A Finding Aid to the
Marie Syrkin Papers

Manuscript Collection No. 615
Collection Summary

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Title</th>
<th>Marie Syrkin Papers</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Dates</td>
<td>1915-1989</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Collection Number</td>
<td>MS-615</td>
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<tr>
<td>Repository</td>
<td>The Jacob Rader Marcus Center of the American Jewish Archives</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Creator</td>
<td>Syrkin, Marie, 1899-1989</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Extent</td>
<td>4 linear feet (10 Hollinger boxes)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Language of the Material</td>
<td>English and Hebrew</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Administrative Information

Biographical Sketch

Marie Syrkin was born in Berne, Switzerland, March 22, 1899, the daughter of Labor Zionist leader, Nachman Syrkin. She was brought to the U.S at the age of eight and lived in New York City.

While attending Cornell University she met and married Aaron Bodomsky. She had two sons, the oldest died in 1924 after she was separated from Bodomsky and living in New York City teaching high school English. Syrkin taught in the public schools of New York City for 25 years and wrote her first book, Your School, Your Children (1944), from her experiences there.

In 1930, she married the poet Charles Reznikoff, and in 1934, she helped found and became a major contributor to the Labor Zionist journal, Jewish Frontier. As a journalist, Syrkin edited the Jewish Frontier from 1948-1971, was editor of Herzl Press, and served on the editorial boards of Midstream and Middle East Review. She became well known as a polemicist and advocate for the Zionist cause and Israel. Following World War II, Syrkin went to Germany as a representative of B'nai B'rith Hillel Foundations to find suitable applicants for Hillel scholarships to American universities among survivors of the Holocaust. She traveled to displaced person camps and interviewed numerous survivors. Her book, Blessed Is the Match: The Story of Jewish Resistance (1957), grew out of these experiences and is believed to be the first work in English about Jewish resistance under the Nazis.

Syrkin accepted a position on the faculty of Brandeis University in 1950, teaching humanities and literature, a post she held until she retired in 1966 to become Professor Emeritus. In the 1960’s, she served on the World Zionist Executive as the American representative for the Labor Party, and as honorary president of the Labor Zionist movement in the United States. Syrkin was a lifelong friend and confidante of Israel’s Prime Minister, Golda Meir, and published her biography, Golda Meir: Israel’s Leader in 1969.

Throughout the 1970’s and 1980’s, Syrkin continued to publish articles and book reviews on various political and cultural subjects. She was also in demand as a public speaker. After the death of Reznikoff in 1976, she moved from New York City to Santa Monica, California. In 1979, she published a volume of her poetry, Gleanings: A Diary in Verse, and in 1980, a book about Israel, The State of the Jews. Marie Syrkin died on February 1, 1989 at the age of eighty-nine.

Scope and Content

Papers consist of correspondence, poetry, published and unpublished articles, addresses, translations, class lecture notes, materials pertaining to Syrkin’s work as a representative for Hillel seeking out scholarship recipients in displaced persons camps after World War II, and miscellaneous items. Important correspondents include Nachman Syrkin, David Ben-Gurion, Golda Meir, Irving Howe, Felix Frankfurter, Saul Bellow, Diana Trilling and Allen Ginsberg.

Arrangement

This collection is arranged in eight (8) series: A. Correspondence; B. Diary; C. Poetry; D. Articles and Addresses; E. Translations; F. Class Lecture Notes and Syllabi; G. B’nai B’rith Hillel Displaced Persons Scholarships; H. Miscellaneous.

Terms of Access

The collection is open for use; no restrictions apply.

Preferred Citation

Footnotes and bibliographic references should refer to the Marie Syrkin Papers and the American Jewish Archives. A suggestion for at least the first citation is as follows:

[Description], [Date], Box #, Folder #. MS-615. Marie Syrkin Papers. American Jewish Archives, Cincinnati, Ohio.

Provenance

Received from David Brodansky, Seattle, Wash., 1993.
Series A. Correspondence, 1915-1988

Extent 0.6 linear feet (1.5 Hollinger boxes)

Scope and Content Note Series A consists mostly of personal correspondence with friends and family. There are letters between Marie and her father, Nachman Syrkin (1919-1924) and letters between Marie and a close girlhood friend, Eugenia Shafran (1917-1926) which give insight into Marie's life and concerns as an adolescent and young woman. Another significant group of letters is from Syrkin to Charles Reznikoff, written while she took temporary residence in Reno, Nevada, awaiting a divorce from her first husband. Syrkin and Reznikoff exchanged letters almost daily for a four month period, February through May, 1930. Reznikoff’s letters to Marie are not part of this collection, but were given by Syrkin's heirs to the University of San Diego where they are part of the Charles Reznikoff Papers. Other correspondence in this series includes letters from Golda Meir's assistant and Meir herself concerning Syrkin's biography of Meir, and two short letters from David Ben-Gurion.

Arrangement Correspondence is arranged by correspondent, then chronologically within each file folder.

Box and Folder Listing

Box 1. Folder 1. Nachman Syrkin to Marie Syrkin, 1919-1924
Box 1. Folder 2. Nachman Syrkin to Marie Syrkin, undated
Box 1. Folder 3. Nachman Syrkin to Marie Syrkin [postcards], 1919-1921
Box 1. Folder 4. Marie Syrkin to Nachman Syrkin, 1919-1920
Box 1. Folder 5. Marie Syrkin to Eugenia Shafran, 1917-1918
Box 1. Folder 6. Marie Syrkin to Eugenia Shafran, 1919-1926
Box 1. Folder 7. Marie Syrkin to Eugenia Shafran, circa 1917-1920
Box 1. Folder 8. Marie Syrkin to Eugenia Shafran, circa 1917-1920
Box 1. Folder 9. Eugenia Shafran to Marie Syrkin, 1919-1920
Box 1. Folder 10. Samuel Roth to Marie Syrkin, 1916-1917
Box 1. Folder 11. Marie Syrkin to Maurice Samuel, 1917
Box 1. Folder 12. Maurice Samuel to Marie Syrkin, 1917-1961
Box 1. Folder 13. Laura Reding (Reichenthal) to Marie Syrkin, 1923-1924
Box 1. Folder 14. Miscellaneous correspondence, 1915-1924
Box 1. Folder 15. Marie Syrkin to Charles Reznikoff, 1928-1929
Box 1. Folder 16. Marie Syrkin to Charles Reznikoff, 1930 February-March
Box 1. Folder 17. Marie Syrkin to Charles Reznikoff, 1930 April-May
Box 1. Folder 18. Marie Syrkin to Charles Reznikoff, 1933
Box 1. Folder 19. Marie Syrkin to Charles Reznikoff, 1936
Series B. Diary, 1915

Scope and Content Note
Series B is a handwritten journal kept by Syrkin from March to May 1915 when she was 16. In it she relates her feelings and emotions about her future, her work, school, and relationships.

Box and Folder Listing
Box 2. Folder 9. Marie Syrkin's diary, 1915 March-May

Series C. Poetry, 1979-1980, undated

Extent 0.6 linear feet (1.5 Hollinger boxes)

Scope and Content Note
Series C consists of manuscript, typescript, and copies of published poems written by Syrkin. The poems span her life from early adolescence to old age, but most are undated. Also included in this series is a file of correspondence and reviews pertaining to her book, Gleanings: A Diary in Verse, published in 1979, and copies of poems by friends, Samuel Roth and Asenath Petrie.

Box and Folder Listing
Box 2. Folder 10. Poetry - Ithaca, undated
Box 2. Folder 11. Early poetry - mostly adolescent (not for publication), undated
Box 2. Folder 12. Light/satirical verse, undated
Box 2. Folder 13. Poems - juvenile, undated
Box 2. Folder 14. Poems - love and personal, undated
Box 2. Folder 15. In Memoriam and other poems, undated
Box 2. Folder 16. Gleanings: A Diary in Verse [typescript], undated
Box 2. Folder 17. Poems after publication of Gleanings, undated
Box 3. Folder 1. Bound volumes of manuscript verse, 1979
Box 3. Folder 2. Poems - typescript, undated
Box 3. Folder 3. Poems - revised, undated
Box 3. Folder 4. Poems to be revised, undated
Box 3. Folder 5. Verse - unfinished and unpublished, undated
Box 3. Folder 6. Miscellaneous poems [German, author unknown], undated
Box 3. Folder 7. Poems by Samuel Roth, undated
Box 3. Folder 8. Poems by Asenath Petrie, undated
Box 3. Folder 10. Marie Syrkin's copy of The Waste Land and Other Poems by T. S. Eliot with notes in the margins, undated

**Series D. Articles and Addresses, 1925-1989 (bulk 1960-1988)**

**Extent** 1 linear foot (2.5 Hollinger boxes)

**Scope and Content Note** Series D is the largest series and consists of Syrkin's writings and lectures. The series reflects her interests in politics, culture, and literature, and her position as an advocate and interpreter of Zionism and Israel in the United States. There are copies of published articles, arranged chronologically from 1925-1988, and undated typescript articles and addresses, mostly from the 1960's through the 1980's. There is a separate file with Syrkin's articles published in the Jewish Frontier (1937-1983) arranged chronologically. Additional materials in this series include Syrkin's letters to the editor of various publications, lectures and resources re: Zionism, typescript copies of book reviews, and a special issue of Jewish Frontier dedicated to Syrkin in 1983.

**Box and Folder Listing**

- Box 4. Folder 1. Published articles by Syrkin, 1925-1969
- Box 4. Folder 2. Published articles by Syrkin, 1970-1979
- Box 4. Folder 4. Published articles by Syrkin, undated
- Box 4. Folder 5. Articles in Jewish Frontier by Syrkin, 1937-1983
- Box 4. Folder 6. Articles and response regarding feminism, 1985
- Box 5. Folder 1. Typescript articles and addresses, 1960s-1980s
- Box 5. Folder 2. Typescript articles and addresses, 1960s-1980s
- Box 5. Folder 3. Typescript articles and addresses, 1960s-1980s
- Box 5. Folder 4. Typescript articles - current and recent, 1988-1989
- Box 5. Folder 5. Typescript book reviews, 1960s-1980s
- Box 6. Folder 1. Lectures and articles regarding Zionism, undated
- Box 6. Folder 2. Lectures and articles regarding Zionism, undated
- Box 6. Folder 3. Zionism - resources, undated
- Box 6. Folder 8. Issue of Jewish Frontier, 1942

**Series E. Translations, undated**
Series E consists of three undated files of Syrkin's translations of Russian, German, and Yiddish poetry into English.

Box and Folder Listing

Box 6. Folder 10. Verse, undated
Box 6. Folder 11. Ghetto poetry, undated
Box 6. Folder 12. Russian Poet, Aliger, undated

Series F. Class Lecture Notes and Syllabi, undated

Extent 0.8 linear feet (2 Hollinger boxes)

Scope and Content Note Series F comes from Syrkin's tenure on the faculty of Brandeis University teaching humanities and literature from 1950-1966. The files consist of outlines of lectures, listings of resource materials, copies of exams and course syllabi.

Arrangement The files are arranged alphabetically by author and/or course title.

Box and Folder Listing

Box 7. Folder 1. American Jewish literature, undated
Box 7. Folder 2. American Jewish novel, undated
Box 7. Folder 3. Cervantes, undated
Box 7. Folder 4. Chaucer, undated
Box 7. Folder 5. Dante, undated
Box 7. Folder 6. Dickens, undated
Box 7. Folder 7. English 1, undated
Box 7. Folder 8. English 10, undated
Box 7. Folder 9. Dreiser, undated
Box 7. Folder 10. Dostoyevsky, undated
Folder undated, 7 (11)
Box 7. Folder 12. Faulkner, undated
Box 7. Folder 13. Faust, undated
Box 7. Folder 14. Hebrew Literature, undated
Box 7. Folder 15. Hemingway, undated
Box 7. Folder 16. Heroic Age - Greece, undated
Box 7. Folder 17. Homer, undated
Box 7. Folder 18. Humanities 1, undated

Extent 0.4 linear feet (1 Hollinger box)

Scope and Content Note Series G contains materials related to Syrkin's work in German refugee camps following World War II seeking out recipients for Hillel scholarships in American universities. Included is background information, correspondence, applications, notes, writings by displaced person, and a collection of miscellaneous documents and notes pertaining to the Holocaust.

Box and Folder Listing

Box 9. Folder 5. Hillel students, 1947
Box 9. Folder 6. Writings of displaced persons [German/Hebrew], 1946-1947
Box 9. Folder 7. Syrkin's notes on DP camps and students, 1946-1947

Series H. Miscellaneous, 1919-1986

Extent 0.4 linear feet (1 Hollinger box)

Scope and Content Note Series H includes a Secretary's book of the Zionist Society of Cornell University (1919), a file of resource materials on conservative Jewish women, a brochure from the Brooklyn Jewish Center Institute of Jewish Studies for Adults, and materials relating to the Peace Now petition signed by Syrkin, and her Golda Meir Award in 1986.

Box and Folder Listing

Box 10. Folder 1. Secretary's book of Zionist Society of Cornell University, 1919
Box 10. Folder 2. Trancred notes and articles, undated
Box 10. Folder 3. Conservative Jewish Women, 1970
Box 10. Folder 5. Brooklyn Jewish Center Institute of Jewish Studies for Adults, 1940-1941
Box 10. Folder 7. Golda Meir Award, 1980
Box 10. Folder 8. Odds and ends of interest [notes and quotations], undated