more precise vocabulary; he “brought up the parent” to be a different author, or at least, to write a different text.

1.4.3. “Textualization of the ‘facts’”

Arnold Krupat suggested that it is “the nature of narrative always to be a textualization of the facts, never the facts themselves” (89). These texts of the Calof family and my dissertation were a multi-layered textualization that started with Rachel’s first hand-written Yiddish manuscript in pencil and her revisions in ink, then continued with Molly Shaw’s hand-written translation into English, long lost to us, and next Jake’s textualization and “literacizing” of the translation first intended to be a private document and finally the publication as a book. Another layer was the lens that Joe’s translation of Rachel’s Yiddish provided and yet another was my choice of English words for comparing the work that Jake compiled. Each of these layers included individual components influenced by life experiences reflected in the translation and compilation project. Nonetheless, the words and the syntax, or lack thereof, of Rachel’s original language must have some authority here. Mother-son collaboration was recognizable in Rachel Calof’s Story, and without it there would have been no publication and no access whatsoever. But the author’s voice changed, muffled and incrementally altered in the stages between Rachel’s writing and Jacob’s publication. Maxine Hong
Kingston, interviewed by Debra Shostak about memory and translations, described different family memories as possibly being dissimilar. Kingston said, “I like that difference in seeing because it could have been either way; one remembered it one way and one the other. That gives me two stories for one event” (233). Shostak then continued:

Clearly [Kingston's] interest lies less in history per se than in events as they are remembered. That is, the past provides pleasure and meaning not insofar as it is reconstructed authoritatively (as if such reconstruction were possible), but rather to the degree that memories provide a record of human participation in recreating the past. That accounts of the past are multiple and contradictory is a testament to human invention instead of a failure of record keeping. (233)

Not only were the accounts of the past “multiple and contradictory,” but the person narrating the story was a self in flux as well. Paul Eakin described his preference for the concept of “self” considered as “awareness in process,” saying that we “never catch ourselves in the act of becoming selves; there is always a gap or rupture that divides us from the knowledge that we seek” (Stories x). He continued “Self and self-experience...are not given, monolithic, and invariant, but dynamic, changing, and plural” (Stories xi) and he called the process of narrating that of “registers of self and self-experience,” since “there are many stories of self to tell, and more than one self to tell them” (Stories xi). The selves that Rachel Bella described span a lifetime, and retrospective consideration influenced the stories she told. In addition to her multiple selves and stories, the layers of translation and compilation added to the complexity of the story. Sometimes I wanted to get to the “real,” authentic, or core of her story, in her
words. But I realized this core was an illusion; at most, the text was "facts in narrative," both the facts and the narrative elements in flux.

Those facts of Rachel Calof's life in North Dakota may have seemed eminently accessible, perhaps deceptively so. Elizabeth Hampsten said, "North Dakota is an extraordinarily advantageous place for firsthand investigation of the past, because that past is so recent. Some of those who came as children, or were born soon after their parents arrived, are still living" (NDH 4). My interview with one of Rachel's children, the only surviving child Ceil, added another layer to the story. She told about the dynamics of the manuscript translation and its becoming fixed in print, and she told the story differently than Jacob's epilogue suggests in the published version. And yet there was a danger here, that access to yet another view of the Calof family dynamics would cause me to move the story into yet a larger context. Biographer Ingrid Winther Scobie suggested that interviewing relatives contributed to "an awareness of family tensions" (187). She further suggested "the critical caveat is to know when you are in compromising territory. I believe the biographer should never get into a position of owing anything to her subject in the way of interpretation." (187-188). For me, access meant that I felt I'd been "entangled" in the "family network" and I've tried to avoid such entanglement, even though it offers enchanting views in further directions. Scholarly accuracy seemed to be compromised if I were sending updates to the grandson who holds the Yiddish manuscript and constantly concerning myself with his reaction.
The tension between the family's privacy and the researcher's curiosity was always in the background. During the research process I gathered as much information as possible. Only later, retrospectively, was it possible to conjecture that maybe it would be better to not have probed here or there. In the Introduction to *The Challenge of Feminist Biography*, the editors grappled with this issue: “there are serious ethical questions to resolve about revealing a subject’s secrets, and serious consequences in doing so for relations between the biographer and a subject's heirs” (12). I don't know the consequences in this case, and I have attempted to tell my version of Rachel's story. Sometimes I wanted to continue relentlessly as Alice Wexler says she did when writing about Emma Goldman: “At times I probably approached the autobiography more as a prosecuting attorney than as a sympathetic critic. Despite my desire to treat the autobiography as a literary work, I found myself questioning Goldman's veracity” (40). My earliest notes questioned Rachel’s recollections; I found myself challenging her “facts.” However, interestingly enough, my sympathies shifted as soon as the translation process got underway: I began to challenge Jake's version of the story, especially as I increasingly saw the differences in his version and Joe’s translation of the Yiddish handwriting that I heard. My own earliest notes allowed me to see the impressions that are created in the English “literacized” version and to now track these changes as different Rachels emerged from the Yiddish manuscript translation.
In addition to family interviews, I wanted to experience Rachel’s landscape, so I went to Devils Lake, North Dakota. The original homestead was inaccessible; I could not pace off the distance to the well or to the neighbors, but I had to see the land. Shamelessly mining a dead man’s correspondence (Jake’s), I found a Devils Lake contact person, Mary Beth Armentraut, and invited myself to her home for two days of interviews. She took me out to the cemetery where indeed a sign of Calof presence remained: Solomon, the father-in-law, was buried there. Rachel’s Yiddish description of his dying in her arms didn’t survive the translation or compilation cuts; we don’t know who decided to leave that very vivid account out of the published story. I suspect this incident was one of the “buried” tales, incriminating, perhaps, or embarrassing the family, as Rachel criticized the family’s treatment of her father-in-law (“I couldn’t stand that nobody takes care of him’ 232Y) and described herself providing the primary care after his stroke. These were her impressions; another family member may have interpreted the care differently, but her version of the “facts” was the one “textualized.” Except, of course, the final published “textualization” changed her story by dismissing or eliminating or “burying” this incident.

1.4.4. Collaboration or appropriation?

Usually the concept of collaboration involves two (or more) cooperating parties. Some of the complications include an uneven balance of power or possibly exploitation, but usually agreement between the parties is assumed. Working “collaboratively” on a text posthumously meant that Jake assumed his
mother’s consent. However, Jake did not give the reader any indication that he edited Rachel’s manuscript and incorporated his own approach to his mother’s life. He moved beyond editing to a collaborative, or appropriating, project. Jacob’s lack of transparency was perhaps the most problematic aspect of his telling the story. As readers, we should have known that this is what Carole Boyce Davies described as a “multi-authored text.” She said of Winnie Mandela’s story:

> Throughout the narrative there are italicized glosses and clarifying statements added by the editor. The editor describes her many conversations with Winnie and admits to being unable to have her see the project before it went into print. The sense of editorial positioning is further complicated by the presence of Mary Benson, a friend of the family, political ally, and biographer of Nelson Mandela. It exists in that hybrid status between biography and autobiography, and therefore is more fully defined as a collaborative life story. (92)

Even if we knew the extent to which Rachel Calof’s *My Story* was “multiauthored” (in this case perhaps a better term would be “multi-handled” by translation and editing), the inherent problem remained; audiences received the text as though it had been untouched by any change. In the “Acknowledgements” introducing the published version, Sanford Rikoon said

> Molly Shaw translated the Yiddish words and phrases into their closest English equivalents. Jacob Calof then adjusted the translation’s grammar and punctuation, relying on his familiarity with his mother’s narrative style to maintain the faithfulness of the text to his mother’s voice. There are always difficulties attendant upon translation, and the line between translation and interpretation is always hazy. Particular difficulties accompany the translation of Rachel Bella Calof’s Yiddish, which she used throughout her life as her primary spoken language, into written English. (xii)

Furthermore, Rikoon claimed
In this case we owe a great deal to Jacob Calof, who refused to use outsiders who might have changed any part of his mother's story and who would not have known her 'voice' and narrative style. Jacob Calof adhered to the substance, sentiment, and style of his mother's writing as closely as possible. *No passages were added or deleted* from the original nor were any changes made in the content or chronology of her narrative. (emphasis mine, xii)

Sandy Rikoon was a rural sociologist involved in researching his book on Jewish farming in the Upper Midwest when he found the Calof manuscript in an archive. His attention was certainly directed to the compelling narrative, but for him, it was one of many components in his research work on agriculture. He did not turn to the Calof family for several years with his suggestion about publication possibilities. I think that his find and pursuit of publication were fortunate, but his focus was not on the translation issues or on the vocabulary level of the text. Sometimes, I wanted to justify Jacob Calof and his changes. He seemed to tell his mother's story in order to transmit her messages, but also he incorporated his own missions of Americanizing and heroicizing his pioneer family. Of course, as Linda Wagner-Martin says, the biography (and sometimes I did call the work Jake did a biography) was often "based on the experience, or lack of experience, of the biographer doing the work" (8).

However, Jacob's collaboration with his mother's narrative was not limited to his addition of editorial comments. He wanted her voice to sound right. The ethnographical "third voice" might seem applicable here. In her work with the elderly Jewish community that resulted in *Number Our Days*, Barbara Myerhoff described the "third voice" as "neither the voice of the informant nor the voice of
the interviewer, but the voice of their collaboration" (cited in Kaminsky 7). Marc Kaminsky’s introduction to Barbara Myerhoff’s posthumous *Remembered Lives: The Work of Ritual, Storytelling, and Growing Older* elaborated on the relevance of Myerhoff’s concept of the “third voice.” Kaminsky said:

> This clarifying word seeks to translate the ‘greenhorn’ voice of the Yiddish-speaking old person for the educated (and potentially condescending) auditor. In so doing, this mirroring word assimilates the elder’s utterances to conventional discourse, rendering the speech more capable of commanding the respect of respectable persons... This appropriation of the other’s speech is a transformation of it that makes it ‘audible’ to an audience that has classified this ‘broken English’ as lower-class and ignorant. (19)

Kaminsky makes clear, however, that there is a “mission of transmit[ing] Yiddishkeit to succeeding generations” (21) though ideally this type of “appropriation” is used in the spirit of the original author. The “third voice” is controversial in that it “authorizes a departure from the verbatim transcript, but it balances this license against a principle of constraint. The ethnographer’s editorial intervention must adhere to the process of the interview” (Kaminsky 8). I would suggest that precisely the knowledge and family loyalty that Jake inherited as the son would compromise his ability to edit.

We cannot know without the destroyed original translation to what extent the differences began in translation. We don’t know whether Molly’s translation included the entire Yiddish manuscript, or whether her translation was incomplete and Jacob Calof actually incorporated everything he received into the Second English Version. Sanford Rikoon approached the English translation that had been distributed among the family and to Jewish archives as a “sacred text,” as
he said in a letter to Jacob Calof in the beginning stages of their journey toward publication:

my goal with Rachel Calof’s account would be to present her words in as exact a form, style, and chronology as she wrote them in 1936. I can only assume that she wrote what she believed to be the truth from her own memory and experience and I generally feel it inappropriate to ‘correct’ her. In other words, I consider the content of Rachel Bella’s account as somewhat ‘sacred’ in a book such as the one I conceptualize. (Rikoon to Calof, 4 November 1991)

This approach perhaps allowed Rikoon to gain Jacob Calof’s confidence in terms of releasing the manuscript for publication, but unfortunately it codified the English translation. No independent translation verified that, indeed, “no passages were added or deleted from the original nor were any changes made in the content or chronology of her narrative” (xii). Jacob Calof had given Sanford Rikoon only sixty-seven pages of Yiddish manuscript. Even a limited verification would have shown this to be less than one fourth of the English translation. I suspect that Rikoon’s sending the material to YIVO for a “spot check” verified the spirit of the translation; however, because only a limited portion of the Yiddish original was investigated, it could not verify that material was neither added nor deleted. Jacob Calof was perhaps attempting to present his mother, as Kaminsky said, “rendering the speech more capable of commanding the respect of respectable persons” (19), but I question whether an uneven balance of collaborative power, between Jacob Calof as owner of the manuscript and Sanford Rikoon as scholar, prevented a more thorough determination of the extent of the changes and language from the Yiddish manuscript.
Correspondingly, the material that I incorporated or avoided in my analysis of Rachel's Yiddish manuscript can be scrutinized. Since my training was not in history, nor in Yiddish, the directions that I focused upon were textual, though I was sure that my background in political science influenced me to choose an interdisciplinary approach. The Personal Narratives Group negotiated the challenges of these disciplinary methods, albeit in different people from many academic disciplines. My straddling went on within. They said in their introduction:

We were repeatedly surprised by the tenacious hold of our traditional disciplines. Despite our shared interest, we often found the gulf between the humanities and the social sciences to be wide. Each group spoke its own language. While the social scientists emphasized social structure and human agency, the humanities scholars focused on textual interpretation and narrative structure...our discussions were most successful when we focused on the role of the canon in literary analysis and the role of power relations in social analysis. (10)

I constantly referred to the text, to the words, the slippery translation; but another part of my analysis examined the community, the ideas of exile and migration, of citizenship. Fortunately, the state of life-writing scholarship allowed me this interweaving of complexity.

Even as I was critical of Jake's agendas, I investigated my own (PNG 202). While I tried to focus on scholar Suzanne Bunkers' "nonjudgmental" approaches to Jake's compilation, I sometimes found his work to be misleading. I returned conflicted to Bunkers:

I do not study these texts in a vacuum. I examine them from my own perspective, which is based on my own beliefs and experiences and is not value-free. My research requires that I do my best to scrutinize the ways in
which my own predispositions, biases, and experiences shape my responses to what a woman writes in a given diary or journal. Such self-scrutiny does not ensure that I can then approach my research from an objective point of view; to the contrary, it ensures that I am well aware of the subjectivity inherent in the research process and that I incorporate this awareness into the work that I do. ("Midwestern" 194)

Accordingly, I was aware of the degree to which Rachel's and my trajectories seemed to have interesting intersections (immigrating, farming, language acquisition, juggling religious constraints, and raising children). Nonetheless, Rachel was from a different time and place, and her son did know her well. Yet, I did not always want to credit him with access and "truth" regarding his mother's life. I always wanted to demand his accountability and recognition of his own input to his mother's text. I would like to have seen his glosses printed in italics in Rachel Calof's Story in order to acknowledge his ownership. However, I had to be honest with myself; Rachel's and my trajectories also had many non-intersections: education, mobility, choice of partner, privacy – perhaps, especially privacy and agency in our own lives. So, who was I to tell Jake, who lived with Rachel in North Dakota, St. Paul and Seattle, would you please be quiet and let your mother speak?

Immigrant writer Eva Hoffman said, "to some extent, one has to rewrite the past in order to understand it" (242). Jake added to the rewriting and I would like to contribute to an understanding by unbraiding, separating the strands of the connections, hoping to reveal some of the sources of the different voices. But Hoffman also suggested that "it is the price of emigration, as of any radical discontinuity, that it makes such reviews and rereadings difficult; being cut off
from one part of one’s own story is apt to veil it in the haze of nostalgia, which is an ineffectual relationship to the past, and the haze of alienation, which is an ineffectual relationship to the present” (242). We biographers may be “dual citizens” looking back and trying to figure out the world, but I had to go beyond the “sense of identification” that Bell Gale Chevigny ascribed to biographical work (358), and to include Jake in the story. Jake was not a dual citizen; he was born and died in the United States. Nonetheless, he linked his immigrant mother author to this immigrant dissertation writer. Without him, her story would have remained in translated notes from the Yiddish manuscript and almost certainly would not have been published.

Another possibility, though, was an alternative script. The Calof family did not always agree upon the type of collaboration to pursue. Anecdotal evidence supported the option that Rachel Calof could have been brought to a wider audience in a film treatment in which her daughter, Elizabeth Breitbord, seemed to have been interested. Apparently Jacob, however, wanted to maintain the ownership and control of image building within the family, specifically on his terms. Elizabeth might have allowed some of the uncertainty and chaos found in Rachel’s Yiddish manuscript to have been portrayed. However, no family consensus verified these dividing lines. Sometimes it seemed to be Elizabeth who limited access, and Jake who wrote to Barbara Streisand about possible film adaptations of the book. Even if he seemed to have thwarted one route in order
to maintain editorial control of his mother's story, wide readership was a function of publication, undoubtedly to Jake's credit.

1.4.5. On being Jewish, Israeli, American and issues of access

I cannot discount the notion that without my Jewish last name, or perhaps my intercultural background, I would not have had the same access to this material and the research project would have remained in the realm of archival scholarship. Jewish people that I approached quickly discerned that my name is an anomaly: an unlikely hybrid of Christian (in this case, Catholic) and Jewish. The Kristine is from my Catholic grandfather, a farmer in Wisconsin who died before I was born. The Peleg, however, is a modern Israeli name, based in the Torah, a function of my family connections in Israel. The choices I made as a very young person – to immigrate, to convert in an Orthodox conversion in Israel, and to live a Jewish life – have been with me for more than half of my life. Choices which seemed obvious to me in Israel are somewhat less clear-cut in the United States. I did not grow up Jewish in the U.S, I had never lived there (writing this in Israel) as an adult. The mobility in my trajectory contrasted with Rachel Bella's limited movement. I was free to return to my native land, my native language, for graduate school and for whatever period of time our family warranted desirable. Access to lives is not always granted without trepidation and I suspect that the Peleg name allows me entrance in a way that a less obvious name might not have. The people, the individuals who helped me and offered
their lives to scrutiny, certainly interrogated my motives and background. I don’t mean that they would reject a non-Jewish researcher. However, the tone and the cadence of our discussions did reflect underlying common denominators. Stan Calof, the first of the grandchildren to welcome me and share the Calof names and phone numbers, asked about my “credentials” and not only my Hebrew University degrees. I think that Joe and Rose, my translators, and I had far more in common because I’d lived in Israel for twenty years when we met — ironically, considering they never have. But their immigration to the U.S. from Poland, via Sweden, gave us a basis for discussion about building Jewish lives in the community as non-natives. For however much I may have spent formative time in the United States, twenty years in Israel were no less influential. Significant changes in my world outlook resulted. I came back Jewish, with my Israeli husband and our two Israeli children.

Being Israeli involved an immersion in Jewish life that is hard for Americans to fathom. Imagine that the holidays were not Christian, the school vacations unrelated to Christmas and Easter. Every week focused around the Sabbath, even for the least observant of Jewish families since the work week ended in time for preparation and celebration of the “Shabbat.” Sunday was already the first day of the working week. My “credentials” in this case resulted from the years of living a Jewish life. I was simply very attuned to the sounds of Jewish life and found the project intriguing in terms of language. Barbara Kirshenblatt-Gimblett wrote in the Foreword to Remembered Lives: The Work of
Ritual, Storytelling, and Growing Older that Barbara Myerhoff first intended her work on a new project about ethnicity to be with the Chicano population in California as a “logical outgrowth of her previous work in Mexico” (x). She thought that “anthropologists typically study someone else, not themselves” (x). However, when she turned to the Chicano communities, they asked her why she wasn’t working with “her own people” (x)? Only then did she consider working with elderly Jews resulting in Number Our Days. Kirsheblatt-Gimblett said

In trying to understand why the Venice work had been so compelling to her, Barbara wrote, ‘However much I would learn from that [my work with the Huichol] was limited by the fact that I would never really be a Huichol Indian. But I would be a little old Jewish lady one day; thus is was essential for me to learn what the condition was like, in all its particulars .... I consider myself very fortunate in having had, through this work, an opportunity to anticipate, rehearse, and contemplate my own future. This had given me a temporal integration to my life that seems to me an essential ingredient in the work of maturing.’ (x)

My work could have been done even if I had not been Jewish, but some of the information flowed more easily because I am. Some of my curiosity was a function of ears attuned to the words and connotations in Hebrew and similarities in Yiddish. I think I would be remiss if I were not to question this, for the transparency and subjectivity of my lenses were certainly affected by this aspect of my background.
2.0 Scholarship: Introduction

When *Rachel Calof’s Story* first appeared as an Indiana University Press publication in 1995, a convergence of changes in autobiography theory, feminist theory, Western history, and immigrant literature allowed a vantage point in examining its timing and acceptance. This scholarship continued to develop and provided intellectual background for my examination of the text.

2.1 Autobiography Theory: From Individualistic to Relational, Collaborative and Contextual

*Life has a way of not living up to one’s expectations. Writing autobiography is one of the strategies human beings have developed to make life matter... The illusion of the past occupies the present, but the present is not illusion. The present allows life to matter. The illusions of the importance of past and future endow life with something akin to significance, which the autobiographer then weaves into an enduring artifact.*


*I had traveled a long and often torturous way from the little shtetl [town or Jewish community] in Russia where I was born. It wasn’t an easy road by any means, but if you love the living of life you must know the journey was well worth it.*


*I literally cried and I started to think over again my whole balance and some thoughts crawled into my brain that I fell into a hole and I was always afraid.*

Rachel Calof, the Yiddish manuscript as translated by Joe Rozenberg, 2002.

While we read Rachel Bella Kahn Calof’s account of her life, whether or not she actually wrote the signal line “a life worth living,” we imagined her
expectations and contemplated her "whole balance" (Calof 38Y). Meanings altered by recollection, translation, editing or contextualization added layers of complexity to the stories she told when she sat down with her notepad. Only those stories, sometimes blurred by distant recollection, were indeed contributed by Rachel Calof. The layers of translating, editing, compiling and contextualizing each had different sources. Even after she wove her life into an autobiographical "enduring artifact," meanings and forms continued to develop. Autobiographical theorist James Olney said that "it is not only the past...that varies in presenting earlier selves to us, but the present also which is capable or not of perceiving with intensity, and of holding with coherence, selves past and present" (Metaphors 25). Multiple contributions, whether authorial or editorial or in the translation process, overlap; unbraiding the metissage\(^{27}\) allows an examination of the ways that this literary work functioned.

Rachel Calof's Story: Jewish Homesteader on the Northern Plains was published in 1995 during this convergence of changes in scholarship which encouraged publications of individual life stories: included in her homesteading story are issues of diversity, race, ethnicity, gender – all neatly packaged in a riveting narrative. Relevant scholarship for my research included autobiography, women's studies, western studies and immigrant literature. In addition, in a later section, I discuss issues of collaboration and ethnography. Within the framework

\(^{27}\) Françoise Lionnet used this term in Autobiographical Voices: Race, Gender, Self-Portraiture. (1989) to describe the interrelations of race and gender, among other factors.
of this section on autobiography, I sketch a short background of autobiography theory, examine changes in canon and approach, and identify concepts in recent autobiography theory useful for analyzing Rachel Calof's Story. Postmodernist and feminist theories influenced these fields and underwent similar movements and changes. Myths were mutable; canons were not stable entities. Postmodern concepts of identity were flexible and despite close scrutiny resisted limiting definitions. The need for innovative tools for examining unconventional contents was expressed in the humanities as well as in the social sciences and disciplines themselves became less independent. Indeed, the issues were not independent: in order to analyze Rachel Calof's Story, examining ethnicity was implausible outside of the context of gender, while changes in the concept of “frontier” in western studies situated the homesteaders differently than several decades ago. Autobiography theory no longer considered autonomy as critical, or exclusive in importance, and language studies emphasized the lack of transparency in translation. Immigrant literature no longer necessarily celebrated the processes of assimilation or Americanization. I could not compartmentalize the academic research without losing the connections, yet here I present the issues somewhat along disciplinary lines in order to grapple with the multiple concepts Rachel Calof's autobiography evoked.

Autobiography studies have changed significantly in recent years. In her 1992 American Women's Autobiography: Fea(s)ts of Memory, literary critic Margo Culley said
It would be hard to point to a field of contemporary literary studies more vibrant than autobiography studies. Where else does one find a wealth of primary material still mostly unread and unranked?… The most pressing concerns of contemporary scholars – genre and gender as culturally inscribed; the construction of the self within language systems; the referentiality of language itself; the nature of subjectivity, authority, and agency; the problematics of making meaning and making history; theories of time, memory and narrative – all absorb critics of autobiography. (3)

It wasn’t always like this. Autobiographical theory has undergone considerable reappraisal in the past thirty years. Feminism and post-modernism were among the critical forces that triggered significant change in autobiography theory. In 1989, in *Interpreting Women’s Lives: Feminist Theory and Personal Narratives*, the Personal Narratives Group wrote “the strongest challenge to the disciplines came from feminist theory, which we understand as part of a vital, necessary revolution in human comprehension” (4). Shirley Neuman described the unified self as the cornerstone of traditional autobiography theory:

...the concept of the self as an indivisible entity, ontologically and textually self-identical while at the same time individual and distinct from others, underpinned the earliest work on autobiography and still forms the basis of the ‘contract’ through which all but theoretically sophisticated readers approach the genre. The historical importance of this concept cannot be overestimated: the humanist foundations of the notion of a textually and experientially unified self made it possible to take autobiography seriously within the literary institution. (214)

Historically, this unified self, the “Enlightenment self,” as critics Julia Watson and Sidonie Smith described it, “sees its destiny in a teleological narrative enshrining the ‘individual’ and ‘his’ uniqueness” (xvii). Literary critic Estelle Jelineck said that before World War II “autobiographies were considered of interest almost exclusively for the information they provided about the lives of their authors; there
was virtually no interest in the style or form of the life studies" (1). James Olney suggested that contemporary interest in autobiography began in 1956 with the publication of Georges Gusdorf's seminal article “Conditions and Limits of Autobiography” (Smith 4). Another influential work defining classical autobiography and the development of theory in the field was Roy Pascal's *Design and Truth in Autobiography*, published in 1960. His vast overview entertained the inclusion of autobiographical novels and examined the "structure of truth in autobiography" (Pascal).

In the 1970s, significant publications by James Olney and theorist Philippe Lejeune contributed to a developing field. In his 1972 book *Metaphors of Self: The Meaning of Autobiography*, Olney described the self as "(1) unitary; (2) specifically human; (3) personally unique" and said that any creative project "must derive its integrity-coherence from one's own integrity-coherence" (33-34). Later, of course, Olney's focus on the unified self shifted. In addition, Olney described the problematic nature of autobiography study on the part of literary

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28 Gusdorf’s article championed the individuality of the universal self and was frequently referred to as an entire school of thought. He said that the “prerogative of autobiography consists in this: that it shows us not the objective stages of a career – to discern these is the task of the historian – but that it reveals instead the effort of a creator to give meaning to his own mythic tale” (Olney *Autobiography* 48). While he described the field of autobiography as primarily devoted to the “autonomous adventure” or “public sector of existence” and looked at lives expressed in terms of “unity of a life across time” (Olney *Autobiography* 31, 36, 37), nonetheless he recognized that out of this unity there was “only a fragmentary cutting” of the life story (Olney *Autobiography* 38). I think he was, in fact, forward-looking in the attempt to "situate" the story, whether contextually or in relation to the author’s "perspective of what I have been" (Olney *Autobiography* 38). In other words, while much of the scholarship, especially the feminist criticism, indeed objected to Gusdorf’s approach, his article remained an important basis for understanding the developments in the field. The problems with his focus on the individual and the exclusion of the rest of the world in his Western approach were significant limitations. Caren Kaplan offered excellent analysis of the evaluations of his work “through the lens of gender” (118-119).
critics as "in some tangled, obscure, shifting, and ungraspable way it is, or stands in for, or memorializes, or replaces or makes something else of someone's life" (Olney Autobiography 24-25). By 1980, Olney moved towards embracing the incomplete nature of the self: "by its very nature, the self is (like the autobiography that records and creates it) open-ended and incomplete: it is always in process, or, more precisely, is itself a process" (Olney Autobiography 25). Nearly simultaneously, Philippe Lejeune's *Le Pacte Autobiographique* seemed to be definitive. He characterized autobiography as: "A retrospective account in prose that a real person makes of his own existence stressing his individual life and especially the history of his personality" even as he is modifying and expanding upon it continually (*Le pacte autobiographique* 14, cited in Olney Autobiography 17). With his consideration of the title page "as an integral part of the text" he could now, as autobiographical theorist Paul Eakin described it, "identify a textual criterion by which to distinguish between autobiography and fiction, namely the identity of the proper name shared by the author, narrator and protagonist" (Eakin Foreword ix). Olney criticized Lejeune for being too "schematic" (Olney Autobiography 17) but seemed to accept Lejeune's suggestion that "one should not think of a specific genre as an isolated or isolable thing but should think in terms of an organic system of genres within which transformations and interpenetrations are forever occurring" (Olney Autobiography 18). This flexibility was ultimately the direction of autobiography.

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29 *Le Pacte autobiographique* was published in Paris in 1975.
genre studies and the way in which scholars twenty years later built upon previous innovations.

In the late 1970s and early 1980s, feminist criticism of autobiography appeared which may seem to us now as relatively essentialist and limited, but which ultimately led to breakthroughs in theory. Scholar Mary Mason initiated the discussion of the "Other" and relational concepts; her work effectively shifted the focus from the individualistic stance which had previously controlled autobiography theory (Eakin 1999 47). "Autogynography" questioned essential difference: whether the female subject was different from the male.

Investigating "difference" was championed not only by feminist autobiographers. Olney contended that autobiography was the "focalizing literature" for departments of "American Studies, Black Studies, Women's Studies and African Studies" (Autobiography 13). Autobiography appeared to express unique familiarity, what he called a "privileged access to an experience" (Autobiography 14) that became canonical. He repeated this contention in 1988 and developed upon it:

In the academic world of the previous decade there has been a concerted effort to reconstruct American literature (and other literatures as well, of course) and to redefine the canon that determines who and what will be

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30 I present only a limited review of the feminist criticism here; the subject is more fully developed in the Women's Studies section of the scholarship chapter.

31 Germaine Bree in "Autogynography" explained that her title was in reaction to a section at a conference entitled "Women's Autobiography" (171). She said "I was somewhat puzzled by the implications of the title. We were not, in any other section, invited to discuss 'men's autobiography.' The plural in 'women' itself was disconcerting in relation to the singular 'autobiography.' Beyond that difficulty did the title imply that autobiographies written by women constituted a subgenre?" (171). Her title was taken from an article by Domna Stanton.
admitted to serious literary study. Not only have previously excluded
groups of writers – women, blacks, other minorities – been given entry into
the canon, but also various writing modes, in particular autobiography, are
recognized as having claims equal to those of more traditional literary
genres. (Olney 88 xiv)

He added that the “number of courses on autobiography, in one or another of its
literary guises, has increased dramatically in the past quarter of a century and
the various ‘studies’ that have arisen in university curricula – Women’s Studies,
American Studies, Afro-American Studies – are often organized around
autobiographical writings” (1988 xiv-xv). Substantial numbers of primary texts
were introduced and a recovery stage allowed readers to “explore more fully and
fairly this pivotal genre, challenging, like the life-writers themselves, the gendered
and artificial barriers between private and public experience, the individual voice
and its community” (Coleman 2).

As the canon opened to previously marginalized32 subjects, the forms of
acceptable material for literary study expanded. By 1996, diaries were the
subject of Suzanne Bunkers and Cynthia Huff’s *Inscribing the Daily: Critical
Essays on Women’s Diaries*. They described untraditional source materials:
“Traditional definitions of autobiography and postmodernist challenges to these
definitions... interrogat[e] narrative objectivity and the monolith of self-
construction and identity” (Bunkers/Huff 3-4). These challenges called into
question most of the previous assumptions about what constituted an

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32 A concept also subject to debate: the Personal Narratives Group described the rejection of the
term by women who suggest that center and margin were relative terms and that marginal
depended upon situational viewpoint.
autobiography and whose story was going to be told and read. In the late 1980s, both Olney and Lejeune, according to Bunkers and Huff, continued “to grant primacy to traditional definitions of autobiography yet leave open the possibility for other voices” (4). Bunkers and Huff’s work with diaries supported critical study of the genre:

... by suggesting that the voices in the autobiographical chorus are various, yet possessing common strains, these critics make way for the contributions of both diaries and women writers to the autobiographical act. The solidity of a consistent model and the construction of the self as a distinct entity give way to increased emphasis on the multiplicity of self-construction, varying textual strategies, and the location of the diary within cultural frameworks. (Bunkers/Huff 4-5)

Diary studies took on new authority. The “coherence, significance and systematic retrospection” which Judy Nolte Temple referred to as the “recurring criteria” of autobiography were not necessarily found in the same form in diaries. For critics accustomed to “constructed books” the challenge was to see how the diary reflected the life lived (Lensink WS 42). Nor was the content necessarily similar: Felicity Nussbaum said that the “diary, tolerant of multiple subjectivities and discourses, is especially resistant to representing the self as a unified, rational, and intentional subject” (132). Life writing “gained a wide readership” and voices once “private” were now being heard (Coleman 2).

Expansion of both content and form continued in additional directions. Lynn Z. Bloom proposed “auto/bio/history” as a “fledging offspring of the close collaboration between the author of an autobiographical document and the scholar who completes the original text with a complementary and equivalent text
of her own" (12). Historian Betty Bergland advocated the study of "ethnic autobiographies" as providing insight into the "multiplicity of subject-positions that constitute a single agent" (1994 157). Significant changes in subject matter challenged the concept of canon. The "master narratives" were no longer accepted as inevitable and were open to new interpretations. Sidonie Smith contended

... challenges both to the concept of a speaking subject and to the belief in language's transparency have shattered the epistemological certainties and ontological legitimacy of what French theorists call the 'master narratives' of the West, autobiography among them. As notions of an authoritative speaker, intentionality, truth, meaning and generic integrity are rejected, the former preoccupations of autobiography critics – the nature of its truth, the emergence of its formal structures, the struggle with identity, and even the assumptions of a motivating self – are displaced by a new concern for the graphia, 'the careful teasing out of warring forces of signification within the text itself'." (Smith 1987 5-6).

Narrowing the discussion of autobiography theory, the "nature of truth," "formal structures," "discerning a motivating self" and finally "the warring forces of signification in the text itself" – to the concepts most relevant to my work was a complicated process. "The nature of truth" and "motivating self" were the primary

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33 Paul Eakin elaborated on the multiple axis of development in How Our Lives Become Stories (1999), presenting an extensive analysis in the changes of autobiography study in the late twentieth century.
foci of the discipline. Of course, throughout the discussion a constant awareness of the issues of “truth” and “self” and “warring forces of signification within the text itself” manifested themselves. However, the three concepts that seemed most relevant and significant to my work were: the move towards a relational view of autobiography, the investigation of the collaborative aspects of autobiographical theory, and issues of context. All three of these concepts rejected an isolated individual stance. No longer was the self held up as successful if, and only if, it was an autonomous, successful being. The degree of success was no longer measured by distance and lack of connection.

Collaborative aspects of autobiographical theory also recognized the unlikelihood of lives in isolation. I examine collaboration more thoroughly in the chapter on family collaboration, but the theoretical foundations were found initially in autobiography theory. Finally, there was considerable work being done in the discussion of context. Previously, autobiography seemed to be conceptualized as existing in a vacuum. More recently, the contexts of lives, the setting and “encumbrances” have been acknowledged as part of the life story being told.

34 Both issues (truth/self) were highly relevant; particularly regarding so-called universals examined by feminists. (See Personal Narratives Group 262-3 for a more fully developed discussion.) “Feminists have argued that concepts of Truth, embodied in generalizations such as Mankind or the universal ‘he,’ typically refuse to acknowledge gender differences and therefore are deceptive. They are generalizations that close off certain questions, and assume a partial reality to be the whole story” (262-3). In addition, Barrett J. Mandel reminded us that “truth” in any autobiography may seem “distorted” to another, even one who lived in the same location. “The autobiographer who speaks the truth about him or herself may produce a book that would most assuredly strike a close relative or an enemy as distorted or even false. Yet, if he is courageously open to the synthesizing process of meaning-making, the autobiographer will have produced a valid, honest, and perfectly true revelation of his life, couched in and defined by his horizons” (70).
Relational autobiography

The concept of relational autobiography was introduced by Mary Mason in “The Other Voice: Autobiographies of Women Writers,” in 1980. She said the “dramatic structure of conversion that we find in Augustine’s Confessions... simply does not accord with the deepest realities of women’s experience and so is inappropriate as a model for women’s life-writing” (210). Furthermore, the “egoistic secular archetype” that Rousseau wrote of “finds no echo in women’s writing about their lives” (210). Female identity...

... seems to acknowledge the real presence and recognition of another consciousness, and the disclosure of female self is linked to the identification of some ‘other.’ This recognition of another consciousness – and I emphasize recognition rather than deference – this grounding of identity through relation to the chosen other, seems... to enable women to write openly about themselves. (210).

Her suggestion that connections rather than differentiations might offer a different means of understanding lives opened this direction of autobiography study. Julia Watson said “Mason argues for women’s autobiography as a separable genre of life-writing on the basis of criteria that are internal to the work, that is criteria for how the woman’s writing voice discovers and presents itself as an Other in discourse” (in Olney Studies 180) noting that the significant change was that “the ‘I’ enunciated in no case manifests the self-dramatizing egoism and obsessive self-reference of the Rousseauean autobiography, understood by most critics as prototypical for the genre” (in Olney Studies 180). Not only did the boundaries of
the genre change when the focus shifted to multiple connections, but relational
approaches changed other aspects as well. The canon no longer exalted the
isolated life and we began to see other lives in terms of relational contexts.

Modifying the view of autobiography as individualistic and moving toward
definitions of relation was difficult. Paul Eakin contended that “autobiography
promotes an illusion of self-determination” and the “myth of autonomy dies hard”
(Lives 43). He continued:

We tend to think of autobiography as a literature of the first person, but the
subject of autobiography to which the pronoun ‘I’ refers is neither singular
nor first, and we do well to demystify its claims. Why do we so easily
forget that the first person of autobiography is truly plural in its origins and
subsequent formation? Because autobiography promotes an illusion of
self-determination: I write my story; I say who I am; I create my self. The
myth of autonomy dies hard, and autobiography criticism has not yet fully
addressed the extent to which the self is defined by – and lives in terms of
– its relations with others” (Lives 43).

This “illusion of self-determination” was inherent in the publication of
autobiography; the title and copyright pages reinforced the concept of an
independent author. In the case of Rachel Calof, those pages, with their shared
credits, were precisely one of the locations in which the myth of the single
autonomous writer became obvious. However, one bridge between the relational
and the collaborative was found in Eakin’s description of “proximate
collaborative autobiography.” He said “it is one of the defining paradoxes of
proximate collaborative autobiography that such narratives both confirm and
resist the reality of relational identity” (Lives 179). He contended that the
“relational model of identity is conditioning us to accept an increasingly large
component of 'we'-experience in the 'I'-narratives we associate with autobiography” (Eakin Lives 75). Relational models opened the field to a different type of successful storytelling. This acceptance became crucial in the discussion of Rachel Calof as the author of the “ur-text,” and the eventual relational model of identity and collaborative approach to authorship in her (their) text. Ironically it was Lejeune’s model of distinguishing autobiography from other related forms that led to recognition of this collaboration. Eakin suggested that “we are indeed relational selves living relational lives, [and] the reign of the Gusdorf model will surely end” (Lives 55). We came to “recognize the extensive body of relational autobiography that already exists” (55) masquerading as individual while indeed relational.

**Collaborative autobiography**

What was the place of collaboration in the field of autobiography? Critics of this most singular and individualistic mode of expression seemed to acknowledge, perhaps as a consequence of the recognition of relational aspects of living, that writing an autobiography was also relational. Eakin pointed out that in most collaborative autobiography the “relation is presumably and by definition entered into voluntarily” (Lives 172). As he continued:

The first-person narrative products of such relations, however, turn out to be as ethically complex as they are rhetorically ambiguous, for these first-person narratives largely – often completely – conceal the collaborative

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35 The “ur-text” was the original manuscript, the source of all further documents.
mediation, the interlocutive role of a second person, on which they are founded. The peculiarity of the central rhetorical feature of these texts, an ‘I’ that refers to two different individuals... the rhetorical ambiguity is compounded by a generic one: these mediated texts purport to be autobiographies but are in many cases closer to biography, given the decisive role played by the writer/editor in their creation. \(\textit{Lives} 172-3\)

\textit{Rachel Calof’s Story} did not meet the criteria of collaboration “entered into voluntarily,” though she apparently did ask her son, Jacob, to translate her manuscript (David Calof). However, this collaboration process was atypical in that she died fifty years before publication, the translation was completed without her input, and the “literacizing” process took place without her knowledge or consent. The ambiguity of authorship began on the title page of the Indiana University Press publication where it said

\begin{center}
\textit{RACHEL CALOF’S STORY}
\textit{Jewish Homesteader on the Northern Plains}
\textit{J.Sanford Rikoon}
Volume Editor
Indiana University Press
Bloomington and Indianapolis
\end{center}

This implied that she wrote her story, but did not say that the author equaled narrator equaled protagonist.\textsuperscript{36} Indeed, this third-person reference to Rachel Calof suggested that her story, not her authorship, was being presented to us. Only the chapter entitled “My Story” integrated the first-person authorial position. This title was not found in the original Yiddish text; the notebook was entitled

\textsuperscript{36} As Lejeune differentiated autobiography from biography or fiction: “identity of the proper name shared by the author, narrator and protagonist.”
“book one,” so even the title “My Story” apparently was not Rachel Calof’s concept but was created during the process of translation or compilation, perhaps in order to erase the ambiguity of the collaborative nature of this story.

The copyright page said “Translated from the Yiddish by Jacob Calof and Molly Shaw.” Probably more accurate would have been: “Translated from the Yiddish by Molly Shaw and ‘put into a literary form’ by Jacob Calof.” However, such a description would have led us to question what sort of literacizing was done; Eakin reminded us that autobiography often “conceal[s] the collaborative mediation” (Lives 172). In addition, the copyright page said “My Story, by Rachel Bella Calof, ©1995 by Jacob Calof.” I think we were to understand that the English version of My Story, to which Jacob Calof contributed greatly, was owned by him. Some of the confusion could be attributed to his conflict with Molly Shaw regarding “ownership” of the translation. She would not sign over any “rights” to this ownership, claiming that she had done it for her friend, Elizabeth, Jacob’s sister; her refusal created an awkward situation for Jacob since he could not claim to have done the translation on his own (Shaw, Stephens). Later he would be unable to independently translate new pages that were found to be untranslated (Calof correspondence). Nonetheless, he was claiming the English version to be his, obscuring the relational nature of the collaboration.

In both of the types of “collaborative autobiography,” as defined by Philippe Lejeune, “ethnographic accounts prepared by anthropologists and oral historians” and “as-told-to’ lives of celebrities written by ghosts...the details of
the collaborative process... and the exact nature of the contribution of each
member of the pair to the jointly created text, are usually masked" (Eakin Lives
173). Lejeune in “The Autobiography of Those Who Do Not Write” said that the
device of the autobiographical contract results in facilitating a confusion
between the author, the narrator, the ‘model’ and in neutralizing the
perception of the writing, in rendering it transparent. This fusion takes
place in the autobiographical signature. Unlike the apocryphal
autobiography, the autobiography composed in collaboration such as it is
practiced today in a more or less acknowledged manner, introduces a flaw
into this system. It calls to mind that the ‘true’ is itself an artifact and that
the ‘author’ is a result of the contract. The division of labor between two
people (at least) reveals the multiplicity of authorities implied in the work of
autobiographical writing, as in all writing. Far from imitating the unity of the
authentic autobiography, it emphasizes its indirect and calculated
character. (187-188)

The Rachel Calof – Molly Shaw – Jacob Calof collaboration was not entirely
“masked;” however, the “details of the collaborative process” were certainly not
“transparent.” Eakin called this situation “ventriloquism” and pointed out
particularly the issues involved in family collaboration:

how that power is exercised becomes the central problem of the ethics of
life writing, for there is no getting around the fact that ventriloquism,
making the other talk, is by definition a central rhetorical phenomenon of
these narratives. Proximate collaborative autobiography seems to
embrace, conceptually, the reality of relational identity, the structuring
bond between self and other, but the desire for autonomy, for mastery of
one’s origins, for authorship, persists. Children may be ‘episodes in
someone else’s narrative,’ as Carolyn Steedman proposes, whether they
like it or not; when children turned adults become the authors of such a
narrative, however, it is a different story and the tables are turned. (Eakin
Lives 180-181)

Editor Sandy Rikoon’s “Acknowledgements” in Rachel Calof’s Story said “Molly Shaw translated the Yiddish words and phrases into their closest English equivalents. Jacob Calof then adjusted the translation’s grammar and punctuation, relying on his familiarity with his mother’s narrative style to maintain the faithfulness of the text to his mother’s voice” (Rikoon xii). Jacob’s “adjustments” included added (and deleted) material, which I will detail further in the chapters on collaboration and divergences. Noteworthy at this point however, was the extent to which Jacob added extensive public material; he may have been an “episode in someone else’s narrative,” but he elaborated on his family of origin in a manner that his mother’s manuscript did not. This “proximate collaborative autobiography,” differed from the original text, contextualized and created a different picture, no longer an individual autobiography, but a new product.

**Contextual**

The self that was created as autobiographical subject was not isolated from other family members, nor from the community in which it was situated. Studying the complexities of the context offered information that was regarded previously as irrelevant. The “autobiographical self,” Betty Bergland said, “must be understood as socially and historically constructed and multiply positioned in complex worlds and discourses” (*Postmodernism* 131). Context contributed to understanding whether an individual’s choices “made sense, given the cultural
norms of the time” according to Linda Wagner-Martin. “Defiance on a woman’s part in the nineteenth century need not have been the murder of a parent, a lover, or a minister; it might well have been her decision not to marry or not to become a part of her community...” (9). Eakin called this a “situated self” which was a “product of a particular time and place” and was “nested” in the “self, family, community set in a physical and cultural geography, in an unfolding history” (Lives 85). Rachel Calof’s environment was specifically a Jewish, immigrant, farming, isolated home in North Dakota, and each of these vectors influenced the story she told. Eakin said that “relational autobiography” was contextualized in the “family memoir, in which the lives of other family members are rendered as either equal in importance to or more important than the life of the reporting self” (Lives 85). Ironically, while Rachel Calof’s memoir certainly included the other family members, it never conceded her centrality in her story. The contextual issues became more significant in Jacob’s additions, which contributed to a larger picture and attempted to equalize and recognize other family members.

Germaine Bree contended that feminist theory may have led autobiography critics beyond the isolated individual and that the contribution of feminist theory may have been the “dismantling of the concept of the ‘unencumbered’ self.” She said,

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38 In the chapter about the home setting, I introduce evidence that the North Dakota Jewish settlers were able to maintain their ethnic and religious affiliations in that unlikely setting by establishing a large enough community that promoted intermarriage and insular educational systems.
It might well be that at this time of spectacular change in our sense of the macrocosm we inhabit – women, because until now they have had little occasion, therefore little inclination, to ‘construct meaning’ on a grand scale, are in a better position to see beyond the constraints of our conceptual representations, beyond our dichotomies and abstractions...and to look to the ‘multiplicity of the real.’ The dismantling of the concept of the ‘unencumbered’ self disrupted the conventional patterns of autobiography. (Bree 175)

Rachel Calof certainly situated herself in a large family context, highly "encumbered" and always relational. However, Jacob apparently considered this an inadequate rendition of his family's history. Jacob's contributions widened this context as though the family setting was not an indicative presentation of his parents. In the Yiddish manuscript, Rachel Calof did not include any of her husband's public achievements. Jacob elaborated on economic success, community recognition - both secular and religious - and educational endeavors, all embellishments that added, in a not unproblematic manner, aspects of contextualizing. With Jacob's additions, Rachel Calof's Story was no longer her story alone.

2.2 Women's Studies and Feminist Theory: Contents, Sources, Contexts

Feminist theory affected academic disciplines in a variety of ways. The Personal Narratives Group (PNG) noted that, in literature, scholars questioned "why the canon was dominated by the writings of a small group of literary men, and why some forms of literary expression were valued above others" (3). In history, "new social history" caused a reassessment of the "theory and methods"
of the previously dominant 'great man' history," and "whether relying on collective biography based on quantitative sources or on first-person accounts of the experiences of ordinary people, the new studies redefined what it meant to write history" (PNG 3). In biography, according to the editors of The Challenge of Feminist Biography: Writing the Lives of Modern American Women, changing the focus meant that now "a different type of person is receiving biographical treatment" (Alpern 6). Some achievements were not recognized in the past and the lack of recognition was due "more to the failure of historians to pay attention to their kind of achievement" (Alpern 6). They went on to say "feminist biographers are not only restoring 'invisible' women to the record but enlarging our perspective of the record" (Alpern 6). Once again the focus was upon "whose lives had been made exemplary" (PNG 3, emphasis theirs) and whose stories were told.

One of the places in which Women’s Studies intersected with autobiography theory is with the application of gender as a category of interrogation. Initially, feminist theory advocated the recovery of as many women’s life stories as possible and their acceptance into the canon. Yet, as late as the 1970s, no clear-cut implementation of feminist practice existed in terms of academic research.\(^{39}\) The 1980s saw a significant increase in women’s biographies and, by 1992, nearly “two hundred biographies of women have been

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\(^{39}\) In 1979, the Biographical Research Center at the University of Hawaii looked into research directions for a conference. “The respondents’ sole comment relevant to women was to hope that there would be treatment of more women subjects in the future. No respondent suggested the usefulness of feminist perspectives of the writing of women’s lives” (Alpern 3-4).
written since 1970" (5). Gender studies questioned issues of focus: was the study of women entirely too taken up with white, middle-class, powerful women? Did biology imply a certain destiny? The editors of *The Challenge of Feminist Biography: Writing the Lives of Modern American Women* suggested “no matter how feminist biographers sort out the complexities of any one individual women’s response, they accept as a given that gender will always, in some way, be central to an understanding of a woman’s life, even if that woman is not particularly conscious of that centrality or even denies it” (Alpern 8). And still the focus remained on the more powerful, usually white, often Christian, women in leadership roles.

In the 1980s, while the subject might have been more often female, scholars were not yet utilizing a wide range of feminist possibilities. Gerda Lerner, in 1988, “called attention to the rising interest in the genre of biography in a survey of current work in United States Women’s history” and called this an “explosion” both in publication of monographs and in doctoral dissertations (Alpern 5). However, she noted:

potential practitioners of the genre apply a more feminist approach to women’s lives, using the new feminist scholarship in literature, psychology, and anthropology. Such an approach would allow biographers to use life-cycle analysis or to address topics most biographies seldom touch on, such as how women’s private and public lives intersect, the impact of mother-daughter relationships, or the ‘familial and female friendship support networks that sustained women’s public activities’. (Alpern 5)
The call for integration of feminist theory into all spheres of academic research widened the scope of the disciplines. The call for further feminist biography changed “the frameworks within which we interpret historical experience” (Alpern 13). The Personal Narratives Group maintained that feminist theory was “the strongest challenge to the disciplines” and cited Elizabeth Minnich’s claim that “androcentric thought” was a “devastating conceptual error” (4). The idea that “human experience is gendered” seemed obvious, but twenty years ago, it was part of “the radical implications of feminist theory” (PNG 4). Looking for differences in life stories along gender lines created provocative insights about multiple aspects of life. Linda Wagner-Martin said that the biography of a male subject, then, has usually been a relatively uncomplicated presentation of the persona, shaped in the pattern of the personal success story...Telling a woman’s life, however, is less formulaic. For one thing, most women’s lives are a tightly woven mesh of public and private events. The primary definition of a woman’s selfhood is likely to be this combined public-private identity. So, to write the story of these interconnected parts of a woman’s life, in order to tell her complete story, means creating different structures for women’s biography. (6)

In addition to this issue of different structures (and I will go into this more thoroughly later in this section), the question of whose story would be told was a primary concern. Alpern said initially when focusing on women’s biographies, attempts were made to “rescue from historical oblivion” those women who were famous: “the first generation of modern women’s historians had spent years restoring to the record the deeds and accomplishments of ‘notable’ women. But by the mid-1970s, such work, by that time called ‘compensatory,’ moved out to
the margins” (Alpern 4). Another distraction was that the “intense political atmosphere of the 1970s divided and confused scholars about the validity of some historical subjects. As Bonnie G. Smith writes, ‘by the late 1970s, historians had devised tests of loyalty to gender, race and class’,” (Alpern 4). While, this time period was frustrating, the resulting discipline focused on the diversity and multiplicity of women’s experiences.

The impact of feminist theory of autobiography included: changing definitions of whose lives were subjects for research; accepting new sources with the widening of disciplinary boundaries; and investigating narratives differing in terms of structure and subject concerns. I studied feminist research methods to see what they offered for my research and for context and interpersonal connections in Rachel Calof’s Story. Paradoxically, even as scholars rejected the individualism of autobiography and promoted the webs that link, without the very real individual people writing, we would not have seen the more in-depth and realistic portraits with their illuminating details describing their uniquely individual selves.

Whose lives merited study? Jeane Braham suggested that scholars questioned the male, white, upper-class model of ‘achievement and quest’ dominating the field of biography and autobiography until the last twenty years. Whose lives, they ask, have been studied as exemplary and what enlargements of our understanding of human experience can occur when ‘different’ (women, blacks, working-class, disabled, gay) life experiences are included? (56, emphasis hers).
Whose lives indeed? When the boundaries defining legitimate subjects for research were expanded, the “understanding of human experience” suddenly encompassed far more people. Estelle Jelinek claimed that the “female identity is not a heroic one” (102) and as long as the stories of our culture focused on the heroes, the stories were not written about women.⁴⁰ When it became acceptable to look at women's autobiographies, we sometimes saw a “sense of the female identity as a ‘local’ one – personal and ‘different’ – compared not only with men, but also with other women” (Jelinek Tradition 102), then we found that in the localities of the particular were stories that had not yet been told. She also noticed that those who wrote earlier in the nineteenth-century and those who wrote later differed with regard to their self-appraisal of the value of their own autobiographies (Jelinek Tradition 102). Finally, even assuming that women were the subjects, not all women were equally acceptable as subjects. Lois Rudnick described the criticism she faced when writing about Mabel Dodge Luhan, who had been considered “male-identified” and was thus not acceptable “as a model or a guide who points the way for other women” (Rudnick 125). She went on “if we are really committed to examining openly and honestly the lives of all of the varieties of women who have gone before, there can be no party line – spoken or unspoken – in terms of biographical subject choice” (Rudnick 125). Party lines were hardly the only ones that were not crossed: entire populations

⁴⁰ Of course, Jelinek’s definition of heroic conceded the terms of the debate. Redefining heroic would probably be a more contemporary response.
were not recognized as legitimate for biographic and autobiographic study. Research work in new Western history provided examples of neglected sectors.

Obviously, feminist theory and the establishment of Women's Studies departments were not entirely responsible for causing the radical change in approach to the individual in autobiographical study, but they certainly were contributing factors. Once the subject base was broadened to include potentially anyone, the next issue was what types of materials were used to study these lives? An openness to new forms was important in both the humanities and social sciences, an openness that Carole Boyce Davies called “some space for the noncanonical” (8) or moving towards “interrogating our scriptocentric expectations” (16). Often, looking at what Helen Buss calls “women’s private writings,” we saw a “rich source of insight into women’s cultural and personal development” (Feminist 86). Private writings opened the door to far more texts than had previously been studied. Suzanne Bunkers said “women’s diaries and journals chart unmapped territory in such an exploration because they challenge the reader to formulate a more inclusive definition of autobiography than has traditionally been used to delineate the boundaries of the genre” (Midwestern 191). Another alternative was the organizational umbrella of “narrative forms” of the Personal Narratives Group “because it speaks to the complexity and importance of the different shapes assumed by the personal narratives” (PNG 99).
Diary studies illustrated the widening circle of study, both in terms of the population studied and the form. In the 1980s, according to Suzanne Bunkers and Cynthia Huff, “diaries began to receive more consideration as expressions of women’s autobiography” (*Inscribing* 7). Their edited collection provided one example of how the diary moved from the margins to an accepted form of autobiography. The book elaborated upon the rich texture of women’s diaries by using a variety of critical methodologies to ask how the diary as text, as a form of women’s self-inscription, as a window to our historical and contemporary lives, and as a theoretical tool, allows us to question epistemological and critical assumptions... [it] highlight[s] a genre that challenges boundaries and enhances transdisciplinary thinking, by indicating how the content and form of diaries disclose how we construct knowledge, and by helping us understand how we relate to ourselves, to others and to our culture through the mediation of language. (*Inscribing* 1-2)

In addition to employing gender as a category, diary study also acted “as a lighting rod for issues of aesthetics and canonicity” (*Inscribing* 2). According to Judy Nolte Temple, in her study of Emily Gillespie’s variorum diary, this form of life writing contested “our current visions of both classic and postmodern autobiography and breaks down the tidy division between artful autobiography and the artless ‘serial autobiography’ of the diary, between transcendence and immediacy” (*Frontiers* 169). Diaries were found to have multiple forms, not to be monolithic entities at all. Gillespie kept “the form and experiential core of the diary while employing her narrative powers as she revised to include her adult perspective and wishful recollections” (Temple *Frontiers* 169). While evaluating texts with no antecedents in criticism, new critical tools were developed. Bunkers
and Huff "interrogate whether traditional literary and historical frameworks produce the most effective readings of women's diaries and propose instead gender-sensitive reading strategies and theoretical borrowings from other cultures and disciplines in an attempt to deconstruct women's diaries" (Inscribing 15). New material, and new approaches to previously discovered material, contributed to the exciting nature of this vibrant study.

These same boundaries were also ruptured by another variety of life stories: oral life stories. Carol Boyce Davies said

> if we agree with Gloria Anzaldúa that boundaries are sites of contestations, then life stories are boundary-breaking texts. Collaboratively told and written by women, they exist in oppositional relationship to autobiography as it is defined now. They present a multileveled relationship to discourse. Close examination reveals, for example, stories that expose while they camouflage, stories that negotiate public and private space, challenge and retreat, open up some issues and silence others. Gaps and spaces in narration, we know, point to texts in process. (17)

She maintained that these life stories must be considered a "separate literary genre" since they "blur the boundaries between orality and writing" (Davies 7). Because the genre involved two individuals, one whose story was being told and the other who was recording, traditional autobiography would not have encompassed the genre.

The development of new critical tools forced scholars promoting feminist research to reconsider how they evaluated texts. Geographers Janice Monk and Susan Hanson suggested in 1982 the inadequacy of "identify[ing] sexist biases in geographic research" or "develop[ing] a feminist perspective," but maintained
researchers must also understand the "need for revisions of concepts and categories" (11-13). Estelle Jelinek contended that since women's writings were not "powered by a heroic self-image, but driven by a need for self-affirmation" the resulting "style and forms of their autobiographies reflect[ed] a different mode of expression from men's" (Tradition 104). Her sense was that the form was "discontinuous" and "disjunctive" (Tradition 104). She continued:

"diaries, letters, and journals... are accessible forms for women whose emotional, intellectual, and practical lives are fragmented by domestic responsibilities that leave them little leisure time to contemplate or integrate their experiences. Even in more shaped narratives and autobiographies proper, a disjunctiveness persists. Although the women attempt to maintain some chronology, to show some progression in their lives, they interrupt their narratives with anecdotes, character sketches, lectures, letters, and flashbacks. (Jelinek Tradition 104)

She said women's writings were "episodic and anecdotal, nonchronological and disjunctive" (Essays xiii). In addition, she contended that the "identity image" was different from men's: "In contrast to the self-confident, one-dimensional self-image that men usually project, women often depict a multidimensional, fragmented self-image colored by a sense of inadequacy and alienation" (Essays xiii). While "multidimensional," "fragmented" and "inadequacy and alienation" seem to characterize Rachel Calof's Story, an unquestioning acceptance of Jelinek's essentialist position would prove misleading since "disjunctiveness" would supposedly have been a clue that Rachel Calof's voice structures the narrative. My research found her Yiddish manuscript to be more chronological and less "disjunctive" than the English publication. Somewhere, perhaps, in the
piecemeal nature of the translation and compilation process, the linear, chronological progression existing in the Yiddish manuscript was lost and the direct connection between her Yiddish manuscript and the published translation abandoned. The final product, organized by subjects and crises, ironically seemed “disjunctive” in a way that the original was not, clearly not as a result of the “fragmentation” of domestic responsibility, but a consequence of the disjunctive translation and compilation process.

Since the style and form of women’s narratives did not necessarily conform to previously standard literary criteria, these criteria were not necessarily applicable. Judy Nolte Temple suggested, in her discussion of Baby Doe Tabor’s dream-diaries, that traditional criteria of plot, setting and character might not be the appropriate guiding criteria for evaluating diaries (Fragments 77). Indeed, women’s narratives, because they were constructed alternatively, might offer diverse clues about our perceptions of lives.41 Not only the forms were dissimilar, so was the subject matter. In the past, men seemed to incorporate a public voice and subject matter seemed to indicate significant differentiation between men and women’s autobiographical material. Jelinek found that “the subjects women write about are remarkably similar: family, close friends, domestic activities”

41 The Personal Narratives Group considered the lens that they offered in terms of gendering: “Since women's biographies, autobiographies, and life stories all recount a process of construction of the self, these narratives are potentially rich sources for the exploration of the process of gendered-self-identity.... because personal narratives are verbal reconstructions of developmental processes, they can well serve feminist psychologists interested in exploring the links between the evolution of subjectivity, the acquisition of language, and the development of a feminine identity” (5).
(Essays xiii). Temple suggested that even women with public lives, such as Elizabeth Cady Stanton and Charlotte Perkins Gilman, wrote “emphasizing their personal lives” in autobiographies (Lensink Secret 381). Dee Garrison said that writers of feminist biography found “the intersection of public and private. They write of the ordinary and rare moments in a subject’s external and internal life that do not concern the traditional version of history preoccupied with power and hierarchy ... one cannot recreate a subject’s public life or intellectual production without acknowledging that person’s private activities and intimate relations” (77). Finally, she said that “women’s lives are the very foundation of feminist theory” and I was compelled to question then, what happens when this “very foundation” of Rachel Calof’s narrative was tampered with, and the “women’s lives” went through interpretive stages and compilations that “adjusted” the content to the extent that the texts are no longer primarily women’s texts?

However, feminist issues were not the only component of feminist research. Shulamit Reinharz said that feminists “have used all existing methods and have invented some new ones as well. Instead of orthodoxy, feminist research practices must be recognized as a plurality. Rather than there being a ‘woman’s way of knowing,’ or a ‘feminist way of doing research,’ there are women’s ways of knowing” (Reinharz 4). Some of the characteristics of feminist research include research by women, subjectivity and experience valued rather than rejected, and diversity of approach (Reinharz 3). Helen Buss said that her “concerns as a reader,” delineated as her “need for an interdisciplinary close
reading strategy and a refreshed critical vocabulary, my need for a
poststructuralist reading strategy informed by a consciousness of the social
power of language, and a reader-response theory that is grounded in a feminist
ethic" were based in "feminist critics’ insights" (Buss Feminist 88). She included
Elizabeth Hampsten’s “inventive patience,” Elizabeth Meese’s “de-canonizing
strategies,” Gerda Lerner’s views of women’s history, and Suzanne Bunkers’
study of “reflexivity as a reading strategy” (Buss Feminist 88). Furthermore,
feminist strategies enabled the discovery of resistances, since “the more
‘personal’ and ‘mundane’ the issues the more resistance to change we
encounter” (citing Catherine Gallagher, Buss Feminist 88). Expecting experiential
evidence to unravel the discourses in which these texts are situated was not
enough; there must be critical tools that probed revelations the experiential texts
offered. “Women’s daily, lived experience, however, has been denigrated by
mainstream Western epistemology in favor of universality and the separation of
the mind from the drudgery of daily, bodily tasks. The gendered construct of this
mind-body separation places women squarely within the daily” (Bunkers/ Huff
Inscribing 5). The “daily” was precisely where Patricia Baker said we must look
for women’s voices: with the “emphasis on making women’s lives
visible...feminist research has attempted to recognize, faithfully document and
respect women’s diverse experiences” (33).
Feminist research also advocated avoiding universalizing generalizations. Consequently, contextualization became crucial to accessing new insights. Betty Bergland isolated this phenomenon in the following:

The humanist/essentialist view of the self tends to mask the way in which we are constituted in language and positioned differently there—depending on race, class, gender or ethnicity. And because the humanist/essentialist model tends to universalize its view of the human being, it tends to dehistoricize individuals, to ignore the dialectic of the historical moment and ideological practices that shape subjectivities. (Bergland Postmodernism 161-162)

Contextualization, then, was ultimately important in order to situate specifically and not to leave a story isolated or “masked.”

However, even if the experiential stories could be contextualized and added to our understanding, if the materials had not been adequately collected and preserved there would be limited source material for this scholarship. Archival acquisition policies regarding women’s texts changed as a result of expanded definitions of knowledge and the direction of feminist research. Elizabeth Hampsten, in 1996, wrote of the transformations of the past twenty years. Earlier collections were based primarily on “official documents” relating to public personalities and public functions. Considerable time and effort were invested to convince librarians to “accept personal writings” from a wide variety of sources. She described one instance of an archive returning personal papers as not being relevant; they were exactly the type of documents that she was researching (NDH 3). Jewish archives also expanded acquisitions; although this
was not a function of feminist-driven scholarship. YIVO\textsuperscript{42} solicited autobiographical essays as early as the 1940s. Since the Holocaust, of course, Jewish collections have focused on retrieving documents without differentiating between the personal and the public.

Another function of feminist research involved redefinition: if the women of the West were not research subjects either because of disregarded or devalued class or ethnic affiliations then they probably were not in view when searching for women in the West. One of the findings by Elizabeth Jameson in 1984 was that the ideal of “true womanhood” could not define nor describe the women of the West. She said that searching through the “prescriptive literature” was not necessarily relevant since that material “assumes literacy in English and adherence to upper-class Euro-American values, thus excluding virtually all Native American, Hispanic, black and Asian women, and also many immigrant women” (Jameson \textit{Frontiers} 2). Prescriptive literature, while perhaps a beginning, was inadequate to develop a complex picture of a varied population or a variety of geographical settings. While Jameson did examine generational impact, the “West” she referred to was a large and undifferentiated territory.

Finally, contextualization was perhaps the overriding significant conceptual change. Understanding the interpersonal nature of women’s situations changed the focus from the individual, isolated from the background,

\textsuperscript{42} The Yiddish Institute was founded in Poland in 1925 and subsequently moved to New York City. According to Jocelyn Cohen, “The original Yiddish name is Der Yidisher Visnshaftlekher Institute, today known as the YIVO Institute for Jewish Research” (1).
and moved the whole picture to the foreground. The Personal Narratives Group said

the interpersonal context revealed in women's personal narratives suggests how women's lives are shaped through and evolve within relationships with others. Feminists have long noted the special reliance of women upon the resources of networks of family and kin, and the important role women play in nurturing and maintaining such networks. Indeed, this reliance may well be a function of women's relative powerlessness, their lack of access to more formal and institutional routes to influence, and as such a survival strategy shared with other relatively powerless groups (20).

This contextualization need not be limited to family relations, but could conceivably be a wider network of community, faith-based organizations, or voluntary or civic undertakings.

Feminist research circles widened contents, approaches and perspectives beyond the local context or the individual, independent disciplines. An additional aspect of feminist focus - "locational feminism" - recognized, as Susan Friedman said, the "interlocking dimension of global cultures, the way in which the local is always informed by the global and the global by the local" (5). Her book, *Mappings: Feminism and the Cultural Geographies of Encounter*, suggested that "feminism needs to be understood in a global context, both historicized and geopoliticized, to take into account its different formations and their interrelationships everywhere" (5). Helen Buss used anthropological work, such as Clifford Geertz's "thick description," to see how an "event or anecdote is ‘re-read... in such a way as to reveal through the analysis of tiny particulars the behavioral codes, logics and motive forces controlling a whole society" (cited in
Buss, *Feminist* 86). She described learning to “do” literary criticism with a new approach, and said that the “terminology I had learned, the location of such consciously used and overdetermined markers as metaphor, symbol, and allegory left me bereft of an adequate critical practice” (86). The idea of incorporating “thick description” allowed her to shift her focus to “read the trace of a human person constructing her identity in her historical, social, cultural, and gendered place” (Buss *Feminist* 86). The Personal Narratives Group emphasized the diversity: there were “multiple truths in all life stories” (262). They suggested that perspective was important, contributing to the perception of “truth” because perspectives were “linked” to the “truths they reveal” (262). By investigating the conditions which create these narratives, the forms that guide them, and the relationships that produce them are we able to understand what is communicated in a personal narrative. These angles of interpretation not only provide different perspectives but also reveal multiple truths of a life. These truths are essential because they are specific; they are not abstract generalizations about life. While we do not deny the usefulness of some generalizations about women’s lives, we realize that generalization without attention to the truths of experience is fruitless (262).

The importance of an awareness of specific examples of “angles of interpretation” could not be overemphasized. Family context was often too narrow to incorporate the visions of varied societies that the global perspectives offered.

Even with a widening scope, feminist researchers grappled with the emerging postmodern knowledge that truths were variables, not absolute, nor constant. “When talking about their lives, people lie sometimes, forget a lot,
exaggerate, become confused, and get things wrong. Yet they reveal truths. These truths don’t reveal the past ‘as it actually was,’ aspiring to a standard of objectivity. They give us instead the truths of our experiences” (PNG 261).43 Indeed, recognizing the role of the interpreter was part of the understanding that the “truths” were mediated. Elizabeth Hampsten suggested that “public readers, strangers like ourselves, depend on the biographical and other supplementary information” and an editor’s “hints about reading,” in this case, clues provided to allow us to understand information in a text not written with an audience in mind (Hampsten Editing 236). Learning to read and understand non-standard works advanced knowledge. Susan Ware said, “besides rescuing the lives of scores of ‘lost women,’ one of the most important contributions of women’s history to the craft of biography may be its emphasis on personal lives and their impact on public accomplishments” (61). She continued this demanded “attention to the ordinary daily lives of our subjects. Whom you share your bed with and how you pay the bills do have an impact on events beyond the household” (61). However, non-standard works were not immediately accessible nor were the works of “lost women” necessarily easily understood. Without Laurel Thatch Ulrich’s excellent explication and editing, Martha Ballard’s diary would have remained archival material and not the clearly understandable text A Midwife’s Tale: The Life of Martha Ballard, Based on Her Diary, 1785-1812.

43 The Personal Narrative Group reminded us of our own role at this point: “Sometimes the truths we see in personal narratives jar us from our complacent security as interpreters ‘outside’ the story and make us aware that our own place in the world plays a part in our interpretation and shapes the meanings we derive from them” (261).
Finally, individualism may have been less applicable to the women we studied; however, studying women as individuals remained paramount. Consistent effort must be made not to lose the individual in the surroundings when the focus moves. While theoretically the individual could be in flux in terms of identity, the details of her particular individual life were the compelling testimony that allowed stories to be told. The diary revision which sacrificed the immediacy of the details in an effort to make a more literary narrative was similar to the history that was built by taking the more literary versions of the individuals, or the cumulative information of the community rather than the individual as the core unit of information. Context was indeed crucial, partly because it revealed the surroundings and influences, the axis of historical situating, but also as a contributing force. However, even as the context contributed to the shaping of individuals, our subjects must remain part of the foreground and not be replaced by the surroundings.

One final example keenly reminded me that our understandings were built upon the collected records of individual lives. Sociologist Karen Hansen described the story of Lillian Wineman, a woman born in North Dakota of a Jewish father and Norwegian mother (356-7). Hansen’s concept of a “prism of a single life” was an important “historical sociological tool” for her work in Norwegian and Dakota Indian relations. This single individual’s story “refracts many bands of light that could be investigated” (358); however without her lived
life, and the stories available, her story would be lost to history. Some of the subjects Lillian Wineman opened to us:

- how Jews came to settle in North Dakota;
- the dynamics of anti-Semitism in the rural Midwest;
- the production of Indian beadwork;
- European trade in furs and other items with Indians;
- Norwegian immigration to North America and settlement patterns in the Great Plains states;
- homesteading laws;
- single women in frontier communities;
- inter-faith and inter-racial marriages;
- the role of business people in agricultural towns;
- and the Chautauquas and the Chautauqua movement at the turn-of-the-century, to name a few. (358)

Lillian Wineman, for me, refracted a different band of light. Her father married outside of the Jewish community. As a result, she was not included in any of the archival material that I found in St. Paul; she seemed to be invisible in the Jewish community of the late nineteenth-century in Devils Lake, North Dakota.

Contextualizing a life over a century ago, I was reminded that sources remained in many locations. Our concept of historicizing was only as comprehensive as our views and limited by our own contexts. Expanding that perception is an ongoing process.

2.3 Western Studies Scholarship: Less mythical, more diverse

The study of Western history was undergoing similar reappraisals at about the same time as autobiography theory and women’s studies. Rachel Calof’s book benefited from Sanford Rikoon’s timing because only thirty years earlier, women’s manuscripts about frontier life were not considered particularly interesting or necessary. Western historian Katherine Morrissey said “fueled by
new feminist scholarship in a variety of disciplines, western women’s history emerged as a distinct field during the 1970s. Feminist historians went beyond simply incorporating women into the western story” (135). Patricia Limerick, in her seminal *Legacy of Conquest: The Unbroken Past of the American West* (1987), described the Western story as what she called the “creation myth,” Eurocentric as it was indeed:

> Europe was crowded; North America was not. Land in Europe was claimed, owned and utilized; land in North America was available for the taking. In a migration as elemental as a law of physics, Europeans moved from crowded space to open space, where free land restored opportunity and offered a route to independence. Generation by generation, hardy pioneers, bringing civilization to displace savagery, took on a zone of wilderness, struggled until nature was mastered, and then moved on to the next zone. This process repeated itself sequentially from the Atlantic to the Pacific, and the result was a new nation and a new national character: the European transmuted into the American. Thrown on their own resources, pioneers recreated the social contract from scratch, forming simple democratic communities whose political health vitalized all of America. Indians, symbolic residents of the wilderness, resisted — in a struggle sometimes noble, but always futile. At the completion of the conquest, that chapter of history was closed. The frontier ended, but the hardiness and independence of the pioneer survived in American character. (*Legacy* 322-323)

*Rachel Calof’s Story: Jewish Homesteader on the Northern Plains* echoed much of this mythic creation tale. Her origin was in the European past, in a crowded and hopeless situation. The North Dakota land, in her story, was presented as available; the “hardy pioneers” were described on nearly every page of the text. Her story, however, much like the conceptual revision in western history, was the unheard voice behind the rhetoric. Her son, Jake, in an atmosphere of renewed interest in the voices behind the official documents, presented an adaptation of
his family's "creation myth." However, "her" manuscript was less about pioneer success; the "hardiness and independence of the pioneer" that "survived in American character" was his story about his mother, and ultimately about himself. He was that "American character." This short recapitulation of one aspect of the new Western history parallels the outline and research directions for my work on Rachel Calof's Story.

Limerick continued, and my research supports her conclusion, that "one persistent fact of modern times is this: when professional scholars investigate the past, friction with popular beliefs is almost inevitable" (Legacy 323). She said the "charm" of the "creation myth" was in its "simplicity." The creation myth she described, and Jacob Calof emulated, did not recognize the degree of centrality that view from Europe provided as the perspective. The "West" was only westward in a view from the East; not from the South, as the geographical region considered to be the frontier was northward for Hispanics. However, "simplicity, alas, is the one quality that cannot be found in the actual story of the American West" (Legacy 323). The "actual story," as Limerick discussed in her article "What on Earth is the New Western History?" was the separation of facts and myths. She said there were multitudes of "narrowly factual studies" and there were "highbrow studies of meaning" (170-171), both of which were shaken when the "inclusion of minorities as a subject in western history" changed the position of the outlook (What on Earth 171). Frederick Jackson Turner's thesis, she said, "required that the observer stand in the East and look to the West. Now, like
many scholars in other fields, Western historians have had to learn to live with relativism" (*Legacy* 25-26). She said rather than thinking of the West as a “process,” we now thought of it as a “place” – “as many complicated environments occupied by natives who considered their homelands to be the center, not the edge” (*Legacy* 26). Specifics, details and particular people and communities changed the abstract view to one that was informed by the diversity in the “frontier.”

The 1970s proved to be a turning point in western history as well, as in autobiography and women’s studies. Scholars Susan Armitage and Elizabeth Jameson, in *The Women’s West* (1987), discussed the “inadequacy of the older scholarship:”

> How can we document the lives of millions of women who are not represented in historical archives? How can we include the experiences of women who lived in the region before written history? How can we include the important variables of ethnicity, class, regional economy, period of settlement, family status, and women’s life cycles without losing the forest for the trees? We are beginning to see the need to forge new tools and new models. (5)

In the midst of conceptual changes, more comprehensive data was clearly needed and in the process of being collected, yet the information seemed overwhelming. Elizabeth Hampsten described a meeting in Washburn, North Dakota, in the early 1970s, of a hundred women discussing women’s history in North Dakota. “These were the early days of the ‘second wave’ women’s movement, and coincided with the energetic beginnings of the Humanities Council. The 1970s still were fairly early in the state’s consciousness of its own
history as well" (NDH 2). Different participants on the panel spoke of women whose writings were not a matter of public documentation. “All of us on the panel that morning were conscious of giving ‘voice’ to women who were expressing experiences and perceptions similar to those of many participants in the audience – we were less concerned with public events in history” (NDH 2).

Hampsten said that 1979 was a “banner year” for the publication of “personal accounts.” Lynn Z. Bloom used the University of Nebraska Press as an example of the 1980s pivotal position in publications in western literature. Between 1982 and 1992, the Press “published or reissued forty volumes of American pioneer women’s autobiographical works, compared to three that it had in print before 1970 – a 1200 percent increase” (Utopia 148). Akin to the changes that occurred in autobiography and women’s studies, new subjects and revised concepts of legitimate sources contributed to changing myths. As previously noted, the recognition of minority participation in Western history transformed mythology significantly. The identification of diversity in terms of population altered the focus. Morrissey suggested, “as part of the ‘new social history,’ which emphasized the everyday experiences of everyday people, western women’s historians uncovered the memoirs, letters, diaries, and other personal accounts of women moving to or living in the West” (135). She said the “focus on gender differences” has “characterized much of the work of western women’s historians” (136).
Feminist scholarship focusing on gender revealed issues of diversity.

Armitage said that the focus was reinforced by "the recognition that the diversity of western experiences requires us to understand the different circumstances of western women's lives before we can arrive at large generalizations about what the West has been for women" (4). Elizabeth Jameson wrote one of the companion pieces that appeared at the end of the Calof book: "Rachel Bella Calof's Life as Collective History," in which she noted:

*Western women's historians soon rejected the narrow focus on Euro-American frontierswomen and the limited questions of older histories, calling instead for an expanded time frame, for multicultural inclusiveness, and for reconceiving history from women's own perspectives. New histories examined women's adaptations to western environments, their roles in cross-cultural encounters, their efforts to establish social networks and community institutions, and changing understandings of gender – the behaviors, values, and meanings attached to the biological fact of being male or female. (Collective 138)*

She found that the new work on women "explored how different people rearranged their personal relationships, family and kinship, work, childbearing and childrearing, and men's and women's public and private power" (Collective 138). Even though domestic arrangements became acceptable matter for historical discussion, my approach to evaluating the Calof text expands upon this point. The original manuscript's domestic details were changed to create a more acceptable, publishable story. Chaos and uncertainty were deleted. Anger and dissension were eliminated. Illness was edited out, as was most of the sadness and deep distress. Thus we not only must examine how *Rachel Calof's Story* told of a previously unimagined lifestyle, but must also consider that *behind the*
curtain, in the preparation of the book, gender roles and domestic arrangements were changed after Rachel Calof's Yiddish manuscript was written, before it was published. Those changes illustrated a preference for a successful adaptation on the prairie and, perhaps, a condition for publication.

Finally, Jameson said that beyond the gender lens, shifting the focus away from Anglo-Saxons was also challenging. “One of the most important tasks, and for many of us the most difficult, was imagining a history that did not center on native-born Euro-Americans” (Collective 138). She went on to say that some of the difficulty was “to envision how an inclusive history would change inherited versions of the past” (Collective 138). Morrissey said that the feminist scholarship in other fields supposedly offered scholars tools to encourage this work:

From the vantage point of women's studies, feminist scholars measured western women with yardsticks provided by women historians from other fields. Were western women constricted by the 'cult of domesticity'? Was the frontier liberating for women? Why was the struggle for women's suffrage first successful in the West? (135).

While this manner of inquiry introduced new questions, Morrissey said these were not the relevant issues nor the appropriate yardsticks: “Although this effort expanded the story of the western past, it had limitations of its own. The questions tended to arise from concerns identified in studies of eastern, rather than western, women; they also tended to give primacy to the experiences of middle-class, Euroamerican women with eastern roots” (Morrissey 135). Thus, the tools must be context-specific and certainly must recognize the class and racial limitations of work from other fields. Considering Rachel Calof specifically,
middle-class, Christian and European models of domesticity in frontier settlement might not yield the types of questions that would further our understanding of her situation.

In western history as well as literature, feminist scholarship found different sources relevant to research. The limitations of "prescriptive literature" or public documents became obvious, and the search concentrated on documents of personal experience. Letters, journals, diaries and autobiographical writing gained prominence. Elizabeth Davis said that diaries offered information that conflicted with and added a different perspective to received stories.

Contrary to the pervasive stereotype of male heroism and female passivity that has clouded our historical perspective on frontier life, the diaries reveal women's varied responses to the West – their many attempts to conform to Victorian traditions even on the frontier and their many personal rebellions. By understanding the diaries as mediating devices as well as repositories of factual information, one can know the private people who kept these records in new ways (Davis 6).

Jameson said that some of these diaries "were often intended to be shared as family history, as guidebooks for the western journey, or for publication" (Frontiers 2). However, she noted, "some were recopied before they were given to archives or to family members; thus, they often omit women's private concerns, although they are still sources for daily activities and more frequently are outlets for emotion than are men's diaries" (Frontiers 2). Literary scholar Estelle Jelinek looked at the diaries and autobiographies of the nineteenth century reflecting the journey westward. She suggested that there were "few of exceptional literary merit," but that they "complete the picture of westward
migration omitted in traditional histories of the nineteenth century” (Tradition 94). Of course, both the concepts of “literary merit” and the idea that the picture was complete were more in question than they were fifteen to twenty years ago. Our concepts of “the West” changed from the homogenous approach primarily researched in Jelinek’s works. She found men’s autobiographies focused on “migration routes, technological successes or male entrepreneurship” as opposed to women’s emphasis on “the personal, specifically the people they met and the day-to-day hardships of domestic survival” (Tradition 94). Her research indicated

few of these women wrote autobiographies proper, but hundreds found the time – amazingly – to keep diaries and journals that focus, unfortunately, on only a brief period in their lives – usually the time of their journey and/or settlement struggles, concentrating on their efforts to establish new communities and schools, build homes, and farm the land (Jelinek Tradition 95).

The autobiographies of western women were similar in many ways to the other autobiographies being published. Lynn Z. Bloom said “no matter what the context, these women present themselves as the antithesis of the hopeless, worn-out drudges that populate men’s writings about frontier women” (Utopia 146). She suggested “the more arduous the life, the more satisfying the survival – if not of the fittest frontierswomen, certainly of the most articulate autobiographers” (Bloom Utopia 147). Margo Culley described Bloom’s findings:

how these writers reconcile the dreams that drew them west with the harsh realities of their lives. Double voices, narrative and/or pictorial frames allow them to balance the romance and the realism, the utopian and the anti-utopian visions. The farther removed the reality of their
frontier experience is from the utopian ideal, Bloom argues, the more forceful the voices of the autobiographers become. Though circumstances may defeat aspirations, autobiography becomes a ‘powerful way of reshaping their lives... of gaining control of their past through re-inventing it in their works’. (Piece 23)

Calof wrote a story of one of those far removed from the utopian ideal and her writing was indeed a “reshaping” of her story and a means of “gaining control,” -- which was ultimately undermined by the further “reshaping” of the translation and compilation process. Calof’s experience was also removed from the experience of the majority of the Jewish immigrants; neither urban, nor Eastern, her story changed the focus to a different context.

Public documents demonstrated a public language, while some of these private documents, suggested Jameson, introduced the differences in language between written and oral literacies. She said that the private documents showed “the difference between the ‘formal and genteel language’ that the ‘nineteenth-century language instruction’ advocated and the ‘conversational talk encountered in the letters and diaries of working women,’ whose ‘highly oral’ language is similar to the language of oral history interviews” (citing Elizabeth Hampsten, Jameson Frontiers 2). A variety of sources allowed different views of the same person in changing roles. Suzanne Bunkers, in “Midwestern Diaries and Journals: What Women Were (Not) Saying in the Late 1800s,” said

most women writing in the 1800s were not famous literary or historical figures but unknown women writing privately about the events of their everyday lives. Thanks to the recent work of women’s historians, we no longer view these women in terms of stereotypes such as the ‘saint in the sunbonnet’ or the ‘little woman,’ patient and long-suffering, who followed
her man west into the wilderness. Instead, we are beginning to explore the
diversity of women's lives and experiences as presented to us in their
autobiographical writings (190).

Recognizing the diversity of the pioneering women increased “acknowledgement
of other differences, defined by racial, ethnic, regional or class affiliations”
(Morrissey 136) and continued the process of making the invisible finally visible.

Multicultural work was the underlying theme of much of the research being
done: “moving away from the words of prolific white, middle-class diary keepers,
some historians have worked to identify the muted voices of non-English
speakers, the illiterate, and anonymous authors, through the creative use of non-
literary documents” (Morrissey 136). However, as Morrissey also noted, the ways
in which we find women excluded “reveals the influence of ideology upon
historical analysis” (Morrissey 136). Donald Worster said in “Beyond the
Agrarian Myth” that the “younger generation” of historians had “made this new
multicultural perspective their own. They have discovered not only that minorities
have not always shared in the rising power and affluence of the West, but also
that they have in some ways thought differently about the ends of that power and
affluence” (17). Limerick suggested that the “contest for control of land” brought
together the “minorities and majority” in the West (Legacy 292). A multicultural
focus offered an understanding impossible to ignore. The overlap, I think, was
not only in the contest for land, but for articulation of the myth. Limerick said

Everyone became an actor in everyone else’s play; understanding any
part of the play now requires us to take account of the whole. It is perfectly
possible to watch a play and keep track of, even identify with, several
characters at once, even when those characters are in direct conflict with each other and within themselves. The ethnic diversity of Western history asks only that: pay attention to the parts, and pay attention to the whole. It is a difficult task, but to bemoan and lament the necessity to include minorities is to engage, finally, in intellectual laziness. (Legacy 292)

Opening up the “frontier” to examination of its multiple terms began a new process of comprehension. Limerick said that the “cultural study of words” which she researched

remind[s] western historians that we are ourselves fundamentally interpreters, standing at an intersection where many groups – racial, ethnic, religious, national – have met and will meet. At that crossing our mission is to find order, pattern, and meaning in a swirl of perplexing events and perspectives, and it is no violation of scholarly objectivity to hope that a better understanding among these various groups might be one result of our inquiry. (Sky 184)

Abandoning the traditional homogenous portrayal of men’s western history, scholarship cast aside the idea of linear progress. Paula Nelson said, “The old American history emphasized progress and the overall successes of the national venture; struggles and hardships that just led to more struggles and hardships did not always receive adequate treatment” (8). She continued:

Today’s broader canvas has taught us that history is not always linear, that some individuals or groups do not always share equally in the harvest, and that hard work can bring failure as well as success. Many of the virtues of the older history, however, can still be found within the new story: the power of ideas, the importance of purposeful social action, the nobility of struggle, the lessons learned in defeat, the virtues of kindness and compassion for others in victory, and so on. The new history tells a richer story, not necessarily a bleaker one. (8)

The Calof story contributed to this “richer story” of the American West. However, while her story was one of those among the “struggles and hardships [that] did
not always receive adequate treatment," there seemed to be still an unspoken necessity to adjust the story to the "older history" that rewarded linear progress and tended to validate success and obliterate evidence of failure. Perhaps Jacob Calof's adjustment of his mother's story preempted the question. We do not know if the "bleaker" ending (see below) in the Yiddish manuscript would have been publishable material, since by the time the translated version was circulated, the ending had been changed to the uplifting heroic conclusion with which we were familiar: "I had traveled a long and often tortuous way from the little shtetl [town or Jewish community] in Russia where I was born. It wasn't an easy road by any means, but if you love the living of life you must know the journey was well worth it" (91). In stark contrast, the Yiddish manuscript said:

In 1932 I couldn't keep my home anymore and I and my husband decided that I should leave for Seattle to my older daughter for a few months. And that's what happened. Now it's already 1936 and I'm still in Seattle. The children are very good to me and but I don't care about anything anymore. My husband is in St. Paul and does not have a home and to go back, I don't have what for. My husband is not well and cannot make a living. I feel broken down, my heart cries, and I have to stop writing. I cannot do many things anymore. I cry now together with my youngest daughter, she works and when she comes home I told her I don't care and I sit many times by myself and cry very much and not once I'm worried about myself. I have funny thoughts to make an end to my life. I'm sick and nervous but my dear friends, it kills me every day I don't have a way out from myself, how to liberate myself from life. And life is a load on me. (253-254Y)

New Western history studies theoretically supported the "richer story," but I suspect that we as readers had to be more willing to hear the difficult stories before there would be real change. Readers tended to be complicit as consumers of the happy endings. Publishing demands placed limitations on the
“bleaker” tales and we continued to receive a dressed up version, adjusted to be acceptable.

2.4 Immigrant Literature Scholarship: From celebration to alienation

The study of ethnic literature, especially of immigration, was relevant to analyzing Rachel Calof’s Story. This review essay looks mostly at the celebratory nature of much of the earliest immigrant literature and the changes since that genre was fostered. Interestingly, the overlap between autobiography theory and feminist views was being discussed by scholars of immigrant literature. Wendy Zierler found that the “version of immigrant American selfhood present in the writings of [Mary] Antin and [Elizabeth] Stern represented a middle ground between Gusdorf and the feminists, between individuation and relation” (3). The complex vectors that met in the study of immigrant literature provided a vantage point that was exciting in terms of incorporating the theory of the other aspects of my research, while at the same time revealing examples of adaptation similar to the Calofs’ in other immigrant texts. In addition, the “contradictory discourses” of

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44 Zierler went on to say: “In their autobiographies, both Antin and Stern often assume the privileged stance of the isolate American individual – in fact, their individualism represents a paradoxical admixture of individualism and collectivism, in its reliance on mainstream, assimilationist, and therefore collectivist notions of American-ness. At the same time, they remain preoccupied with the impact of this authorial individuation upon what Georges Gusdorf would refer to as their ‘interdependent existence’— their Jewish religious past and their relationship with their immigrant mothers and sisters. And, in their fictional re-renderings of the autobiographies, the pressures of this interdependent existence challenge, even overtake the versions of self delivered in the autobiographies” (3).
Americanization, patriarchy and assimilation were found in many of the early immigrant women’s texts (Bergland *Ideology* 110).

However, while much of the immigrant literature from the early part of the twentieth century, as I shall illustrate, was celebratory of the American way of life and urged by example a rapid assimilation, recently this literature has been questioned and re-examined for fault-lines; where, nonetheless, were the authors ambivalent about the message of Americanization? The challenge was to re-evaluate the texts looking for different messages; the missing aspects of the authors’ presentations; a more multi-dimensional author or one less constrained by a propaganda-type function or message. Lisa Muir, in “Rose Cohen and Bella Spewack: the ethnic child speaks to you who never were,” described two autobiographies from the early part of the twentieth century. Both authors were Jewish women immigrants living in New York:

In explaining themselves and their lives, the women were clear but not simple, and spoke as one person to another. They seemed to consider the reader on equal footing, implying that had people acted accordingly some decades ago, there might have been more understanding between immigrant groups and dominant Americans. Today our concept of multiculturalism allows the boundaries of cultural practice to overlap, but at the turn of the century the melting pot had yet to do much real melting. (127)

Immigration was one aspect of ethnic literature and the timing of the waves of immigration correlated closely with the type of literature published. Katherine Payant said that originally immigrants were welcomed and expected to “contribute to the melting pot” (xvii). Frederick Jackson Turner’s contribution to
this "mythology" suggested that "in the crucible of the frontier the immigrants were Americanized" (Payant xvii). However, "these attitudes began to change with the arrival of new immigrants in the later part of the nineteenth century" (Payant xvii).45 By 1900 anti-immigrant prejudice had become overt, and the suspicion that non-northern European immigrants would never become "American" formed the basis of immigrant literature, although such literature still showed assimilation as the key to becoming American. Restrictive legislation ended the waves of immigration in 1924.46 Another wave of immigration occurred after 1965 when Congress "abolished the system of quotas set up under the National Origins Act" (Payant xx). Matthew Frye Jacobson's phrase "probationary white persons" indicated the journey these immigrants traveled (Whiteness 179). He suggested that during the late 1800s a "coincidence of scientific racialism, discriminatory practice, and the popular expression of racial Jewishness attests to the centrality of race as an organizer of American social life" (Whiteness 179). The Calof family probably experienced the stages of

45 "Lasting from the 1880s to the 1920s, this wave of immigration was composed of people from southern and eastern Europe, peasants or uneducated urban people from Italy, Greece, the Slavic countries and another somewhat different group, Jews from the shtetls of Eastern Europe. These non-English speaking people dressed differently, and they had different religions from the Protestant majority composing most of the native born. Roman Catholic, Orthodox, and Jewish, these 'huddled masses' of Emma Lazarus's famous poem crowded into ghettos in the urban centers of the United States. In the minds of the native born, they created unsanitary conditions and taxed public resources. Up until this time, other than the Catholic Irish, who came after the famine and the Chinese, who came during the mid-nineteenth century to work in mining and on the railroads, immigrants had faced little overt prejudice. However, that began to change with the continual flow from Europe" (Payant xvii).

46 "Congress passed the National Origins Act in 1924. This set up a system of quotas based on percentages of national groups already in the United States, thereby giving precedence to nations in northern Europe." 23.5 of the 35 million immigrants that came the U.S. between 1797 and 1924 arrived between 1880 and 1920 (Payant xviii).
“probationary white persons” as described by Jacobson, though there is no record of specific discrimination. Jacob Calof remembered St. Paul as particularly anti-Semitic (David Calof), but no indication of discrimination appeared in the family saga told in *Rachel Calof’s Story*.

The literature celebrated America and the immigrants in order to convince Americans that these were worthy new citizens. Toby Rose wrote that in the “early part of the century, many authors wrote their stories, in part to allay prejudices against the waves of immigrants who arrived in the early twentieth century and to challenge the stereotypes of ethnic groups created by historical legend or by majority-group authors” (165). She suggested that immigrant authors “tried to convey in their novels impressions of their communities that pandered to public expectations to guarantee a readership. For example, Si Sui Far (Edith Eaton), an early twentieth century Chinese-American writer, attempted to gain a readership by making her protagonists good citizens who followed the American road to assimilation” (165-6).

Mary Antin’s *The Promised Land* in 1912 told the story of an orthodox Jewish immigrant family that settled in Boston. Their Americanization was celebrated as a function of education and secularization. The book was a “popular success” and was adopted in libraries and schools and used as a “civics class text” (Sollors xxxi-ii). Betty Bergland said “scores of these immigrants, like Mary Antin, wrote autobiographies chronicling the journey and new life in America, often describing this experience in epic terms through spatial and
temporal metaphors...America is represented as a grand palace, its shadow covering acres, that ennobles this immigrant woman" (Ideology 101-102). She continued “Mary Antin’s autobiography has circulated widely in the culture in the twentieth century – thirty-four printings, two re-editions, in 1969 and 1985,\(^{47}\) and frequent reproductions in anthologies – which meant the autobiography has served a paradigmatic function” (Ideology 102). Antin portrayed herself, according to Suzanne Shavelson, as “the fulfillment of the American promise,” with her “central metaphor” of the Exodus and the immigrants arriving in the “land of promise” (164). Shavelson continued: “readers welcomed Antin’s apparent endorsement of the American approach to absorbing immigrants into the national way of life” (Shavelson 164). The critical reception seemed to be that of “an unequivocal celebration of both the individual ego and the Americanization process” (Zierler 3).

Other authors, including Anzia Yezierska, became “established American voices” also by “clearly accepting the terms of American identity at the time. Immigrant authors wanting to describe themselves as new American authors spelled out their ‘conversions’,” as Priscilla Wald suggested “to assure an anxious native-born population that they intend[ed] not to disrupt but to assume an American identity” (cited in Muir, 124). The “conversions” were not universal among their contemporaries. Antin may be the exception rather than the norm, though the revisionism currently focused on her work has found contradictions in

her seeming assimilation. Other immigrant writers were already expressing less than full conversion narratives. Anzia Yezierska “spent a lifetime writing of the joys and woes of being from two worlds, all the while realizing that experiences that invalidated the American narrative risked suppression” (Muir 124). Others presented “more sober versions of the immigrant experience,” Abraham Cahan, Ludwig Lewissohn, and Rose Cohen, among them (Zierler 3). Lisa Muir’s recent article about Rose Cohen’s autobiography portrayed Americans as “keenly interested in the immigrant success story rather than immigrant reality in the early part of the century” (128). Another example, O. E. Rolvaag’s *Giants in the Earth*, was a “popular book because of its realistic portrayal of immigrant life. In addition, it was well received because it portrayed values that were important to Americans from the 1920s to the early 1970s. Per Hansa was seen as a role model for white Americans – a man who works hard, overcomes obstacles, and becomes a great success” (Reiff 33). Americans seemed to accept the message of hard work, but in the end, the immigrant hero dies on the prairie, hardly encouraging emulation.

The theme of assimilation in *The Promised Land* suggested that by adopting American values, Antin found herself part of the American conversation, and her input about immigration had credence when the issue became not only accepting the assimilated immigrants already here, but whether to continue to accept more immigrants. Sollors said, “it was assimilation, full American identity, even if adopted unilaterally by declaration of will rather than by birth or easy
acceptance from old-stock Americans, that entitled Antin to criticize her adopted ‘promised land’ – or to praise it for something it would first have to become by fully including people like her” (Sollors Introduction xxxviii). Antin crusaded to convince Americans that they too had something to gain: “The book argues for the value of immigration for both the immigrant and the nation…Antin sought to convince Americans of the value of an unrestricted immigration policy. She did so by portraying herself as a new American who was ready to make a major contribution to the larger society” (Shavelson 164). Americans did not necessarily want to hear this. Some considered Antin misguided as to her American-ness, while others called her “presumptuous.” The question of who was American was “boldly and unequivocally answered with a yes by Mary Antin, whose autobiography therefore constituted not only a success story but also a provocation” (Sollors Introduction xl).

Society (1992) as sounding “anachronistic” (86). She said:

for more than thirty years ethnics in the United States, and scholars among them in particular, have sought out and told their dissonant histories, challenged their ancestors’ unquestioned acceptance of American ideals, analyzed the contradiction of racism embedded in those ideals, or emphasized the syncretic quality of immigrant acculturation as a dynamic blend of Old and New World cultural forms. Nonetheless, Schlesinger articulates here a foundational myth of American identity that had dominated discourse on immigration and acculturation for most of the twentieth century. Progressives, pundits and newcomers themselves believed that immigrant assimilation came at the expense of forgetting past selves and allegiances, and that this act of purging was an inherently American thing to do. By casting off the bonds of the past and entering the warm embrace of the American nation, immigrants not only gained a new identity, but justified and affirmed essential myths of America as a place where anyone with ability could remake himself and achieve ‘success’ in the land of opportunity. (Cohen 86-87)

Oscar Handlin’s The Uprooted (1951), while not ignoring the alienation involved for the immigrants, ultimately also celebrated their arrival and the process of Americanization. Researchers who employed different research tools “moving towards quantification and sociological positivism” questioned Handlin’s generalizations (Yans-McLaughlin 259). The stories told in the last thirty years encouraged the reconstruction of the “past selves” and recognized the costs of assimilation.

48 “[H]e characterized the United States as a nation of ‘individuals who, in forsaking old loyalties and joint to make new lives, melted away ethnic differences. Those intrepid Europeans who had torn up their roots to brave the wild Atlantic wanted to forget a horrid past and to embrace a hopeful future. They expected to become Americans. Their goals were escape, deliverance, assimilation.’ In every era throughout U.S. history, Schlesinger claimed, successive generations of immigrants purged their memories of difference to become one people under the democratizing power of American institutions. This remaking of one’s self in the land of opportunity defined for Schlesinger the ‘American Creed’,“ (Cohen 86).

Literary scholar Katherine Payant described the huge increase in works of ethnic literature (and immigrant literature as a subset of this literature) during the last twenty years, even as many of the works discussed "larger issues of cultural conflict" and not specific issues of immigration (xv). As a result of the civil rights movement, she claimed, more "excluded" groups became vocal and new literatures were created (Payant xx). "Ethnicity" became more accepted. She described the "sociological studies such as Michael Novak's *The Rise of the Unmeltable Ethnics* (1972) and Nathan Glazer and Daniel Moynihan's *Beyond the Melting Pot* (1970) [which] pointed out the 'myth of the melting pot,' that in fact, the stew of America had not assimilated difference between groups, and that ethnicity persisted" (Payant xiv). In the 1980s, Walter Sollors proposed another direction in his *Beyond Ethnicity* (1986) and *The Invention of Ethnicity* (1989): that ethnicity was "an invented condition, one of 'consent,' discovered by various groups after they immigrated to the United States (Payant xiv-xv). The implication of "consent" and "invention" was individual agency, a concept that has
been debated since Sollors' suggestion. However, as Payant suggested, "reinventing and reinterpreting themselves in each generation and by each individual" was the "project of the literature of these groups" (xv).

Perhaps even more significant was the analysis of ethnic literature in terms of generational differences: "whereas many of the first generation of immigrants had clung to the old-world ways, and many of the second generation had embraced all things American and urged their children to become Americans, their children, the third generation, were less anxious about their ethnicity and more interested in exploring their roots" (Payant xx). Riv-Ellen Prell investigated gender as the connection between "external and internal constructions of ethnicity" in terms of the study of identity and ethnicity which, she said, are "so often experienced as unchanging and essential elements of the self" (15). Interdisciplinary work seemed to be accepted as a key to

50 Conzen et al in *The Journal of American Ethnic History* said "The concept of invention offers an optic of power and subtlety for the analysis of ethnicity, this social phenomenon which has demonstrated such unanticipated resilience in the modern world...It shifts the focus of analysis from the hackneyed concern with individual assimilation to a host society to the sphere of collective, interactive behavior in which negotiations between immigrant groups and the dominant ethnoculture are open-ended and ambivalent. It further calls into question the assumption that the host society unilaterally dictates the terms of assimilation and that change is a linear progression from 'foreignness' to Americanization" (31-32) Ethnicity, for example, was "renegotiated" during "periods of identity crisis" for both the immigrant and the host society (war and economic crises are cited) (12-13).

Conzen argued, however, that Sollors' concept of "collective fiction" was mistaken and that a better model would have been "a process of construction" (4-5). She described the "renegotiation of its 'traditions' by the immigrant group presumes a collective awareness and active decision-making as opposed to the passive, unconscious individualism of the assimilation model" (5).

Betty Bergland contended that while Sollors "challenges the concept of ethnic authenticy and recognizes the dynamic nature of ethnicity, culture, and language...the limitations of his approach are suggested in the metaphor of invention, in which he posits endless autonomous beings who seemingly choose ethnicity freely" She said that this approach "fails to demonstrate how the process of becoming ethnic occurs" (Ideology 119-121, note 7).
understanding. Yans-McLaughlin suggested that the changes in immigration scholarship shifted with three alterations of “accepted wisdom”:

- the international ecology of migration; a questioning of the classical assimilation model, which proposes a linear progression of immigrant culture toward a dominant American national character; and through references to other national experiences in Asia and Latin America, a denial of American exceptionalism. (6-7)

She said “the contextualization of American immigration within a continuing global process... itself eroded the classical assimilation theory” (Yans-McLaughlin 6-7). While the theories of ethnicity were in flux, so was the literature. Obviously, if America was not the central focus, the goal no longer Americanization, the tone of the literature changed as well.

Maxine Hong Kingston’s *The Woman Warrior* (1976) was prominent among the literature of the “young writers, including those of the ‘new’ immigrant groups [who] began writing of their experiences and those of their predecessors” (Payant xiv). In the last twenty years, “anthologies of ethnic writers began to appear as well as a few representations in ‘mainstream’ textbooks such as the Norton Anthology” (Payant xiv). Criticism no longer considered all ethnic literature to be “regional” and not “of interest to audiences outside the ethnic groups” (Payant xiii). Toby Rose described the environment in which Rachel Calof’s story was published:

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The social and political revolutions of the 1960s saw the rise of both ethnic and female writers of literature, because writers and publishers were attuned to the growth of a readership with different politics and with an ability to empathize with conflicts grounded in race, class, and gender, as well as cultural difference. Women, in particular, wished to read about the emancipatory feelings of their 'sisters' of whatever ethnicity. It was exactly the right moment for the burgeoning of a group of second- and third-generation ethnic writers whose immigrant parents or grandparents' strivings in America had allowed them to become educated and fluent in the language needed to tell their stories. Writers such as [Gish] Jen and [Sandra] Cisneros, who move more easily from ethnic to dominant culture, are known as multicultural or cross-cultural storytellers, but almost all of them acknowledge the conflicts faced by immigrants of each generation to find an identity in which the old and the new culture can co-exist to some degree. (166).

The new scholarship discovered that not only were the patterns of immigrant writing no longer assimilationist, but also when re-examined, the older texts were found to be more ambivalent than they were previously considered when they were originally published (Payant, Rose, Sollors). Using feminist criticism and other postmodern approaches, critics such as Shavelson and Bergland showed the categories of gender and “expose[d] the ideologies” that more accurately situated the earlier storytellers. Bergland used Bakhtinian arguments of discourse theory to discern “contradictory ideologies” in Antin, especially in regard to gender. Shavelson contextualized Antin’s work with her other published short stories and revealed ambiguity that was not obvious when The Promised Land was studied in isolation.52 In fact, even early twentieth century immigrant writers may not have been striving to be Americanized. Some of the texts had more to

52 Shavelson contended that by “constructing her experience as a virtually uninterrupted rise from impoverished immigrant to educated success — and then claiming that her experience was nothing out of the ordinary — [Antin] denied the reality of both her own family’s struggle and that of thousands of other immigrants” (164-5).
do with being Jewish in the world, especially the Zionist literature, (Jacobson
*Quintessence* 110). Both Rose Cohen and Bella Spewack's autobiographies
spoke "against the American voice that they were supposed to discover and
venerate. They established that the conversion from ethnic to proper American
need not be the ultimate goal in the immigrant narrative" (Muir 124).

**Conclusion: Full Cycle**

The cycle seems complete: beginning with changes in autobiography
theory and moving through diversity in feminist theory and history in the West, to
the point of immigrant literature, the convergence of multicultural interests
allowed us a vantage point into a variety of cultures. Ben Xu described other
selves constructed with a polarity between an "ethnic self" and an "existential
self" and proposed a model of identity both in flux and relational:

> Our ethnic experience, no less than our existential experience, depends
> on the mediation of others. We become aware of our ethnicity only when
> we are placed in juxtaposition with others, and when the priority of our
> other identities, such as individual, class, gender, and religious, give place
> to that of ethnicity. Like other kinds of identities, ethnic identity is not a
> fixed nature or an autonomous, unified, self-generating quality. It is a self-
> awareness based on differentiation and contextualization. The self is not a
given, but a creation; there is no transcendent self, ethnic or whatever
else. (275)

*Rachel Calof's Story* was not told in the linear progression that
autobiography once featured. It started with a homeless child, and ended in a
different time and place, supposedly describing "a life worth living." In spite of the
changes in publication norms and the opening of scholarship to voices such as
hers, I found that her story was adjusted along the way, by her son, Jacob, as he edited and compiled the translated manuscript to tell of lives fulfilling the American dream of success and assimilation. Whether or not this process would now be considered anachronistic, considering that Calof’s text was being translated and compiled in the late 1970s, the narrative tone conformed to the demands of Americanization. The erasures, the segments obliterated, and the delineation of the divergences reveal suppressions in this text. The combination of background voices add to the published presentation of *Rachel Calof’s Story* and the resulting *metissage* reveal the previously hidden contexts of this collaborative effort. Integrity of representation has always been problematic; the insertion of multiple interpretive layers between Rachel Calof’s text and her audience inevitably contributes to a loss of authenticy. Listening for her voice, unbraiding the *metissage*, accepting her truths even when they may be bleaker than we would like to hear: all of these are part of a more comprehensive understanding of immigrant, autobiographical, feminist and Western literatures.
3.0 Personal Narratives in Translation

In *Arts of the Possible*, Adrienne Rich said that “feminism has depended heavily on the concrete testimony of individual women, a testimony that was meant to accumulate toward collective understanding and practice” and that “personal narrative was becoming valued as the true coin of feminist expression” (2). Rachel Calof’s personal narrative became a “coin of feminist expression,” but must be examined in terms of its specificity: she wrote her manuscript in Yiddish as an extensive retrospection of her particular experience as an immigrant from the Ukraine homesteading in North Dakota. This chapter links the theoretical aspects of autobiography, specifically personal narrative, and the particular text Rachel Calof wrote. In addition to the issues of context and narrative form, narrator-interpreter relations necessitate an examination of translation from Yiddish. Finally, because one of the interpreters, Jacob Calof, became a collaborator in the published version of this text, the concept of truths was indeed crucial since obviously there were more than a single author’s truths; an entire tangled family relationship emerged.

The Personal Narratives Group (PNG) at the University of Minnesota in the late 1980s organized their interpretations of narrative material into four groupings: context, narrative form, narrator-interpreter relations, and truths. I found these categories useful for exploring *Rachel Calof’s Story* and determining some of the aspects that merited further investigation. *Context* was not only the frontier or family situations that I discuss in different chapters, but context was
also the "interpretive framework for analysis...from the standpoint of the subject of the personal narrative, as well as from the standpoint of the interpreter's analysis of a particular cultural or social system" (12). Rachel Calof was not only the subject of her narrative; she was the narrator. Additionally, her son was not only a subject of the narrative, but assumed, behind the scenes, a significant role in the narration.

Context alone was not enough and the PNG suggested that the "male autobiographical models" should not be the only prototypical narrative form. They claimed

we needed to deepen our appreciation for narrative form in order to understand how women shape the stories of their lives. Deeply embedded notions and expectations about the 'normal' course of a life, as well as unconscious rules about what constitutes a good story, shape a personal narrative as much as the 'brute facts' of existence do. (13)

Opening the field to narratives that did not necessarily reflect linear progress, considering the ramifications if it was not a good story (was it publishable?), and maintaining privacy were all considerations in examining the narrative form in Rachel Calof's Story.

The PNG concept of "narrator-interpreter relations" focused more on the ethics and inequities of subject participation when the researcher seemed to be using the subject for her own research agenda. Issues of "production" and "control" and "obscur[ing] complex ethical, practical, and political issues" combined with their concern that the "products and outcomes of life-history research must be multiple to ensure that the interests of the narrator and her
community are advanced” (13). I admit that my approach to *Rachel Calof's Story* adhered to the word “interpreter” in the most literal sense. I thought that the role of the translation was paramount and that the “narrator-interpreter relations” were obscured in the published text produced by Indiana University Press.

Finally, the “truths” the PNG envisioned were a “decidedly plural concept meant to encompass the multiplicity of ways in which a woman’s life story reveals and reflects important features of her conscious experience and social landscape, creating from both her essential reality” (14). These “truths” became even more “decidedly plural” in the Calof story because the son became part of the production of his mother’s narrative. Each of the four categories evokes a deeper understanding of Rachel Calof’s manuscript and the book that evolved.

### 3.1 Context

Rachel Calof was apparently writing her Yiddish manuscript as she moved from one extended stay to another among her daughters. She left St. Paul in 1932 when she and her husband sold the house they were no longer able to maintain independently. Apparently she lived with her daughters for a total of four years in Winnipeg, Duluth and Seattle before she wrote the manuscript.

According to Georges Gusdorf, “Recalling of the past satisfies a more or less anguished disquiet of the mind anxious to recover and redeem lost time in fixing it forever” (37). She set out her story of the past and thus it was “fixed” in time as her version of life on the farm. In addition, her childhood was re-established: “the
writer who recalls his earliest years is thus exploring an enchanted realm that belongs to him alone" (Gusdorf 37).

By writing, she took control during a time in which her life was highly out of her control. The 1936 ending of the Yiddish manuscript was not the finely tuned, optimistic ending in the English publication; that significant discrepancy was dealt with in a previous chapter.\(^{53}\) On the one hand, writing was a matter of taking control; on the other, the changes made by the editor authorized a version that Rachel Calof didn’t write. The context, as the PNG described it, was “not a script” but a “dynamic process through which the individual simultaneously shapes and is shaped by her environment” (19). They continued, “the richest contextualization would seek to understand all the relevant parameters of a life. But the very act of interpretation requires us to choose among the multiple identities and associations shaping a life” (19). To focus only on the context of the years in which Rachel Bella was writing the narrative would have been too narrow; however, since in other chapters I developed the contextual framework of the narrative (the frontier, the home, the process of Americanization), this particular chapter’s focus is on the time period in which she was writing.

Here, I analyze the contexts that framed Rachel Calof’s writing process and consider how different elements came into play that were not available in the Indiana University Press publication. This reflection on context reveals what the

\(^{53}\) The “bleaker” ending was elaborated upon in the chapter on scholarship in the section on Western history and idealized settlement histories.
PNG called the “individual and social dynamics which seem to have been most significant in shaping the life. The act of constructing a life narrative forces the author to move from accounts of discrete experiences to an account of why and how the life took the shape it did” (4). But, to what extent did the story remain Rachel’s narrative if she usually expressed those “discrete experiences” while her son, Jacob, constructed the story to be an “account of why and how the life took the shape it did”? His explication was often value-laden and not part of her original narrative. Did we as readers insist upon the “how and why” even if the original document did not include this? Would we have accepted the document on Rachel’s terms?

Diary scholarship was helpful in analyzing Rachel Calof’s manuscript even though it was clearly not a diary, not a daily record with the immediacy that implied. Suzanne Bunkers’ suggestion that diaries were written during “difficult personal circumstances” (“Whose” n. pag.), was probably an accurate description of Rachel Bella’s case. Molly Shaw said that Rachel Bella (Baila) Calof would write at her family’s apartment in Winnipeg.54 “Baila visited her daughters constantly,” said Shaw. “One time she came down with an empty Clover-Leaf notebook, probably cost a nickel, and told us ‘I am going to write about myself.’” Shaw said there were four kids making a lot of noise and they didn’t care if Baila was writing.55 Rachel Bella would have been staying with her daughter, Bess, in

54 Her mother is Mania Kahn Yaffa, Rachel’s cousin.
55 In 1936, Molly would have been 18 years old, Rachel Bella 60.
the same apartment building. Shaw said, “Bess only had one child so Baila was very comfortable there. She would be writing in her lap. We had radiators in each room, she would sit down by the warm radiator and Mother would make her a cup of tea” (Shaw 2002).

Rachel Calof sat there among her friends and relatives; however, many of them would not have been able to read what she was writing. In Winnipeg, Molly’s family could read Yiddish, while Rachel’s own children could not read the manuscript. Felicity Nussbaum said “the diary signifies a consciousness that requires psychic privacy in a particular way. Though the diary is not always strictly secret, it usually affects secrecy, and it is often sold today with lock and key” (135). Rachel did not need the lock and key to keep her memoir secret, since the material was not accessible to most of the bystanders. Her manuscript was diary-like, shielded from her family by the inaccessibility of the Yiddish language. On the other hand, indications that her memoir might have been submitted for publication made it unlikely that the contents were meant to be kept secret. No evidence confirmed whether the manuscript was intended for publication. Perhaps she did intend to publish the manuscript. Recently discovered letters from Jacob Calof suggested that Rachel Calof had published articles in the Yiddish press while she was still alive (Fox correspondence). The timing seemed as though writing was a personal necessity, fulfilling that need often related to diary-writing. Nussbaum called diary-writing
a confession to the self with only the self as auditor and without the public authority; but, on the other hand, it becomes necessary at the point when the subject begins to believe that it cannot be intelligible to itself without written articulation and representation. It is a way to expose the subject’s hidden discourse, perhaps in the hope of ‘knowing’ the self when the subject is still the sole censor and critic of his or her discourse. ...it would seem that the diary might arise when the experienced inner life holds the greatest threat (135).

Since Rachel was no longer living with her husband, Abraham, the manuscript seemed to express a vindication of her choices. She no longer had a mother-in-law living upstairs in her house, her brothers-in-law were no longer an influence in her life; she was free to construct this narrative as she wished. However, as I examined the circumstances, even though Rachel and Abraham had been living separately for four years before she wrote (1932 – 1936), evidence implied that she still saw them living together in the future. Her story was not a manuscript to tell her side of a concluded episode; perhaps it was to show how much she had taken in stride and thus did not deserve to be alone at the end of her life. She did not consider her marriage over. Bunkers said, “certainly, the situational context surrounding a woman’s writings, while one of the most difficult aspects for a researcher to reconstruct, is one of the most fascinating areas for examination because it yields a sense of the writer’s character and personality as she shapes her self-image through her writing” (“Midwestern” 193). The timing of Rachel Calof’s writing seemed to be after the failure of her marriage, and Jacob Calof’s Epilogue in the English publication suggested that viewpoint: “Increasingly my

parents strayed from each other. Their later visits to children who had married and moved away were always done by each of them alone" (102). She appeared to know the undertaking had failed – not only the farm, but also the marriage. However, previously untranslated pages found with the Yiddish manuscript, perhaps an addendum, but possibly written before the manuscript, suggested that she was still anticipating a reunion:

I learned that my husband had false crazy thoughts that I left him and I went and made it easier for myself. But it was not like what he thought. I always went out of my way for my husband...I'm here already the third year in Seattle...Thinking of that I came from St. Paul to Seattle, but with my husband’s suggestion, he told me, when I leave to Seattle, he would be able to make a little bit of money and we would be able at old age [sic] where to put down our heads and I left because of his suggestion. (SE 2-5)

Abraham came to Seattle in 1935, but other than his having used a Seattle address for forwarding mail (A. Calof), there was no indication of the length of his visit, or even whether it overlapped with his wife’s presence on the West Coast. If it did overlap, his visit could have marked a final separation. The previously untranslated pages said that she had been in Seattle three years, which would probably have been during 1935; the manuscript itself was dated 1936.

Rachel probably had additional motives for writing and she did not seem to see her story as a plea to Abraham. No evidence suggested that he ever read the manuscript. Another motive that Judy Nolte Temple ascribed to diary writing and revision was that “her version of events” would be the one that survived (“Cautionary” 22). Or, as Elizabeth Hampsten suggested, “The reminiscences
people write, usually in old age, and usually for the instruction of children and grandchildren, are half-public documents and meant to circulate, if not very widely. They attest to lives well spent, in spite of hardships" (Children 7). This document, because of the inaccessibility of the language, did not circulate among those children and grandchildren until the translation nearly fifty years after the composition.

3.2 Narrative form

Diarists, as Steven Kagle and Lorenza Gramegna suggested “become mythmakers” because the “conversion of experience into language, alter[s] events as they are recorded; it alters memory and with it behaviors based on that memory” (39). While Rachel Calof’s manuscript was not exactly a diary, as previously noted; nonetheless, diary scholarship has investigated the creation of myths that I contend Rachel Calof was supremely interested in achieving. Kagle and Gramegna continued:

By manipulating reality in a diary they could sometimes create the illusion of control, lessen the sensation of risk, or make their restricted situation seem more satisfying. For example, a redefinition might convert even a sense of unbearable oppression into heroism, albeit tragic heroism. (43)

The veracity of what Rachel wrote was not the element I researched; however, she clearly shaped the story. Her focus was upon herself. In the Yiddish manuscript she referred to people by their familial role (brother-in-law, mother-in-law) while the translation into English elaborated upon the characters and
included their names. She left out Molly’s mother’s arrival, which must have been a significant event considering Manya Kahn was Rachel Kahn Calof’s only blood relative among all of those Calofs. Molly Shaw said that Rachel Calof had written to her mother and invited her to come from Kiev to North Dakota. Molly looked for evidence of her mother’s arrival on every page as she translated the Yiddish manuscript and was disappointed that there was no mention of her arrival or wedding. Nor did Rachel Calof write about the public service aspects of Abraham’s life. Those apparently were added during Jacob’s compilation stage to balance the story.

The opposite was also the case: Rachel’s shaping of the story often included too much detail for the more discrete son who was compiling. Bunkers referred to women’s “selective use of speech and silence” (“Midwestern” 191) and ironically, whereas Rachel Calof was highly descriptive, detailed and perhaps indiscrete, the manuscript was changed in translation or editing to convey a nicer, less critical version of life on the prairie, or at least life with the extended Calof family on the prairie. Françoise Lionnet said “Relationships with parental figures, lovers, siblings, or offspring provide the important structuring elements of the narratives…revealing complex modes of interaction between familial and social contexts, the personal and the political, the textual and the historical” (Autobiographical 93). But what if Rachel’s story really was primarily

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57 Most of pages 85-88, devoted to Abraham’s achievements, in the Indiana University Press publication were not in the Yiddish manuscript.
“about me” as she told Molly Shaw? Then it was Jacob who contributed what Estelle Jelineck said of men’s narrative: “the unidirectionality of men’s lives is appropriately cast into such progressive narratives” (Essays 17). In her description of traditional, usually male, autobiography, she said

intimacy is rare in autobiography – by men or women – certain personal details are considered extraneous to a reflective, artistically selective life study. These include one’s domestic life, minor illnesses, and other matters considered trivial and mundane. Although most critics no longer expect autobiographies to adhere stylistically to a precise progressive narrative, nonetheless a unified shaping is considered ideal. That unity should be achieved by concentrating on one period of the autobiographer’s life, the development of his life according to one theme, or the analysis of his character in terms of an important aspect of it. (Tradition 4-5).

Jacob’s editing of Rachel’s manuscript formed what he probably viewed as an “artistically selective life study.” However, this linear approach could be viewed as Sidonie Smith said: “the teleological drift of selfhood concedes nothing to indeterminancy, to ambiguity, or to heterogeneity. Such purposiveness leads to the silencing of that which is contingent, chaotic, tangential to a true self” (93). The chaotic was not hidden by Rachel Calof; however, almost all confusion was edited out in the published version. Her narrative “unfolds within the framework of an apparent acceptance of social norms and expectations but nevertheless describe[s] strategies and activities that challenge those same norms” (PNG 7). She challenged those norms by expressing her doubts. Hers could have been considered a “counter-narrative” because it belonged to a type of memoir that “reveal[s] that the narrators do not think, feel or act as they are ‘supposed to’,”
(PNG 7). However, Jacob’s shaping in the compilation stage, particularly of the birth stories, to eliminate the “ambiguity” and the “chaotic,” changed her story to one in which the mother and narrator “thought, felt and acted” more as the son thought his mother should have written.

The PNG suggested that narrative form may vary from strictly chronological order since the “life course itself may be experienced, however, around other organizing principles, from major events to important self-discoveries, none of which necessarily corresponds to linear time” (100). Rachel Calof’s “organizing principles” were primarily chronological; the Yiddish manuscript adheres to a season-by-season narrative. The published version in English followed this format until page 69, and then was organized primarily by subject. Perhaps the translated segments came to Jacob out of chronological order, or they were somehow intermixed. The Yiddish manuscript continued chronologically and, indeed, sometimes made sense when there was confusion in the English version. The “organizing principles” of crisis, seemed to explain the English version. I would suggest that alternative explanations of “organizing principles” should not focus upon gender or oral sources as much as on the method of translation and editing.

3.3 Narrator – Interpreter Relations

The original manuscript, entitled “Book I,” was written in Yiddish after Rachel Calof had been in the United States for over forty years. She assumed a
Jewish audience, perhaps beyond her immediate family if she indeed submitted the manuscript for publication, but never anticipated the need to translate her Yiddish expressions for a non-Jewish reader. Jacob Calof was acutely attuned to a different audience; he did not expect most of the audience to understand or even tolerate foreign or unfamiliar terms. This section focuses on the Yiddish language as the vehicle of expression, some of the idiosyncrasies of Yiddish as primarily an oral language, and the varied strategies Rachel and Jacob used for their different anticipated audiences.

Barbara Myerhoff, in *Number Our Days*, described Yiddish (also called “Jewish”) according to her informant Shmuel. He said the Jews were pushed to the point that they had to have a language all their own. Here they got their voice. Hebrew was all right to speak to God, but when you had to speak man to man, to your own wife with love, or to your naughty child, when you had to curse your mule, Hebrew was no good for you. Too mighty. So little by little the Jew assembled his language. Now there are some people, even scholars and teachers who you will hear say, Jewish is not a real language. For them, it was inferior. It came out of exile, or the language of exile, for the marketplace. It was for women to talk to children. Not good for big subjects. For these you need Hebrew or Russian or Polish or English. This is nonsense. Jewish we call the *mamaloshen*. That means more than mother tongue. It is the mother’s tongue because this was the language the mother talked, sweet or bitter. It was your own. It is a language of the heart. This the Jewish writers knew, and they used it with love... So Jewish gave us unity. We passed by, we rubbed off, we gathered what we needed here and there. In the *shtetls* Hebrew was not the link, except for a few scholars. Whenever you went to the Judenstrasse in a new town, Jewish you spoke. Even in the schools, Jewish is standing by, patiently waiting to assist Hebrew. Always we traveled along in these two tracks, side by side, Hebrew and Jewish...The language was our republic. (60-61)
For about the last thousand years the Jewish population in Europe spoke Yiddish. Jewish communities existed interdependently within Christian countries, some more insularly, some isolated by legislative fiat, few assimilating. In *The Meaning of Yiddish*, Benjamin Harshav said that in 1897 “97.96% of all Jews inhabiting the Russian Empire claimed Yiddish as their mother tongue” (87). Aviva Taubenfeld considered Yiddish “primarily as the spoken vernacular of East European Jewry and the vehicle of popular religious education, particularly for women and other ‘simple folk’” (148). Furthermore, “Yiddish,” according to Harshav, “was the major original vehicle of internal communication developed by European, Ashkenazi Jews. It mediated between their daily lives and the Hebrew religious and educational heritage on the one hand, and the languages and beliefs of the surrounding, Christian world on the other. It was the cement of an extraterritorial enclosure which kept the separate social and religious network of the Jews within its own possible world...” The Holocaust ended the Yiddish domination of the Jewish community in Europe.

Yiddish developed in Europe, with a Germanic-based sentence structure and vocabulary, written in the Hebrew alphabet. Most Jewish men were literate in

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59 “To be sure, not in all periods and not in all places of their dispersion did European Jews speak Yiddish... Be that as it may, Yiddish was the major linguistic creation of European Jewry and its extensions on other continents (North and South America, South Africa and Australia). In its folklore world, Yiddish preserved the quintessence of the memories and perceptions of a people aware of its history, its ‘chosen,’ extrahistorical status, and its Diaspora predicament; a people remembering its Hebrew heritage and sensitive to the moods and moves of its dominant neighbors” (Harshav xiii).
Hebrew since they were commanded to pray three times daily. While modern Hebrew was not a spoken language until early in the twentieth century, Yiddish absorbed many features of ancient Hebrew, adopting words from the Bible and commentaries, and expressions of philosophy and belief. However, Hebrew study was primarily for men:

Religious education and scholarship were predominantly for men; schools and study-houses were exclusively for men; teachers and preachers were male; boys accompanied their fathers to synagogue and absorbed expressions in Hebrew and Aramaic. Thus, the Holy Tongue became associated with the male world. Its expressions flowed into Yiddish through this channel. (Harshav 23)

Women were not commanded to pray nor were they necessarily taught Hebrew. Nonetheless, they absorbed Hebrew elements via Yiddish. Paula Hyman contended that women were literate in Yiddish: “parents paid little attention to their daughters’ formal Jewish education beyond elementary instruction in reading Yiddish and sufficient Hebrew to follow prayers in the siddur [prayer book]. Women in traditional eastern European Jewish society were neither ignorant nor illiterate. Even when they had no secular education, most could read Yiddish” (Hyman 54). Harshav said, “Many girls, even the poorest, were literate in Yiddish and were able to read and write letters and read the religious and entertainment books for women” (13), Jocelyn Cohen, however, contended that only “one third of Jewish women over the age of twenty could read any language,

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60 “Prayer requires each man to read Hebrew texts by himself. Religious Jews have no mediating priest and thus each person is responsible for communicating directly with his God and learning His teachings. In addition, there are blessings to be said on many occasions and long sessions of praying and reading the Bible in the synagogue on Sabbath and holidays” (Harshav 10).
as measured by the Russian 1897 census" (58). Rachel Calof's literacy in Yiddish was remarkable if indeed only one third of the Jewish women could read. She wrote a powerful and effective narrative, albeit without punctuation or grammatically correct spelling and sentence structure. In contrast, her niece, Doba, learned to read and write Yiddish only when she was in her fifties, and Doba’s granddaughter, Joan, was not sure that Doba ever learned to read in English (Joan Calof). Yiddish functioned as a secular language, used at home and in commerce, but always carried with it the Jewish identity in its vocabulary, expressions and values. Yiddish was the means of communication between strangers from different countries, an international medium, a “lingua franca, the wireless international network linking Jews of distant places, when they met in trade or wandering and resettlement” (Harshav 20-21). While Hebrew was intimately involved with Yiddish language development, most Yiddish speakers

61 Jocelyn Cohen examined the issues of immigrant literacy and American Yiddish and said “Jewish immigrants in the United States had not learned to read and write in modern schools according to systematic pedagogical principles... Reading literacy took place incidentally in the course of acquiring knowledge of the Hebrew alphabet, which one needed to meet one’s minimal religious obligation to pray. It is unclear the extent to which Jewish men and women from Eastern Europe know how to read Yiddish” (57). However, there may have been significant differences between men and women: Cohen went on to say that “while literacy statistics from the 1897 census in Imperial Russia show a 67% literacy rate among adult men, immigration records indicate that over 80% of men entering the US between 1908 and 1912 could read. Women compare unfavorably to their male counterparts. Barely a third of Jewish women over the age of twenty could read any language, as measured by the Russian 1897 census” (57-58). She cited Simon Kuznets, “Immigration of Russian Jews to the United States: Background and Structure,” Perspectives in American History 9 (1975), 80.

62 “This is what Yiddish is all about: the individual words may be very simple but their interaction – involving pieces of texts and divergent languages and cultural situations rather than mere lexical denotations – makes it rich, ironic, plurisignifying. In Yiddish, the casual family language, expressions from religious texts are secularized: they are used as a situational language outside their original, specific religious meaning. Hence, they essentially function as metaphors, linking meanings from the lofty, religious domain to secular situations” (Harshav, emphasis his, 36).
lived in communities with non-Jews and also spoke the local language (predominantly Polish, Russian, German). These local vocabularies were absorbed into Yiddish as well. The structure of Yiddish was mostly Germanic, but Max Weinreich’s concept of fusion is an important one. Since the Jewish communities were living in countries where people were speaking other languages, different words were integrated into Yiddish. Yiddish was a composite language and Rachel Calof’s usage was typical of this fusion. This merger between linguistic systems resulted in parallel tracks in terms of spelling. Written Yiddish was more aligned with its Germanic basis and, unlike Hebrew, used vowels. However, words taken from Hebrew remained faithful to the Hebrew spelling. Men studied Hebrew far more than women did; women, who were not taught Hebrew, often spelled all of the words with vowels, not differentiating between the sources.

Rachel Calof’s lack of Hebrew explained some of her spelling idiosyncrasies. Apparently she had little formal education; her spelling of Hebrew-based words was as phonetic as that of every other word in her vocabulary. She wrote *pachad* (fear) with the extraneous vowels *aleph* and *ayin* (אלוינ) instead of the correct Hebrew vowel-less spelling (עָנֵן). Her two

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63 “In spite of its domestication in the fusion language, the Hebrew component remained different from the rest of the Yiddish language and stood out in any context. In writing, this is clear: Hebrew was the more prestigious writing system and its careful spelling was a key element of preserving the religious tradition; therefore, Hebrew words in Yiddish were spelled as in Hebrew texts, while the rest of Yiddish developed toward a European-type vernacular spelling, including letter representations of vowels, and was also less consistent” (Harshav 58).
additional letters were vowel sounds: א and ו, while she has the consonant components correct: נ. Nor was she consistent in her spelling: once she used the correct spelling of the Hebrew-based word for bride caf-lamed-heh (כַּלָּה) and the next sentence it was spelled kuf- aleph-lamed-ayin (קְפַּעַלַמָּדָיִין). This was basically the same pronunciation: kallah, in both cases; but only in the first instance was the word spelled as it would be spelled in Yiddish (and in Hebrew since it was a word of Hebrew origin).

Her inconsistency in language usage also reflected a lack of formal education: she used the German-based filyecht (Filiecht) for the word “maybe;” two sentences later she used the Hebrew-based afshar ( afscher), spelling it phonetically in Yiddish. Again she added vowels that would not appear in the correct version (אפשאר in Hebrew). Her spelling was phonetic; her changes were vowels. She also tended to use the vowels interchangeably substituting the vowel ayn (א) often when she would need the vowel yud (ע). For example, the German word fenster for window in Yiddish was written פֵּנְסֶטֶר while Rachel Calof wrote פֵּנְסֶטֶר, alternating and substituting the vowels. She also spelled English-based words phonetically, incorrectly writing “A merica,” as two words, as she also wrote “a tended” and “a partment”.

Another aspect of fusion, “interinanimation,” consists of the use of “elements from different source languages in one word” (Harshav 32). Rachel Calof’s use of words that she learned in English, such as nourished, took on Yiddish structure when she wrote ge-nourished which would be a Germanic verb
form for the word. Her adaptations were consistent with Yiddish language formation; however, occasionally her spelling was a source of consternation for translation since obviously there were considerable local and particular influences that rendered translation difficult.

Yiddish functioned as a domestic language and yet, ironically, lacked the vocabulary of the everyday. “Paradoxically, the Yiddish language was very old and very young at the same time, rich in emotive expressions and poor in denotations of ‘realia,’ specific objects in everyday life and nature. As Max Weinreich pointed out, it had few names for flowers but three words for ‘question’” (Harshav 4). In Rachel Calof’s case, a significant missing word was “mushroom,” the central focus of her menu in a particularly outstanding meal that she made while heavily pregnant. However, the word “mushroom” did not appear in her Yiddish manuscript: she used the word parsley in Russian (o'synwoyD), when it should have been the word for mushroom in Yiddish (יארנש). Fortunately, the story survived in translation probably as an example of an oral tradition that only needed the prompting of the tale for the children to be able to tell the story as Rachel Bella probably told it over and over. The precise word confused only translators, poring over the text wondering why this “parsley” turned up in an entirely different language. Her use of a Slavic term was consistent with Yiddish development and her background: “Naturally, people of learning steeped their Yiddish in a lot of Hebrew; Jews living close to Germans (in Lodz or Silesia) used more German words and synonyms; Jews in the
Ukraine used many east Slavic and Russian expressions for names of plants, dishes, and utensils, as well as for official matters” (Harshav 62). The North Dakota State University’s “Germans from Russia Heritage” collection contained a book review by Edna Boardman suggesting that Rachel Calof’s origin included a significant German language component: “Rachel Calof and her husband’s family also spoke a German dialect and originated in the same area as most of the people who subscribe to the Germans from Russia Heritage Listserv” (Boardman).64

Additionally, Rachel Calof’s Yiddish vocabulary became heavily dependent upon English words. Many aspects of her life in North Dakota were not in her previous vocabulary. Harshav suggested, “Given the openness of Yiddish, there was nothing easier for the immigrants to America than to use scores of English words in their Yiddish, especially for the description of concrete items in real life, working conditions, and social institutions” (65). Rachel Calof used English words frequently, and it was an accepted, and even expected, use of the fusion process of the language. Her words from English, written in Hebrew letters, of course, include: shack (שכון), shanty (שאנטי), crops (כראפים), stove (סובב), and road (דרך). Joe Rozenberg, the translator with whom I worked, found that the different versions of her manuscript could be analyzed for increased usage of

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64 The “Germans from Russia” originated in a population migration from Germany to Russia dating from Catherine the Great (1763) of about 30,000 people. They moved en masse to the United States, especially to the Dakotas between 1880 and 1920 (Herzog). Their community identity is preserved in many locations in the Midwest and Northwest in the United States.
English words; the revision contained more examples of words in English than the presumably earlier pencil version.

In the United States, the Yiddish press, in its attempt to connect with readers from all educational levels, contributed to the infiltration of English words into the standard Yiddish vocabulary. According to Elizabeth Calof Breitbord, the Calofs subscribed to Yiddish newspaper, The Daily Forward. Most Jewish immigrant authors were trying to impress their neighbors, or at least not alienate them. They would translate the Yiddish into acceptable American English. Writers in Yiddish were expected to clean up their texts for outsiders' consumption (Taubenfeld, Wirth-Nesher). The incremental changes implemented by Jacob Calof demonstrate that he considered that the material must be acceptable to an American, probably Christian, audience in a way that the original text was not. Rachel Calof, in contrast, was writing to a Jewish audience; she did not explain concepts that would be absolutely clear to a religiously observant audience. She assumed they knew Yiddish. She did, however,

65 "The Americanization of the Yiddish language was left in the hands of the uneducated masses and the mass-circulation newspapers" among them The Daily Forward (Harshav 30-31).
66 Elizabeth Calof Breitbord wrote a letter now located at the Jewish Historical Society of the Upper Midwest. She described their toilet paper as "used newspaper (The Forward)," and it was only when they "became more prominent" did they "use orange paper — that was luxury" (September 27, 1975).
67 "As the drive to assimilate was paramount, writers withheld nothing from their American audiences, translating not only the words but also the rituals and customs into equivalences that their gentile readers could immediately grasp. Unlike the highlighting of foreignness and difference that characterizes some contemporary works, accessibility was crucial for immigrant writers, who sought poetic strategies to make the Old World accessible to the New." (Wirth-Nesher 213-214)
68 See Werner Sollors on Mary Antin's use of Hebrew and Yiddish terms, her glossary, and interestingly her occasional refusal to translate the Yiddish terms to sometimes privilege the Yiddish reader (xix-xxii).
elaborate and explain terms that might not be familiar to an urban audience. If anything, she compensated for those who might not know the English Americanisms of her changed Yiddish, to the extent that I wondered if she was writing for her siblings, those who would not know the English references. Jacob, one generation removed from devout religious observance, was unaware of some of the Jewish concepts his mother used. He did not seem to know that the appearance of stars signified the end of Shabbat, so that his version suggested that “no stars in the sky which, I guess was a bad omen for the washing of babies” (48). Rachel’s Yiddish version assumed that the reader understood that Shabbat was not yet over and no babies would be washed until the stars appeared. He over-translated, taking away the ethnicity, cleaning up all remnants of the Old World, Judaism, and immigration. Other elements of Rachel’s text also confused him; he was only one generation removed from the farm, yet there were agricultural concepts with which he was not familiar.69

Translating literature from one language to another involves a highly complicated process, not always attuned to the nuances of the original language. Susan Frenk said “the current dominant practice in translation is simply to present a finished product, made to look ‘natural’ in the final language and to

69On one of Rachel’s trips to town, the English compiler admits to not understanding why the ox-cart was without wheels. I suspect that Elizabeth Hampsten’s “horse-drawn stone boat— a sled with a box farmers used for removing stones from fields” (132) was the ox-cart described in Rachel’s journey, but translated as “for one reason or another, the wheels were not usable at that time” (35). In the original Yiddish, the conveyance was described without confusion as a “stahmboat,” not so very different from a “stone boat.” Rachel was certain no explanation was necessary; however, Jacob had last lived on the farm when he was five years old.
conceal all the difficulties" (139). However, she said this “raises critical issues in cultural politics. A language, in simplified terms, expresses what its powerful speakers, such as men, want said. Women and other subaltern groups have a different relationship to their language and to what can be said. Such subtle nuances are readily lost, distorted or exaggerated when the utterance is translated, reconfigured, rearticulated” (Frenk 138). Some authors left phrases in another language within the text; for example, Carrie Young in Nothing To Do But Stay included phrases in Norwegian in her otherwise English text. In Miracles in the Lives of Maier and Doba Calof, Maier Calof framed his use of Yiddish with “there is an old Yiddish saying: ‘The man thinks and God laughs’,” which Sandy Rikoon elaborated upon in a footnote in his historical background chapter of the Rachel Calof publication: “This is a literal translation of the Yiddish proverb ‘der mentsh tracht, un Got lacht.’ A more well-known variant of this saying is ‘Man proposes, God disposes’” (121, 131). Other means of recognizing the transition from one language to another were suggested by Aviva Taubenfeld:

three linguistic devices – the translation of Yiddish into English, the transliteration of Yiddish words, and the typographical representation of the English incorporated into the characters’ speech – underscore the distance between the two language communities that the immigrant author must traverse in attempting to portray one to the other realistically. These devices also highlight the artistry of the language of the text. (152)

The strategies – translation, transliteration and typographical representation – do not even begin to incorporate the layers of meaning in Rachel’s Yiddish
manuscript or the socio-economic connotations found in her Yiddish word choices and the resulting demands on the translation.

### 3.4 Truths

The "truths" of Rachel Calof's story are of course multiple: more than one author, more than one position in life; across generations, genders, languages and the ocean. Nonetheless, I would emphasize that the convergences between the Yiddish manuscript and the English published version outweighed the divergences. The vast majority of the English published version was from Rachel's handwritten Yiddish manuscript. Indeed, as I was transcribing the Yiddish retranslation into English, I was impressed with the degree each paragraph in the English publication matched a sentence from the Yiddish manuscript. Given the overriding convergences, the divergences were particularly provocative as I tried to figure out what patterns of adjustment might emerge. The types of change seemed to be the elaboration of paragraphs: clarifying factual information, contextualizing within the family and the community, or softening Rachel's often acerbic comments. The English published version included more reconciliation than the Yiddish manuscript. It would be fascinating to know if this forgiveness was indeed based on Rachel's transmission via oral history or if Jacob's compilation originated this reaching out to the relatives. The Yiddish manuscript and the English published version continued to converge until
page 69 in the English published version. From that page onward, most of the paragraphs in the English publication followed a crisis-based organization rather than the chronology of Rachel's Yiddish manuscript. Perhaps the translations were sent out of order? Apparently, Jacob did not have a copy of the original Yiddish manuscript as he was compiling the English version. For whatever reason, the parallel structure broke down. With some notable exceptions, most of the stories were included in the English published version; not always in the logical order of the Yiddish manuscript. A final convergence was the use of Rachel's own words. For the most part the English publication incorporated the words that Rachel used as English words interspersed with the Yiddish in her manuscript. Of course, the issues of word choice return us to the complications of translation.

One particular instance served as an outstanding example of different possible connotations. In the English publication, when Rachel Calof arrived in North Dakota, she and Abraham were met by Abraham's brother Charlie. Her reaction was fierce:

I felt a sinking feeling when I saw this man. He was quite dirty and badly dressed with rags on his feet in place of shoes. He looked like a subnormal person to me, a suspicion which was confirmed the moment he began to talk. I disliked him instantly and instinctively. (22)

In the Yiddish manuscript, she described the scene somewhat differently:

I took a look at those people and almost fainted. Dirty, poorly dressed, and in my eyes he looked like a "balagoola" (a cart driver) and he started to talk to me and I didn't like it. (41Y)
Balagoola was not “subnormal” in a direct translation. The word was derived from the compound Hebrew word ba’al which meant owner (and husband, as well, but that would be the subject of an entirely different discourse) and agala which meant cart. No complicated connotations existed in Rachel Calof’s previous usage of this word, as a young woman when she traveled to see her brothers and sister in a nearby city. Then: “I used to miss my lovely children, sister and brothers, at one time my grandpa used to send me with a carriage (balagoola) dragging about two days back and forth just to see the children” (10-11Y). In the English, “How I longed for my brothers and sister. Occasionally my grandfather would permit me to visit them. It was a long trip, requiring two days for the round-trip, but to see my brothers and sister was worth any hardship” (4-5). Apparently when the Calof family was not involved, the translation seemed to be considerably more neutral: the carriage or ox-cart was not even mentioned in Jacob’s English, published version. Of course, the connotations have many filters. Molly Shaw’s translation of balagoola could have slanted the term towards an unacceptable, class- or family-related negative nuance. Jake added his knowledge of his mother’s intense dislike for this brother-in-law. Subsequently, when Joe Rozenberg translated the word, with his Yiddish background, he noted a class connotation. Jake may have intended to convey the class connotation, but perhaps it meant something entirely different to him than it does to us—“subnormal”? Finally, when I lectured to an audience with people who spoke Yiddish, there was an argument about whether balagoola meant cart
owner/operator, or if it also meant "someone to steer clear of" or someone with whom one should avoid having personal connections. The truths shifted for us. Perhaps Jake’s implication and translation into “subnormal” was exactly what his mother would have wanted us to understand.

In the next chapters, I investigate different typologies of divergences. By focusing on a particular issue: the environment, the rhetoric of the frontier, I am able to unravel layers of linguistic and stylistic changes that Jacob made as he compiled his mother’s story. Additional divergences concerning home, intimacy and religion are discussed in the section on the Jewish home on the prairie. Finally, in the chapter on Americanization I examine the presentation of Rachel Calof’s Story as an immigrant to citizen trajectory, one that is not substantiated in the Yiddish manuscript.
4.0 “Sags and Swales”: Rachel Calof, Indoors and Out

Elizabeth Hampsten described women settling the American frontier in the nineteenth century as writing primarily about connections to other people and rarely about the landscape. She suggested that “women describe where they are in relation to other people more than according to a spot on the map,” and that they neglect altogether the “attendant history and economics” (Read This 40). While the shanties were critical in the pioneer story, “women omit directions for getting to them” (Read This 37). Hampsten’s assumptions indicated that the women were afraid of the “expanses” and thus “venturing out” was limited (Read This 39), which contributed to this picture of women alone, each in her own world. Literary critic Annette Kolodny described earlier women settlers, each establishing a “garden” of her own, a somewhat restricted version of the landscape experience (Land Before Her 240-241). Rachel Calof described a different environment and the differences were significant. Not only did Rachel Calof write of both interiors and outdoor landscapes, she relied on the transitions between them in order to maintain and develop her equilibrium. Transitional spaces provided routes for movement, growth and stability.

Rachel Calof’s Story oscillated from indoors to out in the “seamless” manner Peg Wherry described in “At Home on the Range: Reactions of Pioneer Women to the Kansas Plains Landscape.” Wherry found that commentary on the landscape in all of the Kansas pioneer women’s manuscripts that she had examined was “seamlessly integrated with reports of other aspects of their lives”
Indeed, the outdoors for the pioneer women that she investigated was “all in a day’s work” (77). Wherry proposed seven categories of “response to the natural environment” found in most of the narratives that she studied: the weather, impressions upon arrival, plant life, wild animals, outdoor activities, “pleasure trips” and “connecting the natural world to religious feelings” (73-74). Wherry found the integration of the outdoors ubiquitous, a significantly different conclusion than Hampsten’s findings. Calof’s story moved smoothly between indoors and out repeatedly, and if we were expecting a gendered view of domestic interiors and male-dominated exteriors, we were surprised at the different approach the Calof book presents. Calof’s story did not neglect the outdoors, and, in fact, showed escape opportunities to the prairie from the cramped indoor spaces. The Calof text pushed beyond “seamless” and showed how transitional spaces were critical for avoiding the confinement of the crowded indoors. For while the picture presented indoors was one of painful lack of privacy, those same shanty spaces became “felicitous” the moment that Rachel Calof’s in-laws moved out every spring. It was the sharing of domestic space, rather than the containment, that caused the resentment of confinement.

In a 1995 interview in the Seattle Times, Jacob Calof, Rachel’s youngest son and the one most closely involved in producing Rachel Calof’s Story, said that his mother claimed there was “an inverse relationship of the land to personal space. The more wide open the prairie, the more people had to crowd together to keep from freezing to death” (Stripling). Rachel Calof’s Story recorded her first
impressions of the North Dakota landscape in terms of desolation. She referred to the "long ride across the limitless prairie" (23) after they arrived in Devils Lake by train, and the distance from the station to their farm was another twenty-five miles "across the trackless prairie" (22). Further in the narrative, she mentioned the "grass desert" (36), giving birth in the "great wasteland" (62), the "overwhelming prairie" (29) and the "vast expanse of the great plain" (29). Most of these descriptions of landscape were fairly benign; while not enthusiastic, or perhaps not appealing to a city dweller, they were not necessarily negative to one seeking that vast openness that was (and is today) to be found in North Dakota. Yi-Fu Tuan, in *Space and Place*, however, warned that this sense of expansiveness was relative to cultural expectations. What was seen as certainly a formidable challenge to the pioneer, but not necessarily disadvantageous, could to a Russian immigrant such as Calof, have been seen as a profoundly different situation (55-56). In addition, the historical moment affected cultural acceptance, since before the plains became a prospect for potential settlement, they previously "provoked dread." He said they "lacked definition compared with the reticulated spaces of the settled and forested East" (57). Thus, while

> Americans have learned to accept the open plains of the West as a symbol of opportunity and freedom, ... to the Russian peasants boundless space used to have the opposite meaning. It connotated despair rather than opportunity; it inhibited rather than encouraged action. It spoke of man's paltriness as against the immensity and indifference of nature. Immensity oppressed. (Tuan 55-56)

Certainly to the immigrants in the late 1880s, homesteading seemed the promise of the future. However, a negative component remained regarding this open
expanse: “To be open and free is to be exposed and vulnerable. Open space has no trodden paths and signposts. It has no fixed pattern of established human meaning; it is like a blank sheet on which meaning may be imposed” (Tuan 54).

The open expanse was not yet inscribed with meaningful markings, as was reflected in Rachel Calof’s description of being lost: “There were no landmarks or lights. To lose your way on the prairie was like being lost at sea” (34).

Specifically, the Devils Lake area is part of the “Drift Prairie Plain,” a topography “within the limits of the latest ice invasion, and varies from gently undulating through rolling to hilly, the form being due almost entirely to the original disposition of the unmodified glacial drift upon a nearly level plain,” according to geographer Robert Thompson Young (8). The open expanse changed from flatland to a more varied terrain. In this variety were unseen areas, invisible from a given point, and those were threatening even more than the visible uninterrupted expanse. Young described the hidden elements of the landscape:

More important because more numerous, though less conspicuous, are the groups of hills and knobby, irregular ridges which stretch across the prairie ... they lengthen out into long looped curves, and again there seems to be simply a confusion of low rounded hills, both types being so characteristic as to suggest ... their origin in glacial moraines. This prairie is otherwise a gently rolling drift plain cut by a few abnormally deep and well defined valleys... marked by many shallow, irregularly winding coulees and dotted by thousands of small lakes and marshy areas, occupying numerous sags and swales... (Young 8)

These “sags and swales” defied the impression of a flatland. In an analysis of the prairie landscape in *Little House on the Prairie*, Hamida Bosmajian said “horizontally, the prairie is not really level. It has depths that envelop and depths
from which the unexpected can emerge. Both disappearance and emergence
tend to be sudden and connote a vaguely comprehended threat" (55). The
threats were real and the dangers unknown, but more frightening perhaps was
that sense of seeing what appeared to be flat, and not being able to comprehend
the dips and divides that were part of the unfamiliar landscape.

The landscape the Calofs found seemed to be totally devoid of landmarks,
but I suspect this was only partially true. It would be a matter of years before the
ridges and sloughs would become familiar enough to be markers for their
journeys; eventually this would happen. Of course, simultaneously, building and
planting would actually change the landscape. Trees would mark boundaries
between fields and farms and would indicate the locations of farmhouses.
Schools, roads and silos would also become part of the changing landscape.70
Developing an awareness of their surroundings took time, and meanwhile they
experienced frightening episodes of being lost, weather-induced difficulties in
travel and mobility, and crisis conditions of paralysis.

Furthermore, the outdoors was not static: the weather was part of this
milieu. At the beginning of the text, the weather categorically controlled their
lives. Whether Rachel Calof's Story was describing a summer storm that turned a
shack upside down or the lengthy winter siege imposed by relentless cold and

70 Sandy Rikoon described the specifically Jewish landscape transformations: "Almost all of the
sacred and secular transformations of the landscape made by the Jewish farm families are now
gone. Some of these, like the rough mikvah (ritual bath) the settlers formed by widening and
boarding a small portion of an open prairie slough, would hardly be comprehensible to local
residents (124). Other geographical designations included place names and the cemetery which
left less transient markers on the space and the collective memory.
snow, the story focused on utter vulnerability to the weather and ever-changing conditions. The day that Rachel arrived with Abe they were met with the news that "the day before, a heavy wind, which was not unusual on these great open plains, had first torn the roof off Charlie's [Abe's older brother] shack and then had turned the structure upside down. Although no one was injured they ended up sitting on the roof. Now he and his family were lodged with his parents until the damage could be repaired" (Calof 25). Their world was at the mercy of the wind and their vulnerability emphasized in the upside-down nature of the house, causing overcrowding in a relative's shanty even during the summer. In a matter of moments the standard of living changed and the living accommodations shifted dramatically.

In *The Promised Land*, set approximately twenty years after Rachel Calof settled in North Dakota, Mary Antin described the "Old Country" as a place of the past and said that she came from "having lived in 'medieval' Russian times to the 'modern' period of America" (Sollors xxix-xxx). Rachel Calof, on the other hand, seemed to be a "time traveler" (Sollors xxix) in the opposite direction. She came from an established home, and though she was a maid in her aunt's home, she described it as "truly a palace. It contained eight rooms and a number of hallways, all of which I was required to wash and wax each day" (Calof 5-6). Most views of immigration to the United States considered the immigrants as improving their status and leaving "their small farms, crowded dwellings, and polluted cities for the virgin lands of the New World" (Tuan 60). Obviously, Calof
was motivated to improve her personal status, but landing in North Dakota did not improve her living conditions. Though being a maid with no future was humiliating for her, she was certainly accustomed to a standard of living that sharply contrasted to the home awaiting her in North Dakota.

After arriving in Devils Lake and hearing about the overturned shanty, Rachel Calof stayed at Abe’s niece’s house, a larger version of the shack that she would be calling home. The text said that at the niece’s the “furniture consisted of a bed, a rough table made of wood slats, and two benches. The place was divided up into two sections, the other being the kitchen which held a stove and beside it a heap of dried cow dung. When I inquired about this, I was told that this was the only fuel this household had” (23). Rachel Calof contended that her situation would be different: “I silently vowed that my home would be heated by firewood and that no animal waste would litter my floor. How little I knew. How innocent I was” (23). Her tone was retrospective, perhaps regretting the judgmental first impressions, knowing that she would later endure similar conditions. (This type of introspection was not borne out in the original Yiddish manuscript: “I asked what is that and they give me to understand that we don’t have wood. There is nothing to make a fire with. I think to myself, what kind of beggars, for me that won’t happen. I for sure will have wood” (Calof 44Y). While Rachel Calof declared that she would never live like that, she did not add the “how little I knew” or “how innocent I was” which certainly contributed to the tone of the retrospective and introspective self-knowledge.) They were constrained to
stay with this niece for the night and this was Calof’s introduction to what the text calls “the greatest hardship of the pioneer life, the terrible crowding of many people into a small space” (24). Rachel Calof slept with the niece, while Doba’s husband and Abe slept “on straw on one corner” and the children had “another corner also piled with straw” (24).

Unfortunately, what appeared to be a temporary overnight situation, Rachel Calof discovered the next morning, would continue in the same manner for the foreseeable future. Their shack was not completed and when they walked over to see it: “we broke out of the tall grass into a cleared space, and I beheld the building, twelve-by-fourteen feet... not only lacking a floor but roofless as well. Just four board walls, sitting in the middle of the trackless prairie” (26). Her fiancé said they would have to live with his parents until they could get nails for a roof but that a “special place had been reserved in his parents’ home which would be our own space” (26). She started to comprehend that this “special place” would be limited since all of the shacks were similar in size and shape, but she was not prepared for the shock:

As we approached, my future mother-in-law came out to greet us and ushered us into our separate apartment. I could not believe my eyes. A pit had been scooped out in the center of the dirt floor. This was the private space which we had been promised. Looking about at the people and the space provided for our living, I knew that I was very close to the living level of an animal. (26)

Of course, until they were married, they did not even share this space; Rachel would be sleeping with her mother-in-law and one of the younger grandchildren until the wedding.
The daytime arrangements were not much more encouraging. The beds were "hammered to the walls" and a table was "also hammered to a wall" (39). They moved a bench for three people to sit at the table for meals, while the others sat on the beds. But they were not confined indoors in the daytime except during the winters. Outside, for all that we were told about the desolation, we imagined the setting with the houses far apart and no contact with the neighbors. Perhaps in this instance Hampsten was correct; we did know more about the furniture than about the connections or a map of the surrounding homesteading land claims. Though we were not told clearly in this text, there were actually neighbors within calling distance. When there was a problem in one shack, a scream brought other family members from their shacks less than a quarter of a mile away. But the isolation was nonetheless a real phenomenon: all of those neighbors were Calofs. They set their shanties at the corner of the homesteads so that they could be in close proximity. They initially owned livestock in common, and the adjacent lots allowed them to dig one well for all of the families together. Historian Robert J. Lazar said there were sixty-two Jewish families settled in the area at this time and among them was the Calof clan:

Though Jewish farmers occupied land every quarter of a mile in the area, there was never a town in the Ben Zion vicinity. Four miles east of the cemetery, however, four members of the Calof family located. They were Moses Kalov, Charlie Kalov, Abraham Calof and John Calof.\(^{71}\) While they spelled their names differently, they were members of the same family. They built their homes, barns, and granaries at the corner of their land

\(^{71}\) The different spellings seemed to be a matter of personal preference. No evidence indicated an imposed spelling by immigration authorities.
where the four pieces of property joined. The group of buildings gave the appearance of a small village. (Lazar 54-55)

This type of grouping was apparently not unusual, for different families described similar situations in an oral history collection at the Jewish Historical Society of the Upper Midwest. “Mother told us of her neighbors getting together and with a team of horses moved her little shack so that she could be closer to the Minnenbergs, the Joe Weisbergs, and another family with adjoining land” (Wilensky). Another example was Rachel Baker’s story of her mother:

Shortly after we arrived at our homestead, my father left to go look for work in towns nearby. My mother was terrified to stay on the land alone. Mr. Reiter and my father consulted their land deeds and found that their lands adjoined. Therefore, Mr. Reiter moved his home, a one-room shack, to within a few feet of and facing our home. Thereafter the two women fortified each other, and neither one after that was afraid. (Geller)

Each of these situations seemed to be supportive, increasing the comfort level on the prairie. Apparently there were no fences, no boundaries, no real distances between the families’ farms. Not really the expanses of the prairie here, but something far worse: a small town made up entirely of the Calof clan. However, Rachel Kahn was not yet a Calof and the small village that she was moving into was made up entirely of her husband’s relatives. “Little Jerusalem,” as it was apparently called (Lazar 55), was a small village reimposed on a new setting – “the horror” both inside and out. Tuan suggested that even in a “spacious” setting, the presence of people can cause the sense of a lack of space: “primarily people crowd us; people rather than things are likely to restrict our freedom and deprive us of space” (59). As Calof said, “The home I had always so desperately
sought still eluded me. The people, the overwhelming prairie, America itself, seemed strange and terrible. I had no place to turn. There were no other homes to be seen on the vast expanse of the great plain. Except for one family, the only people who lived within miles were the Calofs” (29). Even while the families were not contained by the extreme temperatures and storms of winter, they were isolated by distances and Rachel Calof found herself “the only alien there” (29). Elizabeth Jameson suggested that the Calof story “violates the cozy nostalgia of pioneer families cheerfully persevering on ‘Little House on the Prairie’ homesteads. The seductive image they evoke of perpetual warmth, support and cooperation established a difficult standard for real families forced to mediate daily stresses, competing needs, and interpersonal accommodations” (Jameson 139). The nostalgic version of homesteading that the Laura Ingalls Wilder books suggested in the 1930s was not necessarily historically accurate as a generalization for all settlers' families.

The lack of control over the environment, the early vulnerability to the extremes in the weather, and the poverty resulted in the crowding and determined the degree to which the Calof families needed to share scarce resources. The temporary crowding described during the arrival scenes, with one house tipped over and another with no roof, was just the prelude to the ongoing winter situation. The lack of fuel (or money to buy more fuel) forced the families to double up over the winter. The first winter, five adults shared the twelve by fourteen foot shack with chickens under the bed and a calf in the corner (39). The
next winter, the indoor space was shared with a baby in a “hammock ... suspended from the ceiling over our bed” (58). Subsequent winters included more children and the “overcrowding promise[d] to be even more monstrous than in the previous winters” (61). Eventually there was more space as they built a more substantial house, but for the most part, each winter brought some of the extended family members to share their space.

Nonetheless, Rachel Calof’s story was not primarily one of pain and deprivation. Precisely what stood out from the mesmerizing details of the parallel extremes of expansiveness and containment was that she absolutely, doggedly and determinedly established escapes from these otherwise defeating phenomena. She did not sit passively in North Dakota, anymore than she did in the Ukraine, waiting for a better life. Perhaps this agency was what makes her story compelling. She described in relentless detail those prairie environments that seemed to overwhelm other pioneers, and she let us know exactly how many people were contained in the winter housing and whose feet were in her face (her brother-in-law’s) when she was sleeping (Calof 200Y). In a variety of escapes, some more under her control than others, she pursued an individualistic path of self-fulfillment, sometimes unexpected and therefore all the more satisfying for the reader. Two examples of these escapes from the environmental constraints towards the determination of her world illustrated her initiative. First, she hiked alone to see Abraham when he was working at the neighbor Anderson’s farm. The second example was the home improvement
projects she undertook in order to establish an autonomous family life and physical realm of her own. Both "escapes" established agency and involved courage and determination, but an additional factor was the degree to which she made the transitions between known and unknown, familiar and unfamiliar space, in order to undertake these life-sustaining moves of her own.

Soon after their arrival, her fiancé, Abraham, contracted to work at a nearby farm for three months. This income was essential for purchasing fuel and food for the winter for the three Calof families dependent upon him. One late afternoon, Rachel decided to walk to meet him. On a previous occasion, she had returned alone after walking him partially towards his place of work, so she knew the direction, but this was the first time she had undertaken the journey entirely on her own. The English translation did not mention any of the difficulties of staying with her future in-laws, but the Yiddish manuscript referred to several incidents that made her life unpleasant. The English text said: "One time, in the middle of a week which was proving to be a particularly difficult one, my resolve came to the fore again and I decided to visit my boyfriend at the farm where he worked" (32). The Yiddish manuscript was more detailed. The day before she decided to visit her fiancé, she was alone in her own shack when her future brother-in-law arrived:

My younger brother-in-law came over to me and started to talk to me and I was scared because I knew there was no other living person here besides crows...and my brother-in-law asked me why I cry and I told him I miss my boyfriend and miss my brothers and my sister and I am alone and depressed. He stood awhile and listened to me and tells me you know the
first time I saw you I thought I would marry you and I look at him very strictly and tell him I didn’t come for that. (43Y)

He went home and “told his older brother and father that I’m not happy with anything” (45Y). She stayed in her own shack for the remainder of the day but had to run through the wild grasses to her in-laws’ shack to sleep that night. “I hardly made it to the shack where my people were and I right away had a lecture why I’m not satisfied. Where did I have it better?” (45Y). Later that night, during a thunderstorm, Rachel’s future mother-in-law criticized her praying:

My mother-in-law was very busy with two little windows in the shack and she put water in glasses and she started to make blessings for the thunder and lightning. And I didn’t hold back on blessings either, but my mother-in-law couldn’t take it, she was very religious and tells my why don’t you make blessings, and I tell her that I did. And she tells me you have to say it out loud. God wants that we should bless him out loud. I did everything and it started such a storm that the shack started to sway and here we probably will all go with the shack. But as young as I was, I had in my thoughts, I thought I’d be better dead than living a life like this. (46Y)

While the English text did not elaborate about these difficulties at home, despite aggravation and isolation, Rachel was not paralyzed. She was not passively sitting at home waiting for her fiancé’s weekend visit. She found strength in action and even if the prairie was frightening, it did not intimidate her: she chose to leave the familiar (but unfriendly) boundaries. Another time, she walked to meet Abraham when he was on his way home for the weekend. The English text:

Something went wrong though and soon I become completely lost, and in the fading light I stumbled into a swampy area where the grass grew taller than my head. The swamp frogs began their night serenade and the cries

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72 Page 44 in Yiddish was only partially complete.

73 The “my people” was a sarcastic reference.

74 Glasses with water in them were placed on the windowsill against bad luck and damage from the storm (Rozenberg).
of the birds overhead were lonely and mournful. My imagination began to play tricks on me and I began to believe that I heard the sounds of wild animals. I was thoroughly frightened and tried frantically to work my way out of the swamp, but whichever way I turned my feet seemed to sink deeper into the mud. (33)

Abraham was late in leaving work and as he walked out of the farmhouse, he heard Rachel's voice: “he said my yells were so piercing that they seemed to come from all directions and he had a hard time determining where I was and how far away. In trying to follow my cries to their source, he himself began to lose his way” (34). She didn't know if she was anywhere near him. She was sitting on a rock “cold, scared and wet” but continued to yell out his name:

Suddenly there was a movement immediately before me. In one final effort I screamed his name, but it was Abraham. He appeared as though he had descended from heaven. He said that he was about to turn in another direction when my last shriek finally led him to me. I think that I was very lucky that night. The few houses on the prairie were seven or more miles apart and I would not have been the first traveler in North Dakota to lose his way and possibly his life if Abraham had not rescued me. Nothing is done without our heavenly Father, who led Abraham to me through that wilderness. (34)

The religious tone was not unique to this passage, and she was willing to express gratitude both to God and to her fiancé, unlike the feelings she expressed about the rest of his family. Her individualism was not wavering, but she recognized the danger in which she had placed herself. Tuan said that when we are outdoors “our eyes keep searching for points of rest. We may be deliberately searching for a landmark or a feature on the horizon so prominent that it compels attention” (161). Rachel and Abraham did not have the landmarks yet imprinted in their minds and thus the journeys, even a distance of five miles,
were dangerous. However, not making the journey would have been more
detrimental to Rachel's well-being and she knew the degree to which she had to
go away to maintain her independence and sanity. These transitions gave her
independence and agency.

The wilderness was a source of revelation to Rachel and the English text
used words that echo biblical allusion and powerful description: “Looking across
the great plain, I knew a loneliness which seared my very soul. Who belongs to
me and to whom do I belong, I questioned?” (Calof 30). The Yiddish manuscript
bears some similarity: “I felt that I have nothing to live for, no hopes, no future,
alone, who is mine and to whom do I belong?” (Calof 57-58Y). No “searing”
found here, and no complicated sentence structures. In fact, the Yiddish
manuscript is entirely without punctuation. This passage was pivotal in the
manuscript. At this junction, the sixty-seven page re-copied ink Yiddish version
ended, while the pencil, double-sided manuscript started with page sixty-four.
This overlap, pages 64-67 in the Yiddish manuscript, I suggest, was the clearest
evidence of Rachel Calof revising her own work. As she was getting hopelessly
lost in the prairie swamp, so her text metonymically circled around itself several
times and in different variations.

The continuation in the English text:

I was young and healthy and had always had a zest for life despite my
meager past. Still those qualities seemed inadequate to lead me out of the
nightmare existence into which I had fallen. I sat on a stone in the high
grass and gave myself up to utter despair. So great was my anguish that
sense of time and place faded from my consciousness. There remained
only a void of misery and I prayed with a terrible intensity to God to show
me mercy and the way to a better life. After a time the storm of my emotions passed and I arose from the ground. My mind was clear and calm. The resentment and rebellion born in the last two days had solidified into a new strength which was to serve me well from that time forward. I had no illusions about the events which surely awaited me, but I knew now I would never surrender to the overwhelming conditions facing me. I would not become like the others. My desire for a better life would not desert me. (30-31)

The Yiddish manuscript:

Young, healthy, I would like to live and enjoy life. But how? What can I expect from the wild? Making a civilized country and walking from saying goodbye to my boy, I sat down on a rock between the wild grasses and I cried so much and complained to God that I forgot where I am. And I cried and I got up and I went home. Oh, so you think it’s a home? We’re talking about a home? (58Y)

For the most part, each passage in the Yiddish manuscript corresponded with a similar passage in the English text. However, obviously the divergences were significant in terms of sentence structure and word choice. Even while she contemplated her situation at the end of the earth, whether in expressive complex sentences of the English publication, or in the simpler declarative words of the Yiddish manuscript, she was both desolate and renewed in this wilderness environment. The landscape was continually a place of refreshing insight for Rachel, though the tone was considerably different when the vocabulary was a “storm of emotions… solidify[ing] into a new strength” rather than simply a good cry. She found rebirth in her wilderness and her life changed. She was moved in a transformative manner, albeit the English version seemed more formalized: “so great was my anguish that sense of time and place faded from my consciousness” as opposed to “I cried so much and complained to God that I
forgot where I am.” She was obviously more of a presence in the Yiddish version; the first-person pronoun dominated the sentence with three appearances. In the English translation, she was subordinated to the “anguish” as the overwhelming agency that caused the loss of consciousness.

The second escape illustrating Rachel’s independence was a later, domestic episode. With the “promise of spring” and the return of their own shanty for themselves, Rachel described an adventure in searching out new food and a private lunch encounter. In order to make this meal, the heavily-pregnant Rachel searched first for firewood (or dry grass), for water and finally for garlic and mushrooms. She described the fear of the snakes in the prairies and tasted the mushrooms to discern if they were edible (41-43). She was “very proud” and said “I had used my brains and my nerve and as a result my husband would soon sit down to a fine dinner, just the two of us alone” (43). They deliberated about how to improve the house and she decided to “fill the cracks in the wall” with clay which she would then whitewash. “I could already visualize how clean and pretty my home would be” (44). Abe worked long days in the fields and was unable to help her with this project, but the endeavor was an important one for her peace of mind. She gathered clay and “began to knead it with my feet. … [Abe] worked far into the night hammering slats to the walls. I worked the moistened clay onto the walls, between the slabs, making a smooth inner finish over the rough boards. Finishing, I surveyed the result. A miracle had taken place. Our rude shanty had become a palace” (45). Of course, the result was even better seen through the
eyes of the admiring relatives. “Abe’s family came to view my handiwork and they praised me generously. They could not take their eyes from my handsome walls and clean floor. My mother-in-law alternately smiled and sighed. I believed she felt her old age and knew that such an accomplishment was beyond her” (45). During each spring mentioned in her narrative, Rachel wrote of becoming “mistress of my own home” and the “double spring cleaning” that she would do (71). The importance of this act of renewal for her lay in setting herself apart from the norms of the extended Calof family structure and constantly establishing herself as having escaped from sinking into the uncivilized picture of the world that she faced upon her arrival.

Success for Rachel seemed to hinge upon both agency and escape: whether from the family situation in the Old World, the weather and climate limitations in the shanties, or taking on the prairie, on her own, or with her husband. In order to build this success there had to be transitional places, neither contained nor quite of the expanse, for in-between functions allowing her to move freely. For example, Rachel had an episode of postpartum depression that led her to the border between sanity and insanity in which all of the precautions that she took involved cutting off the transitions between indoors and out. Abe was once again working in a remote location and her mother-in-law convinced Rachel that demons were about to carry off her daughter, so Rachel invested tremendous energy in denying all access to her shack:

I worked constantly at improving my defense plans. As each day waned, I took my child in my arms and prayed frantically to God to shield us
through the night. I then placed the baby in the bed and turned my attention to the physical protection of the house. The place had two small windows now, as well as a cellar, and a wooden floor. Entrance to the cellar was by means of a trapdoor built into the floor and a ladder. I hung rags over the windows to keep the demons from looking in. They already inhabited the cellar, at least at night, and I next gave careful attention to this point of entry into the house. I had searched for and found large stones weighing about one hundred and fifty pounds each and one of these I now rolled over the trap door. Another was set against the door. Finally I checked under the bed to be sure that somehow a demon had not crept in unbeknown to me while I was busy with my preparations. (53-54)

The release from this traumatic period of time was a visit from Abe’s niece, who repudiated her grandmother’s superstitions and encouraged Rachel to remove the rags from the windows and return to easy movement between indoors and out.

Windows always functioned as transitional spaces: in O. E. Rolvaag’s *Giants in the Earth*, Beret covered the windows “shutting out that vast outsideness and containing one’s family” (Reiff 37), while in Laura Ingalls Wilder’s books, Pa installed windows to “give him the connection with the expanse of the prairie (Basmajian 60). Hampsten considered women settlers’ “adversarial relations” between home and outdoors in terms of the absence of transitional spaces: “It appears to me that people even now who live in typical two-story frame houses in the Dakotas are continuing the essentially adversarial relationship to the out-of-doors that the first settlers found thrust upon them. Both the early temporary and later permanent housing arrangements include almost no gradations between outdoors and indoors” (38-39). She found that they “omit front porches and secluded garden spaces inviting easy rest or play” (39) which
might have allowed for this necessary transition between the indoor and out. However, success for Rachel Calof ultimately was in that “dialectical movement between shelter and venture, attachment and freedom” that Tuan considered necessary in order to create a “calm center of established values” (54). The trajectory of the story began with their environment “totally lacking in guiding landmarks” (63) and ended with the point at which “travelers on the prairie oriented themselves by [the] beacon” at their home (86). I suggest that for Rachel Calof, rocking on the front porch, walking between the homes, familiarizing herself with the “sags and swales” ultimately allowed her that transitional space, creating an equilibrium between indoors and out, between motion and serenity.
4.1 Arrival: textual analysis

This section elaborates upon the divergences between the Yiddish manuscript and the English publication and analyzes the rhetoric of frontier settlement. The direct textual analysis allows a close grammatical comparison of word choice and sentence structure.

Yiddish manuscript

My “boy’s” family came three months “before” I came. A father, a mother, one older brother with his wife and two children and also a younger brother.

English published version

Abraham's family had come to America three months before my arrival. The family consisted of his father and mother and a younger brother, Moses, who lived with his parents, and an elder brother Charlie, and his wife, Faga, and their two young children. Two nieces, Doba and Sarah, had also come to the new land to be with their husbands.

And the whole family left for North Dakota to take land. That happened in the year 1894 and I and my “boy” we needed to go also there to North Dakota and that’s the way it was.

All these people had gone on to North Dakota which had become a state five years earlier. They had come to claim homestead land which was now being offered to induce people to settle there. The year was 1894. Abraham was convinced that our best chance to make something of ourselves was to avail ourselves of the offer of the free land. With our mutual effort we would build and prosper. I had to agree. It seemed a godsend to penniless people who could not hope to buy land.

Two weeks after going over the threshold of the Goldena Medina we left to make our home also in North Dakota.

I had no idea where North Dakota was or what the country was like, but I was prepared for the challenge. Of course I had no intimation of the incredible hardships which awaited us there. And so, two weeks after setting foot on the golden medina (land) of America, I was
And then we arrived to North Dakota to a little town, Devils Lake and there waited for us my boyfriend's older brother to take us home. That means to the farm. (41-42Y)

We left the train in the town of Devils Lake, North Dakota. We were met there by Abraham's brother, Charlie, who was to escort us to the area where the family had already filed homestead claims and where we also were to stake our claims. This region was approximately twenty-five miles distant across the trackless prairie. (20-21)

I. Abraham's Family

Yiddish manuscript
My "boy's" family came three months "before" I came: a father, a mother, one older brother with his wife and two children and also a younger brother.

English published text
Abraham's family had come to America three months before my arrival. The family consisted of his father and mother and a younger brother, Moses, who lived with his parents, and an elder brother Charlie, and his wife, Faga, and their two young children. Two nieces, Doba and Sarah, had also come to the new land to be with their husbands.

The Yiddish text began with Rachel's description of "my 'boy'" and her arrival in North Dakota. She referred to Abraham as "my 'boy';" the "boy" was in English transliteration in the original Yiddish text. Rachel had not yet referred to him by name and did not do so for some time. She took a distant and outsider position in terms of his family, listing the functions of each family member without describing anyone by name. Conceivably, this was more accurate since she was referring to people she had not yet met at that point in the narrative. Of course, she wrote much

75 Each instance of an English word in the Yiddish text was marked by quotation marks.
later and she knew every single person’s name and all of the intimate details and foibles, but perhaps wished to recreate those early days. In addition, her presence in her story was emphasized as she foregrounded herself: she was not lost in the details of the multitudes of Abraham’s family. In the English publication, the story started with Abraham and his family, situating the story clearly: they “had come to America” as opposed to the Yiddish “came.” The texts similarly indicated the time: “three months,” but the English publication lengthened the description of the process to “before my arrival” rather than simply “I came.” Two types of family data were amplified in the English publication: the bare bones were fleshed out with details and further information, and more characters were included than in the original Yiddish manuscript. The more elaborate sentence structure in the English continued the clarification process, constructing sentences with nouns, verbs, modifiers and prepositional phrases; for example, “the family consisted of” rather than the original minimalist list in the Yiddish manuscript. Nonetheless, the father and mother were similarly referred to by function and not by name, in both versions. The English shifted the younger brother to appear before the older brother since the younger brother was still part of the parents’ nuclear family unit and Jacob Calof as he compiled the English version presented the families in the way that we saw them in their separate living spaces. “Moses,” the younger brother, was named in the English publication, while he was just called “a younger brother” in the Yiddish manuscript. Further, Jacob Calof’s English publication identified this brother as “liv[ing] with his parents” so that we are clear about identification, name and location.
Rachel Calof, in the Yiddish manuscript, was sparse in her description of the older brother: “one older brother with his wife and two children” adequately describing that family unit; she withheld their names. The English publication seemed to be urging information upon us, not leaving these characters unnamed since they would be in this story even if they were marginalized by anonymity in the original manuscript. In English, this brother was “Charlie” and had a named wife “Faga” and finally “their two young children.” We don’t know why Rachel declined to name these children, but they continued to be unnamed in both the Yiddish manuscript and the English publication. Perhaps that information was not available to Jacob. However, he could have been following Rachel’s lead in that she never did refer to Charlie and Faga’s children by name.

In addition, the English version added information not included in the original Yiddish: “Two nieces, Doba and Sarah, had also come to the new land to be with their husbands.” The family constellation was clarified in this manner even though their relationship was somewhat vague; the nieces, Doba and Sarah, were apparently daughters of one of Abraham’s siblings since Rachel referred to Abraham’s mother as Doba’s grandmother. We were not told that Abraham had escorted the nieces westward three years earlier, but archival evidence showed that he had been in North Dakota in 1891 (and Sanford Rikoon added this information in footnoted material, as well). In addition, Maier Calof wrote that he was waiting for his

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76 I suspect while he was completing the editing process he had less information than when the book eventually was published, since these names did appear in the captions on the pictures.
bride, Doba, and that her uncle Abe was escorting her to North Dakota (M. Calof 21). Abe was clearly part of an extensive family settlement and Jacob added this information not only to clarify and add characters that he considered important, but to expand and develop the extent to which the Calofs had established a significant presence.

On the other hand, Jacob was selective in including passages about the extended family. While not in this specific “arrival” section, the next page in the English text elaborated on the nieces as Rachel met them for the first time:

**Yiddish manuscript**
My head turned because I never saw Jewish women dressed like that. Only plain or common peasants. [No matter] how poor we were we still dressed just like all the white people.” (43Y)

**English published text**
I was dismayed to see such attire worn by Jewish women. I was highly indignant at the time, but I want to say now that one of these nieces before long would prove to be a real friend to me. (22-23)

It would be hard to resist commenting on this section, connected as it was to the previous one. The English published text introduced the nieces even though they were not mentioned in the Yiddish manuscript, and then the next occurrence softened the picture still further. The English publication removed any mention of “white people” and suggested that the clothing was inappropriate for “Jewish women” without elaborating, as the Yiddish manuscript did, for whom such clothing might be appropriate. The Yiddish manuscript, in fact, couched this opposition in terms of class issues: “only plain or common peasants” would have been dressed like that. In her previous situation, in the Ukraine, the category “white people” was
possibly a term of class as much as an ethnic marker. Rachel Calof established her alignment with the “white people” and not with the “plain or common peasants.”⁷⁷ At the same time, she was setting herself apart from these family members, Abe’s family, since by her classification of their dress (three years on the prairie could conceivably change anyone’s dress and class affiliation), she was not associated with this group of people. Once again, Jacob, as the compiler, ameliorated this position, adding phrases to cushion the blow: “but I want to say now that one of these nieces before long would prove to be a real friend to me.” No such comment was in the Yiddish manuscript. There was no bridging or reconciliatory element in the wording in the Yiddish manuscript, but rather a harsher, if simpler, telling of the story. At this point, there was no recognition that one of these nieces (or a descendent) would read this passage.

⁷⁷ In the earlier section on immigrant literature in the scholarship chapter, Matthew Fry Jacobson’s phrase “probationary white persons” informs the discussion of the transitions from immigrant, non-white status to “whiteness” (Whiteness 179).
2. Pioneers on the Frontier

Yiddish manuscript
And the whole family left for North Dakota to take land. That happened in the year 1894 and I and my “boy” we needed to go also there to North Dakota and that’s the way it was.

English published text
All these people had gone on to North Dakota which had become a state five years earlier. They had come to claim homestead land which was now being offered to induce people to settle there. The year was 1894. Abraham was convinced that our best chance to make something of ourselves was to avail ourselves of the offer of the free land. With our mutual effort we would build and prosper. I had to agree. It seemed a godsend to penniless people who could not hope to buy land.

The continuation of the passage provided numerous examples of the translation’s editorial comments and informational strategies. As stated earlier, Rachel Calof’s Yiddish manuscript had no punctuation; most of the sentences were connected by “and.” The published English text clearly added information and commentary. Once again, the English referred to Abraham by name, which was not consistent with the Yiddish references to him at this point. Rachel was not yet married to him, he was still her “boy” (or “boy friend”) and she did not refer to him by first or last name.78

While the Yiddish manuscript sentence “And the whole family left for North Dakota to take land” implied homesteading and the assumption was that the audience understood that concept, the English published version added historical

78 It is also important to note that it was one of Rachel Kahn’s family members in the Ukraine who owned the apartments in which the Calof families lived. She included this information in an obscure passage: “Another relative of mine, a great-uncle, lived and owned several houses in a distant city. One of his tenants was a girl named Chaya who through a series of amazing events was destined to become my sister-in-law” (9).
context: "North Dakota which had become a state five years earlier," which was not in the scope of the original document. The date was given possibly to indicate that the original narrator created a chronological text or situated historical context; however, she did not venture into historical or political knowledge. She did not detail the settlement situation, nor the information on statehood. The English published text continued with what I suspect was considered background material for the less well-informed audience, but contained additional and significant value judgments: "Abraham was convinced that our best chance to make something of ourselves was to avail ourselves of the offer of the free land." This is arguably an upgrade in terms of vocabulary, or even a qualitative improvement in translation, but the value judgment in the English text "make something of ourselves" was not even implied in the original Yiddish manuscript. The rhetoric of settlement and Americanization was found consistently throughout only in the English version. The contrast between the understatement of "that's the way it was" and the uplifting and sentimentalizing of the "godsend to penniless people" who will "build and prosper," signified a difference not only of vocabulary, but of philosophy. While Rachel Calof did mention in the Yiddish manuscript that they were going to "take land," she did not elaborate on the notion of "free land" or the concept of "making something of ourselves." The English version historicized the information for those who did not know what it meant to "take land," which was the most Rachel Calof said about it at this point. The layer of self-improvement and the creation of a new life were editorial comments added in translation. Obviously, I do not know what Jacob the compiler knew about the
sentiments of his mother the author, but no textual support or mention of a "godsend to penniless people who could not hope to buy land" existed in the original manuscript. I think this addition was one more example of the compiler’s “framing” the manuscript into a story. The original “and that’s the way it was” limited the story to facts and specific recollections rather than introspective contemplation, or even historical contextualization, while the vocabulary of a “godsend” or the “hope” invested in land was part of the pioneer rhetoric of frontier settlement and nation building of the published English version.

<table>
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<tr>
<th>III. Pioneers on the Frontier</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Yiddish manuscript</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>Two weeks after going over the threshold of the Goldena Medina we left to make our home also in North Dakota.</td>
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<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>English published text</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>I had no idea where North Dakota was or what the country was like, but I was prepared for the challenge. Of course I had no intimation of the incredible hardships which awaited us there. And so, two weeks after setting foot on the golden medina (land) of America, I was on my way to become a pioneer woman and to help build my new country. My life in Russia already seemed remote.</td>
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Little similarity exists between these two versions. Jacob moved further into the role of framing the story. In English, in the previous two paragraphs the family was referred to mostly in the third person with transitions to the first person plural by the end of the second paragraph. This third paragraph in English was entirely in the first person singular, a position significantly different than that of the original Yiddish manuscript. Rachel was given a voice that articulated far more than her original
written words: “I had no idea where North Dakota was” or “I was prepared for the challenge” followed by “I had no intimation of the incredible hardships” but “I was on my way.” Ironically, in the Yiddish manuscript, she spoke in the first person plural, indicating that she joined this venture with Abe. Even if she referred to him as the not-yet-familiar “boy,” in her pronoun selection they had progressed to “we” and “make our home.” Jake’s credibility as the compiler was compromised here since not only did he go beyond factual details or historical background, but in these moments of attempted articulation of her voice, he deviated from the text and the tone of the original. The comparable paragraph in Yiddish was one of mutual effort and not of strident individualism.

Jacob could have preserved the connotations of the Yiddish text’s romanticizing of this transition from Old Country to New by using Rachel’s vocabulary of “threshold” and interweaving the idiom of the “goldena Medina” which could have been translated as the “Golden Land,” that of the streets paved in gold, or possibly the “Promised Land.” Mary Antin described leaving Russia as “The Exodus” and arriving in the United States as “The Promised Land” (130-162). Nonetheless, I believe that Rachel was choosing a different promised land, that she was focused on making a new home. Her moves were compressed into a short span of time, moving rapidly as she did from one country to another and then moving westward within two weeks of landing in New York. She did not seem to be saying,

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79 These differences in pronoun references could have appeared in Molly Shaw’s original translation from Yiddish to English. However, since that translation was discarded by Jake as supposedly unnecessary for future reference, the differences in translation cannot necessarily be ascribed to Molly Shaw.
as implied in the English, that she had "no idea" about the location of North Dakota. Why should we assume that she'd handed over her fate to Abraham, along with her critical thinking skills? This blind obedience was not apparent in her text, nor implied in previous pages. What was the compiler doing when he added the "no idea where North Dakota was" and her willingness and preparedness to take on the "challenge"?

I suggest that he was moving beyond clarification and into the role of framing the story once again. The sentence "I was on my way to become a pioneer woman and to help build my new country" sounded like a story being told. Had she really already assimilated the allegiance to the "new country"? As if to ratify or strengthen this move, he added, "My life in Russia already seemed remote," which may or may not have been true. The pace of change had been phenomenal for Rachel, but what did adding this degree of "remoteness" suggest? That she didn't mail her Russian kin a letter upon arrival telling them about her safe landing? Or that she couldn't yet include a forwarding address, but that she did know the town was named Devils Lake? Why did Jacob dilute the details that she offered us, and inflate the text out of proportion with abstract ideals rather than identify the specific, physical destination that she clearly described? The invented "remoteness" satisfied two needs. First, the son erased the background, the past, the ties that still bound her to the Old World by declaring them remote, suggesting verging-on-forgotten. Secondly, he changed her action from one being acted upon, in her movement, to one of agency. The family left behind was of less importance to Jacob than it was to Rachel. Later, some of her
grief about her exile from her siblings would simply be deleted in Jacob’s version. Jacob incorporated a vision, supplementing if necessary, in order to create a glorious mission, something to make the suffering on the horizon worthwhile.

**IV. Home is on the farm.**

**Yiddish manuscript**

And then we arrived to North Dakota to a little town, Devils Lake and there waited for us my boy friend’s older brother to take us home. That means to the farm.

**English published text**

We left the train in the town of Devils Lake, North Dakota. We were met there by Abraham’s brother, Charlie, who was to escort us to the area where the family had already filed homestead claims and where we also were to stake our claims. This region was approximately twenty-five miles distant across the trackless prairie.

In a fairly straightforward manner, in the Yiddish manuscript Rachel described the arrival and the destination, referring to “home,” and supported by the explanation, “that means to the farm,” if the idea and location of home was not obvious. By the time she wrote this memoir, she had lived on the farm for nearly twenty-three years and the distance was certainly a fact that she would recollect, had that been what she wanted to include. Her narrative did not include the distance and the translation’s “twenty-five miles distant” seemed to be an attempt at mapping, rather than an anticipatory journey to an, as yet unseen home. Indeed, had she wanted to add “across the trackless prairie,” that experiential information was available to her and, nonetheless, was not included. She did, however, mention home; unlike the English published text which included legal terms of “the area where the family had already filed homestead claims” as more of a mission. The
terms of “filed homestead claims” and “escort[ing]” them to “where we also were to stake our claims,” was emphatically not Rachel’s language of building a new home with her “boy.” I suggest that the framing device of myth making, of challenges and of building a country, framed the compiler more than the story as he focused on establishing a discourse of mission. The original manuscript used the language of home, albeit sparsely. Though it might not have seemed like home at first, as the story-teller, Rachel evoked the future home that was at the end of this journey by boat, train and finally by ox cart, and if the destination was still not clear, then “that means the farm” committed her to this venture. However, Rachel’s venture was not heroic in vocabulary or context; she was not building a story of Americanization or settlement as much as she was finding a way out of a dead-end social structure that would have left her without a home or a family, and into one of the few options that she saw for herself. Perhaps the idea of nation was not conceptually one of hers, perhaps a Jewish identity was what she would work with, but Rachel Calof’s text did not indicate the changing of allegiance or the building of the frontier as her agenda.
5.0 Little Jewish House on the Prairie

Home could be considered as the intersection of multiple identities for the Calofs. In the previous chapter, Rachel Calof's home is interrogated as the domestic space within which she alternately derived satisfaction and pride of ownership and negotiated her authority. In this chapter, home is considered also the location of sexuality, birth and death, the most physical aspects of identity. Her home signified an indisputable and unwavering Jewish identity intractably overlaid with the immigrant ethnic identity. And finally, home is the locus of the extended and intergenerational family constellation. Quite a houseful, indeed!

Viewing the Calof home though Jacob's lens indubitably skews our perception of the Calof home on the prairie. Jacob was first and foremost the youngest son of the narrator. He organized his mother's text into a story that he considered appropriate to tell. How could he tell us about his parents' intimacy or of his mother in childbirth? Jacob attempted to convey the family's life in the context of being Jewish. What did it mean to have a Jewish home on the prairie? A Jewish farm? What resources and community surrounded the Calofs? Even though the community perspective was less intimate, there also Jacob Calof was a less-than-reliable narrator partly because he was personally so remote from religious observance as to be ill-equipped to transmit the information accurately, and partly because of his conflict between presenting the Jewish family as acceptable in terms of Jewish observance, and yet not so observant as to be unacceptable to a non-Jewish audience.
Jacob as the voice in this presentation of the Calof family home embodies Paul Eakin’s concept of “ventriloquism” and particularly the issues of family collaboration in “proximate collaborative autobiography”:

there is no getting around the fact that ventriloquism, making the other talk, is by definition a central rhetorical phenomenon of these narratives. Proximate collaborative autobiography seems to embrace, conceptually, the reality of relational identity, the structuring bond between self and other, but the desire for autonomy, for mastery of one’s origins, for authorship, persists. (*Lives* 180)

That “mastering of one’s origins” was perhaps seen best in the first example in this chapter: Jacob’s editing his own birth. Even though Jacob’s birth was obviously last chronologically, his narrative changes were significant and worth examining first. Eakin noted:

Children may be ‘episodes in someone else’s narrative,’ as Carolyn Steedman proposes, whether they like it or not; when children turned adults become the authors of such a narrative, however, it is a different story and the tables are turned. (*Lives* 181)

Jacob Calof should have been an episode in this story, his birth recounted as were the previous eight births in his mother’s narrative. His own birth, however, provided a unique opportunity to rewrite. In the Yiddish manuscript Rachel seemed confused about whether or not she was pregnant:

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**Yiddish manuscript**

*You can imagine why I was surprised and this is because I was not pregnant yet again. And I thought I cannot have any more children, but my fear didn’t take for long. And I felt again a person (mench) to bring a baby to the world. And it didn’t take long and*

**English published version**

*Despite my aversion to bearing more children, I gave birth to my final child, a son, Jacob, in March 1912. Because of the complications of my last pregnancies, I thought it best to deliver the child in town, where hopefully I would have medical help available to me. I was accompanied by my eldest*
Yiddish manuscript
on March the 4th I gave birth to my baby boy Tshikob (Jacobolo), as usual I didn’t give birth to him anymore on the farm. I went again into town. And my older daughter this time went with me already. And I took the small one with me too.

This time my baby boy weighed twelve pounds. And there was already another Doctor. His name was Cox and he was a peoples’ friend and he used to send all the pregnant women to heaven and he didn’t know why his women died on the third or the fifth day and that was because he left a piece of the “afterbirth” and it developed “blood poisoning” and that’s why they died. When I started going into labor, they went to call on him. And he sent me big “capsules” I took them and I got seriously sick and then we sent again after him and when he came I gave already birth to my child. But this time the child came together with the afterbirth. I was very sick and I had to “hemorrhage” on the third day. And I was ready to go to heaven and became sick what they call it birth fever. (245-246Y)

English published version
and youngest daughters, Minnie and Ceil.

The conditions of the confinement in some ways were even worse than the past ones on the farm. The only lodging we could find to rent was an empty store located under a roller skating rink. The furniture consisted of a bed and a stove, and the noise and dust from above were terrible. What an awful place to bring a child into the world.

Jake weighed almost thirteen pounds at birth and my agony in giving him life was great. The doctor who was to attend me was named Cox. He wasn’t exactly a friendly type, but he was all that was available. He was almost completely drunk most of the time and totally drunk the rest of the time. When my labor started he was too intoxicated to come to me, but instead sent a boy with some big pills which made me deathly ill. This terrible man was well-known in the area. It was rumored that because of his drunkenness and ignorance he caused the deaths of many a pioneer mother. (88-89)
Not only did Jacob grow in translation from twelve pounds to nearly thirteen, he added an entire paragraph to the description. Rachel's Yiddish manuscript included "surprise" and "fear" which Jacob transformed into an "aversion" to having more children. For a child to know that his mother did not expect to be pregnant, or even feared for her life after complicated pregnancies, must have been somewhat awkward. Her expression *mench* was usually translated as a positive concept. The Yiddish manuscript invited the reader to share in her surprise: "you can imagine," while the English translation did not refer to the reader. Rachel was more precise in dating the birth and offering both the formal and familiar name, spelled as they are pronounced in Yiddish ("Jacob" would more likely to have been spelled correctly in Hebrew had she known Hebrew spelling). The Yiddish was softer than the English translation: "my baby boy" remained her "baby boy" even though this was written when Jacob was nearly twenty-four years old. He called himself her "final child," which was accurate and probably his choice of reference. Going into town for the birth was now "as usual" rather than giving birth on the farm, even though Jacob clarified: the birth seemed to be far more uncomfortable in a public place. He also underlined the importance of the proximity of medical care supposedly worth the inconvenience of being away from home. Rachel knew which daughters accompanied her, though her writing style limited the use of names, for whatever reason. Jacob added the names, perhaps to facilitate the reader's understanding.
The added paragraph offered details not found in the Yiddish, along with editorial commentary:

The conditions of the confinement in some ways were even worse than the past ones on the farm. The only lodging we could find to rent was an empty store located under a roller skating rink. The furniture consisted of a bed and a stove, and the noise and dust from above were terrible. What an awful place to bring a child into the world. (89)

Jacob was describing the setting of his own birth. This entire paragraph was supplementary, nonexistent in the Yiddish manuscript while both the preceding and following paragraphs in the English text had comparable sections in the Yiddish manuscript. The details were not data that he could have recreated independently, so we imagine that he did have access to the additional information. He used the formal phrase “conditions of confinement,” categorically unlike his mother’s conversational writing. We assume that his mother, or older sister, told him about the furniture and the noise and the dust. However, we are left without knowing who said, “what an awful place to bring a child into the world.” Had his mother added that line when she told the story or was he inserting his commentary on the time and place?

The final paragraphs “match” once again, though with significant differences. As I indicated at the beginning of this chapter, baby Jacob grew in the translation, becoming heavier, which to him may have been more significant.

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80 The “lodging” they found proved to be a clue that Jacob was not born in Devils Lake, North Dakota, at all. A local resident, Mary Beth Armentraut, said that she discussed this with Jacob when he visited in 1996. He knew that he had been born in Edmore, a town only twelve miles from the farm, not the twenty-five miles distant Devils Lake. He said that the publisher had inserted Devils Lake into the book, but that was inaccurate. The clue was the skating rink – which local people knew to be in Edmore (Armentraut).
but to his mother, or any woman imagining childbirth, the implication would be more painfully difficult to deliver. The Yiddish manuscript focused upon the doctor and the common knowledge of his inadequate medical practices; Jacob’s English compilation devoted most of the section to the doctor's state of intoxication which Rachel did not mention. Rachel presumably could have taken the doctor’s neglect as personally as Jacob seemed to, yet the original Yiddish manuscript urged the reader to understand the specific medical problems that this doctor seemed unable to comprehend or alleviate: the “birth fever” that developed as a result of neglecting the afterbirth. Jacob’s compilation disregarded the very visceral descriptions:

And he didn’t know why his women died on the third or the fifth day and that was because he left a piece of the “afterbirth” and it developed “blood poisoning” and that’s why they died. When I started going into labor, they went to call on him. And he sent me big “capsules” I took them and I got seriously sick and then we sent again after him and when he came I gave already birth to my child. But this time the child came together with the afterbirth. I was very sick and I had to “hemorrhage” on the third day. And I was ready to go to heaven and I became sick what they call it birth fever. (245-246Y)

The English publication did not include this complicated discussion of Rachel’s childbirth. Ultimately, the doctor missed the birth after causing Rachel to be “seriously sick” with his “big capsules.” Jacob shifted the readers' view away from his mother’s physical descriptions, perhaps intended for female, Yiddish-speaking relatives, and directed the focus towards the “conditions of the confinement” and the inebriated doctor; anywhere but towards his bleeding mother.
While I have been critical of Jacob's treatment of this section, I must elaborate on the difficulties in translation. The numbering system of the pages in the Yiddish manuscript led to page 246 as a continuation of the same story, but there was no page number indicated on that page. The narrative did continue sequentially: page 245 described the women dying on "the fifth day," the next page, unnumbered, began with "and that was because he left a piece of the afterbirth." The next section in the Yiddish manuscript contributed further to the confusion and did not appear at all in the English translation:

> But the gentiles of the town announced in town if I remember well, there were three "churches" and they go to God and also the bells were ringing. The next day I felt a little bit better. And I don't know who to credit for it. I was sick for a time. (247Y)

Jacob presumably had access to this paragraph since the English version continued directly from the same paragraph of the Yiddish manuscript describing Rachel's operation in St. Paul. The Yiddish manuscript indicated that she was "torn for seven years" until she went "through a little operation" in St. Paul (247Y), which was translated in English as "I never fully recovered from the abuses of this and my previous deliveries, and years later when I lived in St. Paul, Minnesota, I underwent surgery to repair my torn insides, but without favorable

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81 March 4, 1912 was a Monday so the bell-ringing two to three days later might have been unusual.
result” (89). This untranslated (or deleted) section was not written on a separate page; if it had been, it could possibly have been overlooked by the translator. The section about the Gentiles and their churches was clearly a continuation of a page included in both the Yiddish manuscript and the English translation.

The intersection of economic, religious and sexual factors converged on the home. Sexuality was limited to the family domain, which was also the religious and economic unit as far as Rachel Calof was concerned. Sidonie Smith warned that in reading autobiography we must be aware of the embodiment of the actual person. She said:

Autobiographical practice, then, is one of those cultural occasions when the history of the body intersects with the deployment of female subjectivity as the woman writer struggles with multivalent embodiment. And so some kind of history of the body is always inscribed in women’s autobiographical texts – muted or loud, mimetically recapitulative or subversive. We might therefore ask of each autobiographical text a series of interrelated questions. Whose body is speaking? What specific body does the autobiographical subject claim in her text? Where is the body narratively to be found and how does it circulate through the text? (“Identity’s Body” 271-272)

The combination of texts available for interpretation – Jacob’s inhibitions and Rachel’s expressions – allows a more comprehensive picture of this embodiment. Rachel Calof’s Yiddish manuscript may seem inhibited to our ears,

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82 Jeanne Kay discussed the inscription of the environment on the pioneer woman’s body as found in Mormon women’s diaries: “My subjects were concerned with Nature’s impact upon the human body. Suffering incurred from droughts and blizzards or remoteness from urban services, and the poverty endemic to pioneer life were seen as inscribing themselves on women’s limbs, wombs or faces; incurring pain, disfigurement, or even death; yet those marks became emblems of Christian refinement and redemption” (“Surrender” 362-3). Obviously the Christian redemption would not be relevant for the Calof comparison, but the effects of climate and conditions rendered physically was remarkably similar.
but her expressions reveal considerably more about the “multivalent embodiment” than the English publication disclosed. Despite claims to the contrary, sexuality in pioneering narratives was evident. Elizabeth Jameson suggested that women “shared information about the various stages of their life cycles, including how to avoid pregnancy... The strains of childbearing and the work involved in caring for small children were an important difference in male and female experience” (“Workers” 3-4). The narrative structure of the Yiddish manuscript, while following agricultural seasons, adhered more precisely to Rachel Calof’s fertility. Returning to some of the earlier pregnancies, she often described herself as confused (“at this time I forgot or maybe I lost my counting to have another baby” [224Y]) or as having lost track (“but I wasn’t right with one month” [221Y]). She seemed to be either pregnant or lactating for most of her first decade on the homestead, situations that did not lend themselves to accurate calculation of menstrual cycles. In an era when the female menstrual cycle’s relation to pregnancy was not common knowledge (Cosman), she described being pregnant as though it were mostly a matter of chance: “I look around and I’m in other circumstances. My baby’s still so young but what can we do?” (197Y). The English publication eliminated Rachel’s frequent references

83 Elizabeth Hampsten was “astonished” by John Faragher’s claim that sexuality was not one of the values in his content analysis of personal narratives of westward journeys (RTOTY9). She said “Faragher finds deep anxiety about marriage and other sexual human relationships, but not he says, in people’s writing: ‘for all the romance of the trip itself, there was little time for interpersonal involvements between men and women on the trail. People were just too busy for that’ “(RTOTY9). She suggested that all of “his sources have been radically and systematically excised” (RTOTY9) because her findings are opposite: “sexuality is consistently present in the North Dakota-based writings I have seen. Some people write about sex easily, with humor; for others it is a difficult matter” (RTOTY9).
having lost track of her periods and once again finding herself pregnant. The tone of the two texts differed considerably:

**Yiddish manuscript**

_The two little girls and I, we just drag ourselves around and I'm already in my ninth month. And I became a little jittery. Life around the little children, one smaller than the other, but what can I do?"_ (203-204Y)

**English publication**

_I must say that personally the most dependable state of affairs that I knew during the many years I lived on the prairie was pregnancy, and soon I was again carrying my usual load._ (73)

In the English publication, the tone was staid ("dependable state of affairs") and somewhat disagreeable ("usual load") while in the Yiddish manuscript Rachel just said that nothing seemed to be dependable; there was no certainty about when she would be giving birth. Instead of a "load" she described the children and her pregnancy as nerve-wracking, an emotional tone that was polished out of existence.

The English narrative eliminated confusion, not only in terms of the calculation of the timing, but also at the births. Priscilla Wald warned readers to investigate what narratives leave out:

National narratives of identity seek to harness the anxiety surrounding the questions of personhood, but what they leave out resurfaces when the experiences of individuals conspicuously fail to conform to the definition of personhood offered in the narrative. The untold stories that concern me represent such disruptions. They must therefore be reabsorbed by the official stories they challenge. Yet the extra work required by that reabsorption threatens to expose the discontinuity it is supposed to obscure. Thus the uncanny continues to haunt the narrative, drawing attention to its obscured origin in the reformulation (hence to the conventionality) of personhood. Intrinsic to the narrative of identity is the ongoing possibility of a return to its own genesis in the uncanny (the
unrecognized self) – in its efforts, that is, to establish continuity where there has been a rupture (10).

The “untold stories” continued to “haunt” the tale; Jacob’s changes included his attempts to make uncomfortable situations more palatable, eliminate complaints or disease, reduce the confusion and make presentable stories even when deliberation and confusion were the essence of the Yiddish manuscript. Usually these incidents were related to his mother’s parenting or birthing. Perhaps no child can cope with the notion that he was a result of unplanned chaos. But occasionally Jacob was also censoring stories about his parents as a couple. An early example was when Rachel walked to visit Abraham before they were married. She was deeply disappointed when Abe told her that his boss would not allow her to visit him while he was working. The visit was summarized in the English translation as “still it was a very satisfying experience for both of us” (33), while in contrast the Yiddish manuscript described them both crying:

*And my day is more pleasant when I will see my boy. This time I will see him again. But my luck (mazal) disappeared already. Der Anderson told my boy that I cannot come anymore to see him. Because when he talks to me he cannot put together the “shocks”. And I cannot come to him anymore because he will fire him. I didn’t understand what the goy has said. And I saw that my boy was bitter and I ask him what did he say? So he told me what the goy said. And I looked at my boy and the tears were running down from his eyes. And we said good bye and we both cried, and I went with a bent down head, home. (67-68Y)*

How this changed to “a satisfying experience” for them was inexplicable. Did Jacob not want to portray his father crying? Or his mother calling the boss a “goy”? But even more than censoring these details, the entire spirit of the
passage was changed to an uplifting endeavor, while Rachel walked home with a "bent down head" for another week alone with her unpleasant in-laws.\(^{64}\)

In addition to censoring the details of the text, Jacob also limited the English publication to "appropriate" details. Excrement was excluded from the English version, while in the Yiddish manuscript it was part of life: "The winter was a terrible one, cold, and with big terrible storms. It was very cold in the house. I don't wish it upon you. The pot in which the children made was always frozen. There was not too much heat, but time goes and the winter passed" (222). Jacob also reduced Rachel's complaints and cut the details of her obviously strenuous work; this passage did not appear in the English version:

\begin{quote}
But the spring showed up and the children went outside and my head worked better already but I have a lot of work. Five babies and we needed to "attend" the "farm" "products." Raising "chickens", a garden, milked the four cows. It was very hard on me but who will listen to me? I worked and hoped for better. How I didn't know myself. (222-223Y)\(^{65}\)
\end{quote}

Not only was Rachel working at physically demanding labor, but she indicated that her "head worked better already" suggesting seasonal fluctuations and mood changes. Censoring the tormenting reality, Jacob idealized the frontier experience into the form of the \textit{Little House on the Prairie} style of history.

Rachel's physicality was present more in the Yiddish manuscript. She

\(^{64}\) The "censoring" of details was problematic. Elizabeth Hampsten indicated our "obligation" to be faithful to the texts: "In the enthusiasm for retrieving the 'lost' lives of women, we ought to engage a critical sense. Women may be imperfect and still be women; we do not honor anyone by ignoring, or censoring out details that might be disapproved of or better put differently... Rather than erase unbecoming expressions in a text, I do think we have an obligation to take note of their restricted viewpoints" \textit{(NDH 5)}.

\(^{65}\) The words in quotation marks are English words Rachel Calof wrote in Hebrew letters in the Yiddish manuscript.
complained that she was hungry when she was pregnant, but in the English version her appetite was cut. The Yiddish manuscript said: “In the meantime, I became pregnant. I was not sick, God forbid, but I liked to eat a lot... To eat, I would like a lot. But there was nothing to eat” (88-89Y). The English version: “The winter was not far advanced before I found myself pregnant and so ill that I could hardly tolerate such a diet” which sounded more as though she suffered from nausea and did not want to eat than the description of her hearty, but deprived, appetite in the Yiddish manuscript.

The English version reduced her cynicism and cut her apologies for plain speaking found in the Yiddish manuscript:

I felt healthy, not bad, but it would only be something to cook then everything wouldn't be so bad. No wood, of course, I didn't see wood, about wood we are not talking. And dung, was not there either. You have to excuse me, why I express myself so plain and call it dung. Because that place was only with grass.... I really didn’t have with what to cook. (92-93Y)

Rachel seemed to be in a better mood in the English version; she certainly cried less. In the Yiddish manuscript: “And I cried a lot and turned over to other thoughts” (102-103), while in the English version we find: “My mood became sad and doubtful and I began to suffer fits of bitter crying. But before long my disposition changed and I faced the coming event with a better attitude. I was determined to do the best I could to improve our living conditions before the arrival of the child” (44). In the Yiddish manuscript Rachel often described crying at night so no one would hear her.
The situation was grim in both Yiddish and English. With the family starving and freezing during the second winter, Abe went to town to try to bring ointment for the new baby's burn and food and fuel. The English version said succinctly "we were literally starving and freezing" (65) while the Yiddish version detailed the circumstances among the extended family:

*I with the children and my mother-in-law we are expiring with the cold and hunger. My father-in-law and brother-in-law used to come in and take a look and left for home but because I was sick and I had so much "trouble" with my roasted child so they were staying with my sister-in-law and they used to fight every day and they used to come and tell me everything. I couldn't rest especially because of my older child that child is plainly starving and freezing. (161-162Y)*

The relatives were quarreling and going between the shanties to try to relieve the tension. The bleakness of the Yiddish description was wrenching and the summary in English offered a more tolerable view, but without the immediacy of the details. For the most part, Rachel Calof told her story in the present tense even though it was a retrospective narrative; the "child is plainly starving and freezing" in her arms forty years later. In English, her despair was rewritten into past tense and therefore a tone of understanding. In one early section in the Yiddish manuscript she described the winter challenges with her first child, and concluded she would rather be dead. She was also concerned about the poisonous atmosphere that her daughter was absorbing through her milk as she nursed. This section was written with arrows leading the reader from one paragraph to another on a different page and then back again, circling through her despair and directing the reader to understand:
It was so bitter for me that my life would be better off without life. And that was the whole winter. And now after all I have a baby and I need to wash out something too and dry it for the baby and all that in the same shack. In short my life was bitter like that. I used to cry only at night\textsuperscript{86} so nobody will see. I knew that my child sucks in “poison” from me because I used to be all the time bitter and we used to argue with my father-in-law and mother-in-law. I would prefer better dead before a life like that. But time doesn’t stand still “anyway” the winter dragged on with troubles and the spring came. And I was again in other circumstances (pregnant).\textsuperscript{87} (143-144Y)

In the English version her despair was changed to acceptance, at least retrospectively, of the difficulty of the situation. But the immediacy, and her pain, were deleted. She cried at night so “nobody will see.” She described arguing all the time. The Yiddish began and ended the paragraph with her preferring to be dead rather than to live in this manner, hardly the image from Little House on the Prairie. The English translation deleted that paragraph. “Time does not stand still” matched in both the English and Yiddish versions (page 144 in Yiddish, page 59 in English) and then in English there was an entirely invented background of Abraham’s divorce request. The crying was cut, as were the poisonous atmosphere, arguments and preferring death to life like this. Instead, her entire tirade was summed up as “this hellish environment,” hardly an equivalent, void of all detail.

All of the births are cleaner, less confusing or chaotic, and the doubts omitted in the English version. Hannah’s birth, Rachel’s second childbirth experience, was described in English: “I climbed onto my straw-covered

\textsuperscript{86} Break in the manuscript. From a paragraph on page 143 there are lines directing to the top of page 144 and then to the bottom of page 144.

\textsuperscript{87} The arrows direct the reader to go back to the lower part of page 143.
'delivery' table to give birth to my daughter Hannah. The straw was prickly and cold, and as I labored I became thoroughly chilled” (64). In the Yiddish manuscript the details are unparalleled. Rachel first had to clear her shanty of the male in-laws in order to have less of an audience. She did not want her sister-in-law there. Since the English version had never mentioned that Rachel expressed a preference for being dead rather than continuing in this homesteading, her change of heart was also deleted. Hannah’s birth in the Yiddish manuscript:

Thursday 4:00 in the morning I started to go into labor. We had to wake up the two men, my father-in-law and my younger brother-in-law, they should go to my older brother-in-law. After all it’s one room. And they left. My sister-in-law came and she started to sigh (krechtzen) over me and my husband told her to go home because of course it’s bitter in my heart already. I was confused and I didn’t want to die anymore. I wanted to be a mother to my child which can not walk yet. And I cried a lot and I prayed to God he should help me. I was suffering three hours in labor and in “angst”. And it took another half hour and I understood the baby is supposed to come. I laid and cried and it was cold on the “delivery table” that means my bed with the hay that was poking me. (155-156Y)

While she was recalling the reflection about whether or not she wanted to live, she still viscerally remembered the cold and prickly hay. The English succinctly told of the birth, while the Yiddish passages indicated that she was contemplative and remembered that moment. She wanted to get those men out of her one-room space, she didn’t want her sister-in-law moaning around her and she was full of confusion.

Other entire stories appeared in the Yiddish manuscript but were not included in the English version. Some of these incidents, when found in entire blocks of pages, led me to wonder if some pages were not translated or if the
compilation process lost entire sections. For example, Abe's father died when Rachel was taking care of him after a stroke (pages 232 – 238 in the Yiddish). In that same section, Rachel gave Abe a back rub that would have been the most intimate articulated reflection of their physical relationship, and that too was not included in the English version. On the other hand, the miscarriage that she described at the end of the section was included in the English, so it seems unlikely that these entire sections were not accessible for compilation.

Rachel usually anticipated building her home in a thoughtful manner. However, Annette Kolodny indicated that the prairie wife's dream of home often turned out to be a trap: "The dream of a domestic Eden had become a nightmare of domestic captivity" (9). Kolodny argued that the dream unrealized did not make the experience unimportant, or affect the "imaginative structures" still influencing the narratives produced today. Kolodny continued:

That the prairie Eden, more often than not, proved only a fantasy does not diminish its importance. ..What we trace here, in short, are the successive psychic strategies for survival that were, for pioneer women, no less crucial than the imaginative structures through which generations of men followed in the footsteps of Daniel Boone. (10)

However, the frontier was also home. Judy Nolte Temple said the images and metaphors written by Iowa diarist Emily Gillespie maintained the mythology of

88 "And on a nice day he came from work, comes into the house, and said to me, if you want, take a little bit of water for the horses because I have a pain in my back, of course I went and carried the "buckets" with water, I put in the horses in the barn. We didn't have any help. We thought that in a few months we will hire a man. I went into the house and I gave my husband food and massaged his back with "liniment" and he felt better. And he tells me to help him to put the harness on the horse and then he will till the land. I helped him and he went to work. And I saw that hay is not on the "hay loft" and no hay in the wagon. I was thinking it was a very windy spring day and you couldn't even stand and I was thinking we should throw some hay on the wagon and when my husband will come and we will take it together." (233-235Y)
home on the frontier: “Home informs her book, as it did dozens of other women’s diaries and the prescriptive literature of the nineteenth century. Gillespie’s book shows how difficult it was to enact this idealized image with real-life people” (Lensink Secret 89). Rachel Calof was living with real-life people in close quarters. Like the Little House on the Prairie books, Rachel Calof’s Story described a home setting that was “dominated by family and family relationships” (Romines 27). Romines examined the “crucial questions about agency, limits, and sexuality” that the Little House series avoided. For example, Charley Ingalls, a cousin of Laura’s, is presented as a troublemaker early in the series. When Wilder wanted to bring him back in a later book, a scene was withdrawn in which Laura was “manhandled” by Charley (Romines 30-31). Romines said

the boy suggests a knot of enigmas so difficult that he is eventually almost written out of the series...As Wilder originally conceived him, Charley articulates the unthinkable; he resists the benign stasis of Ingalls family relations. He makes explicit the incest that is always implicit in endogamy and challenges Pa’s sexual dominion as the sole male in the Little House. (31)

Among the “unnarratable” episodes in Rachel Calof’s Story were her objections to the proximity of her younger brother-in-law that were edited out, either in translation or in compilation. Rachel rejected his suggestion of replacing Abraham as her fiancé, and later after her marriage to Abraham, she referred to their living in the same quarters as inappropriate. None of those issues of “agency, limits, and sexuality” appeared in the English version. The limits of the lens provided by a son precluded, I suspect, including material as wide as the scope of the Yiddish manuscript. Peter Caccavari, citing Jane Marcus said: “A
woman in exile is, in addition, an uncanny figure, in Freud's formulation, for her very body means home and hearth, the womb/home of humankind. If she is homeless, lost, wandering, where are we, her daughters and sons?" (20-21).

Jacob Calof's mother focused her life on her home and hearth, and wrote at the stage in her life when the stability had been disrupted and she had been displaced. Her homelessness, moving between her daughters, was nonetheless anchored by her articulate expression of the experiences on the homestead. Home was not portrayed as idyllic, nor was her conclusion one of determined optimism. But rather than to insist "if you love the living of life you must know the journey was well worth it," Jacob Calof's responsibility to his mother's story was to respect her exile, the pain reflected on her body, and the home that eluded her throughout her life.
5.1 Keeping Kosher: Jewish Observance on the Prairie

Even though Rachel Calof described the churches of Devils Lake she was probably not familiar with many Christian practices, since she had moved from one Jewish setting to another all her life. In the United States, she did not seem to contextualize her identity on any other continuum except the Jewish – Gentile lines, or the axis within the Calof family. She did not tell us what it was like to be Jewish in Devils Lake or even provide many details about Jewish life on the farm. We do know that Jews were not considered “white” at this point in time or in this place (Jacobson, Azoulay). While North Dakota was populated by immigrants when Rachel Calof lived there, we do not have very much information about the ease of integration, especially if the group was not assimilating; they continued to marry among themselves, educate their children separately, and celebrate their own holidays. North Dakota historian William Sherman said the “Jewish settlers had a social life, however, and they observed the special holidays as best they could. They built a ritual bath (mikveh) on the shores of Big Slough (Little Lake)” (Plains 392). He also said that these Jewish settlers could speak to their neighbors because they were fluent in both German and Russian (Plains 392). Sherman noted that anti-Semitism was “rare” in North Dakota (Plains 399). Sanford Rikoon in “Jewish Farm Settlements in America’s Heartland” included in Rachel Calof’s Story documented the influence of Jewish community activities in the public spaces of the Devils Lake

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89 Karen Hansen cited the U.S. Bureau of the Census 1915: in North Dakota 70.6% of the population were “foreign-born” or “born of foreign or mixed parents” (360). Elizabeth Jameson said twenty-two countries were represented in Ramsey County in the 1920 census. One quarter of the population were immigrants (141). Elizabeth Hampsten added “The state was settled by a higher number of foreign immigrants than came to any other rural state” (Settlers’ Children 5).
area: "As the Devils Lake community grew in size and additional families settled in
area towns, High Holiday services were held in the courtroom in the county building
in Devils Lake. According to a former resident, 'all judicial business was suspended'
on Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur\(^90\) (123). Rikoon correctly noted that Rachel
Calof's account did not offer information on the Jewish community: "Rachel Bella
Calof's narrative portrays an unmistakably Jewish homesteading experience, though
she does not provide details on the institutional organization of Judaism in the Devils
Lake area" (123).

Moreover, Rachel Calof's narrative does not provide information on the cycle
of holidays that inevitably would have been celebrated in a religious home, within a
larger community of other observant families. Her lack of reference to holiday
celebrations, especially in the framework of a Jewish farm, was problematic to me.
Geographer Jeanne Kay pointed out the influence of the holidays and the seasonal
connections to the timing of all of the major Jewish holidays:

The Bible describes an annual cycle of holy days that were based on a lunar
calendar and changing seasons as they would have affected ancient farmers
and herders. The festival of Shavuot (Weeks) for example, celebrates the
gathering of first fruits of the land. Sukkot (Tabernacles) in autumn culminates
a series of days set aside for repentance and atonement with prayers for the
winter rains so essential for agriculture in the Near East. While such
environmental connotations were weakened among urban Jews of the
Diaspora (who nevertheless continued to observe the holy days), they are
quite obvious to visitors of rural Israel today. ("Environment" 294)

One of the explicit connections would have been the overlap between holidays and
harvesting. Both Maier Calof and Sanford Rikoon recognized the Jewish farmers'
lack of agricultural achievement, but Maier Calof made very clear that the Jewish farmers were constrained from harvesting because of the holidays. I wondered if outsiders recognized that the Jewish farming community suffered crop losses as a result of religious obligations. Maier Calof described the disappointing overlap between the holidays and the arrival of the heavy rains and snow:

This time we had a good year. The crop was abundant and it took twice as much time to harvest it. A separator – a reaping machine was needed, but not one was available in the colony. I had to go to another town to buy one. It took me a few days before I returned with the machine and the day I came back was the eve of Rosh Hashanah, the Jewish New Year. We had to postpone the work until after the holidays. There is an old Yiddish saying: 'The man thinks and God laughs.' And we too, felt God's laughter, for on the second day of Rosh Hashanah, a heavy rain poured and later, a white snow fell. It was a great blow to all of us. The difficulties were partly overcome, but with hard labor and heavy losses to the crop. (28).

Sandy Rikoon's essay discussed the farmers turning to the Jewish Agriculturalists Aid Society of America (JAAS) and the Jewish Agricultural and Industrial Aid Society (JAIAS) and the financial support they received. No correlation was made to the Jewish farmers' lack of success because of the pause in work required by holidays, but only as a function of farm machinery. The farmers petitioned for money to purchase a steam engine and grain separator. After four years of documenting the need for the machinery, the New York society granted a loan of $2,182 at 6 percent interest. In the first year of work, the settlers used the machinery to thresh over 16,500 bushels of grain, including over 8,500 bushels of flax, their principal cash crop. One of the beneficiaries of the machinery, Philip Greenberg, told Abraham Levy of the JAAS that this "is the first time that the crop of the Jewish farmers had been threshed before November since they have been here."91 (121-122)

The Jewish farmers were apparently observing the holidays which were frequent throughout the harvesting season.\(^92\) In contrast to Maier Calof's narrative, holidays were scarcely mentioned in Rachel Calof's text. Neither version, Yiddish or English, mentioned postponing harvesting; or alternatively, not observing the holidays. Possibly Abraham and Rachel Calof harvested and did not record the transgression, whereas the Maier Calof family would not do that. Only one Jewish holiday was mentioned in the Yiddish manuscript: on Rosh Hashana after her fourth birth, Rachel said her mother-in-law would be traveling to be with her granddaughter, Doba (Maier Calof's wife), since that home was apparently more strictly observant (207Y). The English publication added a paragraph about Rachel and Abraham Calof's home becoming a “center for all the Jewish holiday celebrations” (85); however, Rachel did not refer to additional holidays in the Yiddish manuscript.\(^93\) Nonetheless, I waver between explanations for her omission of the holidays: were the holidays so obvious that they did not warrant mention? Or was she so caught up in the agricultural seasons that the Jewish holidays were secondary, however unlikely that may seem? If the Calof farm had been remote and isolated, perhaps it would have been conceivable that the holidays were not observed, but they obviously were not secluded. The photograph in the English text, labeled “a minyan on the Calof farm, circa 1910” (122) indicated that the home was a central gathering place; the caption

\(^{92}\) My awareness of this stemmed from having farmed in Israel for ten years.

\(^{93}\) I understood from Ceil Stephens, Rachel's youngest daughter, that her mother was pious and observed the holidays (including owning and using a special set of dishes for Passover at least after they moved to St. Paul). The children were not necessarily observant (Stephens). Elizabeth's daughter, Joyce Aronsohn suggested that their home was kosher more for her paternal relatives than for her grandmother, Rachel Calof (Aronsohn).
neglected to specify the holiday as though it was of no importance, or perhaps, the gathering was so obviously a holiday that it did not warrant elaboration. The absence of the holiday cycle was not a change on the editor’s part; with one exception, Rachel Calof literally did not mention holidays in the course of her memoir.

Rachel Calof’s lack of mention of the holiday cycles intrigues me. Her text moved from season to season dominated by agriculture; in contrast, Maier Calof’s text covering the same time of settlement mentioned the holidays frequently: “In our part of the land spring was far from being warm. But the warmth of the holiday overwhelmed us. The seder, with all its beautiful and impressive ceremonies, the wine, the special food, all were tasteful and delicious” (M. Calof 30). One possibility was that the cognitive dissonance was overwhelming: if Rachel’s family was operating farming equipment during the fall holidays (Rosh Hashana, Yom Kippur, Sukkot) in the race against the impending rain, perhaps inscribing it and giving permanence to the transgression was more than Rachel Calof could write. Or, since we did know that when Abraham worked for a distant farmer, he nonetheless returned to the farmer even on Shabbat, perhaps the incongruity was within the home. If he was not observant, and there were indications that he was not, perhaps the holidays were a source of conflict? But we also knew that Rachel, while piously observant, had lived with her non-observant aunt in the Ukraine. The reconciliation of their customs was described by Elizabeth Jameson: “The Calofs worked to maintain customs that represented the core of their Jewish identity, while they
reconstructed their ‘Jewishness’ in new circumstances” (147). The omission of the holidays in the narratives, both Yiddish and English, seems to bestartlingly unlikely.

Historian Harold Sharfman claimed that the frontier forced Jewish assimilation, but the Jewish community in Ramsey County, ND, in the late nineteenth century apparently was unlike the frontier situations to which he was referring. The Calofs seem to have defied most of his troubling predictions: they settled in a frontier with literally hundreds of Jewish people in their albeit far-flung farming area. Furthermore, they urgently arranged for the single people to be married in and among the community, or to bring brides specially from abroad. Perhaps the Devils Lake, North Dakota, settlements were isolated, but they seem to have done what was necessary to ensure their survival as Jewish families.

Rachel Kahn Calof was one of those eligible brides from the Old Country. Jocelyn Cohen noted that particularly for orphans the

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94 “Not even the tenacity of the American Jewish immigrants could withstand the erosive pressures of the frontier... For the demands of pioneering decreed that no minority – ethnic or religious – could maintain its identity during the westering process. The primitive frontiers provided no clergy or teachers as a link with the past, no teachers to keep faith alive, no synagogues for worship, no leisure that would keep the Sabbath holy, no kosher foods necessary in upholding the dietary laws. Instead they hurried the disintegration of traditional practices in two ways. First, most Jews, in common with other minorities, tended to move westward as individuals, thus subjecting themselves to alien pressures an denying themselves the group strength needed to preserve inherited beliefs and practices. Second, men always outnumbered women along the western fringes. In fact, few Jewish women were among the frontier pioneers. Marriage beyond the faith was common, and with that marriage a loss of Jewish identity. The lone Jew, denied the companionship of others of his faith and married to a Gentile with little sympathy for his religious beliefs, simply disappeared into the emerging social order” (x).

95 Maier Calof settled north of Devils Lake in 1890 or 1891: “A Jewish colony in North Dakota existed, where 200 settlers worked the land and earned an honest livelihood. Those settlers were good Jews. They observed the Sabbath” (17).

96 One of Abraham Calof’s first missions in the United States was to deliver his nieces, Doba and Sarah, to Maier Calof and his brother, Lieb, in 1891. The marriages were arranged by Maier and Lieb’s father in the States and the father’s brother in Steblev. Abraham apparently went back to New York to earn money for his parents’ and Rachel Calof’s passages (M. Calof 21-24).
children's social status plummeted, along with their future marriage prospects, most likely because such children had neither an advocate in the complex negotiations surrounding marriage nor, quite simply, access to resources for either a dowry or funds to pay for a wedding. An orphan—defined as a child who had lost one or both parents—was thus left vulnerable to the exploitation of extended family members, and often became the object of charity. (30)

Rachel was at risk of becoming an object of charity or the servant in her aunt's house, and an unknown fiancé was a better prospect. Historian Linda Schloff clarified the specific cultural norms: “This culture had no place for single women. A woman's basic requirement was to become a wife and mother. Marriage was seen as a religious obligation as well as an economic union” (*Prairie Dogs* 13). One of the challenges of the “religious obligation” that Rachel Calof described in great detail was the maintaining a Jewish home. While she did not delineate the holiday cycles, keeping a kosher home and preparing for the Sabbath was important to her. Perhaps observance of the dietary prohibitions was not paramount compared to her mother-in-law's adherence; nonetheless many episodes of cleaning before the Sabbath, making *challah*, and lighting Sabbath candles, reinforced the importance she ascribed to maintaining her Jewish home.

The next section elaborates upon several textual discrepancies concerning maintaining a kosher home against almost impossible odds. The comparisons below offer explanations of similar incidents that I found were confused in translation or compilation. The laws of *kashrut* (Jewish dietary laws) relevant to these incidents refer to eating only meat prepared by a *shochat*, a ritual slaughterer, one versed in the prescribed method of butchering an animal, a method causing the least pain to the animal. Another prohibition forbids mixing meat and milk at the same meal.
Finally, human survival takes precedence over all dietary laws and observance of Shabbat rest. That is, if a life is at stake, Jewish rituals must be abandoned in favor of saving the life.

**Yiddish manuscript**
And we “decided” we’re going to kill the “chicken” but we didn’t have a shochet. And who’s going to kill the chicken. He [Abe] cannot. My brother-in-law cannot, my father-in-law cannot, but my younger brother-in-law took on to do it. He chopped off the chicken’s head. There’s no treife pot to cook the “chicken”. My mother-in-law went out and found a “can” with some canned “stuff” in it. The can was rusted. But my mother-in-law took on to scrub the can with ashes. And she rubbed the can and gave it to me I should put it on with a piece of chicken. I was very happy, not so much for myself as for my poor child. And I will give her a little bit of soup and a little piece of meat. But my joy was not justified. I couldn’t eat the chicken and I of course was afraid to give it to my child because it had a smell. I say a smell because I can’t say how bad it smelled and with rust. My mother-in-law tells me that it smells like a corpse because the shochet didn’t kill the chicken. [The mother-in-law said] Because I wasn’t well, I can eat it. But I had a feeling that I should not eat it. And I threw everything out. My baby’s little hand improved. I almost healed it.

**English published version**
We had a cow by now but she was about to calve and gave no milk. You may question why we did not slaughter the cow or one of the oxen for food. I don’t believe it ever occurred to anyone to kill and eat an animal that had not been ritually slaughtered according to the precepts of our religion. (66)

(earlier section)
She [Rachel Calof’s mother-in-law] chose to use an old rusted pan from which she attempted to remove the rust by scouring with ashes from the stove. I was afraid that the infant would get blood poisoning from this water but I washed her upper body anyway.

The mother-in-law now prepared food for us. She made taiglach (noodles) and milk and cooked a piece of chicken in the same rust-streaked pan in which she had just heated the water. I was quite hungry and looked forward to having something with which to feed the baby as well. My anticipation was short-lived. The cooked chicken was streaked and besides smelled very strange. I wouldn’t eat this food, and I certainly would not put any of the liquid from it in the child’s mouth. Even the old woman admitted the food smelled rotten, but she

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97 Ritual slaughterer.
98 Not kosher.
I will now examine these moments of discrepancy one by one. The first instance is a contrast between a desperate debate about whether or not to kill a chicken and the ensuing detailed discussion among the Calof family in the Yiddish manuscript and the English version’s contention that it never “occurred to anyone” to violate Jewish law in this manner.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Yiddish manuscript</th>
<th>English published version</th>
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<td>but a little hole was left. The scar was in the “form” from the cover from stove when you grab it with a tongs from the top of the “stove”. (166-168)</td>
<td>attributed this to the belief that the chicken had probably not been killed in the prescribed kosher manner. (48)</td>
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This discrepancy was one of the most startling differences between the English published version of *Rachel Calof’s Story* and the Yiddish manuscript. Appearing only in the Yiddish manuscript, the decision to slaughter a chicken came shortly after the birth of the second daughter, Hannah. Precisely at that same juncture in the story, the English version deliberately claimed “it never occurred to anyone to kill and eat an animal that had not been ritually slaughtered according to
the precepts of our religion." Both the Yiddish and the English versions described Hannah’s arm needing ointment after the burns at birth, but the English did not include the next section on the decision to slaughter the chicken, and then the English version continued with another section out of chronological order, a rain storm which appeared later in the Yiddish manuscript. But why precisely when they were contemplating and killing a chicken to survive, did the English version claim that such a thought “never occurred to anyone”?

While the texts appeared to be in direct contradiction, I suspected that some of the difference was directly related to the piecemeal nature of the translation and compilation. Alternatively, assuming that Jacob received the entire translation, he would have known that there was at least one instance in which the Calof family not only contemplated but executed a non-kosher slaughtering of a chicken. Would this have surprised him? Had his mother never mentioned this episode? Was this a family secret, known only to the older generation and to none of the children? Original translator Molly Shaw said the mother-in-law would never have agreed to a non-kosher meal (Shaw), but in this instance the mother-in-law was present and complicit.

Rachel’s style of writing amplified her ambivalence in this passage. She used English words such as “decided” and her first reference to the chicken was in English (in Yiddish letters). She assumed a Jewish audience and did not explain the problematic nature of what was being discussed, nor did she parenthetically explain the word shochet. By the second reference to the chicken, the word was in Yiddish.
She did not name any names in the section, which was not unusual for her writing, but she was quite precise and deliberate as she went through the men in the family. Her husband was incapable of committing this transgression, as was her elderly father-in-law. The older brother-in-law, Charlie, would later take his part of the non-kosher ox at the circumcision of Rachel’s son, but at this point in his survival on the prairie, he was unable to kill a chicken. Only the younger brother-in-law, unnamed, was capable of the undertaking. Rachel could not refer to this killing with the Yiddish word for slaughter since that would imply the sanction of the ritual slaughterer; instead she used a more American term: “chopped off the chicken’s head,” which was of course accurate, and thoroughly unacceptable in terms of Jewish precepts.

The next comparison is a continuation of the same chicken slaughtering discussion from the Yiddish manuscript and an earlier English section; supposedly unrelated, nonetheless the similarities are striking.

**Yiddish manuscript**

There’s no treife pot to cook the “chicken”. My mother-in-law went out and found a “can” with some canned “stuff” in it. The can was rusted. But my mother-in-law took on to scrub the can with ashes. And she rubbed the can and gave it to me. (166-167Y)

**English published version (earlier section)**

She [Rachel’s mother-in-law] chose to use an old rusted pan from which she attempted to remove the rust by scouring with ashes from the stove. I was afraid that the infant would get blood poisoning from this water but I washed her upper body anyway. (48)

Even though these sections did not match chronologically, I heard the echo of the same rusty can being cleaned with ashes in both the incident about the decision to kill and cook a chicken, and the inexplicable non-kosher meal at the birth of Rachel’s first daughter. I began to suspect that the tales had been intertwined.
The incident in English was one that had puzzled scholars before me. After Rachel Bella gave birth to Minnie, her first daughter, the mother-in-law returned to prepare food for her. It was the Sabbath and they were waiting for the stars to come out, indicating the end of the Sabbath. The mother-in-law made *taiglach* and milk and then, in the English translation, she cooked a piece of chicken (48). The unlikelihood of the mother-in-law cooking a milk and meat dinner was noted by Sandy Rikoon as he added this footnote: “Rachel Bella Calof’s mother-in-law appears to be preparing a meal that violates the central *kashrut* dietary prohibition against mixing milk and meat. This inconsistency remains unexplained; it may be a simple question of memory” (94).

The Yiddish manuscript did not mention a chicken: “*my mother-in-law asks me what I want to eat and I really wanted a lot of good food but there was nothing. She tells me that she is going to cook taglich for me which is small pieces of dough with milk. And she warmed up a little bit of water and she handed me an old bowl with the water. The bowl was tin and I thought maybe the child will be blood poisoned but I must do it*” (112-113Y). I was so puzzled about this inconsistency that I sent this portion of the manuscript to Molly Shaw and asked her to verify Joe Rozenberg’s translation of this one incident. She confirmed: no chicken.

Puzzled, I began to consider alternative explanations and this was one of the reasons I considered the piecemeal nature of the translation and compilation process. About fifty pages later in the Yiddish manuscript, a section remarkably similar to the inexplicable non-kosher meal appeared. Of course, the discussion
about killing the chicken was significantly different in that the decision was a conscious choice in terms of survival with no *shochet* available, rather than a seemingly inadvertent, unlikely, non-kosher meal that someone perhaps did not remember correctly. My contention is that since Jacob did not have the original Yiddish pagination as he was compiling the translation, his placement of these two episodes in tandem would have been a simple mistake – even just matching the tin pans or cans. Jacob might also have been unaware of the principle of *pikuah nefesh*, the Jewish concept that would have authorized even non-kosher slaughter in times of dire need. Saving a human life always overrode issues of keeping kosher. The Yiddish manuscript seemed to recognize this precept when the mother-in-law said that Rachel, weakened by childbirth, could eat the chicken even if it had not been killed in a kosher manner. The mother-in-law's position was later contradicted in the English version when the *shochet* allowed Rachel to eat of the non-kosher ox and conflict between the families resulted, dividing those who accepted his ruling and those who did not.

Continuing this comparison, the final example described the chicken slaughtered by Rachel's brother-in-law as inedible, remarkably similar to the chicken in the unlikely, un-kosher meal after Rachel's birth.

**Yiddish manuscript**

*I should put it on with a piece of chicken. I was very happy, not so much for myself as for my poor child. And I will give her a little bit of soup and a little piece of meat. But my joy was not justified. I*

**English published version**

The mother-in-law now prepared food for us. She made taiglach (noodles) and milk and cooked a piece of chicken in the same rust-streaked pan in which she had just heated the water. I was quite
Yiddish manuscript
couldn't eat the chicken and I of
course was afraid to give it to my
child because it had a smell. I say a
smell because I can't say how bad it
smelled and with rust. My mother-in-
law tells me that it smells like a
corpse because the shochet didn't
kill the chicken. [The mother-in-law
said] Because I wasn't well, I can eat
it. But I had a feeling that I should
not eat it. And I threw everything out.
My baby's little hand improved. I
almost healed it but a little hole was
left. The scar was in the "form" from
the cover from stove when you grab
it with a tongs from the top of the
"stove". (166-168)

English published version
hungry and looked forward to having
something with which to feed the baby
as well. My anticipation was short-lived.
The cooked chicken was streaked and
besides smelled very strange. I wouldn't
eat this food, and I certainly would not
put any of the liquid from it in the child's
mouth. Even the old woman admitted
the food smelled rotten, but she
attributed this to the belief that the
chicken had probably not been killed in
the prescribed kosher manner. (48)

Certain confusing aspects of these two stories exist, even with the texts in front of
me with the numbered pages placed in order. In the Yiddish manuscript, the story
continued without disruptive junctures. The chicken that the younger brother-in-law
killed and the mother-in-law cooked in the tin can/pan that she had cleaned with
ashes, was inedible. Whether this was a function of the rusty cooking implements or
the mother-in-law's and Rachel's beliefs that an improperly slaughtered animal
would inherently be inedible, the elements of the story continued in a chronological
narrative. The baby was Hannah, and her hand was improving by the end of the
story with the ointment that Abe brought from town.

The English version was far more confusing. First, the mother-in-law would
not have made a chicken meal with milk. She objected strongly to slaughtering a
chicken in a non-prescribed manner, though in the end, she did cooperate with the
cooking of the chicken. But I suspect that Jacob would not necessarily have noticed
that mixing milk and meat would have been inconceivable to both his grandmother and his mother. He merely had the cans/panes substituted and the chicken that stank from a different episode. More evidence that this was in comprehensible to him was that his English passage concluded when the mother-in-law “attributed this to the belief that the chicken had probably not been killed in the prescribed kosher manner.” His earlier statement “it never occurred to anyone” to kill an animal without the shochet contradicted this conclusion. He could not seem to reconcile the contemplation and implementation of non-kosher slaughter with the actuality of life on the prairie. However, in the conclusion of this section, a very tiny glimpse afforded us the understanding that there was a possibility of non-kosher meat, even if he did not want to portray his family as having participated in the actual slaughter.
6.0 Collaboration: multi-authored works in families and oral traditions

Families with manuscripts to edit face a complicated dilemma: how best to convey the story in the original author's voice without making significant editorial changes? Textual changes often facilitate readers' understanding and contribute to a successful publication. I investigate here multi-authored texts – both family-based and ethnographic collaborations. Collaborating families pose interesting riddles when more than one writer contributes. At the same time, I find that the anthropological focus on stories from subject to researcher to audience is relevant to this discussion since anthropologists focus on clarifying and making transparent the multiple contributions in the final text. Since these collaborational conundra seemed to overlap, I combine the two matrixes of investigation and consider multi-authored production of texts.

Readers have conflicting expectations. Philippe Lejeune's description of the pact of autobiography authorship demanded that a single author create a text. The public continues to pretend that there are not multiple examples of multi-authored texts. Tension between the demand for a single-author book and acceptable narrative has resulted in adjustments being made and not revealed. Readers have no patience for repetition, pauses or punctuation errors. Narratives need plots, characters and closure, and any deviation from these expectations is likely to result in an unpublished manuscript. Audiences might prefer the author to be one person, non-mediated and pure, but they would not read books with narrative problems.
Finally, this dilemma produced partially disguised characters and uplifting stories, since it was never enough to correct the grammar and to tighten the narrative plot (Temple Frontiers). Hidden editing ultimately resulted in changes in characters’ qualities. The “improved” stories were quite different from the original texts. Simultaneously, ethnographers in the last twenty years established limits and learned to prevent unwarranted adjustments in transmitting stories. Audiences might be more willing to accept the changes if glosses in italics provided sources for changes here and there, making visible responsibility for the differences. Controversy about Barbara Myerhoff’s conceptual development of a “third voice” stemmed from questions about the faithfulness of transmissions. That there could be a third voice seemed true and remarkably like the issues with editing within the family. However, the same issues that haunt the third voice appear in the family as well.99

The authors with collaborating or editing families that I focus upon primarily are Alice James, Laura Ingalls Wilder and Anne Frank. Alice James began her diary while she was in England in 1886 and she kept it until she died, dictating when she was too weak to write (Edel 2). My research focuses not on

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99 One of the most significant issues in defining whether something is collaboration or appropriation was whether both sides of the collaboration were even alive. It was far more difficult to identify cooperation when one person worked with a dead person’s material. That case hardly implied the kind of agreement that we expect when thinking about collaboration. On the other hand, appropriation implies that the active agent is gaining from the work, while he or she may only be continuing an ongoing project, as in the case of Laura Ingalls Wilder and her daughter, Rose Wilder Lane, or there may have been an implicit agreement for another to carry on with a project left uncompleted. To what extent is agreement necessary for a work to be considered collaborative? Or, in the case of Black Elk Speaks, even with the agreement of all of the parties, changing ethnographic theory seemed to redefine a work considered collaborative, to question if it wasn’t perhaps more of an appropriation. Thus, an answer developed today may not be intrinsically the answer accepted in another time or place.
the substance of the work, but on its treatment regarding publication in the family. Leon Edel documented the transition from the bequeathal to Katharine Peabody Loring who “edited the manuscript by straightening its punctuation a little, altering an occasional word, deleting some passages, and introducing a half-a-dozen footnotes” (v). Loring printed four copies which she intended to give to Alice James’ brothers. Henry James asked her to withhold the copies since he was afraid that “the youngest brother, Robertson, or his children, would through carelessness or indiscretion make the diary known” (vi). Loring held onto the manuscript for fifty years before giving it to one of Robertson’s descendents. In 1934, it was printed “as part of a volume also to Wilky (another brother) and Robertson” (vi). Edel said, “Alice remained posthumously, as she had been all her life – the mere younger sister; her claim to attention was still as an appendage to brothers” (vi). This publication included an “82-page introduction devoted to the younger brothers” and the editor “robbed the diary of much of its point by omitting Alice’s clippings from the English papers,” those very clippings which gave the context of her commentary (Edel vii). After family prohibitions, “truncations” and burial amidst superfluous texts, the diary was finally published in 1934 by Leon Edel who utilized the original manuscript and the Loring edition which had all of the original clippings “reproduced in full” (Edel viii). In the diary’s journey, first the family protected itself from gossip and suppressed publication, then utilized the text for the greater family glory, and only in its final

100 Edel’s edition did not include the clippings, but relied on Loring’s edition which had not excised them.
incarnation by a non-family scholar was the diary reproduced as a primary source and subject.

Laura Ingalls Wilder wrote her stories of the American frontier during the 1930s and 1940s. In the past fifteen years different researchers have contended that the contributions of Laura Ingalls Wilder’s daughter, Rose Wilder Lane, were significant; at the very least Lane was editing, if not collaborating or even ghostwriting (Holtz, Romines, Fellman). Ann Romines said: “Until her death in 1968, Rose Wilder Lane defended the myth of her mother’s sole authorship against the strong evidence (overwhelmingly apparent in the Wilder-Lane papers) that Wilder and Lane collaborated on the series” (7). In his *The Ghost in the Little House: A Life of Rose Wilder Lane* (1993), William Holtz demonstrated with multiple examples Lane’s “silent ghostwriting of her mother’s stories” (Davis 104). Moreover, Lane “denied that her mother’s books were fictional in any way, ‘They are the truth and only the truth’, ” (Fellman). Wilder herself would only claim that what she wrote was true, but “not the whole truth” since she thought that children did not need to read every brutal detail (Jameson “Ma” 49). The Wilder-Lane case reflected collaboration between family members in the sense widely understood: two living people consenting to a process, which is not revealed to the public.

Perhaps the most well-known family editing was of Anne Frank’s *Diary of a Young Girl*. First published in 1947, recent editions include David Barnouw and Gerrold Van Der Stroom’s *The Diary of Anne Frank: The Critical Edition* (1989),
Mirjam Pressler's *The Diary of a Young Girl: The Definitive Edition* (1995) and a new edition in 2001 with "five previously unpublished pages describing her troubled relationship with her mother and her parents' 'marriage of convenience'" (Bunkers *Whose*, Allen). Otto Frank edited Anne Frank's diary after he survived World War II and received her manuscript from Mip Gies, who had rescued it from the attic annex (Bunkers *Whose*). Bunke cited Mirjam Pressler's explanation of the different manuscript versions: "Anne Frank kept a diary from June 12, 1942, until August 1, 1944. Although Anne initially kept it for herself, she soon decided that, when the war was over, she would publish a book based on her diary" (Bunkers *Whose* n.pag). Laureen Nussbaum said

prompted by a call over Radio Orange from London by the Dutch Secretary of Education, Culture and Sciences in exile, Anne resolves during the spring of 1944 to rewrite her original diary entries in order to publish them after the war. May 20, 1944, she starts her thorough revision and, in ten weeks, she manages to fill 324 loose pages with her careful rewrite. (n.pag)

In *The Critical Edition*, "the original text is called the a-version; the rewritten text the b-version" (Nussbaum n.pag). Otto Frank's edited version, published in 1952, is a combination of versions a and b and is found in *The Critical Edition* referred to as version c (Nussbaum n.pag). Nussbaum described Otto Frank's editing as undoing much of Anne's thoughtful revision, including scenes that Anne had cut or changed. For half of 1942, both versions of the diary existed and a comparison of the two versions reflects the two years' difference in Anne's maturity. The changes in the c-version were not the same revisions that Anne Frank made to her own work in anticipation of publication but rather "Father Frank undid these
revisions. Apparently, he wanted to preserve, both for himself and for the reader, the image of his beloved, tempestuous little Anne and did not know how to deal with the more objective, spiritually more autonomous young writer” (Nussbaum n.pag). The comparison was vivid since for one period, 1943, only the “revised manuscript” existed; the earlier version did not survive. Nussbaum said, “For that period of time, the reader gets the best insight into the kind of texts Anne had prepared for publication: vignettes about the daily routine in the ‘back-quarters’ and witty descriptions of keenly observed special episodes that interrupt that routine...Towards the end of 1943 her entries become more self-critical and introspective” (Nussbaum n.pag). As I continue the discussion of family editing, collaboration and appropriation, I will develop a typology of the changes and will refer back to these particular family collaborations.

Thinking about the characteristics of family input, the first issue is the perspective of the family member taking over the editing. The possible family relations span the gamut – sons about mothers, fathers about daughters, brothers about sisters, daughters about mothers – crossing generations and genders. The urge for propriety runs in both directions, from the younger to the older and from the older to the younger. Sons and daughters want their mothers to be proper as much as fathers want it of their daughters. Lane and Wilder represent the relationship of the younger generation instructing the older: “the daughter began to cast herself as aggressive, ambitious instructor and mentor for her less experienced mother” (Romines 18). Joyce Antler’s research about Lucy
Sprague Mitchell involved interviewing Mitchell's children in an attempt to understand the family life of the public figure and educator: "To varying degrees, all three children admired and respected their mother, yet they strongly resented her work and her manner of child rearing" (Antler 104). Even though Mitchell had written about the "successful synthesis of work and family as a central theme of her life" her children did not recall the domestic situation as successful (Antler 104-105). In spite of the evidence of both their father's diary and their mother's published memoir *Two Lives*, the Mitchell children "recalled very little of their mother's actual presence in their lives, focusing on her neglect rather than involvement. Sometimes the discrepancies appeared so major that I wondered if there were two different versions of family life: the parents' and the children's" (Antler 105). In the introduction to *The Challenge of Feminist Biography: Writing the Lives of Modern American Women* (1992), the authors suggested that children might not be reliable witnesses to their parents' lives:

We used oral evidence, the testimony of children, relatives, and friends of our subjects. Again, all historians who use oral evidence must resolve dilemmas about the reliability, accuracy, and motives of witnesses. But biographers of women face special problems. Some children, we found, blanked out everything negative about their mothers, others everything favorable. Because society still expects mothers to be more responsible for domestic life than fathers, might children judge mothers more harshly than fathers? If so, how does the biographer weight their testimony? (Alperin et al 12-13).

Tension in the family eliminated reliable sources and made questionable all material from sources so closely invested.
Collaboration within families is based entirely upon these sources so deeply and personally invested. Otto Frank could not have actively collaborated with his daughter; she was no longer alive. Yet he took liberties that Cynthia Ozick described as “the transformation of the diary from one kind of witness to another kind: from the painfully revealing to the partially concealing” (81). These transformations took three forms: content-based, style-based, and the slanting of texts towards appropriateness. Judy Nolte Temple described the work the Gillespie family did in changing their memoir: “Emily Gillespie and her daughter created a textual memorial based on family lies” (Frontiers 158). The Calof family contributed to Rachel Calof’s manuscript by recollecting the oral histories, but also biased the stories with the slanting of some texts which will be discussed further in the divergences section of this chapter.

Otto Frank edited into his daughter’s diary optimism out of proportion and out of context. Ozick said

his preference was to accentuate what he called Anne’s ‘optimistical view on life’. Yet the diary’s more celebrated line (infamously celebrated, one might add) – “I still believe, in spite of everything, that people are truly good at heart” – has been torn out of its bed of thorns. Two sentences later (and three weeks before she was seized and shipped to Westerbork), the diarist sets down a vision of darkness: “I see the world being slowly transformed into a wilderness, I hear the approaching thunder that, one day, will destroy us too, I feel the suffering of millions.” (81)

Otto reinstated “emotional outbursts” that Anne had revised out of the a-version, and changed passages, so that “much of the coherence of the compositional set-up of Anne’s b-version is lost” (Nussbaum n.pag). Ozick said “The ‘real contents’ had already been altered by Frank himself, and understandably, given the
propriety of his own background and of the times" (82). Perhaps this alteration was to be expected. Judy Nolte Temple said that "almost no century-old personal document remains unaltered by either an author with second thoughts, a nervous relative or the elements" (Lensink *Secret* 387).

Another type of change made by Otto Frank was the altering of the religious content of the texts. He made the diary less reflective of Jewishness: "he deleted numerous expressions of religious faith, a direct reference to Yom Kippur, terrified reports of Germans seizing Jews in Amsterdam. It was prudence, prudishness, and perhaps his own deracinated temperament that stimulated many of these tamperings" (Ozick 82). One of the main conflicts about the transformation of the diary into a play production, according to Ralph Melnick, was that Otto Frank insisted that Meyer Levin should "not make a Jewish play of it" because "it's not a Jewish book" (Melnick xiii). How could it not be a Jewish play? How could it be torn from its historical context and stripped of one of its reasons for having been written? Secularization seemed to be a common function of family editing: Jacob Calof changed much of his mother’s speech to eliminate her frequent references to God. She often thanked God, credited him with success, pleaded with him for better conditions. It was the cadence of a religious person speaking. It would perhaps seem old fashioned, but even today, an Orthodox Jewish person’s answer to the question “how are you?” would be answered by "*Baruch Hashem*" meaning literally “God is blessed,” but implying
that the person is well, thank God. These types of references do not appear in
the English version.

Similar types of editing liberties seemed to be common in such
collaborations, even when not family members. In *Black Elk Speaks*, an
elementary of a text transmitted orally to a recorder, John Neihardt, also
transformed the religious references of the subject in a manner inconsistent with
the records:

> On the one hand Neihardt presented Black Elk as more traditional than he
was, completely suppressing Black Elk’s conversion and his career as a
Roman Catholic catechist, which are still unknown to most readers of the
narrative. On the other hand, Neihardt subtly and implicitly Westernized
and Christianized Black Elk’s story, particularly with regard to its climactic
events, the Ghost Dance and the massacre at Wounded Knee. (Couser
91)

Carl Silvio questioned not only the “authenticity of the text,” but also whether
Neihardt was not using Black Elk in a form of “ventriloquism” or “cultural
imperialism” (2). These similarities in transitions from oral to written textual
transmission prompted me to investigate those professionals who regularly report
on other texts, albeit usually oral transmissions. The concern with transparency
in the discipline of ethnography was precisely what I was looking for to explain
what was missing in the Calof family control of information. Families assumed
“control” if the text was a relative’s, while when strangers investigated others, the

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101Carl Silvio said “Since its original publication in 1932, this text has come to be considered one
of the most highly regarded and is certainly one of the most widely read Native American
biographies ever. ...Neihardt’s account of Nicholas Black Elk’s life as a Lakota holy man has
received an enormous amount of critical attention, especially in the last fifteen years as scholars
have made a serious bid for the canonicity of Native American literature. In spite of this attention,
however, the text has often been negatively valued for the liberties, which in some cases
consisted of outright fabrications, that Neihardt took in adapting Black Elk’s story” (2).
story of the translation or transmission became critical. Ruth Behar, in *Translated Woman: Crossing the Border with Esperanza’s Story* (1993), elaborately explained how Esperanza’s story developed which “neatly reflects the process of how my *comadre* and I became mediums for each other’s stories” (14). Behar told how the book was divided into their separate stories and how finally she offered a series of reflections – written from this side of the border and in the context of my location in the academy – on Esperanza’s story and how it might be read from feminist, historical, and autobiographical perspectives. Each of my reflections can be read as a separate conclusion to the book, but together I hope they provide a three-dimensional view of Esperanza as well as of the woman who became her biographer. (14)

Of course this kind of academic reflection was precisely what Genero Padilla rejected when he wrote of the current practice fashionable among critical anthropologists of calling their own imperial practices into question, many of whom are shaping powerful academic careers for themselves by speaking in a confessional mode, a self-reflexive narcissism that further displaces Third World people by making them the objects of theoretical speculation. Although this kinder, gentler anthropology calls for collaborative, dialogic ethnographic exchange, it is in my estimation just another strategy for focusing attention on the anthropologist rather than on the people whose lives are confiscated in one way or another by strangers. (240)

Somewhere there exists a compromise between the “imperialism” that Padilla rejected and Behar’s belief that she and Esperanza became “ mediums” – implying equality – when there was not equality in their relationship. But the problematic nature of the “complex dynamics and problematic processes of cross-cultural collaboration” (Couser 289) need not dominate the entire discussion. For as Couser concluded, “Though much is still lost in translation, Black Elk continues to speak” (Couser 289), as do Esperanza, and Anne Frank
and Rachel Calof. By examining the seemingly more challenging issues of "cross-cultural credibility" (Couser 283), we may get to the issues and thus discover what was not examined in the family collaborations. Lois Rudnick explained that biographers are "active agents" and this notion I suspect got lost in family collaboration. Jacob Calof and Otto Frank, working with existing manuscripts, might not have seen themselves as "active agents" and might not have even considered that they "create their subjects from a particular angle of vision and with a particular set of strategies that help determine the outcome" (Rudnick 118). Perhaps Calof and Frank were so utterly convinced that the manuscripts were theirs to expound upon and rearrange that they lost sight of the degree to which the subject was indeed separate from themselves. Part of the family, yes; identical, no.

Barbara Myerhoff, "an assimilated Jew with no knowledge of Yiddish" (Kaminsky "Introduction" 20) took on the role of translating the culture of an elderly Jewish community in her hugely influential _Number Our Days_. Marc Kaminsky suggested that Myerhoff, in the absence of the children of her older subjects "assume[d] the role of cultural next-of-kin which, by extension gives her property rights over the informant's words" ("Introduction" 20). The implication was that "she can dispose of them in what she believes to be the best interests of the treasure entrusted to her keeping. She is called upon to transmit Yiddishkeit to succeeding generations because the actual children of these elders have discarded the precious legacy that was, but no longer is, theirs" ("Introduction"
20-21). This to me, is indicative of where Jacob Calof went wrong. Although he didn't have training in anthropology or even an inclination to reflect upon his viewpoint, he took charge and assumed that he knew the "best interests" of the treasure "entrusted" to him. He also assumed that he would know best to convey his mother's voice when his mother originally entrusted the manuscript to her daughter, Elizabeth. Yiddish probably complicated the process, for both Myerhoff and Jacob Calof. Yiddish had always been an "oral vehicle of communication" (Harshaw 21) and allowed a symbolization that could be summarized in a limited reference, one that was not always translatable without an extensive philosophical and historical explanation. The "imprisoning" of meaning by writing was a "long Western tradition" which, as Françoise Lionnet commented, "conceives of writing as a system that rigidifies, stultifies, kills because it imprisons meaning... instead of allowing a ... [living logos] to adjust fluidly to the constantly changing context of oral communication in which interlocutors

\[102\] Benjamin Harshav said of Yiddish, "it is not the systematic essay but the concatenation of an associative chain that characterizes Yiddish discourse and its Hebrew sources. This mode of discourse was captured by James Joyce in the characterization of Bloom and is typical of Bellow's writing (in most cases, this style is motivated by modern psychological theory). In this mode, the small units of language and thematic motifs are not strung on one narrative string and made subordinate to the unfolding of plot or an architectonic structure, but are relatively independent and episodic; they can easily relate to their contextual neighbors in several directions and, more important, they are related to a total universe of discourse outside the particular context. That is, they become emblematic or symbolic. At the same time, such a unit clashes with and relates to its discontinuous neighbors, creating mutual reinforcement, semantic density, stylistic play, and irony in this tangle" (100-101).
influence each other” (Lionnet *Autobiographical 3*).103 Scriptocentric expectations, based in a long history of prioritizing and idealizing the written, valorize written expression over oral. Yiddish subverted that cultural expectation, as did some translations from oral culture to written culture. For example, some Native American literature overcame transcription difficulties and the privileging of the written narrative. Arnold Krupat, according to Silvio, does not take these significant alterations in Black Elk’s story as cause to dismiss or devalue the book. For him, Native American autobiography always tolerates a degree of ‘distortion’ for these ‘texts are always the consequence of a collaboration, and … it is useful to know, as far as we can just how they were made.’ Neihardt’s intrusions into Black Elk’s story, in other words, occasion no pejorative judgment on Krupat’s part; they are an inevitable feature of this sort of autobiography and thus serve as part of an object of study. (Silvio 11)

Are family “intrusions” equally “inevitable” and acceptable? Or inevitable only if an element of translation from one language to another is involved?

The transition to written text also can distort original oral tales. Silvio said that the process of transcription inherently adapts to “Western narrative” which “entails, in most cases, a strong sense of closure; stories move from a beginning to an end and remain relatively stable and fixed, written down and inscribed in their linearity. Native American oral narratives, however, were retold in many different contexts and changed subtly with each retelling” (Silvio 9). Rachel Calof’s Yiddish manuscript did not have the closure that was invented for the

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103 Lionnet referred to how Derrida’s “relation of opposition between *écriture* and *parole* becomes established in Plato, and is thenceforth central to Western discourse.” She also discussed Montaigne’s insistence upon a secular language that wouldn’t be bound to an antiquated format of writing. Finally, she said “these central questions of orality and literacy, speech and writing, truth and hyperbole, transparency and obscurity have become the cornerstone of the cultural aesthetics of many postcolonial writers” (3-4).
English publication. Yet, because there was an original, *written* text by Rachel Calof, recreating her story and tracking the differences was possible. Carol Boyce Davies said that transcription “displaces” the story:

> The primary theoretical question posed in identifying life stories, orally narrated and transferred to print, is the problem of authority and control over the text. As distinct from written autobiography, where there is the assumption of a single, writing author and specific authorial control, the life story is first narrated orally and then presented in writing. In effect, then, two texts are active: the oral and the written. But in the process of writing the life, the oral text is displaced.

Because of the hybrid nature of the Calof text, perhaps we can allow and incorporate the oral nature of the home in which Rachel told stories as part of the text. Nonetheless, Rachel Calof’s Yiddish manuscript did not disappear. It may have been displaced. The English version may have been codified, but the original manuscript, held for two generations by people who could not read it, still left a trace. The manuscript still maintained the signifying voice; Rachel’s accent was clearly there when it was retranslated. Inscription had preserved a part of the story. I would hesitate to call her manuscript her whole story, but certainly it was one layer.

Narrative structure did more than codify Rachel Calof’s story. The process of translating and what Jacob Calof called “literacizing” shaped the story into a very different text. One of the examples that Marjorie Shostak gave in her description of writing *Nisa – The Life and Words of a !Kung Woman* was the loss of the “ritual form” of repetition. She said

> Another translation problem was the use of repetition. In a culture with strong oral traditions, repetition often becomes part of the ritual form. For
example, as one memory ended, Nisa often said, “and we lived and we lived and we lived.” (The phrase might actually be repeated several more times.) Although a more ‘literary’ expression could have been employed ... Nisa used repetition: it symbolized the passage of ordinary time, bridged two stories or parts together, and acted as a dramatic device around which to organize her thoughts — a technique used widely by other storytellers. In translating her words, such strong strings of repetitions did not work in English... In a sense this epitomizes the problem of translation: the !Kung expression conveys a different sense of time than do the English ones — a sense of the past that is more immediate and continuing. (237)

I’m not contending that Rachel Calof’s sense of time was contained in her use of repetition, but that Jacob’s “literacizing” removed the repetition and left us without adequate cues to what she was expressing in her choice of repeated phrases. Her vocabulary — at least the written vocabulary — was limited in its range of concrete objects, so that allowing added material, including oral stories, and completing other stories, seemed to be a wise choice on Jacob’s part. The mushroom story in a previous chapter just would not have tasted the same if the main dish had been parsley. Susan Frenk claimed “conventions restrict the translator” because “readers expect a familiar, conventional narrative from a life history, and anything else creates a barrier for them; yet a conventional narrative in Western terms may grossly distort the original story if it has been told in different narrative conventions, embodying different ideas and images” (142). That is not to say that typographical irregularities must be included. Elizabeth Hampsten said that “print exaggerates irregularities” giving them more weight than if the same message was relayed orally (“Editing” 234). Not spelling or punctuation, but grammar reveals more about “the workings of a writer’s mind”
and syntactical errors might be few in an "oral" text since it was written as spoken: “with short clauses but long stretches between full stops” ("Editing" 234). Thus texts which remind us of oral transmission are not necessarily full of errors, but would not impress a reader as sophisticated when viewed in print.

I have debated long and hard with myself about the relevance of Barbara Myerhoff’s concept of the “third voice” regarding Jacob and Rachel Calof’s joint text. On the face of the matter, the “third voice” was not exactly right for this analysis. The “third voice” is the combination of the person talking and the person interviewing. The dialogue, she contended, is more than the sum of the parts; a new element is created. Rachel Calof’s text did not include a third voice in the strictly Myerhoffian sense, in that there was no transcription of an interview. But some of the passages Jacob added contain commentary that was not in the Yiddish text and no one can know whether his additions were based on his understanding of his mother’s life – his recollection of the stories she had relayed over the many years he knew her. Of course, the “third voice” generated many problems, as did Jacob’s invention of Rachel’s opinions that are not evident in her Yiddish text. The ambiguity engendered by invention, “the voice of collaboration” was underlined by Myerhoff’s own reference to the “astounding moral oxymoron: by virtue of collusion” implying the “collaborative relation [ ] charged with secret purpose, secret knowledge, and secret guilt...Myerhoff did not use the word without an awareness of its moral intonation; she was playing off the morally suspect character of the contrivance against the ‘virtue’ and the
integrity' of 'the new creation'” (Kaminsky “Introduction” 6-7, 10-11). I'm not convinced that this was a confession of wrongdoing, any more than I think Jacob viewed his “collaboration” as anything but the necessary task of producing a more accurate text than what could have been understood from his mother's manuscript. Kaminsky asked how he could transcribe “the carton of words” that he had received from his grandmother: “How could I give all those words form? How could I render the experience that my grandmother's utterance communicated – evoked in me – accessible to others?” (Kaminsky YIVO 99). He called this a “lexicon of sighs” and a “wordless vocabulary” and said it was a “nuanced semiology of resignation, endurance, stoicism, and suffering” (Kaminsky YIVO 100). The question was how to translate and transcribe in order to faithfully render the message. He was frustrated, as was Myerhoff, and I imagine Jacob Calof to have been, by the “gap between the expressive richness of the dialogical event and the relative impoverishment of the verbatim transcript” (Kaminsky YIVO 100). Yet, as Ruth Behar insisted, the issue is not entirely “orality versus textuality” (12). The transcriber did indeed have to create a text “recognizable as a story,” but she said “the border between the 'spoken' and the 'written' is a fluid one” (12, emphasis hers). She went on

The more relevant distinction for me is Walter Benjamin's contrast between storytelling and information. Information, in Benjamin's analysis, is a mode of communication linked to the development of the printing press and of capitalism; it presents itself as verifiable, it is 'shot through with explanation,' and it is disposable because it is forgettable. Storytelling, on the other hand, is “always the art of repeating stories,” without explanation, combining the extraordinary and the ordinary. Most important, it is grounded in a community of listeners on whom the story
makes a claim to be remembered by virtue of its "chaste compactness," which inspires the listener, in turn, to become the teller of the story. It worries me that one does violence to the life history as a story by turning it into the disposable commodity of information. (Behar 12-13)

She did not resolve the problem but described her "approach" as "focus[ing] on the act of life story representation as reading rather than as informing, with its echoes of surveillance and disclosures of truth" (13).

Readers have conflicting expectations of narrative. Philippe Lejeune suggested that "secret collaboration is not a novelty" and gave examples of ghost-writing and "secretaryship" and "subcontracting" (On Autobiography 186-187). In a section called "twisting the contract" he developed the idea that many autobiographies were indeed collaborations and that the problem arose only when the question was "deceptions" (Lejeune On Autobiography 187). The contract between reader and author, as I develop in the chapter on autobiography, depended upon the author of the autobiography being one and the same with the protagonist and the first-person storyteller. To readers, however, deceptions seemed sometimes to be preferable to the truth. Laura Ingalls Wilder fans wanted to retain their image of the writer and did not want to know about her daughter's contributions or any collaboration. They wanted her to be "an untutored 'natural' writer, independently recording the story of her frontier childhood and adolescence and simultaneously reinforcing the values of individualism, cooperation, and survival that have come to seem seriously

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endangered" (Romines 13). Thus, an “elaborate dance” was established in the Wilder family's cover-up of the extent of the collaboration (Fellman 546). The process “locked the two women into a twelve-year collaboration and an implicit public deception about Lane's large role in the book's authorship” (Romines 243).

Otto Frank insisted in the epilogue of *The Diary of Anne Frank*: “Apart from very few passages, which are of little interest to the reader, the original text has been printed Thus, he created the “false impression” that he had not edited the diary (Nussbaum n.pag). "Nowhere in the original printed version ... does it say that he had edited his daughter's writings nor that, in preparing the book, he had time and again made choices between two very different versions of Anne's diary entries" (Nussbaum n.pag). The lack of acknowledgment of editorial interference resonated with my reading of Jacob Calof's involvement in the editorial process of preparing the English published version of *Rachel Calof's Story*. Susanne Bunkers claimed that “any diary that has been edited for publication, whether by a family member, an academic editor, a scholarly press, or a mass-market publishing house, bears the unmistakable marks of the editor(s) as well as the diarist" (Whose n.pag). Unmistakable perhaps, but

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105 Only some readers are angry with Otto Frank for his emphasis on Anne's judgment that most people are “truly good at heart;” most readers seemed to prefer the optimism to her conflicting message: “There's a destructive urge in people, the urge to rage, murder, and kill.” Cynthia Ozick compared the two approaches and said that "Miep Gies ...and Hannah Goslar, Anne’s Jewish schoolmate and the last to hear her tremulous cries in Bergen-Belsen, objected to Otto Frank's emphasis on the diary's 'truly good at heart' utterance‖ (Ozick 67). She questioned the shifting of meaning in the diary and the subsequent theatrical and movie treatments. The words of Anne Frank would more honestly be reflected as negative. Ozick said: “These are words that do not soften, ameliorate, or give the lie to the pervasive horror of her time. Nor do they pull the wool over the eyes of history‖ (Ozick 67).
nonetheless warranting acknowledgement. Lynn Z. Bloom claimed that autobiographies “may also require the efforts of a scholarly editor to endow them with sufficient shape or substance to be both readable and self-contained” (“ABH” 22). Elizabeth Hampsten said that the dilemma for editing is how to revise texts without Bloom's “sufficient shape” and introduce them to readers. Strategies of editing may need to change: “If we think that what some women have written is so compelling that we must do almost anything to have it read, then we may need to invent ways to make new contracts between writers and readers” (PNG 135). She went on, “I think it is possible nevertheless to enter into a friendly collaboration with writers like them — to nudge along their best moments of writing, and make what bridges one can over gaps and omissions” (PNG 135). I admit that my reaction is somewhat hypocritical: had there been a Calof daughter editing her mother's work, would I question her in the same manner? Or is the main issue Jacob's lack of acknowledgement, and Sanford Rikoon's subsequent claim that the translation was accurate? Hampsten was not suggesting that editors perform like ventriloquists or puppeteers behind the scenes without revealing the degree to which the text has been “nudge[d]” along, the “gaps” filled in.

The power involved in editing was a double-edged sword for Jacob Calof. On the one hand, as his sister Ceil Calof Stephens said, he incorporated “his attitudes” in the published text. The surviving siblings in the late 1970s relinquished control over the manuscript construction and Jacob Calof's version
was apparently accepted; if there was any disagreement about his changes, additions or deletions, there was no record of such. Carole Boyce Davies said, “Once the editorial process is closely scrutinized, it reveals how the editor becomes the co-maker of the text. The phrases ‘I edited,’ ‘I arranged,’ and ‘I selected’ camouflage a whole host of detailed ordering and creating operations” (92). Jacob Calof originally used the term “compiler” in the English version that was privately distributed to family members and Jewish archives. That term disappeared in the Indiana University Press publication; perhaps it would have called into question the contention that “no passages were added or deleted from the original nor were any changes made in the content or chronology of her narrative” (Rikoon Acknowledgments xii). Jacob’s claim that the English version was entirely faithful to the original Yiddish manuscript locked him into a position of being unable to revise or acknowledge that information was added or subtracted. I think that he was attempting to leave a message revealing additional, unincorporated material in a letter, which was in the archive in St. Paul:

My sister, Elizabeth Breitbord and our family friend, Molly Shaw, both of Los Angeles, literally translated my mother’s Jewish writing into English and sent their translation on to me in Seattle, where I endeavored, keeping faithfully to the autobiography, to put the story into a literary form.

I came into possession of the Jewish pages only after my sister’s death. She and Molly Shaw had put the narrative Jewish pages in order, but to my surprise, when I received all of my mother’s writings, these pages were also included. I can only surmise that she may have begun to write her memoirs on another occasion and that these pages are part of that endeavor. (Calof JHSUM)
He would not have had to write this letter; on the contrary, the letter served to open the route to questioning the faithfulness of the translation. Assuming there was additional, untranslated material, led directly to my efforts at a retranslation of all of the manuscript and the divergences then became quite clear.

The conflict between the reader's desire for a narrative that follows conventional characteristics of plot, character and closure and the desire for authenticity, that is the absence of editorial interference, produced texts that were sometimes questionable. Otto Frank's "complicity" produced what Ozick termed "this shallow upbeat view" (80). Kaminsky struggled with Myerhoff's omissions and changes in her transcription and claimed that she used Yiddish as "a term of concealment" by "repressing the ideologically unpalatable cultural history" and changed the shape of the community's identification with socialist and political movements ("Introduction" 52). Kaminsky further criticized Myerhoff's impulse to correct the Yiddish to "translate the 'greenhorn' voice of the Yiddish-speaking old person for the educated (and potentially condescending) auditor" which he said she did "respectfully" and "tastefully," but nonetheless masked the difference between their way of speaking and "the dominant discourse" (Kaminsky "Introduction" 19). That difference was one of the facts of their lives and it was effectively erased by changing the linguistic styles. Kaminsky said "this lessening of the linguistic distance between the Yiddish-speaking old people and her middle-class audience, while it is a mark of Myerhoff's actual respect for the old
people, is also a way of subordinating their difference and instituting a subjugating discourse that overrides theirs" (Kaminsky “Introduction” 19).

No ready explanation existed for Rose Wilder Lane’s continued editing of her mother’s journal, after her mother’s death, other than her desire to change the material to suit her own standards: “she continued to apply her ideas about propriety and quality to her mother’s text, compromising its considerable potential value as a historical resource and an authentic emigrant narrative” (Romines 93). Lane changed, and never told the audience of the changes, representing the journal as her mother’s travel record. 106 Carl Silvio’s analysis of the arguments about the authenticity and canonization of Black Elk Speaks focused on the changes. He said that Arnold Krupat “provides a detailed analysis of the changes that Neihardt made in Black Elk’s oral story. The motivation for this analysis, however, is neither to debunk nor valorize the text but to study the changes as an inherent and necessary feature of all Native American autobiography” (Silvio 8). G. Thomas Couser said that the Black Elk narrative “speaks with a divided tongue in the way that all collaborative autobiography must, because it conflates two consciousnesses (and in this case cultures and

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106 “Lane never acknowledges in her ‘setting’ that she made constant, usually small alterations in her mother’s manuscript before it was published. Tense travel notations are extended to full sentences, repetitive diction is silently altered, and less explicable changes are made. (For example, Wilder regularly records morning departure times for the wagon train; sometimes Lane alters these times, making them earlier). On 22 July Wilder wrote that everyone in the party bathed in the river except herself; ‘I am not feeling very well and cannot go in’ (journal manuscript, published as On the Way Home; Western). Presumably, in the code of the late nineteenth century, she means to imply that she is menstruating and thus is ‘unable’ to go in the river. Lane entirely deleted this reference, eliminating a telling and important reference to a woman’s bodily experience on a journey of emigration” (Romines 92).
languages) in one undifferentiated voice. And it deceives by not fully acknowledging the extent and the tendencies of its editing" (87).

Rather than pursuing issues of deceit, I contend that we have more to gain by inquiring into those textual differences of the type that Krupat cited. The Calof texts provide this type of process: the changes offer immense information both about the mother writing and the son compiling. Judy Nolte Temple's suggestion that "craft in composition can lead to crafty narratives" alerted me to the "beautifully crafted language" Jacob Calof provided as being suspicious: look for changes there (Frontiers 151). Kaminsky called this "overarticulateness" when criticizing Myerhoff's attempt to "instruct an uniformed auditor" by "voic[ing] Myerhoff's thesis in the mouth of a native speaker" ("Introduction" 26). He said "this carries no one's accent more than Myerhoff's" in this case "bringing this old revolutionary socialist in to the fold of contemporary middle-class Judaism, and pushing her thesis about the sacredness of secular practices" ("Introduction" 26). Jacob Calof's agendas might be similarly questioned and at those points of differences from his mother's, I find the divergences to be most obvious.

Finally, the revisions and editing that families did often concealed the writer's pain, perhaps in part to maintain a semblance of privacy, or perhaps to deny that pain was a reality. Jacob tended to eliminate the details and accentuate the positive and still the story is mostly bleak. Otto Frank "molded Anne's voice to fit into his idealized, paternal image of her. While his revisions may have been well-intentioned, they ultimately kept part of Anne hidden"
(Goertz 653). Sara Ruddick said that Elizabeth Gaskell's biography of Charlotte Brontë diluted the pain of love and ambition and the result was a lessening of the portrait she provided. Ruddick said:

In its attentive love for her subject, Gaskell's biography provides a model for reflecting on women. But I also take from it a warning. In her aversion to anger, personal ambivalence, and unhappy sexuality, Gaskell reveals the limitations of too cautious and protective a love. She never minimizes Bronte's pain, or certainly her virtues. But in simplifying Brontë's psychic life, Gaskell keeps from us complicated, uncomfortable truths we need; truths we are able to ponder because Brontë mustered the courage to reveal them. (158)

My deep respect for Rachel Calof was only furthered when I heard her voice in the unadulterated translation. The additions and deletions, the changes in tone and rhythm in Jacob's compilation ultimately hid many of the immediate characteristics and idiosyncratic traits. True, and overriding, perhaps, the manuscript would not have been published in its original form. Still, the lack of responsibility for or recognition of the changes remains a serious problem with the book. Cynthia Ozick's conclusion about Otto Frank's complicity applied here, as well:

As the diary gained publication in country after country, its renown accelerating year by year, he spoke not merely about but for its author — and who, after all, would have a greater right? The surviving father stood in for the dead child, believing that his words would honestly represent hers. He was scarcely entitled to such certainty: fatherhood does not confer surrogacy (Ozick 80).

Neither does sonhood. Jacob Calof contributed mightily by his rendition of the manuscript and by bringing it to light; my facilitation of the retranslation of the manuscript restores Rachel's voice to her story.
6.1 Divergences: Americanization

"I was born, I have lived, and I have been made over." Thus began Mary Antin's memoir *The Promised Land*, first published in 1912. Werner Sollors, in his "Introduction" in a recent edition, called *The Promised Land* a "sociological account of the transformation of an East European Jewish immigrant into an American citizen" (xii-xiii). Even though the similarities between Mary Antin's and Rachel Calof's books might have created similar stories of transformation from immigrant to citizen, Antin's was a deliberate undertaking of her own initiative, while Rachel Calof's text was altered in the stages between translation, compilation and publication to more nearly fulfill this mission. Little evidence indicates that Rachel Calof's Yiddish manuscript in translation presented an immigrant-to-citizen trajectory; however, by subtly and not-so-subtly changing tone, vocabulary, sentence structure and narrative construction, the story was significantly altered to conform to the narrative of Americanization.

In a pre-publication article in *Publisher's Weekly*, Jacob Calof, Rachel Calof's son and the compiler of the published English version, said that book editor Sanford Rikoon told him that "his mother's story deserved a wider audience" (Mantell 24). Calof said, "Dr. Rikoon thought publishing it would straighten out the record about how the West was settled. My motivation then became to tell her story in English as she told it in Yiddish." The book, of course,
was represented as a “faithful” translation and compilation of the Yiddish text. With the first English translation gone (translated by Molly Shaw in the 1970s and discarded by Jacob), we have only Jacob Calof’s contention that the English version was a faithful rendition of his mother’s story. Elsewhere, I discuss the process of translation and the route to publication, but in this chapter I investigate those divergences revealed in a comparison of a private translation from the Yiddish manuscript that I commissioned, done by Joe Rozenberg in 2001-2002, and the published version of the text. I examine divergences of word choice and paragraph organization in three areas: Americanization and assimilation, family relations and the frontier. This section on Americanization focuses on emigration, ethnicity and religion.

Both Rachel Calof and Jacob Calof experienced the anti-immigration period of the early nineteenth century in the United States, albeit their experiences differed radically because of the differences in their ages and status. Rachel Calof was born in the Ukraine and came as an eighteen-year-old to North Dakota in 1894. She retained Yiddish as her spoken language all her life, even though her daughter described her going to night school to learn English as late as the 1920s in St. Paul (Stephens). Jacob Calof was born in North Dakota in 1912 and lived there until he was five years old. The family moved to St. Paul,

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107 Sanford Rikoon’s acknowledgments claimed: “Jacob Calof adhered to the substance, sentiment and style of his mother’s writing as closely as possible. No passages were added or deleted from the original nor were any changes made in the content or chronology of her narrative” (Rachel Calof’s Story xii). Jacob Calof’s own letter in the files of the Jewish Historical Society of the Upper Midwest described his claims of accurate compilation: “I endeavored keeping faithfully to the autobiography to put the story into a literary form” (Calof file).
where he graduated from high school as valedictorian of his class. But Jacob's intellectual aspirations were not fulfilled; his college plans were thwarted by the Depression, and as his son, David, described, he experienced anti-Semitism in the Twin Cities (D. Calof). In *Willa Cather and the Myth of American Migration*, Joseph Urgo suggested the "sense of exile felt by the first-generation immigrant has seldom been linked to the sense of alienation felt by third-, fourth- and fifth-generation intellectuals. Nevertheless, assimilation, acculturation, and even ethnic pride are symptoms of the consciousness produced by migratory existence, and each is rooted in a sense of having landed at some distance from one's source" (3). The divergences in the Calof text, I suspect, reflect differences between first generation and second generation approaches to migration and dispersal, and the Americanization process demanded. Sollors said that one of the “purpose[s] of [Antin’s] *The Promised Land* was to ... offset a growing sense of American nativist hostility to immigration by presenting the inwardness of a consciousness that underwent the transformation from foreign immigrant to American citizen successfully" (xv). Ironically, slanting the tone of *Rachel Calof's Story* in this Americanization direction is problematic and, in fact, could cause a loss of credibility among readers who sought ethnic authenticity that was erased in the attempt to present the immigrant as a successfully integrated American citizen. Toby Rose said early immigrants often wrote to portray good citizenship and American assimilation and to “allay prejudices against the waves of immigrants who arrived in the early twentieth century” (165). However, second
and third generation narratives portrayed the experience differently, and assimilationist literature now seems to be an anachronistic genre. My examination of the incremental changes implemented by Jacob Calof reveals that he considered that his mother’s text must be made acceptable to an American audience.

Oscar Handlin’s *The Uprooted* glorified the immigrant experience while recognizing a generalized deep personal pain. “The blow that tossed you out, that forever snapped the ancient ties, that blow was an act of liberation” (303). The movement away from the original home might have been born of desperation, but, as Handlin said, the immigrants “did not welcome the liberation, almost any of them. Its immediate form was always separation” (305). That transition began with a journey and Jacob Calof started his Americanization of Rachel’s text from the origins in the Old World. The orphan Rachel Kahn undertook her journey by leaving behind her three siblings; the children had been scattered when her father left on his own journey to the United States. His ship sank and he was never heard from again. Thus a separation narrative, “A child without a home and without a mother” was the beginning of the Yiddish manuscript. Rachel presented herself as alone and motherless as the reader’s first impression. The English version began: “I was born in Russian in the year 1876, and when I was four years old my dear mother died...” (1).

From this initial comparison, it is clear that Jacob’s “literacizing” of the text, which he claimed precisely paralleled the Yiddish manuscript, was not identical.
He began with a place and a date, and with Rachel Calof speaking in the first-person singular. His tendency throughout the English text was to present his mother as a strong individual; Rachel's Yiddish manuscript often showed a more vulnerable persona. Sometimes her Yiddish was more direct and he changed those direct sentences into more complicated structures: "we used to starve" was upgraded into "how well I recall the pangs of hunger which attended all my waking hours" (1). Other times, she was more tentative or confused, and that confusion was eliminated from the story, a divergence I explore in the section on the family. Jacob summarized, as Rachel did, but he added more judgment and prose to his descriptions. The Yiddish manuscript said: "And that's the way I suffered my childhood age. I was swimming in blood and tears" (10Y), while the English version said "And so my childhood years passed in tears and suffering. My life was shattered and wasted and I never knew love since I was four years old, except from my little orphans" (5). The first English sentence was based on the Yiddish manuscript; however, the second sentence exaggerated the tone and temperament. Jacob was setting the stage for a successful life born of the "shattered and wasted" childhood and forgiving her any mistakes she made as a
Another strategy that Jacob used to create a credible heroine was to elaborate and expand upon her statements. The Yiddish manuscript said: “I as the oldest girl started to complain to my father that we are starving’ (2Y). The English version said

I had already assumed the role of protector of my brothers and sister. ...
I decided our lives could no longer continue in this way...
I determined to take action.
I spoke to my father about the intolerable conditions. (1-2)

Jacob made Rachel Calof persistent, heroic, powerful and dominating, while her original vocabulary was modest and viscerally (“we are starving”) explained her acquiring the role of spokesperson. When referring to herself in the Yiddish manuscript, Rachel did not hesitate to use the first-person singular, but often in the English version the first-person singular was exaggerated. In one case, she united her cause to that of her siblings (“we are starving”), later it was mutual efforts with her husband. The individualistic “I” was not so obvious, nor so strident, in the Yiddish manuscript. The enhanced vocabulary of the English

108 Often I was tempted to refer to these versions as “he said – she said”; “he said” when using the Indiana University Press English version and “she said” when using the Yiddish manuscript from which Joe Rozenberg translated. However, the division might not have been as clear-cut as such a claim would seem to be. I do not know Yiddish so I must clarify and refrain from saying this was what the Yiddish manuscript said. On the other hand, I do know enough to identify the letters and to see, for example, that no date appeared in the first sentence of the original manuscript. Some of the issues I could verify for myself. Mostly I relied on the translation that Joe Rozenberg read to me. As for “he said,” as much as I would like to present this in absolute terms, Jacob Calof also relied on a translation and we do not know what that included. However, he followed the narrative to the extent that most sections from the English text have a parallel source in the Yiddish manuscript. What I often found was that for every sentence in the Yiddish manuscript, two or three sentences of commentary, explication or additional material were added to the English publication.
translation created a plot or story line, even though Rachel's words in the Yiddish manuscript fully allowed us to see moving action. For example, the Yiddish manuscript said after her father remarried: "But then my troubles started" (2Y). The English version elaborated to emphasize the pathos of her experience: "Unfortunately the event of his second marriage marked an even further deterioration of our childhood existence"(2). Would it not have been enough to say "but then my troubles started" to create tension? The verbose nature of the English translation detracted more than it added to this section of the text. However, Jacob was setting the stage: she came from deprivation, she survived the struggle, and she succeeded in the endeavor to become an American.

Reminiscent of Mary Antin's story, in the Rachel Calof narrative, a moment appeared in which a lie was the foundation of success in America. In The Promised Land, the lie was the basis for Mary's education: her father claimed that she was two years younger than she really was in order to enroll her in school. "The result of the lie was that Antin - who was small of stature - had to pretend to be two years younger than she really was for many years to come, but unlike her sister, she did benefit from an additional seven years of education" (Sollors xxviii). Antin cut this story out of The Promised Land but returned to it as a short story: "The Lie," in the Atlantic Monthly in 1913 (Sollors xxviii). Similarly, Jacob Calof made a retroactive adjustment as he corrected the version of how his mother came to the United States with a different girl's passport. The story was told as an act of bravery on Rachel Calof's part. Originally, the Calof family
had arranged Abraham's marriage with Rachel Chavetz and, accordingly, transit papers and tickets were made out in her name. She or her father reconsidered, but because of Rachel Chavetz's initial agreement, the transit papers were already in her name. The English version added a paragraph of explanation in the middle of the text:

Many obstacles awaited me during the course of my trip to America, not the least of which was the fact that the passport which I carried was in the name of Rachel Chavetz, the shochet's daughter. Prior to my selection as second choice, and when it appeared certain that the Chavetz girl would be the traveler, the husband-to-be had applied to the American immigration authorities and steamship company for passage and admission in the United States for Rachel Chavetz. This was the passport sent to Chaya, and this was the document which I was expected to use for transport to New York and to gain entry to the promised land. (12-13)

In the Yiddish manuscript, this explanation came in the context of the problem that this created as Rachel Kahn was about to board the boat: I have to stop here and tell how my "boyfriend" from America sent the boat ticket, which was really for another girl (28Y). Rachel Kahn had her travel pass for land travel in Europe in her own name, and the boat ticket in the other girl's name. Unfortunately, in order to board, she had to use both tickets and then the incongruity became obvious. In addition, her travel pass described her physical characteristics so that the fraudulent ticket was clearly the one allowing her to board the boat. During this confusing moment in Hamburg, after she had traveled several days by train to get to the boat, multiple languages were added to the

109 Ritual slaughter's.
layers of travel and deceit. She and the agent, Sarven, who arranged her ticket from Brest-Litovsk agreed upon a plan:

**Yiddish manuscript**  
What do we do at the boat when they would ask me for my passport. I couldn't show it because it was in the other name so the agent told me I should say that they stole my passport. And also my money. (28Y)

**English published version**  
The travel agent suggested that I tell the authorities that my travel pass and my money as well had been stolen. Since no other course presented itself, I really had no choice. I had to attempt it. (14).

She arrived in Hamburg, and as anticipated, she was refused permission to board. As she cried near the wharf, a stranger approached her. Several versions of this episode existed in the Yiddish manuscripts, suggesting that Rachel Calof revised her own descriptions of this incident. In a handwritten pencil version, she said that she did not know:

from where a man appeared. I don't know if he was a Jew or a Gentile. He talks to me in German and I understand that he asked me why I cry so hard. I gave him to understand in my language what happened to me. (19-20x)

Later after his intervention she thanked him: “I was very happy and I didn’t know how to thank the God-fearing man. I thanked him in Russian also. And in Yiddish” (20x).

In the ink (presumed later) Yiddish manuscript, she wrote:

I don’t understand where an old man came forward to me I just saw him a little before sitting in an office where I put down my complaint. I don’t know if the man was a Jew or Gentile and he came over where I stood there and cried and talked to me in German. I understood that he told me not to cry. I explained to him what happened to me. That they stole my passport and also my few rubles. (29Y)
The man returned to the office and arranged for Rachel to sign a document as “Rachel Chavetz” allowing her to board the boat. The ink manuscript in Yiddish continued:

... I was very happy and I didn’t know how much thankful I should be to that man. I thanked him in Yiddish and he understood me. I was very lucky that I went on the boat. (29-30 Y)

However, the English published version elaborated extensively:

As I stood on the dock sobbing uncontrollably, a man whom I had seen in the steamship office during my desperate attempt to gain admission to the ship approached and spoke kindly to me in German. He beseeched me to stop crying. I didn’t know if he was a Jew or not but I sensed immediately that this man was my friend. He asked me to tell him my story and I divulged without hesitation the circumstances which resulted in my passport and travel pass being issued to different names.

This dear man listened quietly to my story and apparently came to the conclusion that I was a decent young lady worth helping. He approached the officials on my behalf and discussed my situation with them while I watched from a distance with my heart in my throat. Then, after what seemed an eternity, he returned carrying a paper for me to sign as Rachel Chavetz. With a happy smile he told me that I would now be permitted to go on board the ship. My exhilaration was boundless. I was so overjoyed that I did not even think to ask my benefactor’s name. I thanked him in Jewish [Yiddish] and he understood me. (14-15)

In the English version, she told the gentleman the truth: “I divulged without hesitation the circumstances which resulted in my passport and travel pass being issued to different names.” In the Yiddish manuscript, in both versions, she did not mention revealing the actual circumstances of why she had a passport in another girl’s name. Neither of these earlier versions indicated that she wavered from what the agent told her to say: her passport and rubles
were stolen. The English version shifted the responsibility to an accommodating character who facilitated her boarding in spite of the passport switch, and assumed that an American audience would accept her immigration more readily if the audience was convinced that Rachel had always told the truth. Jacob did not want his mother’s story to be interpreted as manipulative: in her versions, she got on board by crying, being confused and maintaining the act that had been agreed upon in advance between her and the agent. In addition, clarity and understanding emerged in the English version where there was without doubt significant opportunity for misunderstanding in the Yiddish manuscripts. The Yiddish manuscripts indicated that she was not quite sure of the meanings: “I gave him to understand” or “I understood him to say” rather than the more characteristically direct “I said” or “he said.” Rachel Kahn was not sure of herself or the identity of this man. She understood German, but she addressed him in Russian as well. The English version eliminated the implication of confusion in the multilingual nature of the Yiddish manuscript. The reference to Yiddish as “Jewish” was an old-fashioned, albeit direct translation, referring to Yiddish.\textsuperscript{110}

Arriving in America, with the attendant heightened emotions, was usually portrayed as a pivotal moment in immigrant literature. In Abraham Cahan’s \textit{Yekl} (1896), Jake, the main character, met his wife who was coming

\textsuperscript{110} Yiddish and German are similar enough in structure and vocabulary to be understood.

\textsuperscript{111} Yiddish was also called Jewish in the early part of the 20\textsuperscript{th} century.
to America after three years' separation. He dressed up in his American clothes and was nervous about her arrival. He saw her “through the railing separating the detained immigrants from their visitors” and “his heart had sunk at the sight of his wife's uncouth and un-American appearance. She was slovenly dressed in a brown jacket and a skirt of grotesque cut and her hair was concealed under a voluminous wig of a pitch-black hue” (34). His repulsion by her “green” appearance caused their landlady to tell his wife “No wonder he does hate you, seeing you in that horrid rag, which makes a grandma of you. Drop it, I tell you! Drop it so that no survivor nor any refugee is left” (56). “Green” implied immigrant backwardness or ignorance of American ways. In Cahan’s *Yekl*, the transition from “green” to American, eliminating the trace of “refugee,” began with discarding the wig (subsequently, the scarf). Rachel was certainly cognizant of the first impression she was going to make on her “boy friend.” She wrote in the Yiddish manuscript: “I, as weak as I was, dressed up” (32Y) while the earlier pencil manuscript contained “I made my makeup and in vinegar and in honey, and I wanted my boy should come and pick me up” (22x). Upon

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112 A Yiddish expression with which Joe Rozenberg was not familiar.
arrival in New York, the Yiddish manuscript said: "then they took us all in a building where everybody comes to pick up the 'greenen' newcomers" (33Y), a detail added in revision, not in the pencil version. The English published version omitted the reference to "greenen newcomers," as if changing Rachel's immigrant appearance. If Jacob Calof erased the term, did that mean his mother wouldn't have been green? He removed the trace that associated his mother with one of those "greenen," although she obviously knew she had been, and had then added in the detail later to her manuscript to relive that scene. The English version emphasized the experience instead:

Soon my fellow passengers and I were ushered into an enormous room with bars across the windows which aroused considerable apprehension because it seemed so like a jail. In short order the various examinations began which for each immigrant would determine his or her fitness to enter "Heaven." No previous experience aroused for all such anxiety as the test of Ellis Island. With a word or a gesture from an official, one standing a few feet from the gate opening to the golden land could be refused entry after having traveled so far. (17-18)

The English version amplified the anxiety and historicized it for those who couldn't quite picture the ramifications of failing to get through these checkpoints. "No previous experience" compared or could prepare one for this test. Yet, in the Yiddish manuscripts, Rachel did not sound nearly as

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113 Some information was changed about the arrival: she said they landed at Castle Garden in the pencil manuscript (21x), and changed it to New York in the ink version (32Y). The English version said Ellis Island (17). Historian Roger Daniels said that Castle Garden was "the New York immigrant depot before Ellis Island was opened in 1892" (19). No evidence suggested that Rachel Calof arrived earlier than 1894, but interestingly her recollection was adjusted in different versions. Ellis Island could potentially have become a generic reference to the gateway. Another clue, however, might be a smaller boat that she described as part of the final phase of getting to the city, edited out in the English version, perhaps to exclude seemingly extraneous details.
anxious as the English version represented. She laughed with the girls sitting next to her about her “beloved,” and then Rachel and Abraham had a friendly first meeting. Maybe heightened emotion spiked here, but I suspect the emotional tone probably had more to do with meeting Abraham for the first time than with passing through immigration. The Yiddish manuscript showed some confusion (eliminated in English): “I forgot already that my ‘boy friend’ brought a few oranges when he came to pick me up” (34Y) which was added after she had met him and they were on their way to his room. The English version dropped the confusion: “We greeted one another in quite a friendly manner and he presented me with gift of two oranges” (18).

Toby Rose contended, “No longer are writers willing to give up or hide their ethnic connectedness behind the mantle of assimilation and acculturation as were earlier writers” (171). Rachel Calof’s manuscript significantly demonstrated that even though she was writing in the 1930s, she was not hiding her “ethnic connectedness.” Her recognition of her immigrant status was in sharp contrast with her compiler son’s development of the “mantle of assimilation” that he seemed to find necessary for producing an autobiography from her manuscript. Sometimes he erased markers of ethnicity quite subtly, such as by changing words or intonations, or simply by eliminating phrases that we hardly missed as readers. However, when the manuscript was re-translated from Yiddish, Rachel’s voice was heard, with its accented English, saying some things that her American son, perhaps, did
not want the neighbors to hear. Sometimes Jacob’s changes were a matter of making his mother a little nicer: “we used to wish her dead” (2X) Rachel’s comment as a child about her stepmother, did not appear in the English.\(^{114}\) Abe’s boss, when Abe was working at the neighbor’s farm, became “Anderson, the boss” in the English translation (32), while in the Yiddish manuscript he was “the gentile” (67Y). Another strategy in the compilation of the English version was to fill in details that might not be known to an American or Christian audience. In the Yiddish manuscript, Rachel’s stepmother: “used us for work, like Pharaoh and the Jews, she used to make us do hard labor” (3Y), while the English version said: “She dealt with us as did Pharaoh with the ancient Jewish slaves” (2) which would have clarified for gentile readers by adding the “ancient” and “slaves” to contextualize the Jewish reference. Rachel’s original version would have been sufficient for an audience that understood her.\(^{115}\) In the Yiddish manuscript, Rachel’s description of her wedding included “two Jewish families who lived ten miles from us,” while the English version said “two families who were about ten miles distant from us.”\(^{116}\) Other word choice changes consistent with reducing the ethnic distinctions were the English use of the word Saturday when the

\(^{114}\) Jacob Calof may not have seen that phrase since it was found in the pencil version of the manuscript. In the ink manuscript, Rachel Calof had dropped the “we wished her dead;” presumably her own revision of that section.

\(^{115}\) This example was one that supported the idea that the translation was from the ink version of the manuscript since Pharaoh does not appear in the pencil version.

\(^{116}\) Both the Yiddish and the English left out the participation of the Anderson family who described attending Rachel and Abraham Calof’s wedding in their privately published family memoir.
Yiddish manuscript translation refers to the Sabbath. While this substitution was, of course, correct, the distinction implied a transition from a Jewish calendar to a Christian one. Hana Wirth-Nesher has suggested that "translation has the effect of Christianizing both Yiddish and Hebrew ... whereas Jewish-American immigrant writers chronicled the shift from old language to new, the children of immigrants translated and reinvented Jewish literature to accommodate it to American culture" (216).

Another example of ethnic erasure was also religious, the minimalization of Jewishness. The Yiddish manuscript included Rachel's story about her romantic interest as a young woman in the Ukraine in the butcher boy and his interest in her. This reference was edited to reflect class issues and not to offend Christian readers: the English version commented on the status of the boy as "a butcher was considered hardly better than a convict" (7); while the Yiddish manuscript said "in Europe, a butcher, a shoemaker, a tailor, a musician, is just like a convert" (13Y) in terms of being an unacceptable marriage prospect. The word convert, while a translation of the word she uses (mashumad), does not carry the connotations that it would have to a Jewish audience. The Yiddish word contained the root "to

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117 Wirth-Nesher described Saul Bellow's translation of Isaac Bashevis Singer's story "Gimpel Tarn": "In translating this story originally written for an audience well versed in Jewish tradition but now aimed for a Partisan Review readership removed from Judaic texts and sources, Bellow retained only seven Yiddish words in his translation...Retaining words such as chalah underscored the quaint ethnic character of the story while also providing a few 'authentic' markers of the lost culture. Actual liturgical references, however, no matter how common, were converted into American equivalents. And this is where the cross-cultural plot thickens. For in the English translation of 'Gimpel' Bellow translated the well-known Hebrew prayer for the dead, 'El molei rachamim,' into the Christian 'God's Mercy,' a shift that transformed Gimpel's eastern European setting into Southern Baptist terrain" (217).
obliterate;" the "mashumad" was a person who not only obliterated his religious identity, but his very self. The English version did not say that Rachel could not marry a Christian (although I suspect that she was incapable of conceiving of this as an option), but rather that the issue was the butcher boy's class status at the level of a "convict." Perhaps Jacob feared that adding the implication of obliteration rather than conversion would be possibly offensive to a Christian audience and Jacob would rather not have risked that offense.

A more secular language adjustment changed the family co-operative farming venture, which the Yiddish manuscript consistently referred to as the "firm," to the English version's "working with his family." Perhaps Jacob Calof was uncomfortable, even years later, with the cooperative nature of the family farming, as if it verged on a European-style socialism that he would rather not include. Regardless of the rationale, the Yiddish manuscript indicated Rachel wanting Abe's assistance to start a home improvement project, "Abe tells her 'the firm' will not allow, that means that all work together, my husband, my husband's brothers and father" (105Y) while the English version changed the response to "we both understand that he could not help me very much. He was working from dawn to dark with his father and his brother, Moses" (45). The English version not only eliminated the reference to a decision of the "firm," but also made Rachel and Abe more autonomous: Rachel and Abe understood that her project was not the priority and she and Abe decided that
he could not take time to help her. In addition, the English version limited this cooperative venture to Abe, his father and one brother, while in the Yiddish manuscript clearly all of the family members were committed to working together. Individualized ownership and work continued to be promoted in the English version, sometimes at the expense of the literal translation. In a similar erasure, the Yiddish manuscript said, "then the 'firm' decided again that my husband can put in two more months of work [for] the farmer" (108Y) while the English version said "Abe was offered fifty dollars for two months' work at a distant farm" (46), which made no reference to this being a community decision. The implication led the audience to believe that Rachel and Abe, as an independent economic unit – the acceptable American individualist version – made their own decisions. Jacob's English version also added Abe's commendations from "two presidents of the United States, William Taft and Woodrow Wilson" (87), presumably for his work on the school board, which were not mentioned in the Yiddish manuscript. If Jacob, as the compiler, was adding material about his father to balance the Yiddish manuscript's absolute absence of Abe's recognition, he might more accurately have added his father's extensive recognition later in St. Paul by the Jewish-Socialist organizations (Calof JHSUM).

Finally, a particularly unnecessary ethnic erasure was Jacob's English version use of non-descriptive words rather than Rachel's foreign-sounding phrases. He described one of the meals that Rachel ate upon arrival as "flat
pieces of boiled dough and cheese" (24) which sounded particularly unappetizing. Erasing the ethnicity meant that we could not know this was kreplach (44Y), a perfectly fine word and often a tasty treat, found in Webster's Unabridged Dictionary, “turnovers or packets of noodle dough filled with any of several mixtures, as kasha or chopped chicken livers, usually boiled, and served in soup.” I admit that a different example did not reverberate with meaning for me as I listened to the translation of the Yiddish manuscript: when Rachel prepared food out of very meager supplies, her word was “pletzel,” (163Y), while in English it was referred to as “substitute bread” (67). The word meant little to me, but when I asked others, it did conjure up an image of a specific, flat roll or pita type of bread (Shaw, Rozenberg). In any case, by homogenizing the reference to “substitute bread” Jacob left the reader with a substitute story. Specific details were lost in translation and could have been recovered if the compiler son had been open to a story that allowed strange, “un-American” foods to be prepared and served at its table.118

Jacob Calof grappled with the oral style of the Yiddish manuscript and attempted to standardize his mother’s narrative into his idea of a more acceptable written style. One of Rachel Calof’s oft-used lines was “But the time doesn’t stand still” as we would have known if we were reading the direct

118 Molly Shaw’s translation could possibly have introduced some of the divergences but she claims to have translated the Yiddish manuscript literally. Since that translation was destroyed by Jacob, and he admits to “literacizing” his compilation, I am assuming that most of these changes originated with Jacob Calof.
translation from the Yiddish manuscript. This phrase was repeated frequently in the Yiddish manuscript, while the English publication substituted "winter was very near now" and "life and time do not stand still" (59), "in the fall the inevitable planning for winter" (69), rather than replicating the repetition of the Yiddish manuscript. Elizabeth Hampsten said frontier women's writing "signals intensity of experience by quantity. It tells us more and more of the same, without comparisons. Literal, factual details, added one after another, take on the force that, in public literature, would fall to metaphor" (21). Marjorie Shostak discussed repetition in translation of Nisa's story "I left some of it in, trying to retain its flavor, but substituted words or reduced the repetitions drastically to make it work on the printed page" (PNG 237). In Rachel Calof's Yiddish manuscript the phrases "but time doesn't stand still," or "that's the way it was" were repeated so often that the description of "a life worth living" as the theme seemed absurdly fabricated and had no basis in the Yiddish manuscript. Once again, a substitute story replaced Rachel's words.

Toby Rose suggested that Si Sui Far, a first-generation immigrant writer, "attempted to gain a readership by making her protagonists good citizens who followed the American road to assimilation" (166). Of course, *Rachel Calof's Story* in the English version included those "good citizens,"

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119 I searched the Yiddish manuscript for this phrase, or anything that resembled the wording, hoping all the time to find that they really were Rachel Calof's words. Sometimes I still expect to find textual support for this being the philosophy of her life; perhaps later letters or another manuscript from sometime in the sixteen years she lived after the manuscript was completed in 1936. Other times I just accept that this is Jacob Calof's philosophy of his mother's life.
while the Yiddish manuscript was more consistent with Rose’s contention that first generation writers were “more essentialist” and maintained “roles intact.” Essentialist was not necessarily equivalent to ethnic, but the particularist nature of the term contributes to an understanding of retaining, not assimilating, or maintaining identity. Rose’s further analysis suggested that the second generation, i.e. the son, Jacob, was “more assimilationist... rebelling against the old world ways of their parents by often uncritically trying to fit into American life” (166-167). Finally, the third generation Rose found “secure and upwardly mobile enough to reconnect” (167) presumably with both the inheritance from the grandparents and the assimilated identity that was the goal of the second generation. Indeed ethnicity was not, for the Jewish immigrant, so much a matter of a birthplace as a religious commonality. Elizabeth Jameson contended “the ethnic categories of the census do not define the Calofs’ cultural context, in which religion figured more significantly than country of origin” (146). Rachel Calof was pious, devout and spoke a language of religious connection. Her vocabulary articulated her religious immersion: in the Yiddish manuscript she frequently said “God helped” or “with God’s help.” She appealed to God regularly and thanked him often. The phrase “God forbid” appeared on a regular basis. She even complained to God repeatedly. Jacob Calof seemed somewhat conflicted in the presentation; he presented this story as “American,” downplaying the Jewish and ethnic aspects of his family’s life. The result was
a loss of details and markers of the text. Although Rachel Kahn Calof did not come from a rigidly observant Jewish environment, I found her to be deeply religious and Jewish-identified. Building a Jewish home and family was central to the story in her Yiddish manuscript; that “child without a home and without a mother” haunted her manuscript. Becoming American was tangential to her manuscript, while a priority for her son’s presentation.
7.0 Conclusions

I consider the Calof English publication a hybrid, “implicitly collaborative,” combination of written text and oral history and I believe authorship can be shared as I think it should be in the Calof publication. Ambivalences are revealed by new scholarship, and mine is no different. New information can be threatening, but the search is not intended reveal or expose deceit; as Arnold Krupat says, the value is in finding the differences and examining them.

Anthropologist Barbara Johnson, in “Bold Enough to Put Pen on Paper: Collaborative Methodology in an Ethnographic Life Story,” described working with Ruby Daniel, a Cochin Jewish woman living in Israel, to produce Ruby’s life story:

In a general sense all life story research which involves a storyteller / subject and a researcher / editor is implicitly collaborative. In the growing field of life story research and criticism, scholars increasingly demand that the nature of such collaboration be publicly explored. (emphasis mine, Johnson 128)

Ruby Daniel contributed to her collaborative story by writing an initial text, later elaborated upon in extensive interviews. Their edited final product was collaboratively agreed and jointly authored by Daniel and Johnson.

Perhaps it is historical revisionism to hold Jacob Calof accountable to standards of ethnography that have evolved since he compiled the Yiddish manuscript into the English publication. Additionally, the written component of Rachel Calof’s story was less accessible than the Daniel model since it was written in Yiddish. Finally, the family oral history component of the Calof text
presumably contributed details that Rachel told as stories during her lifetime. Significant details of life on the homestead extended beyond those found in the manuscript, but without attribution we must accept them as part of the collaborative process and not necessarily as Rachel's contribution. Standards of collaboration, particularly when involving transcription from oral histories to written works, continue to be debated. Translating, arranging and elaborating were all factors in producing the text as we have come to know it.

My research considers Rachel Calof's Story in the context of other life-writing scholarship. Autobiography scholarship changed from attention to a master narrative that recognized autobiography as a literature of significant and heroic people, mostly men, to a wider-scoped venture. Relational autobiography proved to be a model that fits the Calof publication even though the ethically complex issues of ventriloquism and collaboration remain unclear. The family context is not a feature in most scholarly investigations and there is room for further investigations of other family-based autobiographies. My work also includes the concept of the contextual-situated self. When contexts are investigated, the works are enriched as the reader sees beyond the horizon of a specific text. Feminist theory contributed to the scholarship in which my research works best: gender as a basis of inquiry, revised criteria of the heroic and revised definitions of whose stories are told and how the narrative need appear in order to be considered worthy of publication. Within concepts of contextualization, nonetheless, individual stories must remain central: I would compare the
polishing of the individual story, with the subsequent loss of details, to those diaries, in Judy Nolte Temple's research, which were revised and lost precisely the individual authenticity that made for a fascinating and valuable story. In addition, investigations of diversity and changing myth-making, found in both western studies and immigrant literature, enriched the fields by offering a broader perspective. Rachel and Jacob Calof contribute immensely to that corpus. Undermining the success story as one of the criteria for publication of immigrant writing is necessary in the future if we are to read the stories as people lived them. Finding conflict doesn't mean rejecting the material: gender and generational differences offer diverse outlooks. I haven't yet considered Rachel Calof's mother-in-law, the nameless character (in the Yiddish manuscript) whose own generation came to the United States at a time when these elderly people already had grandchildren. Both Rachel Calof and Chardh Calof (her name is added in the English publication) were first-generation immigrants, but their viewpoints would probably be substantially different.

Among the "truths" that I examine in the environment chapter is the way that Rachel Calof finds to overcome adversity in her physical surroundings. She is the hero of her tale, and we read about her agency in creating a world in which she can live and thrive. The "truths" in the chapters on sexuality and family are complicated more by the translation and compilation, as are the stories of maintaining a Jewish home on the prairie. I think these reflect what I found in most scholarship on family collaboration: families prefer to highlight the optimism
and idealization rather than focus on the negative aspects of family life. The Calof publication is also similar to other family collaborations in its secularizing of the text to a less religious tone. I incorporated ethnographic models that might be borrowed and utilized in works of literature to consider the limits of transcription without ownership. Finally, while I admit that I read the idealized Little House on the Prairie stories and share them with my children, we must consider our role as adult readers in the demand for a happy ending and to what extent we silence those who do not tell that story. Not all of the new accounts that we find of the diverse populations on the prairies will be traditional success narratives. Until we are willing to read responsibly towards understanding a complicated world, the publishers will continue to advance the sales of the stories with happy endings. I think that is a loss of the details of the lived lives from whom we have so much yet to learn. I would like to share this conclusion with Rachel Calof and suggest that we listen to a slightly different transcription of her voice.

Rachel Calof’s Story focused upon her life on the farm in North Dakota. Rachel was presented as building a Jewish home and devoting herself to raising children. The English publication showed the Calof family as successful in their endeavors. The conclusion of the English publication, startling in its abruptness, was comparable to the Yiddish manuscript’s proportionally minimalistic description of the move from farm to town. Joe Rozenberg’s translation of the Yiddish manuscript described their decision to move to town:

And my husband got “rheumatism attack” and we understood that we can not continue and we decided to sell the “land”. And also the “cattle” and
leave for a bigger town. The older children were already teenagers, and we sold the land for $20 an acre and we sold also the stock this winter. Before we sold everything two boys came to us from St. Paul. One a Chaimi Oster and the second one, Willie Danceman. The winter was a very hard one and we didn’t let the boys go away for four months and they became like our children. I cannot explain to you how we loved those two boys when they were with us. Even now after twenty years, already, and there is already the spring and the two boys helped us to move and they suffered just like we did.

I cried very bitterly to leave the farm. Everything we left on the land we had built with our own blood. We “moved” to the town Devils Lake. We lived there one year.

And then we moved to St. Paul, “Minnesota” and there we went through the whole hell (gehenom). We set up a grocery store and in a year and a half’s time, we lost to a cent. And it went face down. The children got the measles after the measles “scarlet fever” and other sicknesses, until I in a nice early morning became sick with a “hemorrhage” through my throat and I became worse and worse until they took me to the “city hospital” and I was there 14 weeks. And I had “typhoid fever” and after 14 weeks in the hospital I got the “flu” and I was seriously sick.

But if you have years to live, nothing helps and I survived in the city hospital. And we were out of the store already and we were left without money or livelihood but a good brother came around and advised my husband that he should become a “customer peddler” and the first day from his new business he made five dollars. I was at that time in the hospital. My husband came to me very happy and told me the good news. (247-251Y)

Initially I wanted to know what happened next. Why did she tell us about twenty-three years in North Dakota and so very little about her life after the move to St. Paul? Jacob Calof’s Epilogue filled in some of the blanks without suggesting to the readers that his mother’s story, the tale she told, continued in the Yiddish manuscript but was not an “upbeat” optimistic success story. The first 248 pages in the Yiddish manuscript described the story through the end of the homesteading. Pages 249 to 255 (and five additional pages written probably as a
postscript in Seattle) were the summary of the next nineteen years (1917-1936).
She wrote about the struggle on the farm, as though that adventure warranted
documentation, but approached life in the city perhaps as less extraordinary.
Additionally, Rachel wrote about subjects that apparently Jacob omitted: financial failure and unending medical problems. Other subjects in the Yiddish
manuscript, albeit minimally, included her sons being subject to the draft during World War I and Rachel’s daughter falling in love with a Christian. Rachel Calof
cried about intermarriage; the English version does not mention the possibility.
Marc Kaminsky said “In a famous passage, Walter Benjamin wrote that ‘even the
dead’ are not safe from a conformism that is always about to overpower the
tradition in which their memory is preserved and that the struggle over collective
memory is a continuous one” (“Introduction” 61). Questioning and clarifying the
contents of the Yiddish manuscript revealed that “struggle” over the “collective
memory.” The translation, editing and compiling process contributed to the
omission of entire sections in the English publication.

Rachel Calof wrote about her life in the way that she wanted to be remembered. Georges Gusdorf in “Conditions and Limits of Autobiography” claimed:

We must, therefore, introduce a kind of reversal of perspective and give up thinking about autobiography in the same way as we do an objective biography, regulated only by the requirements of the genre of history. Every autobiography is a work of art and at the same time a work of enlightenment; it does not show us the individual seen from outside in his

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120 Keeping in mind that additional pages were found when Jacob received the manuscript after Elizabeth’s death; possibly some of these pages were not included in the translated material.
visible actions but the person in his inner privacy, not as he was, not as he is, but as he believes and wishes himself to be and to have been. What is in question is a sort of revaluation of individual destiny; the author, who is at the same time the hero of the tale, wants to elucidate his past in order to draw out the structure of his being in time. (emphasis mine, 45)

Based on the explanations Rachel Calof offered in the Yiddish manuscript, I think it is safe to assume that she was writing for an audience of her peers. She expected the audience to be observant Jews, understand Yiddish, maybe need some help with the “Americanisms” and the farm expressions. Furthermore, I contend that the emphasis that she placed on the descriptions of physical embodiment suggest that her audience might be her female relatives. She is the “hero of the tale” as Gusdorf described, and her heroics are based on the values of home and family. Another example in the Yiddish manuscript is her recollection of one of her later pregnancies:

And I went back home from the wagon and cried and the pain was less and my nerves broke down. I had to do my obligations to God, to man and to the children. I went to cook “supper.” When my husband came from work, I served supper. The table was ready but I didn’t feel good and I feel something tore “inside” me. We sat down to eat, but I couldn’t. I cried and my husband asked me what’s the matter and I told him everything. I was three months pregnant. I don’t feel good. I was so bad already that I couldn’t walk around. (236-237Y)

Rachel Calof’s duty “to God, to man and to the children” delineated the perimeters of her life on the homestead. During this painful episode, while she was in the middle of what would be a lengthy miscarriage, she described her priorities as being driven by her obligations to God and to her family. Her story was always “highly encumbered,” always relational, yet highly focused upon
herself. Her story, as many women's narratives do, "embod[ies] and reflect[s] the reality of difference and complexity and stress[es] the centrality of gender to human life and thought" (PNG 263). Concurrently, while we would like to see her in the web of connections she lived within, she maintained a degree of autonomy: she did not mention the loans that the family received from the wider Jewish community, barely discussed the neighbors, and did not even refer to the arrival of her cousin from Kiev. The neighbors remembered the Jewish families: Mary Beth Armentraut told me about Mary Beth's aunt visiting Rachel Calof, a talented seamstress, and described the visit down to the sweetened milk that the children were served. In fact, the only allusion to a Bar Mitzvah was from this Gentile whose uncle was a neighbor of the Calof family and attended some of the Jewish festivities. But neither the event nor the visitor was described in Rachel Calof's narrative (in Yiddish or in English). Other missing connections seemed to be omissions, striking in retrospect, included the lack of discussion of her grandchildren; when she left St. Paul in 1932, there were grandchildren.

It was more than seventeen years already, but what can I do. In these seventeen years we married off six children, of course we had some joy in our life, that's the way it went until 1932, I was a few times in the hospital, about six weeks at a time, it's two times I was in Rochester (253Y).

This section was not in the English version, but even in the Yiddish, it said very little about her children and grandchildren. "Married off six children" is the extent of her description of seventeen years in St. Paul. Maybe we do need to take her at her word and understand that Rachel Calof's Story was about the homesteading years and about her life during that time. The multiple texts, word
choices and connotations added layers of depth to the story as did the search for
the translation and editing process. Linear progress was not the direction of her
narrative, and the erasures in translation are only a segment of the omissions.
Within the narrative, both in Yiddish and in English, multiple layers remain to be
explored.
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