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A Stranger Among His People: The Art, Writing, and Life of Bert Levy

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Bert Levy, *As Bert Levy Sees Himself*,
Broadway Magazine, February 1905

The issue of gaze, that is, the awareness that we not only see but, in turn, are seen by others, which consequently influences our behavior, is an ancient concern among the Jewish people, evidenced by apotropaic measures, found in the Babylonian Talmud, to ward off the malevolent glare of demons or for protection against *ayin hara*, the evil eye, cast by jealous neighbors. There, too, is found the concept of *marat ayin*, the prohibition against misleading others by our appearance or activities. In the Middle Ages, Jewish communal authorities enacted sumptuary laws; limiting the number of guests at wedding feasts and the amount of jewelry that could be worn, lest it should come to the attention of the local authorities who might, seeing Jewish wealth, increase taxes and fines on the community. In the early nineteenth century, the Reform movement in Germany proposed eliminating laws and customs

regarding worship, diet, and physical appearance (circumcision) that made Jews appear different in the eyes of their Christian neighbors.¹

The Jewish community's concerns about the gaze of others was also manifested during the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, following both German and Eastern European immigration to America. This was more than the "mere" anxiety, experienced by all immigrants, to assimilate into a dominate culture in order to ensure economic stability or success, for by the late 1870s, social barriers were erected against German Jews. Joseph Seligman, the well-known Jewish banker, was barred from the Grand Union Hotel in Saratoga, New York in 1877 and Austin Corbin, a railroad "robber baron," excluded Jews from his Manhattan Beach resort in Brooklyn in 1879. So, too, in the early twentieth century, restrictions were placed against the Eastern European arrivistes in hotels, resorts, clubs, and private schools, claiming it was necessary to shield gentiles from "the Jews' odious ways and manners". In 1908 New York City police commissioner, Theodore Bingham, publicly claimed that roughly half of New York City's criminals – "firebugs [arsonists], burglars, pickpockets, and highway robbers - came from the Hebrews."² As the seemingly never-ending flood of Jews from Eastern Europe came under the critical gaze of American nativists, and as the already-settled and well-established German Jewish community in the US became aware of this gaze, it influenced the creation of Jewish defense groups, such as the New York Kehillah (1909), the Anti Stage-Jew Ridicule Committee of Chicago (1913), and the Anti-Defamation League (ADL) of B'nai B'rith (1913).³

At the same time that these organized Jewish groups publicly responded to antisemitic and anti-immigrant attacks upon the Jewish community, they also sought – again, responding to the American nativist gaze – to more privately regulate what they deemed to be offensive Jewish behavior. The New York Kehillah, for example, established the Bureau of Social Morals to help stamp out criminal activity on the Lower East Side of New York, while the Anti Stage-Jew Ridicule Committee of Chicago and the ADL sought to boycott Jewish performers who presented, on the vaudeville (variety) stage, what they deemed to be offensive stereotypes of the Jew.⁴

In presenting, here, the story of Bert Levy, an Australian Jew who immigrated to the US in the early 1900s, I want to highlight the role that gaze played, not only for him as an individual but for members of the established Jewish community as well. Though forgotten today, appearing only in an occasional footnote on Jewish cartoonists, Levy was a popular vaudeville stage performer of his time and, moreover, an artist - already a keen observer of the world around him. Utilizing his writings, illustrations, and cartoons, as well as extensive newspaper articles describing his vaudeville stage appearances, my goal is to explore the life of a Jewish immigrant who acutely saw the world around him, and, in turn, was intensely aware of being seen. Though it may be that Levy, as an artist, was oversensitive to the gaze he

encountered and, as a result, felt alienated from all around him, his articulation of those feelings enables us to appreciate the power of gaze and its ability to shape both the individual and the community.

Early years

Bert Levy (1871-1934) was born and raised in Australia. His father, Simon Levy (1829-1904), had emigrated from Russia by 1850 and settled in London, England where he worked, first, as a slipper maker and then as a boot manufacturer. There, Simon married and had five children. Immediately following the death of his first wife in 1861, he married Mina (Mindel) Apatowski (?) (1840-1925) with whom he had two additional children before the family emigrated to Australia in 1865. They first lived in Ballarat East in Victoria, and had five more children, including Bert, before settling in Melbourne, where yet another (!) five children were born - Simon fathering 17 in all.⁵

In Melbourne, Levy worked in his father's shoe factory, operating a machine that punched brass eyelets into boot-tops, and then, when he was thirteen, was employed in the pawnshop of his brother-in-law but, according to him, he was too busy making sketches of the people who looked in the window to pay attention to the store.⁶ Though he stated that he never took a drawing lesson in his life, in actuality, Levy served as an apprentice for four years to the English scenic artist, George Gordon (d.1899) at the Melbourne Theatre Royal, doing scene painting. The English artist, Phil May (1864-1903), who submitted black and white sketches of well-known personalities and social types to the Sydney paper, the *Bulletin*, was also an influence on him.⁷

Levy began his career in writing and cartooning by first writing theatrical pieces for the *Punch*, the *Mirror* and *Table Talk* and contributing illustrations to the *Sydney Mail*, *Town and Country*, and the *Bulletin*.⁸ At the *Bulletin*, in the mid-1890s, he often drew "Jew gags". Though a contemporary writer stated that they were very funny, Levy later (1907) characterized them as, "drawing libels on my coreligionists."⁹ (Dialogue between Jewish father and potential son-in-law: "Menser Motzerkleis: 'My daughter has £20,000; if you close your business on Saturdays, I'll make it £30,000.' Simcka Abramovich: 'Vell, make it £50,000 and I'll close it altogether.'")¹⁰ He finally landed a steady position as a dramatic critic for the *Bendigo Advertiser* and as an artist to the *Bendigonian*, followed, in 1900, by a two-year position as an illustrator for *The Age* in Melbourne.¹¹



Bert Levy, *At Rosenbloom's Musicale*, the *Strand Magazine*, July 1902

In 1895 Bert married Harriett Waxman (1871-1945) from Melbourne. Harriet's family origins were similar to Bert's. Her parents, too, had first emigrated from Poland to England before settling in Melbourne and she also came from a large family. They had two children; a daughter, Rhoda M Levy (1896-96), who died shortly after birth, and a son, Alwyn Gordon Levy (1897-1918), who, as a newly enlisted airman in the Royal Air Force, died in an airplane crash in England during WWI.¹²

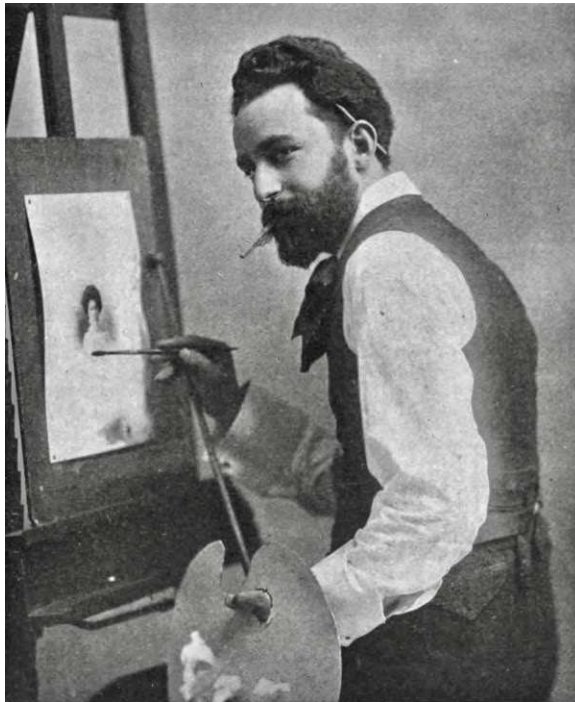
Levy came to the US, arriving in San Francisco in May 1904. (His wife and son followed in 1906.) While on board the steam ship, he started a daily paper, complete with sketches, that caught the eye of another passenger, John Spreckles, the owner of the *San Francisco Call*. Upon arriving in San Francisco, he was promptly hired by the paper to do sketches to accompany the serialization of *The Fugitive*, a novel about a Lithuanian Jewish immigrant.¹³

A few weeks after arriving in San Francisco, Levy left for the East coast. Though he later claimed (in 1908 and 1914) that he had arrived penniless in New York City, his coat "in rags," his shoes "almost off my feet," dressed in "foreign clothes," Levy neglected to mention that he had been paid by the *San Francisco Chronicle* for the sketches he had done before the start of his trip, his trip East was subsidized by the Australian press, and that he found work immediately in New York City doing costume designing. This would not be the only time that Levy would distort and romanticize his personal history. He stated in a 1908 interview that soon after arriving in New York he had won a thousand-dollar prize offered by a large weekly journal - which would have been an extraordinary sum for those times - yet this "episode" was never mentioned again by him.¹⁴ In 1909, though he had been married for 14 years and would continue to be married for 25 more, he claimed in a newspaper interview to be single, "unhappy and lonely and a wretched wanderer on the face of the earth," still looking for a girl to love.¹⁵ (See also, his claims about his "magic lantern" invention, below.) He was

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aware, at all times, of the eyes of others upon him, and adjusted his presentations accordingly.

By the end of 1904, Levy had executed several illustrations for the *New York Times* and in 1905 was hired to work for the *New York Morning Telegraph*, drawing illustrations for the Sunday morning editions. He also continued to draw for the *New York Times* as well as for *Smith's Magazine*, and wrote short pieces that appeared in *Broadway Magazine*, *Life*, *Judge*, and the *New Era*.¹⁶



Bert Levy, Broadway Magazine, February 1905

In 1915, Levy, together with the film director, Sidney Olcott, created four short films, later known as “Bertlevyettes,” combining live-action and animated cartoons, based on his sketch routines: “Famous Men of Today,” “Famous Rulers of the World,” “Great Americans, Past and Present,” and “New York and Its People”.¹⁷ From 1919 to 1923, he wrote for the English theatrical weekly, the *Stage*, as well as the *Vaudeville News*, and published a collection of short stories, *For the Good of the Race* (1921). It was as a lightning sketcher, however, that Levy was to have his great success.

Vaudeville

Beginning in the last years of the nineteenth century, quick-draw artists (lightning sketchers) began to appear on the vaudeville stage. The artist would deliver a monologue while quickly sketching a scene or a portrait to illustrate it. In 1905, for example, Richard Outcault, creator of the comic strip, “Buster

Brown,” presented an act on the vaudeville circuit in which he sketched Buster, and his dog, Tige, on a large easel. Other cartoonists who had brief stints as performers, included Bud Fisher (“Mutt and Jeff”), Rube Goldberg (“Boob McNut”), Milt Gross (“Gross Exaggerations”), Harry Hershfield (“Abie the Agent”), Windsor McKay (“Little Nemo”), and George McManus (“Bringing Up Father”). Some of the earliest silent films also showcased a lighting sketch artist at work, such as *The Enchanted Drawing* (1900), and *Animated Painting* (1904).¹⁸

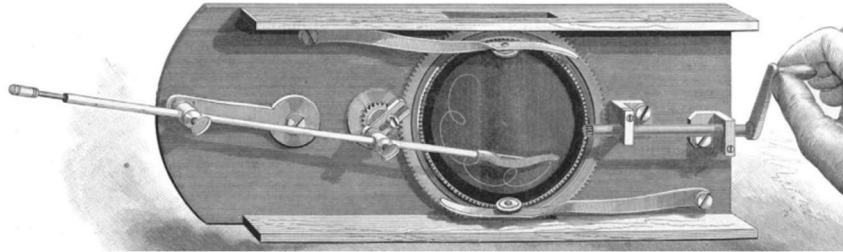
In late 1905, Levy demonstrated at social gatherings, and then on the vaudeville stage, an invention that he had worked on between 1897-99. It utilized elements of the “magic lantern” (a projector with illustrated glass slides) and the cycloidotrope (used for entertainment purposes around 1885), in which a glass disc was darkened with soot and placed in a magic lantern slide. As a hand crank revolved the disc within the slide, a stylus traced a pattern upon it which was projected onto a screen. Levy combined the two, creating, in essence, an early version of what would become the modern overhead projector. He placed a glass disc covered with lampblack (a black pigment made from soot) over a light placed underneath a table that was first projected vertically (from the bottom up) instead of horizontally (as in a standard “magic lantern”). Sitting before the table, in the center of a darkened stage, he used a stylus to sketch upon the glass (white lines now appearing on the black surface). As he worked, the image was then projected, using a prism, upon a large screen for all to see. (Since magic lantern slides had to be inserted upside down so their image would appear right side up on the screen, Levy’s device may have utilized an extra lens or a prism to compensate for the fact that he was sketching right side up.) Reports of his invention variously described it as a “magic lantern,” a “stereopticon,” a “magnifying glass,” an “arrangement of lights and lenses,” “a prism,” and even, a “Bert-Levygraph”.¹⁹

Levy, however, though he was, indeed, a talented illustrator, probably was not producing “lightening quick” sketches – it was said he could do 15 sketches in 15 minutes – but rather had a second slide, previously sketched, that he placed under the blackened one. As he removed the soot with his stylus, the sketch underneath was revealed. Through his skill in quickly removing the blackening, Levy was able to give the impression that he was actually sketching the picture.²⁰

Levy later claimed that his invention was patented all over the world, brought in extensive royalties, had been applied to various commercial purposes, and was to be installed in large railway depots as “an annunciator of the arrival and departure of trains.” When others soon began to duplicate his invention – *Variety* carried reports from 1908-17 of seven entertainers who attempted to imitate his act – Levy, claiming patent and copyright infringement, was able to compel theaters to refrain from booking his competitors. It appears, however, that this was another of his fabrications,

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since there are no indications of its use outside of his vaudeville act, and no records of it ever being patented.²¹



Cycloidotrope, Scientific American 53, no. 25, 1885

Levy, however, was not just an illustrator, he was a talented entertainer, as well. For his first vaudeville appearance in New York, entitled, “The Artist and the Model,” he created a set for the stage to resemble an artist’s studio and had the model, Lottie Vernon, pose for various sketches of her that he produced, interspersed with sketches of well-known personalities. Within a few months’ time he was able to dispose of the model and simply present his sketches of famous Americans, current day politicians, and well-known personalities. Sometimes, while he sketched, he had the orchestra play melodies, sang or delivered various witticisms about the subjects he was drawing, or whistled tunes and invited the audience to whistle along with him. His whistling, though entertaining, was not original to the stage. George W. Johnson, for example, a black minstrel entertainer, recorded “The Whistling Coon,” and “The Whistling Girl” in 1892. Jenkins suggests that “fierce competition for the spotlight often pushed performers toward adopting more and more different specialties into a single act.” Some jugglers and acrobats, for example, added comic material into their acts.²²

For the next 20 years, Levy was on the road, part of every vaudeville circuit in America.²³ In addition, he entertained in Australia, Austria, Canada, England (including a private audience with the King and Queen of England), France, and Germany. Though Levy was not the first (nor last) cartoonist to appear on stage in a vaudeville act, he most certainly was the most successful. His unusual projector, clever sketches, sense of humor, and striking looks, made him a hit on the vaudeville stage. Then, too, since vaudeville was all about variety, his “dumb” (silent) act was a perfect one to intersperse between singing numbers. He soon gave up his steady job as an illustrator with the *Morning Telegraph*, though he continued to submit, over the years, articles and illustrations on vaudeville life to various newspapers and magazines. By 1917 he owned a “show place” home on Long Island, complete with a huge hearth, grounds, and dogs.²⁴

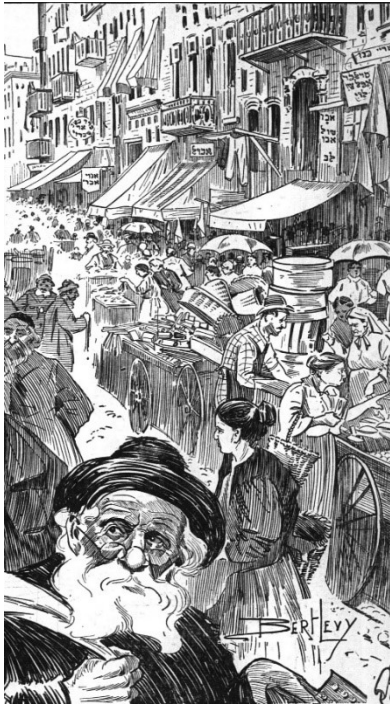
The issue of gaze was also present during Levy’s years as a vaudeville performer, for he was consummately aware of his audience and, like all successful entertainers, adjusted his act in response to their reactions.

Moreover, since the craft of the actor is a false presentation of self, and, since his act involved a certain degree of deception, this suggests that Levy's vaudeville experience contributed to his sensitivity towards and criticism of some of his fellow Jews who "put on masks" in order to try and assimilate into American culture (see below).

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Soon after arriving in the US, Levy stated that his secret ambition was "to illustrate the pathetic and serious side of my race"²⁵. Indeed, many of the illustrations that he did for New York papers and journals focused on the Jewish inhabitants of New York's East Side. The opening words in his essay, "A Stranger Among His People" (1905) in which he stated, "I stood for the first time in the Ghetto of Chicago," and his subsequent reference to "the Ghetto" on New York's East Side, suggests the influence of Israel Zangwill's novel, *Children of the Ghetto* (1892), that portrayed the inhabitants of the Jewish quarter of East London. It is also likely that Levy was familiar with the sketches by Jacob Epstein (1880-1959), appearing in Hutchins Hapgood's *The Spirit of the Ghetto* (1902), that illustrated the inhabitants of New York's Jewish quarter. Unlike Zangwill and Hapgood, however, who profiled socialists, working women, sewing machine operators, novelists, actors, writer and intellectuals - in short, the variegated complex life on London's East End and on what later was called, The Lower East Side of New York – Levy's writings and illustrations suggested that the Jewish quarter was occupied solely by "Old World" Talmudic scholars and Orthodox Jews. In an interview in 1908, he spoke of the unknown Jewish scholar in New York, "who thinks nothing of money but much of his few books," and in his essay, "Oh, Jew! Suppress Thyself!" (1914) he called the scholarly inhabitants of the East Side Ghetto, "real Jews". Their great passion for "the dead and gone past...lends to their lives a religious grandeur which the uptown tourist...would never suspect."²⁶

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Bert Levy,
Passover Eve on the East Side,
the *New York Times*, April 16, 1905



Bert Levy,
Some Types of the Ghetto,
Oakland Tribune, July 5, 1908

Yet although Levy overly-sentimentalized these Orthodox Jews and claimed affiliation with them, he also took pains to distance himself from them. On the one hand, he stood among them as “a co-religionist” who desired to cry out to them: “I am a Jew!” On the other, as a fully assimilated Australian with an immediate ease in American society given English as his native tongue, and a familiarity with urban life in New York based on his years living in Melbourne, he felt that he was “a stranger among my own people.” Though he claimed that this was because he did not understand their tongue (yet, surely, he grew up with Yiddish spoken by his immigrant parents), it is more likely that his discomfort stemmed from their difficulty in speaking English, their Old World dress and customs, their low economic status; in short, their clear identification as unassimilated Americans. Quite aware of how alien they appeared to others, he proclaimed their worth as scholars who scorned the pursuit of material advancement in the same way that Zangwill, in *Children of the Ghetto* indicated that the ghetto, “with all its poverty and misery, is the true spiritual and ethical center of Judaism.”²⁷

But if Levy felt he was a stranger among the newly arrived immigrants of the Lower East Side, he also felt equally alienated from those Jews struggling to become fully assimilated into American society. In his 1914 short story, “Oh, Jew! Suppress Thyself!” he not only cringed at how the Jewish gangsters, gunmen, gamblers, arsonists, and “shyster lawyers” of his

time were abusing the privilege of American freedom but also revealed his discomfort with his “hurrying, pushing, shoving brethren,” and their “aggressive personalities”. In the same way, as Zurawik has noted, that Jews in the 1950s television industry worried about “surplus visibility” - the feeling that whatever they said or did was too much and too conspicuous - and so sought to self-police that visibility, so, too, decades before this, did Levy. He wished that they would “behave modestly... talk less, and appear less ostentatious,” “stand back and keep quiet,” and attempt to suppress themselves.²⁸

In addition to expressing his embarrassment over the lack of manners and culture that these new immigrants displayed, Levy also criticized those who attempted (in vain) to hide their Jewish identity in order to fit into American society. At a lecture he gave in 1907 at a Salt Lake City synagogue, he spoke out against those Jews who attempted to assimilate: “It is the Jew who denies his faith that is detested in America. Americans hate a man with a distinctly Jewish face, who calls himself Murphy.” In 1914 he stated that “there is nothing so pathetic as the man, who, with a Hebrew face, assumes a Christian name” and that “nature’s marks cannot be changed like one’s clothes.”²⁹

Wherever he looked, it seems that Levy saw the gaze of “the other” upon his fellow Jews. They were either “too Jewish,” clearly not American, and so needed to be highly romanticized; or were “too loud,” calling attention to their, yet, unfinished path toward acculturation; or were too obsequious, seeking to vainly eradicate all Jewish characteristics in order to fully assimilate as Americans.

The Samuels and Sylenz affair

To add to Levy’s sense of displacement, he found himself, in 1915, attacked by the established, well-assimilated German-Jewish community. In late 1914, he had created a comic strip entitled, “Samuels and Sylenz,” that ran from June to August 1915. Sometimes, Levy’s talent as an illustrator was apparent in the strip, as intricate scenes appeared in the background; at other times, the strip seems to have been hastily drawn, and, in all probability, was executed while he was touring on the vaudeville circuit. In fact, the characters’ appearances are slightly different in a number of strips. Moreover, it seems that “Samuels and Sylenz” was Levy’s first foray into the world of comic strips. One of his characters often fell to the left, rather than to the right, in the last panel of his strip, whereas, for more experienced comic strip drawers, the reader’s eye was carefully guided along the strip from left to right with nothing to interrupt that flow.³⁰

The strip involved two men, Samuels and Sylenz, partners in an unnamed business. They were modeled on the “two-act,” a standard vaudeville presentation, involving a tall, straight man and his buddy, a short comic. The format (again, based on the vaudeville model) was simple: in the

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first four panels, Samuels, the tall, straight man, set up the joke. In the last panel, Sy, who up to now had been silent, delivered the punch line. Their dialogue was conveyed through eye dialect (phonetic spelling). Samuels: "I'm vorried about my wife. She talks so in her sleep. Last night she vas vorse than ever. She called me awful names." Sy: "Maybe she wasn't asleep." Or (utilizing an old joke): Samuels: "It's too bad about your dog. Such an expensive animal too. For vy did dey shoot it? Vas der dog mad? Sy: "Vell! He vasn't so tam pleased."³¹

In his strip, Levy made sure to avoid vaudeville stereotypes of the Jew. His characters were fashionably dressed (no baggy pants or derby hat pulled down over the ears), were clean shaven (no scruffy beards), and overall, lacked identifiable Jewish physiognomy (such as a large nose). Of the two dozen extant strips, only one portrayed Jews in an unflattering light. Samuels (again, in eye dialect): "Vy did you give der check boy a dollar? You spoil him for others. A quarter would do. Vy such extravagance?" Sy: "Didn't yo see der fine coat he gave me?"³² Here, it was if Levy had come full circle, back to his days in Australia, penning "Jew gags" for the *Bulletin*.

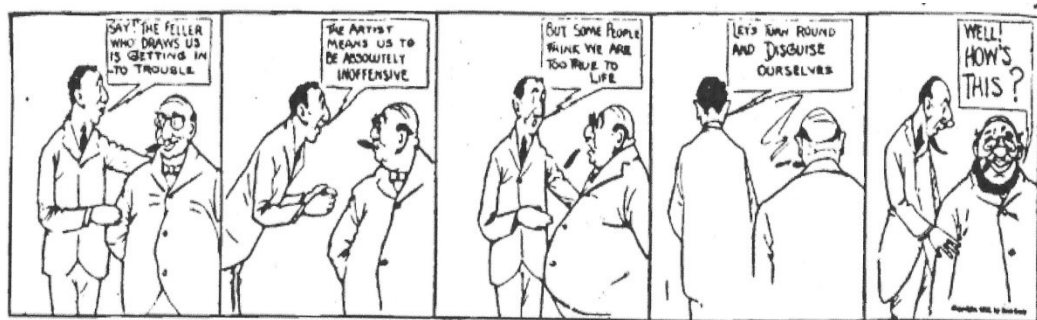


Bert Levy, "Samuels and Sylenz (The Silent Partner),
the Lowell Sun, June 24, 1915

Since Samuels and Sylenz, however, spoke with a stereotypical "Jewish" accent, this was likely the reason, in 1915, that the Anti-Defamation League (ADL) of B'nai B'rith, established by the German-Jewish community of Chicago, called for a national boycott of the strip, finding it "very objectionable to our coreligionists".³³ Certainly, Levy was not the only target of the ADL's ire. B'nai B'rith chapters in St. Louis in 1910 and in Albany in 1912 had previously spoken out against the demeaning caricatures of Jews that had appeared on the stage and in silent films.³⁴ Their attack on Levy, however, was especially ironic given that he proudly identified as a Jew. During his years of vaudeville touring, he spoke at dozens of synagogues across the US and, in 1908, had been one of the key speakers in Los Angeles at a gathering to honor the memory of Theodore Herzl. He had also previously called out those who presented harmful caricatures of the Jew on the stage;

and, as mentioned above, had appealed to his Eastern European coreligionists to be less ostentatious and rude in public.³⁵

Levy responded publicly to the campaign, utilizing his comic strip to air his grievance. Moreover, he did so in a radical way, by “breaking down the fourth wall,” and having his characters directly address the readers. Samuels: “Say! The feller who draws us is getting in trouble. The artist means us to be absolutely inoffensive. But some people think we are too true to life.” (Both turn their backs away). “Let’s turn round and disguise ourselves.” Sy (now wearing a mask, directly facing and addressing the readers): “Well! How’s this?”



Bert Levy, “The Silent Partner,” *the Lowell Sun*, July 22, 1915

Levy, here, appears to be sarcastically replying to his critics that if they thought his characters were “too Jewish,” he would try and disguise them. As the strip continued to unfold during the week, it became clear, however, that the disguise was of no avail. The second day’s strip features Samuels wearing the mask and stating, “I tell you Sy dis disguise ting is a vunderful bizness. Our own mothers wouldn’t know it vas us.” (Behind him, passing characters call out: “Hullo Samuels,” “Paper Mr. Sylenz?”) A few days later, as they continued to walk around with their masks, Levy had a passerby shout out behind them to “Take ‘em off we know yer.” When Samuels asks, “How did they know me?” Sy replies: “Keep your mouth shut and nobody will know you.” If changing their appearance would not work, the only alternative, then, was silence to hide their accents. Levy’s response to his critics, was that his Jewish characters were “true to life” so why vainly try to hide their identity?³⁶

Levy, however, soon acquiesced to the pressure, publicly announcing that he was giving up the strip, forfeiting a salary of \$12,000 for doing it, and paying \$2,200 to be released from his contract with a distributing syndicate. He concluded with a passive-aggressive statement that the editors of the papers in which the strip had appeared considered (unlike the ADL) that his characters were “kindly and quite harmless,” and that he did not kill his strip due to pressure from the ADL: “Twenty Anti-Defamation Leagues could not have suppressed the series. I alone voluntarily killed the drawings to please

my fellow Jews.”³⁷ While \$12,000 in 1915 was no small amount of money, still, it probably paled against the vaudeville salary that Levy was making. In addition, his strip had been barely a two-month enterprise, and he had no difficulty in immediately introducing a new comic strip, “This Way Out,” a few weeks later. Levy may have also calculated that forfeiting this income was not only worth the avoidance of bad press, but that he could actually obtain good publicity by his action. If so, his instincts proved to be correct. B’nai B’rith patted themselves on the back for a job well done and now sang his praises: “Such men as Mr. Bert Levy are a pride and a glory to Israel,” while the *Chicago Sentinel* praised his “manhood and idealism”. Four months later, he was invited to speak at a B’nai B’rith lodge, while another sought his services for a fundraising event.³⁸

Levy’s last years were far quieter. At the end of 1926, he and his wife moved to Los Angeles, where he worked briefly for MGM to write movie scenarios and did illustrations of Hollywood stars for the *Los Angeles Times*. By 1933, a year before his death, he worked as an illustrator for Paramount.³⁹

In retrospect, it is not surprising that Levy could not find a home, both literal and metaphoric, among the established American Jewish community and among the newly arrived Jewish immigrants. As the assimilated son of twice-immigrated parents, himself an immigrant from Australia to America, decades-long peripatetic vaudevillian, and dweller on two US coasts, he could call no place home. Moreover, though he never denied his Jewishness and, in fact, was quite proud of being a Jew, his acute sensitivity to the gaze of others led him to either chastise the behavior of his fellow Jews or overly-romanticize them. When, subsequently, his graphic portrayal of Jews proved troubling in the eyes of the established German Jewish leadership, he suffered through their condemnation, as well. In all these ways, he was truly, a stranger among his people.

Acknowledgements

My thanks to the library staff at the Billy Ireland Cartoon Museum and Library in Columbus, and at Hebrew Union College-Jewish Institute of Religion in Los Angeles, for their research assistance.

Endnotes

1 *Babylonia Talmud*, Baba Metzia 30a, Berachot 55b, Pesachim 110a-112b, Shabbat 61b, 64b; Marcus, *The Jew in the Medieval World*, 193-196; Plaut, *The Rise of Reform Judaism*, 162-169, 206-214. The concern about gaze is, of course, not a uniquely Jewish one but shared with cultures and civilizations throughout the world and throughout the ages. See, for example, Dundes, “Wet and Dry the Evil Eye.” Du Bois, in the early twentieth century, called attention to how racial oppression created “double-consciousness,” the sense of always looking at one’s self through the eyes of others; Elkind and Bowen

explored in the late twentieth century, how children and adolescents imagine that they are the center of others' attention. Elkind and Bowen, "Imaginary Audience Behavior"; Pittman, "Double Consciousness."

2 Bingham, "Foreign Criminals in New York," 383-84; Cohen, "Antisemitism in the Gilded Age," 188, 193-94, 198, 200-01; "Mr. Corbin and the Jews"; Ross, "The Hebrews of Eastern Europe in America," 791. For Jewish concerns during the Enlightenment about the gaze of others, see Cuddihy, *The Ordeal of Civility*. For explorations into the issue of "gaze," "self-image," "presentation of self," and "performativity" that arose, especially in urban settings beginning in the late nineteenth century, see Cushman, *Constructing the Self*, Romeyn, *Street Scenes*, xii-xxv, Westgate, *Staging the Shums*, and Zurier, *Picturing the City*.

3 Belth, *A Promise to Keep*, 37-43; Kibler, *Censoring Racial Ridicule*, 117-18, 127-28; Romeyn, *Street Scenes*, 172-173.

4 "Anti-Defamation Move Becomes Nationwide"; B'nai B'rith News, 245; *Chicago Record-Herald*, March 23, 1913, quoted in Distler, "The Rise and Fall of the Racial Comics," 188-89; Harap, *Dramatic Encounters*, 30-31; Joselit, *Our Gang*, 81-83; Sable, "Some American Jewish Organizational Efforts," 250.

5 Bert was born June 24th, 1871 and died in Los Angeles, California on August 5, 1934. He was given the name of Abraham at birth, then utilized Albert A. before shortening his name to Bert. His father, Simon, stated in 1851 that he was from Germany and Bert corroborated this in a 1907 interview. In Bert's 1912 autobiographical essay, however, he stated that his father was of Polish-Russian parentage, which is more likely. His mother's maiden name is variously given in Australia birth records as Abitoske, Abertosky, Abertowski, Apatoski, Apitoski, Epitosky, and Obadasky (perhaps indicating family origin from Opatow, Poland.) Archer, *Myers Family Tree*; *Australia Birth Index*, "Abraham Levy," "Isaac Levy," "Reuben Levy," and "Rhoda M Levy"; "Bert Levy," *Hartford Courant*; *England Wales Civil Registration Marriage Index*, "Mina Obadasky"; Levy, "Oh, Jew! Suppress Thyself!" 1; Levy, "The Pathetic Side of Vaudeville"; *US Naturalization Records*, "Bert Levy"; *Victoria, Australia, Assisted and Unassisted Passenger Lists*, "Mine Levy"; *Victoria, Australia, Cemetery Records*, "Mena Levy," and "Simon Levy"; *1851 England Census*, "Semion Levy"; *1861 England Census*, "Solomon Levy"; *1920 US Census*, "Bert Levy"; *1925 New York Census*, "Burt Levy"; *1930 US Census*, "Bert Levy."

6 "Cartoonist's Fun with Joe Steibel"; Levy, "Bert Levy-An Illustrated Autobiography."

7 "Bert Levy, Artist, Inventor"; Heseltine, "May, Philip William"; Levy, "Bert Levy-An Illustrated Autobiography," xi-xii, xxi-xxii; Martin, "Bert Levy is a Man of Moods"; *The Encyclopedia of Melbourne Online*, "Theatre."

8 King, *A Cartoon History of Australia*, 70-71; Levy, "Bert Levy-An Illustrated Autobiography," xiii; "The Fugitive."

9 Curtis, "The Humorous Artists of Australia," 664; Levy, "The Pathetic Side of Vaudeville"; "The Fugitive."

10 Kerr, "Bert Levy"; Rolfe, the *Journalistic Javelin*, 50-51.

11 Levy, "Bert Levy-An Illustrated Autobiography," xiii; "The Fugitive."

12 Archer, *Myers Family Tree*; *Australia Birth Index*, "Alwyn G Levy," "Rhoda M Levy," and "Harriett Waxman"; *Australia Death Index*, "Rhoda M Levy"; *Australia Marriage Index*, "Abraham Levy and Hart Waxman"; "Bert Levy Loses Son," 137; *California Death Index*, "Harriet Levy"; *New York, State and Federal Naturalization Records*, "Bert Levy"; the *Reform Advocate*, 355; *US Naturalization Records*, "Mrs. Harriet Levy"; *1930 US Census*, "Bert Levy."

13 Levy, apparently, was the only one of his family to leave Australia. His brother, Reuben, for example, opened up a rockery and glass store in Sydney and called himself, "The King of China." "Apropos of Bert Levy"; "Bert Levy and Australia"; Brudno, "The Fugitive"; *California, Passenger and Crew Lists*, "Bert Levy"; Levy, "Bert Levy-An Illustrated Autobiography," xvi-xvii; "Reub Levy-The King of China"; "The Pathetic Side of Vaudeville"; *US Naturalization Records*, "Bert Levy," and "Mrs. Harriet Levy."

14 For a more truthful account of this time, see Levy, "Bert Levy-An Illustrated Autobiography," xvii-xviii. "Australians Bid Farewell to Departing Artists"; "Bert Levy Tells of the Jew of the Ghetto"; "Cartoonist's Fun with Joe Steibel"; Levy, "Oh, Jew! Suppress Thyself!" 8; Martin, "Bert Levy is a Man of Moods." For the evidence that has led me to conclude that "Oh, Jew! Suppress Thyself" (1914) was the original version of "For the Good of the Race" (1921), see registration for "Oh, Jew! Suppress Thyself!" in Library of Congress Copyright Office, 1914, *Catalog of Copyright Entries*, 1471. Also see Levy, "For the Good of the Race," 5, 9 where the phrase "Suppress Thyself!" occurs several times, and Levy, *For the Good of the Race*, xxiv, in which he acknowledges that the short stories in his book had previously appeared elsewhere, listing several publications as possible sources for "For the Good of the Race."

15 "Bert Levy, Artist, is Hunting for Woman."

16 "B.C. Hart's Opinion"; "Bert Levy and Lottie Vernon"; Levy, "A Stranger Among His People," 16-23; Levy, *An Easter Girl*; Levy, *As An Australian Artist Saw New York's Christmas Streets*; Levy, "Bert Levy-An Illustrated Autobiography," xviii-xix; Levy, *Still Alive and Doing Business*.

17 Levy signed an agreement with Lewis J. Selznick's World Film Corporation at the beginning of December 1914 to create the films; the first one was shown just one month later. They were not a commercial success, however and no copies of them seemed to have survived. "Bert Levy," *Variety*, December 12, 1914; "Bert Levy Signs"; "Saturday."

18 Canwell, "Gags, Situation Comedies," 39; Crafton, *Before Mickey*, 48-57; Laurie, *Vaudeville*, 211.

19 “A Novelty at Keith’s”; “Amusements”; “An American’s Success”; “Another strong feature,” 13; “Bert Levy,” *Variety*; “Bert Levy-New York Telegraph’s Cartoonist”; “Bert Levy. Sketches. Keith’s”; “Bert Levy, sketching,” 10; “Bert Levy Tells of the Jew of the Ghetto”; “Bert Levy, the vaudeville cartoonist”; “Bert Levy, who appears at B.F. Keith’s,” 7; “Colonial,” 17; de Roo, “Mechanical Special Effects Slides”; “Gossip of the Stage”; “Henderson’s”; Hopkins, “In Bert Levy”; Levy, “Bert Levy-An Illustrated Autobiography,” xix-xx; “Shows of the Week---by Rush”; Hopkins, “The Cycloidrope,” 390; “Tivoli Theatre”; “Unique-Polite Vaudeville”; For a brief overview of projected screen images, see Oberdeck, *The Evangelist and the Impresario*, 102-103.

20 Sargent, “Beginners’ Vaudeville Lessons.”

21 “Alleged Copy Cancelled”; “Austin Lapham”; “Bert Levy, Artist, Inventor”; “Copy Act’ Cancelled”; “Felix”; “Henry N Cody”; “Levy Claims ‘Copy’”; “Manager Closes Copy”; Martin, “Bert Levy is a Man of Moods”; “Placed for Four Years”; “The Great Rapoli.”

22 “A Novelty at Keith’s”; “B.C. Hart’s Opinion”; *Bert Levy and Lottie Vernon in ‘The Artist and the Model’ Keith’s*; “Bert Levy’s Idea of Studio Life”; “Gossip of the Stage”; Jenkins, *Pistachio*, 69-70; Kenney, *Recorded Music in American Life*, 38-39; “Plays and Players”; “Unique-Polite Vaudeville.” For an examination of how scientific inventions were presented as entertainment in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, see Jay, *Learned Pigs & Fireproof Women*, 127-146, and Nadis, *Wonder Shows*.

23 Levy should not be confused with another Bert Levy (born as Herbert R Levey) (1887-1972) who ran the Bert Levy Circuit, situated in Chicago, that booked vaudeville acts into small theatres between Los Angeles and San Francisco. “Belasco Painted Out”; “Bert Levey Circuit”; “Bert Levy,” in Cullen, *Vaudeville Old & New*, 680; California Death Index, “Bert Levey”; “Circuits Join in 10-Year Agreement”; 1900 US Census, “Herbert R Levey”; 1910 US Census, “Bert R Levey.”

24 “Amusements”; “An American’s Success”; “Apropos of Bert Levy”; “Bert Levy Commanded to Entertain Royalty”; “Bert Levy Returns Thanks”; “Bert Levy’s Idea of Studio Life”; “Levy Going to Berlin”; McIntyre, “Bert Levy, Vaudeville Cartoonist”; “Novel Decorations”; “Rickard’s Tivoli Theatre”; Stewart, *No Applause*, 87-88; “Vaudeville Star Replies to Critic”; “Wouldn’t Go to Russia.”

25 Levy, “The Pathetic Side of Vaudeville.”

26 Levy may have also been familiar with a work of short stories about New York’s Jewish “East Side” by the vaudevillian, David Warfield. “Australians Bid Farewell to Departing Artists”; “Bert Levy in the Magazines”; “Bert Levy Tells of the Jew of the Ghetto”; Hapgood, *The Spirit of the Ghetto*; Levy, “A Stranger Among his People,” 16-23; Levy, “Oh, Jew! Suppress Thyself!” 13, 19; Levy, *Passover Eve on the East Side*; Warfield and Hamm, *Ghetto Silhouettes*; Zangwill, *Children of the Ghetto*.

27 “Australians Bid Farewell to Departing Artists”; “Bert Levy Tells of the Jew of the Ghetto”; Levy, “A Stranger Among his People,” 16-23; Levy, “Oh, Jew! Suppress Thyself!” 13, 19; “Mr. Bert Levy”; Rochelson, “Language, Gender, and Ethnic Anxiety,” 401. For an examination of “slumming” and its influence on the theatre, see Westgate, *Staging the Slums, Slumming the Stage*.

28 Levy, “Oh, Jew! Suppress Thyself!” 10, 12-13; Zurawik, *The Jews of Prime Time*, 5-6. For explorations into the issue of “gaze,” “self-image,” and “presentation of self,” that arose especially in urban settings beginning in the late nineteenth century, see Romeyn, *Street Scenes*, xii-xxv, Westgate, *Staging the Slums*, and Zurier, *Picturing the City*.

29 Martin, “Bert Levy is a Man of Moods”; “No Prejudice Against Jew.”

30 The copyright was filed in January and February of 1915. The earliest known copy of the strip is from June 7, 1915 and the latest is from August 25, 1915. Mendel Silber, the editor of the *Jewish Ledger* stated that the cartoons “had appeared for a number of weeks.” The strip also appeared under the title of “The Silent Partner” and “His Silent Partner.” “An Artist’s Sacrifice”; Levy, “His Silent Partner”; Levy, “Samuels & Sylenz (The Silent Partners)”; Levy, “The Silent Partner,” *the News*; Library of Congress Copyright Office, 1915, *Catalog of Copyright Entries*, 4142; “Paintings are His Hobby”; “Six Features Wednesday.”

31 Levy, “Samuels and Sylenz,” the *Lowell Sun*, June 29, 1915.

32 Levy, “Samuels and Sylenz (The Silent Partner),” the *Lowell Sun*, July 15, 1915.

33 “A Loyal Jewish Artist.”

34 American Jewish Committee, *American Jewish Yearbook*, 140; “Anti-Defamation Move Becomes Nationwide”; B’nai B’rith News, 245; Belth, *A Promise to Keep*, 44-46, 49-50; “Condemn Stage Jew”; “Charles M. Stern”; “Hebrew Protest Meeting”; “Jews Are Organizing to Stop Defamation”; “Jews Fight Stage Caricature.”

35 “Bert Levy”; “Bert Levy,” Box 1, Folders 3, 4, 7, and 8, Marx Collection; “Bert Levy Tells of the Jew of the Ghetto”; Levy, “Bert Levy-An Illustrated Autobiography,” 293-300; Levy, “Oh, Jew! Suppress Thyself!” 7, 9-11, 16; Levy, “The Pathetic Side of Vaudeville”; “Levy, Bert,” Billy Ireland Cartoon Museum and Library; “Speakers at Service.”

36 Levy, “The Silent Partner,” *Buffalo Morning Express*, July 22, 23, 27, 1915.

37 “A Loyal Jewish Artist”; “An Artist’s Sacrifice.”

38 “An Artist’s Sacrifice”; Brener, *The Jews of Lancaster*, 122; DiMeglio, *Vaudeville U.S.A.*, 21, 27; Levy, “This Way Out”; “Novel Decorations Employed in Bert Levy’s Home”; “What Our Lodges are Doing.”

39 He may also have worked briefly for the animation studios of the Bray Production Co. “Bert Levy didn’t last long in Hollywood,” 42; “Bert Levy Rites Set for Today”; “Bert Levy Signed by M.-T.-G.”; “Bert Levy Work for

Preview”; “Duck Soup”; Levy, *For the Good of the Race*; Levy, “Vaudeville Memories”; “Pen and Pencil Jottings”; “Sketches”; *US Naturalization Records*, “Bert Levy”; “*World Judgement Reversed*”; “\$180 for a Mercedes.” See also his 1929 written and illustrated piece on Charlie Chaplin. Levy, “Charlie Chaplin.” Though Levy was working on a book of his vaudeville experiences in 1930, tentatively titled, *20 Years Around the World with an Entertainer*, the book was never published. “Chaplin Makes Levy Write.”

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