buyers? Last but not least, what is the place of pork and other non-kosher products sold in the Russian stores in the construction of Soviet-type secular Jewishness, before and after migration? The empirical basis of the study in both countries was constructed along similar lines: 30 immigrant families (comprising altogether 55–57 informants in each country), with most informants being in the age bracket 45–65 years, i.e., those who spent most of their lives in the USSR/FSU and between 8 and 15 years in Germany or Israel. Both national samples were located in a single city of area with high concentration of ex-Soviet immigrants, Haifa in Israel and a fictional town of Standstadt in Germany (whose entire Jewish community consists of ex-Soviets). The book offers a very detailed and richly illustrated ethnographic account of the lifestyles and attitudes of the participant immigrant families, with the focus on some 10–12 key informants in each country whose experiences and narratives the author deems most representative or colorful.

The content is divided into eight chapters: two initial ones offer a general introduction to the phenomenon of post-Soviet Jewish immigration and the contexts of reception in the two countries, particularly the encounter of the newcomers with the German and Israeli versions of capitalism and liberal democracy. The following three chapters focus on the patterns of food consumption before and after migration, its symbolic loadings and the connections between the two (e.g., the symbolic separation of the food items and dishes into proletarian and luxurious; the nostalgic reproduction of practices typical of food shortage in the midst of actual abundance, etc.). The titles of these chapters are rather telling: "'Chocolates without History Are Meaningless'." Pre- and post-Migration Consumption" (chap. 3); "Russian Food Stores in Israel and Germany. Images of Imaginary Home, Homeland, and Identity Consolidation" (chap. 4); "Russian Food Stores in Israel and Germany. Different National Symbolic Participations and *Virtual Transnational Enclave*" (chap. 5).

The subsequent three chapters shift the perspective to the matters of "trans-Jewish affiliations" and ethnicity constructions by the immigrants in the two countries. Chap. 6 elaborates on the unique meanings of Jewishness in the Soviet context – as an innate ethnic belonging (or *nationality* in Soviet lore) – rather than religion, hence constructed as a fact of birth unrelated to any religious or cultural practices. Bernstein reflects on the deep rift between this Soviet understanding of Jewishness and the traditional view of Judaism as religion and Jews as a cultural group defined by its ritual and traditional praxis – shared by the hosts (Europeans, Israelis, and Americans alike). She describes multiple social conflicts and mutual alienation between native Germans and Jewish refugees, and to a lesser extent between "Russians" and veteran Israelis, that draw on these divergent concepts and expectations, including recurrent accusations of ex-Soviets of not being real Jews (who are expected to attend synagogues, keep kosher, celebrate Jewish holidays, etc.) but kind of impostors seeking benefits from their host societies. The matter of non-kosher Russian groceries comes in handy as material affirmation of falsehood of these "non-Jewish Jews."

Bernstein continues her analysis of the inherent conflict between ex-Soviet Jews and their German hosts who construe them as descendents of Holocaust victims (which was a ground of their very entry into Germany as refugees), while the immigrants see themselves as part of the victorious Soviet nation that defeated the Nazis in the Great Patriotic War (i.e., WW II on the Soviet territory). Many of the elderly Russian and Ukrainian Jews were soldiers and officers of the Red Army and take pride in their active role in the war with fascism (as opposed to the passive victimhood of European Jews in the Holocaust); this forms the basis of their self-perception, both as Jews and ex-Soviet citizens. They proudly display their wartime medals during celebrations of the Victory Day on May 8th held every year by the Russian community in all major German cities, seemingly oblivious of how the local Germans – their former enemies and now generous hosts – may perceive it. This analysis of the contrasting visions of the history of German-Soviet-Jewish relations is presented in chap. 7, including its reflections in the German media that helps form public opinion about the Jewish newcomers. Bernstein then offers insightful accounts of how ex-Soviet Jews construct and justify their decision to move to the country of former nemesis and the scene of the Holocaust, rather than to their "natural" homeland of Israel.

The final chap. 8 brings together the paradoxes of living in several contested social worlds by Russian Jews in the two countries, including their differential sense of national affiliation (guests or foreigners in Germany, full-fledged participant citizens in Israel), ties with the FSU, and future life plans. The book is a compelling work of participant ethnography that may contribute to better mutual understanding between former Soviet immigrants and their hosts in Israel and Germany. Its main shortcomings, in my view, are 1) Excessive size, multiple renditions of similar ideas in different sections of the book, and heavy-handed writing style (exacerbated by poor copyediting); 2) The book is much more revealing and interesting in its German-based components than in Israeli ones, which are less empirically based and mainly refer to the existing Israeli literature; 3) The author is unfamiliar with parts of the existing scholarship on Russian Jews in different migration countries and their transnational lives (e.g., the book by the writer of these lines – "Russian Jews on Three Continents. Identity, Integration and Conflict." New Brunswick 2007) – and as a result often misrepresents her ideas and findings as novel. Despite these flaws, perhaps inevitable for the first-time author, Julia Bernstein's book is an important contribution to the current scholarship on ethnicity, immigration, and transnationalism.

Larissa Remennick

Búriková, Zuzana, and **Daniel Miller:** Au Pair. Cambridge: Polity Press, 2010. 209 pp. ISBN 978-0-7456-5012-8. Price: £ 15.00

Research into au pair mobility should be of relevance for both migration studies and care studies, yet only a few books about the au pair institution have so far been

published. "Au Pair" by Búriková and Miller is one of the first books to offer a thorough insight into the au pair regime and its consequences for both au pairs and employing families.

Slovakian ethnologist Búriková and coauthor Miller, an English anthropologist who has personally employed several au pairs to take care of his own children, form a unique research team to approach the phenomenon of Slovakian au pairs working in London around the mid-2000s.

In contrast to the "typical" academic style of social studies, the authors omit academic references in the main text, situating them instead in the appendix. They argue that this allows them to differentiate their work from mainstream research on domestic labour which is primarily concerned with revealing exploitation and abuse of (migrant) domestic workers. Búriková and Miller aim to research additionally not only au pair work but also au pair leisure time activities and social networks. Nevertheless, with a more critical use of terms like "host family," the authors could have taken a stance against the misunderstanding of au pairs as family members with corresponding duties.

Having met about 50 au pairs and spent time observing them, talking to them, visiting them at their workplace, accompanying them in their leisure time, and talking to their employing families, the authors provide a remarkable ethnography of the au pair institution and its many facets. Individual chapters are written in different styles and relate diverse stories about becoming and being au pair. In some more comprehensive chapters, the authors emphasize the social context of individual behaviour and categorise their observations in terms of au pair types or patterns.

One of the interesting observations in the first chapter is that au pair mobility from Slovakia to London in the mid-2000s was to some degree induced by economic factors, as au pair wages in London were normally higher than Slovakian salaries. Furthermore, learning English is believed to open up career possibilities for these young women. However, the authors emphasise that often the main reason for becoming an au pair lies in an au pair's personal relationships, such as the desire to gain independence from one's parents, to spend some time without one's boyfriend before getting married, or to take flight from a broken relationship.

The second chapter, "An Embarrassing Presence," deals with the pseudo-family relationship that frames the au pair regime. According to Búriková and Miller, most families do not hire an au pair because of an idealized notion of offering cultural experiences to a young person but rather because the au pair is the "least bad option," (33) and the only affordable solution to the need for daily childcare.

In contrast to the au pair ideal, few families are willing to provide a real family environment for their au pairs while few au pairs actually come to London to experience this kind of family integration. For them, becoming an au pair seems also to be the least bad option as accommodations in London are generally expensive and other types of jobs more difficult to obtain. Thus, the two parties mutually tolerate each other but also find themselves in a spatial proximity that is quite rare for strangers. Nevertheless, there is a fundamental asymmetry beneath this embarrassment of copresence. Forms of exploitation may occur when, in the logic of family integration, employers ask au pairs for the "favour" of cancelling their spare time activities and working extra hours, for instance because the child is ill.

In one of the most original parts of the book, the authors, being interested in material cultural studies, investigate the rooms of au pairs. How are these rooms furnished and decorated by employers? What strategies do au pairs use to occupy their rooms? In some cases the way they arrange their rooms mirrors how au pairs view their relation to the family and their personal understanding of the au pair situation. Some au pairs demarcate their own space in the house by rearranging furniture, decorating their rooms with family photos, and hanging calendars showing the days until they return home. Of the cases portrayed, one au pair is not permitted by her employers to alter her room and consequently feels rejected, claiming she never will feel fully at home in the house. Another au pair regards her au pair time as a transition phase and is prepared to move to a better paying family as soon as she finds one. She makes no effort to alter the room provided and leaves all her stuff lying on the ground, thereby appropriating her autonomous space in the house.

Unmet expectations from both sides of the au pair relation are a significant factor causing problems and conflicts. Certainly not all au pairs fulfil the stereotype of Mary Poppins, but au pairs have their own expectations about employing families, too. Being often unaware of London's heterogeneous population, many Slovakian au pairs anticipate staying with affluent, White, Christian, or secular, middle-class, two-parent households in areas close to central London and are surprised if they find themselves in largely ethnic neighbourhoods instead. In some cases racism against Jewish, Indian, or Nigerian families becomes obvious, but the authors also point out cases in which au pairs found it enriching to learn about another culture via their au pair placement.

In the chapter about "Men," the authors deal with the cliché of au pairs "hunting" for local men to secure their visa through marriage. The authors make it clear through their insightful observations that talking about men, dating men, and possibly also starting affairs or relationships is not a peculiarity of au pairs but rather normal behaviour for young women in their early 20s.

The dominant experience of au pair mobility is a *rite de passage* in which au pairs experience social independence and discover other cultures and life environments, conclude the authors in their chapter "Out of Time." The au pair experience is a transition phase to adulthood in which au pairs get to know different lifestyles and develop future orientations. Sometimes the au pair phase is a time of "experiencing wildness" (159). The young women make this experience between high school and university or before starting a family, which allows them to act out of reach of their parents, partners, and friends at home. Many then engage in trying out fashions and

hairstyles, going to parties, meeting new people of other cultural backgrounds, and even experimenting with love affairs and relationships.

The final chapter explains how individual stories are shaped by the au pair regime, but also how au pairs make use of both minor and major freedoms to create the au pair phase according to their own ideas. The authors analyse the au pair scheme and its legal foundations as something structured by ideas of temporary employment, informality, and foreignness, and provide recommendations on how the au pair scheme could be improved within these outer conditions.

"Au Pair" is a great read and an intriguing academic study. The authors' approach is quite unusual for a scientific book yet makes it more appealing to the public. It is rich in content not only for anyone who thinks about employing or becoming an au pair but also everyone scientifically interested in an ethnography of this specific institution.

The authors reveal the underlying social structures of the well-known but seldom questioned au pair mobility scheme and portray the two sides of the au pair relation equally. Apart from introducing au pairing as conjoining both care and travel, it gives some insight into side aspects of contemporary migration, such as the functioning of ethnic networks and immigration processes.

However, this ethnography omits one important aspect of the au pair phenomenon – the "post-au pair" period. In conceiving the au pair experience as a *rite de passage* and pointing out many facets of its temporary nature, this study should also have included a chapter on the next stage of life after the au pair phase, whether it is a return to Slovakia or settlement in England. In particular, retrospective interpretations of the experience by former au pairs and its subsequent consequences for their lives deserve investigation. Caterina Rohde

Chrisomalis, Stephen: Numerical Notation. A Comparative History. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010; 486 pp. ISBN 978-0-521-87818-0. Price: £ 65.00

"From their origin as a foreign and suspicious novelty during the medieval period, the ten Western numerals, structured by the use of the positional principle, have become so familiar that it is easy for the nonspecialist to forget that there *are* other numerical notation systems. The ubiquity and universality of the Western numerals make understanding their origin and diffusion all the more important. Unfortunately, no monograph has dealt systematically with the topic since Hill (1915), whose work is rather outdated as a result of advances in paleography" (219).

Mit diesen Worten beginnt Stephen Chrisomalis in seinem Buch "Numerical Notation" das Kapitel über die "Western Numerals", d. h. die heute in den meisten Ländern der Erde wie selbstverständlich benutzten Zahlen, irgendwo in der Mitte des Buches, in einem Unterkapitel der "South Asian Systems". Das charakterisiert schon sehr deutlich die lobenswerte Absicht des Buches, die Geschichte aller Zahlennotationen im Laufe der Geschichte der Menschheit vorzustellen und nicht, unsere indisch-arabischen Zahlen besonders in den Blickpunkt zu rücken. Auf eine umfassende Darstellung "unserer Zahlen" müssen wir also weiterhin, nach fast 100 Jahren, warten, aber der Autor dieses Buches hat meiner Auffassung nach die Aufgabe vorbildlich gelöst, die er sich gestellt hat.

Das vorliegende Buch "Numerical Notation" behandelt die Darstellung von Zahlen in schriftlichen Texten in einer vergleichenden historischen Darstellung und in weltweitem Kontext. Dabei reicht die Zeitspanne von den Anfängen der Schrift in Mesopotamien im 4. Jahrtausend vor Christus bis zu einer im Jahre 1995 in Alaska entwickelten Zahlennotation der Inuit. Die geografische Verbreitung umfasst alle bewohnten Kontinente der Erde. Dabei sind die weniger bekannten und verbreiteten Notationen erfreulicherweise im Vergleich zu den bekannten und politisch wie historisch erfolgreichen relativ ausführlich diskutiert.

Das Buch ist in 13 Kapitel gegliedert, beginnend mit einer Einleitung, die die wichtigsten Begriffe erläutert und die wesentlichen Termini definiert. Hierauf folgen 8 thematisch gegliederte Kapitel, die im Wesentlichen der historischen Entwicklung folgen bzw. Kulturregionen der Erde gewidmet sind. In "Hieroglyphic Systems" (Kap. 2) wird die altägyptische Notation als Grundtyp der Familie der sog. hieroglyphischen Darstellungen vorgestellt. Es folgen unter "Levantine Systems" die speziellen Zahlnotationen des östlichen Mittelmeerraums im 1. Jahrtausend vor Christus wie die aramäische und die phönizische. Unter "Italic Systems" werden die etwa zeitgleich in Gebrauch befindlichen Notationen des mittleren (und westlichen) Mittelmeers diskutiert, z. B. die der Etrusker und der Griechen und natürlich die der Römer. Die Diskussion enthält eine ausführliche Darstellung des Gebrauchs von römischen Zahlen in lateinischen Texten im christlichen europäischen Mittelalter.

Mit Kap. 5 ("Alphabetic Systems") wird ein anderer Typ von Notationen diskutiert. Hierbei werden Buchstaben des Alphabets der benutzten Schrift für spezielle Zahlwerte benutzt, wie im Griechischen und in den meisten semitischen Alphabeten.

In weiteren 4 Kapiteln werden Zahlnotationen vorgestellt, die jeweils in Kulturregionen der Erde in Gebrauch waren und/oder sind. Es beginnt mit Südasien (Kap. 6) und wird fortgeführt mit Mesopotamien (Kap. 7). Hier erfolgt die Diskussion der ältesten Notation überhaupt (ca. 3500 vor Christus) relativ spät im Buch. Der Autor begründet dies vor allem mit der Tatsache, dass die mesopotamische Entwicklung in einer Sackgasse endete ("While Mesopotamian mathematics is important for understanding later Greek developments, … Mesopotamian numeration is nearly a historical dead end", 228). Eine ähnliche spezifische und in einer historischen Sackgasse endende Entwicklung ist die mesoamerikanische in Zentralamerika (Kap. 9). Eingeschoben ist in Kap. 8 der Kulturraum Ostasien, der die chinesischen Notationen von den Anfängen der Überlieferung her behandelt.

In Kap. 10 ("Miscellaneous Systems") werden alle restlichen Zahlnotationen "untergebracht", die aus verschiedenen Gründen nicht in die vorherigen Kapitel