



Memoirs of a Grandmother: Scenes from the Cultural History of the Jews of Russia in the Nineteenth Century, Volume Two (Stanford Studies in Jewish History and C)

Pauline Wengeroff

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Pauline Wengeroff's *Memoirs of a Grandmother* offers a unique first-person window into traditionalism, modernity, and the tensions linking the two in nineteenth-century Russia. Wengeroff (1833–1916), a perceptive, highly literate social observer, tells a gripping tale of cultural transformation, situating her narrative in the experience of women and families.

In Volume Two, Wengeroff claims that Jewish women were capable and desirous of adopting the best of European modernity but were also wedded to tradition, while Jewish men recklessly abandoned tradition and forced their wives to do the same. The result was not only marital and intergenerational conflict but also catastrophic cultural loss, with women's inability to transmit tradition in the home leading to larger cultural drift. Two of Wengeroff's children converted when faced with anti-Jewish educational and professional discrimination, unwilling to sacrifice secular ambitions and visions for the sake of a traditional culture they did not know. *Memoirs* is a tale of loss but also of significant hope, which Wengeroff situates not in her children but in a new generation of Jewish youth reclaiming Jewish memory. To them, she addresses her *Memoirs*, giving an "orphaned youth"—orphaned of their past and culture—a "grandmother."

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