MODERNITY, MARGINALITY, AND REDEMPTION: GERMAN AND JEWISH IDENTITY AT THE FIN-DE-SIÈCLE

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ABSTRACT

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Modernity, Marginality, and Redemption: German and Jewish Identity at the Fin-de-Siècle
(Under the direction of Dr. Jonathan Hess)

Modernity, Marginality, and Redemption: German and Jewish Identity at the Fin-de-Siècle explores the literary, cultural, and historical process of negotiating German-Jewish identity following the radical restructuring of German-Jewish society during the nineteenth century. *Modernity, Marginality, and Redemption* considers the dynamic cultural roles that writers such as Karl Emil Franzos, Martin Buber, Jakob Wassermann, Theodor Herzl, and others assigned to the image of East European Jewry and of ghetto life, to Chassidic mysticism, and to messianic historical figures. I show that the works of these authors enact a self-conscious reinvention of Jewish tradition, which weds Enlightenment ideals with aspects of Jewish tradition that the Enlightenment had marginalized, while also engaging in dialogue with the most pressing discourses of fin-de-siècle European culture, in order to proffer Jewish identities that are neither strictly national nor simply religious. As I demonstrate, these texts establish Jewish identity as a central coordinate in debates about nationalism, the limits of language, phenomenology, social progress, and cultural degeneration. In my reading of these texts, I seek to uncover the social and cultural spaces where Enlightenment progress and fin-de-siècle decadence intersect—where the ideals of the Enlightenment collide with their dark counterimages—and give way to a fertile ground for negotiating not only Jewish identity, but modern subjectivity more generally. Ultimately, *Modernity, Marginality, and Redemption*

underscores the significance of the transformation of German-Jewish identity for our more general understanding of broader crises of identity in German and Austrian culture during the fin-de-siècle.

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Introduction

Between Marginality and Authenticity: German and Jewish Identity at the Fin-de-Siècle

I. Mendelssohn, Rosenzweig, and the Inauguration of German-Jewish Modernity

In a brief speech, written to commemorate the 1929 bicentennial of Moses Mendelssohn's birth, the German-Jewish philosopher, theologian, translator, and educator Franz Rosenzweig (1886-1929) reflects on Mendelssohn's centrality for German-speaking Jews throughout the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. In the speech, Rosenzweig looks back to the German and Jewish Enlightenment movements of the eighteenth century, and identifies Mendelssohn (1729-1786) as the prototype of a still-contested mode of Jewishness in Central Europe: the *German* Jew. "Mendelssohn," he writes, "der erste deutsche Jude in dem schweren, beide Worte verantwortenden Sinn, in dem wir Deutschjuden unser Deutschjudentum nehmen, hat uns nicht den Schutz vererben können, unter dem er selbst die neue Bindung vollzog."[1] According to Rosenzweig, Mendelssohn was a groundbreaking figure. He was the first German Jew who could exist as both German and Jew; he could inhabit two identities—or, more precisely, he represented the harmonious synthesis of these two modes of identification.

But even as it recognizes Mendelssohn as the prototypical German Jew, Rosenzweig's text also hints at a crisis lurking behind this synthesis. For Rosenzweig,

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[1] Franz Rosenzweig, "Vorspruch zu einer Mendelssohnfeier," *Zweistromland: Kleinere Schriften zu Glauben und Denken*, ed. Reinhold Mayer and Annemarie Mayer (Dordrecht: Martinus Nijhoff, 1979) 457.

Mendelssohn walked a tightrope between two realms, and the text suggests that Mendelssohn's act of bridging these realms—his reconciliation of European and Jewish identities—was tenuous at best. Nevertheless, for many of his Jewish and non-Jewish contemporaries, and for the generations of German-speaking Jews who followed him, the eighteenth-century philosopher represented an inaugural figure, who straddled the boundaries between traditional Judaism and modern innovations—and between Jewish and non-Jewish European cultures more broadly. Rosenzweig's turn to Mendelssohn should thus come as no surprise. And yet, in looking back at Mendelssohn from his standpoint in Weimar era Germany, Rosenzweig projects a modern quality of German specificity onto Mendelssohn's broad engagement with non-Jewish European culture. Even if he engaged with German culture and the German language, the idea of Germanness would not yet have been a concern for Mendelssohn and his peers. This projection and the epic (and nearly hyperbolic) dimensions with which Rosenzweig endows the image of Mendelssohn in his text call for a closer examination of the nature of Mendelssohn's role in shaping European and Jewish culture.

Mendelssohn was a leading figure not only in the German Enlightenment (*Aufklärung*), but also in its Jewish counterpart (*Haskalah*), and as such he represented two distinct, yet overlapping revolutionary movements. The *Haskalah*, which began to take shape early in the eighteenth century, sought to modernize Judaism and—in some cases—to ease the entry of Jews into non-Jewish European society. The adherents of this movement (called *maskilim*) set out to bring extra-Jewish knowledge into what had been a relatively sealed, isolated Jewish cultural sphere, and, at the same time, to reclaim neglected Jewish learning.[2]

[2] Shmuel Feiner, *The Jewish Enlightenment*, trans. Chaya Naor (Philadelphia: U of Pennsylvania P, 2004) 36-50. For more on the Jewish Enlightenment and its aftermath, see Jacob Katz, *Out of the Ghetto: The Social*

As such, the *Haskalah* engendered both the promise of integration into mainstream European culture and a challenge to Jewish tradition. As the historian Shmuel Feiner notes in his recent monograph on the movement, the Enlightenment "entered the world of traditional pre-modern Ashkenazi society bearing a contradictory message—a promise to abolish the legal restrictions on Jews and to take them out of the ghetto, along with a direct threat to their religious and cultural heritage."[3] Thus, the modernization of European Jewry through the *Haskalah* involved a self-conscious and often perilous negotiation between past and present, between religion and secularism, between Jewish culture and the non-Jewish environment.

Mendelssohn stood at the heart of this negotiation, and he engaged in the opening-up of Jewish culture from within and without. Early in his career, for instance, as a coeditor of the short-lived Hebrew journal *Kohelet musar*, he sought to revitalize Hebrew as a language for secular (and not only religious) learning. In addition, he devoted much of his later career to publishing a German translation of the Torah—printed in Hebrew letters and with a commentary in Hebrew—as a means of bridging the Jewish religious sphere with non-Jewish European culture. But he is perhaps best remembered today for his canonical work, *Jerusalem, oder über die religiöse Macht und Judenthum* (1783), which was aimed largely at a non-Jewish readership, and which represented a philosophical appeal to religious tolerance and a defense of Judaism as rational, non-coercive, and well-suited to Enlightenment notions of religion.

Background of Jewish Emancipation, 1770-1870 (Cambridge: Harvard UP, 1973); Christoph Schulte, *Die jüdische Aufklärung: Philosophie, Religion, Geschichte* (Munich: Beck, 2002); and Aamir Mufti, *Enlightenment in the Colony: The Jewish Question and the Crisis of Postcolonial Culture* (Princeton: Princeton UP, 2007).

[3] Feiner, *Enlightenment* 7.

In addition to his own efforts at restructuring Jewish culture, Mendelssohn enjoyed personal and professional relationships with many non-Jewish luminaries of the *Aufklärung*, including the author and playwright Gotthold Ephraim Lessing (1729-1781) and the Prussian bureaucrat Christian Wilhelm von Dohm (1751-1820), who also played critical roles in the early integration of Jews into European society and culture. Dohm's 1781 political pamphlet "Über die bürgerliche Verbesserung der Juden" signaled the beginning of the ninety-year process of Jewish emancipation in the German lands, by proposing that Jews be granted equal rights in order to enable their moral and social regeneration. Meanwhile, two of Lessing's dramas—*Die Juden* (1749) and *Nathan der Weise* (1779, with Mendelssohn serving as a model for the title character)—depicted Jews who were paragons of the Enlightenment spirit of universal humanity, and thus paved the way for Dohm's political project. For German-speaking Jews celebrating the 200th anniversary of Mendelssohn's birth (as Rosenzweig was), the respective projects of Dohm and Lessing would have resonated as integral parts of Mendelssohn's legacy.

Mendelssohn, then, certainly stood at the threshold of a radically new era for European Jews—indeed, at the very threshold of European-Jewish modernity—full of the promise of cultural integration and social equality. But as Feiner notes, even if the Enlightenment "did not call for the Jews to abandon their life patterns or their existence as a separate society […]," it did "call for the Jewish identity—in which religious life, the Torah and the *chakham* [i.e. the scholar] comprise an entire, satisfying world—to be split," and it demanded the creation of new models of Jewishness.[4] This moment of rupture—the fragmentation of Jewish culture and its exposure to the cultures of non-Jewish Europe—bore the seeds of a crisis, which emerged and played out in public intellectual discourses since

[4] Feiner, *Enlightenment* 93.

1749. Texts like Mendelssohn’s *Jerusalem*, his Torah translation, the journal *Kohelet musar*, Dohm’s political treatise, or Lessing’s dramas show that German-speaking Jews and non-Jews during the Enlightenment began to negotiate European-Jewish identity in a variety of venues, including philosophy, historiography, theology, politics, and literature. And if Mendelssohn played a central role in both the *Haskalah* and the *Aufklärung*, as well as in the project of bridging Jewish culture with European modernity, then his role in the fragmentation and restructuring of the Jewish cultural sphere was equally pivotal. Mendelssohn was not merely the first German Jew; for Rosenzweig at least, he was also the last.

According to Rosenzweig, it was the Enlightenment atmosphere of tolerance which allowed Mendelssohn to bridge European and Jewish identities, and which made the fragmentation of Jewish culture and its encounter with the non-Jewish realm productive phenomena. But this atmosphere did not last long. “Mendelssohn,” Rosenzweig continues,

> hat uns als Wehrlose in diese Gefahr hineingeführt, denn sein eigener Schutz war die Weltanschauung seines Jahrhunderts, an deren ersten Erkrankungskeimen er – ein großartiges Zeichen für die Lebensechtheit seines Philosophierens – gestorben ist. So mußte schon das neunzehnte Jahrhundert sich auf eigene, also auf unmendelssohnsche, Weise weiterhelfen und müssen wir, Kinder einer wieder veränderten Zeit, uns wieder auf neue Wege wagen.[5]

As the tolerant atmosphere of the *Aufklärung* and *Haskalah* stagnated, Mendelssohn expired, along with the likelihood of the emergence of another German (or European) Jew, who—like Mendelssohn—could remain true to both aspects of that difficult identity. Without the protection that Mendelssohn enjoyed, Jews in the German lands faced challenges that he could not have anticipated. And yet, the vision of integration that he initiated could not be undone: the integrity of the premodern Jewish cultural sphere had been fractured, and if Jews

[5] Rosenzweig, “Mendelssohn” 457.

had existed beyond the pale of non-Jewish European society and culture before Mendelssohn, this could no longer be the case.[6]

As contemporary historians note, this negotiation of European-Jewish identity brought about a fundamental shift in the practice and understanding of Jewishness among Jews and non-Jews in Central Europe, and the texts by Mendelssohn, Lessing, and Dohm mark the beginning of a long process of Jewish modernization. Shulamit Volkov, for instance, has argued that "[s]eit dem späten 18. Jahrhundert wurde von den Juden erwartet – nicht nur und nicht einmal in erster Linie von Gegnern –, daß sie ihre eigentümliche 'Jüdischkeit' auf Wunsch ablegen konnten."[7] In order to be integrated into European society, Jews had to be willing to splinter their Jewishness into different parts, each of which could be accepted or rejected at will. And it was precisely this demand to relinquish aspects of Jewishness, which constituted the primary stipulation for Jewish emancipation as it began to take shape in the German lands in the late eighteenth century: Dohm's model of immediate, unconditional emancipation was rejected in favor of the gradual bestowal of rights in exchange for assimilation and regeneration. Central European Jewry (and Central European Jews) had to be restructured in order to be integrated into European society and culture.

Thus, in light of the conditions imposed on Jewish emancipation after Mendelssohn's timely death, and in light of his own Weimar-era German-Jewish perspective, Rosenzweig describes the nineteenth century as one long crisis of European-Jewish (specifically German-Jewish) identity—as a struggle to negotiate Jewish tradition and European culture, and to regain the fleeting moment of harmony which Mendelssohn represented, and which had

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[6] In his text, Feiner demonstrates that this was certainly not the case, and that Jews had begun to enter European society in the German lands very early in the eighteenth century (*Enlightenment* 21-84).

[7] Shulamit Volkov, "Die Erfindung einer Tradition," *Das jüdische Projekt der Moderne: Zehn Essays* (Munich: C. H. Beck, 2001) 122.

taken on mythic proportions by the time of Rosenzweig's speech.[8] But such a characterization tells only half the story. How did this negotiation take place? What did it look like? What were the terms and conditions of the struggle to recreate the image of the first and last German Jew? *Modernity, Marginality, and Redemption* investigates the rest of this story, and examines the negotiation of European-Jewish and German-Jewish identity that occurred over a century after Mendelssohn's death. In order to establish the conditions of this negotiation—and to understand the various models of Jewishness that emerged from it—the present study turns to fin-de-siècle German and Austrian literature and locates alternative models of German Jewishness, and the myths upon which they were based.

Because of the dominant stature of Mendelssohn's image some 200 years after his birth (and, indeed, even today), our story begins—like Rosenzweig's—with Mendelssohn. After his death, in the cultural memory of German-speaking Jews, his image grew to represent an idealized vision of a harmonious European-Jewish (and, beginning in the nineteenth century, German-Jewish) identity. Throughout the nineteenth century, in fact, the process of negotiating German and Jewish identity took on new contours, as it continued to manifest itself in a wide variety of events and phenomena, both within Jewish society and at its periphery. These included the emergence in the 1820s of the *Wissenschaft des Judentums*, which marked the beginning of modern Jewish historiography and scholarship; the development of Reform Judaism in the middle of the century; the emancipation of Jews in the Austro-Hungarian Empire in 1867, and in newly formed Germany in 1871; the

[8] This becomes clear if we consider Rosenzweig's claim (cited above) that Mendelssohn's death—just a few years before the French Revolution and the disillusionment that followed—revealed the *Lebensechtheit* of his philosophy. Of course, Rosenzweig, like Mendelssohn, also passed away at the threshold of a radically new era. He composed his speech on Mendelssohn in the same year in which he died of amyotrophic lateral sclerosis (ALS, or Lou Gehrig's disease), and only a few years before the Weimar-era blossoming of German-Jewish culture came to a sudden halt. That is, Rosenzweig's death perhaps demonstrated the *Lebensechtheit* of his own philosophy. It must be noted, however, that Feiner devotes much of his study to decentralizing Mendelssohn's image, and to exposing it as a deliberately constructed means of promoting *Haskalah* (*Enlightenment* 200-221).

subsequent rise of political antisemitism in the 1880s; and the fin-de-siècle galvanization of the political Zionist movement, which sought the establishment of a Jewish state outside the boundaries of Europe. This variety of political, historical, and theological movements among German-speaking Jews in the nineteenth century reflects the complex and radical nature of the restructuring of Central European Jewry during the period, and each of these movements represents an attempt to grapple with Mendelssohn's legacy—to fashion a model of European Jewishness in the harmonious image that he represented.

Indeed, faced with the modernization of Jewish culture that Mendelssohn and his generation ushered in, and faced with the conditions established for Jewish emancipation, Jews in the German lands began to selectively promote some aspects of Jewish tradition while marginalizing others. Phenomena such as the *Wissenschaft des Judentums*, Reform Judaism, and Zionism served as venues for such selection, and for trying out various models of modern European Jewishness. But despite the prominence of these political and social projects of restructuring Jewish culture, for German-speaking Jews throughout the nineteenth century, literature served as an especially privileged site for creating, negotiating, and performing models of German-Jewish identity. By the end of the nineteenth century, as the rise of political antisemitism called into question the very possibility of founding a German-Jewish identity on the myth of Mendelssohn, German-speaking Jews increasingly sought alternative models of identifying as German and Jewish, and they created alternative myths on which to found them.

Modernity, Marginality, and Redemption investigates these myths, exploring how German-speaking Jews and non-Jews self-consciously turned to the margins of Jewish tradition, and to the medium of German literature, in order to negotiate new models of

modern European Jewishness. As we shall see, these authors created mythic images of the *Ostjude* and of the East European ghetto, of Chassidism and of Chassidic mysticism, and of Jewish messianism and historical messianic figures. To a certain degree, all of these aspects of Jewish culture represented something that German-speaking Jews had been required to give up in order to enter European culture: the "corrupt" Yiddish of East European Jewry, the ecstatic "fervor" of mysticism, the "superstition" of messianism. And, for German-speaking Jews at the end of the nineteenth century, these aspects of Jewish culture existed primarily as images, as myths, as faint and distorted recollections.

Even if they seem a far cry from the Mendelssohnian image of European-Jewish integration, these myths do not represent a return to a premodern, ahistorical, hermetically-sealed notion of Jewishness. Instead, as I will show, they all bear a direct connection to the inaugural moment of European-Jewish modernity—to Mendelssohn's legacy—and the authors who employ them are all deeply invested in balancing Jewish tradition with German culture. The texts I consider constantly revisit (and revise) the Enlightenment inception of European-Jewish modernity, and the promise of integration at its heart. Before introducing these texts, however, we must briefly establish the stakes of this investigation.

II. The Invention of German-Jewish Tradition

The present study builds on a variety of scholarly investigations—both recent and classic—of the crisis of German-Jewish identity that Rosenzweig so tellingly reveals. It draws most heavily on Michael Brenner's account of this crisis, however, and especially on the question of authenticity that he develops, or, as he puts it, "the invention of the authentic

Jew."[9] In his influential work, *The Renaissance of Jewish Culture in Weimar Germany* (1996), Brenner builds on Volkov's argument, summarizing the radical process of cultural restructuring in Central European Jewry in the nineteenth century in terms of both secularization and confessionalization.[10] During this process, Brenner explains, "German Jews selected certain aspects of the rich Jewish heritage and integrated them into modern European culture, as expressed in the realms of scholarship, art, and literary fiction. The result was the formation of a new tradition that had enduring influence on Jewish existence in the modern world."[11] In the attempt to reconcile Jewish tradition with the broader historical shifts in European culture, in other words, German-speaking Jews created radically new models of identification. Thus, the nineteenth-century crisis of German-Jewish identity that Rosenzweig identifies is ultimately a crisis of culture. However, the restructuring of Jewishness did not represent a break with the past—nor even a wholesale rejection of Judaism and Jewish culture—but rather a repackaging and reinvention of tradition. That is, the nineteenth century saw not only innovations in models of identifying as Jewish, but also in the means through which Jews identified: in Jewish tradition itself.

For Brenner, what began as a quest to restructure and modernize Jewish culture and tradition culminated in a search for "authentic" models of Jewishness. He emphasizes cultural (and especially literary) production in his analysis, and as the title of his text suggests, he locates a Jewish cultural watershed in Weimar Germany (that is, in Rosenzweig's Germany), and his study identifies the processes by which German-speaking Jews sought to once again reinvent Jewish culture after the First World War. With an eye to

[9] Michael Brenner, *The Renaissance of Jewish Culture in Weimar Germany* (New Haven: Yale UP, 1996) 129.

[10] Brenner, *Renaissance* 11-35.

[11] Brenner, *Renaissance* 12.

Weimar literature, he follows the trail of several models of Jewish authenticity, including the image of East European Jewry and what he calls the “heretical ideal,” in which historical Jewish outcasts—such as the seventeenth-century false Messiah Sabbatai Zvi—became the subjects of texts by German-Jewish authors.[12] As Brenner points out, these models represented precisely those aspects of Jewish culture that had been pushed to the margins in the attempt to integrate Jews into European modernity; messianism, heresy, and the image of the *Ostjude* embodied those facets of Jewishness that many Enlightenment thinkers believed Jews must reform, relinquish, or regenerate.

The *Ostjude* and the heretical ideal highlight two opposing trends. By turning to East European Jewry, Brenner argues, German-speaking Jewish thinkers in the Weimar era expressed their discontent with “the confessionalization of Judaism, as embodied by Western European Jews in Germany during the nineteenth century […]”[13] As he explains, “[o]nly east of the German borders, where Jewish peoplehood had been preserved, were Jewish traditions still alive.”[14] The alleged authenticity of East European Jewry thus rested in the Western perception that it had not undergone the sweeping changes of the nineteenth century witnessed in the West. For German-speaking Jews in the 1920s, the image of Jewish tradition embodied by the myth of the *Ostjude* offered a perceived depth and richness unavailable to Jews in Western Europe since the Enlightenment.

[12] Brenner, *Renaissance* 148.

[13] Brenner, *Renaissance* 144-145.

[14] Brenner, *Renaissance* 145.

In turning to the so called heretical ideal, on the other hand, German-Jewish thinkers demonstrated that "they were no longer content with the traditional definitions of Judaism."[15] Instead, Brenner argues,

> [t]hey were convinced that Judaism could not be reduced to a religious essence and that factors other than religion bound Jews together. By portraying Jewish figures outside or on the fringes of traditional Judaism—apostates, heretics, and false messiahs—they offered themselves and fellow German Jews alternative role models that would suit their own situation outside Jewish tradition.[16]

The perceived authenticity of the Jewish tradition represented by the apostate Sabbatai Zvi or by the heretic Baruch Spinoza is an authenticity of marginal experience. Perhaps paradoxically, such fringe figures support an argument for an all-encompassing, holistic conception of Judaism and of Jewish tradition—a cultural experience that cannot be reduced to mere confession, yet whose religious elements cannot be swept under the rug of secularization; even heretics and apostates remained somehow connected to Jewishness.

Both the *Ostjude* and the heretical ideal pose a challenge to the Enlightenment demands that led to the initial fragmentation of Jewish identity in Germany, and, as we shall see, they represented parallel countertraditions to the Enlightenment. In identifying these countertraditions, Brenner's text shows us that if the various images of German Jewishness that emerged from the nineteenth-century restructuring of Jewish culture were to function as models of identification, then they would require a historical basis—a sense of authenticity rooted in shared historical events and practices. But how does one characterize the relationship between the complex notions of "an invented tradition," on the one hand, and "authenticity" on the other?

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[15] Brenner, *Renaissance* 149.

[16] Brenner, *Renaissance* 149.

In the introductory essay to his 1983 anthology, *The Invention of Tradition*, Eric Hobsbawm describes how, since the Enlightenment, Western society has seen an increase in the practice of forming invented traditions—a practice mirrored in the account of nineteenth-century Central European Jewry outlined above. As social institutions—including the Church, the British monarchy, and the German university system—adapt to the demands of modernity, Hobsbawm argues, they establish "a set of practices […] which seek to inculcate certain values and norms of behaviour by repetition, which automatically implies continuity with the past."[17] Continuity with the past is often established by drawing connections to historical material and practices that are already associated with the changing institution, but that at the same time buttress its innovations.[18] In other words, those who fashion invented traditions do so through a process of selecting historical material in order to establish the tradition as part of a real or apparent historical sequence. But the creators of such traditions also choose to reject unsuitable material, and to appropriate mythical or legendary material freely.

This process of selecting and rejecting common material—historical or mythical—from a given institution's unique past, lends a sense of legitimacy to the novel practices of that institution: despite modern innovations in the institution, and despite the repackaging of its practices and its historical consciousness, the institution maintains continuity with the past and thus remains *authentic*. Authenticity, then, refers to a kind of legitimacy rooted in both myth and history. However, while such authenticity lends credence to a given invented tradition, because it is often derived from mythical, fictional, or incomplete historical

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[17] Eric Hobsbawm "Introduction: Inventing Traditions," *The Invention of Tradition*, ed. Eric Hobsbawm and Terrence Ranger (London: Cambridge UP, 1983) 1.

[18] Hobsbawm, "Traditions" 4-5.

material, such authenticity also *draws* legitimacy from the invented tradition. The notion of authenticity and the practice of inventing traditions thus rely upon a circular logic of legitimacy, which in turn reveals a fundamental paradox within these typical nineteenth-century phenomena, exposing the national, cultural, or institutional identities that rely on such invented traditions as constructions emerging from the realm of culture and cultural memory, and calling claims of authenticity into question.

The restructuring of German Jewry that Brenner describes certainly counts as a manifestation of the process of invented tradition as Hobsbawm details it. And yet, the task facing German-speaking Jews in the nineteenth century was unique, because it entailed not only restructuring and repackaging Jewish tradition, but doing so within a German linguistic, literary, and cultural sphere. In fact, Volkov draws a sharp distinction between German-speaking Jews and their Russian-Jewish counterparts, whose cultural innovations often occurred within Hebrew or Yiddish texts. As she explains, a Russian-Jewish author like Chaim Bialik might have been influenced linguistically and culturally by his Russian milieu, but, as a Hebrew writer, his work remained sequestered in a specifically Jewish sphere. "Die Heines und die Wassermanns," she continues, "wollten dagegen immer darüber hinaus."[19] Unlike Jews writing in a Jewish language (Yiddish or Hebrew), German-speaking Jews, according to Volkov, were faced with an inherent opposition: to identify in terms of German culture *or* Jewish culture. A quick survey of the classic studies on the crisis of German-Jewish identity reveals the extent to which Jews in the German lands drew on German culture and the German language in restructuring Jewish tradition. More significantly, however, it reveals the extent to which this binary understanding of German-Jewish identity is entrenched in current scholarship.

[19] Volkov, "Tradition" 135.

George L. Mosse, in his classic 1985 study, *German Jews beyond Judaism*, shows, for instance, how Central European Jews in the nineteenth century embraced the Enlightenment ideal of *Bildung*—a complex notion involving cultural education and self-formation—which supplanted Judaism as a kind of secular religion.[20] According to Mosse, these Jews looked to *Bildung* as a means of entering into German culture and society, and as a model for European identification, long after the heyday of the concept among non-Jews. Mosse's student, Steven E. Aschheim, in his seminal 1982 text, *Brothers and Strangers: The East European Jew in German and German Jewish Consciousness, 1800-1923*, details the emergence of the image of the East European Jew and the rather ambivalent responses to it during the long nineteenth century.[21] Aschheim describes how German-speaking Jews gradually constructed the *Ostjude* as a radically foreign mode of Jewishness, against which they could define themselves as Enlightened, progressive, Western, or simply German, before eventually embracing the image of the *Ostjude* as a model of cultural authenticity.

This crisis has received treatment by literary scholars as well. Sander L. Gilman's oft-cited 1986 study, *Jewish Self-Hatred: Anti-Semitism and the Hidden Language of the Jews*, reveals the close affinities between discourses on language and the ambivalences of German-Jewish identity.[22] Gilman argues that by the end of the nineteenth-century drive for assimilation, Jews had internalized discourses of antisemitism, leading to self-doubt about their status as both European and Jewish. In a more recent study, *Modernity and Crises of Identity: Culture and Society in Fin-de-Siècle Vienna* (1993), Jacques Le Rider describes the

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[20] George L. Mosse, *German Jews beyond Judaism* (Bloomington: Indiana UP, 1985) 1-20.

[21] Steven E. Aschheim, *Brothers and Strangers: The East European Jew in German and German Jewish Consciousness, 1800-1923* (Madison: U of Wisconsin P, 1982).

[22] Sander L. Gilman, *Jewish Self-Hatred: Anti-Semitism and the Hidden Language of the Jews* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins UP, 1986).

crisis of European-Jewish identity as part of a confluence of crises in fin-de-siècle Viennese culture, which also included a crisis of masculine identity and an atmosphere of unease about the waning status of the Austro-Hungarian Empire.[23] Le Rider situates the question of German-Jewish identity as a critical aspect of fin-de-siècle modernity more broadly.

Considered together, these studies raise exactly the same question that Rosenzweig hints at in his speech: if the invention of Jewish tradition in Central Europe already depends on linguistic and cultural material claimed by other, non-Jewish (or not specifically Jewish) sources—from *Bildung* to the rhetoric of antisemitism to the fin-de-siècle atmosphere of malaise—then how does one authenticate this tradition? With the exception of Le Rider, these scholars (like Volkov) tend to construct binary frameworks—assimilation vs. dissimilation, Germanness vs. Jewishness, Western vs. Eastern, *Bildung* vs. Religion—in order to describe the process of negotiating German-Jewish identity. Such oppositional frameworks, in which German-speaking Jews borrow "foreign" material from German culture, leaves very little room for a model of German Jewishness that accommodates both aspects of this cultural identity—what Rosenzweig might call *ein mendelssohnsches Deutschjudentum*.

In a more recent examination of German and Jewish cultural encounters, Todd Samuel Presner upends such binary frameworks and calls for a dialectical understanding of the relationship between German and Jewish. As he argues, "'the Jewish'—that which is supposedly differentiated from, outside of, or somehow opposed to 'the German'—is actually within, if not constitutive of, that which is German."[24] In other words, German

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[23] Jacques Le Rider, *Modernity and Crises of Identity: Culture and Society in Fin-de-Siècle Vienna*, trans. Rosemary Morris (New York: Continuum, 1993).

[24] Todd Samuel Presner, *Mobile Modernity: Germans, Jews, Trains* (New York: Columbia UP, 2007) 4.

modernity is always conditioned by Jewish modernity; the former cannot exist without the latter. As he puts it, "there is no such thing as German modernity pure and simple; instead, 'German' is always mixed together, for better or for worse, in splendor and in horror, with 'Jewish.'"[25] Presner's dialectical understanding of this cultural encounter offers rich insight into the historical, literary, and social structures of German modernity and Jewish engagement with it. However, his notion of an inseparable "German/Jewish" encounter in "German/Jewish" modernity does not sufficiently explain the process of reinventing Jewish tradition in German culture that scholars like Volkov, Brenner, and others have documented.

In other words, the notion that "the German" contains a constitutive encounter with "the Jewish" is certainly a provocative and useful characterization of German modernity. However, in subsuming Jewishness into Germanness (and vice-versa), such a notion does not account for models of German-Jewish identity which stake an equal claim for both Germanness and Jewishness—for a cultural heritage that weds Jewish tradition and German *Bildung*, Jewish history and the most pressing discourses of contemporary non-Jewish society. In a 1946 essay, in which he assessed the question of European-Jewish (and, especially German-Jewish) identity around 1900, the philosopher Hermann Levin Goldschmidt presents another model for understanding European or German Jewishness:

> Jüdischkeit und Europäertum – dieses als Beispiel für jede Umwelt, in der jüdisches Schicksal sich vollzieht – stellen zwei Seiten jeweils ganzer Menschen dar: nicht einander entgegengesetzt oder nur nacheinander leistbar [...], aber auch nicht so dasselbe, daß mit einer beide bewältigt wären, oder eine durch die andere schon mitvertreten werden könnte. [...] Der Jude, der nur Europäer sein wollte – oder sonst grundsätzlich nicht jüdisch: ausschließlich Deutscher, Franzose, Engländer – vermag, entwurzelt, keine Frucht zu tragen, aber er bleibt auch als Nurjude unfruchtbar: denn

[25] Presner, *Modernity* 8.

> wie alles Lebendige kann er weder als nur besonderes Wesen bestehen, noch ohne sein Besonderes der Allgemeinheit und Gemeinschaft fruchten.[26]

In Goldschmidt's model, European identity and Jewishness are inseparable for European Jews, and he proposes a European-Jewish identity which affirms Jewishness as part of European culture while also recognizing Jewish difference. In fact, Goldschmidt's model of European-Jewish modernity (and German-Jewish identity) recalls the mythic image of Mendelssohn that Rosenzweig constructs because it allows us to imagine a German Jewishness that lives up to the harmony that Mendelssohn represented.

By examining those invented traditions that enable the formation of German-Jewish identities which remain true to both portions of the term, *Modernity, Marginality, and Redemption* uncovers a unique moment in fin-de-siècle German and Austrian culture, in which the binary opposition between Germanness and Jewishness becomes unstable, untenable, and undone, and in which identities emerge that wed German and Jewish without subsuming one into the other. But why was the fin-de-siècle such a pregnant moment for the development of such identities? To answer this question, let's turn now to the texts that make up the corpus of our investigation.

III. Modernity, Marginality, and Redemption in Fin-de-Siècle German Literature

As we have seen, the twofold process of inventing and authenticating German-Jewish tradition emerged in all aspects of cultural production throughout the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. But this process is nowhere more significant than in the realm of literary production. One reason for this, as Volkov and others note, is that this period saw an

[26] Hermann Levin Goldschmidt, "Hermann Cohen und Martin Buber. Ein Jahrhundert Ringen um Jüdische Wirklichkeit," *Philosophie als Dialogik: Frühe Schriften*, ed. Willi Goetschel (Vienna: Passagen, 1992) 107-108.

explosion of journals and periodicals dealing with German-Jewish history and culture.[27] From the *Allgemeine Zeitung des Judentums* (1837-1922), founded by Ludwig Philippson, to Martin Buber's much shorter-lived organ of Cultural Zionism, *Der Jude* (1916-1928), such journals reflect a large readership actively participating in the creation of German-Jewish identity. These journals are a far cry from *Kohelet musar*, Mendelssohn's brief attempt to foster secular culture in Hebrew: these were journals published in German and aimed at a German (and Jewish) reading public. In other words, these journals serve as a reminder that, for German-speaking Jews in the nineteenth century, to create a modern European-Jewish tradition was to write a Jewish tradition in German.

The broad culture of print may represent a medium for discussing and reshaping Jewish tradition, but the specific realm of literature marks ground zero for the tension between the invention and authentication of that tradition. Consider Theodor Herzl's 1902 utopian novel, *Altneuland*, which presents a Zionist vision of Jewish culture in Palestine epitomized by the performance of an opera dedicated to the life of the false Messiah Sabbatai Zvi. In this episode in the text, Jewish history and the specifically Jewish messianic tradition are clothed in a quintessentially European cultural product—the opera. Similarly, in his 1897 novel, *Die Juden von Zirndorf*, the popular German-Jewish author Jakob Wassermann uses an account of the same messianic movement to establish a deep connection between the town of Zirndorf and the Jewish community there. According to the novel, the town was founded as *Zions*dorf before the name gradually changed due to the influx of Christian settlers.[28] Both texts underscore the problem of how an invented European-Jewish tradition is to establish

[27] Volkov, "Tradition" 131.

[28] Jakob Wassermann, *Die Juden von Zirndorf* (Munich: Deutsche Taschenbuch Verlag, 1996) 63.

continuity with a German and Jewish past, and both posit literature as the productive field for such negotiation.

Following Brenner, this investigation could consider the diverse intellectual projects of any number of politically, socially, and culturally engaged German (and, expanding on his investigation, Austrian) Jews from the Weimar era—including Max Brod, Gershom Scholem, Walter Benjamin, Joseph Roth, Arnold Zweig, or Hermann Cohen—a list which demonstrates the wide array of German-Jewish identities in circulation when Rosenzweig composed his speech. Indeed, even if our story must necessarily begin with Mendelssohn, then we might easily end with Brod or Benjamin, Rosenzweig or Roth. But although the Weimar era saw a blossoming of German and Jewish cultural production in Central Europe, this blossoming was not unprecedented. In fact, the process of reinventing Jewish tradition in the German lands which Brenner, Volkov, and others describe began to percolate near the end of the nineteenth century, with the rise of political antisemitism following Jewish emancipation in Germany and the Austro-Hungarian Empire. As a result, the period between 1880 and 1914 saw the emergence of several institutions and cultural phenomena which sought to reinvigorate Jewish culture, from Herzl's political Zionism, to Buber's notion of Jewish renaissance, to the cultural Zionism of Ahad Ha'am.

More importantly, as Le Rider and others have documented, this process of reinvigoration unfolded against the backdrop of fin-de-siècle modernism, which served as a laboratory for exploring emerging questions about the nature of identity and subjectivity, from Sigmund Freud's psychoanalysis, to Fritz Mauthner's language criticism, to Ernst Mach's work in physics.[29] It was precisely this moment in German and Austrian culture, when scientists, artists, authors, and intellectuals called into question the very notion of

[29] See especially Le Rider, *Modernity* 46-55.

identity, which allowed for the productive negotiation of notions of Germanness and Jewishness—and of European modernity and Jewish tradition—a negotiation that brought about the most sweeping changes in European-Jewish culture since Mendelssohn, and until the rise of German fascism in 1933.

Beginning shortly after emancipation, but especially during the fin-de-siècle, a dialogue developed within German literature in which German-speaking Jews and non-Jews reevaluated the promises of the Enlightenment while they turned to the very aspects of Jewish tradition that the Enlightenment had marginalized: the image of the *Ostjude* in the Eastern ghetto, Chassidism and Chassidic mysticism, and Jewish messianism. These three motifs emerged as prominent and exotic discursive spaces for locating Jewish authenticity. Depictions of exotic lands and of subversive or alternative historical figures are certainly common in late nineteenth- and early twentieth-century German literature—ranging from the Wild West in Karl May's *Winnetou* novels (1893) to the Far East in Hermann Hesse's *Siddhartha* (1922). But for the authors who engaged with the Eastern ghetto, the Chassidim, and messianic figures such as Sabbatai Zvi, these motifs were always more than simply exotic; they represented something familiar yet foreign—aspects of Jewish tradition that were emblematic of Jewish difference, especially after the radical restructuring of European Jewry following Mendelssohn.

Building on Hobsbawm's notion of an invented tradition and on the problem of authenticity that Brenner identifies, the present study examines exemplary texts which confront the crisis of German-Jewish modernity by turning to and reinventing the margins of European-Jewish tradition and experience. Each of the chapters that follow tracks one of the marginal motifs listed above. My individual case studies respectively examine the ghetto

literature of Karl Emil Franzos (1848-1904) from his 1876 collection *Aus Halb-Asien*; Buber's (1878-1965) reception of Chassidism in his first two collections of Chassidic tales, *Die Geschichten des Rabbi Nachman* (1906) and *Die Legende des Baalschem* (1908); and the image of the false Messiah Sabbatai Zvi (and the messianic movement that he sparked) in Wassermann's (1873-1934) novel of fin-de-siècle decadence, *Die Juden von Zirndorf* (1897) and in Herzl's (1860-1904) utopian vision of a Zionist state, *Altneuland* (1902). Franzos' text lays the groundwork for the questions that emerge around 1900, while Buber's Chassidic tales, and the novels by Herzl and Wassermann represent the three dominant discourses on Jewishness in circulation in German culture at the fin-de-siècle: cultural Zionism, political Zionism, and a third discourse that located Jewishness squarely in the realm of modernist cultural production.

If at first glance these texts seem rather disparate, they nevertheless have much in common. They are all works of narrative fiction. They were all extremely popular and influential, if often controversial: the particular works of Franzos and Buber helped codify Western (German) perceptions of East European life and of Chassidism, while Herzl's novel irreparably widened the defining rift between factions in the Zionist movement. Moreover, these texts speak to the broader context of the invention of German-Jewish tradition, and in my readings, I seek to establish a genealogical framework that situates the texts both diachronically within the process of Jewish modernization beginning with the Enlightenment, and synchronically alongside central (and often canonical) contemporary works. For instance, in Chapter Two, I examine Buber's early engagement with Chassidic storytelling as part of a modern tradition of linguistic skepticism and a concern with language as medium—a tradition which has its roots in both Mendelssohn's Enlightenment philosophy and the

phenomenology of Arthur Schopenhauer. At the same time, however, I place Buber's work into dialogue with the exploration of acute language crisis depicted by Hugo von Hofmannsthal, one of his most prominent contemporaries.

Buber's reception of Chassidism—like the projects I examine by Wassermann, Herzl, and Franzos—supports an argument for an all-encompassing, holistic conception of Judaism and Jewish tradition. Other texts that address related themes include poetry collections such as Börries von Münchhausen's *Juda* (1900) or Else Lasker-Schüler's *Hebräische Balladen* (1913), which revisit the ancient Jewish past in search of new models of Jewishness; Richard Beer-Hofmann's *Der Tod Georgs* (1900), which advocates an embrace of Jewish difference as a way out of the malaise of fin-de-siècle Viennese culture; and Thomas Mann's "Wälsungenblut" (1905), which depicts a fatally flawed attempt on the part of a Jewish family to fully immerse itself in German culture. But while Münchhausen and Lasker-Schüler engage with the Jewish past, they do so via a mainstream, biblical tradition. At the other end of the spectrum, the return to an innate Jewish religiosity in Beer-Hofmann's novel contains little that specifically connects it to Jewish culture. Instead, the text employs a passing mention of blood to reconnect the protagonist with "tradition." Finally, while Mann offers gaudy images of failed assimilation and taboo practices, his problematic work seems closer to a satire of fin-de-siècle decadence and of the cult of Wagner than a serious attempt to explore the redemptive potential of the margins of German-Jewish tradition.

In contrast to the works by Mann, Beer-Hofmann, Münchhausen, and Lasker-Schüler, the texts I examine address fin-de-siècle cultural concerns, while they also attempt to establish continuity with Jewish historical material that presents an alternative terrain to the material of the Enlightenment, and to the sweeping changes that it brought about. In Chapter

Three, for instance, I trace the prominent fin-de-siècle discourses of decadence, regeneration, and location, with which Wassermann and Herzl engage, by reading their texts alongside Zionist works by Buber, Max Nordau, E. M. Lilien, and Ahad Ha'am. At the same time, following Aamir Mufti and others, I locate the genealogical heritage of these discourses in the Enlightenment framework of Jewish integration, and I demonstrate that these authors employ the image of Sabbatai Zvi in order to critically revisit the dawn of European-Jewish modernity, and the initial promise of Jewish integration into European culture. The mythical image of Sabbatai Zvi that emerges in these novels—like the image of the Chassidim in Buber's texts—recalls and subverts the myth of Mendelssohn that Rosenzweig invokes.

However, even if the texts I examine engage with messianism, Chassidism, and the Eastern ghetto as aspects of an alternative, mythic, elusive, "authentic" Jewish tradition, then as we will see, they also approach these motifs in terms of *Bildung* and German culture. Thus, the Jewish tradition that they seek to invent and authenticate is self-consciously a *German*-Jewish tradition.[30] The critique of the Enlightenment and its legacy contained within these texts therefore does not mark a wholesale rejection of its ideals, but instead revisits the movement and its initial promise. As we will see in Chapter One, in fact, Enlightenment culture—and especially *Bildung*—was central for German-speaking Jews at the end of the nineteenth century. Let's turn now to Franzos' earliest collection of ghetto fiction, and examine how he self-consciously stages a rehabilitation of *Bildung* in order to address the crisis of German-Jewish identity.

[30] It is crucial to note that (with the exception of Wassermann) all of these authors were Austrian, and all engaged with images of the Austro-Hungarian Empire. Thus to speak of a negotiation of *German*-Jewish identity might seem out of place. However, these authors were also all deeply invested in the German language and German culture, and, as inhabitants of a notoriously multicultural (and multilingual) Empire, the questions of nationality and of cultural belonging that they considered were distinctly organized around notions of Germanness and Jewishness.

Chapter One

Enlightenment in the Twilight: *Bildung* in *Halb-Asien*

I. "Denn strafen wollen wir Sie nicht"

> Glücklicherweise ist aber jeder der deutschen Sprache Kundige auch fähig Jargon zu verstehen. Denn von einer allerdings großen Ferne aus gesehn, wird die äußere Verständlichkeit des Jargon von der deutschen Sprache gebildet; das ist ein Vorzug vor allen Sprachen der Erde. Sie hat dafür auch gerechterweise einen Nachteil vor allen. Man kann nämlich Jargon nicht in die deutsche Sprache übersetzen. Die Verbindungen zwischen Jargon und Deutsch sind zu zart und bedeutend, als daß sie nicht sofort zerreißen müssten, wenn Jargon ins Deutsche zurückgeführt wird, d. h. es wird kein Jargon mehr zurückgeführt, sondern etwas Wesenloses. Durch Übersetzung ins Französische z. B. kann Jargon den Franzosen vermittelt werden, durch Übersetzung ins Deutsche wird er vernichtet. „Toit“ z. B. ist eben nicht „tot“ und „Blüt“ ist keinesfalls „Blut.“ (Franz Kafka, "Einleitungsvortrag über Jargon")[31]

In a 1912 address, in which he introduced the Yiddish-speaking Polish actor, Yitzhak Löwy, to a German-speaking audience at the Jewish Town Hall in Prague, Franz Kafka identified a crucial intricacy in the relationship between Jews residing in the German-speaking lands and their East European counterparts. This relationship is characterized by a conflicting, complementary balance of distance and proximity, distinction and similarity, as epitomized by that of the Yiddish language (or *Jargon*) to German: German plus distance equals Yiddish. For Kafka, the linguistic proximity that allows every German speaker to grasp the superficial meaning of Yiddish also makes translation of the former language into the latter impossible. While it remains possible to convey Yiddish to the French people (itself a problematic construction), the act of uniting Yiddish with the German language via

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[31] Franz Kafka, "Einleitungsvortrag über Jargon," *Nachgelassene Schriften und Fragmente*, ed. Malcolm Pasley, vol. 1 (Frankfurt am Main: Fischer; New York: Schocken Books, 1993) 192.

translation purges the former of its being—of the distinction of distance. To render Yiddish into German—two languages sharing a common ancestor, to which, according to Kafka, Yiddish often remained more faithful—is not only to produce an empty translation, but to produce stillborn discourse, “etwas Wesenloses.”[32]

The tense similarity (yet non-identity) of Yiddish and German that Kafka so incisively analyzes encapsulates an identity crisis among German-speaking Jews which had begun in the late eighteenth century and which would reach its pinnacle after the First World War. Neither wholly accepted into a German or Austrian society, nor any longer maintaining meaningful connections to Jewish cultural or religious practices, many German-speaking Jews were, as I outlined in the introduction to this study, uncertain about their cultural status. And Kafka plays on this uncertainty, deliberately establishing an opposition between Western and Eastern Europe, and between Yiddish as a language of Jewish experience, and German as a language beyond such experience.

At the beginning of his talk, Kafka situates his audience squarely in the realm of Western European culture and circumstances. Yet, given Kafka’s status as a German-speaking Jew living in a primarily Czech-speaking, non-Jewish enclave in the sprawling, multicultural Austro-Hungarian Empire, the binary construction of Western and Eastern Europe is extremely problematic. In fact, as Scott Spector has noted, Kafka positions himself in the center of this dichotomy (and of the aforementioned identity crisis), occupying the theatrical space between two “mutually incomprehensible entities before and behind him: the spectators he faces in the audience (assimilated Prague Jews) and the Yiddish they cannot

[32] As he explains: “Der Jargon stammt z. B. in seinen Anfängen aus der Zeit, als das Mittelhochdeutsche ins Neuhochdeutsche überging. Da gab es Wahlformen, das Mittelhochdeutsche nahm die eine, der Jargon die andere. Oder der Jargon entwickelte mittelhochdeutsche Formen folgerichtiger als selbst das Neuhochdeutsche […]” (Kafka, “Jargon” 190).

understand (Jewish language and the Polish actor Löwy)."[33] In fact, it is precisely this state of indeterminacy, of suspension between two poles—indeed, between two audiences—which Kafka exposes and puts on display in his speech.

Kafka characterizes the distinction between these two realms in terms of apparent order and chaos: "Unsere westeuropäischen Verhältnisse sind, wenn wir sie mit vorsichtig flüchtigem Blick ansehn, so geordnet: alles nimmt seinen ruhigen Lauf. […] [W]er könnte aus einer solchen Ordnung der Dinge heraus den verwirrten Jargon verstehen oder wer hätte auch nur die Lust dazu?"[34] The order he describes is, however, only visible by means of a cautious and quick glance. To look longer might jeopardize the security and stability of this perceived order, and such self-examination is precisely what Kafka proposes—not however, by taking a long look at the self, but instead by looking fleetingly at *Jargon*. In fact, for Kafka's German-Jewish audience, a close encounter with *Jargon* via a recitation of Yiddish poetry represents a revelatory and potentially devastating (that is, apocalyptic in both senses of the word) moment of self-reflection:

> Ganz nahe kommen Sie schon an den Jargon, wenn sie bedenken, daß in Ihnen außer Kenntnissen auch noch Kräfte tätig sind und Anknüpfungen von Kräften, welche Sie befähigen, Jargon fühlend zu versehen. […] Wenn Sie aber einmal Jargon ergriffen hat—und Jargon ist alles, Wort, chassidische Melodie und das Wesen dieses ostjüdischen Schauspielers selbst,—dann werden Sie die wahre Einheit des Jargons zu spüren bekommen, so stark, daß Sie sich fürchten werden, aber nicht mehr vor dem Jargon, sondern vor sich. Sie würden nicht imstande sein, diese Furcht allein zu ertragen, wenn nicht gleich auch aus dem Jargon das Selbstvertrauen über Sie käme, das dieser Furcht standhält und noch stärker ist.[35]

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[33] Scott Spector, *Prague Territories: National Conflict and Cultural Innovation in Franz Kafka's Fin de Siècle* (Berkeley: U of California P, 2000) 87. For more on Kafka's speech, see Marthe Robert, *As Lonely as Franz Kafka*, trans. Ralph Manheim (New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1982) 56-61. For a broad discussion of Kafka's reception of Yiddish theater, see Richie Robertson, *Kafka: Judaism, Politics, and Literature* (Oxford: Clarendon P, 1985) 14-28, and Evelyn Torton Beck, *Kafka and the Yiddish Theater: Its Impact on His Work* (Madison: U of Wisconsin P, 1971).

[34] Kafka, "Jargon" 188.

[35] Kafka, "Jargon" 193.

Within the audience lurk latent powers of understanding. Sander L. Gilman links these powers to the linguistic affinity between German and Yiddish, suggesting that this affinity offers the German-speaking audience the ability to "comprehend a new and truly Jewish culture 'intuitively.'"[36] But it is precisely this notion of intuition that suggests the contrary. Perhaps Yiddish isn't a portal to a new, unknown Jewish culture, but instead a silver thread connected to an old, suppressed Jewishness. This is why it is to be feared: the intuitive comprehension of Yiddish poses a threat to the Western order of the audience members' lives. And yet, Kafka benevolently posits that an immersion into *Jargon*—a cultural storehouse that encompasses not only language but the essence of the East European Jew—may also provide a means of bearing this fear: *Selbstvertrauen*, self-confidence, or put differently, confidence in the Self.

Such *Selbstvertrauen* in the Austro-Hungarian Empire around the fin-de-siècle was a precious commodity, and Kafka admits that it may only be temporary, stating at the end of his talk: "Wenn es [i.e., das Selbstvertrauen] sich dann verliert, morgen und später […], dann wünsche ich Ihnen aber, daß sie auch die Furcht vergessen haben möchten. Denn strafen wollen wir sie nicht."[37] Indeed, Kafka's assertion of the inability to translate the language of East European Jewry into that of assimilated German Jewry, yet of the latent affinity between the languages, invokes a critical tension of identification; the audience is caught among a series of coordinates: East European, West European, German, Austrian, Czech, Jewish, Yiddish (and perhaps even urban and rural). Which self does one trust? From which trust does one derive the self? This paucity of *Selbstvertrauen* was characteristic of a broader

[36] Sander L. Gilman, *Franz Kafka* (London: Reaktion Books, 2005) 53.

[37] Kafka, "Jargon" 193.

problem of modern identity prevalent throughout the fin-de-siècle—a problem of subjectivity manifested in Friedrich Nietzsche's philosophical project, in Sigmund Freud's psychoanalysis, and in the discourses of nationalism and cosmopolitanism in Central Europe—but it was already acutely experienced by German Jews disillusioned with the project of assimilation in the initial decade following Jewish emancipation in both Germany and the Austro-Hungarian Empire.[38]

The proximity of Yiddish and German that Kafka posits is based on a highly romanticized image of the Yiddish language: the two languages are not entirely mutually intelligible. Moreover, as numerous scholars have shown, for generations of Jews in German-speaking lands—who bore geographic proximity to their Yiddish-speaking neighbors—the Yiddish language represented a "corrupted" German language, which marked the failure of Jews to integrate into German culture.[39] And yet, beginning especially in the second half of the nineteenth century, the image of East European Jewry—represented in Kafka's case by Yiddish—served as an archaeological site, the excavation of which yielded insight into the cultural practices and sources of a Jewishness from which many German-speaking Jews had distanced themselves in their quest for assimilation. The state of indeterminacy that Kafka

[38] Jacques Le Rider, for one, identifies Central Europe as a hotbed of identity troubles, citing three intertwined crises of the individual: a crisis of modernist identity, of masculinity, and of Jewishness. See Jacques Le Rider, *Modernity and Crises of Identity: Culture and Society in Fin-de-Siècle Vienna*, trans. Rosemary Morris (New York: Continuum, 1993) 1.

[39] For instance, Steven E. Aschheim writes: "Many West European Jews expressed their disdain for Eastern Jews, but it was in Germany that such notions were given their most radical formation. This was so because German Jews felt the rift most acutely. Germany, after all, bordered Poland, a geographical factor of great importance. The physical accessibility of Germany from Poland had for centuries made it the historical gateway for Jews migrating from East to West. […] While the geographical dimension was absent in other West European countries, German Jews were never able to forget that they shared a common border with the unemancipated Eastern ghetto masses. Throughout the nineteenth century and into the twentieth, German Jewish history was conditioned by this presence, as both myth and reality." Steven E. Aschheim, *Brothers and Strangers: The East European Jew in German Consciousness, 1800-1923* (Madison, U of Wisconsin P, 1982) 4-5.

unveils in his speech points to an innate insecurity about the Germanness of his audience, but also to a kind of longing to plumb the depths of the audience's Jewishness.

Yiddish had not always been an object of romanticization. Steven E. Aschheim, in his classic 1982 study, *Brothers and Strangers: The East European Jew in German and German Jewish Consciousness, 1800-1923*, points out that the image of East European Jewry remained largely a negative image—a caricature or stereotype—throughout much of the nineteenth century. In his study, in fact, Aschheim ends the first phase of his genealogy of that image with its ultimate "crystallization" as a stereotype, which he in turn attributes to the German-Jewish journalist, editor, and author Karl Emil Franzos, and especially to his collection of tales and travel sketches in the *Halb-Asien* trilogy, beginning with the two-volume text, *Aus Halb-Asien* (1876).[40]

Largely forgotten today, the sketches contained within this text helped catapult Franzos to fame. Their popularity was due in no small part to Franzos' biographical connection to the land he described: Franzos was born in Galicia in 1848, and the landscape and people of the eastern edge of the Austro-Hungarian Empire were the frequent subjects of his writing until his death in 1904. In fact, along with the two other texts in the trilogy—*Vom Don zur Donau* (1878) and *Aus der großen Ebene* (1888)—the region also forms the setting for his early novella cycle, *Die Juden von Barnow* (1877), as well as numerous novels, including his posthumously published masterpiece, *Der Pojaz* (1905). And yet, more than Franzos' personal relationship to *Halb-Asien*—a highly suggestive name that he coined and popularized—it was the exotic character of this region, coupled with its proximity to

[40] Aschheim, *Brothers* 27. Robertson offers a historical analysis of the images of East European Jewry as created by Franzos, Kafka, and Martin Buber. In his essay, he offers a brief outline of the historical circumstances of real East European Jews—a rare occurrence in much of the literature on Franzos. See Ritchie Robertson, "Western Observers and Eastern Jews: Kafka, Buber, Franzos," *Modern Language Review* 83.1 (1988) 87-105.

German-speaking Europe, which made it so compelling to Western readers. For Franzos and his audience alike, *Halb-Asien* was a twilight zone between Europe and Asia.

To the extent that many of the sketches in the *Halb-Asien* series focus specifically on the life and culture of East European Jews in the region, Franzos fits into a long tradition of ghetto writing, following in the footsteps of authors such as Leopold Kompert (1822-1886), who used stories of Jewish life and customs as a tool for promoting the acceptance of Jews into German society, by depicting the universal humanity of life in the ghetto.[41] Indeed, in his reading of Franzos, Aschheim foregrounds the image of the *Ostjude* as a central figure in these texts, effectively collapsing this image with that of the ghetto and of ghetto life, and finally stating that Franzos "did little more than articulate the post-Enlightenment perception of the ghetto."[42] This of course begs the question of how exactly such a notion of the ghetto manifests itself.

The answer is complex. Even though the terms "ghetto Jew" and "Ostjude" began to converge into a single concept by the end of the 19th century, Aschheim explains, "[a]t the beginning of [that] century, German Jews had also been considered ghetto Jews."[43] Developing this notion further, he says: "*The ghetto* referred to the simple fact of Jewish physical concentration regardless of its coercive or voluntary origins, and even more crucially, to the perception of the separatist culture generated by such concentration. *Ghetto*

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[41] For a recent study of Kompert's ghetto writing, see Jonathan M. Hess, "Leopold Kompert and the Work of Nostalgia: The Cultural Capital of German Jewish Ghetto Fiction," *Jewish Quarterly Review* 97.4 (2007): 576-615. For a comprehensive look at ghetto literature, see Gabriele von Glasenapp, *Aus der Judengasse: Zur Entstehung und Ausprägung deutschsprachiger Ghettoliteratur im 19. Jahrhundert* (Tübingen: Niemeyer, 1996), and, especially, Gabriele von Glasenapp and Hans Otto Horch, *Ghettoliteratur: Eine Dokumentation zur deutsch-jüdischen Literaturgeschichte des 19. und frühen 20. Jahrhunderts,* 2 vols. (Tübingen: Niemeyer, 2005).

[42] Aschheim, *Brothers* 27.

[43] Aschheim, *Brothers* 5.

increasingly came to connote a state of mind."[44] Thus, the ghetto denotes first of all the myth of a physical location—an isolated, separate region for Jews, maintained freely or not. But more importantly, the notion of ghetto signifies a state of mind—an internalized barrier to the gradual project of Jewish emancipation.

As we have seen, beginning in the Enlightenment, this process was synonymous with a process of ethical regeneration—a physical, moral, and linguistic distancing from Jewish culture, especially as it was codified in the image of the *Ostjude*. As such, it necessitated a break with past Jewish traditions and practices, and the failure to achieve such a break resulted in a kind of approximate failure of identification—an inability on the part of Jews to fully integrate into German culture and society. And this is precisely the failure that Kafka invokes in his speech, as evidenced by the haunting fear on the part of his audience-members that they will understand Yiddish—the fear that they are caught in an interstitial state between Germanness and Jewishness.

In fact, in a recent monograph linking the so-called "Jewish Question" in Europe with questions of postcolonial culture, Aamir R. Mufti argues that it is this very state of indeterminacy that makes Jewishness problematic for the Enlightenment. In his reading of Gotthold Ephraim Lessing's 1779 philosemitic drama, *Nathan der Weise*, Mufti argues: "That which constitutes the Jew as crisis for enlightened community is […] not that he is other to the citizen of the state but rather precisely that he becomes indeterminate, neither outsider nor one of us."[45] The cultural situation that Kafka describes in his speech is analogous to the political one that Mufti posits above. For Kafka, Yiddish itself—as a

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[44] Aschheim, *Brothers* 5-6 (emphasis in original).

[45] Aamir R. Mufti, *Enlightenment in the Colony: The Jewish Question and the Crisis of Postcolonial Culture* (Princeton: Princeton UP, 2007) 51.

uniquely Jewish cultural phenomenon—embodies the indeterminacy that Mufti describes: it is both not-German and too German. It is far enough from the German language to be distinct, yet too close to allow for translation. Through its very proximity to German, Yiddish does not allow itself to be integrated into German.

Recalling Kafka, Aschheim uses the attitude of Jewish Enlightenment reformers toward Yiddish as a central example of how the notion of ghetto functioned in German and German-Jewish consciousness: "The *Jargon* seemed to embody all the negative Jewish qualities of the past. […] More and more the traditional ghetto Jew—the language he spoke, the habits he retained—became synonymous with *Unbildung*, counter-example of what the new German Jew had to become."[46] Thus, already in the Enlightenment, the ghetto represented everything that Jews in German-speaking Europe needed to shed on the path to emancipation, and its frontiers were inscribed within the distance of non-identity—the distance between *Jargon* and German, between *toit* and *tot*, *Blüt* and *Blut*. As the physical presence of these frontiers eroded, a cultural residue remained.

It is impossible to overlook what Aschheim might call Enlightenment overtones in Franzos' work—especially given his criticism of cultural circumstances in *Halb-Asien*—and Franzos is in fact deeply concerned with the ghetto as a state of mind. Yet, Aschheim fails to fully explore the significance of his own claim. If Kafka's talk on Yiddish suggests that assimilated, German-speaking Jews possess a latent connection with East European Jewish life or tradition—if Yiddish can invoke an apocalyptic moment of both fear of the self and of *Selbstvertrauen* in Löwy's audience—then Franzos has a radically different understanding of the idea of a latent connection to a foreign Jewish tradition. Instead of positing the internalized ghetto as an obstacle to Jewish assimilation, or to Jewish participation in the

[46] Aschheim, *Brothers* 8.

"order" of West European culture, Franzos concerns himself with the problem of indeterminacy that Mufti describes and that emerges in Kafka's description of Yiddish. In fact, like Kafka, who hints at a crisis of identity lurking beneath the polished surface of his assimilated, German-speaking audience—an identity whose external mask of order can potentially be shattered by an evening of Yiddish theater—Franzos is concerned in his ghetto writing with a discord between outward appearance and (latent) inner essence. But in his ghetto literature, Franzos attempts to divest the notion of ghetto of specifically Jewish connotations, and to expand it to include many of the cultures and peoples living in *Halb-Asien* and beyond. For him, the indeterminacy of the ghetto is not a particularly Jewish phenomenon, but simply a matter of the lack of cultural engagement.

Franzos' strategy becomes clear when reading his texts against the ghetto tales of one of his contemporaries, Leopold von Sacher-Masoch, especially his 1878 collection of sketches, *Judengeschichten*, and its 1881 sequel, the aptly titled *Neue Judengeschichten*. Although both authors were born in Galicia, the two had contrasting experiences vis-à-vis German and East European Jewish culture.[47] While Franzos grew up with a close family connection to the German language and to Prussian culture, which instilled in him a sense of distance from his Yiddish-speaking Jewish peers, the non-Jewish Sacher-Masoch (who himself did not learn German until the age of twelve) paid many visits as a child to the still walled-in Jewish ghetto in Lemberg (today Lviv).[48] The two authors' texts reflect their

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[47] The two also competed, with Sacher-Masoch criticizing Franzos as too biased, as Margarita Pazi has documented. See Margarita Pazi, "Karl Emil Franzos' Assimlationsvorstellung und Assimilationserfahrung," *Conditio Judaica: Judentum, Antisemitismus und deutschsprachige Literatur vom 18. Jahrhundert bis zum Ersten Weltkrieg*, ed. Hans Otto Horch and Horst Denkler, vol. 2 (Tübingen: Niemeyer, 1989) 219. In her essay, Pazi also offers a biographical reading of Franzos' promotion of German culture. See Pazi, "Franzos" 218-233.

[48] Place names in this multicultural, multilingual region are notoriously difficult, and the choice of one form over another often has overt political consequences. For the sake of clarity, I will follow the primary authors and make use the German names whenever necessary.

contrasting attitudes toward German culture and toward Eastern Europe, but both address the incongruence between appearance and essence there. It is not by chance that Franzos names the setting of his sketches *Halb-Asien*—a location that is not quite Europe and not yet Asia—and, as I will argue in this chapter, it is precisely this state of suspension that Franzos sets out to redeem.

Aus Halb-Asien consists of sketches, stories, anecdotes and observations about a region with which the author claimed to be intimately familiar. Franzos grouped the sketches into five sections, four of which represent the lands that comprise this geographic region—*Aus Galizien*, *Aus Süd-Russland*, *Aus Rumänien*, and *Aus der Bukowina*—while the other section highlights the administrative relationship of the region to the Austro-Hungarian Empire: *Die k. k. Reaktion in Halb-Asien*. The subject matter of the sketches varies from the chronicle of a Ruthenian uprising in "Der Aufstand von Wolowce," to an ethnographic description of the various locales along the route of an express train in "Von Wien nach Czernowitz," which I will discuss in more detail below.

With the publication of *Aus Halb-Asien* in 1876, and of the novella cycle *Die Juden von Barnow* the following year, Franzos assumed a prominent place among a long line of authors of ghetto fiction, reaching as far back as Kompert and Berthold Auerbach (1812-1882). Accordingly, *Aus Halb-Asien* also contains many sketches dealing specifically with Jewish life and customs in the region. These range from the almost farcical critique of religious casuistry in "Nur ein Ei" to the inspirational story of the political potential of the Jewish populace in *Halb-Asien*, as detailed in "Jüdische Polen." Because of Franzos' prominence as author of ghetto fiction, much of the extant scholarship on *Aus Halb-Asien* centers on the treatment of Jews in the work, engaging the text as a prime example of ghetto

literature, which casts a critical eye on the atmosphere surrounding the *Ostjude* in the Austro-Hungarian borderlands, and on the daily practices of Jewish life.[49] Jeffrey A. Grossman has even argued that in his early ghetto fiction, Franzos "constructs a world of 'other' Jews to whom he ascribes the negative qualities ascribed to Jews more generally by writers like [Gustav] Freytag or [Wilhelm] Raabe."[50] To be sure, an engagement with Jewish life is central to Franzos' project, and his depiction of the East European Jewish milieu is often not flattering, but it is precisely his discussion of the vast non-Jewish environment in *Halb-Asien* that allows for a more thorough understanding of the text's depiction of the region and of the image of the *Ostjude*. As I will argue in this chapter, *Aus Halb-Asien* does indeed operate as ghetto fiction, but only insofar as it reinvents the very notion of the ghetto. The text is more concerned with the ghetto as a state of mind—with the ghetto as an operation or condition—than with the particulars of Jewish life in physical concentration.

In his reading of Franzos' work, Aschheim describes the author as "the embodiment of German Jewish Enlightenment, vehemently restating its postulates at the very moment political events, intellectual developments, and literary fashions seemed to render his brand of *Bildung* didacticism out of date."[51] Indeed, in many regards, *Aus Halb-Asien* reads like a love letter to a universal and universalizing notion of German *Bildung*. Although I will draw on Aschheim's rich notion of the ghetto to denote primarily a cultural distancing, in this chapter I will diverge from his reading of Franzos as a blind proponent of an outdated project of universal cultural education. Instead, as I will demonstrate, in turning a critical eye to the

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[49] See, for instance, Glasenapp, *Judengasse* 191-216, and Jeffrey A. Grossman, *The Discourse on Yiddish in Germany: From the Enlightenment to the Second Empire* (Rochester, NY: Camden House, 2000) 194-203.

[50] Grossman, *Yiddish* 203.

[51] Aschheim, *Brothers* 27.

margins of the Austro-Hungarian Empire—which for him lay beyond the pale of influence of Enlightenment thought—and then promoting a century-old idea of *Bildung* as a means of overcoming the characteristic condition of in-betweenness of the ghetto, Franzos self-consciously and strategically revisits and restages the first moments of the crisis of German-Jewish identity and modernity.

In other words, to claim that Franzos blindly employs an outdated notion of *Bildung* to help crystallize a negative stereotype of East European Jewry, as Aschheim does, is to tell only part of the story. In his *Halb-Asien* project, Franzos is not stuck in the past; he deliberately turns back the clock and reexamines an anachronistic notion of *Bildung* as a secular redemptive force, with which to overcome the particularly modern identity crisis that Kafka hints at—a crisis palpably felt by German-speaking Jews in Germany and Austria-Hungary during the first decade after emancipation, and one that even in 1912 a lone evening of Yiddish theater might unleash. Franzos thereby universalizes the scope of the crisis of German-Jewish identity while at the same time laying the groundwork for later redemptive projects in fin-de-siècle German and Austrian culture, including Martin Buber's reception of Chassidic mysticism and the depictions of the false Messiah Sabbatai Zvi in works by Jakob Wassermann and Theodor Herzl. Franzos' project, as I will demonstrate, is decidedly modern, and it deals as much with German culture and German identity as with the image of the *Ostjude*.

In the following section, I will flesh out the shape of the internalized, psychological ghetto by examining the ghetto fiction of Sacher-Masoch, focusing on the brief sketch "Moses Goldfarb und sein Haus." I will then turn to Franzos' introduction to *Aus Halb-Asien*, as well as his sketch "Von Wien nach Czernowitz," in order to demonstrate that *Halb-Asien*

is a staging ground for mapping the internalized ghetto onto a discursive region. Finally, in the last section, I will examine Franzos' "Schiller in Barnow" to illustrate how he establishes a program of redemption for the intermediacy of ghetto existence, through universal and universalizing engagement with a specific brand of German *Bildung*, which self-consciously revisits the Enlightenment and, with it, the outbreak of modern crises of German, Jewish, and German-Jewish identity.

II. "Wer wird den alten Vater so kränken?": Reconstituting the Internalized Ghetto

Before looking more closely at Franzos' work, I would like to explore the contours of the ghetto as both a geographic space and an internalized obstacle—as a state of mind—through a brief examination of an exemplary piece of ghetto fiction by Sacher-Masoch, which reveals how Franzos' most prominent contemporaries constructed the image of the ghetto. Although the term *Ghetto* was a nineteenth-century innovation in the German language, it recalls the isolation (and the relative autonomy) of Jewish communities in Western Europe before the push for emancipation in the late eighteenth century. And yet, as Aschheim points out, the notion of the ghetto in the nineteenth century also signifies a radically different kind of community.[52] The idea of an internalized ghetto directly harkens back to the moment in which these isolated communities opened up and Jews in German speaking lands started to probe the possibilities of German-Jewish identity. Only after this initial break with a self-contained Jewish cultural sphere—and with the *Selbstvertrauen* that it offered—did the idea of a latent, psychological ghetto emerge.

[52] Aschheim, *Brothers* 5-6.

The Internalized Ghetto

Kafka's introductory remarks on Yiddish reflect this notion of the ghetto: the members of his audience of German-speaking Prague Jews—living in a modern enclave in the Austro-Hungarian Empire, and apparently situated comfortably within the realm of Germanness—were still subject to a fear of the Yiddish language, and more precisely, to a fear of their own innate ability to understand that language intuitively. Kafka's text suggests that each member of the audience unconsciously bore a mask of German culture, which at any moment might have been exposed as such by a simple evening of Yiddish theater. For these Jews, the confines of the ghetto had been internalized, existing only in the uncertainty of an exclusively German identity; these ghetto Jews were Jews suspended somewhere in an incomplete process of becoming German.[53]

Thus internalized, the psychological ghetto is marked by incompletion, by a state of in-betweenness on the path toward the ethical regeneration demanded by emancipation. Behind this in-betweenness lurks the hidden threat that assimilation into German culture was only superficially completed.[54] What if German or Austrian Jews had only appeared to become German or Austrian? In other words, Kafka seems to suggest that for German-speaking Jews operating in a ghetto state of mind, the dreaded possibility of being unmasked as not truly German is ever present. The psychological ghetto is thus delineated by an insurmountable distance between Germanness and Jewishness, varnished with the

[53] Kafka's "Brief an den Vater," composed in 1919 is a particularly rich documentation of this notion of suspension. See Franz Kafka, "Brief an den Vater," *Nachgelassene Schriften und Fragmente*, vol. 2, ed. Jost Schillemeit (Frankfurt am Main: S. Fischer Verlag; New York: Schocken Books, 1992) 143-217. See also Jonathan Boyarin, *Storm from Paradise: The Politics of Jewish Memory* (Minneapolis: U Minnesota P, 1992) 94-98.

[54] For more on this notion, see Sander L. Gilman, *Jewish Self-Hatred: Anti-Semitism and the Hidden Language of the Jews* (Baltimore and London: Johns Hopkins UP, 1986). Gilman's discussion of the invention of the *Ostjude* is particularly rich (270-286).

appearance of identity. This distance manifests itself in a sociolinguistic form when Kafka portrays Yiddish as accessible to all speakers of German, while he simultaneously asserts the impossibility of translating the former language into the latter, its closest relative; Yiddish is the language that simultaneously appears German and can never become German.

The internalized ghetto as described by Aschheim and illustrated by Kafka is a specifically Jewish condition, stemming from a kind of self-doubt. Experienced in Prague in 1912, this notion of the ghetto marks a stalled process of assimilation, an interstitial state between two realms, and the consequent uncertainty of equating resemblance with identity. It emerges in what Kafka describes in his speech on Yiddish as the appearance of an orderly existence with the potential for the revelation of chaos lurking in a Yiddish theatrical performance. Kafka, as a German-speaking Jew living in Prague, and as the scion of an assimilated family, might have had firsthand experience of an internalized ghetto.

But the internalized ghetto had also been described a generation earlier, and from an outside observer. Sacher-Masoch's sketch, "Moses Goldfarb und sein Haus," published in his 1878 collection, *Judengeschichten*, offers a multigenerational glimpse into the internalization of the ghetto.[55] In fact, in its opening sentence, the text raises the possibility of an internalized ghetto, painting a concise picture of the ghetto as a psychological and particularly Jewish location, lacking physical embodiment:

> Ein Ghetto war es eigentlich nicht, in welchem Moses Goldfarb mit den Seinen wohnte, sondern eine echt polnische Juden-Schänke, welche hundert Schritte außerhalb des Dorfes an der Kaiserstraße stand, mit ihren ewigen Kothlachen vor der Thüre und den schmutzigen Trogen; aus denen die Pferde der vorüberkommenden Fuhrleute mit dem Schweif schlagend zu fressen pflegten; aber das Ghetto ist trotzdem überall, wo ein unverfälschter gläubiger Jude siedelt und die Thora ihre

[55] For surveys of Sacher-Masoch's ghetto literature, see Hans Otto Horch, "Der Außenseiter als 'Judenraphel': Zu den Judengeschichten Leopolds von Sacher-Masoch," *Conditio Judaica: Judentum, Antisemitismus und deutschsprachige Literatur vom 18. Jahrhundert bis zum Ersten Weltkrieg*, ed. Hans Otto Horch and Horst Denkler, vol. 2 (Tübingen: Niemeyer, 1989) 258-286. See also Glasenapp, *Judengasse* 234-251.

unsichtbaren, aber unübersteigbaren Mauern zwischen ihn und die übrige Welt schiebt, insbesondere, wo er so ganz allein, von seinen Brüdern entfernt, unter Christen lebt, wie Moses Goldfarb.[56]

Moses Goldfarb doesn't live in an isolated community of Jews on the outskirts of a city—nor, indeed, in any other sort of Jewish community. Much to the contrary, he's cut off from other Jews, residing primarily in a Christian milieu. Moses Goldfarb's ghetto is one of authentic belief, and its borders consist of his relationship to the Torah—to the Jewish law that governs his activity, and forms a barrier that hinders his integration into the secular-modern aspects of the world around him. The sentence above reenacts Moses Goldfarb's insular position in its very structure: his name, uttered in the second clause and repeated again at the end of the sentence, performs his self-contained existence.

The text is not a story driven by a concrete conflict requiring a resolution, but instead presents itself as a sketch from the author's childhood, and the first-person narrator is ostensibly Sacher-Masoch himself. It revolves around the title character's precarious position and elaborates on the structure of the internalized ghetto invoked in its first sentence. Goldfarb's strict adherence to the Torah, with which the narrator defines his ghetto, is partially a reaction to his isolation as a lone Jew existing in a non-Jewish environment. Moses Goldfarb, it seems, is very much a product of his surroundings. The narrator explains his position:

> Der einzige Sohn des auserwählten Volkes unter Andersgläubigen war Moses Goldfarb darauf angewiesen, die Gebote seiner Religion strenger zu beobachten als jeder Andere, wo es anging, wo es jedoch nicht anging, war er erfinderisch, dieselben zu *umgehen*, ohne sie geradeaus zu verletzen und machte sich dabei die Spitzfindigkeit des Talmud gut zu Nutze.[57]

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[56] Leopold von Sacher-Masoch, "Moses Goldfarb und sein Haus," *Judengeschichten* (Leipzig: Verlag Johann Friedrich Hartknoch, 1878) 29.

[57] Sacher-Masoch, "Goldfarb" 35.

Moses Goldfarb's existence as the sole Jew among non-Jews (excluding, of course, his family) demands the double obligation of heightened adherence to the Torah, and the increased pressure to circumvent Jewish law when it stands in direct conflict with the conditions of his environment. The narrator describes at length how Goldfarb skirts the spirit of the Torah in order to remain loyal to its letter, while at the same time answering the demands of life in a non-Jewish milieu. If Goldfarb's isolation appears at first glance as an inner retreat to the insularity of an unfragmented Jewish cultural sphere, then upon further scrutiny cracks become evident in this totality. From the creative (or selective) adherence to the Torah emerge two separate realms: the realm of Jewishness and the realm of the non-Jewish community, and Goldfarb is unable to completely balance the two. In his attempt to bridge these two spheres by allowing religious doctrine a primary role in the non-Jewish sphere, and then circumventing this primacy whenever necessary, Goldfarb exhibits the kind of intermediacy that we see emerge in Kafka's text.[58] His isolation consists not merely of the cultural distance between himself and his Christian neighbors or of his lack of contact with other Jews. It is precisely the product of both of these conditions: a failure on the one hand to completely assimilate, and, on the other hand, to maintain his own standards of Jewishness.

His children, with whom the narrator is much more familiar, encounter this state of suspension in a different fashion. Unlike their father, who strives to maintain a connection with his Jewish heritage in spite and because of his isolation from other Jews, his three children experience "starke Neigungen, sich dem Zeitgeiste anzuschmiegen […]."[59] The

[58] The best illustration of this predicament occurs with Goldfarb's difficulty avoiding unleavened bread for one week before the Feast of Passover, a virtual impossibility for an inn-keeper in Poland: "Was soll also der fromme Moses Goldfarb beginnen, um weder seine Seele noch seinen Leib zugrunde zu richten?" (Sacher-Masoch, "Goldfarb" 38)

[59] Sacher-Masoch, "Goldfarb" 40.

narrator explains that in their youth, the children begin to turn toward the spirit of secular modernity. Abraham, the oldest son, becomes a soldier; his younger son, Benjamin, attends school in the neighboring city, intent upon becoming a doctor; and his young daughter, Esterke, begins to explore her sexuality and its potential influence on members of the opposite sex.[60]

Ten years after the initial description of the children's inclination to embrace modern secular life, the narrator revisits their situation. He returns to his home village and stops by Goldfarb's inn, where he encounters Benjamin and Abraham again. The former is on vacation from his studies at the *Gymnasium* in Lemberg, and expresses a deep interest in German literature—especially Goethe—while the latter is on leave from his post as a sergeant in the army. Abraham's rank and military reputation, in fact, afford him the respect of local Polish residents. Along with this newly-won respect, however, he has also acquired a taste for pork, and as the narrator offers him a cognac, Abraham asks him to also order some bacon as well—but not to tell his father (the innkeeper). "Ich habe es mir angewöhnt beim Regimente," he explains, "aber sprechen Sie nichts vor dem Tate, es möchte ihn kränken."[61] Unlike his father, Abraham does not let the law stand between him and the world around him, but he does maintain a degree of respect for his father's piety. Indeed, his use of the word *Tate* (the Yiddish word for "father"), betrays his complicated intermediate position: by using Yiddish he asserts a personal connection to his father's Jewishness, while relegating

[60] For a brief analysis of Jewish female sexuality in ghetto writing, see Ritchie Robertson, *The 'Jewish Question' in German Literature, 1749-1939: Emancipation and its Discontents* (Oxford: Oxford UP, 1999) 424-426. For a more sustained investigation of the intersection between masochism and philosemitism in his work, see David Biale, "Masochism and Philosemitism: The Strange Case of Leopold von Sacher-Masoch," *Journal of Contemporary History* 17.2 (1982) 305-323.

[61] Sacher-Masoch, "Goldfarb" 45.

that mode of Jewishness in linguistically remote terrain—in a foreign language, signifying foreign traditions and foreign laws.

The narrator does not see Esterke during his visit to the inn, and refrains from asking about her. A few years later, however, at the theater in Lemberg, he catches a glimpse of her watching the performance from the box of a count. After the show, he speaks with her briefly, and she praises a collection of his stories. He encounters Benjamin shortly thereafter and the text concludes with the following exchange:

> "Ich habe eben Ihre Schwester gesprochen," sagte ich, "sie ist sehr schön geworden und scheint in glänzenden Verhältnissen zu leben."
>
> Er zuckte die Achseln. "Was wollen Sie," sagte er, "ein Jeder soll sein Glück machen, aber nicht Jeder kann dies in gleicher Weise, ich mache es durch meinen G e i s t und sie"—er vollendete den Satz nicht—"der Graf würde sie heirathen, wenn sie sich taufen ließe, aber wer wird den alten Vater so kränken?"[62]

Moses Goldfarb's wish to remain Jewish in a non-Jewish milieu leaves residual traces on his children. Although they embrace secular culture, and do not allow the Torah to interfere with their engagement with the non-Jewish world surrounding them, they also do not wish to fully embrace that world. Like Moses Goldfarb, who goes out of his way not to transgress the letter of the law, his children similarly avoid upsetting the old *Vater* (whether he is Goldfarb or God). This is most true for Esterke, who remains trapped between the piousness of her father and the palpable expectations of her Christian environment. Practicing a mode of Jewishness that bears few traces of religious or cultural affiliation, and yet unwilling to convert to Christianity even in order to marry the count, Esterke is trapped in a position between two possibilities: she no longer adheres to her father's notion of Jewishness, yet remains nevertheless only on the brink of entering the Polish aristocracy.

[62] Sacher-Masoch, "Goldfarb" 47-48.

Sacher-Masoch's text casts a partial embrace of secular modernity as problematic, and he constructs a binary, in which Jews can either choose Jewishness or modernity (in a secular-Christian milieu), but nothing between, and certainly not both.[63] The ghetto in Sacher-Masoch's sketch, "Moses Goldfarb und sein Haus," is thus a specifically Jewish phenomenon. Whether defined by an exaggerated adherence to the letter of the Torah while neglecting its spirit, or by a refusal to convert to Christianity, the ghetto in this text is staged as a failure to completely assimilate. Alongside Kafka's psychological ghetto—which denies the possibility of transitioning into a secure sense of Germanness—Esterke's state of in-betweenness, and her father's attempt to hold together the fractured Jewish cultural sphere while inhabiting the space within its fissures, are manifestations of the internalized ghetto that Aschheim identifies.

But the position that Sacher-Masoch adopts in order to lend credence to his depiction of Jewish life in Eastern Europe complicates his conception of this ghetto as uniquely Jewish. Although, like Franzos, Sacher-Masoch grew up in the region that forms the setting of his stories, he did not come from a Jewish background. And yet, in an 1877 letter to the Galician-born Jewish author and philosopher Fabius Mieses, in which he responds to Mieses' critique of one of his works, Sacher-Masoch assumes the position of an intimate outsider, one who understands the nuances of Jewish life, and who even identifies—or can be identified—with a Jewish milieu. The letter, published in 1877 alongside Mieses' response in the journal, *Jüdisches Literaturblatt*, opens with the following passage:

> Ihr Schreiben hat mich nicht im Mindesten verletzt, aber in hohem Grade überrascht. Bis jetzt war ich gewohnt, von jüdischer Seite fast begeistert anerkannt, von judenfeindlicher Seite aber als jüdischer Parteigänger verdächtigt, oder gar in schlimmster Absicht als Jude bezeichnet zu werden. Ihr Schwiegervater war von

[63] Sacher-Masoch depicts precisely the crisis of secularity that that Mufti identifies in his reading of Lessing (Mufti, *Enlightenment* 51).

> meinen Darstellungen des polnisch-jüdischen Lebens hoch erfreut, und er ist maßgebend, da er dasselbe genau kennt, D… in Berlin, einer der besten Kenner des Judenthums, machte mir die wärmsten Lobsprüche und bezeichnete mich als den Einzigen der fähig wäre, Heines Rabbi von Bacharach zu vollenden, ebenso günstig sprach sich H… in Leipzig aus, während der gefeierte K… in Breslau fand, ich stelle die Seelenkämpfe eines jüdischen Gelehrten in einer meiner Novellen so wahr und tief dar, daß er glauben müsse, ich sei ein Jude.[64]

Sacher-Masoch is not Jewish, but because of his accurate depiction and intimate knowledge of East European Jewish life—and especially of the inner struggles of a Jewish intellectual—even the most discerning Jews and antisemites are quick to label him Jewish, or to detect a Jewish quality in his works. Sacher-Masoch embraces this identification, positioning himself as a successor to Heinrich Heine and placing his own project in line with Heine's historical novel, *Der Rabbi von Bacharach*, often cited as one of the earliest examples of German ghetto fiction. Thus, Sacher-Masoch seems to want to inhabit the very same interstitial spaces that he describes as so problematic for Moses Goldfarb and his family. Indeed, the *Seelenkämpfe* that he mentions reflect Moses Goldfarb's struggles to integrate into his non-Jewish milieu while maintaining his Jewish identity. If the problem of in-betweenness that characterizes the internalized ghetto is a specifically Jewish problem, then Sacher-Masoch claims a Jewish identity in order to legitimate his depiction of it.

From this position of near-Jewishness, Sacher-Masoch constructs an image of East European Jewish life framed between the perspective of the insider and that of the outsider. Neither wholly critical nor wholly romanticized, this image, as we shall see, resembles Franzos' depiction of that milieu in that it emphasizes the problem of in-betweenness as a crucial component. Unlike Sacher-Masoch, however, Franzos resists characterizing this in-betweenness as a specifically Jewish problem. With this distinction in mind, I will now return

[64] Leopold von Sacher-Masoch, "Ein Brief Sacher-Masoch's über die Juden," *Jüdisches Literaturblatt* 6 (1877) 97, rpt. in Glasenapp and Horch, *Ghettoliteratur* 1: 169.

to *Halb-Asien*, where I will demonstrate that internalized notions of the ghetto, such as those that emerge in Sacher-Masoch's sketch and Kafka's speech, are precisely what Franzos sets out to eliminate with his project. For Franzos, the first step is to reconstitute such ghettos in discursive depictions of corporeal reality.

Establishing the Limits of Twilight

In his introduction to *Aus Halb-Asien*, Franzos stakes a personal claim to a middle position that is the inverse of Sacher-Masoch's: Franzos assumes the privileged authorial situation of the distanced insider, a position "zwischen dem Touristen und dem patriotischen Schilderer."[65] That is, although Franzos was raised in the region he calls *Halb-Asien*, he does not wholly identify with it. He explains:

> Ich bin im Osten geboren, aber als der Sohn deutscher Eltern, ich bin in einem podolischen Städtchen aufgewachsen, aber in einem deutschen Hause, und so hat mir ein früh gewecktes Volksbewußtsein unwillkürlich den Blick geschärft und den Verhältnissen des Ostens gegenüber eine gewissen Unbefangenheit gegeben. […] [L]angjähriger Aufenthalt, zahlreiche Reisen haben mich mit Sprache, Sitte und Eigenart jenes Völkergewirres vertraut gemacht. Aber ebenso genau habe ich das Leben der westlichen Kulturvölker kennen lernen dürfen.[66]

From this site between the gawking tourist and the biased native, Franzos claims the ability to write an accurate, objective, and unbiased description of *Halb-Asien*. Using an intimate knowledge of both the life of his East European subjects and of the expectations of his Western readers, Franzos establishes an enlightened position vis-à-vis both groups. Although this position is analogous to that which Kafka ascribes to his audience in his introductory lecture on Yiddish—the uncertain, even precarious state of an individual claiming

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[65] Karl Emil Franzos, "Einleitung," *Aus Halb-Asien: Kulturbilder aus Galizien, der Bukowina, Südrußland und Rumänien*, 4th rev. ed., vol. I (Stuttgart und Berlin: J. G. Cotta'sche Buchhandlung Nachfolger, 1901) xvii.

[66] Franzos, "Einleitung" I: xvii.

Germanness from its very margins, while retaining an inside track to another, latent identity—Franzos takes up a far more self-assured stance.

In staking out his own position at the threshold of *Halb-Asien*, Franzos fails to mention his own Jewish heritage. Indeed, although he claims an early-developed *Volksbewußtsein*, he never identifies himself as part of a specific *Volk*. Given his prominence as an author of ghetto literature, and in light of Aschheim's assertion that his contribution to the genre marks the "crystallization" of the image of the *Ostjude*, and the last step in the discursive codification of the Eastern ghetto, then how does one explain this omission? The answer tellingly reveals a critical aspect of Franzos' intervention in *Halb-Asien*: When assuming the role of a distanced insider at the onset of his cultural and ethnographic exposition on *Halb-Asien*, Franzos self-consciously establishes the dichotomy of insider/outsider in terms of something other than Jewishness. In other words, at the very onset of his project, Franzos seizes the opportunity to remove the notions of intermediacy and of a lack of *Selbstvertrauen*—which characterize the internalized ghetto in the texts by Sacher-Masoch and Kafka—from a particularly Jewish realm and to leave open the possibility of its universal application. This begs a second question: If not a Jewish realm (or problem, or condition), what is the "ghetto" in the ghetto literature of *Halb-Asien*? The short answer: It is a ghetto of stalled, incomplete, and dubious Enlightenment.

In his descriptions of *Halb-Asien*, Franzos depicts an entire region steeped in in-betweenness, in which, according to his introduction to the text, "europäische Bildung und asiatische Barbarei, europäisches Vorwärtsstreben und asiatische Indolenz, europäische Humanität und […] grausamer Zwist der Nationen und Glaubensgenossenschaften"

encounter one another in unparalleled fashion.[67] This fundamental tension between European civilization and Asian barbarism manifests itself not along a fixed geographic border, but within the institutions and individuals of the region as the incongruence of outward appearance and inner essence: “Die Schale, die Form sind in jenen Ländern vielfach dem Westen entlehnt; der Kern, der Geist sind vielfach autochthon und barbarisch.”[68] This state of in-betweenness is analogous to the distance that defines the internalized ghetto, and Franzos maps this distance in *Aus Halb-Asien* with a modernist cartography, blurring the imaginary fault line dividing Europe and Asia, and locating it as an identity crisis within individual residents of *Halb-Asien*. Yet, alongside this individual, internal crisis, Franzos’ ghetto also emerges as an institutional, geographical state of in-betweeness: the cultural and administrative institutions in the region also exist suspended between Europe and Asia. In other words, through his depiction of *Halb-Asien*, Franzos attempts to restore corporeal form to the internalized ghetto by encoding its properties—its intermediacy and its suspended assimilation—into a cultural and geographic frontier. *Aus Halb-Asien* transfigures the distance of the internalized failure to identify, into a fleshy, tangible geography. As such, this region becomes a physical location within his text for confronting the psychological dissonance hinted at in Kafka’s address, and lucidly illustrated by Sacher-Masoch.

In order to reconstitute the internalized ghetto, Franzos must redefine its internal components. He describes *Halb-Asien* as a ghetto of unenlightened thought, a realm situated at the edge of European *Bildung*, progress, and humanity, and existing just beyond the grasp of Western culture. His most evocative image of this threshold involves the melting together

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[67] Franzos, “Einleitung” I: xv.

[68] Franzos, “Einleitung” I: xvi.

of light and darkness, and he frames his description of the region in terms of cultural illumination:

> Noch giebt es Gegenden in jenen Ländern, wo der Mensch im Naturzustand lebt, nicht im paradiesischen und idyllischen, sondern im Zustand tiefsten Dunkels, dumpfer Rohheit, in ewiger kalter Nacht, in die kein Strahl der Bildung, kein warmer Hauch der Menschenliebe dringt. Und schon giebt es Gegenden dort, über denen die Sonne der Kultur leuchtet, wo fremdes Wissen und einheimische Kraft sich harmonisch verbunden […] haben. […] Im allgemeinen herrscht im Osten oder doch mindestens in dem Teile des Ostens, von dem diese Blätter Kunde geben, weder heller Tag, noch dunkle Nacht, sondern ein seltsames Zwielicht […]. [69]

Thus, the characteristic feature of *Halb-Asien* is existence between the light of *Bildung* and the darkness of barbarism, between Western knowledge and Eastern strength. Because boundaries blur and polarities dissolve in this twilight, Franzos has the freedom to plumb the depths of in-betweenness—to examine the possibility of being simultaneously Eastern and Western, both "enlightened" and "barbaric," at once a member of the Polish aristocracy and of the Austrian bureaucracy, simultaneously German and Jewish. In fact, because of its very position at the threshold between enlightenment and barbarism—and because of the twilight that conditions all appearances there—*Halb-Asien* is a region of indeterminacy, where the extent of cultural illumination cannot be discerned with the naked eye. Like the fear that Yiddish will reveal Western order to be an illusion (as described by Kafka), Franzos insists that *Halb-Asien* is not as cultivated as meets the eye.

Indeed, the cultural twilight of *Halb-Asien* casts a pall of indeterminacy over its physical geography, creating a state of in-betweenness that mirrors the properties of the internalized ghetto. Franzos begins to probe the correspondence between such internalized indeterminacy and external geography in his sketch, "Von Wien nach Czernowitz," which

[69] Franzos, "Einleitung" I: xvi.

begins in an intermediate space, caught between motion and standstill—the carriage of a speeding express-train:

> "Bitte, mein Herr, ist die asiatische Grenze schon passiert?" Sie sprach es mit einem eigenthümlichen Lächeln und jenem sonderbaren heiseren Timbre, welches dem Kenner beweist, daß sein Gegenüber nicht leicht etwas übelnimmt. Wer sie war, hatte ich auf den ersten Blick weg: eine Dame, die im Osten ihr Glück versuchen wollte, nachdem sie im Westen sehr viel Glück gegeben und empfangen hatte. Übrigens nicht ohne Witz und Bildung, wahrscheinlich ein gefallener Bildungsengel, eine ausgeglittene Gouvernante.[70]

This passage confronts the reader with two extreme positions along a continuum of certitude. The narrator feels confident about taking a lightning-quick assessment of his interlocutor's character. He can surmise her story—who she is—with a single glance. Of course, "wer sie war" has nothing to do with her individuality or personal identity, but refers rather to a type, a role that she plays or a function she serves. The narrator's confidence is that of a person who has seen many such fallen angels of *Bildung*, perhaps along this very train route, and it stands in sharp contrast to the lack of *Selbstvertrauen* that we've seen in Kafka and Sacher-Masoch.

His assuredness of the role that his interlocutor plays extends also to his sense of geographical location. While the fallen *Bildungsengel* wonders at what point she has crossed the border to Asia, the narrator asserts with conviction that the train from Vienna to Czernowitz does not even begin to approach the Asian continent: "Wo denken Sie hin—erst am Ural…"[71] But her reply calls into question his perhaps hasty assessment, or at least the faculty of judgment with which he made it. She asserts a confidence of her own, urging him to turn his gaze outward, to reconsider his geographic appraisal:

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[70] Karl Emil Franzos, "Von Wien nach Czernowitz," *Aus Halb-Asien: Kulturbilder aus Galizien, der Bukowina, Südrußland und Rumänien*, 4th rev. ed., vol. II (Stuttgart und Berlin: J. G. Cotta'sche Buchhandlung Nachfolger, 1901) 189.

[71] Franzos "Czernowitz" II: 189.

> "Ja, wie diese Geographen sagen. Aber blicken Sie doch hinaus…" Das that ich. Es war hinter Lemberg. Der Zug wand sich durch ödes, ödes Heideland. Zuweilen war ein abscheuliches Hüttchen zu sehen; das Strohdach stand dicht über die Erde auf: eine rechte Troglodyten-Höhle. Zuweilen ein Ochs vor einem Karren oder ein Haufe halbnackter Kinder. Und wieder die unendliche Öde der Heide, und der graue Himmel hing trostlos darüber. "Wir sind bereits in Asien", wiederholte sie mit größter Bestimmtheit. "Ich könnte drei körperliche Eide darauf schwören!" Und sie begann sich im Waggon einzurichten, als ob wir in Asien wären.[72]

The woman in the train brings another kind of certainty to this passage, based not on the work of geographers, but on the work of her own gaze. The endless steppes and impoverished dwellings that the train passes are Asian, and the woman's confidence becomes utterly corporal. Not only is she willing to swear three physical oaths on the fact that they are in Asia, but she begins to change her visage accordingly, donning a mask that suits the outward appearance of her environment. As a fallen angel of *Bildung*—an example of the failure of Western culture—she has apparently boarded the train from Vienna to Czernowitz already innately equipped to become Asian, and her transformation displays another kind of *Selbstvertauen*.

Her own confidence in her Self is contagious and the narrator later refers to her as "die galante Asiatin."[73] And yet, in its attempt to fix the boundary between Europe and Asia, the opening of this text depicts a region in which the relationship between outward appearance and inner essence is anything but stable. The tension between the "wer sie war," which the narrator ascertains at first glance, and the inner quality that allowed his interlocutor to transform herself into an Asian woman, betrays an uneasy mutability of the self—the exact quality that delimits the internalized ghetto for Kafka's audience. The ultimate

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[72] Franzos "Czernowitz" II: 189-190.

[73] Franzos "Czernowitz" II: 190.

Selbstvertrauen that she seizes in this circumstance emerges only after her own Asiatic potential seizes her.

Franzos starts from this abstract problem of in-betweenness, of self-doubt—the problem of existing between appearance and essence—and then proceeds to incorporate this notion in physical reality. The image of his interlocutor's metamorphosis from a fallen angel of *Bildung* to the "galante Asiatin" eventually impels him to recount several other theories on the location of the border between Europe and Asia, and then finally to posit his own, which he develops throughout the sketch: "Nach meiner Ansicht laufen die Grenzen beider Weltteile sehr verwickelt ineinander."[74] With this core insight, Franzos reveals the physical correlation between *Halb-Asien* as a location and the state of in-betweenness that it embodies. In fact, in this sketch, Franzos maps the contours of what Aschheim calls the internalized ghetto onto the physical location that he calls *Halb-Asien*. The ethnography that he writes in *Aus Halb-Asien* is the ethnography of intertwined borders, of instability and in-betweenness, of a marginal region that is caught between two worlds, of a region that is thereby never more than *half* anything. The boundaries of *Halb-Asien* thus reconstitute the boundaries of the internalized ghetto, and these boundaries are as fluid as the relationship between European appearance and Asian essence in the region. Insofar as the train from Vienna to Czernowitz follows the not-so-clearly-defined boundary of *Halb-Asien*—a boundary which also demarcates gradual degrees of cultural illumination—it also transports the notion of ghetto out of an exclusively Jewish realm of experience and into a universalized discourse of in-betweenness. Thus, with an instrument no sharper than a locomotive, Franzos rends the internalized ghetto from within the modern Western Jewish subject and

[74] Franzos "Czernowitz" II: 191.

reestablishes it as a physical location, on the edge of Europe and of the Austro-Hungarian Empire, possessing both concrete and discursive properties.

All of the residents of *Halb-Asien*—Jewish, Polish, German, Ruthenian—must contend with the cultural twilight in the region to one degree or another, and all are suspended in a state of in-betweenness, a state that does not afford a sense of *Selbstvertrauen*. The new flesh of the reconstituted ghetto also contains a newly universalized discursive component, distinct from Jewish specificity. Even though this location is marginal and even unstable, it represents a clearly defined problem, which in turn begs for a concrete solution. Because it is cultural illumination that drifts in indeterminacy in *Halb-Asien*—in close connection with the indeterminacy of the self—Franzos proposes a universal cultural concept as the only way of escaping the reconstituted physical and spiritual ghetto: the Enlightenment ideal of universal self-cultivation through *Bildung*. In the section below, I will argue that Franzos deliberately rehabilitates an anachronistic notion of *Bildung*. Then, through an analysis of the sketch "Schiller in Barnow," I will demonstrate how he assigns *Bildung* a redemptive function as the only means of escaping the twilight of *Halb-Asien*.

III. Redeeming *Bildung*—*Bildung* as Redemption

Part cultural ethnography, part memoir, and part fiction, *Aus Halb-Asien* is above all a political text. Indeed, Franzos does not shy away from using his project as an instrument for the promotion of what he considers cultural progress, and one glance at his agenda demonstrates the significance of *Bildung* for achieving his political aims:

> So ist denn dies Buch […] ein streitbares Buch, das zu fernerem Kampfe für Bildung und Fortschritt ermuntert und diesem Kampfe seine Wege zu weisen sucht. […] Ich

> wünsche den Osten weder germanisiert noch gallisiert—beileibe nicht! Ich wünsche ihn bloß kultivierter, als er derzeit ist, und sehe keinen anderen Weg dazu, als wenn sich der Einfluß westlicher Bildung steigert. Und da der Einfluß französischen Wesens im Osten bisher wenig segenreiche Früchte gebracht hat, so meine ich hier allerdings vornehmlich die Pflege deutscher Bildung.[75]

Although he calls specifically for the injection of German *Bildung* into the Eastern borderlands, Franzos simultaneously rejects any further implications of this specificity. German *Bildung* isn't the only means of cultivation in the East, he argues: it is simply the most practical. This passage doesn't advocate that the peoples of *Halb-Asien* become more German, but rather that they accept *Bildung* as the material that brings to fruition an immanently propelled process of cultivation—*Bildung* as the tissue that fills out the latent skeletons of manifold indigenous cultures. Thus, the penetration and pervasion of *Bildung* in *Halb-Asien* represents for Franzos the provision of the equipment of universal self-cultivation. If we take him at his word, then the image of German culture that Franzos posits is really an image of a universal, transnational culture.

It is tempting to read Franzos' polemic in the above passage as an apology for a model of benevolent colonialism: the peoples of the East need Germans to show them the path to Enlightenment. To the extent that Franzos establishes *Bildung* and Western culture as the antidotes to the cultural conditions in *Halb-Asien*, such a reading is certainly justified. Indeed, we cannot ignore or excuse the binary oppositions inherent in the term *Halb-Asien*, which pits Europe against Asia, West against East, and Enlightenment against barbarism. And yet, in light of Franzos' unique treatment of the notion of in-betweenness, and of the work's position in the tradition of ghetto writing, this passage also requires a radically different reading, one that preserves the possibility of two-way cultural influence in Franzos' text. In other words, I see in Franzos' project a critique of the nationalist, essentialist

[75] Franzos, "Einleitung" I: xix-xx.

condition of German cultural politics in 1876 (which would shortly give rise to political antisemitism and its consequences), a critique that parallels and perhaps rivals his critique of the cultural circumstances in *Halb-Asien*. After all, Franzos wasn't writing his text for the residents of *Halb-Asien*, but for a German-speaking readership. It is therefore paramount to consider his understanding of *Bildung* and of German culture fully, before we reduce his text to another manifestation in the rising tide of German nationalism or cultural chauvinism after 1871. In the passage above, German *Bildung* and German culture serve as models, as outlines for unfolding a native manifestation of a universal culture and identity—not merely as parts of a discourse of cultural superiority.[76] In other words, for Franzos, *Bildung* is certainly a normative discourse, but his appropriation of it in *Aus Halb-Asien* is as much aimed at Germans as at the inhabitants of his homeland.

[76] Mufti's study draws on postcolonial criticism to provocatively trace the tensions between emancipation and assimilation in European Enlightenment discourses on the so-called "Jewish Question." See especially the first chapter, "Jewishness as Minority: Emergence of a European Problematic" (Mufti, *Enlightenment* 37-90). In an earlier article on the ghetto fiction of Kompert, Florian Krobb outlines the application of postcolonial critique to ghetto literature. See Florian Krobb, "Reclaiming the Location: Leopold Kompert's Ghetto Fiction in Post-Colonial Perspective" *Ghetto Writing: Traditional and Eastern Jewry in German-Jewish Literature from Heine to Hilsenrath*, ed. Anne Fuchs and Florian Krobb (Columbia: Camden House, 1999) 41-53. Finally, two studies illuminate an analogous tension in the narrower context of Franzos' project—namely, the tension between Franzos' chauvinistic attitude toward German culture, on the one hand, and his promotion of universal Enlightenment on the other. In the first, Chris Thornhill examines the totalizing structure of the European Enlightenment in Austria, and particularly among Austrian Jews. He argues: "[T]he experience of the eastern Jews as a group utterly beyond political function but desperately in need of integration into such function, is perhaps the most salient dimension to all negotiations of the Austrian Enlightenment with the eastern Jews." See Chris Thornhill, "'Grenzfälle': Galician Jews and Austrian Enlightenment," *German Life and Letters* 49.2 (1996) 172-173. And he certainly counts Franzos as a part (or proponent) of the Austrian Enlightenment, see Thornhill 171-181. Additionally, Mark H. Gelber examines the tension between the notion of Germanization and the program of ethnic pluralism in Franzos' ghetto fiction. In particular, he traces discrepancies between Franzos' stated agenda of universalism and tolerance, and his depiction of Jewish life. See Mark H. Gelber, "Ethnic Pluralism and Germanization in the Works of Karl Emil Franzos (1848-1904)," *The German Quarterly* 56.3 (1983) 376-385. In the present study, I depart significantly from Gelber's view, showing how Franzos performs his program in his fictional texts.

Reclaiming *Bildung*

Even though Franzos seems to wield his notion of *Bildung* as an absolute given—a concrete, recognizable, and particularly German project of cultural engagement—the idea of *Bildung* was, in 1876, hardly a static phenomenon. By invoking it, he self-consciously taps into a century-old discourse involving an ideal of both universal cultural education as well as the possibility of belonging to a unique German cultural nation. *Bildung* entails both the notion of personal unfolding and the contradictory notion of socialization through aesthetic education. Aleida Assmann lucidly traces the history of this discourse (and of its complications) in her 1993 text, *Arbeit am nationalen Gedächtnis: Eine kurze Geschichte der deutschen Bildungsidee*.

Assmann argues that at the time of its modern German debut—in the thought of Wilhelm von Humboldt and Johann Gottfried Herder—the concept of *Bildung* hinged upon the transcendental notion of a universal human being, who was in turn the product of Enlightenment ideals: "Das neue Ideal der Bildung beruht auf der Erfindung des Menschen als allgemeiner Norm eines überständischen, übergeschichtlichen, überkonfessionellen, übernationalen und überhistorischen Wesens."[77] By drawing on the work of George L. Mosse, Assmann points out that this notion of *Bildung* is the *Bildung* that German Jews embraced at the end of the eighteenth century.[78] This was the concept of *Bildung* espoused by Moses Mendelssohn, and the concept of *Bildung* that provided for the possibility of Jewish emancipation.

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[77] Aleida Assmann, *Arbeit am nationalen Gedächtnis: Eine kurze Geschichte der deutschen Bildungsidee* (Frankfurt am Main: Campus Verlag, 1993) 29.

[78] Assmann, *Gedächtnis* 87. See also George L. Mosse, *German Jews beyond Judaism* (Bloomington: Indiana UP; Cincinnati: Hebrew Union College P, 1985) 3.

However, the Enlightenment model of universal humanity that spawned the notion of *Bildung*—a humanity that transcends the constraints of class, religion, nationality, and even history—necessarily required a radical break with the past.[79] Lacking such historical connectedness, the new, universal person of the Enlightenment thus faced the initial tremors of groundlessness that led to the larger eruption of a modern crisis of identity at the fin-de-siècle. In fact, by the time that Franzos was writing *Aus Halb-Asien*—shortly after the project of Jewish emancipation finally had been realized—the discourse of *Bildung* had taken on a vastly different meaning. By the late nineteenth century, in the face of the increasing uncertainty of modern identity, the idea of universality on which *Bildung* was based had shifted, and the notion took on implications of nationalism and cultural specificity. Assmann explains:

> [Die Bildung] löste sich von der Norm universalistischer Humanität und verbündete sich mit der Eigenart eines in Sprache, Geschichte und Territorium verwurzelten Volkes. […] Das im Gefälle des Modernisierungsschubs orientierungslos gewordene Individuum zog bald den sicheren Halt kompakter Identitätsmuster den anspruchsvollen Forderungen der Aufklärung vor.[80]

Almost immediately after its conception, then, the radical break with tradition demanded by Enlightenment *Bildung* caused an apparently insurmountable groundlessness and a subsequent retreat to nationalism and cultural essentialism. It is precisely this nationalized, culturally specific notion of *Bildung* that Franzos confronts in his depiction of *Halb-Asien*, advocating instead for a return to the universal spirit of the Enlightenment. In fact, although

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[79] Assmann's clarity on this matter justifies citing the passage at length: "Aufklärung bedeutet Traditionsbruch. An die Stelle der über Generationen von Hand zu Hand weitergereichten Stammbäume und Sinngebungen, an die Stelle der lokalen Herkunftswelten tritt als ein Neuer Bund das Angebot der Vergesellschaftung durch Bildung. Den Kern dieses neuen Evangeliums bildet die Idee der Humanität. Mit der Norm des Universal-Menschen forderte die Aufklärung die faktische Realität der gesellschaftliche und geschichtlich vielfach besonderten und begrenzten Menschen in die Schranken. Dieses abstrakte Ideal 'Mensch' wurde aus dem Geist der Schrift geboren" (Assmann, *Gedächtnis* 32).

[80] Assmann, *Gedächtnis* 33.

at least one scholar has called him "an expansionist German nationalist,"[81] Franzos explicitly argues that the promotion of German *Bildung* should not be understood as a process of Germanization—bearing the hallmarks of nationalism and cultural superiority, and demanding the submission to German norms, the German language, and German *Kultur*—but rather its opposite. "Germanisieren—" he contends, "das ist ein undeutsches Wort für ein undeutsches Thun. Wer sein eigenes Volkstum liebt, wird auch dies höchste Gut niemand anderem rauben wollen."[82]

At first glance, Franzos' return to the Enlightenment spirit of *Bildung* hardly seems novel, especially because, as Mosse points out, even into the twentieth century, many German Jews continued to cling to the original notion of *Bildung*, despite its gradual yet continual distortion.[83] Moreover, Mosse's argument seems to reinforce Aschheim's assertion that Franzos is merely an anachronistic representative of the German-Jewish Enlightenment and its brand of *Bildung*.[84] But Franzos acts strategically. Unlike the German Jews, who for Mosse are somehow unable or unwilling to realize and accept the extreme changes in the nature of *Bildung*—despite the palpable consequences that such neglect entails—Franzos recognizes that, like many institutions in *Halb-Asien*, the contemporary and German nationalist idea of *Bildung* is nothing more than a sham.

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[81] Fred Sommer, *"Halb-Asien": German Nationalism and the Eastern European Works of Karl Emil Franzos* (Stuttgart: Akademischer Verlag Hans-Dieter Heinz, 1984) 6. Sommer is not alone in his critique of the problem of Germanization in Franzos. See also Janusz Golec, "Die Versuche der Kulturvermittlung von Karl Emil Franzos," *Trans: Internet-Zeitschrift für Kulturwissenschaften* 15 (2004) [electronic publication].

[82] Franzos, "Einleitung" I: xx.

[83] "Although many Jews accepted the changed demands of society, however uneasily, many others clung stubbornly to the older ideal of *Bildung*. The quarrels and divisions among Jews were, with the exception of a very few Zionists and a minority of the orthodox, fought upon a shared commitment to the ideal of *Bildung*" (Mosse, *German Jews* 14).

[84] Aschheim, *Brothers* 27

He reveals this by exposing *Bildung* to the twilight of *Halb-Asien*. This twilight between Enlightenment and barbarism, in which the peoples of *Halb-Asien* are suspended, is a direct result of their own failure to completely embrace the ideal of *Bildung* in its original splendor. In fact, in order to transcend the reconstituted internalized ghetto in *Halb-Asien*, Franzos demands nothing less than a physiognomic metamorphosis through the appropriation of *Bildung*:

> Das Kulturstreben unter jenen Völkern zu wecken und zu fördern, […] das ist die Aufgabe des Deutschtums im Osten. Wenn es dieselbe bisher nur wenig erfüllt hat, so ist dies die Schuld jener Nationen selbst. Sie haben die westlichen Bildung, der deutschen und französischen, nur geringen Eingang gegönnt und dies Wenige nicht gehörig verarbeitet; es ist ihnen nicht in Fleisch und Blut übergegangen und ist darum auch wenig mehr als der Firnis, mit dem sie die autochthone Barbarei bedecken.[85]

If in Franzos' sketches the people of *Halb-Asien* are uncultured, if they remain exotic and uncivilized, it is because they have failed to absorb German *Bildung*. On the one hand, Franzos espouses a discourse of paternalistic cultural colonization in this passage. But at the same time, the image of assimilating *Bildung* into native flesh and blood suggests that Franzos also values a uniquely "Eastern" contribution to this Western ideal. The residents are not to become German, but members of a uniquely local manifestation of a universal Enlightenment culture. The difficulty with Franzos' claim in this passage lies in the notion *Bildung* itself. If the residents of *Halb-Asien* embrace *Bildung* as a means of becoming German—a possibility completely consistent with the inverted image of the ideal prevalent in the late nineteenth century—then they will be unable to develop their own indigenous cultures, instead merely donning the shroud of German culture. Enlightenment may indeed require *Traditionsbruch*, but not in exchange for the tradition, history, and culture of another *Volk*.

[85] Franzos, "Einleitung" I: xxi.

Thus, the tension between appearance and essence—the in-betweenness characteristic of *Halb-Asien*—is a problem also manifested within contemporary conceptions and practices of *Bildung*. By playing on this in-betweenness, Franzos challenges nationalist notions of the concept, making an implicit appeal to the ideal in its Enlightenment form. If, in the twilight of *Halb-Asien*, barbarism sometimes doesn't look like barbarism at all, then sometimes barbarism looks a lot like the German *Kulturstaat*. As a nationalist enterprise of cultural chauvinism, *Bildung* cannot perform its appointed task and transform the residents of *Halb-Asien* into members of a universal humanity. Instead, it can only serve as a cultural whitewash, a mask that peels away upon closer inspection. If *Aus Halb-Asien* is a work of ghetto literature that critiques an image of ghetto life, then in this case, "ghetto" does not simply denote a Jewish state of incomplete assimilation into German culture, but rather the incomplete integration of Enlightenment principles into Western European civilization.

Far from blindly adhering to an outdated ideal, Franzos self-consciously revisits the Enlightenment inception of *Bildung* in an effort to salvage the notion as a redemptive force for overcoming the condition of in-betweenness—the discord between appearance and essence—which Aschheim, Sacher-Masoch, and Kafka address. Of course Franzos' engagement with *Bildung* isn't limited to the introduction to *Aus Halb-Asien*. Many of the sketches in the text deal with cultural education in one form or another, but "Schiller in Barnow," written in 1875 on the anniversary of Friedrich Schiller's birth, perhaps best shows how Franzos brings the power of a reclaimed notion of *Bildung* to bear on the cultural twilight of *Halb-Asien*. As I will show, in "Schiller in Barnow," Franzos challenges nationalist appropriations of culture as implicitly ghetto, arguing instead for the universal development of indigenous national cultures—a critical distinction.

Sziler*, or the Distorted Image of *Bildung

"Schiller in Barnow" celebrates one of the quintessential representatives of German national culture in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, and in doing so invokes a literary discourse of German classicism, and of the promotion of German national culture. Schiller is simultaneously a paragon of German cultural production—next to Goethe one of the most-recognized names in the German literary canon—and a famous proponent of German cultural autonomy, as his support of a German national theater demonstrates. But this celebration isn't completely affirmative, and Franzos is critical of many appropriations of the author's work. The opening lines in fact already illustrate the dubious position of an author like Schiller in the twilight of *Halb-Asien*: "Es giebt, Alles in Allem, deutsch und polnisch, fünf Exemplare im Städtchen. In der einzigen Bibliothek freilich, jener der Dominikaner, findet sich keines."[86] By depriving the local library (in the fictionalized Galician town of Barnow) of Schiller's works, the opening lines of the text show just how little German culture has penetrated the region.[87]

Proceeding, then, from this brief inventory of Schiller in Barnow, the narrator further develops a sketch of the status of *Bildung* in *Halb-Asien* through an almost archaeological history of each exemplar of Schiller's works, beginning with the first four (which, as we shall see, stand in direct opposition to the fifth), describing each edition and its owner in turn. These include the local Count, Graf Alexander Rodzicki; the Jewish town physician, Dr. Arthur Tulpenblüh; the judge's wife, Frau Bezirksrichterin Casimira von Losinska; and Schlome Barrascher, a Jewish moneychanger. Schiller plays a different role in the lives of

[86] Karl Emil Franzos "Schiller in Barnow," *Aus Halb-Asien: Kulturbilder aus Galizien, der Bukowina, Südrußland und Rumänien*, 4th rev. ed., vol. I (Stuttgart und Berlin: J. G. Cotta'sche Buchhandlung Nachfolger, 1901) 151.

[87] Barnow is generally believed to be based on Franzos' hometown of Czortkow. See Sommer, *Franzos* 78.

each of these individuals, and each has a different motive for owning the author's work. Yet for each character, the reception of Schiller remains a superficial affair, invoking the incongruity of appearance and essence with which Franzos partially defines *Halb-Asien*.

The narrator begins by describing a beautiful, twelve-volume collection of Schiller's works, which belongs to the Count. He procured his Schiller in order to win the hand of the Countess, who had demanded to be loved exactly "wie Schiller die Laura geliebt."[88] Although the Count himself is a minor author, and thus would presumably have an inclination for reading and appreciating literature, the narrator does not reveal how or even if the poet affected the Count personally, saying merely that he purchased the collection in order to research Schiller's love life. The text does, however, describe the Count's financial gain: "Wanda reichte ihm Hand und Mitgift; die letztere gab er weiter, die erstere ist ihm verblieben."[89] Once they have served this fiscal purpose, the books are left neglected in the castle's tiny library.

If Schiller's collected works did little more for the Count than provide access to much-needed financial support, then for the Bezirksrichterin they represent a kind of emotional currency, directly linked to her disappointing marriage and her serial infidelity. She reads her copy of Schiller for the same reason that she engages in various extramarital affairs: to temporarily escape from the heartlessness of her husband. Consequently, as she passionately leafs through her Polish translation of Schiller, her emotions vary as frequently as her lovers. The tears brought about by one of his poems, and the enjoyment gleaned from reading the description of rape and plunder in a convent in *Die Räuber* (1781) affect the Bezirksrichterin only briefly. Her thoughts quickly wander from Schiller's earliest drama to

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[88] Franzos, "Schiller" I: 153.

[89] Franzos, "Schiller" I: 154.

the former lover who gave her the text, “ein junger, blonder Adjunkt deutscher Abkunft, der bald […] an der Schwindsucht starb.”[90] The recollection of his tragic fate causes her to cry, but her sorrow is also short-lived. As the passage continutes, the Bezirksrichterin “[w]einte bitterlich und griff zum Paul de Kock und lachte wieder. Denn dies Buch hatte ihr kürzlich ein brauner Husar geschenkt und der lebte noch und war ungeheuer gesund.”[91]

For both the Count and the judge’s wife, reading Schiller satisfies an immediate, external need. The Count needs to fulfill his fiancée’s desire to recreate a “litterar-historisch[e] Leidenschaft.”[92] In other words, his reception of Schiller—and ultimately of German culture—is a matter of mere imitation. For the Count, German *Bildung* simply involves appropriating the external realities of German cultural history, represented as courtship à la Schiller, and does not require *Bildung* to arouse what Franzos calls *Kulturstreben*. Similarly, the Bezirksrichterin uses Schiller for pure titillation—an escape from the realities of her marriage. German culture is a conduit for the kind of passion that she can’t get from her husband (or any other Polish man), and that she can only get from her lovers in the short-term.[93] In each case, the individual potential of German culture is not realized, and the superficiality of Schiller’s reception is underscored by the ultimate fate of the texts themselves: the Bezirksrichterin moves on to another lover and another author, while the Count’s edition is left to decay alongside the memoirs of Casanova in the

[90] Franzos, “Schiller” I: 159.

[91] Franzos, “Schiller” I: 159.

[92] Franzos, “Schiller” I: 154.

[93] As the narrator explains: “[Die Bezirksrichterin] war ja eine Polin, und bei diesem Volke ist alles Gefühlsleben in den Frauen, die Männer Scheinen leer ausgegangen” (Franzos, “Schiller” I: 158).

"Winckelchen des öden, leeren Zimmers" which houses the library in Schloss Barnow.[94] *Bildung* is reduced to *Bildungsgut*, a fungible commodity that can be purchased and employed for personal gain.

Both the Count and the Bezirksrichterin are members of the Polish ruling class in Galicia, of which Franzos is harshly critical in the introduction to his work, and Franzos seems to encourage the temptation to read their superficial reception of German culture as a direct result of their social and ethnic status.[95] For instance, when describing the Bezirksrichterin's copy of Schiller, he employs a Polish spelling of the author's name (*Sziler*), departing linguistically and even orthographically from the Gothic German script (*Frakturschrift*) of the rest of the text.[96] Like the untranslatable word pairings in Kafka's speech on Yiddish, the word "Sziler" stands out on the page precisely because it is only an approximation of "Schiller".

But it isn't their status as members of the Polish aristocracy per se that leads the Count and the Bezirksrichterin to misappropriate German culture. For Franzos, such misappropriation is symptomatic of the misguided nature of Polish hegemony in Galicia, which suppresses the development of other indigenous cultures in the region, opting instead

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[94] Franzos, "Schiller" I: 154.

[95] In fact, he expresses this criticism in no uncertain terms: "Nichts, gar nichts in Österreich ist so unberechtigt, so unbegreiflich, wie diese absolute Herrschaft der Polen in Galizien. Denn *gegen* den Polen ist in diesem Lande vor allem der große und tüchtige Stamm der Ruthenen, der trotz des unsäglichen Drucks der Polen ehrlich nach Entfaltung seiner reichen Kraft strebt; *gegen* den Polen ist der zahlreiche, bildungsfähige jüdische Bevölkerung, schon weil sie deutsch spricht; *gegen* den Polen ist der Deutsche im Lande: der Kolonist in den Dörfern, der Bürger in den Städten; *gegen* den Polen ist endlich der Bauer seiner eigenen Nationalität, der ja schon oft blutige Beweise dafür gegeben hat, das er nichts vom polnischen Zukunftsstaate wissen will. Bleibt also als Träger dieser drückenden Herrschaft nur die polnische Intelligenz, oder was man in Galizien so nennt, und der Adel" (Franzos, "Einleitung" I: xxv).

[96] Franzos, "Schiller" I: 158.

for the superficial—that is, ghetto—varnish of *Bildung*.[97] By reducing Schiller to a commodity—to his inadequate translation as *Sziler*—the Count and the Bezirksrichterin are able to regulate the appropriation of *Bildung*. From this position, they may employ contemporary, nationalist notions of *Bildung* (or cultural education more broadly) in order to reinforce their political hegemony. In doing so, however, they ultimately suppress the appropriation of *Bildung* as a universal ideal—of *Bildung* in its Enlightenment form—and thus they stand squarely in the path of the kind of cultural development among the Ruthenian, Jewish, German, and even Polish population in Galicia, which Franzos seeks to foster. Their superficial reading of Schiller erects discursive boundaries around the very idea of cultural education, and these boundaries contain all residents of *Halb-Asien*, be they Ruthenians, Germans, Poles, or Jews.

The Jews that Barnow Deserves

In the introduction to *Aus Halb-Asien*, during his lengthy critique of Polish hegemony in Galicia, Franzos makes one of his most famous statements about the cultural position of Jews in that region. Shortly after praising Galician Jews as particularly suited to *Bildung*, he goes on to place a majority of the blame for their impoverished cultural state on the Christian (in this case, Polish) authorities there, saying "*jedes Land hat die Juden, die es verdient*," and thereby mitigating this inherent proclivity toward the proper appropriation of *Bildung*.[98] Indeed, the depiction of the two main Jewish characters in "Schiller in Barnow," Schlome Barracher and Dr. Arthur Tulpenblüh, reveals the extent to which the cultural ghetto enacted by the Polish aristocracy also affects the decidedly isolated Jewish community in Barnow.

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[97] See Franzos, "Einleitung" I: xxv-xxvii.

[98] Franzos, "Einleitung" I: xxvii (emphasis in original).

Schiller's works offer Schlome Barracher and Arthur Tulpenblüh the potential for personal development—opening each to possibilities located beyond the horizon of *Halb-Asien*—yet neither is able to fully transcend these boundaries.

Dr. Tulpenblüh owns the same edition of the poet's works that the Count owns, and like the latter, he procured the works in order to please a sentimental bride-to-be. Raised the poor son of a tailor, the driven young Dr. Tulpenblüh had "nie einen Dichter gelesen, außer in den deutschen Schulstunden auf dem Gymnasium," and the practical-minded physician had only agreed to purchase the small library because he thought it might provide his wife the kind of romantic fulfillment he was unable or unwilling to give her.[99] As she found that she had less and less time for the texts, however, Dr. Tulpenblüh eventually developed an interest in them. Encountering in them a completely new world, he began to read Schiller with regularity. As the narrator explains: "Wenn er Schiller las, dann war ihm zu Mute, als setze er der sonst Kurzsichtige, eine Brille auf und könne nun an denselben Dingen, die ihm mit freiem Auge tot und hässlich erschienen, eine Menge des Schönen und Lebendigen entdecken."[100] Reading Schiller thus gradually leads to an awakening, a revelatory moment in which Tulpenblüh re-perceives the world. Already an educated man, the doctor nevertheless had remained blind to possibilities beyond the cultural twilight of *Halb-Asien*. Appropriating Schiller alters his shortsighted vision and he sees the world through eyes that are newly reformed.

The narrator makes much of the doctor's closed, pragmatic personality. He had not sought out a wife himself, but had instead—mirroring the Count's situation—selected the prospective bride with the largest dowry. Schlome Barracher on the other hand, is driven

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[99] Franzos, "Schiller" I: 155.

[100] Franzos, "Schiller" I: 157.

neither by practicality nor by financial gain, but is instead, like the judge's wife, an emotional, sentimental person. Born into a wealthy family, he was sent by his parents to become a Talmud scholar, despite his early talent for drawing. "Dies [Talent] trieb man ihm aus," explains the narrator, "aber etwas anderes konnten ihm weder die Schläge des Vaters, noch die Traktate des Talmud austreiben: sein tiefes Gemüt und in diesem Gemüt ein großes Dürsten."[101] Although he marries at eighteen and has a son at nineteen, Schlome's thirst for *Bildung* finally leads him to the *Gymnasium*. A number of tragedies—including the death of his son—intervene to break his spirit, however, and he abandons his studies, settling into a withdrawn life in the Jewish community in Barnow:

> Schlome war unterlegen. Er lebte wie die anderen, er machte sogar Wechselgeschäfte; nur daß er daneben auch gern Schiller las, sehr gern, noch viel lieber, als es der Stadtarzt that. Denn dem Schlome ging es gerade umgekehrt; die Welt des Dichters war ihm bekannt und vertraut; in die Wirklichkeit aber starrte er mit scheuen Schwärmeraugen hinein. Und diese Augen werden nicht schärfer, selbst wenn er seine große Hornbrille aufsetzt. Denn diese Brille sitzt immer auf seiner Nase, wenn ein Wechsel bei ihm unterschrieben wird […].[102]

In contrast to Dr. Tulpenblüh, reading Schiller does not offer the young moneychanger a new perspective on the world around him; he is already familiar with a poetic mode of perception. Instead, Schiller represents a form of cultivated resistance against his isolated, otherwise unfulfilled life in *Halb-Asien*—an escape from the realities of his existence, and from his ultimate failure in the struggle "zwischen dem nationalen Judentum und der Kultur."[103] But Schlome's resistance is purely internal, his escape fleeting, and just as he cannot find a way out of the isolated confines of *Halb-Asien*, he remains entrenched in a cultural ghetto. If *Bildung* is only used as a temporary escape—be it from an unfulfilling marriage or to the

[101] Franzos, "Schiller" I: 159-60.

[102] Franzos, "Schiller" I: 160.

[103] Franzos, "Schiller" I: 160.

unrealized dreams of youth spent thirsting for knowledge—then it cannot effect the lasting, and universal Enlightenment that Franzos finds so valuable. For Franzos, Enlightenment *Bildung* is both universal and absolute; there can be no return to tradition, no silver thread of attachment to a national, religious, or cultural identity.

The first four exemplars of Schiller's works in Barnow represent four distinct, yet related, misreadings of Schiller—four misappropriations of German culture and ultimately of German *Bildung*—incapable of bringing about political reform or cultural development. By positioning Dr. Tulpenblüh and Schlome as mirrors to the Count and Bezirksrichterin, respectively, the text establishes a symmetrical relationship between Polish nationalist hegemony and Jewish isolation in Galicia (and in *Halb-Asien* more broadly). Two notions of in-betweenness—or two aspects of the same notion—are posed, both arising through an incomplete or unconsummated relationship with German *Bildung*. If Friedrich Schiller represents a quintessential example of German culture and of the value of a universal notion of *Bildung*, then the copies of Schiller that line the shelves of these characters' homes attest to nothing more than the hollow shell of such cultivation.

Redemption through *Bildung*

Franzos does leave room for optimism regarding the possibility of cultural progress in Barnow. The final copy of Schiller that the narrator discusses is in the poorest condition, is by far the least attractive, and, according to the text, "kein Antiquar giebt fünf Kreuzer dafür, wenn er gescheidt ist."[104] But given the constant barrage of misleading surfaces in the text, however, it should come as no surprise that this tattered and poorly printed volume of Schiller's collected poems represents a rare victory of *Bildung* in *Halb-Asien*. Indeed, this

[104] Franzos, "Schiller" I: 161.

lone volume of Schiller's poetry serves to join its three owners into a single multicultural tribe, united by and through pure *Bildung*. This group, in turn, becomes as a model for the proper appropriation and deployment of *Bildung* as a means of transcending the twilight of *Halb-Asien*.

The text was originally given to the unattractive Polish student Franz Lipecki by his beautiful cousin, Josephine, with whom he was (of course) madly in love. After Josephine marries a wealthy innkeeper, Franz decides to nurse his broken heart by retreating to a Dominican monastery, where he changes his name to Franciscus. He does a poor job of recovering, however, and—just as any broken-hearted nineteenth-century intellectual might—he develops a cough, loses his faith in God, and continues to decline until his superiors transfer him to the monastery in Barnow to die. But the air there proves to be curative; although his faith remains shaken, his physical condition improves and he eventually gains the courage to confront his past and to read Josephine's volume of Schiller. This reading causes a complete spiritual renewal:

> Der Eindruck, den er da empfing, war ein ungeheurer. Was sich so stammelnd aus seinem armen, kämpfenden Herzen emporgerungen: das Evangelium reiner Begeisterung, das Evangelium der Menschenliebe, hier scholl es ihm voll und prächtig entgegen. Schiller ist so recht ein Dichter der Armen und Beladenen. Von jener Stunde an war der junge Mönch Franciscus nicht mehr einsam, wie er es bisher, sein Lebenlang, gewesen. Nun hatte er einen Freund, der zu ihm sprach. Und mit welchen Stimmen![105]

For the heartbroken, dilapidated monk, who has lost his faith in God and in humanity, Schiller's work rings out as gospel. Accordingly, the narrator describes this moment with ecclesiastical language. Schiller's poetry emerges as dogma, as a hallowed language that stands in for his hollowed-out faith. Franciscus' embrace of this language is wholehearted and complete; from then on, he becomes a monk in the service of *Bildung*. He is able to

[105] Franzos, "Schiller" I: 164-65.

spread the good news one day, when, out in the heath, he encounters a Ruthenian schoolteacher, Basil Woyczuk, and a young Jew, Israel Meisels, walking together and conjugating Latin verbs. These two are interested in learning and Franciscus is willing to teach them. He thus makes two new friends, "die bisher, so wie eben er, im Dunkel getastet und in der Wüste gedürstet."[106]

Although at its very onset, the text excludes the possibility of finding something of cultural value in the local monastery, and although the other characters in the text seem unable to escape the ghetto in *Halb-Asien*, Schiller provides this trio exactly the program that Franzos expects of *Bildung*. The Gospel of Schiller enacts within Franciscus, Basil, and Israel a transubstantiation of singular, isolated, essential flesh and blood into the universal flesh and blood of *Bildung*. The nominative, religious, and physical transformations that Franz undergoes—Franz becomes Franciscus, and Franciscus loses his faith and becomes deathly ill—are not enough to help him overcome his emotional plight. However, an encounter with Schiller as *Bildung* enacts a complete spiritual reconfiguration, which prepares him for fellowship in a world of universal humanity. Franzos' description of Schiller's text as a form of gospel invokes an exclusive, Christian notion of humanity that leaves no room for non-Christians (meaning, especially in the context of *Halb-Asien*, Jews). At the same time, however, it is only after he loses his *Christian* faith—and, indeed, degenerates to the very brink of death—that Franz/Franciscus is able to finally receive Schiller as *Bildung*. The universal humanity that he joins remains exclusive, but only to the extent that it requires an unconditional faith in a radically secular notion of *Bildung*. That is, in Franzos' text, the Gospel of Schiller excludes Christians and Jews alike, until they are ready fully embrace the totalizing, universal Enlightenment brand of *Bildung*.

[106] Franzos, "Schiller" I: 165.

Thus, rather than merely providing a glimpse into an unknown and unrealizable world, or providing a temporary respite from this one, Schiller as *Bildung* offers spiritual renewal that is a far cry from a wholesale embrace of nationalist German culture.[107] In fact, because Schiller's poems occupy a central position in each of their lives, Franciscus, Basil, and Israel inscribe their names on the reverse of the title page, thus binding themselves to one another at the site of *Bildung*, even as *Bildung* reconfigures their relationship to one another and to *Halb-Asien*. According to Franzos, indigenous cultural development is only possible through such a fundamental and absolute embrace of *Bildung*, and it is this commitment to *Bildung* that frees these characters from the various obstacles that had stood in the way of their cultivation: Schiller's poetry offers the monk spiritual fulfillment, it fortifies Basil's hopes of one day leading an uprising against Polish rule in the region, and it offers Israel a glimpse beyond the horizon of Jewish isolationism. These characters form a tribe of universal humanity that transcends differences of class, religion, and nationality. They embody the ideal of Enlightenment humanity. For Franzos, this is the only way out of the twilight of *Halb-Asien*.

[107] In one of his own ghetto tales, Sacher-Masoch makes parallel use of magical imagery to emphasize the radical importance of literature for Jews living in the ghetto. In his text, "Von Fenster zu Fenster," from the 1881 collection, *Neue Judengeschichten*, he writes: "Der blasierte Weltmann in Paris oder Wien, der bei einer Sensationskomödie in seiner Loge gähnt, die polnische Dame in Krakau oder Lemberg, die in ihre Pelzjacke geschmiegt, auf ihrer Ottomane ausgestreckt, den neuesten Pariser Roman verschlingt, sie ahnen es nicht, was in dem kleinen ostgalizischen Neste, in dem es nicht einmal eine Buchhandlung giebt, für den armen Juden ein zerrissenes, abgerissenes Buch ist, und erst ein Buch wie der Faust. Es ist für ihn kein angenehmer Zeitvertrieb, sondern ein ganzer Himmel voll goldener Sternenschrift, eine grüne Bergwiese mit duftenden Blumenbuchstaben bedeckt. Für ihn ist der Poet noch ein Magier, der sein kleines Stübchen mit wunderbaren Gestalten, Göttern und Helden bevölkert." Leopold von Sacher-Masoch, "Von Fenster zu Fenster," *Neue Judengeschichten* (Leipzig: Morgenstern, 1881) 146-147. Two major differences stand out, however. First of all, this language is not specifically religious, but instead invokes astrology, magic, and myth. Secondly, in Sacher-Masoch's story, the importance of literature is emphasized only in a specifically Jewish milieu, distinct from the cosmopolitan man of the world in Paris or the Polish aristocrat in Krakow.

IV. Conclusion

In her text, *Arbeit am nationalen Gedächtnis*, Aleida Assmann sets a clear opposition between the Enlightenment notion of *Bildung* and traditional modes of grounding identity or, to borrow Kafka's term, sources of *Selbstvertrauen*. A product of the Enlightenment push toward the development of a universal humanity, she argues, "Bildung ist das Ergebnis der konsequent modernisierten Tradition."[108] As such, it relies in its structure on sources of traditional identities—on national history, and on religious practice, for instance—even as it breaks with them. As she continues:

> [Bildung] sammelt religiöse Funken ein und bietet sie in der zeitgemäßen Form säkularer Frömmigkeit an; sie ist ein pädagogisches Konzept, das das Heil auf die Erde herunterholt, indem es Erlösung durch Erziehung verspricht. Erziehung als Bildung vollzieht sich jenseits fester Normen und verbindlicher Vorbilder. Im Zentrum steht der Auftrag zum eigenen Entwurf, zur autonomen Selbstgestaltung. *Bildung* erweist sich mit ihrer Anpassung an Evolution und Zeitlichkeit als das Gegenteil von *Bindung*.[109]

The promise of *Bildung* was a promise of universal redemption through universally accessible aesthetic education, a promise that transcended history and difference. Along the way, however, this process breaks down, and *Bildung* begins to bear German nationalist and essentialist connotations, and to support the claims of such forces. In *Aus Halb-Asien*, as I have demonstrated, Franzos stages an intervention on behalf of the Enlightenment notion of *Bildung*, with constant faith in, and fidelity to, the potential of this notion for the betterment of humanity. Moreover, he simultaneously indicts the misuse of the concept—be it in East Galicia or in Western Europe—wielding the ghetto as a tool for critiquing nationalist sentiments in German culture.

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[108] Assmann, *Gedächtnis* 30.

[109] Assmann, *Gedächtnis* 30.

Franzos chooses to stage his intervention within (or around) the genre of ghetto literature—a move that necessarily engages with issues of Jewishness and of Germanness, and most importantly, of a state between the two. I have shown that he draws upon a palpable yet often unarticulated conception of the ghetto as something internalized, as a psychological distance best characterized a generation later by Franz Kafka in his "Einleitungsvortrag über Jargon." Franzos' attempt to redeem Enlightenment *Bildung* for the late nineteenth century via ghetto fiction requires that he first of all reconstitute the defining feature of this psychological, internalized ghetto—the notion of incomplete transition, of in-betweenness, of the fear of a latent connection to a hidden past, of the lack of *Selbstvertrauen*—as a physical location, and secondly that he redefine its parameters in terms of cultural enlightenment, and not in terms of Jewish specificity.

I have shown that he does, indeed, establish such a geographic and historical space, situating it on the outskirts of the Austro-Hungarian Empire, in a region that he names *Halb-Asien*. Moreover, he imbues this location with a spiritual component, depicting it also as a cultural and discursive phenomenon set in the twilight between enlightenment and barbarism—a place in which nothing, even *Bildung*, is what it claims to be. Through close readings of sketches from *Aus Halb-Asien*, I have shown that the way out of this physical and cultural twilight zone lies in an anachronistic, yet primordial notion of *Bildung*, far removed from the nationalist discourse of cultural superiority that it had become late in the nineteenth century. In *Aus Halb-Asien*, Franzos brings the nearly stillborn Enlightenment notion of *Bildung* to bear on the fissures in the modern self, fissures that emerged in the Enlightenment moment in which tradition was discarded for *Bildung*, but which Enlightenment *Bildung*

never had the opportunity to suppress. Franzos' text thus retroactively redeems Enlightenment *Bildung* for the sake of redeeming the un-Enlightened.

Thus, the physical and cultural twilight characteristic of the state of in-betweenness that is *Halb-Asien* also contains a temporal component. The train from Vienna to Czernowitz, which races along the indeterminate borders of Franzos' newly reconstituted ghetto, is nothing less than a time machine, and this, perhaps, reveals the crucial facet of Franzos' interest in *Bildung*. As his text catapults a redeemed and revitalized fossil of *Bildung* into the late nineteenth century, it also revisits the Enlightenment, the inagural moment of German-Jewish identity, the death of Mendelssohn, and the death knell of unfractured notions of identity. Franzos' embrace of *Bildung* and its potential to offer *Selbstvertrauen* establishes a model for reinventing a German-Jewish identity in the face of modernity—a model that rejects the primacy of both its German and Jewish components, opting instead for an identity rooted in a universal project of secular, cultural Enlightenment.

Chapter Two

“Die Unzulänglichkeit aller Mitteilung”: Martin Buber, Mysticism, and the Politics of Cultural Memory in German-Jewish Modernity

I. Martin Buber, Chassidism, and the Problem of Authenticity

“Wir alle sind in irgend einem Sinne seine Schüler,” writes Gershom Scholem in his 1962 essay, “Martin Bubers Deutung des Chassidismus,” in order to characterize the immense influence of Martin Buber’s reception of Chassidism on the contemporary understanding of the movement.[110] “In der Tat denken wohl die meisten von uns, wenn sie über Chassidismus sprechen, vor allem in den Begriffen, die ihnen durch Bubers philosophische Deutung vertraut geworden sind,” he continues.[111] That this appraisal of Buber’s influence comes from Scholem—the father of the modern study of Jewish mysticism, and one of the great twentieth-century scholars of Jewish thought—speaks volumes about the popularity and reception of Buber’s lifelong project of retelling the myths, legends, and sayings of the Chassidim. Buber’s reception of Chassidism is but one aspect of his illustrious career, however, and through much of the twentieth century, the editor, philosopher, translator, and cultural critic stood as one of the great figures of modern European-Jewish thought. Even today, he is also well known for his dialogic philosophy, first articulated in *Ich und Du* (1923), and his translation of the Hebrew Bible (1926-1938, 1954-

[110] Gershom Scholem, “Martin Bubers Deutung des Chassidismus,” *Judaica*, vol. 1 (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 1963) 168. Originally published in *Neue Zürcher Zeitung. Beilage: Literatur und Kunst*, 20. und 27. May 1962.

[111] Scholem, “Buber” 168.

1962), which he undertook with Franz Rosenzweig and which he continued to publish and revise until more than 30 years after Rosenzweig's death.

Like Karl Emil Franzos, Buber grew up between the worlds of East and West European Jewry. Born in 1878 in Vienna, Buber moved to Lemberg at the age of three to live with his grandfather, Salomon Buber, a renowned Midrash scholar. In 1897 he returned to Vienna to begin university studies, which he continued until 1904 at universities in Vienna, Leipzig, Zurich, and Berlin. As a student, Buber was an early enthusiast of Friedrich Nietzsche's philosophy, and he later studied under such notable figures as the sociologist Georg Simmel and the philosopher Wilhelm Dilthey. As a young man, he participated in Theodor Herzl's Zionist movement, and for a few months in 1901 he edited the major literary organ of political Zionism, *Die Welt*. After a break with Herzl, Buber began to promote a different kind of Jewish renaissance, focusing on cultural life, rather than the establishment of a Jewish nation-state.[112] It is from this interest in Jewish renewal that Buber's initial engagement with Chassidism sprang, manifested in his two earliest collections of Chassidic tales, *Die Geschichten des Rabbi Nachman* (1906) and *Die Legende des Baalschem* (1908).

Both texts were extremely popular among the German reading public, and although they followed Franzos' many literary depictions of the Chassidim, as well as more positive portrayals by Jewish thinkers such as the historian Simon Dubnow, the Yiddish poet Isaac Leib Peretz, and the Hebrew scholar and philosopher Micah Josef Berdichevsky, Buber is

[112] For a more detailed discussion of Buber's notion of Jewish renaissance around 1900, see especially Asher D. Biemann, "The Problem of Tradition and Reform in Jewish Renaissance and Renaissancism," *Jewish Social Studies* 8.1 (2001): 58-87. Maurice Friedman, a prominent Buber biographer and translator, offers a more detailed discussion of the relationship between Buber's biography and work. For the early Buber, see Maurice Friedman, *Martin Buber's Life and Work: The Early Years, 1878-1923* (New York: E. P. Dutton, 1981). Friedman offers a more compact discussion in Maurice Friedman *Encounter on the Narrow Ridge: A Life of Martin Buber* (New York: Paragon House, 1991).

largely responsible for crafting the most widespread and durable images of the movement.[113] His early reception of Chassidism, in fact, made a deep impression on his German-speaking contemporaries—from Jewish intellectuals including Simmel, Arnold Zweig, and the publisher Salman Schocken, who took pride in Buber's image of the rich cultural content of Chassidism, to non-Jewish superstars of the fin-de-siècle, such as Hugo von Hofmannsthal and Rainer Maria Rilke, who saw in Buber's work important parallels with their own literary projects.[114] Steven E. Aschheim summarizes the influence of Buber's image of Chassidism by contrasting it with Franzos' portrayal of the movement: "What to Franzos was nothing but a species of medieval barbarism appeared now in Buber's hands like the very vanguard of modernism, and it was this that constituted its great appeal for many members of an intelligentsia disaffected from the liberal-positivist consensus."[115] The phrase "in Buber's hands" is of particular significance here, for in *Die Geschichten des Rabbi Nachman*, *Die Legende des Baalschem*, and throughout his career, Buber presents a very specific image of Chassidism, turning to the myths and legends surrounding the earliest generations of the movement in order to juxtapose them with institutional, rabbinic Judaism. As I will discuss more thoroughly in this chapter, Chassidism for Buber was a living, dynamic, and highly personal alternative to the cold word of the Torah and Talmud that official Judaism represented for him.

Scholem may admit the massive influence of Buber's image of Chassidism, but ultimately he offers little praise for Buber. Instead, his essay contains a scathing critique of

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[113] Steven E. Aschheim, *Brothers and Strangers: The East European Jew in German and German Jewish Consciousness, 1800-1923* (Madison: U of Wisconsin P, 1982) 122.

[114] Aschheim, *Brothers* 128-32.

[115] Aschheim, *Brothers* 125.

Buber's construction of the movement as just that: a construction. "[Buber] kombiniert die Fakten und die Zitate, wie es seiner Absicht entspricht,"[116] Scholem argues. "Diese Absicht besteht aber darin, den Chassidismus als ein geistiges Phänomen, nicht als ein historisches darzustellen. Er hat öfters gesagt, er sei nicht an Geschichte interessiert."[117] According to Scholem, this has two major consequences for Buber's work:

> Erstens lässt Buber sehr viel Material aus, das in seinen Erörterungen überhaupt nicht vorkommt, obwohl es für das Verständnis des Chassidismus als eines historischen Phänomens von größter Bedeutung sein mag. Dazu gehören, nur um zwei Beispiele zu nennen, das von ihm beständig weggedeutete oder minimalisierte magische Element und der soziale Charakter der chassidischen Gesellschaft. Zweitens erscheint das Material, das er auswählt, bei ihm häufig mit seiner eigenen Deutung seines Sinnes eng verbunden.[118]

Buber does not offer a scholarly depiction of the movement. He isn't interested in the history of Chassidism or in the movement in its fullness, but only in a specific image. To this end, he includes some documents—namely the extensive corpus of legends, myths, and sayings of the Chassidim—and omits others—the lectures, sermons, and theoretical writings of the movement.[119] In short, Buber's Chassidism has little to do with Chassidism as it was lived and practiced, and for Scholem, this is a significant problem.[120]

[116] Scholem, "Buber" 170.

[117] Scholem, "Buber" 170.

[118] Scholem, "Buber" 170.

[119] Scholem, "Buber" 175-176.

[120] In a recent study, Glenn Dynner offers an expert analysis of the rise and spread of Chassidism in Central Europe, and unique insights into the social structures of the movement. See Glenn Dynner, *Men of Silk: The Hasidic Conquest of Polish Jewish Society* (Oxford: Oxford UP, 2006).

To evaluate the merits of Scholem's critique lies outside of the scope of this project.[121] Let it suffice to say that Scholem's approach emerged as the scholarly standard in studies of Chassidism.[122] Furthermore, contemporary scholars of German-Jewish cultural history agree that Buber offers a highly stylized image of the Chassidim. Aschheim, for instance, argues, "The Hasid for both Buber and his readers was not a real figure but an ideal type: the empirical Hasid and the Hasid of the Legends could be dissociated from one another."[123] In the introduction to *Die Legende des Baalschem*, moreover, Buber himself states that his image of Chassidism is far from historical: "Ich berichte nicht die Entwicklung und den Verfall der Sekte, ich beschreibe nicht ihre Gebräuche. Ich will nur das Verhältnis zum Absoluten und zur Welt mitteilen, das diese Menschen dachten, wollten und zu leben versuchten."[124] He further acknowledges that his image of Chassidism is no substitute for a history of the movement or a biography of its founder.[125]

While Scholem's critique is certainly central for any scholarly study of Chassidism as a historical movement, in terms of the trajectory of Buber's overall project and the importance of the popular reception of his image of Chassidism, Scholem misses the point. As scholars have noted, even in the early nineteenth-century, during an early explosion of Chassidic printing, Chassidim mobilized the historical images of the movement's most

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[121] Many scholars have undertaken this evaluation, however. For a compact survey of the debate, see Rachel White, "Recovering the Past, Renewing the Present: The Buber-Scholem Controversy over Hasidism Reinterpreted," *Jewish Studies Quarterly* 14 (2007): 364-392.

[122] Moshe Idel, *Hasidism: Between Ecstasy and Magic* (Albany: State U of New York P, 1995) 3.

[123] Aschheim, *Brothers* 137.

[124] Martin Buber, *Die Legende des Baalschem* (Frankfurt am Main: Literarische Anstalt Rütten & Loening, 1908) i.

[125] Buber, *Baalschem* i.

prominent leaders in order to promote contemporary political and/or spiritual aims.[126] At stake, then, is not the validity or verisimilitude of the image, but the way in which Buber self-consciously constructs Chassidism, and the extent to which his image of Chassidism helped shape notions of European-Jewish identity in German and Austrian culture. Rather than dwelling on the inaccuracies and omissions of Buber's image of Chassidism, this chapter will concentrate on the specific contours of that image and how it engages with fin-de-siècle discourses of modernity and of German and Jewish identity.

Contemporary scholars of German-Jewish history and culture offer a variety of interpretations of Buber's depiction of Chassidism and its reception. Paul Mendes-Flohr, in his study *From Mysticism to Dialogue: Martin Buber's Transformation of German Social Thought* (1989), charts the course of Buber's philosophy from a focus on internal experience to an embrace of dialogic thought.[127] In his analysis, Mendes-Flohr demonstrates the centrality of Nietzsche's philosophy, of Schopenhauer's problem of individuation, and of Dilthey's distinction between empirical, sensory experience (*Erfahrung*) and lived, inner experience (*Erlebnis*) to Buber's understanding of mysticism. "In his presentation of mysticism and myth, both Gentile and Jewish," Mendes-Flohr argues, "Buber celebrated the mystic's ability to overcome the individuation, or the multiplicity and mutual opposition, of

[126] Dynner documents the rise of Chassidic printing, demonstrating how printing songs, sermons, and hagiographic literature served to promote the movement (*Silk* 197-226). In his recent biography of Israel ben Eliezer (the Ba'al Shem Tov, often considered the father of Chassidism), Moshe Rosman argues that the collection of stories surrounding the Ba'al Shem must be understood as hagiography, as texts "not written to record the biography of a great person in the past but to persuade people in the present to behave in a certain way or to accept a particular doctrine." See Moshe Rosman, *Founder of Hasidism: The Quest for the Historical Ba'al Shem Tov* (Berkeley: U of California P, 1996) 153.

[127] Paul Mendes-Flohr, *From Mysticism to Dialogue: Martin Buber's Transformation of German Social Thought* (Detroit: Wayne State UP, 1989).

phenomena that painfully characterizes the empirical world."[128] Thus, from Mendes-Flohr's philosophical-historical standpoint, Buber's embrace of Chassidic mysticism is a manifestation of a broader philosophical and sociological concern with the modern problems of individuation and the fragmentation of experience (which I will explore in more detail below).

Both Aschheim and Sander L. Gilman read Buber's project in terms of the reinvention of East European Jewry and situate it against the backdrop of racial and national notions of identity prevalent around 1900. Gilman notes that, beginning with the early Zionist movement, the image of the *Ostjude* underwent a radical revaluation in German (that is, Western) consciousness, and he casts Buber as a central manifestation of this change.[129] As he argues in his classic text, *Jewish Self-Hatred: Anti-Semitism and the Hidden Language of the Jews* (1986): "The antithesis between acculturation, which Buber views as a surface phenomenon, and the true roots of Jewish identity, perceived by him as inherent in the Jew, is but the standard paradigm of Jewish uniqueness presented by racial anti-Semites given a positive value."[130] Thus, for Gilman, Buber's image of Chassidism represents a positive cooptation of essentialist (even antisemitic) discursive constructions of Jewishness.

Aschheim casts Buber's project in a more political light, underscoring Buber's ties not only to the Zionist movement, but also to other fin-de-siècle nationalist ideologies that involved an embrace of myth and a quest for authenticity. As he argues in *Brothers and Strangers: The East European Jew in German and German Jewish Consciousness, 1800-*

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[128] Mendes-Flohr, *Mysticism* 18.

[129] Sander L. Gilman, *Jewish Self-Hatred: Anti-Semitism and the Hidden Language of the Jews* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins UP, 1986) 273.

[130] Gilman, *Self-Hatred* 273.

1923 (1982): "In a sense, Buber's Hasid—vibrant and rooted in human community and religious values—was the Jewish Volkish answer to the ideal figure of the German Volkish movement, the peasant."[131] Chassidic Jewish tradition seemed resistant to the kind of divisions that plagued modern European Jewry in the nineteenth century, including the question of whether Jewishness was compatible with German identity and/or secular European culture. Thus, according to Aschheim, Buber's Chassidim represented more than a revaluation of Jewish stereotypes; remote and resistant to modernity, they became the Jewish counterpart to a romanticized image of provincial German life.

In a more recent study, *Jüdische Tradition und literarische Moderne: Heine, Buber, Kafka, Benjamin* (2007), Bernd Witte takes a literary-historical approach to Buber's image of Chassidism, by reading Buber in the context of German-Jewish literary modernity. Witte argues that an unbroken chain of literary commentary—reaching back to the oral redaction of the Torah (as recorded in the Talmud)—exists within Jewish tradition, and that this metatextual proclivity represents the particularly "Jewish" contribution to modern German literature and culture.[132] As he explains:

> [Die Lektüre und der Kommentar der kanonischen Schrift] sind es, die das Weiterwirken der jüdischen Überlieferung noch in der deutschsprachigen literarischen Moderne bestimmen. Im Gegensatz zur klassischen deutschen Literatur und deren Weiterungen im neunzehnten und zwanzigsten Jahrhundert, die sich auf die Natur als ihren Ursprung berufen, wird die deutsch-jüdische Literatur von einem ausgebildeten Bewusstsein des Schriftcharakters von Literatur getragen. Das bedeutet, sie findet ihren Ursprung in vor-geschriebenen Texten.[133]

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[131] Aschheim, *Brothers* 102.

[132] Bernd Witte, *Jüdische Tradition und literarische Moderne: Heine, Buber, Kafka, Benjamin* (Munich: Hanser, 2007) 9-10.

[133] Witte, *Tradition* 10.

Buber, he argues, is one link in this chain of commentary. But, as the statement above makes clear, this argument rests upon a dubiously essentialist characterization of Jewish textuality. It assumes a single and singular Jewish experience—a particularly "Jewish" mode of reading—that is carried over into a single and singular German literary tradition. Moreover, because Witte's analysis reduces "Jewish" cultural production to a mode of reading, it verges on many fin-de-siècle antisemitic stereotypes of Jews as actors and as cultural imitators.[134] Despite these concerns, however, Witte's analysis of Jewish literary commentary in German modernity proves extremely fruitful, because it offers a means of situating Buber's early Chassidic texts within a modern German literary tradition, which begins with Moses Mendelssohn and extends to Walter Benjamin and beyond. In contrast to Aschheim, Witte suggests that Buber's reception of Chassidism is not resistant to modernity, but is instead part of a long tradition of modern German-Jewish cultural production.

In short, Mendes-Flohr, Gilman, Aschheim, and Witte all offer useful contextual insights into Buber's early Chassidic texts. Mendes-Flohr lays bare the modern philosophical underpinnings of Buber's engagement with mysticism, while Gilman and Aschheim situate Buber's project within broader historical and political discourses on East European Jewry in German and Austrian culture. Witte links Buber's early Chassidic texts to the Enlightenment origins of German-Jewish identity, and his analysis draws implicit and tentative connections between Buber's project and fin-de-siècle modernity more broadly. In this chapter, I will build on these scholars' analyses through close readings of Buber's two earliest collections of Chassidic tales. I will show that rather than simply offering a skewed exposition of East European Jewish life or an articulation of a prominent nineteenth-century philosophical problem, Buber's project brings together a constellation of modernity, mysticism, language

[134] Buber takes a similarly essentialist tack, as I will discuss below.

crisis, and cultural memory—all of which are crucial for understanding his image of Chassidism and its afterlife in German and German-Jewish consciousness.

In the first chapter of this dissertation, I demonstrated that Franzos charged German literature with redemptive potential, enacting a sacralization of German culture by elevating the image of Friedrich Schiller to messianic status. Franzos' project of rehabilitating the Enlightenment notion of *Bildung* as a substitute for religious, national, and even ethnic modes of self-identification establishes a precedent for understanding the constellation of modernity, mysticism, language crisis, and cultural memory in Buber's early collections of Chassidic tales. As I will detail in this chapter, Buber's project also involves the search for redemption through language (or language crisis), but he reconfigures this constellation in a specifically German-Jewish context. He isn't interested in rescuing German culture from the ghetto of nationalism. Instead, as I will demonstrate, in his construction of Chassidism, he strategically casts the mystical practices of the Chassidim as a means of recuperating Jewish cultural experience in Diaspora.

With its interest in recovering Jewish culture, Buber's project certainly fits the bill of the broadly-conceived Zionist project, but unlike many of his contemporaries—from Herzl to Ahad Ha'am—Buber posits a notion of Jewish identity that is neither religious nor national.[135] In sharp contrast with Herzl's political project, for instance, Buber's image of Chassidism casts Diaspora experience as a source of strength and rejuvenation for European Jews. In fact, as I will demonstrate in this chapter, Buber posits a model for fashioning an authentic German-Jewish, European-Jewish, or Diaspora-Jewish identity that draws from and

[135] For more on Zionist notions of Jewish identity, see, for instance, David A. Brenner, *Marketing Identities: The Invention of Jewish Ethnicity in* Ost und West (Detroit: Wayne State UP, 1998) 33-39. Buber outlines his position vis-à-vis Jewish nationalism and Jewish religion in a 1909 speech, published in 1911 as "Das Judentum und die Juden," which I will discuss in more detail below.

comingles three sources: the cutting-edge cultural discourses of European modernity, a Diaspora Jewish tradition contemporary to and marginalized by the *Haskalah*, and an ancient, mythic—and invented—Jewish past. For Buber, in other words, cultural Zionism becomes a project both of Jewish cultural renewal *and* of negotiating European modernity.

In this chapter, I will examine Buber's introductory material to *Die Geschichten des Rabbi Nachman* and *Die Legende des Baalschem* in order to demonstrate how he appropriates Chassidism to present a model of an intact (unfractured) modern Jewishness. In the first section, I will look at Buber's critique of secular and confessional notions of Jewishness, before beginning to explore his construction of mysticism. I will demonstrate that Buber engages with a modern philosophical problem in order to reorient Jewish mysticism as something central to authentic Jewish identity. In the second section, I will continue this examination in order to show that Buber strategically positions Chassidism as a unique product of European Diaspora experience, thus recasting it as a tradition with close ties to West European Jewry. Moreover, I will demonstrate that through his depiction of Chassidic mystical practice, Buber invents and authenticates a Jewish tradition of constantly reinventing tradition. Finally, in the third section, I will show how Buber situates Chassidism and Jewish mysticism at the heart of European modernity by engaging with a modern discourse of language skepticism and its acute eruption in the fin-de-siècle.

II. Jewish Mysticism, Modernity, and Individuation

As I argued in the previous chapter, Franzos, in his early ghetto literature, cast the notion of *Bildung* as a means of overcoming the impulse of nationalism that plagued late nineteenth-century Central Europe. In his texts, in fact, *Bildung*—embodied in and

transmitted through German cultural and linguistic artifacts—became a redemptive force that promised emancipation from the pseudo-culture of *Halb-Asien*, where the Enlightenment notion of a universal, humanistic culture had not taken hold. In Franzos' texts, reading Schiller represents a Eucharistic act, through which proceeds the transubstantiation of German culture into Jewish, Ruthenian, or Polish cultural awareness *from within*. Enlightenment universalism bears the potential to breathe life into the mere appearance of culture that for Franzos characterizes *Halb-Asien*.

Judging by the title alone, *Die Geschichten des Rabbi Nachman* sounds as if it might be at home among Franzos' many so-called *Kulturskizzen*, which purport to provide an insider's ethnographic account of the customs and folklore of East European peoples, and which are targeted at a readership largely unfamiliar with these groups. Written a generation after Franzos began his *Halb-Asien* project, Buber's text indeed mirrors Franzos' in terms of its audience and its authorial perspective. Because of his ties to both Lemberg and Vienna, Buber writes as someone familiar with the fringes of the Hapsburg Empire as well as with its cultural and political center. More importantly, Buber writes for German-speaking Jews and non-Jews who have an understanding of East European Jewry as something profoundly foreign and exotic—an understanding no doubt cultivated by Franzos' ghetto literature—and he presents the tales of Rabbi Nachman of Bratslav (1772-1810), a famous Chassidic master, as part of a foreign tradition.

Given these similarities, it would certainly come as no surprise if Buber's text likewise cast a critical eye on East European Jewry and Chassidism as lacking genuine culture (i.e. *Bildung*), or if it situated Chassidism in opposition to the German Enlightenment and the *Haskalah*. Contemporary scholars, in fact, often construct such a tension between

Chassidism and the Enlightenment in Buber's early works, noting that unlike Franzos, Buber attempts to eschew the ideals of the latter in order to valorize the former. For instance Gilman argues: "That the Baal Shem Tov, the founder of modern Chassidism, was a contemporary of Moses Mendelssohn is lost in the attempts by Buber to create an 'ageless, primeval…longed-for, recurring' model for the language of the Jews."[136] According to Gilman, Buber overlooks or ignores Chassidism's position alongside *Haskalah* as two simultaneously developing aspects of the Jewish cultural sphere in modern Europe. Such a reading would suggest that even if Buber celebrates Chassidism, for him, as for Franzos, the movement represents little more than a relic of the premodern Jewish past persisting into the early twentieth century.

However, a glance at Buber's dedication in *Die Geschichten des Rabbi Nachman*—the first of several layers of text to precede the tales themselves—reveals a work that presents itself as something far more complex than an ethnographic compilation of *Kulturskizzen* or a valorization of Chassidism at the expense of the *Haskalah*. Buber writes: "Meinem Großvater Salomon Buber, dem letzten Meister der alten Haskala, bringe ich dieses Werk der Chassidut dar in Ehrfurcht und Liebe."[137] By dedicating the text to his grandfather, a famous Midrash scholar who had helped introduce him to East European Jewish life, Buber frames this collection of tales in terms of personal history, grounding his interest in Chassidism in

[136] Gilman, *Self-Hatred* 275. In his reading of Buber, however, Gilman concludes that Buber surprisingly values rationality in his retellings of the Chassidic tales, and plays down elements of magic and superstition (275-276). Mendes-Flohr likewise contrasts Buber and Franzos in his afterword to a 1999 edition of *Die Geschichten des Rabbi Nachman*. See Paul Mendes-Flohr, afterword, *Die Geschichten des Rabbi Nachman*, by Martin Buber (Gütersloh: Gütersloher Verlagshaus, 1999) 149-150.

[137] Martin Buber, *Die Geschichten des Rabbi Nachman* (Gütersloh: Gütersloher Verlagshaus, 1999) 5. Editions published after the death of Salomon Buber (late in 1906) bore the following, slightly modified dedication: "DEM GEDÄCHTNIS MEINES GROSSVATERS SALOMON BUBER DES LETZTEN MEISTERS DER ALTEN HASKALA BRINGE ICH IN TREUEN DIESES WERK DER CHASSIDUT DAR."

his own experience growing up in Lemberg.[138] More significantly, however, this dedication also establishes more than a mere binary opposition between Chassidism and the Jewish Enlightenment: Buber challenges Franzos' depiction of antagonism between the two movements, and suggests that Chassidism is more than a fossil of premodern Jewry. In fact, he self-consciously positions Chassidism as a modern Jewish phenomenon and as a contemporary to the *Haskalah*, and, in doing so, he raises the specter of modern Jewish identity as something fragmented, incomplete and in need of redemption.

Haskalah and Chassidism are two strands in a complex tangle of discourses that emerge from within the various layers of introductory material in Buber's text. Indeed, beginning with the premise that Jewish mysticism is somehow uniquely Jewish, Buber's text offers an intricate description of Jewish mysticism as the ultimate expression of Jewish identity, while it simultaneously articulates a theory of perception that hinges on distinctly nineteenth-century discourses of modern experience. This material thus does considerably more than provide color commentary for a collection of Chassidic tales; it constructs a constellation that draws together notions of Enlightenment, identity, mysticism, tradition, and fin-de-siècle philosophy. Above all else, as I will show in this section, the introductory material to *Die Geschichten des Rabbi Nachman* and to *Die Legende des Baalschem* exposes these works as explorations of the potential that European-Jewish mysticism offers for mending the fissures characteristic of European-Jewish modernity and modern European-Jewish identity. Thus (in the very margins of his texts) Buber constructs and draws on an underground, alternative, and marginal Jewish tradition as a source for renewing Jewish cultural experience, and, consequently, his two earliest collections of Chassidic tales offer

[138] Gilman's analysis emphasizes the role of Buber's biography in his reception of Chassidism (*Self-Hatred* 273).

unique insights into the complex, multi-layered discourses of modern identity during the fin-de-siècle.

Chassidism and the Ground of Jewishness

Die Geschichten des Rabbi Nachman deals with a peculiar image of Chassidism from the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries. Buber primarily understands Chassidism of this period—Rabbi Nachman's Chassidism—neither simply as a variety of Jewish religious practice, nor as a form of East European Jewish community, but instead as the "letzt[e] und höchst[e] Entwicklung der jüdischen Mystik."[139] Thus, the relationship between Chassidism and *Haskalah* posited in the work's dedication also entails a relationship between Jewish mysticism and Enlightenment. In fact, another layer of introductory material in Buber's text, a short history of Jewish mysticism presented to establish "die Atmosphäre des Buches," challenges the understanding of this relationship as mere opposition.[140] Jewish mysticism, Buber argues, is not "als eine zeitweilig auftretende bewußte Reaktion gegen die Herrschaft der Verstandesordnung aufzufassen," but rather, the currents of mysticism and the currents of rationality have always existed alongside one another in Jewish culture and in Judaism.[141] Chassidism and *Haskalah* were simply two modern (eighteenth- and nineteenth-century) expressions of these parallel trends.

At the same time, however, Buber does posit a historical struggle between mysticism and rationality—here reduced to Chassidism and *Haskalah*—noting later in his text: "Ein gefährlicherer Gegner erstand […] in der Haskala, der jüdischen Aufklärungsbewegung, die

[139] Buber, *Nachman* 20.

[140] Buber, *Nachman* 9.

[141] Buber, *Nachman* 12-13.

im Namen des Wissens, der Zivilisation und Europas gegen den 'Aberglauben' auftrat."[142] The Jewish Enlightenment movement had no place for Chassidism or Chassidic mysticism, and it marginalized the latter, seeking in effect to ghettoize its practices, and to eliminate the "Gottessehnsucht des Volkes."[143] For Buber, in other words, Enlightenment opposition to Chassidism manifested itself as a quest to still the spirituality of the movement, to replace mysticism with secular rationality, empirical knowledge, and civilization.

The indictment of the *Haskalah* in this passage points to the broader nineteenth-century process of the secularization and confessionalization of Jewish society. As Jews entered modern European society, a once-unified Jewish cultural sphere became splintered into competing, incomplete, and sometimes incompatible notions of Jewishness. In his early writings on Judaism and Jewishness, in fact, Buber again and again depicts Jewishness as something fragmented, incomplete, and difficult to define. For instance, in a speech originally delivered in 1909 to the Bar Kochba society—an organization of young Zionists in Prague—and later published as the first of his *Drei Reden über das Judentum* (1911) under the title, "Das Judentum und die Juden," Buber analyzes two familiar but ultimately insufficient responses to the question of Jewish identity, posed as follows: "Welcher Art ist die Gemeinschaft, von der wir Zeugnis ablegen, wenn wir uns Juden nennen?"[144] The responses that Buber considers—religion and nation—and his analysis of them, help explain Chassidism's place in modernity for Buber.

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[142] Buber, *Nachman* 24.

[143] Buber, *Nachman* 24.

[144] Martin Buber, "Das Judentum und die Juden," *Frühe jüdische Schriften 1900-1922*, ed. Barbara Schäfer (Gütersloh: Gütersloher Verlagshaus, 2007) 219. Buber modified the speech considerably before its publication in *Drei Reden über das Judentum* (1911), even revising its original title, "Der Sinn des Judentums." My discussion of this text follows the 1911 version, which was more widely circulated and which perhaps best reflects Buber's position during this period.

According to his speech, Jewishness functions as a nationality in modern society, but in reality it lacks the inner cohesion of a nation.[145] The idea of Jewishness as a nationality is only a half-truth, representing a de facto condition, rather than a natural one. As he argues:

> Wie äußert sich hier die nationale Existenz? Wie der Jude, erleidend und reagierend, zur außerjüdischen Welt steht, was ihm als Juden von dieser zugefügt und wie es von ihm verarbeitet wird, mag seine Art seit siebzig Geschlechtern mitgestalten, ein begründendes Element seines inneren Judentums kann es nicht abgeben; denn sonst wäre er nur Trotzjude, wäre Jude nicht aus eigenem Wesen und Bestand, sondern auf Kündigung der Völker; und auf einem Wink der Völker würde sein Judentum nicht mehr lebendige Substanz sein, nur noch Gedächtnisleid und Gedächtnisgebilde […].[146]

Modern Jewish identity appears to be a national identity, but only insofar as it is determined from the outside. In Europe, generations of persecution, from medieval accusations of blood libel to modern antisemitism, have grouped Jews together in relative isolation from non-Jews, but for Buber, this affinity is not sufficient to foster a national identity. Such a configuration robs the Jewish "nation" of any agency in terms of its nationhood, and bars Jews from finding positive content in their construction of national character. For Buber, a nation must be founded on common and unique cultural material that binds its constituents together, and it requires its own store of such material to renew and reinvigorate itself. Buber cites language, land, and customs as three examples—three materials that West European Jews necessarily share with their non-Jewish neighbors, and which are thus not sufficient for forming a Jewish nation.[147]

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[145] Buber, "Judentum" 221.

[146] Buber, "Judentum" 221. This notion of a *Trotzjude* seems to respond directly to Herzl's 1896 manifesto of political Zionism, *Der Judenstaat*, in which he defines Jewishness as a reaction to antisemitism, arguing: "Wir sind ein Volk – der Feind macht uns ohne unseren Willen dazu, wie das immer in der Geschichte so war." See Theodor Herzl, *Der Judenstaat: Versuch einer modernen Lösung der Judenfrage*. *Text und Materialen 1896 bis heute*, ed. Ernst Piper (Berlin: Philo Verlag, 2004) 31.

[147] Buber, "Judentum" 223.

Buber offers a similar critique of the notion that Jewish identity is merely religious. While he concedes that a Jewish religion exists, he laments that modern Jewishness lacks *religiosity*:

> Gibt es eine in sich wirkliche jüdische Religiosität? Nicht Dogma und Norm, Kult und Regel: gibt es ein heute von Menschen gelebtes eigentümliches Verhältnis zum Absoluten, das seinem Wesen nach als jüdisch zu bezeichnen ist und das sich in einer Gemeinschaft der Juden konstituiert?[148]

Just as Jewishness is a national identity in effect and not in reality, modern Judaism only seems to be a religion in its outward expression. It contains dogma, but it offers no living relationship to the divine. It presents legislation to live by, but its ritualized practice does not demand that practitioners actually live it. Especially in the secularized culture of fin-de-siècle Europe, Judaism is too isolated from Jewish life to form the ground of Jewishness.[149]

Buber also enacts this critique of Judaism in *Die Legende des Baalschem*, where he underscores exactly the ways in which Chassidism represents an alternative. In the introduction to that text, Buber issues an indictment of all official religion—not only Judaism—contrasting it to the lived and living tradition of *Mythos*:

> Alle positive Religion ruht auf einer ungeheueren Vereinfachung des in Welt und Seele so vielfältig, so wildverschlungen auf uns Eindringenden: sie ist Bändigung, Vergewaltigung der Daseinsfülle. Aller Mythos hingegen ist Ausdruck der Daseinsfülle […]. Die persönliche, ungemeinsame und unzugängliche Religiosität der Einzelseele hat ihre Geburt in Mythos, ihren Tod in der Religion.[150]

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[148] Buber, "Judentum" 220.

[149] In this speech (as in earlier texts) Buber employs the category of *Blut* to express a notion Jewish distinction that he feels is more suitable. In his scholarly examination of cultural Zionism, Mark H. Gelber charts and contextualizes the problematic racialist implications of such rhetoric. See Mark H. Gelber, *Melancholy Pride: Nation, Race, and Gender in the German Literature of Cultural Zionism* (Tübingen: Niemeyer, 2000) 125-160. As we will see, Buber's definition of *Blut* in this text relies heavily on the notion of Jewishness that he develops in *Die Geschichten des Rabbi Nachman*—a notion that emphasizes collective history alongside its essentialist component. See note 75, below.

[150] Buber, *Baalschem* iii.

For Buber, religion is not broad enough to accommodate the fullness of being, and thus it cannot fail to repress the fullness of spirituality, locking it away in a series of dogma, ritual, and legislation. The alternative tradition of *Mythos*—which combines mysticism (lived spirituality), on the one hand, and folklore or storytelling (the material of cultural tradition) on the other—leaves room for such fullness, and for the development of a personal relationship with the absolute.[151] Because of this opposition, religion and *Mythos* are locked in a constant struggle in Jewish tradition, and it was in Chassidism, Buber argues, that *Mythos* last gained the upper hand.[152]

I will discuss Buber's understanding of *Mythos* in more detail in a later section of this chapter. For now it is enough to note that, for Buber, Chassidism represents a movement that injected religiosity into its religious life through mystical practice and that grounded its sense of community in the shared cultural material of its stories and folklore. Such an understanding of Chassidism demonstrates the possibility of an intact notion of Jewish identity, and it provides a model for developing such an identity. But Buber is particularly concerned with *modern* Jewish identity, and to note that Chassidism is a historical contemporary of the *Haskalah* is not sufficient to establish its modern character. To that end, Buber turns to an analysis of the history of Jewish mysticism.

Mysticism, Perception, and Jewish Identity

If Buber understands Chassidism primarily as an expression of Jewish mysticism, then in *Die Geschichte des Rabbi Nachman*, he further nests mysticism within an image of Jewish identity. For Buber, in fact, Jewishness entails (and has always entailed) a proclivity

[151] Buber, *Baalschem* v.

[152] Buber, *Baalschem* iv-v.

toward mystical ecstasy: “Die mystische Anlage ist den Juden von Urzeiten her eigen […].” [153] Thus, even a brief history of Jewish mysticism—of its various manifestations and of the circumstances from which these manifestations emerged—must necessarily offer unique insight into the nature of Jewishness itself. As Buber explains:

> Es ist eine bedeutsame Eigentümlichkeit des Juden, die sich in den Jahrtausenden kaum gewandelt zu haben scheint, daß sich die Extreme bei ihm aneinander entzünden, schneller und mächtiger, als bei irgend einem anderen Menschen. So geschieht es, daß mitten in einem unsäglich begrenzten Dasein, ja gerade aus seiner Begrenztheit heraus plötzlich mit einer Gewalt, die nichts zu bändigen versucht, das Schrankenlose hervorbricht und nun die widerstandlos hingegebene Seele regiert.[154]

In this passage, Jewishness is decidedly unmodern; it has remained intact for centuries. Rigidly limited and explicitly defined, Jewishness suggests an existence within a series of strict confines—a series that might include the extensive legislation of the Torah and Talmud, the walls of the ghetto, monotheism (as the worship of a lone god), the notion of existence as God’s chosen people, and, especially, the boundaries of the premodern, hermetically-sealed Jewish cultural sphere.

Just as official religion bottles up the fullness of spiritual life, these various boundaries of Jewishness seem to limit contact between the Jew and the non-Jewish realm.[155] At the same time, however, the boundedness of Jewish experience that the passage above describes implies the kind of integrity of identity that stands in stark contrast with the fractured identities that emerged in post-Enlightenment Europe. Indeed, the mystical temperament of oscillating extremes (as an ancient, unchanged, innate quality of Jewishness)

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[153] Buber, *Nachman* 12.

[154] Buber, *Nachman* 13.

[155] Buber uses “Der Jude” extensively throughout this text, and although I find “the Jew” to be a highly problematic construction, I use this term in my analysis in order to remain true to Buber’s terminology. Additionally, because Buber consistently uses the masculine form of the noun and its pronouns, I have similarly used “he” when referring to “the Jew.”

appears to be at odds with modernity. But it is precisely this ancient, unchanged, innate quality that occasionally and repeatedly reaches beyond the borders of Jewishness—and beyond the very notion of boundedness—to drive the Jewish subject outward, toward nearly unbounded contact with the non-Jewish, with everything that exists outside of its carefully regulated existence, thus bringing about the multiple perspectives, influences, impulses and identities that characterize the modern subject. In this passage, in other words, the Jew is tightly shut until his mystical impulse makes him wide open; he is primordial until he is ultramodern.

Buber's image of the Jewish soul reaching beyond itself clearly articulates a notion of mystical communion. But Buber does not frame this as an act of communion with God or with a divine presence, for even communion with God entails some sort of limitation. Instead, Buber crafts an image of Jewish mysticism as communion with the very absence of limits, as unity itself. Significantly, in this passage he does not employ theological language to explain the act of mystical communion, nor does he turn at this point to Rabbi Nachman's tales. Instead, he embeds his discussion of modern Jewish identity—which in turn contains a discussion of mysticism, and ultimately of Chassidism—within a theory of perception. Not only does the Jew exist within tightly-defined parameters, but he also interacts with the world in a uniquely Jewish manner: "Wenn jede Seele sich ihre natürliche Substanz aus den kräftigen, wertbetonten Bildern formt, die sie mit ihren Sinnen aufgenommen und mit ihrem Gefühl gefasst hat, so scheint die Seele des Juden dieser natürlichen Substanz arm zu sein."[156] In order to describe Jewish mysticism, Buber divides the subject into two parts: its *Seele*—the subject's spiritual and/or intellectual aspect—and its *Substanz*—the sensory counterpart to the *Seele*. Each soul has a given substance, which is shaped by sensory

[156] Buber, *Nachman* 13.

perception. The soul's interaction with the stimuli that it perceives takes place within the realm of *Substanz*, and it is *Substanz* that grounds the soul in its surrounding environment. Why, then, does the Jewish subject seem to lack *Substanz*? This is the crucial question for understanding Buber's image of Jewishness, and to answer it requires a closer look at the foundation of the theory of perception on which Buber draws in this text.

Buber's early interest in mysticism was heavily influenced by the question of individuation—a decidedly modern problem which was the topic of his 1904 Ph.D. thesis, and a problem which, as Mendes-Flohr demonstrates, Buber inherited from Schopenhauer, Nietzsche, and Dilthey.[157] A thorough discussion of the influence of these philosophers on Buber's work lies beyond the scope of this project. However, two points are critical for understanding how Buber gathers perception, mysticism, Jewish identity, and modernity into a single constellation in the introductory material to *Die Geschichten des Rabbi Nachman*. First of all, following Dilthey and others, Buber distinguishes between two modes of experience, *Erlebnis* and *Erfahrung*, which involve two forms of perception and which in turn provide two distinct kinds of knowledge.[158] *Erfahrung* denotes empirical experience gained from sensory interaction with the world. *Erlebnis*, on the other hand, refers to experience gained from within the subject itself, or, as Mendes-Flohr describes it, "affective, lived experience."[159] The second key point is that the problem of individuation hinges on the distinction between these two modes of experience. For Buber, in fact, individuation is a product of an over-reliance on *Erfahrung* for knowledge of the world. Thus, as Mendes-Flohr

[157] Mendes-Flohr, *Mysticism* 49-82. Mendes-Flohr offers an excellent and detailed analysis of the philosophical genealogy of this question in Buber's work.

[158] Buber develops his discussion of *Erlebnis* and *Erfahrung* most thoroughly in a 1913 text, *Daniel, Gespräche von der Verwirklichung*, and Mendes-Flohr meticulously examines this discussion in his own monograph. See especially Mendes-Flohr, *Mysticism* 72-75.

[159] Mendes-Flohr, *Mysticism* 72.

explains, the subject "perceives the world exclusively as a series of individuated phenomena, and all facts of being locked in eternal separation from, and perforce in opposition to, one another."[160] This experience of the world as a collection of distinct, individuated phenomena is for Buber a highly modern, bourgeois mode of experience, exacerbated by positivism and an increased reliance on empirical knowledge.[161]

Through its increasing reliance on *Erfahrung*, the subject loses contact with inner, instinctive, innate experience, and ceases to be able to understand the world as an interconnected array of expressions of a single, non-individuated essence. Indeed, even language itself, the structures of which reflect the structures of *Erfahrung*, contributes to the perception of the world as individuated.[162] The loss of contact with *Erlebnis* results in a fallen state, where the subject is held captive by the mere appearance of things, and lacks awareness of inner reality—a fallen state that mirrors the emptiness that Buber sees in modern definitions of Jewishness as confession or nationality. Buber thus clearly privileges *Erlebnis* over *Erfahrung*, and laments the supremacy of the latter.

In light of his engagement with the *Erlebnis*/*Erfahrung* dichotomy, Buber's initial description of Jewishness as at once sealed-off and extending outward, as something primordial and ultramodern, and as something extremely limited yet testing the boundaries of boundedness, takes on added nuances. As his introduction continues, he develops this notion further: "Den vom Subjekte unabhängigen Gegenständen unendlich fremd, nur für die Funktionen des Subjekts unterworfenen Gegenstände verständnisvoll […], existiert der Jude

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[160] Mendes-Flohr, *Mysticism* 49.

[161] Mendes-Flohr, *Mysticism* 49.

[162] Mendes-Flohr, *Mysticism* 73.

weniger in Substanz, als in Relation."[163] Because he is sealed within himself, because of his condition of electedness, because of the *Begrenztheit* that Buber described above, the Jew has difficulty processing the outside world as a phenomenal world of individuated objects. Instead, through his limited, self-contained nature, the Jew is more open to *Erlebnis* experience. However, such experience is necessarily limited to the contours of the subject. The individuated world located outside of the boundaries of the subject—the sensory world that interacts with the *Substanz* of a given soul—remains remote and difficult to access. Thus, in its very essence, Jewishness is a unitary state of being-in-relation to things, and not an individuated state of existing among things. It is for this reason that the Jewish subject seems to lack substance; if the world of *Erfahrung* governs and shapes the *Substanz* of every subject, then the Jewish subject, with its inclination toward *Erlebnis*, appears less grounded, less substantial.

Jewish identity takes on yet another distinction in the passage above: the condition of distinction itself. Precisely because he does not participate as fully in the realm of differentiated objects, the Jew is marked by an unparalleled condition of foreignness vis-à-vis the world. This particular construction of Jewishness as radically foreign to the world and the problem of individuation (and the *Erlebnis*-*Erfahrung* dichotomy) discussed above occupy the center of Buber's early engagement with Jewish mysticism. The prominent role of Lurianic Kabbalah among the various forms of Jewish mysticism outlined in the introductory material to *Die Geschichten des Rabbi Nachman* underscores the centrality of these themes. Named for its founder, Isaac Luria, Lurianic Kabbalah was a sixteenth-century development in Jewish mysticism which placed messianic expectation at its center, and which gave rise to

[163] Buber, *Nachman* 13.

a new mythology of creation (see below).[164] For Buber, Lurianic Kabbalah also marks an important turn toward the role of the individual in the development of Jewish mysticism, and he even positions Chassidism as its direct descendant.[165]

Scholem is highly critical of how Buber presents the relationship between Lurianic Kabbalah and Chassidism.[166] Even a cursory discussion of the intricacies of Lurianic Kabbalah lies beyond the scope of this project, but its central aspect—its story of fall and redemption—is highly relevant to Buber's construction of Jewishness and its relationship to the *Erlebnis-Erfahrung* dichotomy. Scholem offers a concise summary of this aspect of Lurianism:

> [D]em großen Mythos von Exil und Erlösung zufolge, als welcher die lurianische Kabbala ist, sind "Funken" des göttlichen Lebens und Lichtes über die ganze Welt in Verbannung zerstreut und bangen danach, durch die Handlungen des Menschen "erhoben" und an ihren ursprünglichen Platz in der göttlichen Harmonie allen Seins restituiert zu werden. Dieser kabbalistische Mythos […] ist wohl das wichtigste Erbe, das der Chassidismus von der Kabbala übernahm. Die vielen Variationen, die dieser Mythos hier erfuhr, liefen darauf hinaus, daß, da diese "heilige Funken" ja ausnahmslos überall vorhanden sein sollten, der Chassidismus im Prinzip die Existenz einer rein profanen Lebenssphäre leugnete, die für die religiöse Aufgabe des Menschen keine Bedeutung habe.[167]

The notion of a unified, divine presence that becomes splintered and scattered throughout a world of empty forms dovetails neatly with the problem of individuation discussed above. The world perceived as individuated, isolated, opposed objects—the world known through *Erfahrung*—is the world in which the divine sparks exist in exile. This is a world of concrete forms (known in Lurianic Kabbalah as the realm of "shells"). The task of the human being in Lurianic Kabbalah is to restore these sparks to a state of unity with the divine, a state of non-

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[164] Gershom Scholem, *Kabbalah* (New York: Dorset Press, 1987) 67-75.

[165] Buber, *Nachman* 19-20.

[166] Scholem, "Buber" 178-179.

[167] Scholem, "Buber" 184-185.

individuation and non-isolation. According to Buber, Chassidism brought this doctrine of unity into everyday life. As he puts it, "[Der Chassidismus] nimmt das Jenseits ins Diesseits herüber und läßt es ihm walten und es formen, wie die Seele den Körper formt."[168] Thus, for Buber, Jewish mysticism—and particularly Chassidism—represents a means of resolving the modern problem of individuation, by bridging the subject with the nearly insurmountable alterity of the world and by bringing *Erlebnis* to bear on *Erfahrung*.

Jewish mysticism is simultaneously a means of mending fractures in the divine (by raising up the divine sparks) and a means of mending fractures in experience (by reorienting the subject in the world of *Erlebnis*). If we revisit Buber's discussion of the ground of modern Jewish identity in "Das Judentum und die Juden," this doubly redemptive function of mysticism takes on more immediate contours. Fragmented modern Jewishness—whether it is rooted in religion without religiosity or in nation without national character—is no longer Jewish at all. It lacks the inherently Jewish connection to unifying inner experience (*Erlebnis*) and exists only in terms of outward appearances and de facto effects. Modern Jewish identity is a Jewishness of forms, a Jewishness banished to the realm of shells, and it thus desperately needs mystical intervention. Buber locates such intervention in his image of Chassidism.

III. Mysticism, Chassidism, and the Invention of Tradition

As we have seen, in the layers of introductory material to *Die Geschichten des Rabbi Nachman*, Buber essentializes Jewish identity, often invoking "der Jude" and speaking of a single Jewish spirit. And yet, Buber uses his construction of Jewish mysticism in order to craft a model of Jewish identity that defies the constraints of the various essentialist

[168] Buber, *Nachman* 20.

discourses that were prevalent in the early twentieth century. In fact, for Buber, Jewish mysticism offers the possibility of a Jewish identity beyond the boundaries of fin-de-siècle religious, Zionist-nationalist and/or antisemitic notions of Jewishness. Indeed, as scholars have noted, because mysticism depends neither on the foundation of a Jewish national homeland, nor on any "official" Jewish religious practice, Buber's treatment of it—and the Jewish identity that he constructs through it—has radical political and cultural implications in fin-de-siècle Central Europe.

Aschheim, for instance, sees Buber's project as part of a broader search for "sources of national cultural vitality," in lieu of official religious affiliation.[169] "[Buber's] analysis of Hasidism," Aschheim continues, "provided a model of Jewish spirituality that was at the same time radically antiestablishmentarian."[170] Moreover, Aschheim points out that Buber was working in a Western milieu, writing for a German-speaking audience, and he "took as his model East European Hasidism because he wanted to reshape Western Jewish cultural sensibility."[171] He thus sees Buber's reception of Chassidism as an appropriation of something that was uniquely Jewish but doubly marginal—something foreign to Buber's Western readers and opposed to normative Judaism.

Gilman similarly identifies in Buber's project the attempt to craft a positive depiction of Jewishness for West European Jews by appropriating an Eastern Jewish tradition.[172] For Gilman, however, this endeavor is somewhat marred by Buber's own Western Jewish sensibilities, and his retelling of Chassidic tales "reveals the inner struggle of a Western Jew,

[169] Aschheim, *Brothers* 122.

[170] Aschheim, *Brothers* 125.

[171] Aschheim, *Brothers* 124.

[172] Gilman, *Self-Hatred* 274-279. Gilman is especially critical of Buber's reworking of the Chassidic tales, as I will discuss in more detail below.

writing in a Western language, attempting to adapt cultural artifacts from a totally different milieu for the needs of his positive projection of the Jew."[173] Thus, for Gilman, a necessary conflict between Eastern and Western Jewish traditions emerges in Buber's Chassidic tales because he casts the two traditions as radically foreign to one another. Both scholars read Buber's reception of Chassidism as the appropriation of a marginalized movement in order to present an image of authentic Jewishness to a Western audience. But this is only part of the story, and as Buber's discussion of Jewishness (outlined in the previous section) suggests, his reception of Chassidism is much more complex. Rather than simply appropriating a radically-foreign, "antiestablishmentarian" Jewish tradition to promote an alternative (and authentic) image of Jewishness, Buber employs Jewish mysticism (and specifically Chassidic mysticism) as a model for redeeming the fissures in modern European-Jewish identity. I will investigate the mechanism of such redemption below, by examining the essential Jewish qualities that drive Buber's understanding of Jewish mysticism generally—*Pathos* and *Schicksal*—to show that he draws on these two aspects of Jewishness and Jewish Diaspora experience to root mysticism in a tradition that is both essentially Jewish and a product of life in Diaspora.

***Pathos*, Diaspora, and the Jewish Mystical Tradition**

In *Die Geschichten des Rabbi Nachman*, Buber argues that mysticism is a product of two factors: "die Art und das Schicksal des Volkes, aus dem sie heraufwuchs."[174] As I have shown, Buber casts the *Art* of the Jewish people—Jewishness—in terms of a rigidly defined subject, sealed within itself, yet regularly reaching beyond its borders toward the unbounded.

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[173] Gilman, *Self-Hatred* 275.

[174] Buber, *Nachman* 12.

According to Buber's phenomenology, in fact, the Jewish attunement to inner, *Erlebnis* experience suggests a correlative proclivity toward an understanding of the universe as non-individuated—toward an awareness of the interconnectedness of all things. But, as Buber explains, even such awareness is constrained by, and confined within, the sharp boundaries of the Jew: "[Der Jude] hat einen geringen Sinn für die ganze Wirklichkeit eines Baumes, eines Vogels, eines Menschen, der für sich ein absolutes, unerschöpflich reiches, so geartetes Dasein einschließt."[175] The Jewish subject—sealed within itself—appears to lack the *Substanz* that grounds it in the realm of *Erfahrung*, in the experience of the world as individuated through the senses. Adept at formulating the abstract relationships that govern the universe and at perceiving the connective tissue of the universe, the Jew is little able to contemplate the reality of the concrete objects of everyday life *as* concrete objects. A tree is not a tree but an expression of a non-individuated universe existing within the borders of the subject.

The essential *Art* of the Jew is far more complex, interactive, and dialogic than it may first appear, however. Although the Jew is strictly bounded and rigidly defined, another fundamental feature of the Jew is that he reaches beyond himself. As the text unfolds, Buber invokes the quality that he calls *Pathos* in order to further develop this idea:

> Es gibt jedoch ein Element, das all dies in gewisser Weise ersetzt, in dem es der Seele des Juden einen Kern, eine Sicherheit, eine Substanz gibt, allerdings keine sensorische, objektive, sondern eine motorische, subjektive. Das ist das Pathos. Ich vermag es nicht zu analysieren, noch auch in eine Definition zu fassen. Es ist ein eingeborenes Eigentum, das sich einst mit allen anderen Qualitäten des Stammes aus dessen Orte und dessen Geschicken heraus gebildet hat.[176]

[175] Buber, *Nachman* 13.

[176] Buber, *Nachman* 14.

If Jewishness necessarily hinders the process of situating oneself among the objects of one's environment, then it is through *Pathos* that the Jew grounds himself in the outside world. *Pathos* is the urge to bridge *Erlebnis* and *Erfahrung*, to bring *Jenseits* into *Diesseits*, or to raise the divine sparks out of the realm of the shells. Mirroring *Erfahrung*, *Pathos* allows the Jew to experience objects as objects existing outside of his subject. Unlike *Erfahrung*, however, *Pathos* places these objects in communion with the subject, effectively pulling the individuated outside world into contact with the inner, unified, subjective realm of *Erlebnis*. And yet, the totality of such transmission and unification is unattainable for the nearly hermetically-sealed Jewish subject, and for this reason Buber characterizes *Pathos* as "das Wollen des Unmöglichen"—a striving toward the impossible.[177]

Insofar as it offers the Jewish soul both security and substance, *Pathos* resembles and perhaps anticipates Franz Kafka's notion of *Selbstvertrauen* from his 1912 "Einleitungsvortrag über Jargon," which I discussed in the first chapter of this study. Just as for Kafka the grounding force of *Selbstvertrauen* accompanies and remedies the enormous fear of the self that Yiddish produces in assimilated, non-Yiddish-speaking Jews, Buber's *Pathos* serves to ground an otherwise aloof and abstract Jewish essence in the external world. And just as Kafka's *Selbstvertrauen* is limited temporally—the fleeting alleviation of a concomitant fear—Buber's *Pathos* affords the Jewish subject a foothold only in the most extreme territory, the spaces at the very edge of that which is possible. *Pathos* connects the Jewish subject to the non-Jewish realm of individuation, but only to the extent that it represents an attempt on the part of the Jewish subject to reintegrate into the unifying realm of *Erlebnis* that which has been individuated. That is, although *Pathos* offers the Jew a connection to the extra-subjective and individuated world—to the realm of sensory

[177] Buber, *Nachman* 14.

experience—that connection always rests upon a desire to transcend that world, to draw its objects into the subject, or as Buber further describes it, *Pathos* "streckt die Arme aus, das Schrankenlose zu umfangen."[178] In mystical terms, *Pathos* allows for the divine presence to intermingle with the profane, but only in exile, as sparks dispersed among the dark world of shells, and it demands that these sparks be lifted up into a unified whole.

Selbstvertrauen and *Pathos* share another crucial feature: each represents a marginal phenomenon rooted in the very center of Jewishness. *Selbstvertrauen* is an innate and eternal facet of Jewish identity, but for Kafka's assimilated, German-speaking audience, it is a suppressed quality that must be awakened in order to be experienced. In early twentieth-century Prague, Kafka suggests, Jewish *Selbstvertrauen* could be found only in the margins of the Jewish subject—in the unplumbed depths of innate Jewishness. *Pathos*, too, is an innate and eternal facet of Jewishness. It also functions at the margins of Jewish experience, for it represents a longing toward that which exists outside of the Jewish subject, and at the very margins of existence itself. Immutable and ever present, however, *Pathos* does not need to be awakened. Rather, in its striving for the impossible, *Pathos* always reaches out of bounds.

Buber demonstrates the marginality of *Pathos* in his text, when, in lieu of a further definition of the phenomenon, he offers an illustration of it through a succession of historical moments located not only at the boundary between the possible and the impossible, but also at the margins of Jewish tradition. He writes:

> [Pathos] trägt eine schlechthin unerfüllbare Forderung, wie das Pathos Mose und der Propheten die Forderung der absoluten Gerechtigkeit, wie das Pathos Jesu und Pauli die Forderung der absoluten Liebe, oder eine schlechthin unerfüllbare Absicht, wie das Pathos Spinozas die Absicht, das Sein zu formulieren, oder ein schlechthin

[178] Buber, *Nachman* 14.

> unerfüllbares Verlangen, wie das Pathos Philons und der Kabbala das Verlangen nach der Vermählung mit Gott, die im Sohar "Siwwug" genannt wird.[179]

The first three examples point toward pivotal moments in Jewish history, including Moses' reception of the Torah and Spinoza's philosophy—to which Buber later attributed "die Infragestellung des jüdischen Gottesglaubens."[180] And yet, despite (or perhaps because of) their status as pivotal moments, each of these three examples exists at the extreme boundaries of Jewish tradition: Spinoza as an excommunicated heretic, or Jesus and Paul as founders of a new religion. Perhaps most significantly, Buber invokes Moses as the giver of the law, and names him alongside the prophets who served as intermediaries between God and the Jewish people. This characterization of Moses—as opposed to the Moses who delivered the Jews from Egypt, for instance—recalls the inestimable gap between Moses and the Jewish people, when, upon his return with the law from Mt. Sinai, he found the Jews engaged in idol worship. Physically and socially distant from the people, yet bearing their most sacred text, Moses the lawgiver is perhaps Moses at both his most central and his most marginal vis-à-vis Jewish tradition. Likewise, as central as *Pathos* is to Jewish identity, history, and culture, it is always also the most marginal aspect of Jewishness.

By situating Kabbalah within the series Moses, Jesus, Spinoza, this passage discloses both the central importance of Jewish mysticism and its marginality in relation to Jewish history and tradition. In German-speaking Europe by the end of the nineteenth century, the *Haskalah* and movements such as the *Wissenschaft des Judentums* had relegated Jewish mysticism to a fringe phenomenon, far from mainstream Jewish religious practice. And yet, Buber insists that this marginalization was only superficial: "Die mystische Anlage ist den

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[179] Buber, *Nachman* 14.

[180] Martin Buber, "Geleitwort zur Gesamtausgabe," *Die Chassisdischen Bücher* (Hellerau: Verlag Jakob Hegner, 1928) xi.

Juden von Urzeiten her eigen, und ihre Äußerungen sind nicht, wie es gewöhnlich geschieht, als eine zeitweilig auftretende bewußte Reaktion gegen die Herrschaft des Verstandesordnung aufzufassen."[181] Mysticism has always accompanied other currents in Judaism; if it is a marginal phenomenon, it is nonetheless an ancient, authentic Jewish phenomenon, rooted in *Pathos*. Indeed, like *Selbstvertrauen*, *Pathos* serves as a means of connecting Jews and Jewish experience to Jewish history and tradition, even if that connection remains underground and marginal. *Pathos* lends the authenticity of Moses, Jesus, and Spinoza to Jewish mysticism.

If *Pathos* validates the Jewish mystical impulse as a central part of Jewish tradition, and if it provides the Jewish subject a foothold in the world outside itself, then the validation it offers and the foothold it affords are tenuous at best, for *Pathos* exists only in the perilous ground of the impossible. "So wird die Seele," Buber continues, "die in den wirklichen Dingen keinen Boden finden kann, von ihrer Leere und Unfruchtbarkeit erlöst, indem sie in dem Unmöglichen Wurzel schlägt."[182] As the *Wollen des Unmöglichen* that tethers the abstractness that is Jewish essence to the outermost extremes of concrete existence, *Pathos* also represents a will toward that which exists outside the Jewish subject, toward the world of individuated experience surrounding it, toward alterity itself.

The authenticity that *Pathos* lends to the Jewish mystical impulse is not sufficient to propel the historical development of Jewish mystical tradition. Because *Pathos* requires communion with the extra-Jewish—because it demands that the borders of the Jewish subject be transgressed—the development of Jewish mysticism necessarily depends upon a second force. As Buber explains: "Kommt demnach die Kraft der jüdischen Mystik aus einer

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[181] Buber, *Nachman* 12-13.

[182] Buber, *Nachman* 14.

ursprünglichen Eigenschaft des Volkes, das sie erzeugt hat, so hat sich des weiteren auch das Schicksal dieses Volkes eingeprägt."[183] Thus, the series Moses, Jesus, Spinoza, Kabbalah lays bare the symbiotic relationship between *Pathos* as the "Art des [jüdischen] Volkes"—as one of the two aspects of Jewishness that produce Jewish mysticism—and its counterpart: *Schicksal*, the fate and the historical circumstances of the Jewish people.[184] It is the interaction between the two that drives the development of Jewish mysticism.

Despite the rigid boundaries that determine the Jewish subject, the quality of *Pathos* constantly pushes the Jew to attempt to transcend these boundaries. *Schicksal* may best be understood as the consequence of such reaching beyond. Indeed, if *Pathos* is an inherently Jewish quality that bridges the walled-in Jewish subject with the extra-Jewish world, the unified world experienced through *Erlebnis* with the individuated world of *Erfahrung*, and *Diesseits* with *Jenseits*, then *Schicksal* similarly represents a specifically Jewish set of circumstances, in which the Jewish subject transgresses its boundaries. It is therefore appropriate that Buber casts *Schicksal* in diasporic terms:

> Das Wandern und das Martyrium der Juden haben ihre Seelen immer wieder in die Schwingungen der letzten Verzweifelung versetzt, aus denen so leicht der Blitz der Ekstase erwacht. Zugleich aber haben sie sie gehindert, den reinen Ausdruck der Ekstase auszubauen, und sie verleitet, Notwendiges, Erlebtes mit Überflüssigem, Aufgeklaubtem durcheinanderzuwerfen, und in dem Gefühle, das Eigene vor Pein nicht sagen zu können, am Fremden geschwätzig zu werden. So sind Schriften wie

[183] Buber, *Nachman* 15.

[184] Buber uses precisely these terms in his definition of *Blut* in his speech, "Das Judentum und die Juden." As he argues: "Die Gewalten, aus deren Wirkung sich das Menschenleben, Wesen und Geschick, aufbaut, sind Innerlichkeit und Umwelt: die Dispositionen, Eindrücke zu verarbeiten, und das eindringende Material. Die tiefste Schicht der Dispositionen aber, die dunkle schwere Schicht, die den Typus, das Knochengerüst der Personalität, hergibt, ist das, was ich das Blut nannte: das in uns, was die Kette der Väter und Mütter, *ihre Art und ihr Schicksal*, ihr Tun und ihr Leiden in uns gepflanzt haben, das große Erbe der Zeiten, das wir in die Welt mitbringen. Das tut uns Juden not zu wissen: es ist nicht bloß die Art der Väter, es ist auch ihr Schicksal, alles, Pein, Elend, Schande, all dies hat unser Wesen, hat unser Beschaffenheit mitgeformt. Das sollen wir ebenso fühlen und wissen, wie wir fühlen und wissen sollen, daß in uns lebt die Art der Propheten, der Sänger und der Könige Judas" ("Judentum" 224, my emphasis).

> der “Sohar”, das Buch des Glanzes, entstanden, die ein Entzücken und ein Abscheu sind.[185]

Buber explains the *Schicksal* of the Jews in terms of “wandering” and “martyrdom”—not dispersal per se, but nevertheless the conditions that the Jewish soul encounters outside of the exclusive realm of Jewishness. In this passage then, Diaspora becomes an enabling force (like *Pathos*), which leads to a heightened attunement to the ecstasies of mystical revelation, as well as a force that brings about the suppression of the purest expressions of *Pathos*. The ceaseless movements and persecutions of Diaspora life have gradually inscribed Jewish consciousness with a fear of the inability to convey Jewishness to the extra-Jewish realm. In turn, this fear, along with the essentially Jewish foreignness vis-à-vis the world of individuated things which Buber describes, leads the Jew to appropriate the superfluous trappings of other cultures in an attempt to express Jewish consciousness.

Pathos reaches out to Diaspora experience and initiates heightened ecstasy, while donning the banal garb of profane, everyday, superficial, non-Jewish existence. This process of accumulating external influences makes Jews in Diaspora less receptive to the (subjective, abstract) realm of inner experience, of *Erlebnis*, but it also gives rise to the some of the most profound expressions of Jewish spirituality and of the Jewish openness to the absolute. It is the oscillating cooperation and tension between *Pathos* and Diaspora that propel the development of Jewish mysticism. A product of this relationship, the *Zohar*—a text that emerged in Spain during the thirteenth-century and that forms the cornerstone of the canon of Kabbalah—thus marks a high point in the history of Jewish cultural achievement, while remaining marred by considerable flaws.

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[185] Buber, *Nachman* 15.

Beginning with this central example, Buber casts the development of Jewish mysticism—from the *Zohar*, via Lurianic Kabbalah, to Sabbateanism and Chassidism—as a constantly unfolding encounter between Jews and their environment. In fact, all of these mystical movements are products of European Diaspora Jewish culture, and they all represent the double bind of heightened ecstasy and muted expression that the interaction between *Pathos* and Diaspora enacts.[186] As the most recent link in this chain of development, Chassidism represents for Buber the zenith of Jewish mysticism, and the last best cultural expression of modern Jewish identity. And yet, as is the case with other forms of Jewish mysticism—and with the quality of *Pathos* itself—Chassidism is simultaneously marginal and essential. It originated in the region that Franzos called *Halb-Asien*, at the very edge of Europe, and throughout the nineteenth century, members of the *Haskalah* (i.e. the *maskilim*) and *mitnagdim* alike positioned Chassidism at the fringes of Jewish tradition, whether because of its East European origins or because the mystical practices associated with it were at odds both with Enlightenment ideals and with normative Judaism. Moreover, as I outlined above, for many assimilated German-speaking Jews and for the *Haskalah*, the Chassidim represented a backward fringe group with very little claim to "authentic" Jewishness; they were an anachronism, a living fossil that clung to the superstition and magic that had been purged from the modern, rational understanding of Jewishness.

For Buber, however, it is precisely this marginal position which allowed Chassidism to emerge and which makes the movement so essential to European-Jewish identity: "Polen hatte eine feste, durch die fremde, verachtende Umwelt in sich gestärkte jüdische

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[186] Lurianism arose in Safed (in the Galilee), but in a community populated by Jews from around the world, including Central Europe and especially Spain. See Scholem, *Kabbalah* 72, and Moshe Idel, *Messianic Mystics* (New Haven: Yale UP, 1998) 164.

Gemeinschaft, und zum ersten Mal seit der spanischen Blüte entwickelte sich hier ein eigenes Leben in Werken und Werten, eine dürftige und gebrechliche aber selbständige Kultur."[187] The doubly marginal position of the East European Jewish community vis-à-vis surrounding non-Jewish communities and vis-à-vis Western European Jewry and the *Haskalah* provided the impetus for Chassidism. The passage above even situates Chassidism alongside the flowering medieval Spanish-Jewish community that produced the *Zohar* and represented a proto-modern European enclave. Chassidism, then, is a model of Jewish cultural production in Diaspora in the vein of the golden age of Jewish culture in Arab-ruled Spain; it simultaneously represents the apex of an alternative tradition (Jewish mysticism) and of mainstream Jewish cultural production.

The alternative tradition in which Buber situates Chassidism is a tradition of reaching beyond the boundaries of Jewishness, and yet, as a product of *Pathos*, it has its roots in the very essence of Jewishness. Through *Pathos*, in fact, Chassidism lays claim to the heritage of mystical dispersal in Jewishness—a tradition of self-exile—not as the result of a fall or lapse, but as the product of a unifying impulse toward the extra-Jewish. Chassidism is not only born of Diaspora, but of the inherently Jewish will toward the extra-Jewish. Fractured and hybrid, the product of an eternal Jewish essence and of the constantly changing and eternally foreign outside world, Buber's Chassidism nevertheless successfully and productively bridges the ancient gap between the realm of the sealed Jewish subject and its non-Jewish environment. Through this alternative, unitary, and essentially Jewish tradition, moreover, Chassidism offers a mode of redemption for the modern problem of a fragmented world of individuation, and this redemptive potential extends to the realm of European- (and German-) Jewish identity.

[187] Buber, *Nachman* 20.

Indeed, by connecting ancient with modern and Jewish tradition with Diaspora culture, Buber's image of Chassidism marks an ideal of modern Jewish identity, built on the interaction of the essential Jewish quality of *Pathos* and the diasporic experience of the Jewish *Schicksal*, rather than on a hollow Jewish nationalism or official Jewish dogma. As he comments in the introduction to *Die Legende des Baalschem*: "Die chassidische Lehre ist das Stärkste und Eigenste, was die Diaspora geschaffen hat. Sie ist die Verkündigung der Widergeburt. Es wird keine Erneuerung des Judentums möglich sein, die nicht ihre Elemente in sich trüge."[188] For Buber, Chassidism represents a unique cultural and political alternative to assimilation, to political Zionism, and to the secularization and confessionalization of the Jewish cultural sphere. Indeed, as a particularly Jewish, particularly modern product of Diaspora, Chassidism offers the possibility of crafting an authentic European-Jewish identity, which requires neither assimilation into another culture, nor the transplantation of European-Jewry in another part of the world.

Buber's unbridled praise of the potential of Chassidism is somewhat misleading, however. In *Die Geschichten des Rabbi Nachman*, he does not advocate that his German-speaking readers move to Poland and seek out the guidance a Chassidic spiritual leader.[189] Nor is his embrace of Chassidism an embrace of widespread mystical practice; Buber doesn't publish a handbook of Kabbalah for German-speaking Jews. In fact, he argues that by the end of the nineteenth century, Chassidism had fallen into a state of degeneration, the main cause of which was, "daß der Chassidismus auch nach außenhin eine Forderung des

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[188] Buber, *Baalschem* vi.

[189] In this regard, as Ritchie Robertson notes, Buber shares much in common with Franzos: "Despite its enthusiasm, Buber's account of Hasidism is just as external as Franzos's. He did not join a Hasidic community […] and shows little interest in the life of Hasidim at the present day." See Ritchie Robertson, "Western Observers and Eastern Jews: Kafka, Buber, Franzos," *Modern Language Review* 8.1 (1988): 98.

Unmöglichen war: daß er vom Volke eine seelische Intensität und Sammlung verlangte, die es nicht besaß."[190] As a product of *Pathos*, Chassidism necessarily reached too far outside of the Jewish people and/or the Jewish subject to succeed. "Er gab [dem Volk] die Erlösung," Buber continues, "aber um einen Preis, den es nicht bezahlen konnte."[191] If Chassidism is a doomed phenomenon—akin to absolute love, absolute justice, and the codification of being—then how can it function as a model for crafting an authentic, modern German-Jewish identity? What are the elements of Chassidism that Buber posits as crucial for the regeneration of Jewish tradition? The answers to these questions lie in the specific image of mystical practice that Buber develops in his introduction to Nachman's tales.

Storytelling and the Performance of *Pathos*

For Buber, Rabbi Nachman's tales represent the cultural artifacts of a stable, intact European-Jewish tradition, and as such, they offer a window of authenticity for German Jews struggling with German-Jewish identity. This window discloses itself not in the tales themselves, however, but in their telling, and in *Die Geschichten des Rabbi Nachman*, Buber performs this telling by encasing the tales in layer after layer of external text, each of which undermines the stability of the tradition that Buber constructs. Although Chassidic mysticism stems from the ancient mystical interaction of *Pathos* and Diaspora, and although it represents a product of the essential integrative impulse that drives Jewish mysticism, for Buber it is above all a mysticism of storytelling, and it is in storytelling that he locates the redemptive potential of Chassidism. In fact, as I will demonstrate below, Buber uses the

[190] Buber, *Nachman* 25.
[191] Buber, *Nachman* 25.

mechanism of storytelling in his depiction of Chassidism in an attempt to redeem modern Jewishness through an invented, marginal tradition of constantly *reinventing* tradition.

The way in which Buber situates himself in relation to Chassidic tradition reveals the centrality of storytelling and of invented tradition in his image of the movement. He devotes a single-page section of his text—following the dedication and preceding the introduction to Jewish mysticism—in order to explain his position, and the first sentence of this section already underscores the question of storytelling and of invented tradition in the work: "Ich habe die Geschichten des Rabbi Nachman nicht übersetzt, sondern ihm nacherzählt, in aller Freiheit, aber aus seinem Geiste, wie er mir gegenwärtig ist."[192] Buber does not claim simply to be a translator who more-or-less faithfully conveys Nachman's stories into the German language. He does not even position himself as a compiler or redactor of the tales. Instead, he affords himself the freedom to retell—to reconfigure, reform, and reinvent—Nachman's tales, in the spirit of their original telling. Buber, in other words, claims a direct narrative descent from Nachman, with unique access to Nachman's intention, and to the mystical-cultural content of his tales; Buber is privy to the Chassidic tradition of storytelling that Nachman embodies, and to the (underground, alternative) tradition of Jewish mysticism that Chassidism in turn represents.

This position is rather precarious, and Buber attempts to bolster it by criticizing the accuracy of spirit of the written source of the stories, a second-hand retelling by one of Nachman's own students. As Buber explains: "Die Geschichten sind uns in einer Schülerniederschrift erhalten, die die ursprüngliche Erzählung offenbar maßlos entstellt und verzerrt hat. Wie sie uns vorliegen, sind sie verworren, weitschweifig und von unedler

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[192] Buber, *Nachman* 9.

Form."[193] Because Nachman's stories are only available as second-hand retellings, in their recorded form they lack the fullness of the original. Only occasionally do individual sparks of Nachman's spirit shine through in the written version of the stories, and Buber attempted to preserve these and build upon them: "Ich war bemüht, alle Elemente der originalen Fabel, die sich mir durch ihre Kraft und Farbigkeit als solche erwiesen, unberührt zu erhalten." [194] Buber thus positions himself as a natural successor to Nachman, who has the unique ability to recognize, reinvigorate, and recuperate the "spirit" of Nachman's tales, omitting that which is superfluous, dead, and distorted.

Buber has drawn considerable criticism for precisely these omissions, however. Gilman notes that Buber "excludes the supernatural, as one would expect from a German writer steeped in the rational tradition, while claiming to reflect the antirationalist tradition within Judaism."[195] Scholem argues that in concentrating on the stories, legends and myths of the Chassidim, Buber paints only half of the picture, an approach that he likens to attempting "den Katholizismus zu beschreiben, indem man die schönsten Aussprüche der Heiligen der Kirche auswählt und deutet, ohne sich um die dogmatische Theologie der Kirche zu kümmern."[196] While these criticisms are certainly justified from an anthropological or a historical standpoint, and while Buber certainly offers a skewed and stylized image of Chassidism, both Scholem and Gilman fail to read Buber's work on its own terms. Scholem's critique assumes that Buber is striving for historical accuracy in his reception of Chassidism, while Gilman understands Buber's project as a means of revaluing certain Jewish

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[193] Buber, *Nachman* 9.
[194] Buber, *Nachman* 9.

[195] Gilman, *Self-Hatred* 276.

[196] Scholem, "Buber" 179-180.

stereotypes. A closer look at how Buber understands the mechanism of Chassidic stories—and particularly the "spirit" of Nachman's telling of his tales—reveals that Buber has a rather different agenda: to provide a source of material from which to reinvigorate modern Jewish identity.

Buber offers a clue to the nature of this spirit—and to the ultimate intention of, and mechanism behind, Nachman's storytelling—in yet another layer of introductory material preceding the tales themselves: a brief sketch of Nachman's biography. In this sketch, Buber uses Nachman's life story to illustrate the unique situation of Chassidism as a means of uncovering *Erlebnis* experience, of bridging the essentially-Jewish and the non-Jewish, and of redeeming a fractured modern Jewish identity. According to Buber's account, Nachman grew up in the Polish city of Międzybórz, where he struggled with his own quest for spirituality. He reaches a turning point in his life at the age of fourteen, when he marries and moves to the country, to the village of his father-in-law.[197] Here Nachman encounters a radically foreign environment:

> Hier kam er zum ersten Male der Natur nahe, und sie griff ihm ans innere Herz. Den Juden, der nach einer in der Enge der Stadt verlebten Kindheit in Jünglingsjahren in das freie Land hinauskommt, erfaßt eine namenlose, dem Nichtjuden unbekannte Gewalt. Ihm hat eine tausend Jahre lang Vererbung der Naturfremdheit die Seele in Banden gehalten. Und nun ihn, wie in einem zauberhaften Reiche, statt des graugelben Tones der Gasse, Waldgrün und Waldblüte umgibt, stürzen auf einmal die Mauren seines Geistesghettos nieder, die die Macht des Vegetativen berührt hat. Selten hat sich dieses Erleben in so eindringlichem Einflusse kundgegeben, wie bei Nachman. Der Hang zur Askese weicht von ihm, der innere Streit endet, er braucht sich um die Offenbarung nicht mehr zu mühen, leicht und froh findet er seinen Gott in allen Dingen.[198]

The abstract interaction of *Pathos* and Diaspora that Buber describes as the motor of Jewish mysticism takes on personal contours in this passage. For Nachman to recognize the divine

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[197] Buber, *Nachman* 29.

[198] Buber, *Nachman* 29.

presence in all things, he first had to escape the walls of the ghetto and the bonds of his own foreignness vis-à-vis the outside world.

What's more, by moving from the confines of the city, Nachman performs the act of reaching outside the Jewish subject as demanded by *Pathos*—he steps away from the millennial inheritance of "Naturfremdheit" out to the margins of Jewish experience. As a Jew living in the country—or, more precisely, as a Jew living beyond the confines of the city—Nachman takes his place in the lineage of marginal Jews that Buber enumerates in his history of Jewish mysticism: Moses, the Prophets, Jesus, Paul, Spinoza, and the practitioners of Kabbalah. Nachman embraces the uniquely Jewish urge to reach beyond his uniquely Jewish boundaries, and thereby opens himself to the revelation of the unifying presence of the divine in all things; he repairs the fissures that divide him from the world and his *Erlebnis* experience from *Erfahrung*. His experience as a marginal Jew allows him to redeem the gulf between subject and object, between self and environment.

It is crucial to note that the revelation that the passage above describes is personal and individual, despite that the content of Nachman's revelation involves the awareness of non-individuation. Moreover, the kind of redemption that occurs is not a wholesale, messianic redemption, and it does not bring about apocalyptic changes. Instead, the redemptive force that Buber locates in Nachman's biography—and in Chassidism—is enacted at the level of the individual subject. However, Chassidism is accessible to everyone, marking a sharp departure from preceding developments in Jewish mysticism. The mystical practice of Kabbalah, especially, was restricted to the initiated, and despite the impulse of *Pathos* to reach beyond the boundaries of Jewishness, the redemptive potential of the Kabbalah

remained esoteric, sequestered within notoriously difficult texts, until it gradually approached the sovereign status of dogma, lacking redemptive potential.[199]

During Nachman's life, Buber explains, Chassidism was threatened with a similar process of dogmatization and institutionalization. Although it offered each individual a path to the divine through even the most banal aspects of life, Chassidic mysticism—as an authentic product of "das Wollen des Unmöglichen"—demanded too much intensity and too much concentration from its practitioners.[200] Thus, a class of intermediaries emerged, the Zaddikim, which served to connect the community at large with the realm of the divine.[201] "Der Zaddik machte die chassidische Gemeinde reicher an Gottessicherheit, aber unendlich ärmer an dem einzig Wertvollen: dem eigenen Suchen und Eifern."[202] The Zaddikim provided the people with a connection to the spiritual realm, making the individual quest for a connection to that realm superfluous. As the Zaddikim grew stronger, Chassidism began to degenerate into yet another official form of worship—a mere sect lacking its original redemptive potential.[203] The question thus remains: How does Nachman's personal revelation of unity bear redemptive potential for German-Jews? Or, more broadly, what is the relationship between Nachman's individual bridge between *Erlebnis* and *Erfahrung* and the

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[199] Buber, *Nachman* 16. See also Buber, *Baalschem* iv-v. At least one scholarly account corroborates Buber's construction of the esotericism of Lurianic Kabbalah. In a recent essay on Hasidic publishing, Zeev Gries details the reluctance of one late eighteenth-century editor, Solomon of Lutsk, to compile a set of the teachings of the Maggid of Mezhirech, a famous Zaddik. As Gries explains, "[T]he teachings of Luria had been addressed to a select group of intimate disciples and were not intended for wider circulation. They were liable to be misunderstood, and Solomon of Lutsk was reluctant to make them accessible to the unqualified readership through the publication of the 'Lurianic' homilies of the Maggid of Mezhirech." See Zeev Gries, "The Hasidic Managing Editor," *Hasidism Reappraised*, ed. Ada Rapoport-Albert (London: Littman Library of Jewish Civilization, 1996) 150.

[200] Buber, *Nachman* 25.

[201] Buber, *Nachman* 25.

[202] Buber, *Nachman* 25.

[203] Buber, *Nachman* 25.

problem of modern European-Jewish identity? For Buber, the impetus of Nachman's revelation is crucial; it is a result of an individual acting on the impulse of Jewish *Pathos*—Nachman moves out of the ghetto and into the country. Chassidic mysticism, in other words, is the mysticism of everyday life—of *Pathos* performed—or as Buber puts it: "Der Chassidismus ist die Ethos gewordene Kabbala."[204]

According to Buber, Nachman recognized that the elitism of the Zaddikim—like the esotericism of Kabbalah—threatened to undermine the redemptive potential of Chassidism, and he sought to counter this trend with his teachings.[205] Universality took center stage: not only was Chassidic mysticism accessible to everyone, but in order to maintain its vitality and to truly function as a redemptive force, it required everyone to open themselves to *Erlebnis* experience. As Buber explains:

> Was die Kabbala nie gewesen war, sollte werden; die Lehre sollte von Mund zu Ohr gehen und wieder von Mund zu Ohr, sich stetig aus dem Reich der noch ungeborenen Worte erweiternd, getragen von einer unaufhörlich sich ergänzenden Schar der Boten, in jedem Geschlecht die Geister erweckend, die Welt verjüngend, "die Wildnis der Herzen in einer Wohnstätte Gottes wandelnd". Aber er erkannte, daß er zu solchem Lehren die Kraft nicht aus den Büchern, sondern nur aus wirklichem Leben mit den Menschen und in ihnen schöpfen konnte.[206]

If Chassidism was to become a lived tradition then it must be accessible to the masses, and it must effect an organic change among the people. That is, just as Nachman had to become a marginal Jew before his own revelation of *Erlebnis*, in his teachings he sought to bring the margins of Jewish tradition—the mystical interplay between *Pathos* and Diaspora—into the everyday lives of the Chassidim. Unlike the mysticism of Kabbalah, which was ghettoized inside immutable, esoteric texts, everyday Chassidic life took on the qualities of mystical

[204] Buber, *Nachman* 20.

[205] Buber, *Nachman* 31.

[206] Buber, *Nachman* 31.

practice, because the Chassidim allowed the divine presence to permeate their hearts and indeed the world. Chassidic mysticism involved tapping into a Jewish tradition that was both spiritual and profane—it represented life lived in an intact Jewish realm. At the same time, Chassidism in Buber's text eschews the dogma and empty ritual that Buber equated with official Judaism; Chassidism was not only a lived tradition, but a living one. In fact, in order to make an ethos of Kabbalah, the message of non-individuation through the divine presence—the revelation of *Erlebnis*—must be transmitted orally, as the above passage suggests, and not in esoteric texts. The schism between the Jew and his environment would be healed one person at a time.

Here an apparent paradox surfaces in Buber's rendering of Nachman's teachings: *Erlebnis* experience cannot be directly transmitted as language. It is an experience that comes from within the subject and it is unique to the subject, even as it serves to unite all things—*Erlebnis* lies beyond the pale of language. According to Buber, Nachman recognized this problem, and Buber describes an immense struggle in the process of articulating his teachings: "[Nachman] sagt kein Wort der Belehrung, das nicht durch vieles Leiden gegangen ist […]. Das Wort bildet sich spät in ihm; die Lehre ist bei ihm zuerst Erlebnis und wird dann erst Gedanke, das ist Wort; 'ich habe in mir,' sagte er, 'Lehren ohne Kleider, und es ist mir gar schwer, bis sie sich einkleiden.'"[207] Nachman's message begins as *Erlebnis*; language is only its temporary and almost incompatible vestment.

Nevertheless, language remained a central component to his mystical project, and Nachman seemed to privilege the incongruence of language with the *Erlebnis* experience that it attempts to transmit. If language necessarily fails to convey *Erlebnis* experience, it may

[207] Buber, *Nachman* 34-35.

still elicit such experience from within the listener: “Das Entscheidende jedoch ist für Nachman, seiner Auffassung des Wortes gemäß, nicht die Wirkung auf den Sprechenden, sondern die auf den Hörenden.” [208] For Nachman, the effect of his teaching is that the listener becomes a speaker—the receiver transmits the teaching anew. Indeed, as Buber continues, “[D]ie Seele des Schülers soll so in ihren Tiefen erweckt und berufen werden, daß aus ihr und nicht aus der des Meisters das Wort geboren wird, das den obersten Sinn der Lehre kündet und so das Gespräch in sich erfüllt.”[209] The word is transmitted from mouth to ear until it gradually permeates the community. In the process, the word (as a mere garment for Nachman’s teaching) emerges as malleable and freely changed. The teachings of Rabbi Nachman do not become static, fixed, or dogmatic. Each telling is simultaneously a retelling, a recasting, and a process of re-clothing *Erlebnis* experience in linguistic form.

The passages above illustrate how storytelling takes center stage in the redemptive project of the Chassidim. Storytelling allows everyone to participate in a mystical tradition, but unlike the texts of Kabbalah (or even the Talmud and Torah) the intention of the story does not allow itself to become institutionalized. Moreover, the process of retelling constantly rejuvenates the mystical tradition of Chassidism with the unpredictable, mutable, and unfettered spoken word. Finally, as I will discuss further in the next section, storytelling remains closely tied to everyday experience. In this passage, then, Buber uses Nachman’s biography to recount (or indeed invent) the framework of a Jewish tradition of lived mysticism that constantly reinvents itself through storytelling. By emphasizing the tradition of storytelling in Chassidism, in other words, Buber authenticates his own reception of the

[208] Buber, *Nachman* 35-36.

[209] Buber, *Nachman* 36.

movement as part of that tradition, while casting the invention of tradition as a model for Jewish renewal.

Buber underscores storytelling even more in his introduction to *Die Legende des Baalschem*, where, as he does in his introduction to Nachman's stories, he admits to freely appropriating and retelling the stories.[210] He does not claim to report on a tradition, but to actively participate in it. As he continues: "Ich stehe in der Kette der Erzähler, ein Ring zwischen Ringen, ich sage noch einmal die alte Geschichte, und wenn sie neu klingt, so schlief das Neue in ihr schon damals, als sie zum ersten Mal gesagt wurde."[211] By actively bringing the tradition of Chassidic storytelling into the German cultural sphere, Buber reinvigorates German-Jewish culture with new material, all the while insisting that this material is not new at all. This tradition conveys an authentic European-Jewish cultural heritage, but it draws its vitality from always reinventing the material of this heritage. Buber casts this function in mystical terms near the end of his introduction: "Die Legende ist der Mythos des Ich und Du, des Berufenen und des Berufenden, des Endlichen, der ins Unendliche eingeht, und des Unendlichen, der des Endlichen bedarf."[212] For Buber, then, the spoken word, when given the form of a story, myth or legend, is both the bearer of mystical revelation and of cultural memory. It draws *Erlebnis* experience from within the subject and projects it into the atmosphere, reaching out to other subjects and stimulating similar experiences in them, while perpetuating itself as an oral tradition that resists institutionalization.

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[210] Buber, *Baalschem* ii.

[211] Buber, *Baalschem* ii.

[212] Buber, *Baalschem* vi-vii.

In *Die Geschichten des Rabbi Nachman* and *Die Legende des Baalschem*, Buber constructs an opposition between the spoken word and the text, privileging the mutability of the former above the durability of the latter. It is precisely this mutability that preserves and perpetuates the underground Jewish tradition that he posits in Chassidism.[213] Because it is a lived tradition—an intact, all-encompassing ethos of Jewishness—Chassidism represents for Buber a model for mending the fissures in modern European-Jewish identity. Through this image of Chassidic mysticism, Jewishness reveals itself as a process rather than a state, and it opens itself to the possibility of renewal and redemption via a constant encounter with its own margins. In fact, because Buber depicts Chassidism as a living tradition, the redeemed Jewish identity that he posits also relies upon a self-consciously invented and reinvented tradition of oral storytelling, and not the stagnant word of institutionalized doctrine, passed down in immutable texts. However, in raising the opposition between the spoken word and the text, Buber also engages with a broader concern with language and medium in German and German-Jewish thought since the Enlightenment. Thus, as I will show in the next section, by invoking a crisis of language in Chassidism, Buber brings his image of that movement into the very heart of German modernity.

[213] Buber's depiction of the Chassidism as privileging oral literature over the written word is one moment in which Buber strays particularly far from the historical record. Dynner documents an explosion of Chassidic literature beginning around 1780, which he attributes to a transition from manuscript to print literature in a self-conscious attempt to "disseminate the zaddik-idea throughout eastern Europe's entire Hebrew readership" (*Silk* 201). Moreover, Dynner notes that Chassidic literature was often printed in Hebrew, rather than the vernacular Yiddish (208-209). Of course, two major exceptions were *Shivhei ha-Besht* and *Sippurei Ma'asiyot*, which were published in Hebrew and Yiddish, and which correspond to Buber's *Die Legende des Baalschem* and *Die Geschichten des Rabbi Nachman*, respectively (209). In fact, these were the only two collections of Chassidic tales (as opposed to homiletic literature) in print during the first half of the nineteenth century (218).

IV. Chassidism and Crises of Experience, Language, and Subjectivity

In the previous section, I examined several parallels between Kafka's notion of *Selbstvertrauen* and Buber's *Pathos*. According to their respective authors, both qualities are inherently Jewish, and both are means of grounding the Jew in Jewish tradition. But the two notions diverge in their articulation. Kafka presents *Selbstvertrauen* as part of a discussion of a linguistic phenomenon, rendering it inextricable from the Yiddish language. *Pathos*, on the other hand, emerges in Buber's text as part of a theory of perception. In fact, the integrative, unifying impulse of *Pathos* necessarily reaches beyond language, and yet, as his emphasis on Chassidic storytelling suggests, language is nevertheless central to Buber's reception of Chassidism. In fact, as I will demonstrate below, for Buber, the key to the possibility of fashioning an authentic modern European-Jewish identity lies in a crisis of language within Jewish mysticism. Furthermore, by invoking this language crisis, Buber engages with broader discourses of language and subjectivity that were prevalent during the fin-de-siècle and in modernity more generally.

Many contemporary scholars emphasize a unique linguistic component in Buber's reception of Chassidism. Gilman, for instance, argues that Buber takes as his task creating a special language for the Jews, and he observes that Buber "casts these [Chassidic] tales, which are to be a reflection of the truly Jewish mode of discourse, in a language that is itself quite unique."[214] Witte takes this sentiment further, situating Buber in a long-standing "Jewish" linguistic tradition. According to Witte, this tradition began with the revelation of the Holy Scripture to Moses, an episode that discloses two unique aspects of the Jewish understanding of language: it establishes a significant distinction between oral and written

[214] Gilman, *Self-Hatred* 275-276.

speech, and it privileges the immediacy of the former over the mediated, distanced quality of the latter, thus emphasizing, he argues, the necessity of oral commentary to supplement the inferior word of the text.[215]

For Witte, then, Jewish literary tradition is a tradition of commentary—a concern with language as a medium—and as I noted in the introduction of this chapter, this unique understanding of the distinction between written and oral language, along with the resulting tradition of commentary, represents *the* Jewish contribution to modern German literature and culture, in his view.[216] As Witte describes this tradition: "In der Tat muß Sprache als Schrift als 'transkriptives' Phänomen charakterisiert werden, sie setzt also eine Vor-Schrift voraus, die der Schreibende von seiner aktuellen Erfahrung her neu schreibt. Dadurch unterscheidet sie sich von der unmittelbaren Präsenz der Stimme, die sich in der gesprochenen Sprache artikuliert."[217] In other words, Jewish literary tradition presupposes a fundamental schism between speech and script, between the spoken and written word, which only enters German literature via Jewish authors who are aware of—and participating in—this tradition. More importantly, as Witte argues, this schism is a uniquely modern phenomenon in German culture, initiated during the Enlightenment, at the dawn of German-Jewish modernity, in Mendelssohn's 1783 defense of Judaism, *Jerusalem, oder über religiöse Macht und Judenthum*.[218] Thus, in contrast with Gilman, Witte sees Buber's reception of Chassidism less as a project of creating a new language than one of engaging with and furthering an existing tradition of literary commentary.

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[215] Witte, *Tradition* 9-10.

[216] Witte, *Tradition* 10.

[217] Witte, *Tradition* 10.

[218] Witte, *Tradition* 10-11.

If we set aside, for a moment, the essentializing nature of his analysis, Witte offers interesting insight into Buber's reception of Chassidism, especially in his argument that "Bubers Verfahren [steht] immer noch in der Kontinuität dessen, was im traditionellen Judentum 'mündliche Lehre' heißt."[219] Moreover, to the extent that Buber depicts Chassidic storytelling as a process of reinventing and recasting the revelation of *Erlebnis* experience, as I discussed in the previous section, his work certainly demonstrates a concern with commentary as a mode of producing literature, and he seems to privilege oral speech over the written word in *Die Geschichten des Rabbi Nachman* and *Die Legende des Baalschem*. But the modern German manifestation of the Jewish literary tradition (from Mendelssohn to Benjamin) which Witte identifies—and with which Buber engages—is more than merely a tradition of commentary or of distinguishing between written and spoken language. As I will discuss in this section, Mendelssohn, Buber, and Benjamin all represent positions in a discourse of language criticism which identifies experiential consequences in such distinction. Moreover, this discourse became particularly acute in Vienna around the fin-de-siècle. Thus, while Buber's project of retelling Chassidic tales may draw on a "Jewish" tradition of commentary, it primarily engages with a broader question regarding the connection between language, subjectivity and modern experience. Below, I will examine Buber's position in this broad discourse by reading his work alongside texts by Mendelssohn and Benjamin.

[219] Witte, *Tradition* 124. Even if we bracket the essentialist nature of Witte's construction of "the" Jewish literary tradition, this conception remains problematic precisely because it posits a radical schism between oral and written text. Jonathan Boyarin, for one, notes the inextricable connection between text and dialogue in the study of both the Bible and the Talmud. See Jonathan Boyarin, "Voices around the Text: The Ethnography of Reading at Mesivta Tifereth Jerusalem," *Cultural Anthropology* 4.4 (1989): 414-415.

Storytelling and Modern Experience

As Witte notes, in *Jerusalem*, Mendelssohn invokes the distinction between the spoken word and written text, although in an apparently innocuous digression. However, as Arnold Eisen points out, Mendelssohn's critique of the written word forms the "cornerstone of Mendelssohn's entire redefinition of Judaism," while at the same time creating moments of tension in his argument.[220] According to Mendelssohn, the proliferation of print media has caused a great shift in modern culture (Jewish and non-Jewish), in that the spoken word has lost its once presumed supremacy over the text.[221] As he explains: "Wir lehren und unterrichten einander nur in Schriften, lernen die Natur und die Menschen kennen nur aus Schriften, arbeiten und erholen, erbauen und ergötzen uns durch Schreiberei, der Prediger unterhält sich nicht mit seiner Gemeinde, er liest oder declamirt ihr eine aufgeschriebene Abhandlung vor."[222] Not only has the written word begun to gain favor in modern culture, but it has all but replaced the spoken word, and this shift has introduced a perceptible distance between individuals—even the task of the preacher has shifted from oration to writing.

Although Mendelssohn does not posit the rise of the text as entirely negative (he attributes to it the potential for great progress and for the rapid spread of Enlightenment ideals), he does note considerable consequences, including above all the decline in value of lived human experience (*Erfahrung*), and an increasing dependence upon the written word.

[220] Arnold Eisen, "Divine Legislation as 'Ceremonial Script': Mendelssohn on the Commandments," *AJS Review* 15.2 (1990): 240. To engage with the vast and rich body of scholarship that exists on Mendelssohn's text lies beyond the scope of this project. Eisen, however, offers one of the more nuanced interpretations of Mendelssohn's critique of written language in *Jerusalem*.

[221] Moses Mendelssohn, *Jerusalem, oder über religiöse Macht und Judenthum*, in *Schriften zur Philosophie, Aesthetik und Apologetik II: Schriften zur Psychologie, Aesthetik, sowie zur Apolgetik des Judentums*, ed. Moritz Brasch (Hildesheim: Gerog Olms Verlgsbuchhandlung, 1968) 435.

[222] Mendelssohn, *Jerusalem* 435.

As he explains: "Wir brauchen des erfahrenen Mannes nicht, wir brauchen nur seine Schriften. Mit einem Worte, wir sind *litterati*, B u c h s t a b e n m e n s c h e n. Vom Buchstaben hängt unser ganzes Wesen ab, und wir können kaum begreifen, wie ein Erdensohn sich bilden und vervollkommnen kann ohne B u c h."[223] Instead of relying on the experience of elders (or experts)—or on one's own experience—to gain knowledge of the world, the modern person needs only to peruse a book. This passage points to a growing condition of isolation among individuals, and a widening divide between life and knowledge, because, as Eisen points out, for Mendelssohn the written word is a less reliable path to knowledge than the spoken word, which requires context and thus necessarily develops historically.[224]

As a result of such isolation and fragmentation, Mendelssohn argues, the modern subject not only has grown dependent on texts, but on mediation itself in order to process the stimuli that it receives from its faculty of perception. As he continues: "Kaum fühlt [der Mensch] den seiner Seele eingesenkten Sporn, aus diesen äußern Eindrücken sich Begriffe zu bilden, so wird er die Notwendigkeit gewahr, sie an sinnliche Zeichen zu binden, nicht nur, um sie anderen mittheilen, sondern um sie für sich selbst festhalten, und so oft es nöthig ist, wieder beachten zu können."[225] In other words, not only does the prominence of textual culture reduce the value of lived experience, but in Mendelssohn's analysis, because the written word isolates the reader, and because it divides life from knowledge, it changes the character of experience itself. Experience requires ever more mediation.

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[223] Mendelssohn, *Jerusalem* 436.

[224] As Eisen explains, "[Oral discussion] confers a fluidity on concepts themselves, enhanced over time by the changing usage and meaning of the words used in speech to transmit the concepts. Those changes ironically serve truth, which is ungraspable by more direct means in any event. Speech allows for constant change in our concepts and facilitates that change" ("Legislation" 246).

[225] Mendelssohn, *Jerusalem* 436-437.

Of course, as Eisen makes clear, Mendelssohn's analysis is somewhat problematic for his broader position, in which he seeks to defend Judaism as a religion of revealed legislation, rather than revealed truths.[226] How can Mendelssohn advocate that Jews follow the (recorded, scriptural) law of the Torah and Talmud when he bemoans the immutability of the written word? For Mendelssohn, the solution lies in an understanding of the law as ceremony, that is, as performance. Jewish law is something to be carried out, and because it is performed again and again, generation after generation, it serves as a kind of living text, which "mit allen Veränderungen der Zeiten und Umstände gleichen Schritt halten, und nach dem Bedürfnisse, nach der Fähigkeit und Fassungskraft des Lehrlings abgeändert und gemodelt werden kann."[227] For Mendelssohn, then, practice makes perfect. The ceremonial law of Judaism is a viable text precisely because—and only when—it is carried out in everyday life; the law maintains its validity because, like the spoken word, Jewish ceremony develops historically.

Like Mendelssohn, Buber also casts the modern supremacy of the text—and the consequent dependence upon mediation—as something problematic in his early reception of Chassidism. Indeed, just as Mendelssohn privileges the lived (ceremonial) aspect of Jewish law, Buber's vision of Chassidic mysticism revolves around an oral tradition of storytelling that brings the immediacy of *Erlebnis* experience into everyday life. As I demonstrated above, Buber favored these tales over the mystical practice of Kabbalah precisely because the mystical power of the latter was trapped in esoteric writings, and he likewise describes the mediating function of the Zaddikim as the ultimate downfall of Chassidism. Indeed, both authors identify the textualization of knowledge and the decontextualization of experience as

[226] Eisen, "Legislation" 242-248.

[227] Mendelssohn, *Jerusalem* 434.

central problems for modern European Jews, even if Buber posits Chassidism as an alternative to the fragmentation of the Jewish cultural sphere that Mendelssohn and his generation ushered in. However, despite the shared diagnosis in their respective projects, Buber and Mendelssohn offer radically divergent solutions to these problems. For Mendelssohn, the solution lies in the practice of Jewish ceremonial law. Buber's solution also involves a kind of daily performance, but not of the rituals of official religion. Instead, Buber promotes the underground tradition of mysticism, which conveys itself into everyday life via *Mythos*, a notion that he explains in *Die Legende des Baalschem*.

Buber describes *Mythos* as a Jewish spiritual tradition locked in a constant struggle with official Judaism, and he goes so far as to claim that the "Geschichte der jüdischen Religion ist die Geschichte ihres Kampfes gegen den Mythos."[228] Official Judaism, that is, forces *Mythos* underground, and while the former may bear the outward forms of Jewishness through history—its dogma and its ceremony—the latter bears its true spiritual content. In the case of Chassidism, Buber explains, *Mythos* gains the upper hand in this struggle, and among the Chassidim it was able to transmit the spiritual expression of both mysticism and of folklore or legend (*Sage*): "In ihm [i.e., Chassidismus] strömen Mystik und Sage zur Einheit zusammen. Die Mystik wird Besitz des Volkes, und zugleich nimmt sie die ganze Erzählerglut der Sage in sich auf."[229] Unlike the dead and dogmatic texts of official Judaism, in other words, in Chassidism, the folktale or legend keeps the revelation of Jewish mysticism—its dance of *Pathos* and *Schicksal*—among the people and close to everyday life. *Mythos*, then, denotes both the redemptive revelation of Jewish mysticism and the vehicle that bears such revelation.

[228] Buber, *Baalschem* iv.

[229] Buber, *Baalschem* v.

Indeed, as the mechanism of bringing an awareness of *Erlebnis* experience into everyday life, the folktale forms the center of Buber's image of Chassidic mystical practice. As I discussed in the previous section, Rabbi Nachman's tales were the vehicles of his own awareness of *Erlebnis*, and were designed to elicit *Erlebnis* experience in the listener—making the listener another storyteller. The Chassidic folktale thus claims a double connection to everyday life: it forms the mundane garb of *Erlebnis* experience, and it represents the participation in a cultural tradition of elaborating such experience. As more and more listeners become storytellers, the revelation of Chassidic mysticism is never far from the people—it hangs on everyone's lips. Buber's celebration of Chassidic storytelling thus serves as a response to the kinds of problems that Mendelssohn identified in the modern rise of the text. Although Mendelssohn was concerned with the outer experience collected through interaction with the world (*Erfahrung*), and Buber with inner experience (*Erlebnis*), for Buber, as for Mendelssohn, oral language necessitates a close connection among individuals in a community, and it narrows the fissure between knowledge and everyday life.

The celebration of storytelling in Buber's concept of *Mythos* (and in his reception of Chassidism more generally) also anticipates the work of Walter Benjamin, another cultural critic and theorist of modernity. In his famous 1936 essay, "Der Erzähler," Benjamin likewise addresses the connection between modern experience (*Erfahrung*) and the dichotomy of oral and written speech.[230] "Erfahrung," he observes, echoing Mendelssohn,

[230] To say that Benjamin's discussion of experience has generated a considerable amount of scholarly discussion would be an understatement. See, for instance: Martin Jay, "Experience without a Subject: Walter Benjamin and the Novel," *Cultural Semantics: Keywords of Our Time* (Amherst: U Massachusetts P, 1998) 47-61, 211-215. Michael W. Jennings, *Dialectical Images: Walter Benjamin's Theory of Literary Criticism* (Ithaca: Cornell UP, 1987). For a more extended discussion of "Der Erzähler," see Peter Brooks, "The Tale vs. The Novel," *Novel: A Forum on Fiction* 21.2-3 (1988): 285-292.

“ist im Kurse gefallen. Und es sieht aus, als fiele sie weiter ins Bodenlose.”[231] Drawing on this observation—and on Marxist theories of production—Benjamin establishes an opposition between the story, as the oral transmission of *Erfahrung*, and the novel, as the expression of the author’s isolation. As he explains:

> Es hebt den Roman gegen alle übrigen Formen der Prosadichtung – Märchen, Sage, ja selbst Novelle – ab, daß er aus mündlicher Tradition weder kommt noch in sie eingeht. Vor allem aber gegen das Erzählen. Der Erzähler nimmt, was er erzählt, aus der Erfahrung; aus der eigenen oder Berichteten. Und er macht es widerum zur Erfahrung derer, die seiner Geschichte zuhören. Der Romancier hat sich abgeschieden. Die Geburtskammer des Romans ist das Individuum in seiner Einsamkeit […].[232]

The novel is not part of oral tradition, and its rise marks an acute increase of individuation, an ever-widening sense of isolation among individual novelists and individual readers. Like Buber, Benjamin seems to privilege oral speech over the written word, because of the former’s capacity for creating community.

Indeed, Benjamin and Buber both address a problem of *modern* experience, and both make the distinction between *Erlebnis* and *Erfahrung*. However, as Martin Jay has shown, Benjamin’s understanding of these two forms of experience departs significantly from Buber’s.[233] Buber is concerned that *Erlebnis* experience is on the decline, and that the human being experiences the world in terms of individuation. For Benjamin—as for Mendelssohn—

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[231] Walter Benjamin, “Der Erzähler,” *Gesammelte Schriften: Aufsätze, Essays, Vorträge*, eds. Rolf Tiedemann and Hermann Schweppenhäuser, with the collaboration of Theodor W. Adorno and Gershom Scholem, vol. II (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 1991) 439.

[232] Benjamin, “Erzähler” II: 443.

[233] As Jay argues: “What set Benjamin apart from his predecessors was his disdain for both the alleged immediacy and meaningfulness of *Erlebnis* and the overly rational, disinterested version of *Erfahrung* defended by the positivists and neo-Kantians” (“Experience” 48-49).

the decline in value of *Erfahrung* has a direct correlation to the isolation of the modern subject.[234]

This difference in terminology is somewhat misleading, however. Both Buber and Benjamin employ notions of experience that deal with the question of community. Buber is interested in finding the unity of all things through individual, subjective *Erlebnis* experience, and in transgressing the rigid borders of the Jewish subject. For his part, Benjamin laments the dissolution of community that the modern proliferation of the printed word has enacted, preferring, as Jay describes it, "the cumulative, totalizing accretion of transmittable wisdom, of epic truth, which was *Erfahrung*."[235] But for Benjamin—as for Buber—storytelling has highly personal, individual dimensions. The story is not a mass-produced product of the printing press, but it instead bears the marks of an individual artisan. As he explains:

> Die Erzählung, wie sie im Kreis des Handwerks […] lange gedeiht, ist selbst eine gleichsam handwerkliche Form der Mitteilung. Sie legt es nicht darauf an, das pure "an sich" der Sache zu überliefern wie eine Information oder ein Rapport. Sie senkt die Sache in das Leben des Berichtenden ein, um sie wieder aus ihm hervorzuholen. So haftet an der Erzählung die Spur des Erzählenden wie die Spur der Töpferhand an der Tonschale.[236]

Like an artisan, the storyteller colors his story with traces of his own life, and thus each telling bears the unique mark—like fingerprints left in a clay pot—of its teller. This vision of storytelling mirrors the mechanism behind Nachman's mystical message. Nachman could not communicate the bare revelation of *Erlebnis* experience—the pure "an sich" of his message. Before bringing his teachings forth as stories, it was necessary for him to steep them in his

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[234] Consider, for instance: "Wer einer Geschichte zuhört, der ist in der Gesellschaft des Erzählers; selbst wer liest, hat an dieser Gesellschaft teil. Der Leser eines Romans ist aber einsam" (Benjamin, "Erzähler" II: 456).
[235] Jay, "Experience" 49.

[236] Benjamin, "Erzähler" II: 447.

own life, his own language, and his own *Erfahrung*. Thus, Nachman's stories, while serving as a vehicle for his personal revelation of *Erlebnis*, also bear the traces of his *Erfahrung*, and of the *Erfahrung* of each subsequent storyteller.

If the passage from Benjamin above is somehow exemplary of a (German-) Jewish literary tradition, then it seems to underscore Witte's claim that such tradition is a tradition of commentary. Indeed, in "Der Erzähler" and in Buber's early collection of Chassidic tales, storytelling certainly involves an engagement with previous texts, although not necessarily in written form. Nachman's stories, for instance, not only bear his revelation, but they ultimately serve as a vehicle for Buber's attempt to fashion a model of European-Jewish identity. Likewise, in Benjamin's text, the notion of commentary takes precedence over the content of the storyteller's tale: "Seine Begabung ist: sein Leben, seine Würde: sein *ganzes* Leben erzählen zu können. Der Erzähler – das ist der Mann, der den Docht seines Lebens an der sanften Flamme seiner Erzählung sich vollkommen könnte verzehren lassen."[237] In telling a story, the storyteller tells his whole life; he draws from the totality of his *Erfahrung*. The storyteller invests so much of his *Erfahrung* into the telling that he risks exhausting his very existence in the story; the act of telling nearly eclipses the tale itself. But in "Der Erzähler," Benjamin concentrates specifically on the novel as a genre of bourgeois alienation—a form of alienation analogous to that experienced in the bourgeois cultural sphere in fin-de-siècle Central Europe. Indeed, there is little about "Der Erzähler" which makes it stand out as a particularly "Jewish" text. Thus, when reading Benjamin alongside Buber, we must question whether more is at work in Buber's privileging of oral speech than merely an extension of the "Jewish" tradition of commentary that Witte identifies.

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[237] Benjamin, "Erzähler" II: 464-465.

For Benjamin, the storyteller's existence as storyteller is so rooted in *Erfahrung* that he does not feel the gulf between knowledge and life that characterizes modernity. In fact, the storyteller resists this fundamentally modern crisis of experience and bears the last vestiges of a premodern social and cultural configuration. As *Erfahrung* declines, the storyteller becomes an in increasingly rare bastion of experience, a holdout from a far away era: "Der Erzähler – so vertraut uns der Name klingt – ist uns in seiner lebendigen Wirksamkeit keineswegs durchaus gegenwärtig. Er ist etwas bereits Entferntes und weiter noch sich Entfernendes."[238] Like Buber's Chassid, Benjamin's storyteller occupies a marginal position in modern culture, and both Chassidic *Mythos* and storytelling represent underground traditions. Indeed, the red thread that connects Mendelssohn, Buber, and Benjamin is not a concern with Jewishness, but with modernity.

But Benjamin's storyteller is not completely secure in his premodern refuge, as the above passage illustrates. The life-consuming danger of the act of storytelling mirrors the difficulty that Nachman experiences when trying to convey his revelation: "Immer ist in ihm eine Bangigkeit des Wortes, die ihm die Kehle zusammenpreßt, und bevor er das erste Wort einer Lehre spricht, scheint es ihm, als müsse seine Seele ausgehen."[239] When Nachman attempts to communicate his *Erlebnis* experience, he feels an uneasiness of speech that extends to his very soul—it's as if his soul could be extinguished in the act of telling. His message is almost confounded by language itself, and this is how Nachman distinguishes himself most clearly from Benjamin's storyteller. If the latter is immune to the modern crisis of experience because his story is so rooted in his *Erfahrung*, the former experiences this crisis in its absolute fullness because his *Erlebnis* is too dependent on his story. That is, the

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[238] Benjamin, "Erzähler" II: 438.

[239] Buber, *Nachman* 35.

act of storytelling for Nachman brings about a crisis of experience precisely because his message, his urgent revelation of *Erlebnis*, cannot be transmitted via language. For Nachman, the word will not bear *Erlebnis* directly into the realm of *Erfahrung*.

While the storyteller is not interested in bridging the gap between life and knowledge—for him this gap doesn't exist—it is precisely because of Nachman's concern with bridging this gap that Buber's image of the Chassidic story does not represent a premodern relic, persisting into modernity, but must instead be understood as a self-conscious response to the crisis of experience that so many thinkers saw as modernity's defining characteristic. Buber thus reduces Chassidic mystical practice to the act of storytelling; through oral language, mysticism permeates Chassidic life and the Jewish mystical tradition reinvigorates itself. At the same time, however, Buber's turn to storytelling represents more than an engagement with a Jewish tradition of commentary, or a privileging of the spoken word over the written text. The violence that Rabbi Nachman experiences when trying to communicate his mystical revelation and the constant threat of silence that accompanies the outpouring of his soul disclose a crisis of language in Jewish mysticism, which reaches beyond broader discourses on language skepticism and penetrates to the core of the individual mystical encounter. Buber's depiction of Jewish mysticism, in fact, contains a dual crisis of language and subjectivity—a crisis which had become acute in fin-de-siècle Vienna, and which is crucial for Buber's project of establishing a model of Jewishness based on an underground, modern, and invented Jewish tradition.

Mysticism, Language Crisis, and Subjectivity

As I outlined above, the introductory material to *Die Geschichten des Rabbi Nachman* contains a brief history of Jewish mysticism, and the text bears traces of the language crisis that Nachman experiences. If, on the one hand, the Jew is particularly disposed toward experiencing the world via *Erlebnis*, then on the other hand, he is also disposed toward understanding the world in terms of language, rather than sensory perception. As Buber explains: "Unvergleichlich mehr motorisch als sensorisch veranlagt, reagiert [der Jude] auch in seinem ganz innerlichen geistigen Leben sehr viel intensiver, als er empfängt. Er gestaltet das Empfangene mehr zu Wortgedanken, Begriffen, als zu Bildgedanken, Vorstellungen, aus."[240] Thus, for Buber, the Jew is not only attuned to the non-individuated realm of *Erlebnis*, but also to the structuring impulse of language, which establishes relations among things. For the Jew, language is both unifying and individuating—it draws together and pulls apart—and this tension that unfolds within language rests in the heart of Jewish mysticism.

In his analysis of the *Zohar*, which I briefly examined above, the role of this linguistic tension becomes clearer. Recall that, according to Buber, the diasporic *Schicksal* of the Jew gives rise to insecurity, and it caused the Jew to gather not only the most important elements of surrounding cultures, but also the superficial trappings of these cultures.[241] Moreover, the insecurity and fear of being unable to express the Jewish essence led Jews "am Fremden

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[240] Buber, *Nachman* 13.

[241] "Das Wandern und das Martyrium der Juden haben ihre Seelen immer wieder in die Schwingungen der letzten Verzweifelung versetzt, aus denen so leicht der Blitz der Ekstase erwacht. Zugleich aber haben sie sie gehindert, den reinen Ausdruck der Ekstase auszubauen, und sie verleitet, Notwendiges, Erlebtes mit Überflüssigem, Aufgeklaubtem durcheinanderzuwerfen, und in dem Gefühle, das Eigene vor Pein nicht sagen zu können, am Fremden geschwätzig zu werden. So sind Schriften wie der 'Sohar', das Buch des Glanzes, entstanden, die ein Entzücken und ein Abscheu sind" (Buber, *Nachman* 15).

geschwätzig zu werden."[242] For Buber, such unseemly talkativeness permeates Jewish mystical texts—especially the *Zohar*. As Buber explains:

> Mitten unter rohen Anthropomorphismen, die durch die allegorische Ausdeutung nicht erträglicher werden, mitten unter öden und farblosen Spekulationen, die in einer verdunkelten, gespreizten Sprache einherstelzen, leuchten wieder und wieder Blicke der verschwiegenen Seelentiefen und Offenbarungen der letzten Geheimnisse auf.[243]

Because of the interaction between the outward-directed impulse of *Pathos* and the diasporic *Schicksal* of Jews, two distinct modes of language appear in the *Zohar*: the barren, stilted, raw, and shadowy language of speculation and the brilliant flashes that represent direct revelations of the hidden depths of the soul. These opposing modes of language are simultaneously manifestations of the dialectic of Diaspora experience and Jewish *Pathos*, as well as of the language crisis within Jewish mysticism. The bright threads that connect the soul to the divine presence (through the revelation of *Erlebnis*) are intertwined with the dark language of individuation and of the world experienced via *Erfahrung*, the language in which the text is written. Thus, language and Jewish subjectivity converge in Buber's discussion of mysticism; a crisis of language establishes Jewish mysticism as a form of cultural production, in which the relationship between a specifically Jewish essence (*Pathos*) and a specifically Jewish historical experience (Diaspora) can be called into question, negotiated, and ultimately reshaped.

Modernity saw an ongoing reassessment of language, as the above examples from Mendelssohn and Benjamin demonstrate. However, Buber's text emerged at a particularly pregnant moment of language skepticism during the fin-de-siècle—a moment in which language crisis permeated the intellectual atmosphere, as scholars have noted. Jacques Le

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[242] Buber, *Nachman* 15.

[243] Buber, *Nachman* 15.

Rider, in his seminal 1993 study, *Modernity and Crises of Identity*, cites numerous examples of this crisis: Fritz Mauthner's *Beiträge zu einer Kritik der Sprache* (1901/02), the works of the physicist Ernst Mach, and Robert Musil's unfinished monument to the fin-de-siècle, *Der Mann ohne Eigenschaften* (1930-43).[244] In his provocative analysis, Le Rider argues that the fin-de-siècle concern with language was symptomatic of two other trends: a broader crisis of subjectivity, stemming from the confluence of currents in psychology, physics, and art, which together opened rifts in the notion of a unified subject, and a heightened discourse on mysticism, which was central to the works of Mauthner, Nietzsche, Gustav Landauer (who published a modern version of the writings of the medieval German mystic, Meister Eckhart), and others.[245] Faced with the increasing fragmentation of subjectivity, many thinkers began to doubt the potential of language to express modern experience, most significantly the poet, dramatist, and prose author Hofmannsthal (1874-1929), who had moved among the most prominent literary circles in fin-de-siècle Vienna as a teenager before emerging as that milieu's most central figure, and whose 1902 epistolary text, "Ein Brief," exemplifies the prominence of the constellation of mysticism and crises of language and subjectivity.

First published in a Berlin literary journal, "Ein Brief" (also known as the "Chandos-Brief"), occupies a central position in the fin-de-siècle canon, and it remains one of the most discussed texts of the period.[246] In his reading of the "Chandos-Brief," Le Rider argues that

[244] Jacques Le Rider, *Modernity and Crises of Identity: Culture and Society in Fin-de-Siècle Vienna*, trans. Rosemary Morris (New York: Continuum, 1993) 46-55.

[245] Le Rider, *Modernity* 11-74 (especially 46-59).

[246] The literature on "Ein Brief" is vast. For a brief summary of the state of contemporary scholarship on the text, consider Dagmar Lorenz *Wiener Moderne*, 2nd ed. (Stuttgart: J. B. Metzler, 2007) 163-168. Scholars predominantly read the text as the document of a language crisis, although some more recent investigations deemphasize this feature and instead argue that the text seeks to establish a new kind of poetics. For readings in

Hofmannsthal and his contemporaries drew on notions of mysticism that entailed the divestment of language as a first step in a process of dismantling subjectivity.[247] In turn, to relinquish language marked a last-ditch attempt to resolve the fin-de-siècle crisis of identity by eliminating the subject altogether.[248] Le Rider does not cite Buber in this context, but his reading of the "Chandos-Brief" helps illuminate the nature of the intersection of mysticism and crises of language and subjectivity in Buber's reception of Chassidism.[249] Although Hofmannsthal's text precedes *Die Geschichten des Rabbi Nachman* by four years, in the present study, I am not concerned with questions of influence. Instead, I propose that a closer examination of the "Chandos-Brief"—as a contemporary (and exemplary) artifact of a unique fin-de-siècle constellation of crises—reveals that the intersection of Jewish mysticism and Jewish identity in Buber's text can only be understood in terms of a crisis of language and of a radical skepticism toward language as both a medium of communication and a mediator of experience.

"Ein Brief" presents itself as a 1603 letter from the fictional Lord Chandos to his friend, Francis Bacon, in which the former explains two years of silence. In his apology, Chandos summarizes the various literary projects that he had planned, but had been unable to execute, before finally elaborating on his condition. The reader learns that Chandos' silence

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the former vein, see Le Rider and especially Gotthart Wunberg, *Der frühe Hofmannsthal: Schizophrenie als dichterische Struktur* (Stuttgart: W. Kohlhammer, 1965). For contemporary readings that deemphasize the language crisis in the text, see Aleida Assmann, "Hofmannsthals Chandos-Brief und die Hieroglyphen der Moderne," *Hofmannsthal Jahrbuch: Zur europäischen Moderne* 11 (2003): 267-279 and Rudolf Helmstetter, "Entwendet: Hofmannsthals *Chandos-Brief*, die Rezeptionsgeschichte und die Sprachkrise," *Deutsche Vierteljahrsschrift für Literaturwissenschaft und Geistesgeschichte* 77 (2003): 446-480.

[247] Le Rider, *Modernity* 55.

[248] Le Rider, *Modernity* 55.

[249] Witte does cite Hofmannsthal in connection with Buber, drawing generic parallels between Buber's reception of Chassidism and Hofmannsthal's 1894 text, "Das Märchen der 672. Nacht" (*Tradition* 124).

did not occur overnight, but was instead the product of a gradual collapse in his faculty of speech—a process of decay that began with the inability to contemplate abstract concepts and eventually extended into the realm of inconsequential small talk and the transmission of local occurrences. Finally, as Chandos describes it:

> Es zerfiel mir alles in Teile, die Teile wieder in Teile, und nichts mehr ließ sich mit einem Begriff umspannen. Die einzelnen Worte schwammen um mich; sie gerannen zu Augen, die mich anstarrten und in die ich wieder hineinstarren muß: Wirbel sind sie, in die hinabzusehen mich schwindet, die sich unaufhaltsam drehen und durch die hindurch man ins Leere kommt.[250]

Speechless, Chandos is decidedly not at a loss for words. Instead he becomes unable to assemble words into meaningful thoughts or to insert them into a meaningful context, and this is the distinguishing feature of his language crisis. Language loses its structuring impulse—the cohesion of its relationships—and, in the ensuing whirl, order becomes disorder, and solitary words separate out into limitless, meaningless individuation. In this passage, Chandos casts his language crisis primarily as a crisis of lexical and physical place. Words no longer belong. However, the crisis he describes involves a twofold failure of the mediating quality of language: he can no longer use language as a medium for communicating experience—hence his two-year silence—and, as the structuring bonds of language dissolve, he loses his footing in the world outside of his subject.

It is precisely through this failure of mediation, however, that Chandos begins to have mystical (or semi-mystical) experiences, which manifest themselves as unmediated encounters with the world.[251] During these encounters, a mere glimpse of a lone everyday

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[250] Hugo von Hofmannsthal, "Ein Brief," *Erfundene Gespräche und Briefe,* ed. Ellen Ritter (Frankfurt am Main: Fischer, 1991) 49.

[251] Le Rider describes these encounters as enacting the dissolution of "an artificial separation between the ego and the world" (*Modernity* 50).

object can spark a revelation of a higher form of life: “[E]s ist ja etwas völlig Unbenanntes und auch wohl kaum Benennbares, das in solchen Augenblicken, irgendeine Erscheinung meiner alltäglichen Umgebung mit einer überschwellenden Flut höheren Lebens wie ein Gefäß erfüllend, mir sich ankündet.”[252] This revelation comes in the form of something “unnamed and barely nameable”; it arises from the extreme edge of language and thus helps to dismantle the barriers that stand between Chandos and the “Flut höheren Lebens” that eventually permeates his experience of the world. That is, although language for Chandos breaks apart into tiny, disconnected and individuated units, this breakdown allows him unprecedented access to the unity of all things; an exaggerated experience of the world as *Erfahrung*—an experience of individuation in overdrive—bridges the subject with the world in a mode of experience akin to *Erlebnis*.

A crisis of language incites a series of mystical encounters for Chandos, and these encounters—as encounters with “etwas völlig Unbenanntes und auch wohl kaum Benennbares”—occur at the very margins of language. In fact, these episodes are doubly marginal, always almost (but not quite) beyond the reach of language and within the grasp of the self-assuredness of place. In other words, although these episodes afford Chandos unmediated access to an almost extra-linguistic presence, they neither offer him a greater sense of groundedness in the world, nor do they completely preclude a linguistic experience. Behind each episode lurks the possibility of both speech and an encounter with the absolute, as is evident in Chandos’ impression of a beetle floating in a watering can beneath a tree:

> Denn was hätte es […] mit begreiflicher menschlicher Gedankenknüpfung [zu tun], […] wenn diese Zusammensetzung von Nichtigkeiten mich mit einer solchen Gegenwart des Unendlichen durchschauert, von den Wurzeln der Haare bis ins Mark der Fersen mich durchschauert, daß ich in Worte ausbrechen möchte, daß ich weiß, fände ich sie, so würden sie jene Cherubim, an die ich nicht glaube, niederzwingen,

[252] Hofmannsthal, “Brief” 50.

> und daß ich dann von jener Stelle schweigend mich wegkehre und nach Wochen, wenn ich dieses Nußbaums ansichtig werde, mit scheuem seitlichen Blick daran vorübergehe, weil ich das Nachgefühl des Wundervollen, das dort um den Stamm weht, nicht verscheuchen will, nicht vertreiben die mehr als irdischen Schauer, die um das Buschwerk in jener Nähe immer noch nachwogen.[253]

To come face-to-face with a beetle floating in a watering can in the shadow of a tree is to come face-to-face with the unbounded expanses that lie beyond language; this encounter fills Chandos with the presence of infinity—with an awareness of the world as non-individuated. Even though this encounter with the unbounded occurs beyond the realm of language, seeing a beetle in a watering can impels Chandos toward speech. Indeed, this encounter mirrors the impulse of *Pathos* that Buber describes; Chandos becomes attuned to *Erlebnis* and simultaneously feels the urge to reach beyond the confines of his subject. And yet, like Rabbi Nachman, who felt his throat squeezed shut by language itself when crafting his mystical message, for Chandos to speak would require a radical reckoning of the banal and the impossible, of the mortal and the divine, of the trifling nothing before him and the broad expanse of infinity of which it is a manifestation.

Chandos' language crisis—like Nachman's—consists of the overwhelming awareness of the ineffability of *Erlebnis* experience. Moreover, just as Nachman overcomes this crisis by clothing his revelation in his stories, in precisely this space between speech and speechlessness, Chandos assumes for himself the structuring, ordering, relational quality of language. As he reports:

> [I]ch fühle ein entzückendes, schlechthin unendliches Widerspiel in mir und um mich, und es gibt unter den gegeneinanderspielenden Materien keine, in die ich nicht hinüberzufließen vermöchte. Es ist mir dann, als bestünde mein Körper aus lauter Chiffern, die mir alles aufschließen.[254]

[253] Hofmannsthal, "Brief" 51-52.

[254] Hofmannsthal, "Brief" 52.

Without words, Chandos no longer experiences the world as mediated and individuated through the system of language. Instead, as language dissolves around him, his body dissolves into language. He embodies the system of language itself, and he perceives the individuated objects of the world as manifestations of a single, unified presence, extending from his subject and arousing the "Nachgefühl des Wundervollen." Thus, if the recognition of the failure of language as a medium of communicating experience brings about Chandos' mystical encounters, then these encounters offer Chandos an alternative means of experiencing the world without mediation.

This apparent lack of mediation is deceptive, however, for despite his speechlessness, Chandos cannot fully escape the realm of language. These mystical encounters, he explains at the end of his letter, have prepared him to receive a new, revealed language, "von deren Worten mir auch nicht eines bekannt ist, eine Sprache, in welcher die stummen Dinge zu mir sprechen, und in welcher ich vielleicht einst im Grabe vor einem unbekannten Richter mich verantworten werde."[255] For Chandos, access to the unbounded and non-individuated realm of *Erlebnis*—the object of his mystical experiences—is only attainable through a simultaneous breakdown of one kind of language and the revelation and physical assumption of the structuring impulse of another. What initially appeared to be the failure of an individual's speech emerges as a transition, via the mystical encounter, from a stilted, limited experience of the world perceived as *Erfahrung*, to an experience of the world as collective and unified (as *Erlebnis*), via an unknown, marginal and obscure language of things and of the divine. In other words, through a breakdown of human language—which he recognizes as inadequate for expressing (and transmitting) experience—Chandos gains unmediated experience of the world.

[255] Hofmannsthal, "Brief" 54.

By invoking a revealed language as a result of Chandos' mystical episodes, Hofmannsthal's text describes a redemptive function inherent in the crisis at the heart of mystical language. In the face of the impossibility of transmitting *Erlebnis*, mystical language offers an alternative medium of communicating experience; after relinquishing human language, Chandos gains access to a more adequate medium: the marginal, unknown language of the divine. Thus the "Chandos-Brief" underscores the unique position of mystical language as a medium of communion, on the one hand—of opening oneself to *Erlebnis*—and a medium of communication, transmission, and expression, on the other.

Here Hofmannsthal's text most clearly intersects with, and illuminates, Buber's project. As I detailed above, in his discussion of the *Zohar*, Buber differentiates between the brilliant flashes of unmediated revelation—expressions of Jewish *Pathos*—and the shadowy language in which these flashes are clothed—the product of the Jewish diasporic *Schicksal*.[256] Buber elaborates this opposition as one between *Pathos* and language (characterized as *Rhetorik*):

> Das Pathos erniedrigt sich oft genug zur Rhetorik; diesem Sündenfall waren die Juden von jeher ausgesetzt, und nicht immer bloß die mittelmäßigen. Aber immer wieder macht sich das Pathos frei und ist reiner und größer als zuvor. Am größten, wenn es die Gefahr erkennt, die ihm vom Worte droht. Sich mitteilend, weil es nicht anders kann, fühlt es doch die Unzulänglichkeit aller Mitteilung, fühlt die Unaussprechlichkeit des Erlebnisses, und glüht auf in Angst, von der eigenen Rede geschändet zu werden.[257]

Although *Pathos* represents a direct, unparalleled connection to the unifying experience of *Erlebnis*, in order to ground the Jew in the world outside of his borders, *Pathos* must reach beyond the boundaries of the Jewish subject. In the act of reaching out, *Pathos* bears a

[256] Buber, *Nachman* 15.

[257] Buber, *Nachman* 15.

linguistic function, and the mystical word must not only inspire communion with the divine, but it must also be communicative.

The tension between *Pathos* and *Rhetorik* in this passage—between the unmediated Jewish essence that seeks to express itself, and the inadequate human language of that expression—mirrors Chandos' mystical language crisis. Chandos gains access to unmediated experience of the world, but only at the expense of his human language. At the same time, however, the promise of a more suitable (if marginal) language reveals itself to him. In Buber's depiction of Jewish mysticism, the inadequacy of *Rhetorik* for conveying *Pathos* in its fullness propels the historical development of Jewish mysticism, which in turn represents an authentic and underground means of transmitting *Pathos*—even if only incompletely. The Jewish mystical tradition becomes a repository for the essence of Jewish identity (*Pathos*), but to draw from it, the Jew must abandon the mainstream material of identification, including notions of nation, language, and customs. In other words, once the modern Jew refuses to base his Jewishness on hollow claims of nationality, or on a religion lacking religiosity, he can turn to mystical language for the material basis of Jewishness. What's more, Buber also casts the Jewishness that comes from the Jewish mystical tradition as uniquely European, as the product of Diaspora. Thus, for Buber, the Jewish mystical tradition—embodied most recently by Chassidism—contains the primordial Jewish impulse of *Pathos*, while always reinvigorating itself through the languages and experiences of the non-Jewish.

By engaging with notions of mysticism, with the question of language as a mediator of experience, and with the problem of language's inadequacy for transmitting experience, Buber situates his project among the most pressing discourses of the fin-de-siècle—and

alongside the period's most celebrated thinkers. In Buber's early collections of Chassidism, Jewish mysticism locates a redemptive force within a crisis of language, which offers the possibility not only of overcoming a modern crisis of experience, but of mending the fissures in the modern subject. However, Buber's reception of Jewish mysticism ultimately represents an attempt to craft an authentic European-Jewish identity at the fin-de-siècle—one that represents an alternative to both assimilation and political Zionism. Through the interaction between *Pathos* and Diaspora—between the intra- and the extra-Jewish—the language (crisis) of Jewish mysticism emerges as a vehicle for the transmission of the cultural memory of Jewishness at the very margins of Jewishness, and for the creation of a Jewish identity that draws on both of these forces as sources of strength. Buber's image of Jewish mysticism, then, represents a program of cultural Zionism that seeks to renew Jewish identity while embracing the experience of European Diaspora.

V. Conclusion

Buber's early reception of Chassidism is much more complex than meets the eye. As I have shown above, the introductory material to *Die Geschichten des Rabbi Nachman* and *Die Legende des Baalschem* contains a complex constellation of discourses, ranging from notions of mystical union to Enlightenment thought. Indeed, drawing on Mendes-Flohr, Witte, and Le Rider, I have outlined some of Buber's philosophical influences; I have demonstrated the extent to which he participates in a modern tradition of language skepticism; and I have shown that his work also engages with fin-de-siècle crises of language and subjectivity. Despite his engagement with these various discourses, however, Buber's project is primarily one of presenting an alternative model for crafting European-Jewish

identity, and to this end he appropriates some aspects of Chassidic tradition, while ignoring many others. The end result is an image of Chassidism as a Jewish tradition that blends some of the most prevalent discourses of modernity with a mythic (and invented) Jewish past—all the while emphasizing the European, Diaspora character of this tradition.

Given the vast variety of the discourses, influences, and traditions that appear in Buber's earliest collections of Chassidic tales, and given the complexity of Buber's engagement with them, it might be helpful to consider Buber's project in light of one other philosopher, Friedrich Nietzsche, whose contributions to fin-de-siècle thought and to the conceptualization of modernity cannot be overestimated, let alone overlooked. Mendes-Flohr, Aschheim, Le Rider, and others have already documented Nietzsche's considerable influence—especially his 1883 text, *Also sprach Zarathustra*—on Buber's philosophy, on his engagement with mysticism and myth, and on his concern with modern experience.[258] Building on this work, I will now briefly turn to Nietzsche to help synthesize the interaction among the various discourses that I've examined in Buber's early reception of Chassidism.

Like Buber's introductory material to *Die Geschichten des Rabbi Nachman* and *Die Legende des Baalschem*, Nietzsche's 1880 text, *Der Wanderer und sein Schatten* (later published in the second volume of *Menschliches, Allzumenschliches: Ein Buch für freie Geister*, 1886), engages considerably with questions of modern identity, language, and media. This is particularly evident in the aphorism entitled "Gut schreiben lernen":

> 87. G u t s c h r e i b e n l e r n e n . — Die Zeit des gut-Redens ist vorbei, weil die Zeit der Stadt-Culturen vorbei ist. Die letzte Gränze, welche Aristoteles der grossen

[258] For an in-depth outline of Buber's engagement with Nietzsche, see Paul Mendes-Flohr, "Zarathustra's Apostle: Martin Buber and the Jewish Renaissance," *Nietzsche and Jewish Culture*, ed. Jacob Golomb (London: Routledge, 1997) 233-243. For a discussion of Nietzsche's influence on the Zionist movement via Buber, see Steven E. Aschheim, *The Nietzsche Legacy in Germany, 1890-1990* (Berkeley: U of California P, 1992) 102-107. See also Le Rider, *Modernity* 291-292, and Witte, *Tradition* 125-132.

> Stadt erlaubte — es müsse der Herold noch im Stande sein, sich der ganzen versammelten Gemeinde vernehmbar zu machen —, diese Gränze kümmert uns so wenig, als uns überhaupt noch Stadtgemeinden kümmern, uns, die wir selbst über die Völker hinweg verstanden werden wollen.[259]

In this passage, Nietzsche seems to engage with what Witte calls the "Jewish" tradition of distinguishing between oral and written language. Like Mendelssohn and Benjamin, Nietzsche recognizes the modern supremacy of the written word. Unlike Mendelssohn, however, Nietzsche is not critical of the rise of the text, but instead embraces it as a necessary consequence of the configuration of modern society. The city has grown too large for the herald, and the time for good speech is past; the modern person must turn to good writing. And yet, the social configuration that he describes in this passage—the structure of the modern city and of the modern sense of community—is nothing short of diasporic. Just as the city has outgrown the boundaries established by ancient philosophers, the notion of community itself has lost currency in modern society. The modern subject wants to be heard beyond his or her own city, beyond his or her own *Volk*, and for Nietzsche, the written word has become the only suitable medium for such communication.

At first glance, Nietzsche's privileging of the text stands in sharp contrast with Buber's embrace of storytelling and of the oral language of *Mythos*. However, the diasporic condition of modernity which Nietzsche describes (and which I have shown is central to Buber's project) provides a clue that Nietzsche and Buber have more in common than meets the eye. Indeed, the motive that Nietzsche posits for learning to write well points to a close connection to Buber's project. As he continues:

> Desshalb muss jetzt ein Jeder, der gut europäisch gesinnt ist, g u t u n d i m m e r b e s s e r s c h r e i b e n lernen: es hilft Nichts, und wenn er selbst in Deutschland geboren ist, wo man das schlecht-Schreiben als nationales Vorrecht behandelt. Besser

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[259] Friedrich Nietzsche, *Menschliches Allzumenschliches I und II*, *Kritische Studienausgabe*, eds. Giorgio Colli and Mazzino Montinari, vol. 2 (Berlin: De Gruyter; Munich: DTV, 1999) 592.

> schreiben aber heisst zugleicht besser denken; immer Mittheilenswertheres erfinden und es wirklich mittheilen können; übersetzbar für die Sprachen der Nachbarn; zugänglich sich dem Verständnisse jener Ausländer machen, welche unsere Sprache lernen; dahin wirken, dass alles Gute Gemeingut werde und den Freien Alles frei stehe; endlich, jenen jetzt noch so fernen Zustand der Dinge v o r b e r e i t e n , wo den guten Europäern ihre grosse Aufgabe in die Hände fällt: die Leitung und Ueberwachung der gesammten Erdcultur. —[260]

Here Nietzsche casts learning to write well as a distinctly cosmopolitan act. In learning to write and to think well, one not only makes one's language and thoughts accessible to one's neighbors, but the gradual exchange of ideas and culture—the communication of that which is *mitteilenswert*—leads to the gradual (if distant) accumulation of a total world culture. All culture will stand open to everyone who cares to learn it. Thus, like Buber, Nietzsche is concerned with the ability of language to communicate and to make that which is worth communicating accessible. For Buber, it is precisely this concern that mars the language of the *Zohar*, even as it propels the development of Jewish mysticism. Similarly, if Buber privileges the malleable, personal aspects of storytelling over the fixed, dogmatic, immutable and often esoteric word of the text, then Nietzsche is interested in creating texts that are more malleable, more easily translatable, and indeed more accessible. Writing well, like mystical storytelling, involves clothing one's experience in words that suit the listener, and not merely the (ineffable) experience itself. In other words, even if Nietzsche promotes the written word while Buber praises oral storytelling, in this aphorism, the act of writing well for Nietzsche exhibits many of the features that Buber finds so compelling in oral speech.

This passage also casts learning to write well as a means of crafting an identity that is distinctly European, and not rooted in a notion of nationality. In fact, in an indictment of nationalist discourse, Nietzsche contrasts European identity with being German. The claim that writing poorly is a national privilege for someone born in Germany only holds true as

[260] Nietzsche, *Menschliches* 2:592.

long as that person adheres to the notion of a privilege that accompanies nationality; only Germans who claim Germanness, and who do not work toward Europeanness, write poorly. To write well means to overcome nationalist sentiments, as the end of this aphorism underscores:

> Wer das Gegentheil predigt, sich n i c h t um das gut-Schreiben und gut-Lesen zu kümmern — beide Tugenden wachsen mit einander und nehmen mit einander ab —, der zeigt in der That den Völkern einen Weg, wie sie immer noch mehr n a t i o n a l werden können: er vermehrt die Krankheit dieses Jahrhunderts und ist ein Feind der guten Europäer, ein Feind der freien Geister.[261]

To be a good European is directly opposed to the rampant nationalism of the end of the nineteenth century. Thus, Nietzsche promotes an *alternative* identity in this text—the good European—and as a *freier Geist*, the good European is in turn a marginal figure in Nietzsche's critique of modernity.[262] As I have shown, Buber takes a similar tack. In promoting his image of the Chassid, Buber draws on a marginalized figure, plucked from the edges of both Europe and Jewish tradition, and he posits that figure as a central, authentic, and necessary alternative to modern constructions of Jewishness. Indeed, even his choice to emphasize the Chassidic story reflects this engagement with marginality—for Buber, the Chassidic story represents the most recent manifestation of Jewish *Mythos*, which constantly struggles with the dogma of official religion. Thus, like Nietzsche, Buber is interested in creating an identity that does not depend on nationalism. Moreover, the marginal character of Chassidism in German-Jewish consciousness makes it an alternative to a Jewishness that is merely confessional.

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[261] Nietzsche, *Menschliches* 2:593.

[262] *Der Wanderer und sein Schatten* is structured around a marginal figure. The 350 aphorisms that make up the body of the work follow a brief dialogue between the titular figures, in which the wanderer takes the opportunity to quiz his shadow, and the aphorisms represent a reconstituted and reformed retelling of their exchange.

Die Geschichten des Rabbi Nachman and *Die Legende des Baalschem* were the first two books that Buber published, and throughout his career, his interest in Chassidism never diminished. These earliest texts stand out in Buber's overall oeuvre, however, in terms of his philosophical project and of his treatment of the Chassidim—both of which shifted dramatically after the First World War. In the first case, Buber became less interested in *Erlebnis* and more interested in dialogue, as the 1923 publication of *Ich und Du* demonstrates.[263] In the second case, Buber himself notes a change in his relationship to Chassidism in the introduction to the 1963 edition of his collected Chassidic writings. During the First World War, Buber explains, for him "[der Chassidismus] hat damals aufgehört, nur ein 'Gegenstand' zu sein, dem damit genug getan ist, daß er zulänglich 'behandelt' wird."[264] However, in spite (and perhaps because) of their unique position texts in Buber's oeuvre, these first two collections are crucial for understanding Buber's early thought. More importantly, because they contain such a rich constellation of discourses—including a concern with modernity, Diaspora experience, and language, as well as a turn toward marginal figures and marginal traditions—*Die Geschichten des Rabbi Nachman* and *Die Legende des Baalschem* remain central documents of how German-speaking Jews during the fin-de-siècle negotiated a model of modern European-Jewish identity alternative to secularization, confessionalization, and political Zionism.

[263] For more on this philosophical shift, see Mendes-Flohr, *Mysticism*.

[264] Martin Buber, *Schriften zum Chassidismus*, vol. 3 of *Werke* (Munich: Kösel-Verlag; Heidelberg: Verlag Lambert Schndeider, 1963) 7.

Chapter Three

Messianic Ground: History, Tradition, and Jewish Identity in Theodor Herzl and Jakob Wassermann

I. Karl Kraus, Martin Buber, and the “Geschichtsanwälte des jüdischen Volkes”

The Viennese journalist, satirist, and cultural critic Karl Kraus opens his 1898 polemic against the newly-coalescing Zionist movement, “Eine Krone für Zion,” with an anecdote about being solicited for a monetary contribution to the movement:

> Einer der Herren, die sich jetzt als Geschichtsanwälte des jüdischen Volkes aufwerfen und mit seltsam gen Sonnenaufgang verdrehten Augen für die Rückkehr aller übrigen Juden nach dem Stammland Palästina agitiren, ersuchte mich vor einiger Zeit, einen kleinen Betrag zu jenen Zwecken beizusteuern, die man zionistische oder mit einem guten alten Wort antisemitische nennt.[265]

Kraus does not shy away from expressing his disdain for the movement, attributing an inherently antisemitic quality to the push for a mass migration of European Jews to Palestine. Moreover, he describes his visitor—the *Geschichtsanwalt mit gen Sonnenaufgang verdrehten Augen*—with a mix of ridicule and resentment, as a figure with a misaligned historical vision (turned simultaneously toward the East and toward an ancient Jewish past), and as one who mishandles Jewish history as a consequence. For Kraus, this visitor—like the leaders of the political Zionist movement—goes a step too far in his self-appointed role as executor of an imagined cultural and political estate, a portion of which all Jews collectively inherit, but only because they are compelled to contribute to it.

[265] Karl Kraus, “Eine Krone für Zion,” *Frühe Schriften, 1892-1900*, ed. Joh. J. Braakenburg, vol. 2 (Munich: Kösel-Verlag, 1979) 298.

In his text, Kraus weds a notion of Jewish tradition and history with that of a uniquely Jewish territory. Zionism, Kraus implies, locates both Jewish tradition and the Jewish future in an Eastern territory in Palestine, and (for Zionists) it is this geographical landscape which dominates and prefigures Jewish history. For Kraus, to look on Palestine as the Jewish *Stammland* is to look back in time and to overlook (or even undo) the long history of Jewish life in Europe and of Jewish engagement in European culture. In other words, the eyes of the *Geschichtsanwalt* are misaligned precisely because they locate the Jewish present and the Jewish future in an ancient Jewish past and in a distant (formerly Jewish) territory.

The problematic intersection of history, tradition, and territory which Kraus establishes in his polemic was a mainstay of the nineteenth-century processes of confessionalizing and secularizing Jewishness in German culture, as represented, for instance, by two of the most influential German-Jewish movements: *Wissenschaft des Judentums* and Reform Judaism. The latter movement began to downplay the messianic doctrine of a Jewish return to Zion,[266] while the former historicized rabbinic literature and religious practice—relegating tradition to history.[267] As Amos Funkenstein notes, these early nineteenth-century instances of religious reform were at heart political acts, meant to strategically situate German Jews as full participants in German culture, rather than as temporary inhabitants waiting to return to Palestine.[268] With the 1896 publication of Theodor

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[266] See, for instance, Shulamit Volkov, "Reflexionen zum 'modernen' und zum 'uralten' judischen Nationalismus," *Das jüdische Projekt der Moderne: Zehn Essays* (Munich: Verlag C. H. Beck, 2001) 39-40.

[267] See Christoph Schulte, *Die jüdische Aufklärung* (Munich: Verlag C. H. Beck, 2002) 114-118.

[268] As Funkenstein notes: "All references or allusions to a national redemption had to be eliminated from the liturgy, which was also to be completely translated into the vernacular. Even those components of the synagogal reform which seemingly had a purely aesthetic function, such as the introduction of the organ into the service, were calculated to blunt eschatological-national aspirations: the reason why choirs and musical instruments were barred earlier was primarily because they were improper expressions of joy after the destruction of the

Herzl's political manifesto, *Der Judenstaat*, and the subsequent galvanization of the political Zionist movement, the constellation of history, tradition, and territory took on a more urgent and controversial character. Indeed, it was this text, in which Herzl proposed the formation of a Jewish state outside the boundaries of Europe, which established the relationship between Jewish territory, tradition, and history as hotly contested ground.

But if *Der Judenstaat* brought into focus questions about the nature of Jewish territory and its relation to Jewish history and tradition, then Kraus's incisive satire revealed that Zionist discourse was as much an attempt to fashion and legitimate a certain vision of Jewish identity as it was a political movement. Indeed, in his recent monograph on Kraus, Paul Reitter provocatively and convincingly demonstrates that at the heart of Kraus's text lies a critique of Zionism as a project of assimilation.[269] And only a few years after Kraus's polemic—with the famous debate between Max Nordau and Ahad Ha'am about the role of Jewish culture in Herzl's 1902 novel, *Altneuland*—these questions of territory, tradition, and Jewishness formed the fault-lines of a fundamental rift in Zionism.

In this context, "Eine Krone für Zion" raises the question as to what constitutes a Jewish territory (or a Jewish location more broadly), and the text provides two contrasting images of such locations. The first is the Zionist vision of Palestine—an imagined Jewish territory established on an ancient Jewish *Stammland*. But by equating antisemitism with the push to relocate European Jews, Kraus also offers Europe (and especially Vienna) as a Jewish location on par with (or superior to) Palestine. And here Kraus has a point: from the publication of *Der Judenstaat* until at least Herzl's death in 1904, Vienna was the intellectual

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Temple. The rebuilt Temple will again have them." Amos Funkenstein, *Perceptions of Jewish History* (Berkeley: U of California P, 1993) 254.

[269] Paul Reitter, *The Anti-Journalist: Karl Kraus and Jewish Self-Fashioning in Fin-de-Siècle Europe* (Chicago: U of Chicago P, 2008) 79-82.

and political center of the Zionist endeavor, and it represented an epicenter of Jewishness in Europe, both in antisemitic and Jewish-nationalist discourses. Contemporary scholars—most notably Jacques Le Rider and Steven Beller—repeatedly underscore the significance of the so called Jewish Question to the unique character of fin-de-siècle Viennese culture, primarily because of the prevalence and prominence of Jews in the Austrian intellectual milieu, from Sigmund Freud to Otto Weininger, and from Arthur Schnitzler to Richard Beer-Hofmann.[270] Furthermore, as Klaus Hödl notes, fin-de-siècle Vienna was home to Western Europe's first Jewish nationalist student organization (the *Kadimah*, founded in 1882), the world's first Jewish museum, and—with the election of Karl Lueger as mayor in 1895—the city became the first European capital run by a self-avowed antisemitic political party.[271] If Palestine represents the Jewish *Stammland* for the Zionists in Kraus's polemic—the *ancient* ground of Jewish identity—then in light of his tacit assertion of the Jewishness of Europe and European culture, and in light of Vienna's centrality for European Jewry around 1900, it would seem that fin-de-siècle Vienna is the *modern* Jewish locale par excellence.

The images of Vienna and Palestine in Kraus's polemic differ in more ways that their respective temporal orientations. For the Zionists, Palestine represents an imagined Jewish territory—a land which is ripe for colonization and in which to build a Jewish political state. Kraus's Vienna, on the other hand, is a locale whose Jewishness is culturally determined, and whose boundaries are discursive, rather than merely geographic. This distinction, however, does not mean that Palestine was devoid of cultural connotations for the Zionists, or that

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[270] Jacques Le Rider, *Modernity and Crises of Identity: Culture and Society in Fin-de-Siècle Vienna*, trans. Rosemary Morris (New York: Continuum, 1993). Steven Beller, *Vienna and the Jews, 1867-1938: A Cultural History* (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1989).

[271] Klaus Hödl, "Theodor Herzl and the Crisis of Jewish Self-Understanding," *Theodor Herzl: From Europe to Zion*, ed. Mark H. Gelber and Vivian Liska (Tübingen: Niemeyer, 2007) 129.

Vienna sat apart from Zionist political considerations. At first seeking only an escape from European antisemitism, Herzl suggested Palestine as one of two possible sites for settlement (along with Argentina) in *Der Judenstaat*.[272] By the publication of his 1902 novel *Altneuland*, however, Herzl had his sights fixed firmly on Palestine, and as I will discuss below, he had begun to frame his political project in specifically Jewish cultural terms. Thus, while we may differentiate between Palestine (in the Zionist imagination) as a Jewish territory and Vienna (in fin-de-siècle cultural discourse) as a Jewish locale, the boundaries between these two spaces and notions of place are hardly rigid.

A locale and a territory, Vienna and Palestine respectively represent two images of what in this chapter I will broadly call Jewish space: physical locations and specific landscapes in which it was possible to locate—and, above all, to ground—notions of Jewish identity. But Kraus's Vienna and the Palestine of the Jewish *Geschichtsanwälte* weren't the only images of Jewish space circulating in fin-de-siècle German culture. Contemporary texts that engage with notions of Jewishness and Jewish tradition—especially those concerning the debates surrounding Zionism—are full of alternative spaces, and these texts serve to complicate questions of the nature of Jewish space (whether landscape, locale, or territory) and its relationship to history, tradition, and identity by depicting locations that are simultaneously ancient and modern, concrete and discursive. Martin Buber offers two images

[272] Theodor Herzl, *Der Judenstaat: Versuch einer modernen Lösung der Judenfrage*. *Text und Materialen 1896 bis heute*, ed. Ernst Piper (Berlin: Philo Verlag, 2004) 33-35. In *Der Judenstaat*, Herzl defines Jewishness as a product of persecution, citing antisemitism as the only common bond that connects Jews: "Nur der Druck preßt uns wieder an den alten Stamm, nur der Haß unserer Umgebung macht uns zu Fremden" (Herzl, *Judenstaat* 31). By 1903, however, Herzl seemed convinced of the importance of Palestine, and when offered a chance at settlement in Uganda (then British East Africa), he rejected it. See David Vital, *Zionism: The Formative Years* (Oxford: Clarendon P, 1982) 159-162. For more on the image of Africa in Herzl's thought, see Eitan Bar-Yosef, "A Villa in the Jungle: Herzl, Zionist Culture, and the Great African Adventure," *Theodor Herzl: From Europe to Zion*, ed. Mark H. Gelber and Vivian Liska (Tübingen: Niemeyer, 2007) 85-102.

of Jewish space—one in a 1909 speech, the other in his personal library—which help establish exactly what was at stake in such images around 1900.

Buber ends “Das Judentum und die Juden”—the first of a famous series of speeches delivered to the Bar Kochba organization of Zionist students in Prague—with a memory from his childhood:

> Als ich Kind war, las ich eine alte jüdische Sage, die ich nicht verstehen konnte. Sie erzählte nichts weiter als dies: “Vor den Toren Roms sitzt ein aussätziger Bettler und wartet. Er ist der Messias.” Damals kam ich zu einem alten Mann und fragte ihn: “Worauf wartet er?” und der alte Mann antwortete mir etwas, was ich damals nicht verstand und erst viel später verstehen gelernt habe; er sagte: “Auf dich.”[273]

In Prague in 1909, this *Sage* served as the final stirring words of a speech on the possibility of reinvigorating Jewish cultural awareness, and Buber likely chose it because of the emphasis that the story places on individual action, because of the immediate sense of personal urgency that the phrase “auf dich” confers on each audience member. Such rhetorical moves are the material of good political speechwriting, after all. But, as we shall see, this brief *Sage* also rehearses the questions of space, history, and tradition which Kraus underscores in his polemic.

In this tale (possibly adapted from the Babylonian Talmud), Buber draws on a messianic framework in which the Messiah is not to be expected, anticipated, or hoped for.[274] Instead, the Messiah in Buber’s speech waits for action on the part of humanity, on the part of *Eretz Israel*, on the part of Jews—indeed he waits for the audience members themselves. Thus Buber’s tale seems to promote a vision of secular messianism akin to the one that Herzl

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[273] Martin Buber, “Das Judentum und die Juden,” *Frühe jüdische Schriften 1900-1922*, ed. Barbara Schäfer (Gütersloh: Gütersloher Verlagshaus, 2007) 227. Buber modified the speech considerably before its publication in *Drei Reden über das Judentum* (1911), even revising its original title, “Der Sinn des Judentums.” My discussion of this text follows the 1911 version, which was more widely circulated and which perhaps best reflects Buber’s position during this period.

[274] See Babylonian Talmud Sanhedrin 98a.

put forth in *Altneuland*—a vision, which I will discuss below, of a return to Palestine (and even of the reconstruction of the Temple) enacted through a well-coordinated, technologically savvy political movement.[275]

But this story also binds a notion of space to the figure of the Messiah, who, as a beggar and leper, is relegated to a location outside of the city. Thus, in appropriating this tale, Buber codifies a radically different vision of redemption and of the conditions of Jewish space than appears in Herzl's novel: the Messiah sits in exile, excluded from the European capital, excluded from society as a beggar and leper, and finally—in the act of waiting to redeem the Jews—excluded from history itself. The Messiah's marginal position in Buber's speech, moreover, reflects the marginality of Jewish messianism in nineteenth-century German-Jewish culture, and Buber's engagement with messianism signals an attempt to locate a redemptive force not in a vision of secular progress or in a popular movement, but in the margins of Jewish tradition. And it is of course no coincidence that the Messiah waits outside Rome. Indeed, we might consider Rome the symbolic capital city of the European Diaspora. It was the origin of the forces that destroyed the Second Temple (in 70 CE), the home of the government against which the namesake of Buber's audience, Simon bar Kokhba (who had also been declared a Messiah), revolted less than a century later, and the seat of the Church that persecuted European Jews throughout medieval and early modern Europe. Thus, situated on the very outskirts of Diaspora, the Jewish space in this text—like the Messiah who occupies it—is in every regard marginal, and it is from precisely this

[275] For a brief analysis of Zionism as secular Messianism, see Arthur Hertzberg, *The Zionist Idea: A Historical Analysis and Reader* (New York: Athenum, 1977) 15-22. See also Robert S. Wistrich, "Theodor Herzl: Between Myth and Messianism," *Theodor Herzl: From Europe to Zion*, ed. Mark H. Gelber and Vivan Liska (Tübingen: Niemeyer, 2007) 7-22.

location outside the gates of Rome (and not from a return to Palestine) that Buber anticipates redemption.

Like Kraus's *Geschichtsanwalt*, Buber fixes his gaze on an image of Jewish space—and of a Jewish future—which stems from a particular reading of Jewish tradition. And not unlike Herzl's call for a Jewish state, in his speech, Buber impels the Jewish *Volk* to perform the messianic function for itself. But the words that bear redemptive potential in his text—the *auf dich* that would mobilize Jews to call forth the Messiah—demand a reengagement with Jewish culture, and not a retreat to the Jewish *Stammland*. The only Jewish location in "Das Judentum und die Juden" is situated at the fringes of mainstream majority culture, of normative Jewish tradition, and of history. Because this location emerges in a retelling of an old fable, moreover, it is deeply embedded an oral Jewish tradition, recalling the medium of cultural memory that Buber celebrated in his groundbreaking books, *Die Geschichten des Rabbi Nachman* (1906) and *Die Legende des Baalschem* (1908), and thereby rehearsing the act of cultural reinvigoration which I discussed in the previous chapter of this investigation. Jewish space in Buber's speech, in other words, is above all discursive; it exists within the memory of a Jewish tale, which itself stems from an ancient oral tradition of Torah redaction. And even in his depiction of this location, Buber avoids an image of political territory, locating the Messiah outside of the boundaries of Rome.

In this valorization of Jewish tradition, Buber seems interested only in its marginality, in the underground strains of Jewishness and in Jewishness as an underground strain. Buber—like Kraus's *Geschichtsanwalt*—appears to fix his gaze on an image of Jewish space and of a Jewish future rooted in a particular (in this case, messianic) understanding of the Jewish past. As I demonstrated in the previous chapter, however, Buber's project of Jewish

cultural renaissance is also deeply invested in some of the most prominent questions and discourses of fin-de-siècle German culture, and to peek inside Buber's library around the time of his Bar Kochba speech would have meant to unearth a second image of Jewish space—one that also demonstrates his commitment to German culture: his personal bookplate.

Figure 1: "Ex Libris Martin Buber," E. M. Lilien, 1902.[276]

Designed in 1902 by the famous Galician-born Jewish artist, E[phraim] M[oses] Lilien, the bookplate (Figure 1) depicts a churning sea with a lone island rising from the

[276] E. M. Lilien, "Ex Libris Martin Buber," Buber Archives, Jerusalem National Library, *Martin Buber's Formative Years: From German Culture to Jewish Renaissance, 1897-1909*, by Gilya Gerda Schmidt (Tuscaloosa: U of Alabama P, 1995) ix.

middle.[277] The island, in the form of a Star of David, is heavily fortified. It contains a single city full of stately cedar trees and domed buildings. Bearing the characteristic flora and architecture of ancient Palestine, the island city thus resembles a stylized and idealized Jerusalem, uprooted from physical geography and transplanted into a faceless body of water. A banner bearing the text "Mein ist das Land" and "Ex Libris Martin Buber" surrounds the image, forming a circular medallion, which in turn rests upon two quills rising from a stack of books on a desk below. The bookplate contains a second *ex libris* in Hebrew between the medallion and the desk above which it hovers.

Lilien designed the bookplate not long after a public disagreement (at the Fifth Zionist Congress in Basel, 1901) between Buber and Herzl about the role of Jewish culture in Zionism, after which Lilien, Buber, and others cofounded the Jüdischer Verlag. In this context—hot on the heels of a fundamental rift between parties in the Zionist organization emphasizing cultural renaissance and those interested in establishing a Jewish territory—the caption, *Mein ist das Land*, suddenly appears overdetermined. As part of an *ex libris*, as a bibliophile's mark of ownership, the bookplate already also reads *mein ist das Buch*, thus textualizing this overtly Jewish landscape. And it is through the act of claiming textual ownership that the *ex libris* unites Latin and Hebrew phrases—Rome and Jerusalem—under the umbrella of a German sentence: *Mein ist das Land*. The *Land* on Buber's bookplate is at once diasporic, Hebrew, and German; it is both remote and essentially Jewish. And yet, this

[277] For a fin-de-siècle assessment of Lilen's work, see Stefan Zweig, introduction, *E. M. Lilien: Sein Werk*, by E. M. Lilien and Stefan Zweig (Berlin: Schuster & Loeffler, 1903) 9-29. For a representative survey of his early works, see Oz Almog and Gerhard Milchram, eds., *E. M. Lilien: Jugendstil, Erotik, Zionismus* ([Vienna]: Mandelbaum, 1998). For a discussion of Lilien's works in the context of fin-de-siècle German and Jewish culture, see Mark H. Gelber, *Melancholy Pride: Nation, Race, and Gender in the German Literature of Cultural Zionism* (Tübingen: Niemeyer, 2000) 87-124, and Michael Stanislawski, *Zionism and the Fin de Siècle: Cosmopolitanism and Nationalism from Nordau to Jabotinsky* (Berkeley: U of California P, 2001) 98-115.

Land consists of no land at all: it is a fictional non-territory, multiplied and affixed to the inside cover of a book, existing solely within the realm of literature.

Although the bookplate posits an imagined, uniquely Jewish location, it also convincingly marks that location as discursive—a fantasy island, a land printed between the pages of a book, a land reproduced throughout Buber's library. The assertion of ownership that Buber stamps on his books contaminates and supersedes the bookplate's own assertion, *Mein ist das Land*, for the territory that Buber claims is the territory of cultural memory itself: the books that belong in his library. In other words, if the island on Buber's *ex libris* reflects a utopian vision of a specifically German-Jewish *topos* in which the boundaries between Rome and Jerusalem dissolve, then it also asserts the possibility—even the necessity—of dredging a ground for German Jewishness from the pages of a text and from the texts of a library. The phrase, *mein ist das Land*, on Buber's *ex libris* ultimately argues—in German—*das Buch ist das Land*.

Even as Buber's *ex libris* betrays a yearning for a space in which to ground Jewishness, it denies the corporeality and territoriality of such a space, situating it instead in the yellowed pages of cultural memory, whether in a book collection, in the marginalized tradition of Jewish messianism, or in the persistent memory of an old fable. Buber's bookplate suggests that culture and tradition (and not territory or the myth of autochthony) form the provenance of Jewish identity. Moreover, like the messianic fable that he employs in his Bar Kochba speech, this text positions the renaissance of Jewish culture as a redemptive act: in the former text, the Jewish *Volk* signals the Messiah through cultural engagement; in the latter, Jerusalem is deterritorialized and reconstituted under the banner of the German language. And, as I have shown, these redemptive or redeemed locations are

inherently marginal, situated outside of the gates of the Diaspora capital, or on the inside cover of a book.

Buber's speech and his bookplate do not simply offer visions of Jewish locales. Instead, these texts represent self-consciously discursive constructions of locations in which to ground Jewishness, locations which privilege the immateriality of medium—the mutability and mobility of the word—over geographic territory, and which, in drawing on the Messianic tradition without positing a return to Zion, simultaneously stake a claim for the centrality of marginality. Most importantly, these uniquely Jewish locations occur squarely within the realm of the German language.

For the Zionists whom Kraus critiques, Palestine represents a Jewish territory—a land which is ripe for colonization and upon which to build a Jewish political state. Kraus's Vienna, on the other hand, is a locale whose Jewishness is culturally determined, and whose boundaries are discursive, rather than merely geographic. Buber's Bar Kochba speech and his bookplate mediate between these visions. They reveal Jewish space to be first and foremost discursive, and in them, the realm of German literature and culture discloses itself as the most suitable terrain for revisiting Jewish tradition and establishing, reinventing, and grounding Jewishness.

But Buber's bookplate and his Bar Kochba speech also reveal that the distance between Kraus's Vienna and Herzl's Palestine is not as great as it might at first appear. Even if Herzl's vision of Jewish space is colonial or territorial in nature, he initially realizes this vision in a novel, written in German, for a German readership. Thus, Herzl's Palestine—like Kraus's Vienna—is also a discursive location. Even Buber and Herzl have more in common in their respective representations of Jewish space than one might expect: the cultural Zionist,

Buber, and (as we shall see), the political Zionist, Herzl, both draw on the messianic tradition in Judaism in order to create spaces in which to ground models of Jewish identity. In this chapter, I will examine Herzl's 1902 utopian novel, *Altneuland*, alongside another novel that draws on Jewish messianism as means of legitimating a vision of Jewish space and of Jewish identity: Jakob Wassermann's 1897 text, *Die Juden von Zirndorf*.

Die Juden von Zirndorf and *Altneuland* both revolve around the establishment of German and Jewish locations. Franconia in the former text, and Palestine in the latter, represent Jewish locations that are simultaneously steeped in premodern history and the products of European modernity, and they are utopian (or dystopian) locales that are as discursive as they are geographical. What's more, in order to legitimate the visions of Jewish space that they create, both texts employ the figure of the seventeenth-century false Messiah and apostate, Sabbatai Zvi—a figure from Jewish history who was responsible for one of the largest movements among European Jews and whose memory had been marginalized by the *Haskalah*. However, as I will detail in this chapter, while Herzl's gaze is fixed firmly on the future foundation of a Jewish territory outside Europe, but with German cultural underpinnings, Wassermann's text dwells in the immediate European-Jewish past to create a German landscape that is already also Jewish.

If reading Buber (the cultural Zionist) alongside Herzl (the political Zionist) may require little justification, to read Wassermann and Herzl together may not initially seem so fruitful. While Herzl famously led a movement to resettle European Jews in Palestine, Wassermann is often remembered for his staunch demand to be recognized above all as a German (and, indeed, a Franconian) author, and Wassermann had little engagement with the debates on Zionism around 1900. Indeed, with a few exceptions, these two authors are rarely

discussed together in recent scholarship, in part because their respective political agendas (or lack thereof) often lead them to be situated on opposite ends of the assimilation/dissimilation continuum.[278] As I will show, however, *Die Juden von Zirndorf* and *Altneuland* have more in common than meets the eye.

By reading the two novels alongside one another, in this chapter I will show that, while Herzl and Wassermann seem to serve radically different goals, both authors self-consciously set out to create discursive spaces in which to ground models of being simultaneously German and Jewish. More importantly, as we shall see, even as both authors celebrate the necessity of Jewish space, the discursive spaces that emerge in these texts—like those that appear on Buber's bookplate and in his Bar Kochba speech—undermine the significance of space itself, valorizing culture as a means of identification. Nevertheless, the models of German-Jewish (or European-Jewish) identity that emerge in these texts are radically different, with Herzl presenting a cosmopolitan Jewish nationalism, and Wassermann offering a pre-national form of local identity. Examining the continuities and discontinuities between these two visions of Jewish space—especially in light of Buber's visions of Jewish space—will serve to complicate the boundaries between the competing notions of (German) Jewishness circulating in fin-de-siècle discourse, and show that

[278] See, for instance, Ritchie Robertson, *The 'Jewish Question' in German Literature, 1749-1939: Emancipation and its Discontents* (Oxford: Oxford UP, 1999) 277, 486-488. David Biale (whom I will discuss below) marks one exception, however. See David Biale, "Shabbtai Zvi and the Seductions of Jewish Orientalism," *The Sabbatian Movement and its Aftermath: Messianism, Sabbatianism and Frankism*, ed. Rachel Elior, vol. 2 (Jerusalem: Institute of Jewish Studies, 2001) 85*-110* (English section). Michael Brenner's excellent monograph, *The Renaissance of Jewish Culture in Weimar Germany*, draws attention to an obscure letter by Wassermann, published in 1928 in the *Jüdische Rundschau*, in which (referring to *Die Juden von Zirndorf*) Wassermann claims: "Es gibt hervorragende Köpfe im Judentum wie auch außerhalb desselben, die der Meinung sind, daß das Vorspiel, die Geschichte des Sabatai Zewi, einer der wichtigsten Anlässe zur ganzen zionistishen Bewegung war." See Michael Brenner, *The Renaissance of Jewish Culture in Weimar Germany* (New Haven: Yale UP, 1996) 136; Jakob Wassermann, "Jakob Wassermanns Antwort," *Jüdische Rundschau* 27 Nov. 1928: 660.

Wassermann, Herzl, and even Buber all seek models of German-Jewish identity that allow for being simultaneously German *and* Jewish.

Before turning to my analysis of *Altneuland* and *Die Juden von Zirndorf*, I will briefly sketch the contours of the biography of Sabbatai Zvi, the movement he sparked, and its reception in nineteenth-century European literature. I will then examine the visions of colonial space in Herzl's novel, and show that even as he posits the necessity of a Jewish territory in Palestine in which to anchor a distinctly cosmopolitan form of Jewish national identity—and even as he turns to Sabbatai Zvi to legitimate this territory—Herzl crafts an image of Jewish space that ultimately privileges European-Jewish cultural production. In the next section, I will examine another construction of European-Jewish space in Wassermann's novel, in which he uses the Sabbatean movement to root a pre-national, local Jewish community in Franconian soil. In my reading of these texts, I will show that both authors challenge binary notions of assimilation and dissimilation, by creating models of being simultaneously European and Jewish, and by offering alternative visions to the post-Enlightenment model of European-Jewish modernity.

II. Sabbatai Zvi, Sabbateanism, and European-Jewish Modernity

As I will demonstrate below, the image of Sabbatai Zvi plays a critical role in both *Altneuland* and *Die Juden von Zirndorf*. While a detailed description of Sabbatai's life or of the history of the Sabbatean movement lies beyond the scope of this project, a brief sketch of the historical figure, the movement he inspired, and the fin-de-siècle reception of this

movement is in order.[279] Sabbatai Zvi was born in 1626 in Smyrna (today the Turkish city of Izmir), the son of a merchant who was likely of Ashkenazi descent.[280] In 1648—the same year in which a bloody series of pogroms occurred in Poland—Sabbatai first declared himself the Messiah. It wasn't until much later, however, after an encounter in 1665 with a famous young Kabbalist, Nathan of Gaza, that he was taken seriously. Nathan of Gaza eventually declared Sabbatai the Messiah, sparking a massive movement that reached Jewish communities from Jerusalem to Amsterdam and from Poland to Italy.[281]

Throughout his life, Sabbatai was prone to violent swings between periods of deep depression and great euphoria, during which he would commit "strange acts," which ranged from simple incongruity to blasphemy.[282] After his revelation in 1665, Sabbatai often made changes to the liturgical calendar, declaring an end to fasts, and celebrating holidays out of turn.[283] He also advocated antinomian acts, which eventually led to his excommunication and his expulsion from Jerusalem.[284] The Sabbatean movement continued to grow, however, reaching its height in 1666, when Sabbatai went to confront Sultan Mehemed IV of Turkey and to claim the Turkish crown. He was jailed, and he eventually converted to Islam, but this did not cause the movement to end, and some sects persisted throughout the eighteenth

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[279] Gershom Scholem has written extensively on Sabbatai Zvi and the Sabbatean movement, including a massive (and definitive) biography of the false Messiah. See Gershom Scholem, *Sabbatai Sevi: The Mystical Messiah, 1626-1676*, trans. R. J. Zwi Werblowsky (Princeton: Princeton UP, 1973).

[280] Scholem, *Sabbatai Sevi* 106.

[281] Scholem discusses in detail the extent and characteristics of the movement throughout the Jewish world. For more on the movement in Europe, see especially Scholem, *Sabbatai Sevi* 461-602.

[282] Scholem, *Sabbatai Sevi* 128. Scholem discusses Sabbatai's behavior in clinical terms, speculating that Sabbatai likely suffered from bipolar disorder, which he calls "manic-depressive psychosis" (125-138).

[283] Scholem, *Sabbatai Sevi* 162.

[284] For a description of the circumstances surrounding Sabbatai's expulsion from Jerusalem, see Scholem, *Sabbatai Sevi* 242-247.

century in Europe, and well into the twentieth century in other places.[285] Indeed, Scholem notes that while other messianic movements had failed without lasting consequences, because of the depth and breadth of Sabbateanism, the movement had created "a new kind of 'life-feeling'" among Jews, thus explaining the movement's afterlife.[286] After his apostasy, Sabbatai negotiated a dual identity, or as one scholar explains: "The last ten years of Sabbatai's life can be understood as a prolonged effort […] to be both, to prove to himself and the world that the two identities of Jew and Muslim can be fused in a single human being."[287] He died in 1676.

Sabbatai Zvi (and the movement he inspired) became touchstones in European literature throughout the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Contemporary scholars describe Sabbatai's popularity among German Jews as the product of broader crises of Jewish identity in the years between emancipation and the rise of German fascism. In his monograph on German-Jewish culture in the Weimar Republic, for instance, Michael Brenner attributes Sabbatai Zvi's newfound popularity to a search for Jewish authenticity in the wake of nineteenth-century secularization.[288] As I outlined in the introduction of this study, for many German-Jewish intellectuals of the 1920s, figures like Sabbatai Zvi and the philosopher Baruch Spinoza (Sabbatai's contemporary) represented what Brenner calls the *heretical ideal*—historical Jewish outsiders who offered German Jews "alternative role

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[285] Of particular interest is the Dönmeh sect, a group of Jews who, following Sabbatai's example, converted to Islam, only to secretly continue to pray to Sabbatai. See David J. Halperin, *Sabbatai Zevi: Testimonies to a Fallen Messiah* (Oxford: Littman Library of Jewish Civilization, 2007) 4. Halperin's introduction offers a very concise version of Sabbatai's biography.

[286] Scholem, *Sabbatai Sevi* 687.

[287] Halperin, *Sabbatai Zevi* 10-11.

[288] M. Brenner, *Renaissance* 129-152.

models that would suit their own situation outside Jewish tradition."[289] In other words, marginal figures like Sabbatai Zvi—who existed both on the outskirts of normative Judaism and of later German-Jewish historiography—offered a means of authenticating Jewish identities rooted in non-normative Jewish culture, rather than in mainstream religious practice. Thus, for Brenner, Sabbatai Zvi represented the outsider's outsider for those Weimar-era German Jews who looked for Jewishness in something other than Judaism.

In a more recent text, historian David Biale points out that Sabbatai Zvi enjoyed a broader appeal than Brenner suggests, showing that the image of Sabbateanism in "Jewish" literature was not confined to the Weimar era, nor even to the German language or to texts written by Jewish authors.[290] In addition to the novels by Herzl and Wassermann, Biale cites texts as diverse as Leopold von Sacher-Masoch's novella *Sabbathai Zewy* (1874), Sholem Ash's Yiddish drama *Shabbtai Zvi* (1908), and an English-language story by the British author Israel Zangwill, entitled "The Turkish Messiah," which appeared in his famous 1898 collection, *Dreamers of the Ghetto*. Biale asserts that these texts are more than simply the products of Jews looking to authenticate alternative modes of Jewishness. Instead, he argues, for these West European authors, marginal figures like Sabbatai Zvi reflect a particular moment of Jewish Orientalism, in which "ambivalence about the Jewish Orient captured many of the other ambivalences of these writers about contemporary Jewish culture."[291] For fin-de-siècle Jews and non-Jews, the image of Sabbatai Zvi and of Sabbateanism represented an exotic canvas upon which to project various aspects of the fin-de-siècle crisis of Jewish identity—including questions of "rabbinical authority, heresy, conversion and messianism,

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[289] M. Brenner, *Renaissance* 149.

[290] Biale, "Shabbtai Zvi" 85*-110*.

[291] Biale, "Shabbtai Zvi" 87*.

among others."[292] In Biale's analysis, Sabbatai's outsider status lies in his exotic, Oriental character, and not necessarily in his marginal position vis-à-vis normative Jewish tradition and dominant Jewish historiography.

Insofar as Biale and Brenner show that the image of Sabbatai Zvi formed a site for negotiating alternative modes of Jewish identity at the fin-de-siècle and beyond, they offer useful insights into the false Messiah's reception. But authors such as Herzl and Wasserman, who embraced the so called "heretical ideal," were not simply outsiders vis-à-vis normative Judaism; despite their considerable contributions to German and Austrian culture, they also occupied a minority position in German society. Fittingly, the historical outsiders that they embrace—especially Sabbatai Zvi—are also doubly marginal; nineteenth-century discourses of Jewish tradition pushed historical figures like the false Messiah to the fringes of both Jewish culture *and* of European modernity. And Sabbatai bore particular significance as a Jew who spent years negotiating two apparently incommensurable identities. Thus, as I will demonstrate below, these authors' engagement with the margins of Jewishness—and with a marginal Jew—was not simply a means of authenticating secular or non-normative *Jewish* identities (as Brenner and Biale suggest); they were not solely interested in establishing models of being Jewish beyond the pale of Judaism. Instead, these authors employed figures like Sabbatai Zvi in order to also create and authenticate models of Germanness.

Finally, as an antinomianist and an apostate who sparked a massive movement among European Jews, Sabbatai occupied a unique position vis-à-vis Jewish modernity.[293] He galvanized European Jewry at a moment before the Enlightenment had ushered in the

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[292] Biale, "Shabbtai Zvi" 86*.

[293] Biale argues, for instance, that for fin-de-siècle Jews, Sabbateanism "became the site for projection of the struggles and anxieties of a generation living between tradition and modernity" ("Shabbtai Zvi" 110*).

possibility of European Jewishness in Central Europe. That is, because of the sweeping changes in European-Jewish culture, society, and historical consciousness that his movement ushered in, Sabbatai's image represents a sliver of European-Jewish modernity in the premodern world. In turning to this image, Herzl and Wassermann thus self-consciously constructed models of European-Jewish identity that revisit (and challenge or even circumvent) the failed Enlightenment model of integration-in-exchange-for-assimilation. The image of Sabbatai Zvi and the Sabbatean movement is rife with questions of assimilation, decadence, and Enlightenment—questions which, as I will demonstrate in the remainder of this chapter, were crucial for Herzl and Wassermann in their constructions of fin-de-siècle German-Jewish identities and of the discursive landscapes and territories in which they grounded these identities.

III. The Final Frontier: Culture and Redemption in Theodor Herzl's *Altneuland*

As Buber's bookplate and his first Bar Kochba speech demonstrate, the fin-de-siècle discourses surrounding notions of Jewish locales and Jewish territory—and especially those connected to the many models of Zionism in circulation at the time—were intimately bound to questions of culture and cultural production, on the one hand, and to images of redemption and messianism, on the other. Even Zionists like Herzl, who emphasized political action and sought to carve out a geographic space for Jewish territory, recognized the centrality of literature and culture in their endeavor. In this regard, Herzl, Buber, and others reflect the considerations of Kraus in "Eine Krone für Zion," who demonstrates more of a concern with the decline of European culture than with the awakening of Jewish political consciousness.

"Sollte eine Verbesserung der europäischen Cultur nicht rascher durchzuführen sein," Kraus asks in his text, "als die Gründung einer nationaljüdischen?"[294]

It thus should come as no surprise that Kraus does not address *Der Judenstaat* in his attack on Herzl. Instead, he reserves his critique for Herzl's literary output, and makes explicit reference to Herzl's 1894 drama, *Das neue Ghetto*, which had premiered in 1898 and which depicted the second-class status of assimilated Jews in Viennese society.[295] Kraus takes this cultural critique into the realm of hyperbole, and he casts Herzl's entire interest in Zionism as a cover for his literary aspirations:

> Um die Entwicklung des Herrn Dr. Theodor Herzl, dieses begabten Wiener Prosaisten, mag man sich schon bekümmern. Aber dass aus dem einzigen Grunde, weil er einen Uebergang vom Feuilletonfach zum Leitartikel brauchte, Hunderttausende, von einem Schimmer eiteln Glanzes genarrt, doppelt elend in ihr altes Loos zurücksinken müssen, – war gewiss nicht der in der Weltordnung vorgezeichnete Lauf der Dinge.[296]

This passage suggests that Herzl occupies marginal ground—both socially and journalistically—recalling the Messiah in Buber's speech.[297] As a feuilletonist, Herzl's literary output is by definition consigned to the area below the fold, and like the protagonist in *Das neue Ghetto*, it can only achieve second-class status. For Kraus, Herzl's involvement in Zionism and his subsequent turn toward Palestine represent nothing more than attempts to elevate the status of his journalistic work. Herzl's territorial interests, in other words, lie less

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[294] Kraus, "Zion" 311. As Reitter observes, Kraus devotes a considerable portion of his polemic to attack the ubiquitous aesthetes and dandies that formed the fin-de-siècle Viennese literary scene, the objects of ridicule in his 1896 text, "Die demolierte Literatur" (Reitter, *Kraus* 75). See also Karl Kraus, "Die demolierte Literatur," *Frühe Schriften, 1892-1900* ed. Joh. J. Braakenburg, vol. 1 (Munich: Kösel-Verlag, 1979) 269-289.

[295] Kraus, "Zion" 298.

[296] Kraus, "Zion" 314.

[297] Incidentally, several critics have noted how the figure of Herzl took on messianic contours in Zionist memory. See Wistrich, "Herzl" 7-22. Michael Berkowitz demonstrates the powerful use of Herzl's image in marketing Zionism. See Michael Berkowitz, "Re-Imagining Herzl and other Zionist Sex Symbols," *Theodor Herzl: From Europe to Zion*, ed. Mark H. Gelber and Vivan Liska (Tübingen: Niemeyer, 2007) 73-84.

in reclaiming the Jewish *Stammland* in Palestine, and more in planting a personal flag in the real estate above the fold in the Viennese press.

Kraus reveals the intimate bond between cultural production and fin-de-siècle identity politics, and he underscores it in the final sentence of his polemic, by invoking one of Herzl's most loyal supporters: the journalist, cultural critic, and psychologist, Nordau. Complaining of the aberrance of Herzl's literary ambitions, Kraus asks: "Wo bleibt Herr Nordau, der grosse Literaturarzt, der stets noch bei der geringsten Anomalie der Zeiten und mit seltener Vordringlichkeit dem verendenden Jahrhundert den Puls fühlen zu müssen wähnte?.... Ach, er ist Vorsitzender des Zionistencongresses!"[298] Nordau made a name for himself by diagnosing European society, literature, philosophy, and aesthetics as degenerate, most notably in *Die conventionellen Lügen der Kulturmenschheit* (1883) and *Entartung* (1892/93). In the latter text, he described the etiology of social degeneration by attacking such notable figures as Friedrich Nietzsche and Richard Wagner, and by criticizing nearly all modes of European modernism, from the naturalism of Émile Zola to the aestheticism of Joris Karl Huysmans. By citing Nordau's failure to recognize the cultural threat that Zionism poses, Kraus also tacitly highlights the cultural bent of the Zionist project.

Indeed, cultural concerns repeatedly slip to the fore in Herzl's own account in *Der Judenstaat*. The question of language in the Jewish state offers a prime example. Herzl argues that a single, official, common language is not necessary. Instead, the settlers would maintain their own languages, in a kind of linguistic federation modeled on Switzerland.[299] But he explicitly excludes Jewish languages, dismissing Hebrew as too infrequently spoken, and Yiddish as a ghetto language. As he puts it, "Die verkümmerten und verdrückten

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[298] Kraus, "Zion" 314.

[299] Herzl, *Judenstaat* 79-80.

Jargons, deren wir uns jetzt bedienen, diese Ghettosprachen werden wir uns abgewöhnen. Es waren die verstohlenen Sprachen von Gefangenen."[300] Here Herzl exhibits precisely the attitude toward Yiddish that Franz Kafka suggested (and subverted) in his 1912 speech on the language, which I discussed in the first chapter of this study. By positing the Jewish state as a site where linguistic (and cultural) regeneration can occur, where *Jargon* can be unlearned, Herzl's text shows that Zionism (as Kraus suggests) is at root a cultural endeavor—an attempt at cultural assimilation or *embourgeoisement*—even when it dons the garb of nation building.

Perhaps anticipating the sentiments of Buber's bookplate and his first Bar Kochba speech, Kraus shows that the ground of Jewishness in the Zionist project is above all discursive. It is precisely German literature and German culture—and not just a remote territory and uniquely Jewish landscape—which are at stake in the debates surrounding Zionism. Despite its hyperbole and its melodramatic tone, in fact, Kraus's caricature of Herzl and of political Zionism offers insight into the movement's most significant literary product, Herzl's *Altneuland*. This utopian novel represents a literary companion to Herzl's *Der Judenstaat* and, not surprisingly, it describes a journey between the two paradigmatic Jewish locales that appear in Kraus's polemic: the novel posits and rejects one kind of Jewish space, the Jewish cultural milieu of Vienna, in order to create another, radically different space, a Jewish political territory in Palestine.

In the novel, the Jewish state in Palestine is established through the expert application of modern technology, which manifests itself in every aspect of life. Swamps are drained to create arable land, and vast quantities of supplies and provisions are coordinated over several continents using the latest media of communication. Even the Passover Seder receives a new

[300] Herzl, *Judenstaat* 80.

component: a phonographic supplement to the *Haggadah*. At the same time, however, the novel repeatedly affirms Palestine as an ancient and traditional Jewish homeland, and it casts the establishment of the Jewish state there as the grass-roots fulfillment of messianic redemption. Indeed, as with Buber's Bar Kochba speech, the image of messianic expectation in *Altneuland*—evoked in Herzl's case, as we'll see, by an image of Sabbatai Zvi—carves out and legitimates (and even sanctifies) a uniquely Jewish location in the future. Just as a Jewish past and a Jewish future collide in the messianic space outside the gates of Rome in Buber's fable, where the Messiah waits for a signal from the Jewish people, *Altneuland* (as its very name suggests) depicts a *topos* where the stalled engine of Diaspora Jewish history and tradition is finally reignited by popular action. In the case of Buber's text, this future is determined by the Messiah's expectant *Auf dich*. As for Herzl, his novel bears the dedication: "Wenn Ihr es wollt, ist es kein Märchen."[301]

The visions of space in the novel depict colonial territory as the site for cultural regeneration, very much in the vein of the nineteenth-century project of Jewish assimilation and emancipation. As Michael Stanislawski has argued, *Altneuland* displays a unique blend of Zionist-nationalist sentiments and cosmopolitanism; it represents a location in which Jewish nationhood and cosmopolitan European culture blend seamlessly in a regenerated Palestine.[302] Indeed, shortly after the publication of Herzl's novel, the cultural Zionist Ahad Ha'am complained that the Jewish land it depicted was too European.[303] In this section, I will examine the intersection of cosmopolitanism and nationalism in Herzl's novel, by

[301] Theodor Herzl, *Altneuland* (Vienna: R. Löwit Verlag, 1925) 1.

[302] Stanislawski, *Zionism* 16-18.

[303] See Ahad Ha'am, "Altneuland," *Ost und West* Apr. 1903: 227-244. I will examine Ahad Ha'am's critique, along with Nordau's response, in more detail below.

concentrating first on the images of Jewish space that the text proffers, and then—in light of Ahad Ha'am's critique—on the instances in which the novel foregrounds Jewish culture. I will demonstrate that even as the text promotes a vision of assimilation and European cosmopolitanism, it complicates this vision by incorporating marginalized elements of Jewish cultural history—including Jewish messianism and the story of Sabbatai Zvi—into specifically European cultural institutions. Through my reading of the text's cultural offerings, I will demonstrate that even in the moments in which political Zionism asserts the supremacy of establishing a Jewish territory over developing a uniquely Jewish culture, questions of Jewish cultural production and of Jewish tradition repeatedly percolate to the surface. As we will see, even if German literature and German culture did not form the impetus for political Zionism (as Kraus suggests), they nevertheless served as a privileged site in which Zionism operated, as well as the contested ground at the heart of Zionist debates about Jewish territory, Jewish culture, and Jewish identity.

A Voyage Nowhere with N. O. Body

As I briefly noted above, Herzl's novel offers a literary manifestation of his political vision. In doing so, the text also presents several images of Jewish territory and of Jewish landscapes, to which I will now turn. Part *Bildungsroman*, part travelogue, and part utopian novel, the text follows its protagonist, Friedrich Löwenberg—a young, Jewish (and consequently unemployed) lawyer—from the decadent atmosphere of fin-de-siècle Vienna to the brave new frontiers of an imagined modern Jewish state. The opening scene of the novel illustrates the hopelessness of Friedrich's situation in Vienna. Because he cannot find gainful employment, he spends his days—like countless other young Jewish professionals in this

opening scene—reading newspapers in a coffeehouse. His only two friends have recently died from the complications of their desperate situation: one from a fever obtained while trying to start a new life in a Jewish settlement in Brazil, the other from a self-inflicted gunshot wound to the head. The first Jewish locale in the novel—fin-de-siècle Vienna—emerges in all of its characteristic decadence, and Friedrich, like the many Jewish young men in the coffeehouse, is very much a product of this decadence. Moreover, Friedrich is alone. But he is not merely ostracized from majority (non-Jewish) society; the novel makes a point of demonstrating that his lack of means makes him an outcast among the wealthy Jewish elite, including the family of the beautiful Ernestine Löffler, for whom he secretly pines.

Desperate, Friedrich responds to a newspaper advertisement, which reads simply: "G e s u c h t w i r d ein gebildeter und verzweifelter junger Mann, der bereit ist, mit seinem Leben ein letztes Experiment zu machen. Anträge unter N. O. Body an die Expedition."[304] N. O. Body turns out to be Mr. Kingscourt (formerly Königshof), a wealthy German-American misanthrope who plans to retire forever to a desert island in the South Pacific, and who seeks an educated young man as a companion. The only other company he has—a suicidal Tahitian and a "stumme[r] Neger"—are not, it seems, qualified for the position.[305] Friedrich agrees, but before departing he requests a sizable sum of money, which he gives to the family of David Littwak, a poor Jewish boy from Eastern Europe, whom he had recently encountered begging outside the coffeehouse from the opening scene. Then Friedrich and Kingscourt set sail for their remote island hideaway.

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[304] Herzl, *Altneuland* 11. Again, this passage suggests one of the standard themes of fin-de-siècle decadence: a highly educated, but "nervous" cultural elite facing the impending demise of civilization. See Le Rider, *Modernity* 11-29. It is precisely this atmosphere that Kraus lampoons in his 1896 pamphlet, "Die demolierte Literatur" (269-289).

[305] Herzl, *Altneuland* 36. For more on the colonialist and racist discourses in the novel, see Bar-Yosef, "Villa" 94-97.

On the way, the ship stops briefly in Palestine (at Jaffa), and the two companions do a bit of sightseeing, offering the reader a first glimpse of the ancient Jewish landscape that becomes central to the novel. This initial impression of the region, however, is far from positive:

> Die Lage am blauen Meere wohl herrlich, aber alles zum Erbarmen vernachlässigt. Die Landung in dem elenden Hafen mühselig. Die Gäßchen von den übelsten Gerüchen erfüllt, unsauber, verwahrlost, überall buntes orientalisches Elend. Arme Türken, schmutzige Araber, scheue Juden lungerten herum, alle träg, bettelhaft und hoffnungslos. Ein sonderbarer Moderluft, wie von Gräbern, beengte einem das Atmen.[306]

This passage puts the *alt* in *Altneuland*. The text depicts Jaffa as a city perched on the edge of ruin. Dirty and impoverished, the city and its inhabitants exude an air of hopelessness on the one hand, and musty decay on the other. In this scene, Palestine is a Jewish location bereft of any future, existing only as a faint memory, a location akin to a ruined tomb or a dilapidated burial ground. The novel specifically attributes an Oriental quality to the decay of the region—a quality implicitly opposed to Western civilization.[307]

Not content with this scene, Kingscourt and Friedrich take a train to Jerusalem. Along the way, they only encounter more of the same impoverished, decaying wasteland:

> Auch auf diesem Wege Bilder tiefster Verkommenheit. Das flache Land fast nur Sand und Sumpf. Die mageren Äcker wie verbrannt. Schwärzliche Dörfer von Arabern. Die Bewohner hatten ein räuberhaftes Aussehen. Die Kinder spielten nackt im Straßenstaube. Und in der Ferne des Horizonts sah man die entwaldeten Berge von Judäa. Der Zug fuhr dann durch öde Felsentäler. Die Abhänge verkarstet, wenig Spuren einer einstigen oder gegenwärtigen Kultur.[308]

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[306] Herzl, *Altneuland* 47.

[307] Biale offers a discussion of Jewish Orientalism by examining the case of Sabbatai Zvi (Biale, "Shabbtai Zvi" 87*-90*). In another context, John M. Efron examines Orientalism among German-Jewish historians of the mid-nineteenth century, including Heinrich Graetz and Abraham Geiger. See John M. Efron, "Orientalism and the Jewish Historical Gaze," *Orientalism and the Jews*, ed. Ivan Davidson Kalmar and Derek J. Penslar (Waltham, MA: Brandeis UP, 2005) 80-93.

[308] Herzl, *Altneuland* 47-48.

The barren landscape of Palestine offers little trace of cultivation and cultural production. Nothing is able to grow in the sun-baked earth except for naked children and shifty Arabs. Almost instinctively, Friedrich equates this barrenness with the state of the Jewish people: "'Wenn das unser Land ist,' sagte Friedrich melancholisch, 'so ist es ebenso heruntergekommen wie unser Volk.'"[309] Like the treeless hills of Judea, the Jewish *Volk* exists in a state of utter degeneration—a state alluded to in the novel's opening coffeehouse scene. And like the decrepit city of Jaffa, this land (and the *Volk* it represents) seems to have little future—the barren fields are virtually incapable of providing sustenance. This Jewish landscape, it seems—like the *Volk* itself—is badly in need of redemption.

Kingscourt, however, sees potential in the land: "Das Land braucht nur Wasser und Schatten, dann hätte es noch eine Zukunft, wer weiß wie groß!"[310] Seen through the eyes of the cosmopolitan German-turned-American, even this image of a degraded landscape presents the possibility of regeneration, both in terms of the cultivation of its fields and the culture of its (dispersed) people. If afforded the proper conditions, the landscape can be restored, even improved to new levels of prosperity. When Friedrich asks who should perform this regeneration—who should bring the water and shade—Kingscourt's response is telling: "Die Juden, Kreuzschockschwerenot!"[311] In regenerating the land, Kingscourt suggests, the Jewish *Volk* may also regenerate itself. Thus the novel establishes a constellation of landscape, culture, and identity, in which notions of national and cultural identity are bound to a unique, dilapidated, but redeemable territory. More specifically, the novel constructs Jewish territory as a mirror-image to the condition of the Jewish *Volk*.

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[309] Herzl, *Altneuland* 48.

[310] Herzl, *Altneuland* 48.

[311] Herzl, *Altneuland* 48.

But the Jewish *Volk* and the Jewish *Stammland* aren't the only people and places in need of redemption in the text. Indeed, as critics have noted—including most recently Todd Presner—Herzl's vision of Zionist territory becomes a site for regenerating local Arabs and East European Jews, for restoring masculinity, and for integrating the text's protagonists into normative discourse of heterosexuality.[312] However, the images I cited above of Palestine as a territory of hopelessness and decay also draw explicit connections to discourses of fin-de-siècle cultural decadence and degeneration that were so prevalent at the time, in texts ranging from Nordau's *Entartung*, to Friedrich Nietzsche's *Der Fall Wagner* (1888), to Kraus's "Die demolierte Literatur." In *Altneuland*, the competing Jewish spaces of Vienna and Palestine are intimately bound by a mutual need for social and cultural renewal—a bond that emerges more clearly as the text unfolds.

From Palestine, Friedrich and Kingscourt continue to their island, where they spend twenty years together, although the novel offers little narrative insight into what transpires there. All that the reader learns of this fantasy island comes from Kingscourt's description of it, before the companions leave Vienna:

> Es ist ein kleines Felsennestchen im Cooks-Archipel. Die habe ich mir gekauft, und mir dort von Leuten aus Rarotonga ein komfortables Haus erbauen lassen. Das Gebäude liegt so versteckt hinter den Felsen, daß man es von keiner Seite bemerkt, wenn man auf dem Meere vorbeifährt. Es sind übrigens auch die Schiffe dort selten. Meine Insel sieht nach wie vor unbewohnt aus…[313]

This island offers a vision of landscape (and of non-territory) that stands in stark contrast with the companions' experience in Palestine. With a few key differences, however, the

[312] Todd Samuel Presner, *Mobile Modernity: Germans, Jews, Trains* (New York: Columbia UP, 2007) 197-204. For a sustained reading of discourses on colonial and sexual regeneration in the text, see also Daniel Boyarin, *Unheroic Conduct: The Rise of Heterosexuality and the Invention of the Jewish Man* (Berkeley: U of California P, 1997) 271-312.

[313] Herzl, *Altneuland* 36.

description of Kingscourt's island resembles the image of Jewish space on Buber's bookplate. Both islands are isolated, removed from the context of a surrounding civilization. And both islands are heavily fortified—whether by stone walls or high cliffs—concealing and secluding their respective inhabitants. Buber's bookplate, in fact, depicts no inhabitants at all. Finally, and most significantly, both islands are discursive fantasies, existing in the very margins of texts, with Buber's bookplate hidden between the covers of texts in his library, and Kingscourt's island only taking shape outside of the framework of the novel's main narrative.

At first glance, these two islands seem to have radically different relationships to culture, however. Marked by its characteristic flora, shape, and architecture, Buber's island represents a uniquely Jewish space that calls for a renaissance of Jewish cultural awareness within the German cultural context. As I described above, Buber's bookplate unites Diaspora experience with Jewish tradition under the umbrella of the German word. Kingscourt's faceless island, on the other hand, exists apparently removed from all culture whatsoever, and it is precisely the lack of culture that causes him to seek out the company of someone like Friedrich, as he puts it, "um das Sprechen nicht zu verlernen."[314] But it is precisely their escapist act of retreating from fin-de-siècle society that foregrounds the need for regeneration, not only in Palestine, but in Europe, as well. During their twenty year sojourn on the isolated island, the distance from fin-de-siècle culture allows Friedrich to grow into a "Baum von einem Menschen," who could now "den Weibern gefährlich werden."[315] In other

[314] Herzl, *Altneuland* 36.

[315] Herzl, *Altneuland* 59. Here Herzl engages directly with prevalent fin-de-siècle discourses on Jewish masculinity and Jewish decadence. As Stanislawski argues: "[F]or Nordau and Herzl […] at least as insidious as the ghetto Jew was the bourgeois Jew, represented as a fat (and effeminate) cigar-smoking capitalist with a carefully coifed wife (or mistress) on his arm or as a deracinated German- or Austrian-Jewish student, intellectual, lawyer, or journalist at home in the coffee house and lecture hall but cut off entirely from nature,

words, while the island on Buber's bookplate asserts the possibility of Jewish cultural regeneration within the discursive realm of German culture, Friedrich's regeneration from physical (and masculine) decadence only occurs in the isolated non-territory of Kingscourt's uncultivated island.

And yet, Kingscourt's island is not entirely without culture. The description of the island—like the utopian framework of the novel itself—represents a stock literary convention. Kingscourt's island, as critics have noted, recalls the colonial fantasies of the so-called *Robinsonade*—a genre of novel based on Daniel Defoe's 1719 *Robinson Crusoe*—which had its heyday in German culture during the early eighteenth century.[316] Thus, if the earlier vision of Palestine served to establish a constellation of landscape, culture, and identity, then Kingscourt's island uncovers the regenerative potential of colonial territory as it is imagined in the German literary conventions of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries.[317] Through this literary framework, the novel indeed casts literature and culture as a vehicle for national and even physical regeneration.

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from military life, from 'real' manhood" (*Zionism* 93). For extended discussions on this constellation, see especially Le Rider, *Modernity* 165-183 and D. Boyarin, *Unheroic* 189-359.

[316] Bar-Yosef, "Villa" 91. For more on the *Robinsonade* and the eighteenth-century reception of adventure literature, see Rolf Grimminger, "Roman," *Deutsche Aufklärung bis zur Französischen Revolution, 1680-1789*, ed. Rolf Grimminger, vol. 3 of *Hansers Sozialgeschichte der deutschen Literatur vom 16. Jahrhundert bis zur Gegenwart* (Vienna: Carl Hanser Verlag, 1980) 665-678. For more on the German colonial imagination, see Susanne Zantop, *Colonial Fantasies: Conquest, Family and Nation in Precolonial Germany, 1770-1870* (Durham: Duke UP, 1997).

[317] D. Boyarin provocatively reads Herzl's Zionism from a postcolonial perspective. After demonstrating the colonial aspects of the project of Jewish emancipation in Europe (especially in German and Austrian culture), he argues that, in pursuing a colonial trajectory, political Zionism represented an act of mimicry of European colonialism, and thus a form of assimilation. His nuanced reading offers much insight into the continuities (and discontinuities) between the Zionist project and European colonialism (*Unheroic* 271-312). In a more recent text, Aamir Mufti broadens this line of investigation, and establishes a connection between the project of Jewish emancipation and European colonialism. See especially Aamir R. Mufti, *Enlightenment in the Colony: The Jewish Question and the Crisis of Postcolonial Culture* (Princeton: Princeton UP, 2007) 37-90.

During their twenty-year absence from civilization, the two companions develop a curiosity about the state of civilization in Europe, and as the narrative resumes, Friedrich and Kingscourt are heading back to visit Europe, if only to confirm their misanthropic stance. On the way, they again stop in Palestine. Upon disembarking in Haifa, they promptly encounter David Littwak. Once a young boy begging at the gates of the coffeehouse—an image not altogether unlike the Messiah in Buber's story—David Littwak has become an up-and-coming member of the new society in Palestine and one of its most important civic leaders. Overjoyed at the appearance of his erstwhile benefactor, David introduces Kingscourt and Friedrich to the many innovations and renovations in the new Jewish state. The very first ground-level view of Haifa offers a radically different vision of Palestine as a Jewish location and of its situation vis-à-vis the cultures of the Orient and of the Occident:

> Es fand hier offenbar ein Verkehr aller Völker statt, denn man sah die buntesten Trachten des Morgenlandes zwischen Gewändern des Okzidents. Chinesen, Perser, Araber wandelten durch die geschäftige Menge. Vorherrschend war freilich die Kleidung des Abendlandes, wie diese Stadt ja überhaupt einen durchaus europäischen Eindruck machte. Man hätte glauben können, daß man sich in einem großen Hafen Italiens befinde. [...] Nur waren die Gebäude viel moderner und reinlicher, und der Straßenverkehr enthielt bei aller Lebhaftigkeit weniger Lärm.[318]

Much has changed in the twenty years since Friedrich and Kingscourt last visited the region. This passage presents Palestine as a vibrant commercial center, far removed from the dirty streets of Jaffa twenty years earlier. Moreover, this city and its inhabitants display little of the Oriental character that defined the novel's earlier description of Jaffa. This city resembles an Italian metropolis, but without the Mediterranean chaos: here everything is clean, well ordered, and cosmopolitan.

In the remainder of the novel, David takes the castaways on an extended tour of the various technological, political, commercial, and cultural institutions and innovations in

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[318] Herzl, *Altneuland* 67-68.

Altneuland. The text gradually constructs an image of *Altneuland* as redeemed landscape. What were once swamps are now arable plots of land, once barren fields are now fertile gardens; the cities are full of beautiful new buildings—everywhere prosperity blossoms. And like the land itself, the Jews in the new Jewish state have undergone a similar regeneration, of which David is a prime example. In his first appearance in the novel, as a ten-year-old boy in Vienna (with a strong Yiddish accent), David is forced to beg for money to help support his starving family. In the Jewish state, David is a prosperous, educated, prominent member of the community, who speaks flawless German. Like the island on Buber's bookplate, this utopian Jewish territory represents a redeemed landscape; like Kingscourt's island, it also represents a redemptive one.

Altneuland thus constructs colonial space and Jewish territory as a site for Jewish regeneration. Interestingly, the regeneration that occurs is nothing short of the assimilation into European culture that marked the precondition for Jewish emancipation in Europe. Twenty years with Kingscourt on a desert island regenerate Friedrich physically, while the same period of time in the new Jewish state regenerates David's speech and makes him a productive member of civic, bourgeois society—motifs of Jewish regeneration that stem directly from the inaugural debates on Jewish emancipation in German-speaking Europe.[319] As Presner notes: "At the upshot of the Zionist bildungsroman […] weak, Eastern, Yiddish-speaking Jews have become transformed into politically and physically strong, heterosexual, German-speaking Jews who reside in Palestine, the outpost of European civilization."[320] The Jewish territory in *Altneuland* ultimately represents a territory in which Jews are finally able

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[319] D. Boyarin summarizes this position: "As much as it is a reterritorialization of Jewishness […], Herzelian Zionism is a deterritorialization of Germanness" (D. Boyarin, *Unheroic* 309).

[320] Presner *Modernity* 203.

to become more European. But, as we will see below, this assessment of the novel is as old as the text itself.

"Nirgends eine besondere jüdische Spur"

The street scene in Haifa raises two crucial questions about *Altneuland*, both as a novel and as a depiction of Jewish territory. First of all, through the radical contrast between Haifa and the vision of Jaffa twenty years earlier, the novel leaves Friedrich and Kingscourt (along with the reader) anxiously wondering about the mechanism of the region's regeneration. Secondly, the cosmopolitan character of this scene—as well as the image of regeneration that it offers—begs the question of the specifically "Jewish" character of Herzl's imagined Jewish state. How does this cosmopolitan (perhaps hyper-European) vision represent a model of *Jewish* identity? After the release of the novel, this latter question emerged from the heart of some of the most heated discussions about the role of Jewish culture in Zionism, most famously manifested in the debate between Herzl's lieutenant, Nordau, and the cultural Zionist Ahad Ha'am. Moreover, while the question of Jewishness may seem unrelated to the question of redemption or regeneration in the novel, as I will demonstrate below, these two notions are deeply intertwined, both in the text and in the debates surrounding it. Again and again the novel depicts culture as a regenerative force, and as I will show, the text's discursive spaces are the spaces with the most redemptive potential.

Altneuland immediately caused as stir among Zionists readers, with many expressing discontent about its vision of a Jewish state. Early in 1903, *Ost und West*—a German-language monthly journal of Jewish culture—entered the fray by soliciting a review of the

novel from Ahad Ha'am, a Russian Zionist and one of Herzl's staunchest critics.[321] According to the editors of *Ost und West*, the journal hoped to publish a rebuttal by Herzl alongside Ahad Ha'am's piece, and accordingly sent Herzl an advance copy of the review.[322] Herzl subsequently forwarded the review to Nordau, who wrote a biting response, which was preemptively published (more than two weeks before Ahad Ha'am's review appeared) in the March 13 issue of *Die Welt*, the weekly journal of political Zionism.

The review by Ahad Ha'am offers a series of critiques of the novel, ranging from skepticism about the astonishing speed of the fictionalized land's transformation, to questions about how this transformation seems to defy fundamental social, economic, and political principles. The central line of criticism in his review is cultural, however, and Ahad Ha'am repeatedly points to the novel's lack of specifically Jewish cultural institutions, noting, for instance, that "Hebräisch ist hier offenbar, gleichwie im Golus, nur die Sprache der Gebete und Begrüssungen."[323] By the same token, he bemoans the abundance of European culture. As he describes one sequence near the end of the novel, after Friedrich and Kingscourt have celebrated the Passover Seder with the Littwak family: "Nach dem Fest machen die Gäste noch verschiedene Ausflüge, und überall sehen sie ähnliche Zustände, wie die bereits geschilderten: Europäer, europäische Sitten, europäische Erfindungen. Nirgends eine besondere jüdische Spur."[324] For Ahad Ha'am, the Jewish state in its regenerated setting in

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[321] Ahad Ha'am's review has already been published in Hebrew in 1902, in the journal *Ha-Shiloah*, but it would not have been widely available to a German-speaking readership. For more on the journal *Ost und West*, see David A. Brenner, *Marketing Identities: The Invention of Jewish Ethnicity in* Ost und West (Detroit: Wayne State UP, 1998). D. Brenner discusses how the editors of *Ost und West* saw Nordau's review as a manifestation of his "Paternalistic West European biases and his limited understanding of Eastern Jewish traditions" (38).

[322] "Die Juden von Gestern (Eine Erwiderung)," editorial, *Ost und West* Apr. 1903: 220.

[323] Ahad Ha'am, "Altneuland" 240.

[324] Ahad Ha'am, "Altneuland" 241.

Palestine is too European—a complaint that speaks directly to the novel's description of Haifa as a city resembling an Italian port—and indeed of *Altneuland* as a location in which assimilation into European culture may finally occur.

Ahad Ha'am's criticism is not unfounded. Unlike the island on Buber's bookplate—whose shape, flora, and architecture mark it as a specifically Jewish locale—*Altneuland* conspicuously lacks specifically Jewish traditions and cultural institutions. Non-Jews are welcome to participate in the so called *neue Gesellschaft*, the region's secular governing body. German (and certainly not Hebrew or Yiddish) seems to be the most prominent language. Even Judaism is strictly relegated to the home or the synagogue, and the novel sets all religion on equal terms with other (non-religious) cultural institutions. As the narrator describes it:

> Glaubenssachen waren ein für allemal von der öffentlichen Beeinflussung ausgeschaltet. Ob einer im Tempel, in der Kirche, in der Moschee, im Kunstmuseum oder im philharmonischen Konzerte die Andacht suchte, die ihn mit dem Ewigen verbinden sollte, darum hatte sich die Gesellschaft nicht zu kümmern.[325]

Religion is far from a defining feature of the Jewish state that Herzl envisions, and Judaism exists as radically compartmentalized—sealed-off from public life. But even in this cosmopolitan setting, *Altneuland* is not totally bereft of Jewish culture, and two moments in which the novel describes cultural artifacts serve as discursive backdoors through which *Altneuland* claims a specifically Jewish character.

The most prominent of these is a reading of the Passover *Haggadah*, which occurs during the novel's long Seder sequence, and which recounts the story of Passover and of the Jewish liberation from Egyptian captivity.[326] The novel supplements this *Haggadah* with a

[325] Herzl, *Altneuland* 286.

[326] Herzl, *Altneuland* 201-256.

second, updated text—a phonographic recording of Joe Levy, the architect behind the practical implementation of the Jewish state—recounting how he coordinated the settlement effort. The text thus sets the establishment of the Jewish state on equal ground with escape from slavery in Egypt, while it simultaneously casts the secular Zionist effort as an end to Diaspora—as the redemption of the rift between the Jewish *Volk* and the Jewish *Stammland*. And this redemption comes packaged in a modern adaptation of an ancient Jewish tradition.

A second cultural institution, the vibrant theater scene in Haifa, serves as a complex vehicle for Jewishness in the text. Haifa is home to several theaters, whose offerings range from a serious drama about Moses in the *Nationaltheater* and "tasteless" Yiddish farces in the *Volkstheater*, to an opera about Sabbatai Zvi in the *Opernhaus* (which I will discuss in more detail below).[327] Thus, even as the novel extols the necessity of a territory for Jewish nationality, and even as it posits the regenerative potential of establishing a Jewish state in the Jewish *Stammland*, it establishes Jewish identity through cultural (rather than political) venues. More importantly, just as the novel puts a modern, European spin on the traditional telling of the story of Passover, other aspects of Jewish history and tradition—including the lives of Moses and Sabbatai Zvi—are encased in modern, European cultural institutions. Ahad Ha'am, it seems, was onto something. But a closer look at the opera scene in the novel complicates matters.

After contemplating the city's theatrical offerings, Friedrich, Kingscourt, and their hosts eventually visit the opera, which resembles its European counterparts in every way, right down to the conventions of proper dress. And at first glance, this opera scene seems to serve as a vehicle for downplaying—even disparaging—Jewish culture, despite its specifically Jewish historical content. When Kingscourt asks for an explanation of the history

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[327] Herzl, *Altneuland* 105.

of Sabbatai Zvi, Mirjam, David Littwak's sister, offers the following synopsis: "Dieser Sabbatai Z'wi war ein falscher Messias, der am Anfange des siebzehnten Jahrhunderts in der Türkei auftrat. Es gelang ihm, eine große Bewegung unter den Juden des Orients hervorzurufen, aber später fiel er selbst vom Judentum ab und endete schmählich."[328] In her explanation, Mirjam fails to paint an accurate portrait of the movement, relegating it to the wrong portion of the seventeenth century and confining it to the Orient. Indeed, as critics have noted, the Jews on stage—standing in for those apparently duped by the false Messiah's charisma—are specifically cast as Oriental Jews.[329] Thus, like the first images of Palestine in the novel, this description of Sabbatai Zvi invokes a Jewish tradition that is both historically and geographically remote from European modernity, and one that is at odds with Western culture.

As the scene unfolds, however, David offers his own reading of the opera, which then assumes a pivotal role in the novel, both as a means of establishing cultural connections between European and Jewish traditions, and as a means of legitimating Herzl's vision of Jewish territory. Through David's reading of the opera, in fact, Herzl endows his vision of the Jewish state with messianic properties, while he carves out a space in which to negotiate an image of German Jewishness. Responding to Friedrich's surprise at the end of the opera's first act that "solche Abenteurer immer wieder Glauben finden konnten,"[330] David offers the following interpretation:

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[328] Herzl, *Altneuland* 115.

[329] Biale, for instance, reads this scene as Herzl's attempt to promote his secular vision of progress by "contrast[ing] those backward Jews, whether of the Orient or elsewhere, who believed in miracles and were therefore swept up by false messianism, with an enlightened, modern movement based on technology" ("Shabbtai Zvi" 96*-97*).

[330] Herzl, *Altneuland* 116.

> Mir schient, das hat einen tiefen Grund. Das Volk glaubte nicht, was sie [i.e. solche Abenteurer] sagten, sondern sie sagten, was das Volk glaubte. Sie kamen einer Sehnsucht entgegen. Nein, noch richtiger: sie kamen aus der Sehnsucht hervor. Das ist es. Die Sehnsucht macht den Messias.[331]

In this passage, David politicizes Jewish messianism in a move that seems to anticipate Buber's appropriation of a messianic tale in his Bar Kochba speech. Rather than the Messiah representing a predetermined future phenomenon which is to be expected and which brings about the eschaton, for David, the emergence of the Messiah (or *a* Messiah) is strictly a result of the unfulfilled political desires of the Jewish *Volk*. The Messiah on stage—a false Messiah—emerges in response to the Jewish longing for redemption.

Given the vast scope and utopian vision of Herzl's Zionism, his choice to depict messianism should come as no surprise. Herzl wants to tap into the grassroots potential of messianic expectation, while also clearing the way for a secular reinterpretation of the phenomenon. Indeed, by confining his engagement with messianism to a fictional stage in Haifa, Herzl positions European culture (the opera) as the vehicle for preserving and transmitting Jewish history and Jewish tradition. In doing so, his text seems to establish "European" and "Jewish" as opposing coordinates, and to clearly privilege the former over the latter. And yet, as David's explanation continues, the novel blurs the boundaries of this binary, positioning messianic redemption as the Jewish entry-ticket into Western civilization:

> Nun müssen Sie denken, was das für arme dunkle Zeiten waren, in denen ein Sabbatai oder seinesgleichen erschienen. Unser Volk war noch nicht imstande, sich auf sich selbst zu besinnen, und da berauschte es sich an solchen Gestalten. Spät erst, am Ende des neunzehnten Jahrhunderts, als schon alle anderen zivilisierten Völker ihr Selbstbewußtsein erlangt hatten und es betätigten, kam auch unser verstoßenes Volk zu der Erkenntnis, daß es das Heil nur von der eigenen Kraft, und nicht von phantastischen Wundertätern erwarten dürfe. Nicht eine einzelne Person, wohl aber

[331] Herzl, *Altneuland* 116.

> die erwachte und rührige Volkspersönlichkeit müsse das Erlösungswerk vorbereiten.[332]

According to David, the failure of Sabbatai Zvi to bring about redemption was not rooted in Sabbatai's apostasy, nor even in the Oriental character of his followers, but rather in the failure of the Jewish *Volk* to recognize the nature of redemption as a political, and not an eschatological, phenomenon. David does not disparage Sabbatai's followers for believing the false Messiah, and he does not orientalize the Jews on stage as superstitious and susceptible to the charms of miracle-workers. Instead, he historicizes the Sabbatean movement, establishing a binary not between Oriental and Occidental Jews, but between premodern Jews and those who have achieved political consciousness.

In this text, messianism represents a Jewish mode of nationalism, and it is precisely through the messianic urge that Jews are able to join the other "civilized" *Völker*. Herzl underscores this move at the conclusion of David's explanation: "Gesta Dei per Francos, hieß es einst bei den Franzosen – Gottes Taten durch die Juden! sagen unsere echten Frommen, die sich nicht durch parteiische Rabbiner verhetzen lassen. Welcher Werkzeuge sich Gott für seine unerforschlichen Zwecke bedienen will, das steht bei ihm."[333] Here the text references a twelfth-century account of the First Crusade, the title of which invokes divine will to legitimate the deeds of the crusaders. Similarly, in this passage, the establishment of a Jewish state and the mobilization of the Jewish *Volk* becomes the will of God, leaving pious Jews unable to question the secular Zionist project. Through his reengagement with the messianic tradition, then, Herzl legitimates his vision of Jewish territory, even as he appropriates an image of a Christian-European invasion of that same territory.

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[332] Herzl, *Altneuland* 116.

[333] Herzl, *Altneuland* 117.

More importantly, culture—the European opera and the Jewish historical figure that it depicts—becomes the central vehicle for establishing the political consciousness that he desires. But Herzl doesn't merely value culture for its political utility; culture is not only a means of mobilizing the masses toward a given political end. Instead, in *Altneuland*, the European-Jewish space on stage also becomes a critical location for developing and negotiating Jewish identity—more critical, in fact, than the European-Jewish territory that Herzl's utopian novel constructs, or even than the *Stammland* toward which the *Geschichtsanwälte des jüdsichen Volkes* level their gaze. For Herzl, the institutions of culture that his text presents (the opera, the *Haggadah*, Jewish history and messianism in the figure of Sabbatai Zvi, and even the novel itself) all emerge as the most reliable ground for establishing an identity rooted in Jewish tradition, European culture, and modern political consciousness.

In fin-de-siècle German-Jewish consciousness, Sabbatai Zvi was a double outsider, vis-à-vis both Jewish tradition, and, retroactively, the mores of post-Enlightenment bourgeois society. Herzl's appropriation of Sabbatai's story thus not only represents a reengagement with (and reinterpretation of) the Jewish messianic tradition; it also marks a reorientation toward the margins of Jewish tradition and of the process of assimilation ushered in by the German Enlightenment. Herzl offers a utopian vision in which, through the return of the Jewish *Volk* to the Jewish *Stammland*, post-Enlightenment European (and, especially, German) culture is restored to a fantasy of inclusiveness, cosmopolitanism, and universality.

In fact, by revisiting and reinventing Jewish messianism, Herzl makes a radical attempt to reclaim marginality in European culture. The Sabbatean movement onstage demonstrates for Herzl's readers that Jewishness contains (and has contained) a latent

national self-consciousness—of *Volksbewußtsein*—beneath the surface of its messianic impulse. Without the will toward *Volksbewußtsein*, in fact, a Sabbatai would not have been possible, the text argues. By staging Jewish messianism as the theme of an opera within the novel, Herzl encases Jewish history in European culture. By the same token, however, in locating a latent *Volksbewußtsein* within the messianic impulse in Judaism, Herzl cloaks European culture in Jewish tradition. Such dual integration is a far cry from assimilation into European culture, or from dissimilation from European culture. Instead, by bringing the margins of Jewish tradition to bear on European culture, Herzl fashions a model of Jewish identity rooted in the engagement with both cultures. Thus, if Herzl's novel serves to redeem the Jewish *Volk* and to restore the Jews to their *Stammland*, then it also marks an attempt to regenerate precisely the post-Enlightenment European culture that it promotes. As Presner notes, at least in Herzl's fantasy "[t]here is no dialectical underside to Herzl's society."[334]

In light of the central role that Jewish messianism plays in Herzl's vision of a Jewish territory, it seems that Ahad Ha'am's critique of the novel misses the point. For all of its European trappings, *Altneuland* retains a central connection to Jewish culture, and, indeed, the novel strives to underscore Jewishness at the heart of its European cultural offerings. Haifa has an opera house, but this European institution offers a venue for the audience to learn about Jewish culture and Jewish nationalism. Herzl thus constructs a model of German Jewishness that transcends the assimilation/dissimilation trap, asserting a right to both aspects of this dual identity, and refusing to oppose Jewishness and Germanness or Jewishness and Europeanness.

In his response to Ahad Ha'am, Nordau likewise asserts a Jewish right to participate in European culture, albeit at the expense of another Other. For him, European institutions

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[334] Presner, *Modernity* 201.

such as the opera are integral to the modern Jewish state, which will represent “ein Stück Europa in Asien.”[335] As he explains:

> Wir wollen, dass das wiedergeeinte, befreite jüdische Volk ein Kulturvolk bleibt, so weit es dies schon jetzt ist, ein Kulturvolk wird, so weit es dies noch nicht ist. Wir ahmen dabei niemand nach, wir benützen und entwickeln nur unser Eigentum. Wir haben an der europäischen Kultur mitgearbeitet, mehr als an unserem Teil; sie ist unser in demselben Masse wie der Deutschen, Franzosen, Engländer. Wir gestatten nicht, dass man einen Gegensatz zwischen Jüdisch, unserem Jüdisch, und Europäisch konstruiere. [...] Seine Eigenart wird das jüdische Volk innerhalb der allgemeinen westlichen Kultur entfalten, wie jedes andere gesittete Volk, nicht aber ausserhalb, in einem kulturfeindlichen, wilden Asiatentum, wie Achad-Haam es zu wünschen scheint.[336]

The very notion of culture for Nordau is European—and it stands in sharp contrast with the Oriental character that, for instance, the novel depicts in its first description of Jaffa. Moreover, Nordau insists that European culture is also Jewish culture, and he refuses to accept an opposition between the two. Modern Jewishness is part and parcel of European culture, and to deny that would be tantamount to resorting to “wild Asianness.” Thus, in a move that parallel’s Karl Emil Franzos’ *Aus Halb-Asien* (1876, discussed in the first chapter), Nordau strategically replaces the German/Jewish binary with European/Asian—situating Jewishness on the European end.

Although Nordau’s marginalization of Asianness hardly represents a viable alternative to the marginalization of Jewishness that he opposes, his response to Ahad Ha’am does reveal that what is at stake in *Altneuland* is more than the construction of Jewish territory. Instead (perhaps as Kraus suggested), the fictional territory that Herzl fashions represents a proving ground for negotiating questions of Jewish identity, European identity, and cultural production. Jewish cultural regeneration—a project begun with the

[335] Max Nordau, “Achad-Haam über ‘Altneuland’,” *Die Welt* 13 Mar 1903: 2.

[336] Nordau, “Achad-Haam” 2.

Enlightenment promise of emancipation—takes center stage in the novel, even as the novel stages redemption as a colonial fantasy in which wild *Asiatentum* is tamed by European civilization. Herzl legitimates his image of Jewish territory by drawing on an unlikely source—an opera depicting the messianic movement surrounding a false Messiah—and he reenvisions Jewish messianism as an expression of the integration of the Jewish *Volk* into European civilization. Thus, Herzl employs an image of Jewish space and the margins of Jewish culture to craft a model of European-Jewish identity that straddles a utopian future and an ancient Jewish past, that draws on the fringes of Jewish tradition and one of Jewish history's most marginal figures, and that confounds the assimilation/dissimilation binary.

IV. Paths of German Jewishness: Jakob Wassermann's *Die Juden von Zirndorf*

At the end of his review of *Altneuland*, Ahad Ha'am contextualizes the title of Herzl's novel, and he underscores the way in which the text addresses Diaspora experience. He complains that in the novel, the Jewish state is dubbed *Altneuland* by Kingscourt, and not by one of the Jewish characters. He finds this particularly irksome because the novel's title recalls the name of the *Altneuschul*, "womit seit unvordenklichen Zeiten die uralte Synagoge in Prag bezeichnet wird."[337] Once again, it seems, the novel—and with it Herzl's vision of Jewish territory—squanders an opportunity to include uniquely Jewish cultural elements. "Nun kennt man ja die hübsche Legende," he continues,

> wonach diese Synagoge sogleich nach der Zerstörung des Tempels durch jerusalemische Auswanderer erbaut worden ist, die die mitgebrachten Steine vom Tempel Zions als Fundament verwendeten. Dabei wurde der „T h ' n a j" (Bedingung) verabredet, dass, sobald der Messias kommt und die Vertriebenen in ihre Heimat zurückkehren, das Haus abgerissen und die Grundsteine wieder nach Zion gebracht

[337] Ahad Ha'am, "Altneuland" 244.

> werden. Ursprünglich hiess also die Synagoge „Al-Th'naj-Schul" [...], woraus im Verlaufe der Zeit „Altneuschul" geworden ist.[338]

According to this legend, the *Altneuschul* only represented a provisional spiritual home in Diaspora, literally and figuratively built on an ancient yet temporary foundation. For Ahad Ha'am, this story represents a final jab at Herzl's plan, for he argues that Herzl's vision of *Altneuland*, too, is merely a vision of a provisional place: "Ihm liegt nämlich die Bedingung zu Grunde, dass die Geschichte binnen 20 Jahren zu einem gedeihlichen Ende geführt wird und die 'Zionisten der ersten Stunde' alles noch selber mitmachen und sich an jenem öffentlichen Leben beteiligen können, welches sie in Europa sehnsüchtigen Auges mit ansehen, ohne es mitmachen zu dürfen..."[339] For Ahad Ha'am (as for Kraus), Herzl's Zionist enterprise has nothing to do with revitalizing Jewish culture, but only with a deterritorialized form of assimilation—with finally achieving equal status in European culture (albeit outside Europe).

But the legend of the *Altneuschul* that Ahad Ha'am recounts tells an alternative story. In time, the defining provision (*Bedingung*) resting at the foundation of the *Al-Th'naj-Schul* underwent a distortion. The messianic provision of imminent return lost its relevance as the Jewish community in Prague, along with its temple, received a new orientation vis-à-vis Diaspora existence. The *Al-Th'naj-Schul* became the *Altneuschul*—a location straddling two sets of spatial and temporal coordinates. Like the messianic space in Buber's Bar Kochba speech, or the Jewish island on his bookplate, the *Altneuschul* eventually began to embody a mode of Diaspora experience, in which it is possible to be simultaneously at home and away, European and Jewish.

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338 Ahad Ha'am, "Altneuland" 244.

339 Ahad Ha'am, "Altneuland" 244.

This shift in the notion of Diaspora, in which its transient and temporary aspect comes to represent the foundation of a rooted existence, sheds light on another fin-de-siècle novel of Jewish space and Jewish identity, Wassermann's 1897 breakthrough text, *Die Juden von Zirndorf*. Like Herzl's project, Wassermann's work is deeply invested in the question of German-Jewish identity, and, as the continued canonical status of his 1921 autobiography, *Mein Weg als Deutscher und Jude*, demonstrates, Wassermann remains an important figure in scholarly discussions of the so-called Jewish Question in early twentieth-century German culture. *Die Juden von Zirndorf*, however, has garnered considerably less critical attention—especially in investigations of German-Jewish identity—despite the obvious considerations that its title invokes.

This extraordinary novel tackles the problem of German Jewishness on at least three different levels. First of all, through its explicitly messianic protagonist, Agathon Geyer, the novel presents a complex depiction of the intersection between discourses of Jewishness and decadence in fin-de-siècle German culture. The novel's main narrative traces Agathon's development as a proponent of radical individualism who systematically rejects the fundamental institutions of bourgeois society as decadent. He renounces his faith, is expelled from school for writing an essay condemning the state of education, and becomes estranged from his father. At the novel's end, Agathon does not find his place in society, but instead comes to the realization, "daß die Kaserne und das Spital, der Palast und das Gefängnis, die Kirche und das Wirtshaus, das Theater und die Schule von einem Schmerz gepeinigt, von einer Lüge erhalten, von einer Hoffnung betrogen werden."[340] During the course of the narrative, Agathon equates the disharmony between the appearance and essence of bourgeois social institutions—the combination of *Schmerz*, *Lüge* and *Hoffnung* mentioned in the

[340] Jakob Wassermann, *Die Juden von Zirndorf* (Munich: Deutsche Taschenbuch Verlag, 1996) 261.

passage above—with Jewishness, thereby undermining any stable, normative understanding of Jewish identity.

The novel also examines German Jewishness from a more kaleidoscopic perspective, parading a panorama of other characters before the reader—Jewish and non-Jewish residents of fin-de-siècle Fürth—who disrupt Agathon's story, who mark the stages of social decay that figure so prominently in the text, who establish various images and counterimages of Jewishness, and who continually step to the forefront of the action. These supporting characters include the innkeeper and vicious anti-Semite, Sürich Sperling; Agathon's teacher, Bojesen; the Jewish aesthete, Nieberding; his former lover, the prostitute, dancer, and daughter of a wealthy assimilated Jewish businessman, Jeanette; her homeless grandfather, Gedalja; Agathon's secret half-brother, the poet and womanizer Stefan Gudstikker; and Sema, a mysterious Jewish orphan. Often baffling critics, this panorama of different characters offers a spectrum of possible German and Jewish identities, thus further undermining normative notions of Germanness and Jewishness in the text.[341]

Finally, Wassermann approaches questions of German-Jewish identity with a nearly sixty-page prelude, through which the Jewish community of Fürth sinks deep discursive roots into the local soil. Set in 1666 and containing a fictional account of the historical movement surrounding Sabbatai Zvi in Fürth, the prelude seems at first glance to have little more than a thematic connection to the body of the novel. Indeed, like the opera scene in *Altneuland*, the

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[341] Critics offer widely varying interpretations of these characters. Hans Otto Horch, for instance, refers to them as "Allegorisierungen der jüdischen Existenz- und Identitätsproblematik," while Gabriele Leja considers them representatives "ohne Eigenleben" of stages of assimilation. For his part, Fritz Martini labels the characters part of a "Massenbewegung." See Hans Otto Horch, "'Verbrannt wird auf alle Fälle…': Jude und Judentum im Werk Jakob Wassermanns," *Jakob Wassermann: Werk und Wirkung*, ed. Rudolph Wolff. (Bonn: Bouvier, 1987) 132; Gabriele Leja, "Jüdische Gestalten im erzählerischen Werk Jakob Wassermanns," *Jakob Wassermann: Werk und Wirkung*, ed. Rudolph Wolff (Bonn: Bouvier, 1987) 69; and Fritz Martini,"Jakob Wassermann: Die Utopie eines Messias in der Moderne: Zu dem Roman *Die Juden von Zirndorf,*" *Zeit der Moderne: Zur deutschen Literatur von der Jahrhundertwende bis zur Gegenwart*, ed. Hans-Henrik Krummacher, Fritz Martini, and Walter Müller-Seidel (Stuttgart: Kröner, 1984) 466, respectively.

prelude appears as a casual (albeit lengthy) aside, meant to add "Jewish" color to a text which, after all, purports to describe the *Jews* of Zirndorf. Accordingly, critics typically reduce it to thematic window-dressing, arguing that Wassermann simply uses the prelude to create a messianic backdrop for the novel's main narrative[342] or to establish a cyclical historical perspective that balances the novel's utopian vision.[343]

However, Wassermann's text has much in common with Herzl's novel, and when examined together, it becomes clear that much more is at stake in the prelude to *Die Juden von Zirndorf* than the construction of an elaborate backdrop for the novel's main narrative. Like Herzl, Wassermann addresses the constellation of identity, space, and Jewish tradition that emerges again and again as a central concern in fin-de-siècle German culture. And—like Herzl— Wassermann appropriates the image of Sabbatai Zvi in order to legitimate his vision of a space in which to ground German Jewishness. In this section, I will examine this vision of space in the novel, and trace the continuities and discontinuities between the utopian *Altneuland* of the near future, and Wassermann's dystopian vision of seventeenth-century Franconia. I will demonstrate that while Herzl's novel seeks to ground Jewishness in a discursive national territory in which Jews regenerate themselves and post-Enlightenment European society, and in which they participate unhindered in mainstream (even "civilized") European culture, Wassermann's text constructs a pre-Enlightenment local landscape in which Jews are already negotiating German-Jewish identities, and in which the role of the marginal outsider emerges as a legitimate—even essential—mode of Jewishness.

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[342] Leja, "Gestalten" 69; Horch, "Verbrannt" 141.

[343] Martini, "Utopie" 465.

The Ground of Jewishness in Franconia

The narrative in the prelude to Wassermann's novel unfolds against the backdrop of an overdetermined landscape, which often pushes itself to the forefront of the action. As the prelude begins, in fact, the landscape shapes and anchors the narrative: lists of neighboring cities, local rivers, and prominent landmarks all serve to mark the boundaries of the text's discursive space as specifically Franconian. Additionally, the narrator uses buildings and squares to connect the seventeenth-century setting of the prelude with the contemporary setting of the main narrative. For instance, a gathering point for a vast movement of Jews becomes a local park, and the house of the Christian student who had a secret affair with a young Jewish woman becomes a school for Jewish orphans.[344] The landscape thus not only circumscribes the story, but it also serves as a primary medium for transmitting cultural memory within the text.

The opening sentence of the text underscores the central role that the Franconian soil plays in the novel, and casts landscape as a force that transcends history, and even time itself:

> Gemächlich schwebt die Zeit hin über die Länder und über die Geschlechter, und wenn sie auch Städte zertritt und Wälder zerstampft und neue Städte und neue Wälder hinwirft mit gleichgültiger Gebärde, so vermag sie doch dem heimatlichen Boden niemals seine Lieblichkeit zu rauben oder seine Rauheit, kurz jene Gestalt und jenes Antlitz, womit die Heimat ihren Sohn erfüllt, indem sie ihn gleichsam als ihr Eigentum in Anspruch nimmt und ihm auf den Weg seines Lebens nur diese Worte zur Mitgift wählt: Aus meinem Ton bist du gemacht.[345]

This passage establishes an abiding and binding connection between the landscape and its inhabitants. The influence of the former supersedes expressions of individuality; the landscape determines the character of its people, and the varied manifestations of this relationship are always secondary to the relationship itself. The negotiation of identity in

[344] Wassermann, *Zirndorf* 52, 46.

[345] Wassermann, *Zirndorf* 7.

Franconia—whether German, Jewish, or both—is hardly a negotiation at all; it always results in a Franconian product. Unlike the spaces of colonial regeneration in Herzl's text (Kingscourt's fantasy island and the utopian fields of *Altneuland*), the Franconian landscape in Wassermann's novel is a *generative* space: it determines the character of its people. Moreover, the notions of *Heimat* and of a *heimatlich[er] Boden* in the text are radically inclusive. Everything that springs to life in this landscape belongs to Franconia.

If the formative power of the Franconian landscape is timeless, it is not ahistorical. The Thirty Years War wreaked extreme violence on the landscape and its people, and as the narrator explains, if the line of the horizon, "die von den Mauern Nürnbergs über Altenberg nach Cadolzburg zieht," had experienced no changes during the course of many centuries, the same could not be said of the area "in jenem stillen Winkel zwischen den beiden Strömen [i.e., Rednitz und Pegnitz]."[346] As a result of this violence, the fields in this region were soaked with blood, trampled, and destroyed, and much of the landscape only began to recover after the end of the war.[347] During that catastrophe, soldiers from the invading Swedish army erected a cairn as a monument to their victory, taking a single stone from each plundered house, and it is through this cairn that the landscape's determining power finds concrete expression. The so called *Schwedenstein*—composed as it is of the stones of destroyed houses—illustrates the mnemonic property of the landscape in the text, recalling the Swedish victory, recounting the extent of the damage, and, as the community's collective memory of the war became distorted and the image of war began to gain "Buntheit und […]

[346] Wassermann, *Zirndorf* 7.

[347] Wassermann, *Zirndorf* 7.

Frohheit," it continued to memorialize the war's catastrophic consequences.[348] Although the landscape proves timeless, it also bears the marks of human history and determines the course of cultural memory.

Just as radically inclusive as the notion of *Heimat* that opens the novel, the *Schwedenstein* also serves as monument to the history of the Jewish community in Fürth, and it is through the *Schwedenstein* that the text first introduces Jews to the Franconian milieu that it describes:

> Auf jenem Schwedenstein bei der Kapelle befand sich auch unter vielem anderem Gemäuer ein gut zubehauener Granitblock, welcher mit seltsamen und fremdländischen Lettern bemalt war. Es war eine jüdische Inschrift auf einem Grabmonument, und die Schweden hatten ihn vom Gottesacker der Juden gestohlen und ihn hier unter die Steine rechtgläubiger Christen geworfen.[349]

Although the text describes this Jewish gravestone as an alien element in the local cemetery, covered in the characters of an unfamiliar language, it is not completely foreign. The Swedes procured the stone from among the same houses and buildings that they destroyed during the war. The Jewish gravestone is local, as was the person for whom it was erected. Despite its alien appearance, then, this gravestone and its inclusion in the town's defining monument demonstrate that Jews existed alongside non-Jews in Fürth.

In fact, the Jewish gravestone in the *Schwedenstein* serves as a concrete allegory of Jewishness in Fürth as both a local and a diasporic phenomenon. Uprooted from its original location, the gravestone seems radically out of place among the other stones, and the local Jews believe that the soul of the stone's owner, Joseph Gabriel Naphtali, cannot find rest and

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[348] Wassermann, *Zirndorf* 8.

[349] Wassermann, *Zirndorf* 8.

that it "wandle allnächtlich klagend zum Schwedenstein."[350] Neither Christians nor Jews dare to remove the stone from the cairn, however. The local Christians fear the effects of a magic curse, while the Jews of Fürth believe that to disturb the *Schwedenstein* would mean to rekindle the violence that it memorializes.[351] Thus, this foreign gravestone—which, because it comes from the local Jewish cemetery, is not so foreign at all—has become essential to the landscape of Fürth, and to its most important man-made feature. In other words, the *Schewdenstein* also serves as a reminder that Jewishness is something both foreign and endemic in this Franconian community—something rooted in official local history, and yet existing outside of the mainstream. In the Franconian landscape, Jewishness is both essential and marginal.

Significantly, in the passage above, it is language—script—that provides a marker of Jewish difference in the *Schwedenstein*: the text only describes the letters on the Jewish gravestone (and not the stone itself) as *fremdländisch*.[352] The novel thus projects this linguistic difference into the spatial realm—the foreign letters are painted on the stone in the *Schwedenstein*. And the novel's further description of the stone underscores how its form and appearance seem incongruent in the local landscape: "So stand also das Grabmal der Juden unter ungleichartigen Genossen wie ein Fremdling aus weiter Ferne. Es sprach eine unbekannte Sprache, und seine edlere Form ließ es zu besserem Dienst berechtigt erscheinen."[353] The novel again underscores the diasporic status of the stone and of the Jewish community that it represents. Indeed, this passage recalls the marginal position of the

[350] Wassermann, *Zirndorf* 9.

[351] Wassermann, *Zirndorf* 8-9.

[352] This mysterious gravestone with Hebrew lettering is reminiscent of the ghostly Hebrew inscription on the beech tree in Annette von Droste-Hülshoff's classic 1842 novella of local color, *Die Judenbuche*.

[353] Wassermann, *Zirndorf* 9.

Messiah in Buber's Bar Kochba speech. Like that Messiah—a leper and beggar excluded from Rome, Jerusalem, and history itself—this gravestone no longer belongs to the Jewish community, but it still cannot assimilate among its neighbors. As the passage continues, however, the text reorients the diasporic gaze of the stone and the community. "Es blickte nicht hinaus auf die Ebene, sondern sah herein gegen die niederen Häuser und in die krummen, winkeligen Gassen von Fürth."[354] This gravestone does not look back to its place of origin, nor does it look toward the horizon and further travel. It keeps its gaze leveled on the local community, despite its marginal position vis-à-vis that community.

Through the account of the *Schewdenstein*, Wassermann constructs his own constellation of space, history, and identity in *Die Juden von Zirndorf*, which in turn establishes an image of the local landscape as a ground for negotiating German-Jewish identities. This image of a German-Jewish landscape is radically different from Herzl's vision of Jewish territory, not only because of its generative (rather than regenerative) character, but also because it offers an inverted understanding of Diaspora experience. The Jewish gravestone calls attention to the diasporic status of the Fürther Jews, even as it discounts the opposition of Diaspora and autochthony as fundamentally different relationships to the Franconian landscape. The gravestone, like the Diaspora Jewish community that it represents, is simultaneously marginal and essential, both to the community's cultural memory and to its concrete vehicle in the landscape (the *Schwedenstein*).

The text's portrayal of Diaspora experience calls into question Wassermann's use of the messianic figure Sabbatai Zvi, however. How do we explain the chronicle of a messianic movement in a text that seeks to carve out a German-Jewish landscape? The key to

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[354] Wassermann, *Zirndorf* 9.

understanding this problem lies in the uniquely marginal and essential role that Sabbatai plays in the text—and, as I discussed above, in the history of European-Jewish culture more broadly. The novel first introduces Jewishness as both essential and marginal in Fürth via the *Schwedenstein*. As the prelude unfolds, four Jewish characters involved in the movement around Sabbatai Zvi continue to develop this notion of Jewishness. Each of these characters has an integral relationship to both the land and the Jewish community in Fürth, and yet each of them remains an outsider vis-à-vis that community. Just as the Franconian landscape determines the character of its inhabitants in the text, as I will demonstrate below these characters reinscribe Jewishness as something central to the landscape. Thus, the prelude establishes the role of the outsider as a leading role in Jewish culture and in the Franconian landscape, and as a legitimate source of German-Jewish identity.

From Zion to Zirndorf: Sabbatai Zvi and the Essential Marginality of Jewishness

Wassermann's dense prelude contains several intertwined narrative strands which unfold against the backdrop of this overdetermined landscape. Each of these narrative strands details the development of messianic expectation in the Jewish community in Fürth—an expectation which culminates in a mass exodus toward the Greek city of Saloniki, where the Jews hope to join Sabbatai Zvi in redemption. As the narrative proceeds, figures of Jewish outsiders propel the plot forward—including Sabbatai Zvi himself, his prophet and messenger Zacharias Naar, his future bride Zirle, and Rahel, a local woman in particular need of redemption. Through the image of these Jewish outsiders, the prelude posits specifically Jewish elements in the identity of the local community, while it also reveals the intimate

bond between the Jews of Fürth and the Franconian firmament. I will examine these characters below.

The prophet Zacharias Naar arrives in Fürth on the eve of Yom Kippur, bearing the tidings of Sabbatai Zvi's messianic revelation. A stranger in town, he enters the Jewish community as an outsider, and even his visage marks him as both foreign and ominous. As the text explains: "Sein Gesicht war von grünlichweißer Färbung, und ein roter Bart floß mager um Wangen und Kinn, so daß er nur eigentlich eine Art von Rahmen bildete und dem Gesicht etwas Fremdes, etwas erschreckend Deutliches verlieh."[355] However, despite his foreignness, Naar and his messianic message effect widespread change in the community. After delivering a speech in the local synagogue, in which "nichts von Lebensfreude und nichts von Gottesfreude […] zu finden [war]," Naar transforms the joyless asceticism of the Jewish community into a spark of hope.[356] As the narrator explains:

> Es wurde leuchtend um ihre Augen, rings herum wurde es Tag, das bange Los der Unterdrückung schien einem Ende nahe: Sonne, Freiheit, göttliches Auserwähltsein zu großen Dingen, Glanz und Freudigkeit und verzückte Sehnsucht—als eine wundervolle Erfüllung tausendjähriger Glaubensdienst.[357]

This hope of redemption drives the community into a frenzy of messianic expectation. The usually pious Jews of Fürth cease working, ignore the Sabbath, and begin to disregard holidays and rituals. They instead engage in a variety of unusual activities, from staging all-night orgies and childhood weddings, to practicing self-flagellation and organizing marathon prayer sessions.[358]

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[355] Wassermann, *Zirndorf* 10.

[356] Wassermann, *Zirndorf* 13.

[357] Wassermann, *Zirndorf* 15.

[358] Wassermann, *Zirndorf* 26-38.

The appearance of the marginal figure Zacharias Naar thus seems to drive the community to marginal behavior. And yet, the text explains that tales of Sabbatai Zvi and his miraculous acts have already circulated from Constantinople to London, and the messianic fervor of the Fürther Jews reflects similar unrest in Jewish communities throughout Europe.[359] Indeed, all of European Jewry seems to have mobilized in the face of imminent redemption, and the Jews of Fürth are merely a part of that movement. It is the local landscape, moreover, "welche fanatischen Strömungen so leicht zugänglich sind," which marks the Franconian Jews as particularly susceptible to messianic expectation—not the schemes of an exotic visitor.[360] Unlike the visions of regenerative colonial territory in Herzl's novel, Wassermann's text does not offer a utopian image of Jewish space, neither in the joyless piety of the Jewish community before Naar's arrival, nor the antinomian fervor that followed. Moreover, while Naar's outsider status and his message of Sabbatai Zvi's messianic revelation indeed awaken marginal elements within the Jewish community, the text establishes these elements as innate and inherently Jewish phenomena—part and parcel of a Pan-European Jewish character, and yet rooted in the specificity of the Franconian countryside.

A second Jewish outsider, Zirle, further fuels the messianic fervor of the Fürther Jews. She arrives in town one day bearing mysterious childhood memories of the massacre of her family in Poland, of her narrow escape, and of being raised by nuns in a Polish convent. Not long after she appears in town, members of the Jewish community find her in the cemetery, half naked and singing a song "in einem fremden Rhythmus und einer fremden

[359] Wassermann, *Zirndorf* 18-19.

[360] Wassermann, *Zirndorf* 24.

Sprache."[361] She claims to have been brought there by the ghost of her father, who tells her that she is destined to be the bride of Sabbatai Zvi. She shows the gathered crowd several fingernail wounds on her arms and chest, and this evidence of her supernatural story has a profound impact on the community: "Stille Schwärmerei, fanatische Gläubigkeit, geheimnisvolle Ekstase und die Taumel der Bacchanterei, das alles hatten sie gesehen oder gefühlt. Aber das offenbare Wunder, so dicht vor ihren Augen, machte sie verdutzt und voll Angst."[362] Like Naar, Zirle is an unfamiliar face in Fürth who helps galvanize the messianic expectation among Jews there. Indeed, her ghostly encounter in the cemetery—an encounter at the very margins of the Jewish community, and one that Wassermann borrowed from a historical occurrence in Poland—offers a concrete expression of the hidden ecstasies and silent ravings with which everyone in the community had intimate experience, but which no one accepted as legitimate phenomena.[363] Through Zirle, then, Wassermann seems to valorize the fanaticism, superstition, and ecstasy surrounding this messianic movement—qualities distinctly at odds with the rationality of the Enlightenment or the mores of the bourgeoisie.

The circumstances surrounding Zirle's revelation are noteworthy. She is discovered in the cemetery by members of the local Jewish community who have removed the Jewish gravestone from the *Schwedenstein* and who plan to return it to its rightful place. This act anticipates the events that follow, for after the "miracle" of Zirle's revelation, the Jews of Fürth fully embrace their hope of messianic redemption, and the community reorients itself

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[361] Wassermann, *Zirndorf* 33.

[362] Wassermann, *Zirndorf* 35.

[363] Martini notes that Wassermann took many of the details of the prelude from information he gleaned from the abridged "volkstümliche" edition of Graetz's history of the Jews from 1888 ("Utopie" 464, 483n). See also Heinrich Graetz, *Volkstümliche Geschichte der Juden*, vol. 6 (Munich: Deutsche Taschenbuch Verlag, 1985) 57-58.

toward its own margins. Following Zirle and Naar, the Jews sell their belongings and organize a mass pilgrimage to Sabbatai Zvi, prepared to relinquish any historical or social claims to their homeland. As the narrator explains:

> Jauchzend wollten sie ein Land verlassen, das nur Verachtung und unmenschliche Grausamkeit für sie gehabt hatte. Es schien leicht, alles hinter sich zu werfen, wenn im Osten die guten Triften der ererbten Wohnsitze lockten, wenn ein königlicher Prophet sie zum unverbrüchlichen Bunde rief. Das hier war kein Vaterland für sie und konnte es niemals werden, wie sich auch die Zeiten wandeln mochten.[364]

Just as the Jews of Fürth are prepared to unseat the Jewish gravestone from the town's defining monument, they are also ready to cast aside the Franconian landscape, which plays such a central role in the text's construction of the Jewish community, and which even has a hand in determining the breadth and depth of their messianic excitement. The community seeks an end to its Diaspora. Franconia loses the possibility of becoming a homeland, because a more fruitful, more binding home seems to await them.

After a few weeks, the community begins its ill-fated voyage. Before the procession has traveled a half-day from Fürth, foul weather, unfaithful gypsies, an ambush by soldiers from Nuremberg, and a forest fire all conspire to hinder them. The Jews of Fürth may be ready to cast off the land of *Verachtung* and *Grausamkeit*, but it seems that Franconia is not yet ready to relinquish them. They press on, however, until two more Jewish outsiders emerge to complete the narrative. The first is Sabbatai Zvi (although he does not appear in person): on the second day of their march, the Fürther Jews learn that Sabbatai has converted to Islam, thus putting a premature end to their pilgrimage, and to the ecstasy of messianic expectation. While some members of the community return to Fürth, others gain permission from a local lord to found a new community which they name *Zionsdorf*, and which only later—through an influx of Christian settlers—comes to be called Zirndorf. Like the

[364] Wassermann, *Zirndorf* 41.

Altneuschul in Ahad Ha'am's review of *Altneuland*, the Zion-of-last-resort achieves a permanent status, and its provisional character is effaced by the passage of time. Significantly, the Jews of Zirndorf—like the Jewish gravestone in the *Schwedenstein*—do not orient their gaze toward a location of origin, to an ancient Jewish *Stammland* in Palestine. Instead, through the establishment of *Zionsdorf* (and the eventual emergence of Zirndorf), the novel performs a kind of redemption of European-Jewish identity, in that it reinterprets and suspends Diaspora and establishes a new *Stammland* on German soil.

Throughout the prelude, the false Messiah Sabbatai Zvi is both present and absent. His image—and the tales of his miraculous deeds—stir the Jews of Fürth (and from all over Europe) into action, and galvanize them into a cohesive front, intent on celebrating Jewish difference through a mass return to the East. And yet, it is precisely the moment in which Sabbatai Zvi seems to cease to be Jewish that he has the most profound impact on both the novel and the Jewish community it depicts. As the narrator explains:

> Die Juden sind ein starkes [...] Volk; doch sind sie nur groß, wenn ein wenig Gelingen bei ihnen wohnt, und sie sind nicht lange groß, denn sie brechen leicht in dem Erstaunen über ihre eigene Größe. Auch Sabbatai Zewi war ein Jude, vielleicht das klarste Bild des Juden, ein Stück Judenschicksal: Macht oder Sklaverei.[365]

According to the text, Sabbatai Zvi had grown more central and more powerful than his own Jewish essence would allow. In fact, because he pushes his marginal status as Jew past the very brink of Jewishness, he becomes the prototype of the modern European Jew whose outsider status drives him beyond Judaism, as Brenner and Biale have suggested.[366] At the same time, however, it is only through Sabbatai Zvi's apostasy that the Jews of Fürth are able to create their own homegrown Zion, establishing Zirndorf both on the foundation of

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[365] Wassermann, *Zirndorf* 63.

[366] See M. Brenner, *Renaissance* 129-152, and Biale, "Shabbtai Zvi" 85*-110*.

shattered messianic expectation, and on the recognition and mobilization of Jewish difference (and indeed, Jewish marginality). Through Sabbatai Zvi, the text thus stages Zirndorf as a uniquely Jewish locale in Germany, in which the very notion of Jewish marginality grounds and legitimates a model of Jewishness that transcends religion and even culture.

The final outsider—whose absence is palpably present throughout the prelude—is the main novel itself. The prelude comprises nearly one-fifth of the entire text, and through it, the text builds a sense of anticipation for the story in the novel that follows. Like the messianic expectation of the Jews of Fürth, however, the reader's hopes regarding the main portion of the text are soon dashed. In the first chapter to follow the prelude, the text soaks the Franconian landscape with a flood of biblical proportions, enacting a fresh start, and the narrative only refers back to the events of the prelude in marginal fashion, via references to locations mentioned in the former text.

Aside from these cursory connections, however, the prelude contains only a single silver thread to bind it to the novel's main narrative. In the stress of the procession to Sabbatai Zvi, Rahel, the most prominently featured local character in the prelude, gives birth to the son of a Christian student from a neighboring town. This son comes as a surprise to Rahel's family because, in order to cover her sexual indiscretion, she had convinced them that she was bearing the immaculately conceived bride-to-be of Sabbatai Zvi. After Rahel gives birth, the narrator discloses in passing that her son is an ancestor of Agathon Geyer (the protagonist of the text's main narrative).[367] With this final stroke, Wassermann reorients the rest of the novel around its prelude. This marginal portion of text—the *Vorspiel*—suddenly becomes its center, not only setting the stage for Agathon's messianic development, but also underscoring and legitimating its own outsider status. Simultaneously marginal and essential,

[367] Wassermann, *Zirndorf* 63.

the lengthy, disjointed, historical prelude to *Die Juden von Zirndorf* emerges as the novel's most "Jewish" space.

If Zirndorf is a uniquely German-Jewish location that affirms the marginality of Jewishness as a positive mode of identification, then the prelude itself represents an analogous discursive space, in which the text probes the parameters of such marginality. Rather than simply representing messianic window-dressing for a utopian novel of late nineteenth-century decadence, the prelude to *Die Juden von Zirndorf* is essential to Wassermann's overall staging of German-Jewish identity in the novel. The centrality of the prelude in turn reinforces Wassermann's broader strategy of reclaiming and affirming marginality. As I have shown, in fact, he turns again and again to marginal Jewish figures—fictional, historical, and even discursive—in order to fashion an alternative Jewish identity rooted in the margins of Jewish tradition, as well as in the outsider status of Jews in premodern (and fin-de-siècle) European culture.

Like Herzl, Wassermann crafts an image of European-Jewish (or German-Jewish) space in which to negotiate a model of European-Jewish (or German-Jewish) identity. But while Herzl positions *Altneuland* as a site for deterritorialized assimilation, Wassermann asserts Jewish difference as an essential component to both German culture and Jewish identity. The texts by Wassermann and Herzl offer radically divergent images of Jewish space, and of the respective roles of history and tradition in forming such space, and in developing identities from it. Herzl's text reaffirms and reshapes the Enlightenment principles of *Bildung* and civilization which laid the foundation of the first European-Jewish identities, and the colonial Jewish space in his text represents an oasis of European civilization in the desert of Asian barbarism, and location in which Jewish culture may be

regenerated, and in which Jews may finally gain equal footing in bourgeois European society by achieving national consciousness. Jewish space, history, and tradition converge with European culture to form Jewish national identities modeled on those identities taking shape in Europe in the late nineteenth century.

In sharp contrast with Herzl's novel, the notions of landscape and belonging that emerge in the above scenes from *Die Juden von Zirndorf* are explicitly non-national. Instead of presenting a model of identity (Jewish or otherwise) founded on a bourgeois, post-Enlightenment ideal of citizenship, the prelude presents a model of local identity rooted in landscape, proximity, and cultural memory, rather than in an imagined community. In fact, by depicting a failed messianic movement situated in a pre-Enlightenment, pre-bourgeois landscape, the prelude deliberately undermines the structures of national identity that later appear in *Altneuland*. Even as the Jews of Fürth try to integrate themselves into a pan-European return to the ancient Jewish *Stammland*—and even if they reject the possibility of Franconia becoming a *Vaterland*—the local landscape prevents them from leaving. Consequently, they found their community on both the recognition of Jewish difference (on the messianic procession), and a resignation to that difference (the establishment of *Zionsdorf*). Thus, in the novel, history, tradition, and space enter into a reciprocal relationship, in which each term conditions the other, allowing uniquely local identities to emerge. Unlike Herzl's text, which seeks to regenerate Jews into bourgeois subjects and to mend the broken promise of Jewish integration into European society, the prelude to *Die Juden von Zirndorf* circumvents that promise and rejects the validity of European bourgeois society itself, along with the necessity to seamlessly integrate into any such society. In other words, if through its construction of Jewish space Herzl's novel seeks to integrate a

marginalized group into mainstream European society, then Wassermann's text uses another model of Jewish space to affirm marginality as an essential (and legitimate) mode of group identification.

V. Conclusion

Both *Altneuland* and *Die Juden von Zirndorf* implicitly revisit and renegotiate the inaugural moment of European-Jewish modernity in the Enlightenment. As I have shown, the former text establishes European cosmopolitanism in a European-Jewish outpost in Palestine, in which the fissures of European-Jewish identity (cultural, historical, linguistic, and physical) can be mended. The latter novel makes an end run around European-Jewish modernity altogether, and crafts an image of European-Jewish identity that predates the Enlightenment.

The story of Agathon in *Die Juden von Zirndorf* reflects Wassermann's broader strategy of rejecting and circumventing the Enlightenment model of European-Jewish modernity. Throughout the main novel, he unmasks the hollowness of bourgeois institutions, from marriage and education, to religion and the rule of the king. In doing so, he develops into a messianic figure of radical individualism, a figure who denies the impulse to integrate. But Agathon does not seek to regenerate or to redeem society; he is merely interested in revealing its decay, and the solution he offers is profoundly escapist in nature—a solution not unlike that undertaken by Kingscourt and Friedrich at the beginning of Herzl's *Altneuland*: he rejects bourgeois society altogether.

Agathon's refusal to integrate is tantamount to a refusal to accept the crisis of German-Jewish identity that plagued Wassermann, Herzl, and others. The pre-national, anti-

bourgeois model of Jewishness rooted in a uniquely German locale that the prelude constructs is realized allegorically in the final scene of the main text, which suggests that Agathon is (at least temporarily) able to circumvent the fissure or lapse characteristic of European-Jewish modernity. In the final scene of the novel, Agathon finds himself completely divorced from society, ensconced in the local landscape, which appears as an Edenic setting:

> Sommer und Sommerwinde! Blüten an allen Ecken der Welt! Ein tiefes Grün auf den Feldern, die schmeichlerische Stille der Wohnlichkeit unter den Bäumen des Waldes! Flockige Wolken, die wie Schiffe über den strahlenden Himmel ziehen, und Rosen an den Gärten und Wicken in den Hecken![368]

In this setting, standing beneath an apple tree with Agathon, Monika expresses her desire to pick one of the apples. Agathon's response is telling: "O nein, zwei gute Sommerwochen und sie sind reif. Laß sie erst reif sein, Monika."[369] In its final scene, the novel thus explicitly stages and postpones the moment of the fall in the Book of Genesis. But more importantly, the narrative course of the main novel—as established by the landscape it constructs—inverts the biblical trajectory of fallenness found in Genesis: the main novel opens with a flood and ends beneath a fruit tree, just as the messianic protagonist defers tasting the fruit.

If Herzl's utopian novel looks forward to a model of Jewish redemption in the future, Wassermann's text locates redemption retroactively in the past—both in a return to a prelapsarian moment in the main story, and in a return in the prelude to the pre-Enlightenment moment of Sabbatai Zvi's emergence as a Messiah. According to Scholem's biography of Sabbatai Zvi, one of his earlier antinomian acts (in 1658) involved celebrating three pilgrim festivals in one week. As Scholem continues, "The provocation displayed some

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[368] Wassermann, *Zirndorf* 273.

[369] Wassermann, *Zirndorf* 274.

of the most characteristic features of Sabbatai's strange behavior pattern, for throughout his career he exhibited a predilection for shifting dates, changing fixed times, and moving Sabbaths and holy days to other days."[370] One of the more infamous episodes involved abolishing the fast of the Ninth of Av, which, according to the Jewish liturgical calendar, commemorates the destruction of the First and Second Temples, and which (not according to the Jewish liturgical calendar) was Sabbatai's birthday.[371] Instead, a festival was celebrated, and this inversion marked a climactic moment in the messianic movement before Sabbatai's apostasy. Scholem explains this act by suggesting that "Sabbatai may have been inspired by the midrashic dictum […] that in the messianic age 'God will turn the [fast of 9 Av] into rejoicing.'"[372] Thus, one of the hallmarks of Sabbatai Zvi's messianic practice involved reshaping the calendar, and, indeed, the very notion of redemption that fueled his popularity involved the redemption of history, in which sorrow became joy, and fast became festival.

The specific sorrow and the specific fast in this episode are rooted in the inception of Diaspora, in the loss of the Temple and the loss of a Jewish home. And Sabbatai's messianic intervention in the liturgical calendar served to redeem not only Jewish tradition (the sorrows and fasts for the Ninth of Av), but Jewish history (the loss of the Temples) as well. Scholem's account of this episode illustrates the intersection of marginality, history, tradition, space, and messianism that we have seen again and again in fin-de-siècle constructions of European-Jewish space. Scholem's friend, Walter Benjamin, in one of his last and most puzzling texts, "Über den Begriff der Geschichte" (1940), also links

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[370] Scholem, *Sabbatai Sevi* 162.

[371] Scholem, *Sabbatai Sevi* 615-633

[372] Scholem, *Sabbatai Sevi* 615n.

redemption, marginality, and history, by offering an image of redeemed history as one-dimensional:

> Der Chronist, welcher die Ereignisse herzählt, ohne große und kleine zu unterscheiden, trägt damit der Wahrheit Rechnung, daß nichts was sich jemals ereignet hat, für die Geschichte verloren zu geben ist. Freilich fällt erst der erlösten Menschheit ihre Vergangenheit vollauf zu. Das will sagen: erst der erlösten Menschheit ist ihre Vergangenheit in jedem ihrer Momente zitierbar geworden. Jeder ihrer Augenblicke wird zu einer citation à l'ordre du jour—welcher Tag eben der jüngste ist.[373]

In a redeemed history (and only in redemption), every moment of the past collapses into a single moment, in which the potential exists for *any* moment to be called forth instantaneously. Benjamin is describing a (hoped for) way of recording history without an outside: a history in which no single moment—no single *movement*—is marginal. That is, Benjamin conceives of a history-telling without limits, in which time, the great boundary of history and its defining dimension, ceases to bind.

Benjamin's text reminds us of the intimate connection between history and redemption—between time and messianic expectation. He formulates this image of redeemed history, and of the redemptive necessity of marginality, later in the same text, stating:

> Der Messias kommt ja nicht nur als der Erlöser; er kommt als der Überwinder des Antichrist. Nur *dem* Geschichtsschreiber wohnt die Gabe bei, im Vergangenen den Funken der Hoffnung anzufachten, der davon durchdrungen ist: auch die Toten werden vor dem Feind, wenn er siegt, nicht sicher sein.[374]

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[373] Walter Benjamin, "Über den Begriff der Geschichte," *Gesammelte Schriften: Abhandlungen*, ed. Rolf Tiedemann and Hermann Schweppenhäuser, with the collaboration of Theodor W. Adorno and Gershom Scholem, vol. I (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 1991) 694. The scholarly literature on this particular text is incredibly vast, and to engage with it in the present context lies beyond the scope of this investigation. However, the following represents a brief survey: Susan Buck-Morss, *The Origin of Negative Dialectics: Theodor W. Adorno, Walter Benjamin, and the Frankfurt Institute* (New York: Free Press, 1977) 168-175; Michael W. Jennings, *Dialectical Images: Walter Benjamin's Theory of Literary Criticism* (Ithaca: Cornell UP, 1987) 42-81; John McCole, *Walter Benjamin and the Antinomies of Tradition* (Ithaca: Cornell UP, 1993) 295-308; and Vincent P. Pecora, *Secularization and Cultural Criticism: Religion, Nation, and Modernity* (Chicago: U of Chicago P): 67-100.

[374] Benjamin, "Geschichte" I: 695.

For Benjamin, messianic redemption is (and must be) retroactive. Not unlike Sabbatai, who intervened in the liturgical calendar and turned fast into feast, the Messiah in Benjamin's text is responsible for redeeming the living and the dead. The Messiah, as Benjamin describes him, thus has a unique position vis-à-vis history. In fact, like the Messiah in Buber's Bar Kochba speech, the Messiah in Benjamin's text occupies a marginal, yet essential space outside of history where he waits to retroactively restore and reactivate history. Even in the story from the Babylonian Talmud, which likely serves as the source of Buber's tale, the Messiah maintains a peculiar relationship to time, and this relationship becomes his distinguishing feature: while the other lepers change all their bandages once per day, the Messiah changes one bandage at a time, because he might be called forth at any moment, and can't afford for the bandages to cause a delay.[375]

But Benjamin also ascribes to the *Geschichtsschreiber* (or to a model of history-teller) this unique relationship vis-à-vis time. In writing an inclusive history, the *Geschichtsschreiber* can also perform a redemptive function, and, in fact, redemption depends upon such an image of history-telling. Along with and through this unique historical stance, Benjamin's text also points to the integrative impulse in messianism, something that Scholem rehearses in his account of the sources he used for his biography of Sabbatai Zvi:

> In this book I hope to prove that those sources which historians have tended to regard with particular contempt are the very sources which can make an essential contribution to an understanding of the period. What I have in mind are the documents of kabbalistic literature and the theological writings of the followers of Sabbatai Sevi. This literature has not been considered worthy of the attention of "enlightened" Jews (among whom one is inclined, of course, to include historians).[376]

[375] See Babylonian Talmud Sanhedrin 98a.

[376] Scholem, *Sabbatai Sevi* x.

Scholem specifically distinguishes between those materials that might suit an "enlightened" understanding of history, and those that exist beyond the pale of such understanding. In doing so, he calls into question the normative demands put forth by the Enlightenment (and by modernity itself), and he looks to offer a redeemed history of the false Messiah.

In his reading of Scholem's interest in Sabbatai Zvi, and in Jewish mysticism more broadly, the critic Jürgen Habermas casts Scholem's project as a search "in der Geschichte nach dem Anderen der Geschichte."[377] As he explains, Scholem saw parallels between the antinomianism of the Sabbatean movement (and its successor movements) and the European Enlightenment impulse embodied by the French Revolution.[378] As he continues:

> Aufklärung ist für Scholem das Schicksal, aber sie soll nicht das letzte Wort behalten. Marx und Freud hat er stets für die eigentlich Abtrunnigen gehalten; er ist überzeugt, daß auch die religiösen Impulse der letzten Sabbatianer nicht ohne Rest in politischer Utopie aufgehen. Gleichwohl sind wir alle zu Söhnen und Töchtern der Französisichen Revolution geworden. Scholem hat den Umschlag von Religion in Aufklärung als ebenso unausweichlich wie unbefriedigend empfunden.[379]

Scholem's project of locating the mystical, religious impulses in the secular project of Enlightenment represents the kind of retroactive historical redemption that Benjamin puts forth in his text. And such a project of inclusive history-telling offers a way of reevaluating the binaries and margins characteristic of post-Enlightenment culture and consciousness.

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[377] Jürgen Habermas, "In der Geschichte das Andere der Geschichte aufspüren: Zu Gershom Scholems 'Sabbatai Zvi'," *Vom sinnlichen Eindruck zum symbolischen Ausdruck: Philosophische Essays* (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 1997) 75.

[378] Habermas "Geschichte" 81.

[379] Habermas "Geschichte" 82. In this passage, Habermas's assessment of Scholem echoes the opening aphorism in Benjamin's text: "Bekanntlich soll es einen Automaten gegeben haben, der so konstruiert gewesen sei, daß er jeden Zug eines Schachspielers mit einem Gegenzuge erwidert habe, der ihm den Gewinn der Partie sicherte. [...] In Wahrheit saß ein buckliger Zwerg darin, der ein Meister im Schachspiel war und die Hand der Puppe an Schnüren lenkte. Zu dieser Apparatur kann man sich ein Gegenstück in der Philosophie vorstellen. Gewinnen soll immer die Puppe, die man 'historische Materialismus' nennt. Sie kann es ohne weiteres mit jedem aufnehmen, wenn sie die Theologie in ihren Dienst nimmt, die heute bekanntlich klein und häßlich ist und sich ohnehin nicht darf blicken lassen" (Benjamin, "Geschichte" I: 693).

As we have seen in this chapter, in appropriating and reinventing the image of Sabbatai Zvi, Herzl and Wassermann engage in precisely the same kind of project. Both authors revisit and reclaim one aspect of Jewish tradition—Jewish messianism—in order to offer an alternative to the Enlightenment model of European-Jewish modernity. As I have shown, Herzl and Wassermann use this reclaimed tradition to stage spaces in which to ground models of European-Jewish and German-Jewish identity which allow for being simultaneously German and Jewish, even if the images of Jewish space that they offer are radically different from one another, with Herzl constructing a colonial territory of European-Jewish regeneration, and Wassermann creating a local landscape of pre-national identity. Nevertheless, these spaces, and the identities that they ground, represent counterimages to the myth of European-Jewish integration that emerged with Moses Mendelssohn.

Conclusion

Diaspora Ethnography and the Invention of Tradition

In his 1936 essay, "Der Erzähler," Walter Benjamin famously described two archaic categories of the storyteller: those like the sailor, who collect stories from abroad, and those like the farmer, who stay home and preserve local stories and lore. But the sailor and the farmer are merely types, and Benjamin insists that the historical scope of storytelling cannot be imagined without the interpenetration of the two: "Auch bekommt die Figur des Erzählers ihre volle Körperlichkeit nur für den, der sie beide vergegenwärtigt."[380] For Benjamin, this highest embodiment of the storyteller occupies the threshold between two sets of spatial coordinates; the true storyteller is both farmer and sailor, he is both at home and away. At the same time, to perceive the storyteller in his fullness also means to straddle two sets of temporal coordinates. As Benjamin explains, one must be able to make present (*vergegenwärtigen*) that which is "in seiner lebendigen Wirksamkeit keineswegs durchaus gegenwärtig."[381] Storytelling, in its most characteristic form, thus represents a phenomenon that is simultaneously native and foreign, modern and archaic.

In collapsing these dichotomies—home/away, present/distant, modern/archaic—the image of Benjamin's storyteller suggests a condition of both unity and rupture. On the one hand, the storyteller occupies a position that seems to transcend spatial and temporal

[380] Walter Benjamin, "Der Erzähler," *Gesammelte Schriften: Aufsätze, Essays, Vorträge*, ed. Rolf Tiedemann and Hermann Schweppenhäuser, with the collaboration of Theodor W. Adorno and Gershom Scholem, vol. II (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 1991) 440.

[381] Benjamin, "Erzähler" II: 438.

distance, uniting home and away, past and present. And yet, the position that the storyteller occupies is ultimately a precarious one: "[Der Erzähler] ist uns etwas bereits Entferntes und weiter noch sich Entfernendes."[382] The storyteller, it seems, is in danger of dissipating altogether. Significantly, however, Benjamin privileges the storyteller's precarious position, and near the end of the text he situates the storyteller alongside sages and teachers as an essential figure for the transmission of collective experience (*Erfahrung*):

> Er weiß Rat – nicht wie das Sprichwort: für manche Fälle, sondern wie der Weise: fur viele. Denn es ist ihm gegeben, auf ein ganzes Leben zurückzugreifen. (Ein Leben übrigens, das nicht nur die eigene Erfahrung, sondern nicht wenig von fremder in sich schließt. Dem Erzähler fügt sich auch das, was er vom Hörensagen vernommen hat, seinem Eigensten bei.)"[383]

The storyteller draws on the accretions of his own *Erfahrung*, as well as on the *Erfahrungen* of strangers—of foreigners. His position is thus not only simultaneously native and foreign—he is not simply at home and away; it is also simultaneously essential and marginal. The storyteller bears the collective experience of his own tradition, as well as those *Erfahrungen* that he has gleaned from other traditions, which he folds into his own. "Seine Begabung ist: sein Leben, sein Würde: sein *ganzes* Leben erzählen zu können," he continues.[384] The storyteller can testify to his essential *Erfahrung*, and also to that *Erfahrung* which occupies the margins of his life story.

Critics typically read Benjamin's essay as a lament of the modern decline of collective experience (particularly following the First World War), and the text certainly offers a critique of modernity as a condition of the radical isolation and alienation of the individual. But the image of the storyteller that Benjamin crafts in his essay—the image of

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[382] Benjamin, "Erzähler" II: 438.

[383] Benjamin, "Erzähler" II: 464.

[384] Benjamin, "Erzähler" II: 464 (emphasis in original).

someone native and foreign, at home and away—also points to a notion of Diaspora experience, which in fact endows the position of Diaspora with productive aesthetic and historical potential. In his essay, the act of storytelling is a process not only of perpetuating and accumulating cultural memory, but of transgressing boundaries and bridging oppositions, of being simultaneously foreign and native. After all, even if it is possible to tell a story only from the perspective of the farmer or of the sailor, Benjamin insists that "[d]ie reale Erstreckung des Reiches der Erzählungen in seiner ganzen historischen Breite ist nicht ohne die innigste Durchdringung dieser beiden archaischen Typen denkbar."[385] The native, deterritorialized, marginal, and essential position of the storyteller opens the gate to the broadest expanses of cultural memory and of the material of tradition.

As we have seen, all of the primary texts that I have examined in this investigation contain and foreground the tension or slippage between home and away, essence and marginality, which Benjamin's image of the storyteller presents. Perhaps the most obvious example occurs in Martin Buber's account (in *Die Geschichten des Rabbi Nachman*) of Jewish mysticism as the product of the encounter between the essentially Jewish quality of *Pathos*—a will to transcend the boundedness of Jewishness—and the extra-Jewish environment. But the story of Sabbatai Zvi in Jakob Wassermann's *Die Juden von Zirndorf* also contains this slippage: only through a failed messianic procession to Zion (a return to the *Stammland*) do the Jews of Fürth finally establish a home in the landscape that they had long occupied. And Wassermann's story mirrors the legend of the *Al-Th'naj-Schul* that Ahad Ha'am invokes in his critique of *Altneuland*: after the destruction of the Second Temple, Jews from Jerusalem brought stones from the Temple—physical remains of the very essence of Jewish Diaspora—to Prague and built their new synagogue upon them. The new home

[385] Benjamin, "Erzähler" II: 440.

away from home is one rooted in the experience of foreignness, even as it gradually receives a "native" name, the *Altneuschul*. Of course, as Ahad Ha'am points out, Theodor Herzl's novel also rests on such tension, as it depicts a return to the ancient Jewish *Stammland*, but in the model of modern European colonization. Thus, the terms of the binaries native/foreign and home/away collapse in the novel, as the opera about Sabbatai Zvi underscores. Finally, Karl Emil Franzos endows this spatial tension with a temporal element in his construction of *Halb-Asien*: an exotic locale at the edge of Europe, which nevertheless has the potential to become a "native" home for the Enlightenment variety of *Bildung*—a home that, as Aleida Assmann notes, this mode of *Bildung* in the nineteenth century rarely had.

What we haven't seen in this investigation—or, rather, the question which has emerged perhaps most prominently but which remains unexplored—is the question of the authorial position that the authors assume for themselves, a position that Benjamin's storyteller essay helps. If Benjamin's storyteller straddles two sets of temporal and spatial coordinates—home/away, ancient/modern—then his storytelling represents a kind of auto-ethnography, or a mode of Diaspora ethnographic reporting. That is, the unique *Würde* of the storyteller, *sein ganzes Leben erzählen zu können*, lies precisely in the fact that when he transmits his own *Erfahrung*, he simultaneously transmits the *Erfahrung* of the Other, and while participating in a local tradition (by passing on the accumulated *Erfahrungen* of a given community, as a farmer would), he also brings to bear on that tradition alternative, foreign traditions (as a sailor does). He reports to his native culture about the cultures of others, but these other cultures are always inextricable from his own *Erfahrung*. Even in the act (or process) of telling, the storyteller is both native and foreign, at home and away.

Many of the authors in this study assume such an auto-ethnographic stance: Franz Kafka, Leopold von Sacher-Masoch, Franzos, and Buber purport to present traditions with which they are intimately familiar, but of which they are not a part; Herzl and Wassermann offer visions of utopian and dystopian imagined spaces, which no longer (or do not yet) exist, but to which they claim ancient hereditary relationships; even Friedrich Nietzsche—in spurring on fellow *freie Geister* to make one's thought accessible and translatable to neighboring cultures, and in claiming that modern society has expanded beyond the capacity for a certain kind of local community—makes a case for writing in a manner that bridges home and away, native and foreign. In light of Benjamin's image of the storyteller, further examination of the works by Buber, Kafka, Franzos, Sacher-Masoch, Herzl, Wassermann, and Nietzsche would reveal much about the productive potential of Diaspora—or one notion of Diaspora—for bearing, translating, and transforming cultural memory, and for mending the fissures of post-Enlightenment modernity.[386] To what extent does the experience of Diaspora offer a critical ground for evaluating European modernity? How does the practice of ethnography—or the use of an ethnographic gaze—serve as a means of both marginalizing and reincorporating the Other, and how does such practice color notions of Diaspora? Further investigation into the invention of Jewish tradition in fin-de-siècle German culture is needed to shed light on these questions, and, perhaps, to gain a better understanding of the role of Diaspora in shaping European modernity.[387]

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[386] In a chapter titled "Jewish Ethnography and the Question of the Book," Jonathan Boyarin explores the potential of Jewish tradition as a means of critiquing aspects of the practice of anthropology which result in the spatial and temporal occlusion of the ethnographic subject. See Jonathan Boyarin, *Storm from Paradise: The Politics of Jewish Memory* (Minneapolis: U of Minnesota P, 1992) 52-76.

[387] It is crucial to note that this auto- or Diaspora ethnographic stance is not a fundamentally or specifically Jewish phenomenon, but rather, as Nietzsche's inclusion in this list makes clear, part and parcel of a broad problem of European modernity. In fact, while the invention of European-Jewish tradition might serve as the most fertile ground for an investigation of this dynamic in European modernity during the nineteenth century,

Benjamin's image of the storyteller as one who conveys experience from a position that is simultaneously home and away, essential and marginal recalls the mythic image of Moses Mendelssohn with which I opened this investigation. As we have seen, Mendelssohn sought to bridge the realms of Jewish tradition and European modernity, and both his Bible translation (in German with Hebrew letters) and *Jerusalem* (a defense of Judaism that draws explicitly on the debates and categories characteristic of the Enlightenment) bear the *Erfahrungen* of a foreign tradition within a native one. But, perhaps the best starting point for an investigation of the potential of this auto-ethnographic stance lies in another of Mendelssohn's contemporaries, Salomon Maimon (1754-1800), who has not yet achieved the mythic status of Mendelssohn—or even the status of the mythic images of Rabbi Nachman, Friedrich Schiller, and Sabbatai Zvi that Buber, Franzos, Herzl, and Wassermann respectively construct.

Maimon was born Schlomo ben Yehoshua, but he took a new name in honor of the twelfth-century Jewish philosopher, Moses Maimonides. He is most famous for his autobiography, *Salomon Maimons Lebensgeschichte* (1792), in which he recounts his childhood in Polish Lithuania, his training as a Talmud scholar, his thirst for *Bildung*, and his subsequent journey to Berlin (and beyond), where he interacted with members of both the Haskalah and the *Aufklärung*, from Mendelssohn to Immanuel Kant. Unlike the mythic Mendelssohn, however, Maimon never achieved a harmonious balance between European modernity and Jewish tradition, and even though he never relinquished his adherence to certain aspects of Jewish tradition—including what he considered to be its superior rationality—after his death he was buried as an apostate, in an unmarked grave outside of a

other traditions (and Diasporas) must also be considered, from current questions of Turkish-German and Afro-German identities, to the experiences of Germans expelled from Eastern Europe following the Second World War.

Jewish cemetery. A contemporary of Mendelssohn, Maimon already represents the crisis of European-Jewish identity that would emerge in German and Jewish consciousness in the nineteenth century.

Modernity, Marginality, and Redemption has explored this crisis by examining texts which critically revisited its Enlightenment inception, questioning the premises of the Enlightenment model of European-Jewish integration—premises that resulted in the nineteenth-century demand for assimilation as a precursor to emancipation. As we have seen, however, these texts do not discount the initial promise of the Enlightenment, and they embrace moments of European-Jewish modernity which are deeply connected with the movement. By turning to Messianism, mysticism, and the image of the *Ostjude*, Herzl, Wassermann, Buber, and Franzos all assert the possibility of crafting modern European-Jewish (and, specifically, German-Jewish) identities that live up to both aspects of this term by bridging European modernity and Jewish tradition. More importantly, by reclaiming and reinventing those aspects of Jewish tradition that had been marginalized in German consciousness during the nineteenth century, these authors establish an alternative set of myths in which to ground models of Jewishness, myths which challenge and circumvent the image of Mendelssohn, and which accommodate marginality as an essential (and privileged) feature of both Jewish identity and European modernity.

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