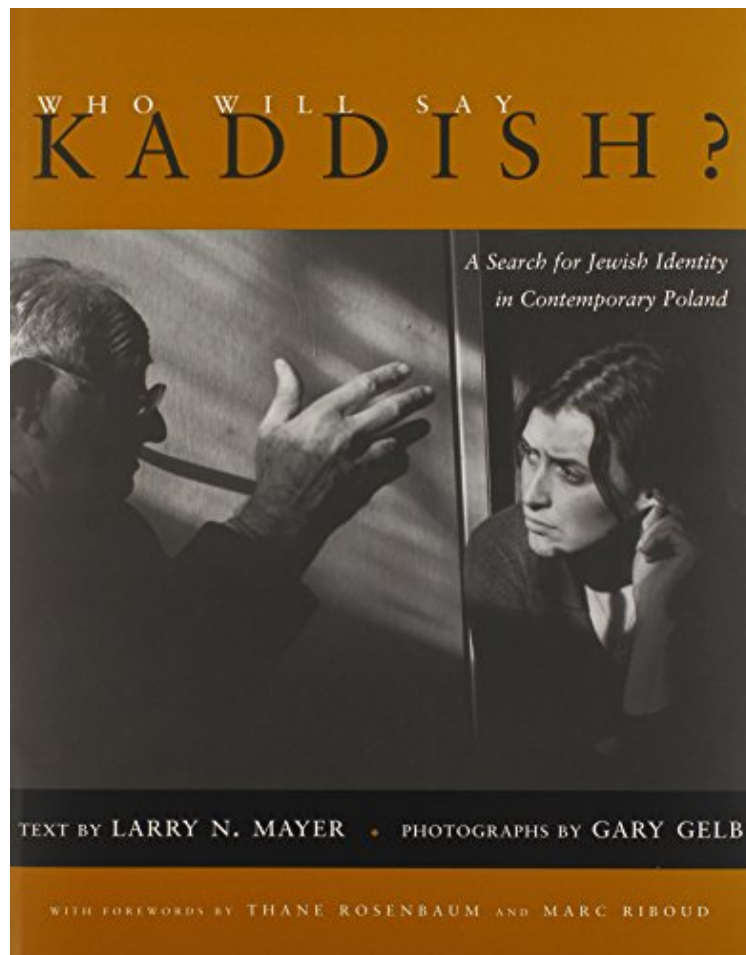


(Ebook pdf) Who Will Say Kaddish?: A Search for Jewish Identity in Contemporary Poland (Religion, Theology and the Holocaust)

Who Will Say Kaddish?: A Search for Jewish Identity in Contemporary Poland (Religion, Theology and the Holocaust)

Larry Mayer

ebooks | Download PDF | *ePub | DOC | audiobook



[Download](#)

[Read Online](#)

#3751996 in Books Syracuse Univ Pr (Sd) 2002-06-01Ingredients: Example IngredientsOriginal language:EnglishPDF # 1 10.28 x .69 x 8.26l, 1.93 #File Name: 0815607199192 pages | File size: 30.Mb

Larry Mayer : Who Will Say Kaddish?: A Search for Jewish Identity in Contemporary Poland (Religion, Theology and the Holocaust) before purchasing it in order to gage whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised Who Will Say Kaddish?: A Search for Jewish Identity in Contemporary Poland (Religion, Theology and the Holocaust):

1 of 1 people found the following review helpful. Relevant and PowerfulBy Sir Lawrence TalbotLarry N. Mayer's portrayal of modern day Jews negotiating the complexities of their history in Poland interweaves his personal quest for understanding the meaning of "Jewishness" in this late age, and yet resists that victim/victor dichotomy that so often accompanies the the sanctified tale of Jewishness in the 20th century. Mayer, the child of two Holocaust survivors, initially sets about his work to tell their tale, to speak the silence, the "absent-presence" of the Holocaust. And yet,

throughout his journeys among the Jews in Poland, his text begins to tell a new tale altogether. Indeed, this is a text about individuals; those who are possessed by "a feeling," be that religious, cultural, familial, or otherwise, that living their Jewishness is a life affirming activity. While this "feeling" takes many forms, Mayer's work is not intended to resolve the inconsistencies between them. Rather, this is a book that ultimately celebrates the diversity of Jewishness in the present, and unhinges stereotypical (and even archetypal) representations of what "Jew" means. Among the incredible individual portrayals included in the book are those who continue to testify, in their own ways, to both the Nazi horror, but also to the horrors of living under the Communist regime in Poland. Shmuel Roth, the "last observant Jew east of Krakow" is called "a living relic," by the text, and after the purging of the Jews in 1968 he was one of the few who remained. While the synagogue is closed down, Shmuel Roth set up a synagogue in his small apartment. In one of the most moving affirmations of the book, Roth speaks about how he must stay alive because if he dies, "what will be left?" Mayer and the photographer of the text, Gary Gelb, whose moving photos bring the text to life, meet with Roth just in time, and thankfully so. Roth, like so many of the generation who survived the Holocaust, has since died; his post-Holocaust life what *Who Will Say Kaddish* so urgently conveys. Another of the "old generation," Moses Szapiro, has an equally incredible story. Szapiro, the "last Jew of Warsaw" assists in the first bar mitzvah performed in the Warsaw synagogue in at least 17 years, since the Jews were forced underground by Communist oppression.) While the text does want to make sense of the horrors of the past, and the shadows of the past are everywhere, the work itself, and its readers, slowly come to understand that the Jewish existence in Poland never went away. It is this fact that Mayer wants to bring to his readers. The continuity he seeks is the continuity of life in a land that was termed "Juden-free" by the Nazis and has had similar terms revived since then. Indeed, Mayer's work operates as a bridge between this old Jewishness and the new Jewishness that is developing in places like Warsaw and Krakow. Despite the fact that anti-Semitism can be witnessed in the day to day realities of their lives in Poland, the development/renewal of "the feeling" Mayer portrays is being produced by a new generation; in journals, schools and in a philosophy so eloquently expressed by living a Jewish life in the present by Bogna Pawlisz. Mayer's own story comes to fruition in this new space that is the space of continuity, rather than the space of an "absent-presence," or the destroyed past. Indeed, the work's title question, "who will say Kaddish?" speaks to both the old generation and the new, and rather than holding each of them in separate contexts, Mayer's work comes to understand that they are each parts of a larger cycle of Jewish life, both in Poland, and in the world. Mayer's version of "bearing witness" is thus the testimony of the now, a life affirming work that refuses to sentimentalize the past or to condescendingly valorize a survivor's mentality; as such, is an empowered and empowering stance for writer, photographer and their readers. In his father's words, "What's the big deal?"

Reviewed by the Infinite Conversation 5 of 5 people found the following review helpful. A wonderfully multifaceted and literate exploration By Charles M. Wyzanski This highly original and personal collection of what amounts to 22 separate essays, combined with illustrative photographs, is much more than its subtitle would suggest, "A Search For Jewish identity in contemporary Poland." Mayer gives us humorous, skillfully drawn vignettes, beginning with growing up in New York City with a father and mother and sister who, on the surface, were little different from other immigrant families, except for the telling fact that the parents came not so much for economic betterment but rather to escape a long history of Polish anti-Semitism, culminating in the Nazi occupation and Holocaust. Mayer knows that, despite his parents' wish to forget the past, nature abhors a vacuum. Armed with passable Polish and the outlines of the history of Poland, he travels to that country in 1995 and tracks down the vestiges of an older Jewish community and the emergence of a newer one. Among his subjects we find less anger or self-pity than a gritty determination to defy the odds and hold onto tradition, even though that tradition must be reinvented and redefined. I recommend this book without qualification. Mayer may not be a novelist, but his characters draw you in and leave you with the same kind of inchoate satisfaction and understanding that Jhumpa Lahiri was able to achieve in exploring her Indian background in *The Namesake*. 2 of 2 people found the following review helpful. Fascinating and well worth it! By A Customer This is an amazing book that integrates photos and text very successfully. This is not just a photo book, nor just a wonderful story about the miraculous revival of the Jewish community in Poland. The author's personal journey, as the son of two Polish-Jewish Holocaust survivors is just as intriguing and extremely well-written. I appreciate his open-minded approach and ironic self doubt. I was especially moved by the chapters about the old Jewish man living near Tarnow, and the 'Jewish' priest in Lublin. The sections where the author takes us back to his American childhood were also especially charming and enlightening. The black and white photographs are well-placed throughout and add an extra level of understanding to this contemporary narrative. A must for all those interested in Judaism, the Holocaust, and what it means to create an identity in the wake of tragedy. Also recommended: Helen Epstein--'Where She Came From' Thane Rosenbaum--'Second Hand Smoke' Nathan Englander--'For the Relief of Unbearable Urges'

By the eve of the Holocaust, Poland was home to the second largest Jewish population in the world. By war's end, its Jews had been decimated and their culture all but destroyed. The authors of this work revisit their roots to research a rumour that Jewish life is being rekindled in modern Poland.

About the Author Larry Mayer is a writer and teacher. His articles have appeared in Hadassah and the Boston Phoenix. He is the son of Polish Holocaust survivors and lives in Cambridge, Massachusetts. Gary Gelb's photographs have appeared in Hadassah, Moment, Money, and Smart Money. He lives on Staten Island, New York.