

**IN THE EYES OF OTHERS:
THE DIALECTICS OF GERMAN-JEWISH AND YIDDISH MODERNISMS**

by

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To my wife Sara
and children Chaya Mirel, Malkah, and Aryeh

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ABSTRACT

This dissertation is a transnational study of German modernism with emphasis on the cultural exchange between German-Jewish and Yiddish worlds. Focusing on the half century between the 1880s and 1930s when the mass westward migration of Eastern European Jews radically reconfigured the way in which Western and Eastern Jews related to each other, I argue that both German Jews and Eastern European Jews constructed their sense of Jewish self around portrayals of foreign Jewish difference. In German-Jewish culture, the image of the religious, bearded Eastern Jew in yarmulke (*der Ostjude*) served as a polarizing figure, which German Jews both rejected and admired in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. In Yiddish literature the inverse image of the assimilated, westernized German Jew (*der daytsh*) was a standard character who intruded into the Eastern European shtetl. An imbalance in research on German and Eastern European Jewish cultures has stressed the German-Jewish reception, rejection, or appropriation of the Eastern European Jew. A critical intervention of my research decenters such historiography by focusing on the exchange in gazes between East and West.

Events in this period that directly impacted a cross-cultural pollination included the rise of Jewish nationalism, the westward migration of Eastern European Jewry, an emboldened Yiddish literary production, and the turn to modernism across Europe. Figures at the center of this study are the German-speaking authors Alfred Döblin, Joseph Roth, Karl Emil Franzos, Nathan Birnbaum, and Martin Buber. I place texts from these German authors into conversation with Yiddish authors such as Y. L. Peretz, Sholem Aleichem, Sholem Asch, and Moyshe

Kulbak. I also analyze work by the German artist Hermann Struck and Galician artist Ephraim Moses Lilien. My focus on how translations, material culture, and authors crossed physical and linguistic borders demonstrates how the two modernist projects were co-constitutive partners in a dynamic process of Jewish identity formation. Postcolonial and psychoanalytic theory informs my analysis of sources in German and Yiddish, thus contributing not only to the field of German studies in broadening the scope of German modernism, but also to Jewish studies and scholarship on the processes of transnationalism.

INTRODUCTION

During the tumultuous half century between 1880 and 1930, German Jews and Eastern European Jews came to new ways of understanding their dynamic relationship, one of which could be described as an embrace. This followed a long period of division in a process that had begun to separate Western and Eastern European Jewry in the seventeenth century.¹ By the nineteenth century, German Jewry successfully distinguished itself on linguistic, religious, and cultural fronts from Jews in the Pale of Settlement, Galicia, and partitioned Polish territories. Linguistically, German Jews had turned away from Yiddish.² The dialect known as Western Yiddish was almost extinct by the end of the 1800s as these Jews increasingly spoke the various national vernaculars, including French, German, and English. Religiously, Reform Judaism had taken hold as a German-Jewish product. Even Orthodox Judaism in Germany acquired the label “neo-Orthodoxy” due to the indelible distinctions between it and the more traditional Judaism of Eastern Europe.³ And culturally, German Jews wore Western clothes and the men had little

¹ David Jan Sorkin, *The Transformation of German Jewry, 1780-1840* (New York: Oxford UP, 1987); Moses A. Shulvass, *From East to West: The Westward Migration of Jews from Eastern Europe during the Seventeenth and Eighteenth Centuries* (Detroit: Wayne State UP, 1971). For a quite early reference by an Amsterdam Jew who commented on the Jews of Nikolsburg and the difference between Eastern and Western Jews, see Shlomo Berger, *Travels among Jews and Gentiles: Abraham Levie's Travelogue, Amsterdam 1764*, Hebrew Language and Literature Series 3 (Leiden: Brill and Styx, 2002), 70-71.

² Jeffrey A. Grossman, *The Discourse on Yiddish in Germany from the Enlightenment to the Second Empire* (Rochester, NY: Camden House, 2000). Of the two major varieties of Yiddish that existed, Western Yiddish—spoken by Western European Jews—essentially dies in the nineteenth century.

³ Jack Wertheimer, *Unwelcome Strangers: East European Jews in Imperial Germany* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1987), 147; Steven E. Aschheim, *Brothers and Strangers: The East European Jew in German and German Jewish Consciousness, 1800-1923* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1982), 9.

problem with shaving their beards.⁴ As legal emancipation spread across Western Europe in the nineteenth century, German Jews expressly distanced themselves from Eastern European Jewry in staking their claim to Germanness.⁵

These markers of westernization are present in images from nineteenth-century Germany. In an 1848 issue of the *Düsseldorfer Monatshefte*, two men stand face to face on a cobblestone street in front of shadowy figures at the backdrop.

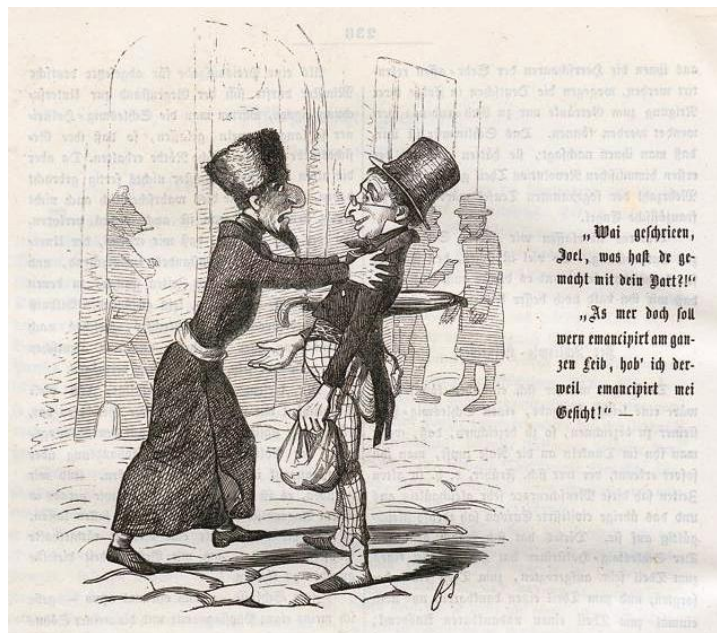


Figure 0.1 Cartoon from German magazine in 1848 contrasting Eastern and Western Jews.

The bearded man on the left wears traditional Eastern European Jewish garb (markers of a *Chassid*), including a long coat and tall fur hat. The shaven man on the right is dressed in Western European clothing, including glasses, a fashionable umbrella under his arm, coat tails,

⁴ Alexander Altmann, *Moses Mendelssohn: A Biographical Study* (University, Alabama: University of Alabama, 1973), 96-97. See also the description of beards in Berger, *Travels among Jews and Gentiles: Abraham Levie's Travelogue, Amsterdam 1764*, 70-71.

⁵ Aschheim, *Brothers and Strangers*, 3-31; Grossman, *Discourse on Yiddish*.

checkered pants, and a cylinder top hat. Both men speak to each other in an accented German that intimates Yiddish. The bearded man grabs the man in Western clothes screaming, “Oy vey, Yoel, what did you do with your beard?!” Yoel, the shaven man, responds, “Since we’re supposed to be emancipated with our entire body, I went ahead and emancipated my face!”⁶ This cartoon was published in Düsseldorf, a Prussian city, at a time when emancipation and civil equality for Jews across Western and Central Europe had been in a precarious position.⁷ Jewish civil rights had both been granted and subsequently taken away since the days of Napoleon. As a result of the 1848 revolutions, the year of this cartoon, Jews were legally emancipated in patchwork fashion across Prussia. This cartoon comes to satirically comment on the radical Jewish assimilation (read: superficial Jewish assimilation) that came as a result of emancipation.⁸ It suggests that Jews think they can become Germans overnight with a simple change of outfit and shave. Seen another way, the joke implies that the German Jew who likes to think of himself as sophisticated and thoroughly Western can never escape just being a Chassid.

The stereotypes in German and Yiddish, such as this one, are important because of the ways in which the perceptions of foreign Jewish difference structured the discourses on Jewish identities for over a century. Central to this joke is the beard, which became a metonym for pre-emancipation Jewry. Though the differences between Western and Eastern Jews have been described in the critical literature in terms of clothing — *Kravat-* and *Kaftanjuden*; or

⁶ „Wai geschrieen, Joel, was hast de gemacht mit dein Bart?!“ „As mer doch soll wern emancipirt am ganzen Leib, hob’ ich derweil emancipirt mei Gescicht!“ “Wai geschrieen,” in *Düsseldorfer Monatshefte*, ed. Lorenz Clasen (Düsseldorf: Arnz & Comp., 1847/1848), <http://digital.ub.uni-duesseldorf.de/dfg/periodical/pageview/1086022>. See also a cartoon a few pages later on page 242, <http://digital.ub.uni-duesseldorf.de/dfg/periodical/pageview/1085956>, and Boyarin, *Unheroic Conduct*, 20; Fuchs, *Die Juden in der Karikatur: Ein Beitrag zur Kulturgeschichte*, 131. The *Düsseldorfer Monatshefte* was an illustrated journal known for its anti-Semitic depictions.

⁷ The Ruhr-Gebiet was one of the most assimilated Jewish populations at the time, next to Berlin. One can think of Heinrich Heine and Karl Marx as two examples.

⁸ See also the 1848 cartoon “Juden-Emancipation in Bayern” Fuchs, *Die Juden in der Karikatur: Ein Beitrag zur Kulturgeschichte*, 124. David Sorkin argues against this cartoon and writes, “acculturation had patently preceded emancipation.” See Sorkin, *The Transformation of German Jewry*, 54.

Kaffeehaus- vs. *Kaftanjude* — the beard was an equally important visual difference between Western and Eastern Jews.⁹ In their attempt to westernize, German Jews had started shaving their beards as early as the seventeenth century. In the eighteenth century, Moses Mendelssohn had a partially shaven face, having what one might call a “neck beard,” while Salomon Maimon, the other famous representative of the German-Jewish enlightenment (*Haskalah*), was fully shaven. In Maimon’s autobiography, he writes about an encounter with the chief rabbi of Hamburg:

“Ach,” sagte er, “Sie sind der Sohn des berühmten Rabbi Josua? Ich kenne Ihren Vater sehr wohl, er ist ein frommer und gelehrter Mann... Ach, wie ist es möglich, daß Sie sich so (er zeigte auf meinen rasierten Bart) verändert haben? ... Sie tragen keinen Bart, kommen nicht in die Synagoge; ist das nicht der Religion zuwider?“ Ich antwortete nein, und zeigte ihm aus dem Talmud, daß unter den Umständen, worin ich mich befände, dieses alles erlaubt sei.... Bei diesen Worten fiel der Oberrabbiner auf seinen Stuhl zurück und fing an meinen verlorene Seele zu beklagen, ich aber ließ ihn klagen solange er Luft hatte, und empfahl mich.¹⁰

For Maimon and other Jews, the upheavels in modern history were seen as “special circumstances” (Umstände), when shaving should be religiously permissible. Maimon’s dramatic shave is even more striking considering his background as a Polish Jew, who immigrated to Germany. Even further to the East than where Maimon had originated, Peter the Great extended a policy of shaving not just to the upperclass, but also to townspeople and merchants in 1705.

⁹ Aschheim, *Brothers and Strangers*, 58-79; John M. Efron, "The 'Kaftanjude' and the 'Kaffeehausjude': Two Models of Jewish Insanity, A Discussion of Causes and Cures among German-Jewish Psychiatrists," *Leo Baeck Institute Year Book* 37, no. 1 (1992), <http://leobaeck.oxfordjournals.org/>. Rosental, "Dann-allerdings," *Schlemiel: Illustriertes jüdisches Witzblatt* 2, no. 4 (April 1, 1904); Walter Georgi, "Der Heiratsvermittler," *Simplicissimus* 2, no. 36 (1897), <http://www.simplicissimus.info/>; Th. Th. Heine, "Metamorphose," *Simplicissimus* 8, no. 10 (1903), <http://www.simplicissimus.info/>; B.....d [pseud.], "Die Transformation der russischen Juden: Vier Generationen," *Ost und West* 1, no. 9 (September 1901), <http://www.compactmemory.de/>. See also Brenner, *Marketing Identities*, 60-61.

¹⁰ “Oh,” he said, ‘you are the son of the famous Rabbi Joshua? I know your father very well, he is a pious and learned man... Oh, how is it possible that you have changed in this way (he pointed to my shaved beard)? ... You don’t wear a beard, don’t come to synagogue; is that not against the religion?’ I answered no and showed him in the Talmud that under the circumstances that I find myself, all of this is permitted.... With these words, the chief rabbi fell back on his chair and began to lament my lost soul. I let him lament until he was out of breath, and I took my leave.” Salomon Maimon, *Salomon Maimons Lebensgeschichte*, ed. Jakob Fromer, 2nd ed. (Munich: Georg Müller, 1911), <http://hdl.handle.net/2027/mdp.39015051815465.294-295>.

This was explicitly enacted as an attempt to become more like Western Europe.¹¹ Shaving is but one example where simultaneous external and internal factors led to the transformation of European Jewish society.¹²

While German Jews turned away from Eastern Europe in their efforts for emancipation in the nineteenth century, Eastern European Jews were not as monolithic in their response to German Jewry. The inroads of Western influence led to deeper fractures within Eastern European Jewish society as well as to the creation of new fault lines. Geographically, those Eastern European Jews living in the metropolises or in the Austro-Hungarian Empire tended to be more receptive of German-Jewish philosophers and literature as part of the *Haskalah*. Those who wanted to “go *daytsh*” (go German) had to contend with large swaths of society who were committed to traditional Jewish life.¹³ Such developments left German Jewry and Eastern European Jewry to gaze at each other from afar as a rift grew between the two groups. For both Western and Eastern Jews, this gaze upon their respective “Jewish Other” served as a structuring mechanism in their subjective Jewish identification as individuals. Nineteenth-century German Jews rejected the Eastern Jewish Other as part of their understanding of Jewish self. And Eastern European Jews of the same time decided whether to reject or accept the Western Jewish Other.

The process of German-Jewish secularization in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries should not be equated with a rejection of Jewish identity, but rather a reformulation of it. In distancing themselves from Eastern European Jewry, German Jews focused on other Jewish groups as models. In the mid-nineteenth century, Jewish authenticity was routinely located with

¹¹ Altmann, *Moses Mendelssohn: A Biographical Study*, 96-97; Berger, *Travels among Jews and Gentiles: Abraham Levie's Travelogue, Amsterdam 1764*, 70-71; Elliott Horowitz, "Beards," In *YIVO Encyclopedia of Jews in Eastern Europe*, 2010, <http://www.yivoencyclopedia.org/article.aspx/Beards>.

¹² “The developments that paved the way for emancipation in Germany were, then, the consequence of a dialectic of internal and external factors.” Sorkin, *The Transformation of German Jewry*, 61.

¹³ Shloyme Etinger, "Serkele, oder di yortsayt nokh a bruder," in *Komedie, lider, masholim un katoveslekh*, ed. Shmuel Rozshanski, Oysgeklibene shriftn (Buenos Aires: Literarische Gesellschaft baym YIVO, 1965), 136, <http://archive.org/details/nybc204251>.

the Sephardim of Spain and North Africa and the Mizrahim of the Middle East. The Berlin Oranienburger Straße synagogue with its Moorish architecture and onion domes built in 1866 reflects this idealization.¹⁴ The rise of Zionism in the coming decades came as a result of processes of secularization and westernization as they met with Jewish identity politics. In 1897, German Jews with shaven faces and moustaches organized and attended the First Zionist Congress in Basel, Switzerland. Zionism was the Jewish reflection of rising European nationalism. Again, clothing reflected the geographic orientation of the group. The congress had an over-the-top red carpet and a dress code of top hat and coattails. Reportedly, only one “Kaftanjude” from “the East” attended this event.¹⁵ On the one hand, Zionism was a result of this secularization reaching back to the Enlightenment. With its emphasis on a renewal of Jewish identity however, Zionism was also the entryway for a process of sacralization during the fin de siècle.¹⁶ Where secularization came in tow with the process of westernization, sacralization—the rejection of acculturation and the assertive use of explicit Jewish themes in the public sphere—accompanied a process of easternization and “rediscovering” cultural value in Eastern European Jewry. In the first years of the twentieth century, German Zionists would become fascinated by the more traditional Jews to the East and form a “cult of the Ostjude.”¹⁷

¹⁴ For an international perspective, see Olga Bush, "The Architecture of Jewish Identity: The Neo-Islamic Central Synagogue of New York," *Journal of the Society of Architectural Historians* 61, no. 2 (June 2004): 180-201.

¹⁵ "Der zweite Baseler Congress," *Kracauer Jüdische Zeitung* 1, no. 9 (September 13, 1898): 1, <http://jbc.bj.uj.edu.pl/dlibra/plain-content?id=677>.

¹⁶ Sigrid Weigel and Mark Kyburz, "Secularization and Sacralization, Normalization and Rupture: Kristeva and Arendt on Forgiveness," *PMLA* 117, no. 2 (March 2002): 320-323.

¹⁷ It is with a work by Arnold Zweig, however, that the cult reached an ecstatic register in its apotheosis of the Eastern European Jew. Opening his 1920 illustrated work *Das ostjüdische Antlitz*, Zweig's first-person ekphrastic narrative brings to life a drawing of a romanticized Eastern Jewish figure with beard and yarmulke: "Er wendet sein Auge von mir fort in eine Ferne, die nichts sonst ist als Zeit. Sein Profil gleitet wie ein fallendes Wasser in den Bart, der sich in Gischt und Wolke löst." "He turns his eye away from me into a distance that is nothing else but time. His profile slides like falling water into his beard which dissipates into froth and clouds." Arnold Zweig and Hermann Struck, *Das ostjüdische Antlitz* (Berlin: Welt, 1920), 13. For the phrase "cult of the Ostjude," see Gershom Scholem, *Von Berlin nach Jerusalem: Jugenderinnerungen* (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 1977), 60, 100. See the chapter entitled "The Cult of the Ostjuden" in Steven E. Aschheim, *Brothers and Strangers: The East European Jew in German and German Jewish Consciousness, 1800-1923* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1982).

In this dissertation, I focus on this interchange of secularization and sacralization from the 1880s to 1930s. The binary way of thinking about the Eastern European and German Jews, which might have been true at some point in the nineteenth century, was greatly outdated by the early twentieth. It was at this time that historical forces brought Eastern European Jews en masse into German-speaking territories. Following the assassination of Czar Alexander II in 1881, waves of pogroms started a sixty-year mass migration of Eastern European Jews. Though a small minority went eastward to the Land of Israel, the majority went westward to Western Europe and the United States. Germany became either the new place of residence for these migrants or a way station for many to pass through on their journey to the United States.¹⁸ The number of Eastern European Jewish immigrants in Berlin and Vienna who informed the nascent German-Jewish fascination with the East was significant. To put this growing immigrant population into perspective, foreigners constituted 20% of the Jewish population in Germany in 1933—almost triple the percentage from 1900.¹⁹ Most of these new Jewish arrivals were concentrated in Berlin and the other larger cities. Eastern European Jews were increasingly discussed in German politics, and among German Jews, they were both despised and adored in ways that did not map neatly onto the German-Jewish political spectrum. Zionist representations, for example, both positioned the Eastern European Jew as the antithesis to the muscular New Jew of their utopian project and adored the same Jew for his seemingly insular, holistic Jewish lifestyle.²⁰

This intermingling of Eastern and Western Jews shaped German-Jewish modernism. This period rife with Jewish introspection and aesthetic expression has been made known to German

¹⁸ Wertheimer, *Unwelcome Strangers*, 42-74.

¹⁹ Esra Bennathan, "Die demographische und wirtschaftliche Struktur der Juden," in *Entscheidungsjahr 1932: Zur Judenfrage in der Endphase der Weimarer Republik*, ed. Werner Eugen Mosse and Arnold Paucker, Schriftenreihe wissenschaftlicher Abhandlungen des Leo Baeck Instituts 13 (Tübingen: J. B. C. Mohr (Paul Siebeck), 1965), 98. For historical perspective, see Shulvass, *From East to West*.

²⁰ Max Nordau, *Degeneration* (New York: H. Fertig, 1968 (1895)); Todd Samuel Presner, "'Clear Heads, Solid Stomachs, and Hard Muscles': Max Nordau and the Aesthetics of Jewish Regeneration," *Modernism / modernity* 10, no. 2 (2003); Theodor Herzl, *Altneuland: Roman* (Leipzig: Hermann Seemann Nachfolger, 1902).

Studies through works by scholars like Sander Gilman, Steven Aschheim, Michael Brenner, Scott Spector, and others.²¹ They have emphasized how Martin Buber's 1901 essay "Jüdische Renaissance" ushered in the German-Jewish reclaiming of Eastern European Jewish "authenticity" in order to heal German-Jewish ills.²² Building on the Zionist platform of Jewish dissimilation, Buber's efforts expanded the number of ethnographic expeditions by German-Jewish authors into Eastern Europe, and spawned the widespread discovery, re-fashioning, making, and marketing of Eastern European Jewish folklore and traditional Jewish life. Buber attributed his own success as an author/compiler of Chassidic folktales to the time he spent as a child with his grandfather in Galicia at the eastern edge of the Austro-Hungarian Empire.²³

Eastern immigrants with traditional Jewish upbringings significantly influenced a generation of fully assimilated German Jews. Here are but a few brief examples. In the words of Nathan Birnbaum in his book *Die jüdische Moderne*, Western Jewish life stood in stark contrast to "der echten, unverfälschten, unverwässerten Alt-Orthodoxie des Ostens."²⁴ Alfred Döblin wrote his expressionist masterpiece *Berlin Alexanderplatz* only after traveling to Poland and publishing an ethnography on Polish Jews called *Reise in Polen (Journey to Poland)*.²⁵ This trip

²¹ See Sander Gilman, "The Rediscovery of the Eastern Jews: German Jews in the East, 1890-1918," in *Jews and Germans, 1860-1933: The Problematic Symbiosis*, ed. David Bronsen (Heidelberg: Carl Winter, 1979), 338-365; Aschheim, *Brothers and Strangers*; Shulamit Volkov, "The Dynamics of Dissimilation: Ostjuden and German Jews," in *The Jewish Response to German Culture: From the Enlightenment to the Second World War*, ed. Jehuda Reinharz and Walter Schatzberg (Hanover, NH: University Press of New England, 1985), 195-211; Wertheimer, *Unwelcome Strangers*; Michael Brenner, *The Renaissance of Jewish Culture in Weimar Germany* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1996); David A. Brenner, *Marketing Identities: The Invention of Jewish Ethnicity in Ost und West* (Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 1998); Grossman, *Discourse on Yiddish*; Scott Spector, *Prague Territories: National Conflict and Cultural Innovation in Franz Kafka's fin de siècle* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 2000). See also select essays in Ivan Davidson Kalmar and Derek J. Penslar, eds., *Orientalism and the Jews* (Waltham, MA: Brandeis University Press, 2005).

²² Martin Buber, "Jüdische Renaissance," *Ost und West* 1, no. 1 (January, 1901): 7-10.

²³ Martin Buber, *Mein Weg zum Chassidismus: Erinnerungen* (Frankfurt a. M.: Rütten & Loening, 1918), <http://www.archive.org/details/meinwegzumchass00bubegoog>.

²⁴ "The real, genuine, undiluted old-orthodoxy of the East." Nathan Birnbaum, [Mathias Acher, pseud.], *Die Jüdische Moderne: Vortrag Gehalten Im Akademischen Vereine "Kadimah" in Wien* (Leipzig: August Schulze, 1896), 51.

²⁵ Alfred Döblin, *Reise in Polen* (Berlin: S. Fischer, 1926); Alfred Döblin, *Berlin Alexanderplatz: Die Geschichte vom Franz Biberkopf*, ed. Werner Stauffacher, 47th ed. (Munich: dtv, 2008 (1929)).

sparked a period of Jewish interest in a man who had already converted to Protestantism and would later convert to Catholicism. Franz Kafka was intrigued by the traveling Yiddish theater with performers from the East. This otherwise fully acculturated German/Czech Jew even came to give a speech on the Yiddish language.²⁶ Else Lasker-Schüler, the daughter of a successful Berlin banker, was romantically involved with the immigrant Yiddish poet Avrom-Nochem Shtentsl.²⁷

I focus on the wide reception of Eastern European Jews in German literature as part of an international dialogue, intersecting with Yiddish literature in multiple ways. For one, the ways in which the Eastern Jew was portrayed in German paralleled how German Jews were portrayed in Yiddish literature in unexpected ways. The figure of the *daytsh* (a Yiddish term for the assimilated German-speaking Jew) was well-established as a recognizable character in nineteenth-century Yiddish literature. An equally fervent interest in portraying the German Jew in Yiddish literature upsets the notion of a unidirectional Orientalist gaze by German Jews. Secondly, the many border crossings were reflected in both literary bodies as authors began to portray foreign Jews in foreign languages. Immigrant Jews from Eastern Europe wrote in German and portrayed Eastern Jews in conversation with German-Jewish portrayals of Eastern Europe. Jews in Galicia, the Russian Empire, and Poland constructed their literary and artistic careers around the interaction with German Jews domestically and abroad. Furthermore, at least one German Jew published in Yiddish to intervene in the reception of German Jews abroad. In this back and forth, representation and counter-representation, the objective differences between Eastern Jews and Western Jews became undone, even as the binary ideas of Western Jews and

²⁶ Franz Kafka, "Rede über die jiddische Sprache," in *Kafka-Handbuch in zwei Bänden*, ed. Hartmut Binder, 2 vols., vol. 2 (Stuttgart: Kröner, 1979).

²⁷ Heather Valencia, *Else Lasker-Schüler und Abraham Nochem Stenzel: Eine unbekannte Freundschaft*, Campus Judaica 5 (Frankfurt am Main: Campus, 1995).

Eastern Jews maintained their hold. This perceived dichotomy structured the discourses of the day and seemingly still guides historiography today. The historiography on the “cult of the Ostjude” has mirrored that of the literature by German Jews, failing to give Eastern European Jews their due space. I argue that both German Jews and Eastern European Jews constructed their sense of Jewish self around portrayals of foreign Jewish difference. My approach to the East-West narrative beyond unilateral German-Jewish reception history²⁸ showcases the engagement with reception as authors placed their narrated Jewish identity alongside the literary constructs. In this context, the layering of reception, representation, counter representation, and re-reception across languages and borders becomes central to my argument.

Observant Jews: Visualizing the Jewish Other

I examine the corpus of information disseminated and representations between these two groups by looking at the act of looking itself. Though the European Jewish renaissance was largely literary, it consciously attempted to encroach upon all artistic genres, including music and visual arts. It was specifically with reporting on Jewish authenticity that visuality and the adage “seeing is believing” took center stage. The discourse on the visual began with the German-Jewish renaissance’s programmatic call to create Jewish art. Perhaps few came as close to Fritz Mordechai Kaufmann’s charge, “Schafft erst die Bilder – eure stärksten Waffen!”²⁹ This call to visual arms came from Kaufmann, a student of Nathan Birnbaum and editor of *Die Freistatt*, a journal dedicated to the unification of Eastern and Western Jewry. The metaphor of the mirror

²⁸ The subtitle to Aschheim’s book is “The East European Jew in German and German Jewish Consciousness.” In her article on “cultural transfers,” Delphine Bechtel writes that her focus is “on reception and interpretation of Yiddish literary culture by German- and Austrian-Jewish intellectuals.” See Delphine Bechtel, “Cultural Transfers between ‘Ostjuden’ and ‘Westjuden’: German-Jewish Intellectuals and Yiddish Culture, 1897-1930,” *Leo Baeck Institute Year Book* 42 (1997): 70.

²⁹ “Create the pictures first – your strongest weapons!” Fritz Mordechai Kaufmann, “Der Ausbau unserer Propagandamittel,” *Jüdische Rundschau* 17, no. 15 (April 12, 1912), <http://www.compactmemory.de/>.

was rampant in these representations. Arnold Zweig wrote from Berlin that the Eastern Jew represented a “Dorian Gray phenomenon” for the German-Jewish spectator, and a Yiddish article from Warsaw focused on German Jews bore the title “We Jews: The German Jews in Front of the Mirror.”³⁰ Visualizing the Eastern Jew came to be understood as a concrete step to realizing the goals of a Jewish renaissance. German-Jewish authors made an intrinsic connection between visuality in the exchange between Eastern European and German Jews. The *Ostjude* and the visual were to be crafted, rather than elements inherent within German Jewry. It is in this vein that Anton Kuh observed that *Ostjuden* had become an “aesthetic project.”³¹

Several scholars have assessed visuality in the Jewish renaissance and in Zionism.³²

David Brenner’s book on the journal *Ost und West* (East and West) explicitly brings out why it was at this time in 1901, the year of the journal’s inception, that visual culture should be considered:

Ost und West was accordingly the first European Jewish journal to feature works of art and photography. Photography, in particular, virtually ensured the magazine’s success. Nine years prior to *Ost und West*, Georg Meisenbach had invented autotypy, the first technique that allowed photographs to be reproduced directly. ...Making one’s ethnicity visible was understood as central to a pan-Jewish identity that incorporated both Eastern-traditional and Western-enlightened models.³³

³⁰ “Man kann auch darauf verweisen, daß diese körperliche Häßlichkeit des Juden ein Dorian-Gray-Phänomen sei: an ihm werde die Seelen-Häßlichkeit seiner Knechter, Peiniger und Verfolger leibhaftig. Jeder häßliche und scheu schleichende Jude sagt dem Jäger Edom: Ich bin du; sieh deine häßliche und verzerrte Seele auf mir ausgebreitet.” Arnold Zweig and Hermann Struck, *Das ostjüdische Antlitz*, 2nd ed. (Berlin: Welt, 1922 (1920)), 78; Yisroel Shtern, “Mir yidn: Di daytshe yidn farn shpigl | שפיגל פארן שפיגל [We Jews: The German Jews in Front of the Mirror],” *Haynt* (July 16, 1937): 7, http://jpress.org.il/Repository/getFiles.asp?Style=OliveXLib:LowLevelEntityToSaveGifMSIE_TAUEN&Type=text/html&Locale=english-skin-custom&Path=HYT/1937/07/16&ChunkNum=-1&ID=Ar00700&PageLabel=7.

³¹ Anton Kuh, “Juden und Deutsche,” in *Juden und Deutsche*, ed. Andreas B. Kilcher (Vienna: Löcker, 2003 (1921)), 91-92.; See Aschheim, *Brothers and Strangers*, 212.

³² Michael Stanislawski, *Zionism and the Fin de siècle: Cosmopolitanism and Nationalism from Nordau to Jabotinsky* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2001); Inka Bertz, “Jewish Renaissance-Jewish Modernism,” in *Berlin Metropolis: Jews and the New Culture, 1890-1918*, ed. Emily D. Bilski (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1999); Michael Brenner, “Authenticity and Modernism Combined: Music and the Visual Arts,” in *The renaissance of Jewish culture in Weimar Germany* (New Haven, Conn.: Yale University Press, 1996). See introduction to Arnold Zweig and Hermann Struck, *The Face of East European Jewry*, ed. Noah Isenberg, trans. Noah Isenberg, Weimar and Now 35 (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2004 (1920)).

³³ Brenner, *Marketing Identities*, 42-44.

Contextualizing the impact of new technology is therefore critical to understanding the German-Jewish renaissance. A notable distinction between the two pools of literary sources is with the images omnipresent in German-Jewish texts. The visual register is certainly present in the Yiddish texts, for example when the shtetl (small town³⁴) Jew catches his first glimpse of the strikingly different Western European Jew. Nevertheless, the German texts seemingly place more emphasis on visuality, not only as evident by the technological capability to print images, but also by the meta-discourse on the visual.

In order to analyze the visual culture of the Jewish renaissance in the age of mechanical reproduction, images that accompanied books (both from the inner contents and on the front cover, which has been an underutilized resource), newspapers, and journals will be a necessary point of inquiry. Material comes from Arnold Zweig and Hermann Struck's *Das ostjüdische Antlitz*; Bruno Frei's exposé *Jüdisches Elend in Wien*; E. M. Lilien's illustration in *Lieder des Ghetto*; and other images employing representations of Eastern European Jews on book covers and in the Jewish press. With regard to the visual culture of books, I also analyze the images of the Jewish Other that the reader attached to the text via the prevalent use of bookplates by Lilien, Struck, and other Jewish artists. From Yiddish literature, I will also read the connections between the visual and textual among the few pictures that were printed at the time in books and journals.³⁵

³⁴ Yisroel Aksenfeld begins his best-known work, written in the first half of the 1800s, by defining a shtetl: "Anyone familiar with our Russian Poland knows what Jews mean by a small *shtetl*, a little town. A small shtetl has a few small cabins, and a fair every other Sunday. The Jews deal in liquor, grain, burlap, or tar. Usually, there's one man striving to be a Hassidic rebbe. A *shtot*, on the other hand, a town, contains several hundred wooden homes (that's what they call a house: a *home*) and a row of brick shops.... God forbid that anyone should accidentally blur out the wrong word and call the town a *shtetl*!" Yisroel Aksenfeld, "The Headband," in *The Shtetl*, ed. Joachim Neugroschel (Woodstock, NY: Overlook, 1989), 49.

³⁵ In line with Brenner's book, the analysis here will be restrained to representations of Eastern Jews in print rather than including all of portraiture and other permutations of the visual arts. As a consequence, two fields of study

Orientalist Gaze

Alongside visual culture, the gaze, as a marker of power dynamics between observer and observed, figures in place texts into a new constellation.³⁶ Central to the German-Jewish renaissance is the Ostjude, the orientalized image of the Eastern European Jew. Rather than rejecting the Yiddish-speaking, shtetl Jew (as was commonplace in the nineteenth century and even into the twentieth), the Zionist-inflected German-Jewish renaissance pivoted on the glorification of the Eastern Jew and his holistic lifestyle, especially around WWI. Many individual German Jews understood his/her Jewish identity by gazing upon this foreign Jewish group, explicitly invoking Orientalist language in the process. On Alfred Döblin's trip to the Polish Jewish community, he understood the rabbinic figures he saw in an explicit Orientalist paradigm. Simply put, he writes "Es sind – Araber."³⁷ Karl Emil Franzos published first-hand accounts on Jewish life in his Galician homeland at eastern edge of the Austro-Hungarian Empire. He titled the book *Aus Halb-Asien* (From Half-Asia).

Contributions in Ivan Kalmar and Derek Penslar's edited volume *Orientalism and the Jews* clarify the specifics of the Orientalism at work in the German-Jewish renaissance, discussing the limitations of Edward Said's work. Ivan Kalmar and Derek Penslar have called Jewish Orientalism an "internal orientalism." They point out how Said fails to discuss Jews in his

necessary to understand visual culture and the construct of the Ostjude, but beyond the scope of this study, are filmic representations and Yiddish theater in Germany. But importantly, Franz Kafka and Nathan Birnbaum became attracted to Eastern Jewry through the theater. See Joshua A. Fishman, *Ideology, Society & Language: The Odyssey of Nathan Birnbaum* (Ann Arbor, MI: Karoma, 1987), 32.

³⁶ I am here only tentatively separating work on the gaze from work on visual culture. This serves to separate the act of looking at the center of scholarship on the gaze from the emphasis on physical cultural products and institutions that have been the focus of visual cultural. However it should be noted that visual culture theorists like Jessica Evans, Stuart Hall, and Nicholas Mirzoeff subsume the gaze under the rubric of visual culture. See Part III, "Looking and Subjectivity" in Jessica Evans and Stuart Hall, "What is Visual Culture?," in *Visual Culture: The Reader*, ed. Jessica Evans and Stuart Hall (London: Sage, 1999). and Ch. 5, "Seeing Sex" in Mirzoeff, *An Introduction to Visual Culture*, 274.

³⁷ "They are — Arabs." Döblin, *Journey to Poland*, 69-71; Döblin, *Reise in Polen*, 98.

landmark discussion of Orientalism.³⁸ This pairing of German-Jewish Orientalism and the Eastern European Jewish response to it opens up new avenues for discussion. Moreover, Kalmar and Penslar argue that by looking at a European minority, like the German Jews, one can see how a European group identified strongly with the concept of the Orient, which would seemingly upend the notion of Western self-definition against the Oriental other. In this dissertation, I show Jews both as agents and recipients of orientalization. The Orient (broadly inclusive of even Eastern Europe at the beginning of the twentieth century) had long been a part of German-Jewish self-understanding.

One example from the bookplates, or *ex libris*, of the period can demonstrate how this theoretical approach helps interpret the primary source material. German Jews often chose a picture of a religious, bearded, assumably Eastern European Jew to be used as their signifying image to mark their personal ownership of books. (See, for example, figure 0.2³⁹) Using the formal aspects of bookplates, they identified themselves with this Jewish Other by placing their own names alongside the image.

³⁸ Said himself admitted to a limited discussion of British and French Orientalism, suggesting that German Orientalism might function differently. Edward W. Said, *Orientalism* (New York: Vintage Books, 1994 (1978)), 17. Kalmar and Penslar recognize the need to distinguish between Christian and Jewish Orientalisms. They argue that Said's study should more aptly be utilized in understanding the relation between the European and Muslim world. They focus on how Jews also constituted the Orient in the Western mind. Ivan Davidson Kalmar and Derek Jonathan Penslar, "Orientalism and the Jews: An Introduction," in *Orientalism and the Jews*, edited by Kalmar Ivan Davidson and J. Penslar Derek (Waltham, MA: Brandeis UP, 2005), xxi.

³⁹ J. Thon, "Ein Beitrag zur Geschichte der zeichnenden Künste," *Ost und West* 4, no. 12 (1904): 835-836, <http://www.compactmemory.de/>; *Berliner Jüdisches Gemeindeblatt*, Feb. 3, 1935.



Figures 0.2 and 0.3 Left, Leo Winz's bookplate as drawn by E. M. Lilien, 1901. Right, a photograph of Winz. Courtesy of Philipp Messner.

The bookplate of Leo Winz, editor of *Ost und West* and member of the *Zionistische Vereinigung für Deutschland*, juxtaposes a visual depiction of an Eastern European Jew with Winz's German and Hebrew names, suggesting an identification with the figure depicted. I focus on the layering of meaning behind such an image. Even though it was a seemingly standard orientalizing of the Eastern Jew, behind this image are the artist and owner of the bookplate, who were both immigrants to Germany from Eastern Europe. Cosmopolitan Eastern European Jews participated in the orientalist fantasies of traditional Jewish life in Eastern Europe. This multidirectionality has been overlooked in the historiography.

My focus on the reciprocity of the Jewish gaze can contribute to the scholarship on Occidentalism. Kalmar and Penslar stress that “Jews have been seen in the Western World...as occidental and oriental.” This is all the more complicated when discussing the perceptions of Eastern *and* Western European Jews. Eastern European Jews gazed upon their Western counterparts in ways that mapped onto the inverse of orientalism. I try to bring these moments of inversion and cross-continental stares together. As Alastair Bonnett writes, the Westward gaze cannot be completely taken as independent or isolated from the Eastward gaze: “A concern with the political and social *uses* and *deployment* of occidentalism in the context of non-Western forms of modernity, as well as its emphasis on the mutually constitutive nature of Western and non-Western identities, make the new school of occidental studies a significant development (sic).”⁴⁰ This “mutually constitutive nature of Western and non-Western identities” is where I am locating the importance of studying Occidentalism in Eastern European Jewish discourse. This serves as the necessary counterweight to the studies that have confirmed German Jews as defining themselves through the Orientalist paradigm by the Orient, the East.

The previous examples come from the German sphere, but Yiddish literature was also rife with passages that focus on the stark visual contrast between the traditional and westernized Jews. From the beginning of the nineteenth century well into the twentieth century, the top hat and lack of a beard symbolized the German Jew in Yiddish writing. Descriptions of rich visitors to the Eastern European shtetl who speak German and wear top hats riddle the literature, which was even more invested in the West-East Jewish divide than German-Jewish literature. We can turn to a few examples to showcase the transition of Yiddish literature from its infantile first endeavors in the nineteenth century to its mature modernist self in the twentieth.

⁴⁰ Alastair Bonnett, *The Idea of the West: Culture, Politics, and History* (Basingstoke, England: Palgrave Macmillan, 2004), 7.

The play *Serkele*, written around 1830 by Shloyme Etinger, is considered the first true drama to be written in Yiddish for artistic purposes.⁴¹ It is positioned at the birthplace of modern Yiddish literature, and it explicitly thematizes this interplay between the two groups. The story takes place in Lemberg, the capital of Galicia, one of the many areas in Eastern Europe under German cultural hegemony. The precocious thirteen-year-old Freyde-altele (also known by her assumed German name “Friederike”) dreams of walking with her future husband, Hendler, in a beautiful Western outfit: “Ach, das wird mir anstehen! Und wenn noch ein Hut mit Federn da zukommen wird – ach, wie schön! Wie herrlich werde ich aussehen! Ja, deutsch muss ich gehen, und mein Hendler auch! Ach, wenn wir so einmal ausgehen werden, auf ein Spazier – es wird uns gewiss niemand erkennen, dass wir Juden sind.”⁴² Whereas in *Serkele* the Jews dream of dressing “German” and not being recognized as Jews, a century later Western clothes were the norm for many Eastern European Jews.

During the physical migrations in the fin de siècle, the antinomies of Jewish identification became upended. Writers in German-Jewish and Yiddish literatures began positioning the narrated self in complex ways, both with and against a portrayal of their respective foreign Jewish Other. Two images from both sides of the German/Yiddish divide show these revised reflections on the dialectic relationship with the Jewish Other.

⁴¹ Mikhail Krutikov, *From Kabbalah to Class Struggle: Expressionism, Marxism, and Yiddish Literature in the Life and Work of Meir Wiener* (Stanford, CA: Stanford UP, 2011), 191-196.

⁴² “Oh, that will look nice! And if I could get a hat with feathers – oh how nice! How pretty I will look! Yes, I will have to go German, and my Hendler too! If we were to go on a stroll—certainly no one would recognize us as Jews.” Etinger, “*Serkele, oder di yortsayt nokh a bruder*,” 136. This passage is written in a highly Germanized Yiddish, leading me to transliterate the Yiddish text into an orthographically approximate German.



Figure 0.4 “A Reincarnation,” Yiddish postcard, Menachem Birnbaum, ~1912

Where figure 0.1 from 1848 exaggerates the transformation of native German Jews, at the turn of the twentieth century, the printed images detailed the transformation of Eastern European Jews as they came to Germany. This Yiddish postcard (figure 0.4) yields the cartoon “A Reincarnation,” which reads from right to left. The caption of the right frame states: “Pinkhes Pikholtz travels to Marienbad. Here you can see how his wife takes him down to the train.” The man wears an unkempt beard, ankle-length coat, and umbrella. The caption below the frame at left states the man is in Marienbad, a spa resort near the German border in present-day Czech Republic. Once there on vacation away from his wife, the man undergoes a “reincarnation,” exchanges his umbrella for a cane, his long coat for a short one, trims his beard, and sports a top hat. The comical nature of this postcard makes it likely that Eastern European Jewish tourists

would have bought this on vacation in Marienbad.⁴³ This cartoon hearkens to a German cartoon “Der Chossid vor und nach der Reform” from 1905 (figure 0.5).⁴⁴



Figure 0.5 Cartoon in *Schlemiel*, 1905.

The title reads: “The Chossid before and after Reform [Judaism].” Chassidism was a movement rooted in Eastern Europe that did not have a large following inside of German borders outside of Eastern Prussia (present-day Poland). The cartoon first shows an elderly man with beard and earlocks with all the trappings of a Chassidic figure—fur hat, *talit katan*, *tsitsit*, white socks, frock. “After Reform,” the same stooped figure is seen to the right with the same cane, but a new moustache, top hat, pocket watch, bowtie, glasses, and striped pants—the characteristic Western style.⁴⁵ In the few years that *Schlemiel* was published in Berlin, this tension between Eastern and

⁴³ Menachem Birnbaum, “A gilgul,” Yiddish postcard [ca. 1912-1913], Menachem Birnbaum Collection, Nathan and Solomon Birnbaum Archives, Toronto. See also Sholem Aleichem’s novel *Marienbad*, which thematizes men on vacation away from their wives. One could compare a later image of Nathan Birnbaum in Marienbad (the father of this artist here) wearing traditional Jewish garb to show how this border town experienced the multidirectionality of Jewish identification, both in the assumption of Western and Eastern appearances.

⁴⁴ See also the cartoon Th. Th. Heine, “Metamorphose,” *Simplicissimus* 8, no. 10 (1903), <http://www.simplicissimus.info>.

⁴⁵ M. Schwartz, “Der Chossid vor und nach der Reform,” *Schlemiel: Illustriertes jüdisches Witzblatt* 3, no. 6 (June 1, 1905). See discussion in chapter 1 on Sholem Aleichem, “Der daytsh | דער דייטש [The daytsh],” in *Oreme un*

Western Jews was a recurring element in its pages. The postcard and the cartoon show that both German Jews and Eastern European Jews found humor in this topic of rapid westernization.

In 1933, Moshe Kulbak published *Disner Tshayld Harold*, a ballad named after Lord Byron's *Childe Harold*. Kulbak's expressionist work centers on a migrant Jew from the Eastern European town of Dzisna in the hustle and bustle of 1920s Berlin.⁴⁶ The inside cover of the book, published in Minsk, bears the following image that ultimately points to the direction of this dissertation. (See figure 0.6)



Figure 0.6 Illustration lining the inside book cover of Moyshe Kulbak's *Disner Tshayld Harold*.

freylekhe, vol. 16, Ale verk fun Sholem-Aleichem (New York: Sholem Aleichem Folksfund, 1918 (1902); reprint, 1920), <http://www.archive.org/details/nybc200087>.

⁴⁶ Moyshe Kulbak, (מוישע קולבאק), *Disner Tshayld Harold: Poeme* [Childe Harold of Dzisna: Poem] (Minsk: Elukhe, 1933). Artist listed as Eydelman, page 99.

One sees the image of a man in top hat and coattails trailed by a goat in a hamlet-like setting. The crowded, gabled-roofed houses have barren trees and broken fences in the backyard. This image is then transposed onto the backdrop of tall skyscrapers. Especially by the 1930s, but already in the century and a half previous, Eastern European Jews were westernizing en masse. The image of the (male) German Jew became a mirror for Yiddish writers. Thus by the time that Eastern European Jews were leaving the shtetl in the late nineteenth century, they were no longer the poor, hunched-back Jews scratching on the gates of Berlin as Mendelssohn had once been in 1743. As the picture in Kulbak's book depicts, these Jews were leaving the shtetl already in top hats and coattails.⁴⁷

These sample images are representative of the visual culture evident in ethnographies, folktales, biographies, and articles pertaining to the representation of and looking at the Jewish Other from across Europe. Besides visual culture, the gaze, with its dual meaning, can figure in to configure these texts into a new constellation. The "Orientalist gaze" has been used to refer to the perception and impressions of Eastern alterity. The gaze has been employed in the more theoretical sense by authors such as Jacques Lacan and Laura Mulvey with a consideration of power discourse between viewing subject and viewed object. Lacan touches upon the interplay between viewing subject and viewed object and expressly upon the way in which the return of the gaze upsets this relationship.⁴⁸ Mulvey focuses on more of the static gendered relationship of

⁴⁷ See B.....d [pseud.], "Die Transformation der russischen Juden." See also Brenner, *Marketing Identities*, 60-61. This montage sets the religious and Westernized Jewish groups onto a time line and within a genealogical hierarchy. The bearded Jewish figure with fur hat and earlocks (top left) has a business man for a son (top right), who is similarly dressed and bearded except for the loss of yarmulke/head covering. He then has a son (middle), whose beard is quite short and has Western dress and glasses. This child of the third generation leaves the Pale of Settlement to move to the city of St. Petersburg and is educated as a lawyer. His child, in turn, is shown in typical bourgeois style (bottom), stripped of all Jewish characteristics by 1895. Even the first names become less ethnically identifiable over time: Ahron, Moses, Saul, and finally, Michael.

⁴⁸ Jacques Lacan, "Of the Gaze as *Objet Petit a*" in *The Four Fundamental Concepts of Psycho-Analysis* [Le quartres concepts fondamentaux de la psychanalyse], ed. Jacques-Alain Miller, trans. Alan Sheridan, Vol. 11, 1998 (1973)), 67-119.

cinema. I bring both of these meanings of the gaze into an analysis of the Central and Eastern European Jewish renaissance to situate not only the travel reports on Eastern and Western Jewish life, but also the comments on staring and expressions of the fear of being looked at (the fear of the returned gaze) that weave throughout these texts. Nicholas Mirzoeff concisely writes that “the gaze is not just a look or a glance. It is a means of constituting the identity of the gazer by distinguishing her or him from that which is gazed at.”⁴⁹ The gaze is intrinsically linked to one’s own identity. This reflects the comment by Arnold Zweig in 1920 that the Eastern European Jew presents “a Dorian Gray phenomenon” for the spectator.⁵⁰ The *sight* of the Ostjude as a distorted reflection of the viewing subject evoked fear in the German Jew. The Ostjuden were the German Jew’s uncanny other—their Dorian Gray phenomenon. Together, these meanings compose “the Jewish gaze,” which is to be understood as that process of reception and representation, distancing and internalization of Jewish difference that characterized the process of coming to terms with the Jewish self.

Two last images from the early twentieth century illustrate the interplay between the two Jewish groups and the complex of East-West imploding in on itself.

⁴⁹ Mirzoeff is building on Mulvey’s and Lacan’s understanding of gender difference, but as will be explained further on, Jewishness can be understood in similar ways to gender—or at least *was* understood to function in similar ways at the beginning of the twentieth century in Europe. For these reasons, Mirzoeff’s statement that the gaze structures identity, in a broad sense, is useful here. Nicholas Mirzoeff, *An Introduction to Visual Culture* (London: Routledge, 1999), 164.

⁵⁰ Ibid.; “Man kann auch darauf verweisen, daß diese körperliche Häßlichkeit des Juden ein Dorian-Gray-Phänomen sei: an ihm werde die Seelen-Häßlichkeit seiner Knechter, Peiniger und Verfolger leibhaftig. Jeder häßliche und scheu schleichende Jude sagt dem Jäger Edom: Ich bin du; sieh deine häßliche und verzerrte Seele auf mir ausgebreitet.” Arnold Zweig and Hermann Struck, *Das ostjüdische Antlitz*, 2nd ed. (Berlin: Welt, 1922 (1920)), 78.



Figure 0.7 *In Lemberg*, E. M. Lilien, 1912



Figure 0.8 Photograph of Nathan Birnbaum with his son Salomon and grandson Jakob. Hamburg, 1931.

Figure 0.7 is by the artist Ephraim Moses Lilien. Lilien, most famous for his Zionist iconography, was an immigrant to Vienna and Berlin.⁵¹ This picture was drawn many years after his westward emigration, on a visit back home in Galicia. The men wear long frocks and beards, but also top hats. Their costume signals that they are of a dying breed at the beginning of the twentieth century, old *maskilim* (adherents of the *Haskalah*) attracted to the nineteenth-century German-Jewish enlightenment ideals. These two men sitting on a bench, representatives of the East dressed awkwardly in Western gear, must have amused the post-maskilic Lilien. This image is a product of migration—first westward and finally back East. Other Yiddish artists and writers

⁵¹ E. M. Lilien, *List of the Original Etchings of E. M. Lilien* (Berlin: Benjamin Harz, 1922), 36-37, <http://babel.hathitrust.org/cgi/pt?id=njp.32101067621332>. See also Leo Baeck Institute digital photograph collection, <http://access.cjh.org/883742>

that emigrated to Berlin and Vienna, like Sholem Asch, were also interested in portraying this old type of awkwardly hybrid Eastern and Western European Jews.⁵²

If Lilien and Asch belong to a post-maskilic generation, then German Jews of the fin-de-siècle and interwar period belonged to a post-assimilationist generation. Indeed, Gershom Scholem retrospectively called his generation of German Jews the “post-assimilated generation”—a term that paralleled what Franz Rosenzweig described as the “dissimulatory” aspirations of the German-Jewish renaissance.⁵³ Figure 0.8 shows one such dissimulatory figure, Nathan Birnbaum, later in life after his religious awakening in 1912.⁵⁴ Birnbaum, born in Vienna, became deeply invested in Eastern European Jewry as their political advocate. His investment transformed his own outward appearance and even language as he acquired the frock, yarmulke, and Yiddish. Unlike the 1848 cartoon (figure 0.1) that shows Western Jews in the throes of secularization throwing off their beards and Jews clothing, here Birnbaum shows the results of sacralization—wearing a beard and traditional head covering. The confluence of West and East, secularization and sacralization, at the dialectic interchange is vivid in this picture as the old Birnbaum in yarmulke, black outfit, and beard sits next to his grandson wearing a yarmulke and

⁵² Sholem Asch, "Der kleyner daytsh | דער קליינער דייטש [The Little daytsh]," *Haynt*, no. 111 (May 14, 1926), <http://jpress.org.il/Default/Skins/TAUEn/Client.asp?Skin=TAUEn&enter=true&sPublication=HYT&Publication=HYT&Hs=advanced&AW=1362418932338&AppName=2>.

⁵³ Scott Spector writes, “The more recent revival of the term has yielded inconsistent definitions, but each of these tends to bring out Rosenzweig’s intended dialectical tension between the terms ‘assimilation’ and ‘dissimilation’ in more explicit ways, implicitly subverting the spectral paradigm.” Scott Spector, “Forgetting Assimilation: Introducing Subjectivity to German–Jewish History,” *Jewish History*, no. 20 (2006). For “dissimilation,” see Franz Rosenzweig, *Briefe und Tagebücher*, ed. Rachel Rosenzweig, Edith Rosenzweig-Scheinmann, and Bernhard Casper, vol. 2: 1918-1929, *Gesammelte Schriften I* (Den Haag 1979), 770; Volkov, “The Dynamics of Dissimilation: Ostjuden and German Jews.”; David Sorkin, “Emancipation and Assimilation: Two Concepts and their Application to German-Jewish History,” *Leo Baeck Institute Year Book* 35, no. 1 (1990), <http://leobaeck.oxfordjournals.org>; Jonathan Skolnik, “Dissimilation and the Historical Novel: Hermann Sinsheimer’s Maria Nunnez,” *Leo Baeck Institute Yearbook* 43, no. 1 (1998). For the related term “post-assimilation,” see Steven E. Aschheim, *In Times of Crisis: Essays on European Culture, Germans, and Jews* (Madison, WI: University of Wisconsin Press, 2001), 65, <http://hdl.handle.net/2027/heh.06599>.

⁵⁴ Birnbaum family portrait, photograph, Nathan Birnbaum Collection, Nathan and Solomon Birnbaum Archives, Toronto. See also David Birnbaum, “Der Nosn un Shloyme Birnboym-arkhiv in Toronte [The Nathan and Solomon Birnbaum-Archive in Toronto],” *Afn shvel*, no. 344-345 (Spring/Summer 2009): 44. See comment on Birnbaum’s switch in dress from Western to Eastern clothes in Fishman, *Ideology, Society & Language*, 72-73.

lederhosen! As was the case for Nathan Birnbaum, for Eastern European Jews of the same period, wrangling with Jewish identity in this cultural mixing bowl had become part of the literary and artistic landscape.

Adding to the scholarship on Ostjuden in the German imagination,⁵⁵ I showcase the reverse phenomenon by which Eastern European Jews defined themselves vis-à-vis German Jews and the impact this had on German Jews themselves. Nineteenth-century Eastern European Jews clamoured towards the Haskalah, the German-Jewish enlightenment, in order to be—in a Yiddish word—*daytsh*. By the end of the century, the Jewish enlightenment and *Wissenschaft des Judentums* had successfully saturated much of Eastern Jewish life. One sign of the *Wissenschaft* movement's inroads are Jewish-led investigations into the demographics of Jewish Eastern Europe, which began in the 1880s. Some of these expeditions by cosmopolitan Eastern European Jews into shtetl life triggered Yiddish and Hebrew literary folklore collections. These stories quickly became the foundation for the Eastern European Jewish renaissance. In this chain of events, the legacy of German-Jewish cultural influence on Eastern Europe is readily apparent.

One can speak of a cultural *exchange* however by continuing along the historical continuum and seeing that this aggrandizement of the shtetl Jew by cosmopolitan Jews of Eastern Europe is the origin point for the romantic image of the Ostjude in German-Jewish literature. In part of my work, I trace the visual vocabulary of the German-Jewish renaissance, as centered on images of the idyllic Eastern Jew, back to these same cosmopolitan Jews who traveled westward to Vienna and Berlin and started publishing in the Zionist journals and publishing houses around 1900. This was a radical intervention into German-Jewish self-understanding only possible through transnational cultural exchange—in both directions.

⁵⁵ The subtitle to Steven Aschheim's work *Brothers and Strangers* is *The East European Jew in German and German Jewish Consciousness, 1800-1923*.

Gender and the Jewish Gaze

The visually-infused texts at the core of this dissertation include those by Sholem Aleichem, I. J. Singer, Sholem Asch, Arnold Zweig, and Alfred Döblin. These overwhelmingly male authors' observations of cultural superiority, inferiority, exoticism, and eroticism are put into conversation with other narrated moments of staring at the Jewish Other to speak to the importance of the gaze and the visual in the creation of a male Jewish subject. In the Orientalist gaze, the object of desire is usually understood to be Eastern women, but here bearded rabbis are the objects of the Jewish gaze. In the larger historical context, ideal Jewish types underpinned the German-Jewish renaissance at the beginning of the twentieth century. The medieval Sephardic Jew, the New Jew, the Muscle Jew, and the Eastern Jew all entered into the imagination of a generation of post-assimilated German Jews as ideals to strive toward. (See appendix D) From the *fin de siècle* into the interwar period, the cultural currency of these ideal Jewish types rose and fell according to the various ideological streams within German Jewry. The philosopher Franz Rosenzweig looked to the medieval Sephardic poet Yehuda HaLevi before becoming interested in the traditional Eastern European Jew. The intellectually itinerant Nathan Birnbaum also attached himself to the religious Eastern European Jew, becoming one in the process. Significantly, the images of Jewish authenticity were male—the bearded rabbi of Eastern Europe, the medieval Sephardic rabbinical scholar, the Muscle Jew.

These male role models, and the cultural Jewish renaissance that they helped structure, marginalized the space for Jewish women. Symptomatic of such marginalization within the Zionist-backed cultural reawakening was the fact that Bertha Pappenheim and Paula Buber, the wife of the philosopher Martin Buber, wrote under the male pseudonyms Paul Berthold and

Georg Monch, respectively. Pappenheim reflected on her marginalized position in her essay “The Jewish Woman” and sharply wrote that she failed to see a place for women in Zionism other than at the fundraising table.⁵⁶ Possibly as a result of such feelings, women who were active in the German-Jewish renaissance created their own alternatives to the ideal Jew. Bertha Pappenheim, Hannah Arendt, and Margarete Susman looked to historical German-Jewish women like Glikl von Hameln and Rahel Varnhagen.⁵⁷ Else Lasker-Schüler created an ambivalent Jewish-Muslim man, Prince Jussuf, as her orientalist alter-ego.

Pappenheim and Lasker-Schüler, two prominent women at this east-west crossing, looked away from Eastern Europe as a source of Jewish identification. Where Arnold Zweig and Franz Kafka saw authenticity and redemption in the East, Pappenheim saw Jewish prostitution and the trafficking of Jewish women. Likewise, Lasker-Schüler maintained the Middle East, not Eastern Europe, as the focal point of her literary and artistic Jewish gaze. Instead of dressing themselves in the clothing of traditional Eastern European Jews as did Nathan Birnbaum, Lasker-Schüler photographed herself as her imaginary Prince Jussuf of Thebes, and Pappenheim famously had a portrait made of herself dressed as the seventeenth-century German Jewess Glikl of Hameln. (See figures 0.9 and 0.10)

⁵⁶ Bertha Pappenheim and Paula Buber, the wife of the philosopher Martin Buber, wrote under male pseudonyms. Pappenheim wrote under the name Paul Berthold, Buber under the name Georg Monch. In reflecting on her marginalized position in her essay “The Jewish Woman,” Pappenheim sharply wrote that she failed to see a place for women in Zionism other than at the fundraising table. See Bertha Pappenheim, “Die Jüdische Frau,” in *Bertha Pappenheim (Anna O.): Literarische und Publizistische Texte*, ed. Lena Kugler and Albrecht Koschorke (Vienna: Turia + Kant, 2002 (1934)), 95.

⁵⁷ Hannah Arendt, *Rahel Varnhagen: Lebensgeschichte einer deutschen Jüdin aus der Romantik* (München: R. Piper, 1959); Margarete Susman, *Frauen der Romantik* (Jena: E. Diederichs, 1929).



Figures 0.9 and 0.10 *Left*, Else Lasker-Schüler dressed as her literary invention Prinz Jussuf von Theben, 1910. *Right*, Bertha Pappenheim dressed as the seventeenth-century Jewess Glikl of Hameln, 1925.

Respectively, Prince Jussuf of Thebes and Glikl of Hameln have been described as these two German Jews’ “alter ego”⁵⁸ and “ego ideal.”⁵⁹ In their creation of alternate Jewish ideals and alter egos, it seems that Jewish women were countering the male-dominated discourses that marginalized them. I am positioning this East-West Jewish gaze as a male gaze with the recognition that a full study of the women engaged with the topic will add to a future iteration of my research.⁶⁰

⁵⁸ Andrea Henneke-Weischer, *Poetisches Judentum: Die Bibel im Werk Else Lasker-Schülers*, Theologie und Literatur 14 (Mainz: Matthias Grünewald, 2003).

⁵⁹ Daniel Boyarin, *Unheroic Conduct: The Rise of Heterosexuality and the Invention of the Jewish Man* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1997), 351. See also Elizabeth Loentz, *Let Me Continue to Speak the Truth: Bertha Pappenheim as Author and Activist*, Monographs of the Hebrew Union College 34 (Cincinnati: Hebrew Union College Press, 2007), 221.

⁶⁰ German, Austrian, Polish, and Russian women actively contributed to the intercultural exchange at the heart of the European Jewish cultural awakening. From Klara Meisels, an actress in the traveling Yiddish theater, to Rosa Bendit, a nurse assigned in the East during WWI, women reflected on the foreign Jewish cultures they saw. Susanne Rueß, *Das Tagebuch der jüdischen Kriegskrankenschwester Rosa Bendit, 1914 bis 1917* (Stuttgart: Steiner, 2012).

Jewish Modernism

I seek to position this work as a contribution to our understanding of modernism.

Modernism, as opposed to its cousin modernity, seems to be an ambiguous, yet often employed category for analysis. This is even truer in Jewish Studies, where one cannot escape the conflation of Jews and the *Moderne*. This dissertation with its subtitle, “The Dialectics of German-Jewish and Yiddish Modernisms,” undoubtedly joins other contemporary books that connect Jews and modernism/modernity in their titles: *Mobile Modernity: Germans, Jews, Trains; Viennese Jewish Modernism; Die Jüdin Pallas Athena: Auch eine Theorie der Moderne; Betraying Spinoza: The Renegade Jew who gave us Modernity; Viennese Jewish Modernism: Freud, Hofmannsthal, Beer-Hofmann, and Schnitzler*.⁶¹ Such an array of books attests to the

Pauline Wengeroff and Clara Michelson were Eastern European Jewish women whose autoethnographic writings in German should be read alongside those of their male counterparts like Joseph Roth and Karl Emil Franzos. Clara Michelson, *Jüdisches Kind aus dem Osten* (Berlin: Philo, 1936), <http://www.archive.org/stream/claramichelson02reel02#page/n273/>; Pauline Wengeroff, *Memoirs of a Grandmother: Scenes from the Cultural History of the Jews of Russia in the Nineteenth Century*, trans. Shulamit S. Magnus, vol. 1 (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2010 (1908)); Joseph Roth, *Hiob: Roman eines einfachen Mannes*, 39th ed. (Cologne: Kiepenheuer & Witsch, 1999 (1930)); Karl Emil Franzos, *Aus Halb-Asien: Kulturbilder aus Galizien, Südrußland, der Bukowina und Rumänien*, 5th ed., 2 vols., vol. 1, Halb-Asien: Land und Leute des östlichen Europa (Stuttgart: J.G. Cotta, 1914 (1876)). The German-Jewish press and German translations of Y. L. Peretz featured the shtetl paintings of the Russian Esphir Yoselevitch. Such a project that examines women and their role in the exchange of Jewish glances would bring women into conversation with their male counterparts from across Europe to consider the intersectional aspects of Jewishness, sexuality, gender, and East/West identities. Women have been either absent from historiography on this topic, or only considered in their roles as the orientalized fantasies of German-Jewish men in such works as Arnold Zweig’s 1920 *The Face of East European Jewry*. See Aschheim, *Brothers and Strangers*; Kalmar and Penslar, eds., *Orientalism and the Jews*. It would also be useful in an analysis of the intersection between the discourses on the New Jew and the New Woman. See Shachar Pinsker, *Literary Passports: The Making of Modernist Hebrew Fiction in Europe* (Stanford, CA: Stanford UP, 2011), <http://site.ebrary.com/lib/umich/Doc?id=10459550>; Godela Weiss-Sussex, "Else Croner and die 'moderne Jüdin'," in *Not an Essence but a Positioning': German-Jewish Women Writers, 1900-1938*, ed. Andrea Hammel and Godela Weiss-Sussex (Munich: Martin Meidenbauer, 2009). For the term New Jew, see for example Hanni Mittelman, *Sammy Gronemann (1875-1952): Zionist, Schriftsteller und Satiriker in Deutschland und Palästina*, Campus Judaica 21 (Frankfurt: Campus, 2004), 47; Robert Jaffe, "Neujüdische Kunst," *Die Welt* 14, no. 3 (April 1901), <http://www.compactmemory.de/>.

⁶¹ Todd Samuel Presner, *Mobile Modernity: Germans, Jews, Trains* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2007); Barbara Hahn, *Die Jüdin Pallas Athene: Auch eine Theorie der Moderne* (Berlin: Berlin Verlag, 2002); Rebecca Goldstein, *Betraying Spinoza: The Renegade Jew Who Gave Us Modernity* (New York: Schocken, 2006); Abigail

many approaches to defining Jewish modernism. These can schematically be arranged along a spectrum. At one end is Steven Beller's approach, and more recently Abigail Gilman's, which verges on defining everything modernist as Jewish in origin.⁶² Scott Spector is at another extreme in his article "Modernism without Jews: A Counter-Historical Argument." Spector proposes that Jews and Modernism are terms that require decoupling—both in the parlance of anti-Semites and philo-Semites.⁶³ A middle-of-the-road approach is seen in Michael Brenner's work, which suggests that Jewish modernism encompasses those artists and authors who chose Jewish themes for their works cloaked in modernist form.⁶⁴

Marc Caplan has suggested a method of examining Jewish modernism by analyzing modernism "on its own terms, using her own terms." This approach might prove confusing exactly because Jewish thinkers were torn about the subject of the *Moderne*. One can readily see the valences of the term *modern* in Jewish publications around 1900, for example among Martin Buber and his contemporary Jews. The journal *Ost und West*, during its day "the most important mouthpiece of the cultural Zionists,"⁶⁵ bore a subtitle advertising the magazine as the monthly periodical for "modern Jewry." Attesting to its innovativeness, the journal used the latest technology in the reproduction of images, showcased the popular art movement Jugendstil, and included literary reviews of works now associated with modernism. In the first issue of *Ost und West*, the word *modern* appears once in the lead article and appears four times in the two pages

Gilman, *Viennese Jewish Modernism: Freud, Hofmannsthal, Beer-Hofmann, and Schnitzler* (University Park, PA: Pennsylvania State UP, 2009).

⁶² Steven Beller, *Vienna and the Jews, 1867-1938: A Cultural History* (Cambridge, MA: Cambridge University Press, 1989); Gilman, *Viennese Jewish Modernism*, 19.

⁶³ Scott Spector, "Modernism without Jews: A Counter-Historical Argument," *Modernism / modernity* 13, no. 4 (2006).

⁶⁴ Brenner, *Renaissance of Jewish Culture*.

⁶⁵ Bertz, "Jewish Renaissance-Jewish Modernism," 170-171.

of the next article, Martin Buber's famous essay "Jüdische Renaissance."⁶⁶ This journal dedicated to making the linkage between Eastern and Western Jewry explicit even in its title ostensibly aligned itself with *die Moderne*. However, the magazine's stated views on the *Moderne* tells a different story, one which includes traces of an anti-*Moderne* position with parallels found in the essay "Modern" by the anti-Semitic Richard Wagner.⁶⁷ In most instances in this journal and elsewhere, the *Moderne* was used as a negative term or one employed as signifying the root cause of problems in the Jewish community.⁶⁸ In favor of the *Moderne*, Buber was however a strong minority opinion, who had his supporters.⁶⁹ As evidence of this ambivalent message about the *Moderne* as used by German Jews, *Ost und West* dropped its subtitle "Illustrierte Monatsschrift für *modernes* Judentum" after a few years and changed it to "Illustrierte Monatsschrift für das *gesamte* Judentum."⁷⁰

⁶⁶ "die Entwicklung des modernen Kunstgewerbes, das Hineintragen der Schönheitslinie in das Thun und Erleben des Alltags..."

⁶⁷ Richard Wagner, "Modern," in *Gesammelte Schriften und Dichtungen*, 3rd ed., vol. 9, 54-60 (Leipzig: E. W. Fritsch, 1898 (1878)).

⁶⁸ Birnbaum, *Die Jüdische Moderne*, 25, 26, 38; O. H., "Review of Max Kaufmann's 'Heine's Charakter und die moderne Seele'," *Die Welt* 6, no. 7 (1902): 10-11, <http://www.compactmemory.de/>; Paul Lindau, "Charakteristik der jüdischen 'Modernen'," *Die Welt* 6, no. 45 (1902): 8, <http://www.compactmemory.de/>; Else Croner, *Die moderne Jüdin* (Berlin: Juncker, 1913), <http://sammlungen.ub.uni-frankfurt.de/freimann/content/titleinfo/424092>.

⁶⁹ Buber writes about seeing all around him the Culture of Beauty of which modern art is a part and which his Renaissance must cultivate. Martin Buber, "Jüdische Renaissance," *Ost und West* 1, no. 1 (January 1901), <http://www.compactmemory.de/>. See A. Coralnik, "Das jüdische Kulturproblem und die Moderne," *Ost und West*, no. 5 (1904): 289-306, <http://www.compactmemory.de/>. After an analysis of the *Moderne*, the writer comes to the conclusion "dann müssen wir die Frage: 'Judentum versus Moderne' mit einem entschiedenen Nein beantworten. Denn das Judentum ist gerade mehr als alle anderen Kulturen befähigt, die Moderne in sich aufzunehmen..." See also Ludwig Klausner, "Moderner Geist im alten Judentum," *Ost und West* 6, no. 7 (1906): 458, <http://www.compactmemory.de/>.

⁷⁰ "Illustrated Monthly Periodical for Modern Jews"; "Illustrated Monthly Periodical for All Jews." In the first few pages of *Ost und West*, the problem of how to position Jews in relation to the *Moderne* is readily apparent. The main article locates the Jew needing instruction within the *Moderne*, where Buber sees the *Moderne* largely as a place of desire where the new language will be spoken and in which the Jewish Renaissance will claim a space building on the awakening world of art. It is striking to note that the one clear voice in favor of the *Moderne*, Martin Buber, had ceased to write for the journal in 1905, just over a year before the title was changed in January 1907. The use of terms related to the *Moderne* among the cultural Zionists, like *Bewußtsein* and *Renaissance*, also demonstrate the divergent opinions of the time in using the word "modern" with reference to Jewish identity formation. Buber, "Jüdische Renaissance.," "Ost und West," *Ost und West* 1, no. 1 (1901); Birnbaum, *Die Jüdische Moderne: Vortrag gehalten im akademischen Vereine "Kadimah" in Wien*, 30; Nathan Birnbaum, [Mathias Acher, pseud.], "Die jüdische Renaissance Bewegung," *Ost und West* 2, no. 9 (September 1902), <http://www.compactmemory.de/>. Thomas Mann conveniently wrote about Jews, the *Moderne*, and *Bewußtsein*. "...Modernität ist Bewußtheit. Man

Shachar Pinsker seeks to save the concepts of *Jewish modernism* and *modernism* by pointing to the changes in Eastern European Jewish society, “which coincided with the enormous upheavals that modernism both responded to and created.”⁷¹ As Pinsker writes, the term *modernism* generally and confusingly describes a period, a style, and various trends, some of which contested each other. Yet Pinsker sees the term *modernism* useful in exactly its inclusiveness of various efforts that sought to reflect and respond to “the numerous and deep wounds of modernity.” In turn, he writes that Hebrew modernism, the focus of his study, is the “version of modernism inflected by a set of distinctly Jewish concerns,” including the transformation of Jewish society’s “geography, modes of living, languages, professions, and consciousness.”⁷² Such a definition gets away from the psychological notion of Jewish modernism as somehow linked to innate Jewish alterity and positions it within a multi-layered historical framework. Pinsker’s definition of Jewish modernism can help situate Jews and modernism together comfortably even in the work of Scott Spector, who otherwise argues for the separation of Jewishness from modernism.⁷³ Like Pinsker, Spector’s book *Prague Territories: National Conflict and Cultural Innovation in Franz Kafka’s fin de siècle* centers on these same markers of geography, languages, and professions in Kafka’s Prague circle. Like Pinsker, I see the term *Jewish modernism* useful, in a tempered fashion, to describe the works at the heart of this dissertation with similar concerns about the transformation of Jewish society across Central

muss wissen, was man ist. Man hat das Prinzip zur Geltung zu bringen, das man darstellt. Ist man ein Jude, so wird man heut die Echtheit der Wirkung zu beeinträchtigen fürchten, indem man darauf bestände, den Hellenen zu spielen. Ist man eine Frau, so sollte man sich heut kein männliches Pseudonym mehr zulegen und aus Büchern nicht mit einer Bassstimme reden... Das bewußte und betonte Judentum ist in eben dem Sinne modern, wie die bewusst betonte Weiblichkeit. See Thomas Mann. “*Der Tag*, No. 79, 1904. Cited in Thomas Mann, “Modernität ist Bewußtheit,” *Ost und West* 4, no. 2 (1904): 144, <http://www.compactmemory.de/>.

⁷¹ Pinsker, *Literary Passports*, 8-9.

⁷² *Ibid.*, 10.

⁷³ See above Spector, “Modernism without Jews.”

and Eastern Europe. Rupture, mobility, and languages in contact are central to my understanding of transnational Jewish modernism.

Marc Caplan echoes Pinsker when he describes modernism as “not just as an aesthetic taxonomy, but the reaction to a historical process manifesting itself in structural and rhetorical terms.”⁷⁴ Pinsker’s and Caplan’s approach reflects my own approach to finding a balance in the various theses about Jewish modernism. In selecting authors and texts, I do address representatives of modernism according to the “aesthetic taxonomy” of commonly understood modernist movements like Jugendstil and Expressionism with E. M. Lilien, Alfred Döblin, and Y. L. Peretz. But I also consider as modernist writers those like Karl Emil Franzos and Sholem Aleichem, whose works do not ascribe to more formal definitions of modernism, and yet can be strongly positioned within the scope of modernism based on this other aspect of Jewish modernism—a reaction to a historical process of upheaval in Jewish geography and life more broadly.

Transnationalism

Orientalism, postcolonial theory, exile, and minority literature are common variables in German studies today. The more recent concept of transnationalism forcefully positions these existing studies, tools, and discourses into various points of intersection. I find the discourse on transnationalism useful in its explicit foregrounding of similar questions that undergird many studies already—questions of borders, migration, translation, and cultural exchange. I will bring

⁷⁴ Marc Caplan, "Review of Schachter, Allison, *Diasporic Modernisms: Hebrew and Yiddish Literature in the Twentieth Century*," *H-Judaic, H-Net Reviews* (November 2012), <https://www.h-net.org/reviews/showrev.php?id=35158>.

some secondary sources that have helped frame my thoughts on transnationalism while discussing a couple brief examples from my dissertation that exhibit these intersections.

German-Jewish modernism as a subset of German modernism is unthinkable without the simultaneous transnational influences brought about with its multiple connections to Eastern European Jewish modernism. I situate my work within the developments of Jewish literary studies that theorize a multilingual, interdependent Jewish modernism. My project contributes to a fuller discussion of a transnational European Jewish renaissance. Apparent from the geographically-determined titles of works such as Michael Brenner's *The Renaissance of Jewish Culture in Weimar Germany* and Ken Moss's *Jewish Renaissance in the Russian Revolution*, scholarship needs to start discussing the European Jewish cultural renaissance and the ties that bound the neighboring, contemporary Jewish groups.⁷⁵ These two manuscripts provide excellent examples for both the influence of transnationalism and the work that still needs to be done. On the one hand, both authors do a commendable job at examining the role of migration and global perspectives in their studies on the vast amounts of Jewish cultural production in the 1910s and 1920s. Brenner focuses on the reception of Eastern European Jews in the German-Jewish renaissance, and Moss offers literary readings of Jewish works in Russian, Hebrew, and Yiddish across Eastern Europe. Certainly these works are already engaging in transnational studies, yet one is left with the question of how these two neighboring, contemporary "Jewish renaissances"—as their titles intimate—are related. The relationship between major figures of both Jewish renaissance movements, for example Martin Buber and Achad Haam, is strangely not rigorously interrogated in either text. More than just benefiting the field of Jewish studies, a transnational study that explicitly focuses on border crossing and cultural pollination brings these

⁷⁵ Brenner, *Renaissance of Jewish Culture*; Kenneth B. Moss, *Jewish Renaissance in the Russian Revolution* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2009).

relationships into relief can demonstrate the benefit, if not necessity, for German studies (among other regional studies) to broaden its own scope beyond national boundaries. Though much research has focused on distinct geographic-national centers, my project considers the porous nature of these regions and their cultural contacts.

Cultural exchange is a metaphor at the heart of my dissertation. Said's *Orientalism* and postcolonial studies have informed my analysis of Jews as a minority culture within Germany and the power relationship between German Jews and Eastern European Jews. Mary Louise Pratt's article *Arts in the Contact Zone*, which later became part of her book *Imperial Eyes: Travel Writing and Transculturation*, has provided me with an example of how to discuss cultural exchange in art and literature.⁷⁶ Through her example of a letter written by a native Incan in Spanish to a Spanish king, she demonstrates the engagement of those colonized with the discourse of the colonizer. She examines elements of the Spanish text and artwork as written by the colonized subject to show an Incan idiom at work even while the text otherwise mirrors the representation of native Incans by the Spanish rulers. Her approach is useful in my work, arguably not a postcolonial context⁷⁷, in examining the back and forth exchange between German-Jewish and Yiddish literatures. I use her comparatist methods of bilingual sources to provocatively show affinities between Yiddish literature and the writing of Karl Emil Franzos, a self-hating Eastern European Jew who wrote in German on the "half-Asian Jews" of his hometown. Franzos, who despised the "corrupted" language of Yiddish, would not have appreciated this comparison, but I can focus on some literary clues to position him well within

⁷⁶ Mary Louise Pratt, "Arts of the Contact Zone," *Profession 91*, 33-40; Mary Louise Pratt, *Imperial Eyes: Travel Writing and Transculturation* (London: Routledge, 1992).

⁷⁷ In the eighteenth century, Jews living in Germany were however referred to as constituting "colonies." See David Friedländer, *Akten-Stücke, die Reform der Jüdischen Kolonien in den Preußischen Staaten betreffend* (Berlin: Vossische Buchhandlung, 1793). See also Leo W. Riegert, Jr., "Subjects and Agents of Empire: German Jews in Post-Colonial Perspective," *The German Quarterly* 82, no. 3 (Summer 2009): 336-355.

his Eastern European milieu. In describing one of his main character's ambitions to learn German as a Yiddish speaker, for example, Franzos uses a cultural reference point native to Eastern European Jews. To learn German literature in secret, his character goes to the outside of the town, to the top of a mountain, in the ruins of a castle. Comparing this scene to one in a work by Y. L. Peretz, a well-known Yiddish author of the same time, we also find a reference to one of Peretz's characters who goes to the edge of the town, to the ruins, to have an illicit relationship with a German girl. This unique way of describing Germanization—in secret, at the outskirts of town, in the ruins—is one example by which Pratt's work helps me analyze cultural codes as carried across literary bodies via works in the "contact zone."

Mobility is another important factor in my understanding of Jewish modernism. Travel literature and ethnography are two genres that constitute much of the literary sources that I examine. As Mary Pratt lays out the questions central to her book on European colonial efforts in *Imperial Eyes*, "How has travel and exploration writing *produced* 'the rest of the world' for European readerships at particular points in Europe's expansionist trajectory? How has it produced Europe's differentiated conceptions of itself in relation to something it became possible to call 'the rest of the world'?"⁷⁸ As with the gaze, travel literature demonstrates the author's reflections of difference. In the context of this work, travel literature offers a unique form of expression for the early twentieth-century European Jew. Repositioning the Jewish author's interminable "in-between" status, travel creates a liminal zone between "here" and "there" in which the author can engage and re-imagine his social status as an outsider by affiliating with other Jewish groups or, alternatively, distancing oneself from them and reaffirming one's non-Jewish identity. Specific to the modernist travel literature of Yiddish culture, there is distinct subversion of traditional motifs of travel, which had been canonically imbued with religious

⁷⁸ Mary Louise Pratt, *Imperial Eyes: Travel Writing and Transculturation* (London: Routledge, 1992).

significance—e.g., from traveling to the Land of Israel to the wanderings of great rabbis in disguise to various villages undetected.⁷⁹

Geoffrey Grossman and Jack Wertheimer offer great examples of research into the discourse around Yiddish in the German sphere and a socio-historical account of Eastern European Jewish immigrants in Germany, respectively.⁸⁰ Both of these authors, however, concentrate on the nineteenth century. In the realm of Yiddish scholarship, Dan Miron's *The Image of the Shtetl* is useful for its deconstruction of Yiddish literary metaphors and, not incidentally, his brief analysis of the *daytsh* in Yiddish literature as an unwelcome visitor to the shtetl as confrontation of modernity and traditional shtetl life.⁸¹ This dissertation can thus enter into this cohort of works with its transnational approach to highlight the complementary, yet disjointed, representations of the Jewish Other in multiple languages.

This study is more than a comparison of representations across cultures. It epistemologically seeks to investigate those who were authoring visual and literary creations and to bring out those authors who migrated across borders and languages to intervene in the dominant discourse about the Jewish Other. This dissertation thus reconsiders the role of Eastern European Jews in the culture of Jewish German-speaking Europe. It positions them as agents of the knowledge garnered about themselves and as active participants in looking, on their own terms, abroad at other Jews. At the nexus of history, literary analysis, and visual culture, the final analysis will show that many Eastern European Jews in the German sphere and at least one German Jew in the Yiddish sphere were representing the Jews of their homelands as a means of

⁷⁹ Anita Norich, *The Homeless Imagination in the Fiction of Israel Joshua Singer* (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 1991).

⁸⁰ Jeffrey A. Grossman, *The Discourse on Yiddish in Germany from the Enlightenment to the Second Empire* (Rochester, NY: Camden House, 2000), 258.; Jack Wertheimer, *Unwelcome Strangers: East European Jews in Imperial Germany* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1987), 275.

⁸¹ Dan Miron, *The Image of the Shtetl and Other Studies of Modern Jewish Literary Imagination* (Syracuse, NY: Syracuse University Press, 2000), 26ff.

intervening in the respective discourses on the Jewish Other. In this light, the definition of an Eastern European Jew (an Ostjude) becomes unstable, thus blurring the line between Eastern and Western European Jewry and demonstrating the need to examine German-Jewish and Yiddish modernist periods together.

Chapter Outline

This study is arranged into three parts to reflect my interrogation of the dialectic nature of European Jewish modernism. Part I, *Jewish Gazes from Afar*, begins with the parallels between the two literatures as the two populations viewed each other from a distance. Chapter 1 lays the groundwork in arguing that a key figure in the German-Jewish renaissance, the literary image of the foreign Eastern European Jew must be understood in the broader Jewish context of contemporary Europe. I compare the representation of the religious Ostjude in German-Jewish literature to that of the assimilated *daytsh* in Yiddish literature to show parallels in mythic imagery that accompanied portrayals of the Jewish Other. I examine how the valence of German Jew in Yiddish literature can vary in its description from the level of holiness as a prophet to the depths of hell as the devil. This supernatural imagery maps onto the apotheosis of the Eastern Jew in German literature.

Chapter 2 hones in on Alfred Döblin and Y. L. Peretz as two authors who reflected on their Jewish identities through representing foreign Jewish archetypes. I show the mutual construction of identity based on a portrayal of foreign Jews in both German-Jewish and Yiddish literatures. Through their cross-continental gazes, Döblin and Peretz came to position their narrated selves alongside their respective Jewish others. Rather than othering their Jewish counterparts as in previous generations of writers, pieces in the modernist canons, like Alfred

Döblin's *Berlin Alexanderplatz* and Y. L. Peretz's "Monish," show that the authors were internalizing these foreign differences.

Moving beyond the parallels and the distant gazes across the European continent, part II turns to cultural exchanges. I highlight the integral bonds that joined the two groups as Eastern European Jews migrated en masse into the German-speaking metropolises. Chapter 3 provides a critical intervention in the historiography on the German-Jewish idealization of Eastern European Jewry. I argue that immigrant Eastern European Jews living in fin de siècle Germany and Austria transferred the Yiddish folklorist trend of portraying a romanticized shtetl life into German-Jewish literature and art. I use the *ex libris*, or bookplate, as a case study in cultural transfer to show how immigrants marked their ownership of books with romantic images of the bearded shtetl Jew and then passed these images on to German Jews for their use. This self-fashioning by immigrant Eastern European Jews is critical in understanding the interwoven nature of Jewish modernism.

Chapter 4 examines the literary genre of autoethnography as written by immigrants to reflect on their intercultural positions. Karl Emil Franzos and Joseph Roth, immigrant Eastern European authors to Vienna and Berlin, garnered authoritative voices on East European Jewish life through their German writings. Insights from postcolonial studies into autoethnography as a cultural product from within the "contact zone" inform this discussion of cultures in dialogue. Ultimately, immigrant engagement with German-Jewish hegemonic discourses on Ostjuden led to a confluence of Yiddish and German-Jewish modes of representing shtetl life in the autoethnographic works.

Part III positions Nathan Birnbaum as the embodiment of this dialectic tension. The final inquiry in chapter 5 uses the Viennese-born Nathan Birnbaum as a linchpin in the

interpenetration of Eastern and Western Jewry. A major Jewish thinker, the author of *Die jüdische Moderne*, and activist across the spectrum of Jewish politics (Zionism, Diasporism, Yiddishism, and Orthodoxy), Birnbaum was the most significant figure to mediate between the two populations in both German and Yiddish. He went against the tide of immigration from the East to learn Yiddish and publish in Yiddish newspapers across Eastern Europe. In Yiddish, he wrote about the assimilants to the West. In German, he wrote about the authentic Jews to the East. Birnbaum's ostensible eccentricities and assumption of an Ostjude persona in language, dress, and religious observance are emblematic of the ways in which the two modernist movements were co-constitutive.

PART I
Jewish Gazes from Afar

CHAPTER 1

Fantastic Jews: Literary Representations of the Jewish Other

Steven Aschheim ends his work *Brothers and Strangers: The East European Jew in German and German Jewish Consciousness, 1800-1923* by proposing future work on “the inverted image.” In a discussion of a few examples from Hebrew literature, he suggests the productive comparison of the ways in which the Eastern Jews were portrayed by German Jews to how the German Jew was portrayed in Eastern Europe. In this chapter, I take up Aschheim’s call, but take different material, namely Yiddish literature as opposed to Hebrew literature, and come to different conclusions than his hypotheses would intimate. Though the East-West directional gazes stand in opposition to each other, the inter-Jewish literary representations from across Europe are not simply “inverted images of one another.”¹ Obviously, the stereotypical poor, religious Ostjude in German literature is the counterpart to the rich, assimilated Westjude in Yiddish literature. But past this, in many ways, the representations and their function paralleled each other.

I explore the literary representations of Eastern European and German Jews at the narrated point of contact, both fictional and real. As stated in the introduction, the necessity of examining these two groups stems from the mutually determined relationship between Central and Eastern European Jews. This bond, which did not exist to the same extent between Central European Jews and Jews further to the west, or between Eastern European Jews and Jews further

¹ Aschheim, *Brothers and Strangers*, 249.

to the east, structured the ways in which these individuals came to understand the Jewish self. The following compares how Jewish authors in German and Yiddish literatures were representing other Jews from across the East-West European divide between 1886 and 1926. I focus on the parallels between the two literatures and conclude that despite the geographical, political, cultural, and literary differences, there were similar tropes common to each literary corpus, including the utilization of the fantastic in thematizing a foreign Jewish presence encroaching upon home turf. Furthermore, this parallel use of the fantastic or supernatural to portray Jewish difference speaks to the parallel function of these representations. Ultimately these similarities can contribute to an understanding of broader European Jewish modernism in that the representation of different Jews came to be an integral component of Jewish identity formation on the part of the individual writers. Both German-Jewish and Yiddish authors of this period positioned their narrated selves alongside fantastic stereotypes of foreign Jews. Authors were ironically othering foreign Jews to come closer to them.

The two corpuses intersect in the first decade of the twentieth century with Martin Buber's and Yitskhok Leybush Peretz's collections of Jewish folktales (1906 and 1908 respectively); however, it is at this point the two bodies diverge in opposite chronological directions. The Yiddish literary modernist movement essentially marks an end to nineteenth century mythical/fearful representations of the German Jew around the time Peretz (1852 – 1915) starts publishing his *Folksimlekhe geshikhtn* collection.² The German-Jewish Renaissance, however, uses Buber's serialized collection of Chassidic tales starting in 1906 as its launching point for mythmaking of the Ostjude.³ Buber (1878 – 1965) ushered in the strong German-Jewish emphasis on reclaiming East European Jewish authenticity in order to heal German-

² Peretz starts editing the collection in 1903. See Ruth R. Wisse, *I.L. Peretz and the Making of Modern Jewish Culture* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1991), 83.

³ Buber, *Die Geschichten des Rabbi Nachman*.

Jewish ill with his 1901 essay “Jüdische Renaissance” as well as subsequent series of books later to be known as *Die Erzählungen der Chassidim*.⁴ Building on the Zionist platform of Jewish dissimulation, his writings expanded the number of ethnographic expeditions by German-Jewish authors into Eastern Europe and spawned the widespread discovery, re-fashioning, making, and marketing of *ostjüdisch* folklore and traditional Jewish life. On the other side of Europe, the figure of the *daytsh* (a multivalent term generally used to refer to the assimilated German-speaking Jew) had long been a recognizable character in Yiddish literature.⁵ Thus by the turn of the twentieth century, the authors under focus here were following a long legacy of previous portrayals of Jewish difference.

In this chapter, the Yiddish authors Sholem Aleichem and Y. L. Peretz will be put into conversation with the German-Jewish authors Franz Kafka and Arnold Zweig. These authors were, relatively speaking, “pedigree” Yiddish and German-Jewish authors. Unlike in the later chapters where I discuss authors and artists who crossed borders to affect Jewish representation in non-native languages (e.g., E. M. Lilien and Nathan Birnbaum), these authors wrote for a “home” audience in their native languages.

⁴ Buber’s call for regeneration and rebirth in “Jüdische Renaissance” was ostensibly used to justify a look into Chassidism as a source of inspiration. See however the discussion here in chapter 4. In this foundational essay that sets off the Jewish Renaissance, Buber intriguingly writes disparagingly of the Chassidic ideology as one of the *sicknesses* of the Diasporic Jewish people—along with “chuzpe”: “das Lebensgefühl [des jüdischen Volkes während des Exils]...verirrte sich in krankhafte Erscheinungen, wie Chuzpe und Chassidismus.” Buber, “Jüdische Renaissance,” 10. Itta Shedletzky sees Buber’s anti-Chassidic stance in his 1906 book as well. This helps to situate the novelty of the Eastern European myth, considering that Buber himself was reluctant to position himself alongside Eastern European Jews in the texts that supposedly initiate this movement. See Itta Shedletzky, “Ost und West in der deutsch-jüdischen Literatur von Heinrich Heine bis Joseph Roth,” in *Von Franzos zu Canetti*, ed. Mark H. Gelber, Hans Otto Horsch, and Sigurd Paul Scheichl, *Conditio Judaica* 14 (Tübingen: Max Niemeyer, 1996), 191. ⁵ See Israel Bartal, “The Image of Germany and German Jewry in Eastern European Jewish Society During the 19th Century,” in *Danzig, Between East and West: Aspects of Modern Jewish History*, ed. Isadore Twersky, Center for Jewish Studies Harvard Judaic Texts and Studies 4 (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1985). Jeffrey Grossman indicates a work published in 1788 as one of the earliest works from a “German Jew” about Eastern European Jews. Even though Shlomo Berger’s work on Abraham Levie pushes this date back a bit, the two Jewish groups started to have independent identities at around the same time and the two inverse literary images ran parallel to each other from this point until the end of the nineteenth century. Grossman, *Discourse on Yiddish*, 88; Berger, *Travels among Jews and Gentiles: Abraham Levie’s Travelogue, Amsterdam 1764*, 70-71.

I will begin with the Yiddish representations of German Jews, deferring to the less-examined side of the discussion. The chapter opens with an etymological analysis of the ambivalent, multifunctional employment of the term *daytsh*. From there, I compare the Yiddish modernist texts centering on the *daytsh* with this etymological analysis. I come to some generalizations about the fantastic representations of the German Jew before comparing them with the German texts. Brief mention of some earlier representations in the two literatures will reveal that the modernist authors of both canons were inherently responding to fear of the “Jewish Other,” a term used here in reference to the foreign Jew from the respective standpoints of the German-Jewish and Yiddish authors. A few literary examples from the German-Jewish renaissance illustrate the ways the fantastic played a role here in the representation of the Ostjude. My main argument is that the similarities in these cross-directional Jewish representations, namely the ironic employment of fantastical/mythic imagery as a means of implicitly confronting fear in previous portrayals, can contribute to a cross-cultural understanding of one of the underpinnings of Jewish modernism, in which self-definition *through* the Jewish Other became central.

The *daytsh* in Yiddish Literature

The *daytsh* as Non-Jew

This section introduces the ambivalence of the term *daytsh* through a short etymological survey of the word, followed by an analysis of how this ambivalence was reflected in literature. Dan Miron writes the almost singular treatment of the *daytsh* in Yiddish scholarship in *Image of a Shtetl*. He positions the *daytsh* within a constellation of characters in Yiddish literature who are

unexpected visitors to the Jewish shtetl.⁶ These characters—the daytsh, the prodigal son, and the Jewish emissary from the Holy Land—upset the fabric of the literary shtetl. Miron lays the groundwork for later scholars and translators, writing that the daytsh is “a Jew from western Europe, usually from Germany, emancipated, Europeanized, and always meticulously dressed according to current bourgeois fashions.”⁷ I want to focus here on the deeper ambivalence that underpins the employment of the term—namely on the simple definition of *daytsh* as a German, inclusive of non-Jews. This interplay of meanings lies at the center of much of Yiddish literature on the daytsh.

A simple search in a Yiddish dictionary intriguingly yields no definition that *daytsh* means German Jew as Miron and others commonly understand the literary character.⁸ The dictionary entry with the closest meaning to “German Jew” is the similar word *daytshun*.⁹ Nachum Stutchkoff’s Yiddish thesaurus, however, helps substantiate that the word *daytsh* as a noun can refer to a Jewish or a non-Jewish German. In 1950 YIVO (The Yiddish Institute for Jewish Research), published a 933-page Yiddish thesaurus compiled from 141 previous dictionaries, textbooks, and encyclopedias between 1876 and 1947. The majority of these

⁶ Dan Miron, *The Image of the Shtetl and Other Studies of Modern Jewish Literary Imagination* (Syracuse, NY: Syracuse University Press, 2000). For a concise version of his argument, see Dan Miron, “The Literary Image of the Shtetl,” *Jewish Social Studies* (Spring 1995).

⁷ Miron, *The Image of the Shtetl*, 26.

⁸ No dictionary that I have found, be it Yiddish-English, Yiddish-Hebrew, or Yiddish-German, had “German Jew” as a definition of *daytsh*. I am curious, then, whether this is a case where Stutchkoff added in his own entry rather than compiling it from a pre-existing dictionary. Again, that *daytsh* is not clearly defined on the “formal” level of dictionaries is not to say that this word did not exist, as will be amply shown in this chapter. In 1937, for example, a Yiddish-American edition of Sholem Aleichem’s children’s story “The Pen-Knife” glosses certain phrases from the text and gives a definition for *daytsh* as: “Meaning here, a Jew who goes around dressed in a blazer and not in a long frock that reaches the knees. A ‘daytsh’ shaves his beard and does not act like the religious Jews.” See Sholem Aleichem, *Dos meserl: Gekirtst un mit fartaytshungen tsum sof fun yeder kapitel* [The Pen-Knife: Shortened and with Translations at the End of Every Chapter] (New York: Ferlag Kinder-ring of the Educational Committee of the Workmen’s Circle, 1937 (1886)), 15, <http://archive.org/details/nybc210445>. The question remains, if the word was so understood or prevalent in Yiddish literature as I aver here, why was it not in a pre-WWII dictionary?

⁹ The term *daytshun* (דײַטשון) is listed as meaning “1) a German Jew (contemptuously) and 2) moderner [sic!].” Alexander Harkavy, *Yiddish-English-Hebrew Dictionary*, Reprint of 2nd enlarged ed. (New York: Schocken, 1988 (1928)), 170. In the sense of “German Jew,” the specific term *daytsh* is not present in Harkavy’s, and even *daytshun* is missing from earlier editions of his dictionary. See Alexander Harkavy, *Complete English-Yiddish Dictionary*, 6th ed. (New York: Hebrew Publishing, 1891).

sources were published in the 1920s and '30s. Unlike a typical English thesaurus in which synonyms are listed for individual words, this thesaurus is arranged by broad topics, such as “being,” “freedom,” “day,” and “blue.” It thus provides not only direct synonyms, but also words loosely associated with the key topics. Locating the word *daytsh* here can assist in determining its valences.

Daytsh is listed under four topics: “language,”¹⁰ “clothing,”¹¹ “non-Jew,”¹² and “disbelief, heresy, conversion.”¹³ The latter categories in which *daytsh* is found, “non-Jew” and “disbelief, heresy, conversion,” can serve to triangulate the specific Jewishness of the fuzzy term. Under “disbelief, heresy, conversion” are listed the words *daytsh*, *daytshuk*, *daytshun*, *daytshure*, *daytsh-milokh*, *berliner*, and *berlintshik*. The word *daytsh* as connected with Jewish apostasy/heresy etymologically founds the notion that a *daytsh* is a German Jew, since it would make little sense for a gentile German to be a symbol of Jewish religious heresy.¹⁴ As noted above, Harkavy’s dictionary expressly lists the term *datyshun*, found here in conjunction with *daytsh*, as meaning “German Jew.”¹⁵ Furthermore, the terms *berliner* and *berlintshik* directly associate the city Berlin with the *daytsh*—an allusion to Berlin’s role as a hotspot of the Jewish enlightenment and reform. On the one hand, Stutchkoff’s thesaurus confirms that *daytsh* was a Jewish descriptor.

The topic “Non-Jew” leads to my larger point about the ambivalence of the term, as it was sometimes used simultaneously to mean a Jewish *and* a non-Jewish German. That *daytsh* is found under the category “Non-Jew” might merely confirm that it refers to a German national,

¹⁰ Nahum Stutchkoff, *Der oytser fun der yidisher shprakh* [Thesaurus of the Yiddish Language], ed. Max Weinreich (New York: YIVO, 1950), 348.

¹¹ *Ibid.*, 579.

¹² *Ibid.*, 168.

¹³ *Ibid.*, 713.

¹⁴ The terms for apostasy and heresy, *apikorsis* and *shmad*, are used in Yiddish exclusively in Jewish contexts.

¹⁵ Harkavy, *Yiddish-English-Hebrew Dictionary*, 170.

not necessarily a Jewish one. Other nationalities are also listed here—for example, Russian, Pole, and Latvian.¹⁶ However, one word immediately juxtaposed with *daytsh* sheds light on how the meaning here actually pertains to a German Jew, namely the word *yeke*. *Yeke* is today a common term for German Jews, possibly arising out of Palestine in the mid-1930s.¹⁷ That the word is found under “Non-Jew” thus poses a problem. Though one could explain the placement of *daytsh* under “Non-Jew” with the strict definition of a German national—not necessarily of Jewish origin—one cannot explain the placement of *yeke* this way. Limor Shifman and Elihu Katz’s review of *yeke* jokes in pre-Holocaust Europe brings out this connection when they write about the interplay between *yekes* and non-Jews:

Many jokes about gentiles and *Yekkes* are almost identical. For instance, the joke about the *Yekke* who cannot understand humor and therefore needs to hear every joke several times is told in almost exactly the same way about gentiles. ... This substitution of

¹⁶ Mordkhe Shaechter, in contrast to Dan Miron, actually labels this non-Jewish national definition as the only suitable one for *daytsh*. This could be a reflection of Yiddish usage in Shaechter’s own time, namely post-war, rather than a reflection of the historical usage. But it is interesting that Shaechter goes to great lengths to give a detailed chart of which national terms could be used to refer specifically to Jews versus non-Jews of various European countries. Here he notably ascribes *daytsh* and *daytshke* (to be discussed below) as non-Jewish referents. Shaechter prescriptively states that *daytsher yid* is the only way to refer to a German Jew. (For contrast, further examples he lists are *rusisher* versus *rus* and *poylisher* versus *poliak* for the Jewish versus non-Jewish names of Russians and Poles respectively.) This again shows at least the historical specificity of this term *daytsh*, if not also the need to discuss the linguistic usage of the word in detail here. Mordkhe Schaechter, *Yiddish II: A Textbook for Intermediate Courses*, ed. Alan Astro (Philadelphia: Institute for the Study of Human Issues, 1986), 84.

¹⁷ Limor Shifman and Elihu Katz, "Just Call Me Adonai": A Case Study of Ethnic Humor and Immigrant Assimilation," *American Sociological Review* 70, no. 5 (Oct. 2005), <http://www.jstor.org/stable/4145362>. It is difficult to find a solid source for this assertion, but some supporting indications are given here: Sammy Gronemann writes an autobiography in 1946 from Israel entitled *Memories of a Yekke*. See Sammy Gronemann, *Zikhronot shel Yekke* [Memories of a Yekke] (Tel Aviv: Am oved, 1946). Furthermore, Karl Emil Franzos writes over several books in the 1890s about the term *Deutsch* being used by Eastern European Jews to describe westernized Jews, but he never uses the term *yeke*. See for example Karl Emil Franzos, *Leib Weihnachtskuchen und sein Kind: Erzählung*, 2nd ed. (Berlin: Concordia deutsche Verlags-Anstalt, 1896), 152, 263.; Karl Emil Franzos, *Der Pojaz: Eine Geschichte aus dem Osten*, 3rd ed. (Stuttgart: J. G. Cotta, 1905), 129, 375. These are indications, rather than strong proofs, that Shifman and Limor’s dating and geographical locating of the term is somewhere in range, but deeper research into the genesis of the name *yeke* still seems necessary. One interesting point of access might be Sh. Bostomski’s *Yekele nar* (Yekele Fool) in which a German Jew is not meant, yet the term *yekele* is used as synonymous with *fool* in the introduction: “There once was a little boy. His name was Yekele. Just like all Yekeles are fools, our Yekele was also considered a fool and they called him ‘Yekele fool.’” (Normally Yekele is simply a derivation of Jacob, but here it seems to be a type of person—perhaps a German Jew?) See Sh. Bastomski, *Yekele nar: A maysele far kleynere kinder* | יעקעלע נאַר: אַ מעשה־לע פֿאַר קלענערע קינדער [Yekele Fool: A Little Story for Smaller Children], 2nd improved ed., Kinder-literatur 1 (Vilna: Di naye yidishe folksschul, 1920), 3. For alternate derivations, see also David L. Gold, "The Etymology of Yiddish *Yeke*," *Zeitschrift für Dialektologie und Linguistik* 48, no. 1 (1981), <http://pao.chadwyck.com/>.

German Jews for gentiles in stupidity jokes can be read as a part of the broader process...in which the tension between Eastern and Western Jews was reflected in the portrayal of the latter as "non-Jewish." The most prominent textual evidence for the argument that this process originated in Europe, together with the stupidity jokes accompanying it, can be found in the "bible" of Eastern European humor: *Sefer ha-bedixah ve-ha-xidud* (The Book of Jokes and Sharp Talk), by Druyanov (1939).¹⁸

This chapter therefore provides background for this later phenomenon starting in the 1930s when gentiles and yekes were partially interchangeable in the Yiddish imagination. The association between the non-Jew and yeke had its predecessor in the nineteenth-century association of the *daytsh* and non-Jew.

Following the term *daytsh* throughout Stutchkoff's thesaurus shows how it was used both as a non-Jewish referent ("language") and as a Jewish referent ("heresy"). More striking, however, is the category of "Non-Jew" that shows how the word *daytsh*, even when explicitly meaning a German Jew, was simultaneously used to identify a person as *not* Jewish. This simultaneity will underpin the following analysis in the employment of the *daytsh* in Yiddish literary representations by Sholem Aleichem (1859 - 1916) and Y. L. Peretz. The ambiguity of the term *daytsh*, whether Jewish or not Jewish, should be noted when reading the stories in translation. I will avoid translating the word as "German Jew," since the gentile-Jewish ambivalence would be elided.

When used in Yiddish literature, the term *daytsh* has one of three referents based on context: One, the German Jew—usually associated with Western European dress, a clean-shaven face, a low level of religious observance, and, of course, the ability to speak German. Two, the non-Jewish German—starting in the 1930s, specifically the anti-Semitic German. Three, the maskilic Eastern European Jew – one who probably had a traditional Jewish upbringing only to abandon it later in life. Assessing inter-Jewish representations becomes difficult due to the

¹⁸ Shifman and Katz, "Just Call Me Adonai": A Case Study of Ethnic Humor and Immigrant Assimilation," 851.

multivalences in Yiddish texts. Due to the intentional blurring of lines, a German of a Yiddish story might be a (semi-)Jewish character. Not only was the German Jew a Jewish Other, he was so different that he was sometimes received as a gentile.

Supernatural Intruders into the Shtetl

This Jewish/gentile ambivalence is the focus of Y. L. Peretz's first and arguably most famous Yiddish piece, his 1888 modernist ballad "Monish."¹⁹ That a *daytsh* appears in Peretz's first published Yiddish work speaks to the importance of inter-Jewish representation. Here, a *daytsh* comes from Danzig to do business in an Eastern European town. The *daytsh*'s daughter, a "*daytshke*" with blond hair down to her feet and a penchant for singing, entices Monish, the young Jewish rabbinical scholar, to an illicit relationship with her. This piece shares a similar storyline with Heine's "Die Lorelei," in which a golden beauty's singing brings down the strongest of men.²⁰ Accompanying Monish to the place of the act, one of his angels asks him, "Tell me, boy, is a German girl (*a daytshke*) worth all the beautiful worlds [promised in God's Torah]?"²¹ From the beginning of "Monish", the reader is told that the *daytsh* is an agent of the devil. At the end of the story, the narration trails away from the former budding Jewish youth as his ear is nailed to the devil's abode atop Mt. Ararat.²² Thus, Peretz's first published work in

¹⁹ Y. L. Peretz, "Monish: A roman-balade [Monish: A Novel-Ballad]," in *Di yidishe folks-bibliotek: A bukh far literatur, kritik un visnshaft* | די יודישע פֿאָלקס־ביבליאָטעק: אַ בוך פֿיר ליטעראַטור, קריטיק און וויסענשאַפֿט, ed. Sholem Aleichem, vol. 1 (Kiev: 1888), <http://archive.org/details/nybc202379>.

²⁰ In the 1888 version, Lilith, who is both the wife of the devil Samael and the *daytshke*'s other-worldly counterpart, is introduced combing her golden hair: "*akegn dem tsohar kemt ale inderfri Lilis di goldene hor zikh tsu.*" See also Isaac Leib Peretz, (Y. L. Peretz), *The I. L. Peretz Reader*, ed. Ruth R. Wisse, trans. Ruth R. Wisse (New York: Schocken, 1990), 343. Peretz wrote that Heine was one of his influences as a writer. See David G. Roskies, *A Bridge of Longing: The Lost Art of Yiddish Storytelling* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1995), 108.

²¹ Yitskhok Leybush Peretz, (Y. L. Peretz), "Monish," in *The Penguin Book of Modern Yiddish Verse*, ed. Irving Howe, Ruth R. Wisse, and Khone Shmeruk, trans. Seymour Levitan (New York: Viking, 1987 (1908)), 77.

²² The ear nailed to a door is a biblical allusion to voluntary slavery: (Exodus 21:5-6) "But if the slave says, 'I love my master, my wife, and my children. I will not go free,' his master shall bring him to the judges, and he shall bring

Yiddish tells the story of an Eastern European Jew being torn away from traditional life by a daytsh and his daughter.

This story and its later versions as edited by Peretz present a deliciously ambivalent Jewish inflection to this daytsh character. Specifically the *daytshke*, his daughter, is often read in the secondary literature either as explicitly Jewish or explicitly not.²³ Notably, Avrom Noversztern mentions the important ambivalence in the character.²⁴ This ambivalence whether the daytsh is Jewish or not lies not only in the lengthy blond hair of his daughter but also in her name—Marie. The name Marie (pronounced “Maria”), arguably the most gentile name for a woman (being the name of Jesus’ mother), would lead the reader to assume that this daytsh is a non-Jew. In 1889, Simon Dubnov, the Jewish historian and author, read Marie’s character as trying to convert Monish to Christianity.²⁵ Peretz deletes this name in later revisions of the ballad, leaving the daughter nameless, which strongly suggests a desire to keep the ambiguity festering about this character’s Jewishness. Rather than pushing the envelope too far with a name

him to the door or to the doorpost, and his master shall bore his ear with an awl, and he shall serve him forever.” That this ending was changed from a previous version will be discussed further on.

²³ See Marc Caplan who goes with the former and Ruth Wisse who votes for the latter. Marc Caplan, “Belarus in Berlin, Berlin in Belarus: Moyshe Kulbak’s *Raysn* and *Meshiekh ben-Efrayim* between Nostalgia and Apocalypse,” in *Yiddish in Weimar Berlin: At the Crossroads of Diaspora Politics and Culture*, ed. Gennady Estraikh and Mikhail Krutikov, Studies in Yiddish 8 (London: Modern Humanities Research Association and Maney, 2010), 96; Peretz, *The I. L. Peretz Reader*; *ibid.*

²⁴ In summarizing the ballad, Noversztern writes, “A plan to tempt Monish is then devised, and, in the end, all hopes pinned to the young prodigy are indeed dashed. An alien, foreign character arrives in the shtetl from elsewhere – a daytsh, an enlightened Jew, perhaps even a non-Jewish German; the term itself is ambivalent. He is a merchant from Danzig who brings with him his lovely daughter, ambivalently named Marie, and she entraps Monish in the mesh of sin.” Avrom Noversztern, “History, Messianism, and Apocalypse in Bashevis’s Work,” in *The Hidden Isaac Bashevis Singer*, ed. Seth Wolitz (Austin, TX: University of Texas Press, 2001), 56.

²⁵ *Voskhod*, July 1889 as cited in Sh Niger, *Y. L. Perets: Zayn lebn, zayn firndike perzenlekhkayt, zayne hebreishe un yidishe shriftn, zayn virkung* [Y. L. Peretz: His Life, His Leading Personality, His Hebrew and Yiddish Writings, His Effect] (Buenos Aires: Argentinere opteyl fun alveltlekhn yidishn kultur-kongres, 1952), 173, <http://www.archive.org/details/nybc200496>. In quoting Dubnov, Niger argues against this reading, which Niger sees as a false reading of the ambiguous description of the daytsh father. Niger writes “in reality, he is a Jew from Danzig who dresses daytsh.” I thank Avrom Noversztern for pointing out this debate to me in personal correspondence, dated September 19, 2010.

like Marie and leading the reader to think that the character is not Jewish at all.²⁶ Peretz's editing of the text necessitates a reading of the different versions of "Monish."

Chava Turniansky outlines the differences between the multiple versions of "Monish," three of which were published in 1888, 1892, and 1908. She reads Peretz through the evolution of the poem. For example, she draws attention to his increasing self-confidence in using Yiddish words (as opposed to Slavic ones) and the increasingly modernist form of the poem as it shifts to free verse.²⁷ One change not addressed by Turniansky is the loss of a leading character's name, namely Marie's. In the 1888 and 1892 versions, the character is referred to as Marie, but in 1908 Peretz deleted every mention of her name, and instead replaced it with the word *daytshke*. This is even more dramatic considering that in the 1888 version, Marie is mentioned ten times. Clearly, the name is not simply overlooked in the editing process. Furthermore, the term *daytshke* is not present in the first version at all. Peretz thus explicitly substitutes the name Marie with *daytshke* in certain lines. In the 1888 version, the angel asks Monish, "Monish, Monish, is Marie worth three hundred with ten worlds?" ("*Monish, Monish, tsi iz Marie vert dray hundert mit tsen veltn?*")²⁸ In 1908, however, the angel asks, "Tell me, boy, is a *daytshke* worth so many beautiful worlds?" ("*Zog zshe, bokher, iz a daytshke vert azoy fil sheyne veltn?*")²⁹ The removal of the name Marie combined with the introduction of *daytshke* suggests intentionality. At least in the 1908 version, a daytsh and his *daytshke* daughter bring down the protagonist Eastern European

²⁶ Though it should be noted that Sholem Aleichem, the most famous of Yiddish writers, had a daughter who went by the name Marie (Waife-Goldberg). Being that "Monish" was first published in Sholem Aleichem's *Di yidische folks-bibliotek*, did Sholem Aleichem read Marie as Jewish or not?

²⁷ Chava Turniansky, "Di gilgulim fun Y. L. Peretses 'Monish' [The Reincarnations of Y. L. Peretz's 'Monish']," *Di goldene keyt*, no. 52 (1965): 220.

²⁸ "מאָניש, מאָניש, צי איז מאַריע ווערט דריי הונדערט מיט צען וועלטן?" Peretz, "Monish: A roman-balade," 156.

²⁹ "זאָג-זשע, בחור, איז אַ דייטשקע ווערט אזוי פֿיעל שיינע וועלטען?" Y. L. Peretz, "Monish: Tragi-komische poeme; nay baarbet | בעאַרבייט [Monish: Tragic-Comical Poem; Newly Edited]," *Teater-velt* 1, no. 10, 11, 12, and 13 (December 4, 11, 18, and 25, 1908): (No. 13, page 11).

Jew, and that, despite the uncertainty involving the *Jewishness* of these Germans, the guests from the West are unambiguously the harbinger of wealth and licentiousness.

Even in Yiddish stories in which the Jewishness of the *daytsh* is foregrounded, moments nevertheless surface which force the reader (and characters in the story) to question this. The ten-year-old boy in Sholem Aleichem's 1886 story "The Pen-Knife" ("*Dos meserl*") wonders about the rich *daytsh* staying in his parents' house, Herr Hertz Hertenhertz:

I did not understand how he lived, and why the Lord kept him in the world. Why was he not choked while eating? And why did the hair not fall out of his naked head? I had heard from my teacher, 'Motye the Angel of Death,' from his own mouth that this Jewish German was indeed a reincarnation, that is to say: a Jew was reincarnated into a German; and later on he might be reincarnated into a wolf, a cow, a horse, or maybe a duck. Into a duck? Ha ha ha!³⁰

Living in a community where men wear yarmulkes and say blessings over food before and after eating as part of a system that understands this to be God's law, the boy is puzzled as to why God does not punish the German Jew, who neither wears a yarmulke nor says blessings over his food. In order to clarify the contradiction in the child's logically drawn conclusions, his teacher explains that his parents' guest is a reincarnation of a Jew and therefore not really a Jew at all. This supernatural explanation comfortably sublates the contradictions presented by the irreligious intruder's presence in the *shtetl*.

The young boy racks his brain throughout the story as to what to call the guest: "this Jewish German, or German Jew, Herr Hertz Hertenhertz..."³¹ Elsewhere, he calls him "this

³⁰ Unless otherwise noted, all translations are my own. Sholem Aleichem, "Dos meserl: A mayse far yidishe kinder [The Pen-Knife: A Story for Jewish Children]," in *Mayses far yidishe kinder*, vol. 5, Ale verk fun Sholem Aleichem (Buenos Aires: Ikuf, 1953 (1886)), 15, <http://www.archive.org/details/nybc202587>. Oddly this passage is edited out of (bowdlerized from?) many Yiddish reprintings and English translations starting at least as early as 1921. See Sholem Aleichem, *Dos meserl: Gekirtst un mit fartaytshungen tsum sof fun yeder kapitl*, 11; Shalom Aleichem (Sholem Aleichem), "The Pocket-Knife," in *Jewish Children*, trans. Hannah Berman (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1921; reprint, 1922), <http://www.gutenberg.org/dirs/2/7/0/0/27001/27001-h/27001-h.htm>.

³¹ Sholem Aleichem, "Dos meserl: A mayse far yidishe kinder," 28-29.

Jewish goy, this goyish Jew.”³² Here the boy hyperbolically questions what takes precedence when referring to the guest. Is he a Jewish German or a German Jew? Or crasser yet, a Jewish goy or a goyish Jew? Sometimes however the boy calls him simply “*der daytsh*.”³³ The fact that the word Jew is left out of many descriptions of German Jews in Yiddish literature, referring to them only as “Germans,” is telling from the perspective of the Judeo-centric culture of Eastern Europe.

In Sholem Aleichem’s 1902 short story, bluntly titled “The daytsh,” an unnamed daytsh visits the small town of Drozshne, located at the time in an eastern province of Poland. He comes to stay at the house of Yoynole, a “simple Jew,” who sees this as a business opportunity. At the end of the daytsh’s very unsatisfying stay at Yoynole’s house, Yoynole overcharges him by a significant sum, which the guest pays without complaint. Shortly after the German returns home, however, Yoynole starts receiving letters and packages. With each package, Yoynole must pay not only for the shipping, but also for the translation services necessary to read each letter. Every letter is essentially just a note from his German guest reiterating his thanks to Yoynole for his kind hospitality. As the letters start arriving in increasingly bigger sizes and thus increasingly expensive for Yoynole, he starts praying to God to be rid of the daytsh. Finally, a telegram arrives from the daytsh that sends Yoynole on a wild-goose chase in Odessa for the possibility of a business venture. After much bother and money spent to travel to Odessa, he finally meets an acquaintance of the daytsh who, on his behalf, simply thanks Yoynole again for the accommodations. In the end Yoynole spends most, if not all, of the money he overcharged the daytsh, and the story concludes with Yoynole cursing him and wishing he had never come.

³² Ibid., 15.

³³ Ibid., 29.

A crucial scene in the various German and Yiddish accounts of Jewish encounter is that of the first appearance of the foreign Jew. The visual difference of the Jewish Other is cause for a moment of reflection. As background to this moment of the first sighting of the foreign Jew in Sholem Aleichem's "The daytsh," the reader has already been introduced to Yoynele, who now awaits work at the train station. The sight of the daytsh is described from Yoynele's perspective as follows:

It once happened—I was standing at the train station, a little worried, seeing off the "Potshtove Express." It was after the third sounding, the train was whistling quite well, and smoke billowed from the smoke stack. I looked over, on the platform stood a wealthy man, tall and skinny, with checkered pants, a top hat and with a lot of luggage; he stood sticking out his neck and was looking around, like a sinful person, in all directions.³⁴

The short passage contains many details—the narrator comments on the departing train (its smoke and sound), the man's appearance (wealthy, tall, skinny, a sinful person), and the man's apparel (checkered pants and top hat). But the passage yields a discrepancy in the amount of detail. Missing is an expected description of how the new arrival got down from the train and onto the platform. Where did the man come from? The reader is lead to see the train's departing smoke stack and hear its whistle. The train leaves, and in the next moment the man is standing on the platform, appearing from the cloud of smoke. I would like to aver that this daytsh is exhibit three for the representation of the German Jew as a supernatural being and should be seen in the context of Peretz's devilish *daytshke* and Sholem Aleichem's earlier piece with the reincarnated Herr Hertz Hertenhertz. In "The daytsh," the German Jew is a trickster figure not unlike the leprechaun, who comes to definitively upset the normal order of the small town, or at least Yoynele's life. Even after leaving town, he wields power from afar. The daytsh essentially taunts the Eastern European Jew with his wealth. The last sentence above describes the daytsh's arrival

³⁴ Sholem Aleichem, "Der daytsh," 134.

at the train station in a curious fashion. What makes this daytsh's look around on the train platform like that of "a sinful person" (*a zindiker mentsh*)? This phrase out of the entire description is the strangest; indeed it is so strange apparently that the only English translator of this story omits it from the translation.³⁵ The German's smoke-filled arrival is eerily juxtaposed with the comment on the man's sinful look. Within the context of the other representations of the daytsh, including those written by Sholem Aleichem himself, the observation that he had the look of a sinful person can be more easily understood. The daytsh was a stock character and, as such, this fleeting comment stands in for a larger commentary about how he should be perceived in supernatural fashion.

A final question concerning this portrayal is whether this daytsh is Jewish. Nothing Jewish about this figure stands out in the entire story—there is no explicit mention that he is, nor does he perform any Jewish ritual. He can apparently understand Yoynele, but Yoynele intentionally tries to speak German, attempting to bridge the gap between the two similar languages.³⁶ One indication that the daytsh is Jewish comes when Yoynele calls him "*Reb daytsh*."³⁷ *Reb*, as derived from *rabbi* in Hebrew, is commonly used as "Mr." when speaking to a

³⁵ Thus rendering the sentence as "He stands there with his long neck stretched out, turning it this way and that way looking for something." Sholom Aleichem (Sholem Aleichem), "The German," in *Tevye's Daughters*, trans. Frances Butwin (New York: Robert V. Waife, 1999 (1902)), 282.

³⁶ How these foreign Jews spoke was conveyed in various ways in the Hebrew script of Yiddish. Either their German was transliterated into Yiddish ("Gut mo-yin, mayn herr" Aleichem, Sholem. *Der daytsh*. [דער דיטש.] Moscow: Emes, 1935 (1905). 5." or expressly translated into Yiddish for the Yiddish reader, who presumably would not be able to understand the German. און דאָס דיטשעל זאָגט צו איהם אויף ריין דיטש, וואָס מיר זעצן איבער אויף עבריי־טייטש, מיט די ווערטער: "... "And the little German said to him in pure German, which we are translating into Yiddish, the words: ...") Peretz, Y. L. "Zibn gute yor." in *Folkstimlikhe geshikhten*. Vol. 1920. New York: Farlag "Yidish". These visitors from afar are the potential harbingers of wealth (in both Aleichem's and Peretz's stories) though they never speak Yiddish. The Ostjuden must communicate with them in German. From the other vantage point, Döblin complained that no one in Poland spoke German: "How gladly I would see more Polish, more Lithuanian, more Russian culture. But I'm hindered by language. And almost no one guides me. Outside of Warsaw, I am poorly assisted." Döblin, *Journey to Poland*, 93. One can bring these narrative choices along with the reflections on the German language itself in the larger discourse of Yiddish scholarship at the time—German or Hebrew as the "pure" languages and Yiddish as the lowly valley that lay between. This adds to the discussion of the power relationship and cultural capital between German Jews and Eastern European Jews.

³⁷ Sholom Aleichem (Sholem Aleichem), "The German," in *Favorite Tales of Sholom Aleichem*, trans. Julian Butwin and Frances Butwin (New York: Avenel, 1983 (1902)), 675; Sholem Aleichem, "Der daytsh," 141.

fellow Jew. In Yiddish, when addressing a Jew whose name is unknown to the speaker, “*Reb yid*,” or, literally translated, “Mr. Jew” is used. “*Reb daytsh*” would therefore be a humorous substitution of the word *Jew* for *daytsh*. The *daytsh* in this story either lacks the “Jewishness” to be called a Jew or he is Jewish enough to be called “*Reb*.” Again, the larger literary context of intentional gentile-Jew ambivalence suggests that this *daytsh* is in fact a German Jew.

A fourth representation of the *daytsh* in Y. L. Peretz’s “Seven Good Years” can add depth to the demonic/trickster portrayals of the German Jew that have been examined so far.³⁸ Returning the discussion to Peretz after having shown two works by Sholem Aleichem illustrates these authors’ fascination with portraying their western brethren. The *daytsh* figures into several of Peretz’s works, including “*Monish*” (1888), “*Travel-Pictures*” (1891)³⁹, “*The Magician*” (1904),⁴⁰ and “*Seven Good Years*” (1908). For Sholem Aleichem, the *daytsh* appears in “*The Pen-Knife*” (1886)⁴¹, “*The daytsh*” (1902), and “*A Premature Passover*” (1908).⁴² Sholem Aleichem and Peretz mirrored each other, writing about the *daytsh* throughout their entire literary careers, from 1886 to 1908.⁴³

In the beginning of Peretz’s “Seven Good Years,” as in Sholem Aleichem’s “The *daytsh*,” the reader is introduced to the simple Jew from Eastern Europe, the foil to the *daytsh*: “Once upon a time in Turbin, there lived a porter by the name of Tuvye and he was a very poor man. One Thursday, he was standing thusly at the market with the skirt of his coat tucked under

³⁸ Y. L. Peretz, “Zibn gute yor | זיבען גוטע יאָהר [Seven Good Years],” in *Folkstimlekhe geshikhtn* | פֿאלקסטִימליכע געשיכטען [Folksy Stories], vol. 1, Ale verk fun Y. L. Peretz (Warsaw: Progres, 1908), <http://www.archive.org/details/nybc201917>.

³⁹ Y. L. Peretz, *Rayze bilder* [Travel Pictures] (New York: Hebrew Publishing, 1909 (1891)).

⁴⁰ Aka “The Conjuror,” see Roskies, *A Bridge of Longing*.

⁴¹ Aka “The Pocket Knife,” see Sholem Aleichem (Sholem Aleichem), “The Pocket-Knife,” in *Jewish Children*, trans. Hannah Berman (New York: Bloch, 1937 (1922)).

⁴² Sholem Aleichem. “A frier peysek: A mayse vos ken zikh farloyfn af der groyser velt | אַ פֿריער פֿסח: אַ מעשה וואָס קאָן זײַן פֿאַרלויפֿן אויף דער גרויסער וועלט [A Premature Passover: A Story That Could Happen Anywhere in the World],” *Der fraynd* (St. Petersburg), March 28, 30, and 31, 1908.

⁴³ Peretz’s first published Yiddish piece was “*Monish*” in 1888, Sholem Aleichem’s in 1883.

the rope around his hips.” This opening mimics the beginning of Sholem Aleichem’s “The daytsh,” in which Yoynel waits for the train “a little worried” about whether work will come his way. Like Yoynel, Tuvye in “Seven Good Years” is also poor. In both stories, named Jewish men—Tuvye and Yoynel—in named locations—Turbin and Drozhne—encounter a daytsh with no name.

The German in this story, however, stands in ostensible contrast to the aforementioned devil-like figures. In this introduction, Tuvye stands at the market, praying to God to provide money for the Sabbath. Who comes? A daytsh: “Just as he was praying, he feels someone pulling on his coattails. He looks around and sees a little daytsh (*a daytshl*), dressed as a hunter in the forest with a feather on his hat and a green trim on his jacket.”⁴⁴ Once again, as in “The daytsh,” it is unclear how the German enters the scene. He appears out of nowhere. The arrival of Peretz’s *daytshl*, directly after Tuvye prays to God, is surely a sign to Tuvye that the man is a gift from God. From the moment of his arrival, this visitor is portrayed in a supernatural light.

Again, the question comes to the fore whether this German is a German Jew. The most striking non-Jewish, or at least non-religious, trait of this figure is his hunter’s apparel. According to the laws of *kashrut*, most animals must be ritually slaughtered with a knife before their meat can be eaten. The death of a kosher animal via other means, like a gunshot, renders the meat of the animal no longer kosher. For this reason, most religious Jews do not hunt game. Contributing to the ambiguity, this seemingly non-Jewish German understands Tuvye’s Yiddish. In other stories, like Sholem Aleichem’s “The daytsh” and Sholem Asch’s “The Little daytsh,” there is usually a comment that the German speaks differently or that some element of translation is necessary. In the absence of such a comment here the reader is led to assume that the daytsh speaks Yiddish.

⁴⁴ Peretz, “Zibn gute yor,” 41.

The daytsh's Jewishness is evoked further as the story develops. "Seven Good Years" was published in a collection called *Folksy Tales (Folkstimlekhe geshikhtn)*. And in typical folktale- or maybe fairy tale-fashion, the daytsh offers Tuvye seven years of prosperity. Tuvye and his wife must choose whether to take the seven years now or to wait and take the years later in life. Before Tuvye discusses the matter with his wife, the narrator tells the reader, as it has apparently occurred to Tuvye, that the daytsh is actually Elijah the Prophet: "It was, it turned out, Elijah the Prophet who, as is his nature, was dressed up as a *daytshl*." Elijah the Prophet is a ritually inscribed visitor in Jewish lifecycle events, for whom a place is set at both Passover meals and circumcisions. Jewish tradition maintains that Elijah the Prophet is a messenger of God who will announce the coming of the Messiah.⁴⁵ Thus, the German who brings seven prosperous years to Tuvye is in reality an angel of God. Elijah, this holy (Jewish) visitor, is therefore conflated with the (Jewish?) visitor from the West. In the narrator's announcement of the daytsh's true identity as Elijah, there is a subtle vagueness as to how to read the last phrase, "as is his nature." Is Elijah's nature to simply disguise himself or, more specifically as the sentence continues, that he disguises himself as a daytsh? Other Yiddish folktales that will be discussed here also have Elijah the Prophet who comes disguised as a daytsh support this latter interpretation. Despite several indications that he is Jewish, it never is explicitly mentioned. The term *daytshl* (little German), rather than referring to physical stature, intones familiarity. In the Judeo-centric paradigm of Yiddish-speaking society, the character's Jewishness is more likely to evoke familiarity than his hunter persona. This repeated uncertainty as to the daytsh's Jewishness is endemic to all of the aforementioned representations.

⁴⁵ "Behold, I will send you Elijah the prophet before the coming of the great and terrible day of the LORD." (Malachi 3:23)

In the broader Eastern European Jewish context, the identification of the German Jew with Elijah the Prophet and the advent of the Messiah is important in understanding Theodor Herzl's reception among Eastern European Jews. As Steven Aschheim writes, "Many Eastern European Jews explicitly compared Herzl to Moses. Ben-Gurion [the first Prime Minister of Israel], who was ten years old at the time, recalled that when Herzl visited his home of Plonsk a rumor spread 'that the Messiah had arrived—a tall, handsome man, a learned man of Vienna, a doctor no less—Theodor Herzl.'"⁴⁶ The artist E. M. Lilien, a figure to be expounded upon in the third chapter, reinforced this opinion with provocative drawings (plural) that compared Herzl to Moses (see figures 1.1, 1.2, and 1.3)⁴⁷:

⁴⁶ Aschheim, *Brothers and Strangers*, 84.

⁴⁷ This allusion was explicit and apparent to Lilien's contemporaries. See Edgar Alfred Regener, "Zionistenstolz und Sehnsucht," *Ost und West* 4, no. 12 (1904): 843, <http://www.compactmemory.de/>; Edgar Alfred Regener, *E. M. Lilien: Ein Beitrag zur Geschichte der zeichnenden Künste* (Berlin: F. A. Lattmann, 1905), 87, <http://sammlungen.ub.uni-frankfurt.de/judaicaffm/content/titleinfo/2063443>; Stanislawski, *Zionism and the Fin de siècle*, 111-113. Regener, *E. M. Lilien*, 146. This window was installed by Dec. 1904 in a Hamburg building that had started being built in Nov. 1903. See "Hamburg," *Im deutschen Reich* 11, no. 11 (November 1903), <http://compactmemory.de/>; Regener, "Zionistenstolz und Sehnsucht.," *Überlieferung und Gesetz: Das Fünfbuch Mose und das Buch Josua*, ed. F. Rahlwes, trans. Reuss, vol. 1, *Die Bücher der Bibel* (Braunschweig: George Westermann, 1908), 233. See also Yaron Peleg, *Orientalism and the Hebrew Imagination* (Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 2005), 153; Boyarin, *Unheroic Conduct*, 275. For other images of Herzl in Lilien's drawings, see also figure at left in *Die Erschaffung des Menschen* in Morris Rosenfeld, *Lieder des Ghetto*, ed. Berthold Feiwel, trans. Berthold Feiwel (Berlin: B. Harz, 1902), 115-118, <http://sammlungen.ub.uni-frankfurt.de/freimann/content/titleinfo/411529>; *Überlieferung und Gesetz: Das Fünfbuch Mose und das Buch Josua*, 1: 224.

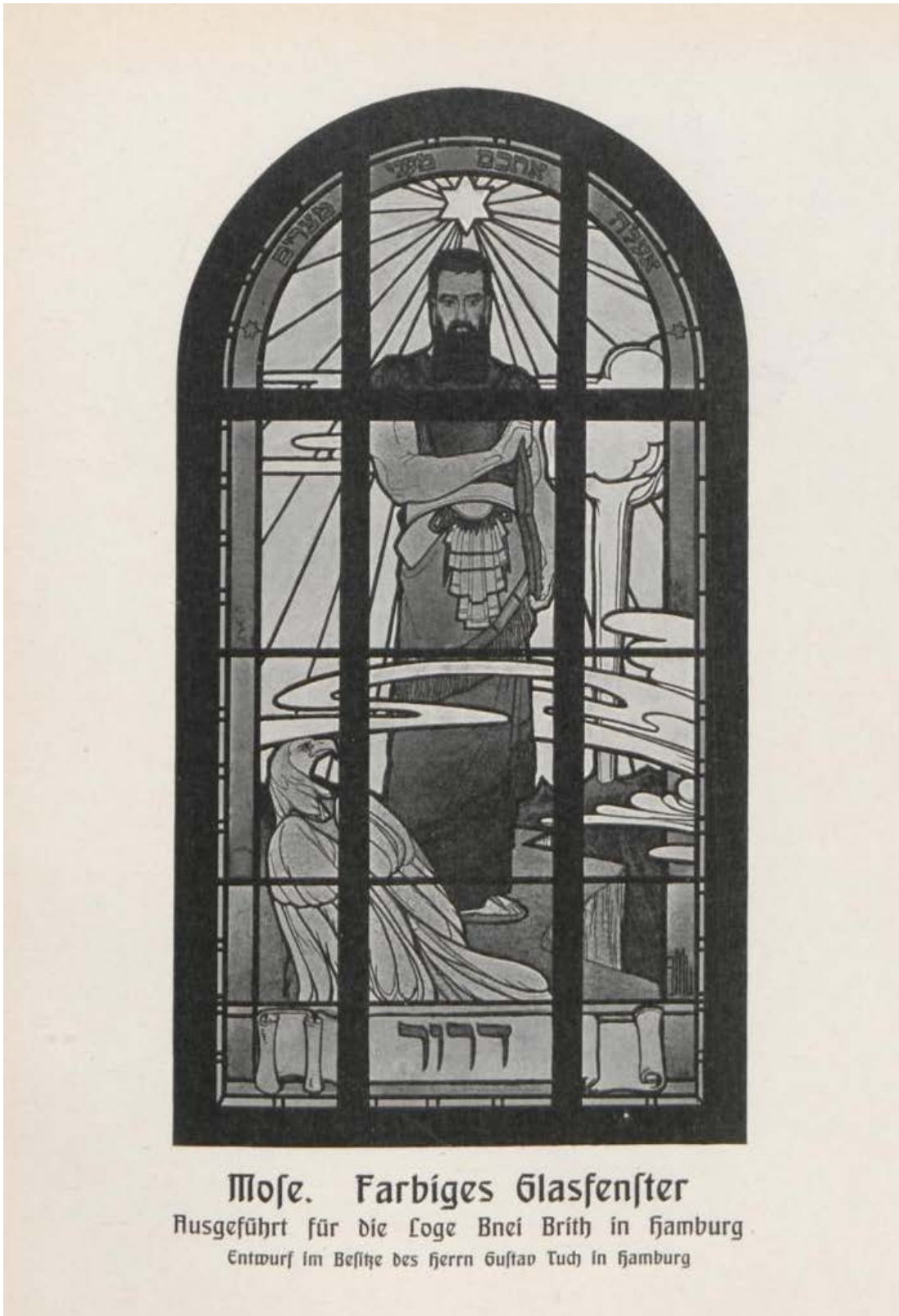


Figure 1.1 *Mose I.* Moses is drawn to look like Theodor Herzl on a stained glass window for a B'nai Brith lodge in Hamburg.



Figure 1.2 E. M. Lilien stands alongside a larger than life image of Moses/Herzl in his studio as he designs the stained glass window *Mose I* in figure 1.1, 1904.

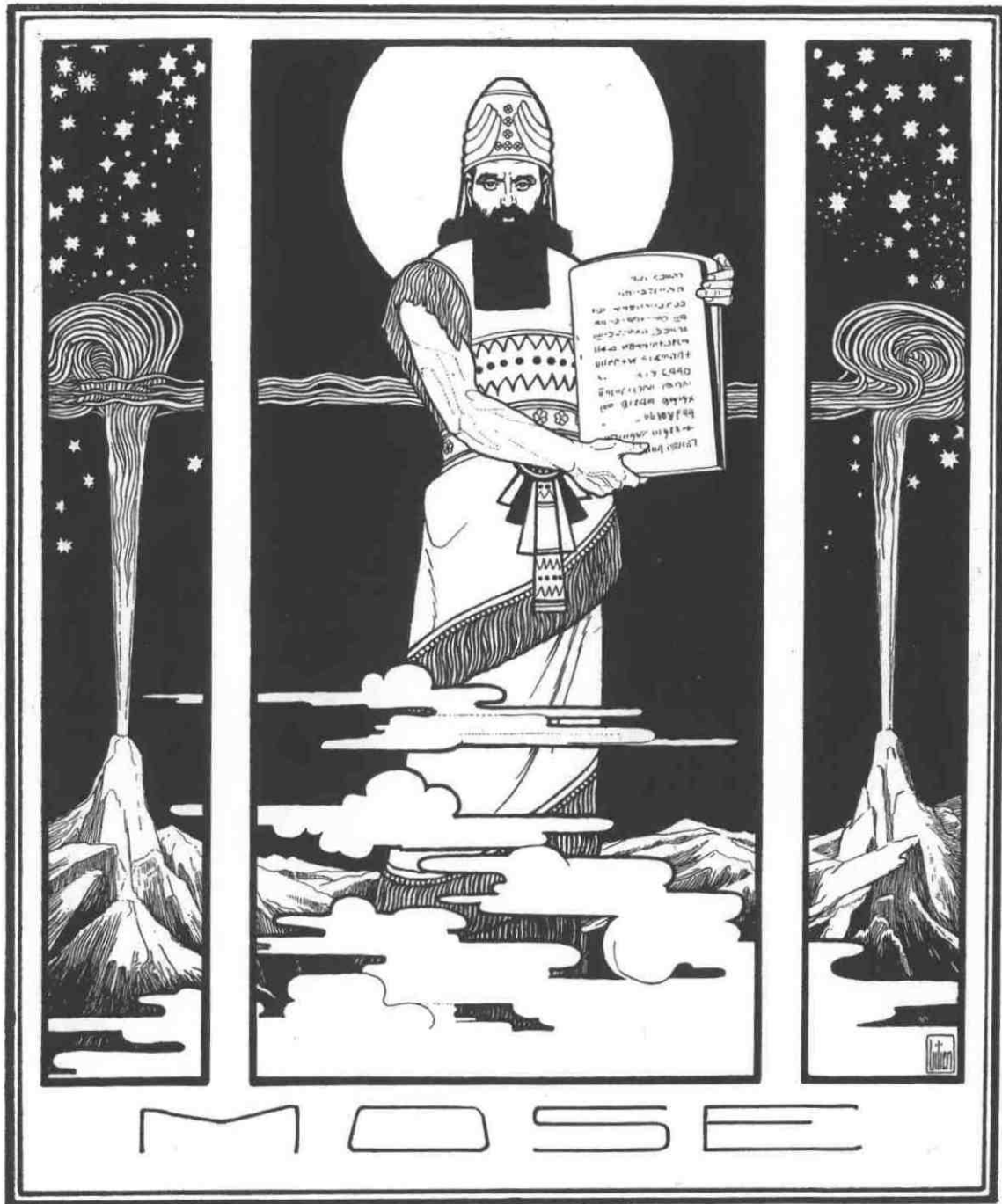


Figure 1.3 *Mose II*. Lilien again depicted Moses with Theodor Herzl's distinctive square beard in 1908. This time, however, the religious overtones were even more explicit as this image was included in a newly illustrated bible.

The connection between prophetic figures and the figure of the daytsh is an interesting one when placed within the context of the devilish representations first discussed. The association of the German with Elijah the Prophet should not be taken at face value as a sign of praise, a simple polar opposite portrayal from that of the satanic German. The two are connected. In Elijah the Prophet tales, his mode of dress serves to disguise him in a form *not* normally associated with holiness. It should be noted that only rarely does Elijah the Prophet disguise himself as a man one might mistake for a rabbi. Instead he chooses the form of a beggar, an ugly man, a harlot,¹ or a non-Jew (as for example, an Arab²). In this light, the disguise of a rich, irreligious German Jew serves as condemnation. A visiting German Jew might turn out to be Elijah the Prophet, but only because he is the last person in whom one would expect to find holiness. Therefore, the supernatural allure of the German Jew emerges as the common factor in the otherwise polar-opposite depictions. In the Yiddish imagination, the German Jew straddled the Jewish/non-Jewish divide as well as the mundane/other-worldly.

In this whirl of stories from Sholem Aleichem and Y. L. Peretz, the following table gives a brief chronological overview of the texts from the Yiddish modernist period that thematize supernatural representations of the daytsh³:

¹ Peninnah Schram, ed. *Tales of Elijah the Prophet* (Northvale, NJ: Jason Aronson, 1991), xxiv.

² In the original Midrash on which “Seven Good Years” is based, Elijah is disguised as an Arab. *Ruth Zuta* (4:11). For other sources of Peretz’s piece, see Yaffa Berlovitz, “נס, גאולה ואליהו הנביא: טרנספורמציה ארץ-ישראלית; עיון ב'לחם'” [Miracle, Redemption, and the Prophet Elijah: An Israeli Transformation; Thematological Study in 'Bread and Water' by Yehoshua Barzilai-Eisenstadt and 'Seven Good years' by Y. L. Peretz], *Bikoret ufarshanut* 30 (1994).

³ One story by Sholem Aleichem, “A Premature Passover” (1908), does not have a specifically *supernatural* depiction of German Jews and is therefore not included here. “A Premature Passover: A Story That Could Happen Anywhere in the World” by Sholem Aleichem is different from the others discussed here on two counts—neither is the German Jew represented supernaturally, nor is the German Jew a visitor to Eastern Europe. In this story, the roles are reversed when a Polish Jew is the trickster on a visit to “*Narenberg*” in Germany (presumably this is a play on the name of the real city Nürnberg that changes it to a name which translates to “Foolsberg”). The Polish Jew preys on the religious gullibility of the German Jews by selling them old Jewish calendars.

Table 1 Supernatural Representations of the daytsh in Yiddish literature, 1886-1926

Date	Title	Author	Supernatural Representation of the daytsh
1886	The Pen-Knife	Sholem Aleichem	Reincarnation
1888	Monish	Peretz	Devil
1891	Travel-Pictures	Peretz	Messenger of God
1902	The daytsh	Sholem Aleichem	Trickster
1904	The Magician	Peretz	Elijah the Prophet ¹
1908	Seven Good Years	Peretz	Elijah the Prophet
1926	The Little daytsh	Asch	Elijah the Prophet

In the Yiddish representations dealt with here, the daytsh is a supernatural figure—whether he is a messenger of the devil, a messenger of God, a trickster, or a reincarnation. He is also a transient visitor/outsider to the Eastern European village, who brings wealth, sometimes unfathomable wealth. He, almost always male, is recognizable on an immediate superficial level from his Western European clothing. Even the one female German discussed here, the *daytshke* who entices Monish, is introduced only after her father, the rich businessman from Danzig, and both are revealed as messengers of the devil. Finally, the Jewishness of the daytsh remains unclear through an intentional narrated ambivalence. It is not simply that *daytsh* equates to a modern German Jew, rather the term provides a means of understood condemnation through its non-Jewish overtones.

The literary mythmaking surrounding the arrival of the German Jew to the shtetl carried over historically into the messianic-laden Zionist inroads in Eastern Europe headed by the daytsh

¹ Y. L. Peretz. "Der kuntsn-makher | דער קונצען-מאכער [The Magician]," *Der fraynd* (St. Petersburg), sec. 16-17, Passover, 1904. In "The Magician" the word *daytsh* does not appear; however, the main character is archetypally characterized as one. The magician arrives in town, having come from Paris on his way to London. He wears a cylinder hat, has a shaven beard (followed by an exclamation point), and has "a Jewish face." (Peretz later changed this to "a truly Jewish face.") See Y. L. Peretz, *Der kuntsn-makher: Baarbet far kinder durkhn oytov* | דער קונצען-מאכער: בעארבייט פאר קינדער דורכ'ן אויטאָר [The Magician: Edited for Children by the Author] (Kishinev: Far undzere kinder, 1912 (1904)), <http://www.archive.org/details/nybc203564>. By the end of the story, the magician provides a grand Passover meal for a poor Jewish couple and disappears. The reader is told that the magician is Elijah the Prophet. See Miron, "The Literary Image of the Shtetl," 28. David Roskies asks the same questions about the Magician as posed here with all of these daytsh characters: "Jew or gentile?" in Roskies, *A Bridge of Longing*, 139.

Theodor Herzl. Interestingly, with the success of Zionism and settlement in Palestine, the term *daytsh* gave way to the word still in current use for German Jews, *yeke*. Shifman and Katz's demonstration of yeke jokes that draw on gentile jokes suggests that the vestiges of the previous term for German Jew still exist in this new form. Having discussed the westward gaze and the ways in which Yiddish modernists represented the German Jew, I will now focus on the intrinsic function of these depictions as historical responses before bringing in the analogous mythical representations of the Ostjude in German-Jewish literature.

Refracted Fear

I now want to pivot the discussion away from Yiddish literature toward German literature. Another parallel between the authors of the German-Jewish renaissance and the Yiddish Modernists was their response to an earlier generation and their renewed relationship to the Jewish Other. I can place these modernist pieces into better context by showcasing some of these earlier portrayals, fearful and otherwise. Here, I will show how some of the themes of Sholem Aleichem and Peretz can be traced to previous works, which had portrayed the German Jew as either the harbinger of evil or Elijah the Prophet. Following this, I will offer examples of German-Jewish fear of the Eastern European Jew prior to a discussion of Arnold Zweig and Franz Kafka, two German Jews who actively confronted this fear.

Rabbi Meir Simcha of Dvinsk (1843-1926), a head rabbi of Dvinsk (now Daugavpils, Latvia) represents one such example of an Eastern European opinion that the Yiddish Modernists countered. This rabbi wrote one of the now canonical religious condemnations of German Reform Jewry.¹ In his posthumously published *The Price of Wisdom (Meshech Chochma)* from

¹ The following quoted passage is often cited in Orthodox religious writings today.

1927,¹ Meir Simcha expounds on a causal relation between Jewish religious observance and the cycle of expulsions that the Jewish people have endured throughout the centuries. In an exegesis of Leviticus 26:44, he writes that each expulsion results from a laxity in Jewish observance.² Following the expulsion, Jewish learning and religiosity peaks again. As the cycle proceeds, the entire generation of Jews turns back to its former careless ways:

It will respond by saying “the inheritance of our forefathers is a lie,” and the Jew will completely forget his maker and he will consider with vigor becoming a citizen of a foreign nation. He will abandon the teachings of his religion to learn languages not his own, he will learn from corrupt ways and will not learn the correct decrees, *he will think that Berlin is Jerusalem*. “And you acted according to the degenerates among them [the non-Jews]”; “you did not act according to” the upright ones.³ “Rejoice not, Israel, like the exultation of the peoples[, for you have strayed from your God.” (Hosea 9:1)] Then there will come a stormy wind and it will rage and uproot it [the Jewish people] by its trunk, placing it among a distant people whose language it does not know. It will know that it is a stranger.⁴

The German Jews exemplify Meir Simcha’s point. He “prophesizes” (as one will find in post-Holocaust references to this passage⁵) that those Jews who “think that Berlin is Jerusalem”⁶ will be the harbingers of the next wave of expulsion. Meir Simcha calls into question an idea from early nineteenth-century German Reform Judaism, namely that a Diaspora Jew’s synagogue is the middle of his “new Jerusalem” –a belief that eschews traditional yearnings for a return to

¹ [Or Somayach Meir Simcha of Dvinsk, pseud.], "Bechukosai," in *Meshech Chochma* | משך חכמה [Price of Wisdom], ed. Menachem Mendel Zaks (Riga: 1927), 245, <http://hebrewbooks.org/14061>.

² “For the land shall lie forsaken without them [the Jewish people], and shall be paid her sabbaths, while she lieth desolate without them; and they shall be paid the punishment of their iniquity; because they rejected Mine ordinances, and their soul abhorred My statutes. And yet for all that, when they are in the land of their enemies, I will not reject them, neither will I abhor them, to destroy them utterly, and to break My covenant with them; for I am the LORD their God.”

³ The previous two sets of quotation marks have been added in by me based on Yehuda Kuperman’s conclusion that Meir Simcha is quoting Sanhedrin 39b. Meir Simcha of Dvinsk, [Or Somayach, pseud.], "Bechukosai," in *Vayikra* [Leviticus], ed. Menachem Mendel Zaks and Yehuda Kuperman, vol. 2, *Meshech Chochma* | משך חכמה [Price of Wisdom] (Jerusalem: 2002 (1927)), 772, n. 27.

⁴ My emphasis added.

⁵ Asher Bergman, *The "Or-Someah"* | מאיר שמחה הכהן ... מן איר שמחה הבהירה של ... הליכותיו בקודש ומשנתו הבהירה של ... מאיר שמחה הכהן | (Bnei Brak, Israel: A. Bergman, 2000), 252-258.

⁶ "יחשוב כי ברלין היא ירושלים".

Zion.¹ Meir Simcha sees Berlin, home to Moses Mendelssohn's Haskalah, as the epicenter of the Reform movement and employs it to attack maskilic Jewish thought in general. As in Stutchkoff's thesaurus, *berlintshik* and *berliner* are synonymous with Jewish heresy. Foreseeing the future expulsion, Meir Simcha warns his Hebrew-reading audience (religious male Eastern European Jews) to fear the German Jews and their irreligious/reformist ways. This rejection of German-Jewish reforms extends the longevity of opinions held by anti-Reform Jewish religious leaders of the early nineteenth-century Eastern European Jewish leaders well into the next century.²

Yiddish writers responded to this fearful representation of the German-Jew in works such as "Monish" "The Pen-Knife," and "The daytsh." On the other hand, these writers also responded to the representation of the German Jew as Elijah the Prophet. Elijah the Prophet appearing as the daytsh can be found in a Hebrew collection of folktales by Rabbi Shlomo Zevin (1890 – 1978). The folktale here, orally passed down to Zevin,³ is rooted in Yiddish culture as is apparent by the Yiddish word *daytsh* in an otherwise Hebrew text:

When Reb Yitzchak Meir of Ger [(1798 – 1866)] was a child of three and all those who saw him were amazed at his precocious talents, his mother took him with her to visit Reb Yisrael, the Maggid of Koznitz, who showed his delight at seeing the young prodigy. On the road leading home, the child took ill with sunstroke. After carrying him as far as her strength would allow, his mother sat down exhausted on a stone and wept bitterly as she saw what a state he was in. Suddenly she caught sight of a passer-by who was dressed like a German Jew (daytsh), with something like a traveler's bag around his neck. When he asked her for the cause of her distress and she told him, he said: "I'll give the child some medication and he will feel well right away." Taking a bottle out of his pocket, he

¹ Perhaps referring to the 1825 speech of Hamburg-based Gotthold Salomon. See Harold Hammer-Schenk, *Synagogen in Deutschland: Geschichte einer Baugattung im 19. und 20. Jahrhundert, 1780-1933*, vol. 1 (Hamburg: Hans Christians, 1981), 154.

² See for example the writings of Nachman of Breslov (1772 – 1810) who wrote from present-day Ukraine. *Chayei Moharan*, Jerusalem, 5707, p. 41. As quoted in Bartal, "Image of Germany and German Jewry," 16. *Price of Wisdom* was Meir Simcha's of Dvinsk personal collection of commentary throughout his life, which he chose not to have published in his lifetime. Thus it is difficult to know when this specific quote was written.

³ Shlomo Yosef Zevin, "A Revelation in Disguise," in *A Treasury of Chassidic Tales on the Torah: A Collection of Inspirational Chassidic Stories Relevant to the Weekly Torah Readings*, trans. Uri Kaploun, vol. 2 (New York: Mesorah, 1992 (1956)), xx.

poured a few drops of its contents on to a lump of sugar which he had, and gave it to the child. The toddler's color at once reverted to normal as his temperature dropped, and the mother resumed her way homeward to Magnishov, accompanied by the stranger. On her arrival she told her story, and in no time word of it spread through the town. The house soon filled with people eager to bring their ailments to this remarkable physician - but the stranger vanished. Reb Yitzchak Meir recounted this episode when he was an adult, and added : "That 'German Jew' (daytsh) was Elijah, but my father did not recognize him, because the leather girdle which he always wears around his waist was for the purpose of this occasion worn around his neck.¹

Elijah masked in the garb of a daytsh surfaces in a folktale ostensibly dating to the early nineteenth century. Yiddish modernists undoubtedly picked up this motif as fodder for their own literary purposes. Interestingly, this story is still being circulated among the English-speaking Jewish community. Speaking to the continued significance of the East-West Jewish gaze today, the English translation is provided by Artscroll Publishers, an American company that prints religious works predominantly intended for Orthodox Jews.²

Finally, I will briefly mention a few cultural appearances of the daytsh in Yiddish-speaking Eastern Europe to conclude that the writers in the Yiddish modernist period were not acting as simple conduits for the representational tradition of the nineteenth century. In the middle of the nineteenth century, a performance troupe in Russia and Romania performed the song "The Debate between Chassid and daytsh." One actor playing the daytsh and another the Chassid sang this duet. According to Bernard Gorin, the plot of this mini-performance revolves around the return of a man to the shtetl after his transformation into a daytsh.³ Another such performance piece was a song, without a date, that read as follows:

¹ English translation from *ibid.*, 296-297. Shlomo Yosef Zevin, *Sipure Hasidim* [Tales of Chassidim] (Tel Aviv: Hotsaat Sefarim Avraham Tsiyoni, 1967), 239-240.

² See also *Dos yidishe likht*, 1977. "Der fertrakhter goyen" by A. Heilman. Vol. 28, no. 5., p. 3. <http://www.hebrewbooks.org/pdfpager.aspx?req=27062&st=&pgnum=1&hilite=>

³ This apparently originated from Velvel Zbarzher; Gorin gives no citation. Bernard Gorin, *Di geshikhte fun yidishn teater: Tsvey toyzend yor teater bay yidn* | די געשיכטע פֿון אידישען טהעאטער: צוויי טויזענד יאָהר טהעאטער ביי אידן [The History of Jewish Theater: 2000 Years of Theater among the Jews], vol. 1 (New York: Literarisher ferlag, 1918), 145-149, <http://hdl.handle.net/2027/mdp.39015024560727>.

He wears his trousers over his boots,
 And eats like a non-Jew, without washing his hands.
 Respectable and fine, fine, fine, fine,
 A daytsh, a daytsh he must be.
 He walks in the street and steals a bun,
 And on the Sabbath he smokes a pipe.
 Respectable and fine, fine, fine, fine,
 A daytsh, a daytsh he must be.¹

This representation yields familiar tropes such as difference in dress, lack of religious observance (not washing before a meal and smoking on the Sabbath), and the comparison to a non-Jew. The song brings out a yet unfamiliar tension between the daytsh's genteel appearance and the criminal that lies beneath the surface. This daytsh "walks in the street and steals a bun." This line is more than just another mocking attack on the daytsh. This criminal association is also found in Ayzik Meyer Dik's 1873 *Yekele Daytsh with Doniel Scribe in His Prayer Shawl*. One of the characters gives a biographical synopsis of Yekele Daytsh, the scoundrel:

He is a foreigner. Before he came to Ligove he moved around the world in all sorts of forms. That is to say, sometimes he would dress himself as a Jew from Jerusalem collecting money... He would tell of great miracles from the Land of Israel, of Jerusalem, of the Wailing Wall. And would sell Land of Israel dirt at a reasonable price... And sometimes he would say he was a traveler and was from distant parts. That he was with the ten tribes and would tell of their banners, of their kings. He would also show off a half shekel, a letter from Haman to cart off all the Jews. And again a letter from Mordechai and Esther... We called him Yekele Congratulations because he kept on getting married. And this dog played a big part, Yekele the daytsh.²

¹ Z. Skuditski and Meyer Viner, eds., *Folklieder-lider: Naye materyaln-zamlung* | פֿאָלקלִידער־לידער: נייע מאטעריאלן־זאמלונג [Folklore Songs: New Material Collection], 2 vols., vol. 2 (Moscow: Emes, 1936), 333, <http://www.archive.org/details/nybc211101>. Translation from Ruth Rubin, *Voices of a People: The Story of Yiddish Folksong*, First Illinois ed. (Urbana: Board of Trustees of the University of Illinois, 1979; reprint, 2000), 275-276, <http://books.google.com/books?id=gWJiUNy-jeUC>.

² Ayzik Meyer Dik, *Yekele Daytsh mit Doniel Soyfer in tales kotn* [Yekele Daytsh with Doniel Soyfer in His Prayer Shawl] (Lemberg: J. M. Ehrenpreis, 1873 (1859)), no pagination. I refer to this 1873 version rather than the earlier one because Dik changed the character's name to Yekele Daytsh. Included in the changes was this paragraph here that introduces Yekele Daytsh. See Ayzik Meyer Dik, *Yekele Goldshleger oder Yekele Mazltov* | יעקעלע גאלדשלעגער אודער יעקעלע מזל טוב [Yekele Goldmine or Yekele Good-Fortune] (Žitomir: Yitskhok Moshe Bakst, 1868), 36, <http://www.mdz-nbn-resolving.de/urn/resolver.pl?urn=urn:nbn:de:bvb:12-bsb10240112-0>. It would be interesting to compare and see how the name change to "Yekele Daytsh" changes the meaning of the story, if at all.

The story ends with the townspeople discovering that Yekele is a convict. It is unclear whether he has been released from prison or whether he escaped. Dik makes it clear that this criminal's last name is not just coincidentally Daytsh.¹ In the narration above, the character calls him "Yekele the daytsh." Yekele Daytsh is a daytsh. In this story, some themes of the daytsh are familiar: a stranger to town, a foreign Jew, and disguises. Yet in both *Yekele Daytsh with Doniel Scribe in His Prayer Shawl* and the previous song, the daytsh emerges as a criminal. This criminality dovetails with the fear of the German Jew already present in earlier portrayals, but that was not a theme continued by later Yiddish writers.

Likewise, there were harsh opinions held by some German Jews about Eastern European Jews.² Extreme examples were heightened by nationalist German rhetoric, as in the case of Max Naumann, leader of the Union of National German Jews (Verband nationaldeutscher Juden). Briefly examining these voices will be useful in the context of understanding the responses of Zweig, Kafka, and Döblin. Naumann writes in the organization's 1920 manifesto:

Dem nationaldeutschen Juden ist der Ostjude ein Fremder, und nichts als ein Fremder, er ist ihm gefühlsmäßig, geistesmäßig, körperlich fremd. Wenn wir hören, daß im europäischen Osten gegen diese mitleidswürdigen Geschöpfe Greuel verübt werden, schlägt das Herz des nationaldeutschen Juden in menschlichem Mitgefühl wie das jedes menschlich empfindenden Deutschen anderen Stammes auch. Es ist dasselbe Mitleid, das wir auch fühlen, wenn von Armeniermetzeleien der Türken oder Negerlynchmorden in Amerika die Rede ist. ... Aber wenn wir von den Leiden hören, die deutsche Kriegsgefangene in afrikanischen Gefangenenlagern, ja selbst bei den kulturstolzen Franzosen erdulden mußten, dann möchten wir aufschreien vor fast körperlichem Schmerz, denn die Schläge, die unsere Brüder treffen, brennen uns auf der eigenen Haut.³

From this excerpt, it becomes evident that Naumann reflects German nationalist sentiment on several levels. First, he distances himself geographically from the Ostjude. Additionally, he uses nationalist rhetoric in speaking against the "culturally proud French" and draws on imperialist

¹ *Yekele* is a name derived from Jacob.

² See Grossman, *Discourse on Yiddish*.

³ Max Naumann, *Vom nationaldeutschen Juden* (Berlin: A. Goldschmidt, 1920), 21.

imagery to sympathize with German soldiers in African prison camps. Perhaps most importantly, Naumann twice speaks of the body and its role in German nationalism. He eschews notions that the German nationalist Jew is related to the Ostjude by saying that the latter is “*körperlich fremd*.” And further still, rather than simply denying a physical relationship to the Eastern European Jew, the nationalist German Jew screams out of almost “*körperlichem Schmerz*” when hearing of the plight of his German brethren: “die Schläge...brennen uns auf die eigene Haut.” This one paragraph hosts a significant number of words pertaining to the body: *Herz, Schmerz, Leiden, körperlich, Haut*. This implies an understanding on Naumann’s part that to be a German national, one must have more than citizenship. Naumann thus claims as much German ethnicity as he can by positioning his body next to the German’s to make up for his lack of an “ethnonational” citizenship as defined by Rogers Brubaker.¹ Perhaps in deference to his Jewish *jus sanguinis*, he writes that he endures “*fast [almost] körperlichem Schmerz*” in sympathy for his imprisoned German comrades. His concerns about the body and the need to separate himself so vociferously from the Ostjude (“*gefühlsfremd, geistesfremd, körperlich fremd*”) belie his omitting a discussion about ethnic *Deutschtum*.

A second, brief contemporary example of a fearful German Jew vis-à-vis the Eastern Jew is Theodor Lessing. Lessing had an unpleasant experience visiting Galicia in 1909, which was chronicled over four issues in the newspaper *Allgemeine Zeitung des Judentums*. He introduces his trip by relating a run-in he had with a swindler. After narrating the event, Lessing writes, “Von da an war ich im Verkehr mit galizischen Juden so auf meiner Hut, wie man etwa auf einer Reise durch Süditalien beständig den Gedanken festhält, daß jedermann, dem man begegnet, in

¹ Rogers Brubaker, *Citizenship and Nationhood in France and Germany* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1992).

irgendeiner Weise begaunern und betrügen möchte.”¹ The reader is to take away from this that Galician Jews are almost as bad as Italians! In the context of such opinions, the prevalent awe of the Ostjude as bound with fear in the Jewish renaissance should be considered a response to real fear rather than a phenomenon *ex nihilo*. An awareness of this fear by German Jews founds most of these literary depictions by Kafka, et al.

The Ostjude in the German-Jewish Renaissance

Steven Aschheim writes that cultural Zionism as led by Achad Ha'am and Martin Buber, as opposed to the Zionism of Max Nordau, furthered a “new emphasis on myth and a revised understanding of the role of the irrational [...] perhaps the most stark example of this change was Martin Buber’s radical transvaluation of the nineteenth-century German Jewish image of the Hasid.”² This fashioning of an *ostjüdisch* myth is important intersection between these cross-cultural literary representations. Thus I offer a brief overview of some German-Jewish mythical representations of the Eastern European Jew, notably in the works of Franz Kafka (1883 – 1924) and Arnold Zweig (1887 – 1968). German-Jewish portrayal of Eastern European Jews has been addressed by many, including Steven Aschheim, David Brenner, Geoffrey Grossman and the authors in an edited volume on Jewish Orientalism.³ Thus, I do not intend to give an encyclopedic listing of all instances in which German-Jewish authors fantastically repurposed

¹ “From then on, I was always on my guard in dealings with Galician Jews as much as when one is on a trip in the South of Italy and cannot stop thinking that everyone that one meets wants to swindle or deceive you in some way.” Theodor Lessing, “Eindrücke aus Galizien,” *Allgemeine Zeitung des Judentums* 73, no. 49, 51, 52, 53 (December 3, 17, 24, 31, 1909), <http://www.compactmemory.de/>. Benjamin Segel, an Eastern European Jew, took great offense to Lessing. See Benjamin Segel, *Die Entdeckungsreise des Herrn Dr. Theodor Lessing zu den Ostjuden* (Lemberg: Hatikwa, 1910).

² Aschheim, *Brothers and Strangers*, 101.

³ Kalmar and Penslar, eds., *Orientalism and the Jews*.

the Eastern European Jew, but rather I propose to take a few key samples and show how these tie in to the main characteristics found in Yiddish representations of German Jews.

I begin with a short piece by the Viennese journalist Otto Abeles (1879 - 1945). In his 1918 *Jüdische Flüchtlinge* (Jewish Refugees), Abeles presents vignettes from his experience among Jewish refugees in Vienna during WWI. The section entitled “Der Bettler,” not more than a few paragraphs, begins by describing the meanderings of a hunchbacked beggar dressed in “uncompromising” Eastern European Jewish garb through a crowd. Abeles tells the reader with supernatural imagery that the beggar’s right eye has been closed “forever” and that all passersby are powerless to his open left eye:

Keiner, dem der Greis das Auge zuwandte, versagte ihm die Gabe, keiner redete ihn an, aber alle blieben stehen und sahen ihm nach. Er erwies Wohltaten, indem er Almosen nahm. Es war ein linder, köstlicher Frühlingsabend. Das bleiche Licht der Bogenlampen mengte sich mit dem purpurnen Widerschein der Wolken, die über dem Kahlenberg hingen. In bescheidenem Abstand folgte ich dem Bettler, der durch dies zauberhafte Stunde ging, wie ein verkleideter König, der heimlich unser Erbe trägt, wie ein Zaddik, der gesandt ist, die Seelen zu prüfen.¹

The narration shifts from individuals in the crowd, who have just been taken by this eye and stare back at the hunchback, to a wistful description of the nature scene around them: “The pale light of the bent street lamps mingled with the violet glow from the clouds that hung over the Kahlenberg.” The abrupt break in narration juxtaposes the eternal *ostjüdisch* beggar (with his eye closed “für immer”) with the eternal nature in the Viennese backdrop. The parallel imagery is further strengthened by the beggar’s hunchback and the “Bogenlampen.” Abeles relates that he

¹ “Noone to whom the old man turned his eye refused him a gift. Noone spoke to him, but everyone stood still and watched him go. He evoked good deeds as he took alms. It was a sweet, crisp spring evening. The pale light of the bent street lamps mingled with the violet glow from the clouds that hung over the Kahlenberg. From a slight distance, I followed this beggar, who walked through this magical hour like a disguised king who secretly bears our heritage, like a Tzaddik, who was sent to examine our souls.” Otto Abeles, *Jüdische Flüchtlinge: Szenen und Gestalten* (Vienna: R. Löwit, 1918), 47-48. Originally published in Otto Abeles, “Tabebuchblätter aus der Flüchtlingszeit,” *Jüdische Zeitung* 10, no. 19 (May 12, 1916), http://edocs.ub.uni-frankfurt.de/volltexte/2008/38053/original/JZ_1916_19.pdf.

then clandestinely followed this man as he walked through this “magical” hour (zauberhafte Stunde). His final words about the Ostjude evidence the strong affinity to the fantastic daytsh: “I followed this beggar, who walked through this magical hour *like a disguised king who secretly bears our heritage, like a Tzaddik¹ who was sent to examine our souls.*” The foreign Jew who comes to town unabashedly wearing different clothes is viewed by the native Jew as a figure in disguise, a likely candidate for a messenger of God on a mission. The similarities in the representation of the Jewish Other in these two literary corpuses are striking.

Despite the parallels, a notable difference in these representations from their Yiddish counterparts, which stems from the choice in genre, is the overt intrusion of a subjective German-Jewish author vis-à-vis the Eastern European Jew. Unlike in Yiddish literature where the author is buried within the narrative devices, the German-Jewish authors overtly mention themselves in the first person. *Jüdische Flüchtlinge*, for example, reads as reportage for the most part with Abeles regularly placing himself in the description of events as he interviews the refugees. In “Der Bettler,” it is the journalistic “I” who follows the *Tzaddik* in disguise. This authorial voice can be explained partially by genre specificity, namely, that the examples on which I focused in the Yiddish literature have a fictional sheen to them. From Sholem Aleichem, I sampled short stories and “children’s stories,” and from Y. L. Peretz, a ballad and a reworked folktale. The works from the German-Jewish side, on the other hand, include Kafka’s introductory speech to a Yiddish performance and a literary ethnographic travelogue from Zweig. In the analysis of Zweig’s and Kafka’s writings that follows, certain these themes from the Yiddish texts reemerge —the mythic, the response to fear, and the Jewish Other as a mirror. These German-Jewish representations use mythic imagery and respond to previous fearful

¹ Lit. “righteous person,” an adjective to describe holy figures, like “Joseph the *Tzaddik*.” The term is intrinsically bound to a Talmudic legend of the 36 *Tzaddikim* whose identities are not known, yet maintain each generation spiritually. Thus this secret holiness probably underpins the use here. Sanhedrin 97b; Sukkah 45b.

representations. As an outgrowth of this response to fear, the German Jew desired to see himself in the Ostjude.

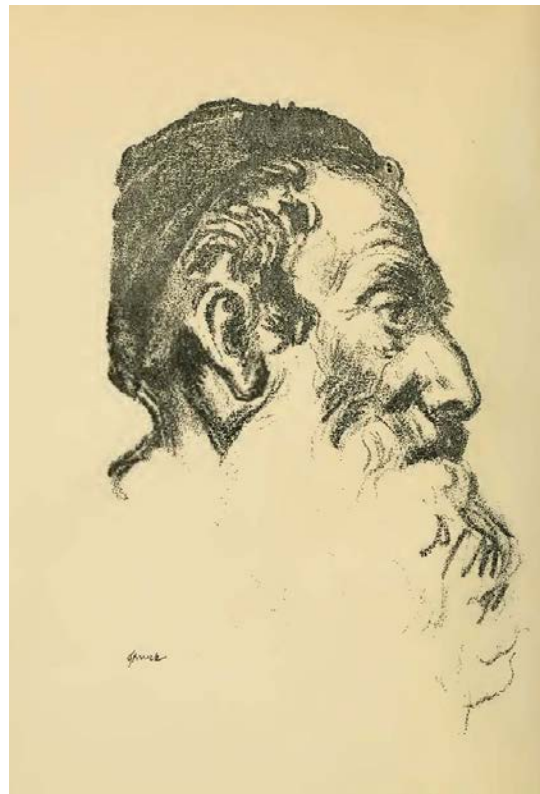


Figure 1.4 An old Jewish man with beard. The first picture in *Das ostjüdische Antlitz*.

While Arnold Zweig and Hermann Struck were stationed in northern Eastern Europe during the First World War, they collaborated on a work published in 1920 entitled *Das ostjüdische Antlitz*.¹ The book consists of Struck's drawings of Eastern European Jewish life accompanied by Zweig's exegesis of these images. From this first sentence of Zweig's narration of the picture in figure 1.4, the programmatic Zionist myth-making and apotheosis of the Ostjude shines through:

Er wendet sein Auge von mir fort in eine Ferne, die nichts sonst ist als Zeit. Sein Profil gleitet wie ein fallendes Wasser in den Bart, der sich in Gischt und Wolke löst. Das

¹ Zweig and Struck, *Das ostjüdische Antlitz*. See introduction by Noah Isenberg in Zweig and Struck, *The Face of East European Jewry*.

Adlige seiner Jochbögen und der Nase, das Geistige der zerdachten und gebeulten Stirn stößt sich vom harten trotzigem Ohre ab und lagert um diesen Blick, der weder fordert noch verzichtet, sich nicht sehnt und nicht klagt, der ist, und eine Ferne an sich saugt, von der wir wissen, daß sie nichts ist denn Zeit.¹

The Jew's eye turns away from Zweig "into the distance that is nothing else but time"—a phrase repeated at the end of the quote. This description could be compared with some representations of God—"his beard which dissolves into froth and clouds." In the remainder of the book, the mythic, "eternal" Eastern European Jew is elaborated upon *ad nauseum*, with the term *eternal* itself showing up some thirty-five times over the course of the work. In no sense is the term used ironically.

Zweig's reading of Struck's pictures intends to change the perception of Ostjuden: "In Gesichtern dieser Kinder steht die Antwort auf jene Frage, die unter allen Worten mitgegangen ist bis an diesen Ausgang: ist das Volk der Juden ein Greis? und ein harter oder weiser Greis sein Sinnbild? Nein und nein!"² Zweig explicitly writes that he wants the German Jew to see that the Eastern European Jew, as a metaphor [*Sinnbild*] for the Jewish nation, is best *portrayed* by a child's face rather than the typical face of the old Jewish man. It is for this reason that a child both adorns the cover and is the last picture in the first edition of 1920. This youthful message has been, however, significantly lost on the publishers of the book today, who now present an old bearded Jew on the cover. Zweig's comments and the strategic positioning of

¹ "He turns his eye away from me into a distance that is nothing else but time. His profile slides like falling water into his beard which dissolves into froth and clouds. The nobility of his cheekbone and nose, the spirituality of the contemplative and bulging forehead tears itself away from the hard and stubborn ear to be situated in this look, which neither demands nor relinquishes, does not yearn and does not complain, which draws distance to itself, from which we know that it is nothing but time."

² Zweig and Struck, *Das ostjüdische Antlitz*, 172

images combined with the fact that Hermann Struck's name as illustrator is listed before Arnold Zweig's name as narrator gestures towards a privileging of the visual over textual.¹

Past the adulation of the Eastern European Jew, the book turns to another of its foci, namely the German Jew's fear of the Jewish Other. Zweig writes that the Ostjude is the West's Dorian Gray: "Man kann auch darauf verweisen, daß diese körperliche Häßlichkeit des Juden ein Dorian-Gray-Phänomen sei: an ihm werde die Seelen-Häßlichkeit seiner Knechter, Peiniger und Verfolger leibhaftig. Jeder häßliche und scheu schleichende Jude sagt dem Jäger Edom: Ich bin du; sieh deine häßliche und verzerrte Seele auf mir ausgebreitet."² Edom stands for the assimilated Western Jew, who, in the eyes of the Zionists, hated the Eastern European Jew as much as the Western Christian did.³ Zweig recognized the fear among his fellow country men that the German Jew might see himself in the Ostjude. Zweig reacts to this and places words into one of the Eastern Jewish faces: "I am you; see your ugly and contorted soul spread out upon me." Zweig tells the German Jew to look the frightful object straight in the face and he will only see himself.

German-Jewish mediators of Eastern European Jewry were echoing the fear to the level of a preposterous din. Franz Kafka, for example, is clearly cognizant of this German-Jewish fear, and indeed evokes it in his so-called "Rede über die jiddische Sprache" from 1912.⁴ Here, Kafka introduces a Yiddish (or "Jargon") poetry reading to an audience of German-speaking Prague Jews:

¹ Again, the later reprinting of the text changes this to give top billing to Zweig.

² "One can also point to the fact that this physical ugliness of the Jew is a Dorian Gray phenomenon: the soulful ugliness of his servants, afflictors and persecutors become incorporated in him. Every ugly and reclusively creeping Jew says to Edom the hunter: I am you; see your ugly and contorted soul spread out upon me." Zweig and Struck, *Das ostjüdische Antlitz*, 78.

³ According to Jewish tradition, Edom was the brother of Jacob and the forefather of Christian Europe. See Genesis 36:1; Isaac Avishur, Moshe David Herr, and Carl Stephen Ehrlich, "Edom," in *Encyclopaedia Judaica*, ed. Michael Berenbaum and Fred Skolnik, 2nd ed., vol. 6 (Detroit: Macmillan Reference USA, 2007), 157-158, <http://www.gale.cengage.com/servlet/GvrlSResult>.

⁴ Max Brod assigned this name to the speech in 1953. Kafka, "Rede über die jiddische Sprache," 504.

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 verstehen. ...Bleiben Sie aber still, dann sind Sie plötzlich mitten im Jargon. Wenn Sie aber einmal Jargon ergriffen hat - und Jargon ist alles, Wort, chassidische Melodie und das Wesen dieses ostjüdischen Schauspielers selbst -, dann werden Sie Ihre frühere Ruhe nicht mehr wiedererkennen. Dann werden Sie die wahre Einheit des Jargon zu spüren bekommen, so stark, dass Sie sich fürchten werden, aber nicht mehr vor dem Jargon, sondern vor sich.¹

Kafka portrays Yiddish as the “essential character” of the East European Jew; it is “everything.” On the mythical/fantastic level, Yiddish awakens forces within the German Jew and “takes hold of” the German-Jewish audience. Yiddish, it cannot be forgotten, “*will frighten you*” (Sie sich fürchten werden). Is Kafka responding to fear or evoking it? As he tells his audience, if the listener is calm, he will be shocked by what will come. He further taunts the audience with his linguistic comparisons—moving from delightful talk of candles, flowers, and songs (*kerzlakh*, *blumlakh*, *liedlakh*) to final frightful imagery of blood and death (German *Blut* versus the Yiddish *blüt*, German *tot* versus the Yiddish *toit*). The pairing of *blood* with *dead* is a fear-evoking choice pushing the speech into its crescendo.

Yet the playfulness of this speech cannot be overlooked. After all, the audience willingly came to hear (and paid for!) Löwy’s Yiddish performance. Kafka can be seen as a mirror on stage in front of the bourgeois German-Jewish audience member (or at least their historical baggage) at the same time he contorts this fear. Kafka’s speech is another exhibit in the German-Jewish repertoire that builds on formerly expressed fear to come to a new understanding about

¹ “You begin to come quite close to Yiddish if you bear in mind that apart from what you know there are active in yourselves forces, associations with forces that enable you to understand Yiddish intuitively. ...If you relax, you suddenly find yourselves in the midst of Yiddish. But once Yiddish has taken hold of you—and Yiddish is everything: the words, the Chasidic melody, and the essence of this East European Jewish actor himself—you will have forgotten your former reserve. Then you will come to feel the true unity of Yiddish, so strongly that it will frighten you, yet it will no longer be fear of Yiddish but of yourselves.” English translation from a slightly edited version found in Franz Kafka, “An Introductory Talk on the Yiddish Language,” in *Reading Kafka: Prague, Politics, and the fin de siècle*, ed. Mark Anderson, trans. Ernst Kaiser and Eithne Wilkins (New York: Schocken, 1989 (1912)); Franz Kafka, “Rede über die jiddische Sprache,” (1912) http://gutenberg.spiegel.de/?id=5&xid=1357&kapitel=4#gb_found.

Jewish identity. Once one “comes to feel the true unity of Yiddish,” which Kafka maintains is the essential character of Eastern European Jewry, then he can only fear himself. He collapses the two groups.¹ Eastern European Jews are German Jews. As Arnold Zweig writes, the Eastern European Jew presents a Dorian Gray phenomenon for the West. The East is the West. Representations of the Ostjude, as propagated by cultural Zionists, fulfilled their need to position all Jews as one.

Under discussion have been the many instances in which Central and Eastern European Jews represented each other, mediating Jewish difference to a home audience in German and Yiddish. Though ostensibly the portrayals are each the inverse of the other, with the German Jew represented as irreligious or not even Jewish, and the Eastern European Jew represented as hyper-religious, the underpinnings of these representations rely on similar tropes, including the utilization of mythic/fantastic elements alongside narrating fear of this Jewish Other. In this section, three pieces were briefly discussed in order to touch upon some of these parallels: the mythic foreign Jew screams forth from the fantastic one-eyed beggar from Otto Abeles, the godly Ostjude whose beard dissipates into time in Zweig and Struck’s work, and Kafka’s terrorizing Yiddish. These three examples were written either during WWI (Abeles, Zweig, Struck) or right before it (Kafka), and come from the three corners of the “German”-Jewish world: Vienna, Berlin, and Prague. Arnold Zweig and Franz Kafka were chosen as exemplifying the mediated fear of the Eastern European Jew. An apparent difference between the two literatures arises from the way in which the German-Jewish texts strongly position themselves to confront pre-existing fear, in part through the use of the first person. The first-person narration is essential to the personal investment in the active collapse of the east-west binary. At the end of

¹ In the context of analyzing the function of Yiddish for Kafka, Scott Spector makes the argument that Kafka, on stage as mediator between audience member before him and Yiddish behind him, undoes this structured distance. See Spector, *Prague Territories*, 85-92.

this analysis, one of the underpinnings of Jewish modernism comes into relief, namely the self-definition *through* the Jewish Other. The next chapter contrasts Alfred Döblin and Y. L. Peretz to demonstrate that the most canonical modernist authors here are, not coincidentally, the most invested in the process of working through their Jewish identities by positioning themselves in front of their mirroring texts.

CHAPTER 2

Reaching across the Aisle: Identification with the Jewish Other

That the authors of Yiddish modernism and the German-Jewish Renaissance represented foreign Jews in response to previous representations lays out a schematic, which necessitates a discussion of generations or phases. Phase I, so to say, entails those authors who portrayed the foreign Jew fearfully. Phase II then includes these later modernists who responded to the previous representations, with a focus here on those authors who portrayed the foreign Jew in order to identify with him on some level. Such categorization becomes problematic when discussing the author Alfred Döblin. Döblin's 1925 *Reise in Polen* upsets the schematic and seemingly straddles both phases of German-Jewish literature. I will focus on Döblin and how his search for himself through the portrayal of the Eastern European Jew intersects with Peretz's own writing process. Like Döblin's works, Peretz's writing presents the similar process of identity formation at work through his presentation of the Jewish Other. Döblin and Peretz are prime candidates to be examined together as part of the larger argument about the parallels and connections between Central and Eastern European Jewish modernisms.

The Case of Alfred Döblin

Alfred Döblin (1878 – 1957) was not affiliated with the cultural Zionist movement with which Zweig and Kafka are associated¹; nevertheless, his ethnography of Polish Jews possesses similarities that warrant a contrast. *Reise in Polen (Journey to Poland)* testifies to Döblin's confrontation with the mythologized Ostjude, but the wild ambivalences in the text and its late date of 1926 in relation to Buber's 1901 essay on the Jewish renaissance strongly suggest that Döblin was at the margins of the German-Jewish cultural renewal. Döblin's Jewish identity, as has been well documented, was always in flux. In 1912 Döblin officially petitioned the German government to separate from the Jewish community. He became politically involved with Zionist affairs within a few years of writing *Reise in Polen*, but then converted to Catholicism after immigrating to the United States.² An indication of his distance from events in the Jewish world that preceded this 1925 Polish trip is seen in his 1921 comments:

Die osteuropäische Judenfrage ist eine Sache für sich. Falls es richtig ist, daß hier große Massen Juden, Millionen, zusammenhängend wohnen. Palästina ist für sie eine falsche, nämlich idealistische Formel... Es muß festgestellt werden, ob die Ostjuden tatsächlich in Millionen in Polen und Galizien wohnen. Alsdann hat eine Abstimmung zu erfolgen. Die Parole muß lauten: nicht Zionismus, sondern Polenismus.³

The choppy aphoristic and sarcastic style of the article makes it hard to determine his exact tone here (as Döblin mentions, he was in the middle of reading the expressionist Anton Kuh's *Juden und Deutsche* (Jews and Germans), which is written in a similar style⁴). Döblin's sincerity in questioning whether there were millions of Jews living in Eastern Europe or Poland is indicated

¹ He was, however, a later Territorialist Zionist.

² Brenner, *Renaissance of Jewish Culture*, 144.

³ Alfred Döblin, "Zion und Europa," *Der Neue Merkur* 5 (August 1921). "Perhaps there are Jews in Poland. An expedition by a geographical society should be set up to establish this...it must be confirmed whether in fact millions of Ostjuden live in Poland and Galicia." Aschheim, *Brothers and Strangers*, 206. His mention of "Polenismus" as the answer instead of Zionism points to his aforementioned Zionist stance, but with a Territorialist bent. See Hans Otto Horch, "Alfred Döblin und der Neo-Territorialismus: Mit bisher unveröffentlichten Auszügen aus Briefen Döblins an Nathan Birnbaum," in *Internationales Alfred-Döblin-Kolloquium Paris 1993*, ed. Michel Grunewald, Jahrbuch für Internationale Germanistik Reihe A, Kongressberichte 41 (Bern: Peter Lang, 1995).

⁴ Döblin, "Zion und Europa," 339.

by the fact that he does so twice. Indeed, *Reise in Polen* shows that he undertook this fact-finding mission himself. Thus WWI with its horde of German-Jewish soldiers who had just recently completed this “expedition,” including Zweig and Struck above, was apparently lost on Döblin.¹ What makes his representations so interesting therefore is exactly this idea of a “first encounter” that otherwise would not be possible for an author writing at such a late date.²

This piece is in many ways a Freudian case of repression as Döblin tries to reconcile the countering forces of his German and Jewish identities. (Döblin was a trained neurologist and psychiatrist with a thorough knowledge of Freud.³) He opens with a narrative of leaving Berlin via train. The second paragraph begins: “Ich – bin nicht da. Ich – bin nicht im Zug. Wir prasseln über Brücken. Ich – bin nicht mitgeflogen. Noch nicht. Ich stehe noch am Schlesischen Bahnhof.”⁴ From the beginning, a self-aware narrator confronts the reader. Though Döblin is clearly in the train as he hears it go over bridges, nevertheless, he forces the reader to ask, “Where is the real Döblin?” He repeats the line “I—am not here. I—am not in the train.” Furthermore, Döblin’s narrative ability to reflect on himself as both the protagonist and the observed evidences a fractured existence. A paragraph later he reiterates, “Ich – bin nicht da,”

¹ See Ulrich Sieg, *Jüdische Intellektuelle im Ersten Weltkrieg: Kriegserfahrungen, weltanschauliche Debatten und kulturelle Neuentwürfe* (Berlin: Akademie Verlag, 2001).

² Though even to say “first encounter” is false when talking about Döblin and this work. Shortly before his trip to Poland, he had become friends with the Yiddish writer Dovid Bergelson and taken an interest in the Vilna Troupe. Jonathan Skolnik suggests the timing of *Reise in Polen* stems from recent anti-Jewish violence in Berlin’s Scheunenviertel in 1923. The question remains why does Döblin position himself as an explorer relating a first-encounter type experience? Jonathan Skolnik, “Yiddish, the Storyteller, and German-Jewish Modernism: A New Look at Alfred Döblin in the 1920s,” in *Yiddish in Weimar Berlin: At the Crossroads of Diaspora Politics and Culture*, ed. Gennady Estraiikh and Mikhail Krutikov, Studies in Yiddish 8 (London: Modern Humanities Research Association and Maney, 2010), 218.

³ Döblin’s earliest reading of Freud was probably around 1909, see Julia Genz, “Döblins Schreibweise der Evokation und Aussparung: Psychoanalytische und psychiatrische Diskurse in *Die Tänzerin und der Leib*,” in *Internationales Alfred-Döblin-Kolloquium, Emmendingen 2007: 'Tatsachenphantasie'; Alfred Döblins Poetik des Wissens im Kontext der Moderne*, ed. Sabine Becker and Robert Krause, Jahrbuch für Internationale Germanistik Reihe A - Band 95 (Bern: Peter Lang AG, 2008), 71.

⁴ “I—am not here. I—am not in the train. We pelt across bridges. I—have not flown along. Not yet. I am still standing in the terminal, Schlesischer Bahnhof.”

which is followed by, “Der Zug, das hallende Gebäude, fährt mich nach Osten.”¹ Here Döblin draws attention to the action of the train; his syntax weakens his agency as an actor in the story.

The Döblin in the train is the object; he is both the driven as well as the observed. Even his plans for an excursion to Poland take on agency as they turn on him. “Es war mein Plan. Jetzt steht es da, bewegt sich, ist nicht mehr in meinem Kopf, rollt um mich ab. Ich steige darin herum. Es ist jetzt gewaltiger als ich. Schrecklich diese Überführung eines Gedankens in die Sichtbarkeit.”²

Again, the loss of agency presents itself as a theme in just the first two pages—from the train that captures him to his plans that overtake him. Why is it that, at the outset of his trip, Döblin feels helpless?

These feelings of passivity and unease in the train continue into the first city he visits. In Warsaw, he goes to meet a *rebbe* to experience a traditional spiritual pilgrimage. In the waiting hall to the rebbe’s chamber, the throng of Chassidim pushing against the rebbe’s door, pushing against Döblin, leads him to portray the scene as follows:

Es ist viel schlimmer, viel schlimmer, als ich es jemals in einem städtischem Gedränge erlebt habe. Ich kann gar nichts sagen. Oft habe ich den Wunsch, man möchte mich herauslassen. Aber wie ich das Anklammern des einen an den andern sehe, diese stumme gewaltige Verbissenheit, gebe ich mich verloren. Ich dränge nicht mit, ich hänge zwischen den andern, die mir in den Nacken, in die Ohren keuchen. Ich lasse unten die Füße los, ziehe die Knie hoch und werde getragen.³

Döblin feels helpless against the Chassidim. He describes how he is literally carried along. His statement, “I can say nothing” indicates that in addition to losing the power of movement, he also

¹ “The train, the reverberating edifice, is taking me east.”

² Alfred Döblin, *Reise in Polen*, Ungekürzte ed. (Munich: dtv, 1968 (1925)), 12-13. “It was my plan. Now it stands before me, moves, is no longer in my mind, rolls down around me. I comb about in it. Now it is more powerful than I. How dreadful this translation of an idea into visibility.” Alfred Döblin, *Journey to Poland*, ed. Heinz Graber, trans. Joachim Neugroschel, 1st Amer. ed. (New York: Paragon House, 1991), 3.

³ Döblin, *Reise in Polen*, 104. “This is much worse, much worse than any urban crowd that I have ever experienced. I can say nothing. I keep wishing they’d let me out. But when I see the way they cling to one another, this fierce mute doggedness, I give up. I do not force my way with them, I hang between the others, who pant into the back of my neck, into my ears. I let my feet hang loose, I draw up my knees, and I am carried.” Döblin, *Journey to Poland*, 76.

has lost the power of speech. The confinement and invasion of personal space extends even to his ears, which he is helpless to stop from being penetrated by the breath of the man next to him. This description is remarkably similar to Theodor Lessing's account of his 1909 travels among the swindling Galician Jews. When Lessing goes to a Friday evening service at a synagogue, he writes at length in terms later echoed by Döblin:

Der Zustrom neuer Ankömmlinge hörte nicht auf. Das kleine enge Zimmerchen faßte soviel Menschen, daß ich kaum noch den Arm bewegen konnte. Ein ohrenzerreißendes Singen, wie ein einziger Klageschrei, hallte hin in den Raum. Man mußte das Geschrei aus dem schrecklichen Hause weithin vernehmen. Immer wahnsinniger, verzückter wurde die allgemeine Ekstase. Schreiende, näselnde Laute, konvulsivische Zuckungen, allgemeine Erregung und Bewegung, die sich bei einigen in Schluchzen und Weinen entlud. Ich sah Menschen um mich, die wie Maniakalen gestikulierten, tobten und weinten. Mich schüttelte vor dieser Art Gebets beinahe Grauen. Mir wurde schlecht. Unwillkürlich geriet ich mit in die allgemeine Erregung hinein. Diesen Haufen hatte religiöser Fanatismus ergriffen, demgegenüber der einzelne machtlos war[...] Der eine überschrie den anderen, schlug sich die Brust, rauft Bart und Haar, schleuderte den Oberkörper auf und nieder, bebte, zitterte in jedem Nerv. Ich hatte das Gefühl, unter Wahnsinnigen zu sein. Noch einen Augenblick länger, und der Wahnsinn steckte mich an, so fühlte ich. Ich drängte gewaltsam zum Ausgang. Zum Glück war ich unmittelbar neben der Türe, ich riß sie auf, lief ins Freie, während hinter mir die klagenden, fürchterlichen Stimmen zusammenschlugen. Ich stürzte die Treppe hinunter; ich hatte ein Gefühl des Dankes und der Erleichterung, als ich draußen den klaren, blauen Nachthimmel und die großen, gesunden Sterne sah...¹

Lessing and Döblin describe their inability to prevent being swept up in the ecstasy of their surroundings. Lessing says the "individual is powerless" in the face of the religious fanaticism that has "grabbed the horde." He emphasizes this physical attack when he writes about "the small narrow room [that] contained so many people that I could barely move my arm," the "ear-wrenching singing," and becoming sick. Where Kafka brackets this fear of the Eastern European essence, Döblin expresses it unquestioningly.²

¹ Lessing, "Eindrücke aus Galizien," 611.

² One can also turn to a similar passage to Döblin's and Lessing's by Nathan Birnbaum that will be expounded upon in a later chapter. See Nathan Birnbaum, "Unter Fremden," in *Ausgewählte Schriften zur jüdischen Frage*, trans.

Döblin can be read as repressing his Jewish past foremost in the fact that he never once reveals his own Jewish background although Jewishness confronts him everywhere. This confrontation with the repressed—the unfamiliar, yet familiar—yields an explanation for the many expressions of shock and unease with an encroached-upon distance that emerge in *Reise in Polen*. The best example of the uncanny encounter is, not coincidentally, the first time he sees, what he terms, the “Kaftan Jews.” In this scene, themes of helplessness, encroached-upon distance, and shock play out dramatically. To frame this scene, Döblin starts with a narration in which he is essentially peacefully minding his own business looking over “die sehr höflichen Tafeln der Straßenbahn.” He is then accosted by hasty, black- and red-colored Kaftan Jews who leave him feeling “stunned, no, frightened”:

Ich stehe an einer Haltestelle, studiere die sehr höflichen Tafeln der Straßenbahn, die alle vorüberfahrenden Linien und ihre Route angeben. Da kommt im Gedränge gerade auf mich zu ein einzelner Mann mit bärtigem Gesicht, in schwarzen lumpigen Kaftan, schwarze Schirmmütze auf dem Kopf, lange Schaftstiefel an den Beinen. Und gleich dahinter, laut sprechend, in Worten, die ich als deutsch erkenne, ein anderer, ebenso schwarzrockiger, ein großer, mit breitem roten Gesicht, rote Flaumhaare an den Backen, über der Lippe. Redet heftig auf ein kleines armselig gekleidetes Mädchen ein, wohl seine Tochter; eine ältere Frau mit schwarzem Kopftuch, seine Frau, geht bekümmert neben ihr. Es gibt mir einen Stoß vor die Brust. Sie verschwinden im Gedränge. Man beachtet sie nicht. Es sind Juden. Ich bin verblüfft, nein, erschrocken.¹

This apparently traumatizing experience occurs in the first chapter. Here Döblin is setting up the pretense that the book is not about Jews. Ostensibly, he was not expecting to see such Jews. One factor in his shock is that they speak “loudly, in words that I recognize as German.” Referring to

Nathan Birnbaum, vol. 2 (Czernowitz: Buchhandlung Dr. Birnbaum & Dr. Kohut, 1910), 354-355, <http://sammlungen.ub.uni-frankfurt.de/freimann/content/pageview/997901>.

¹ Döblin, *Reise in Polen*, 18. “I am standing at a stop studying the very accommodating streetcar tables, which provide every passing line and its route. From the crowd there comes, right at me, a single man with a bearded face in a black tattered frock, black peaked cap on his head, long boots on his legs. And just behind him, speaking loudly in words that I recognize as German, another one just as black jacketed, a big one, with a wide red face, red peach fuzz on his cheeks, above his lips. Speaking fiercely at a small pathetically clothed girl, probably his daughter; an older woman with a black headscarf, his wife, walks worriedly beside her. This gives me a kick to the chest. They disappear into the crowd. People do not notice them. They are Jews. I am stunned, no, frightened.”

Yiddish, this is probably the area that stings most—these Jews speak a variant of his German. Awkwardly stilted in emphasizing the horror, the emphatic language of “stunned” and “frightened” as well as the physical “kick to the chest” (Stoß vor die Brust) bring out, more than any other scene in the text, themes from Freud's explication of the uncanny. A helpless Döblin is “stunned” at seeing a strange sight. This strange man is not just a frightening version of a Jew—a new species, if you will—a “Kaftanjude,” but he acts as a double or Doppelgänger of Döblin in another way, namely, by speaking Yiddish—described as recognizably German, yet not. Importantly, Döblin is apparently the only one in the station privy to this scene. He writes that the man “kommt gerade auf mich zu,” and when they disappear as mysteriously as they arrived, “man beachtet sie nicht.” No one seems to see them except Döblin. Their mysterious appearances and disappearances are reminiscent of the devilish daytsh who appears on the train platform from the smoke in Sholem Aleichem's “The daytsh.”¹ Freud's essay on the uncanny offers us a useful tool in understanding this bizarre scene with its doubling and its expressions of helplessness and fright.² All of this is seen by a man repressing his reason for coming to the train station in the first place. This reads as if Döblin had never seen an Eastern European Jew in frock and beard before. Yet 1925 Berlin had had a significant Eastern Jewish population for over a decade.³

¹ For some other first encounters between the German Jew and the Eastern European Jew at train stations, see Sholem Aleichem, “Der daytsh.”; Abeles, *Jüdische Flüchtlinge*, 6-8; Fishl Shneurson, *Grenadir-shtrase: Roman fun yidishn lebn in Daytshland* [Grenadierstraße: Novel of Jewish Life in Germany] (Warsaw: Literarische bleter, 1935), <http://www.archive.org/details/nybc211573>.

² Sigmund Freud, “Das Unheimliche,” in *Gesammelte Werke*, vol. 12 (Frankfurt am Main: Fischer, 1999 (1919)), 227-278.

³ Non-German Jews constituted 20% of the Jewish population in Germany in 1933—almost triple the percentage from 1900. Most of this growth was after WWI and was quite apparent in Berlin where Döblin lived. See Bennathan, “Die demographische und wirtschaftliche Struktur der Juden.”

A consideration of Döblin alongside the Yiddish modernists must mention Döblin's key modernist work, *Berlin Alexanderplatz*.¹ At the start of the book, Franz Biberkopf is released from prison. The first person whom he meets is an immigrant Jew from Eastern Europe. This Ostjude, described as "der Rote," takes Biberkopf into his house in an unsavory part of town where he meets another Jew, "der Alte." These two Jews put Biberkopf on edge in a remarkably similar fashion to Döblin in the scene described above in *Reise in Polen*:

Was wollte diese Leute von ihm. Er wollte hinaus, er drängte hoch, aber der Alte drückte nieder. Da schrie er: „Was macht Ihr mit mir?“ „Schimpft nur, werdet schon noch mehr schimpfen.“ „Ihr sollt mich loslassen. Ich muß raus.“ „Vielleicht auf die Straße, vielleicht auf die Höfe?“ Da stand der Alte vom Stuhl auf, ging rauschend durch die Stube hin und her: „Laß ihn schreien, soviel er will. Laß ihn tun und machen. Aber nicht bei mir. Mach die Tür auf für ihn.“ „Was ist, gibt doch Geschrei bei Euch.“²

Also in *Berlin Alexanderplatz*, there are two Eastern Jews. This scene parallels the events in *Reise in Polen* when two Jews, one with a red beard, physically accost Döblin at the train station. The German-Jewish reception of Eastern European Jewry overflows into mainstream literary modernism with *Berlin Alexanderplatz*.

Roughly in the middle of *Reise in Polen*, a seemingly misplaced soliloquy arises, where Döblin asks, "You, you in me, forever eluding me, forever reemerging in me, what are you seeking here."³ In a straightforward manner, Döblin questions whether he is as an ethnographer of the Polish peasantry (as the title of the book, the cover image, and the epigraph all indicate⁴) or whether he has ulterior motives. His self-reflection also confirms that Döblin is a man in

¹ See Skolnik, "Yiddish, the Storyteller, and German-Jewish Modernism."

² Döblin, *Berlin Alexanderplatz*, 20.

³ "Du, Du in mir, immer wieder entweichendes, immer wieder auftauchendes Du in mir, was suchst du hier." Döblin, *Reise in Polen*, 188; Döblin, *Journey to Poland*, 142.

⁴ Opening Alfred Döblin's *Reise in Polen*, a quote triumphantly states, "For every border wields a tyrant's power." These words are aimed at all states and at the State per se." On the 1926 cover, a picture of Polish peasants is juxtaposed with images of the Church and Industry in the background. In a book that yields little information on ethnic Poles, it is striking that such a quote and cover image would be chosen. The reader is led to think that Döblin is writing about the post-War politics of Poland and Polish nationalism, but they cover up that the book is much more about the Jewish population in Poland.

transition, someone who is “forever reemerging.” In this latter half of the book, there is a sense of transition in his views of race, a softening in his thoughts about Eastern European Jews, and a settling of his inner turmoil so present in the opening scene.

One of the wildest ambivalences in the text emerges in Döblin’s thoughts on race. Döblin states that the Warsaw Jews have “Arabian heads” and he idealizes them as “Männer der großen Sandwüste.”¹ He simply states at one point, “Es sind – Araber.”² Orientalism and racial theory weigh heavily in his ethnography, yet it is striking that elsewhere *in the same book* he writes about “the nonsense of ‘race.’”³ Why would Döblin write that race is “nonsense” in a work that asserts that Jews are Arabs and that some ethnic Poles have “all kinds of Mongoloid touches”?⁴ He seemingly desires no discussion of race, even when he continues to do so himself. Döblin’s orientalization of Polish Jews is fully realized once he idealizes their way of life, in which they are neither fat, nor insecure, nor unhappy like German Jews. More than a simple comparison, however, he believes in the idea of an origin to the Jewish people in Poland as the “core of the nation” from which German Jews have been geographically isolated and “degenerating.”⁵

He curiously uses the term *core* in reference to an incident centered on Germanness as well. Passing by the window of a bookshop in Lodz, he sees a book in German and exclaims how great it is to read “words, German at the core [*kerndeutsche Wörter*].” As in the reference to the Polish Jews as the authentic core of the Jewish people, here too Döblin uses the word *core* to identify the true or authentic Germanness of this book. He feels elation: “Ah, die Heimat habe ich wieder, sei begrüßt vieltausendmal.” Döblin, using language of shock and surprise, states, “Das Herz geht mir auf” upon seeing that the book he is reading is entitled *Die Sünde wider das*

¹ Döblin, *Reise in Polen*, 95.

² “They are: Arabs.” Döblin, *Journey to Poland*, 69-71; Döblin, *Reise in Polen*, 98.

³ “Der Unsinn der >>Rasse<<...” Döblin, *Reise in Polen*, 145; Döblin, *Journey to Poland*, 109-110.

⁴ “allerhand Mongoloides.” Döblin, *Reise in Polen*, 153; Döblin, *Journey to Poland*, 116. “

⁵ “Kern des Volkes”; “degenerierende.” Döblin, *Reise in Polen*, 137; Döblin, *Journey to Poland*, 102.

Blut—a Nazi slogan accompanied by a swastika.¹ Döblin’s first meeting with true Germanness in Poland is via anti-Semitic literature. He leaves the bookshop window repeating his naïve, now ironic statement: “Teure Heimat, sei begrüßt vieltausendmal.” Whereas in the rest of his story he intentionally places distance between himself and his Jewish subject, here he identifies with the Germanness of the subject matter and closes the distance with the use of the word “homeland.” And yet, at the moment he feels at home, his Jewishness confronts him to push him away. Even at this point in the story when Döblin’s internal conflict as German and Jew is tangible, he does not let the reader know of his Jewish background. As explained previously, Döblin expresses a conflicted belief in and suspicion of race, and here at the bookstore window he realizes he, as a German Jew, is marginalized by the same belief in race that he purports as the objective ethnographer on this trip.

By the end of the book, Döblin can be read as coming to a new statement of self. He returns to narrating his train ride, this time out of Poland. A passenger tells Döblin, “You won’t win any popularity contest if you speak German in Poland.”² Even at the very end, he is reminded of his Germanness, and thus they go on to speak French. To accompany this affront to Döblin’s German sensibilities, the Polish nationalist then proceeds with a rant against the Jews in Poland: “His hatred of Germans is tied up with fear. He expresses pure hatred of the Jews, a hatred intensifying into disgust.”³ In juxtaposing the two hatreds, both for Jews and for Germans, Döblin hints at a reflection of his own dual existence. This scene ends his journey to Poland. As he arrives in Danzig, Döblin’s agency returns: “Ich rolle in der Früh...über eine mächtige

¹ “Ah, I’m home again, a thousand greetings.”; “my heart leaps.” Döblin, *Journey to Poland*, 234; Döblin, *Reise in Polen*, 306.

² “Man macht sich nicht beliebt, wenn man in Polen deutsch spricht.” Döblin, *Reise in Polen*, 335; Döblin, *Journey to Poland*, 256.

³ “Sein Deutschenhaß ist mit Furcht verbunden. Gegen die Juden äußert er reinsten Haß, der sich zum Ekel steigert.” Döblin, *Reise in Polen*, 336; Döblin, *Journey to Poland*, 257.

Eisenbahnbrücke. Ein großes, großes Wasser strömt darüber. Rolle zerschlagen in den schmucken Bahnhof von Danzig.”¹ The repetition of “I roll” as he leaves Poland into Danzig contrasts sharply with the initial ride from Berlin to Poland, where the train controlled the travel and Döblin questioned where he was. On returning home, his agency has returned. As a strange text to have a happy ending, *Reise in Polen* might signal Döblin’s growth in self-confidence as both German and Jew.

Döblin’s internal conflict as a German and a Jew are evidenced in his observations of the Polish Jewry. He narrates his unease through issues of agency accompanied by concerns of boundaries crossed by a subject matter he desired to keep at a comfortable distance. He expresses his new knowledge of Jews and ethnic Germans living abroad by emphasizing the physical effect that it had on him with words such as “shock” and “jolt.” Whereas Döblin utilizes these narrative devices to express his anxieties, in the absence of such at the end of the text, it might be suggested that Döblin has gained at least minor reconciliation with his bifurcated nature after facing his uncanny Other. Moreover, in the larger scope of German-Jewish authors representing Eastern European Jews, Döblin upsets a schematic ordering of generations. Where certain scenes repeat earlier fearful depictions, such as those by Theodor Lessing, *Reise in Polen* shifts in focus to praise the authenticity of the Polish Jewry in a manner that can be likened to Arnold Zweig or Hermann Struck. *Reise in Polen* gestures towards a new understanding of the self on Döblin’s part, which the process of representing Eastern European Jews made possible.

¹ “I lumber across an enormous railroad bridge. A huge, huge torrent pours underneath. Battered, I roll into the pretty terminal in Danzig.” Döblin, *Journey to Poland*, 259.

The Case of Y. L. Peretz

In Yiddish literary production, the ironic narrated fear of the daytsh can be read, in many cases, as a working through of the author's Jewish identity between these two worlds, these two Jewish selves—one in the West and one in the East. In chapter one, Rabbi Meir Simcha's evocation of fear of the German-Jewish Other in his biblical commentary was certainly written without irony. But can the supernatural, sometimes fearful, depictions of the German Jew from authors like Sholem Aleichem and Sholem Asch be taken at face value? I propose here, through an analysis of Y. L. Peretz, that these modernist Yiddish authors situated themselves *as* the daytsh through their representations. The call from authors like Arnold Zweig for German Jews to see themselves in the Jewish Other¹ is thus amplified in the Yiddish literature with the thematic blending of the Jewish Other and the Jewish self. This section will explore this theme by examining both the author-narrator fusion in Peretz's 1891 *Travel-Pictures (Rayze-bilder)* and the evolution of the daytsh in "Monish."²

Peretz's autobiography can situate his own reflections on the lack of an author-narrator divide. He begins his 1913 memoirs by reflecting on his first Yiddish work "Monish"—thus showing the ballad's importance to him. Significantly, he writes that the piece is autobiographical: "Just between us, I tried to sketch myself in the poem 'Monish.' But I

¹ As cited in chapter one: "One can also point to the fact that this physical ugliness of the Jew is a Dorian Gray phenomenon: the soulful ugliness of his servants, afflictors and persecutors become incorporated in him. Every ugly and reclusively creeping Jew says to Edom the hunter: I am you; see your ugly and contorted soul spread out upon me." Zweig and Struck, *Das ostjüdische Antlitz*, 78.

² For simplicity, I have chosen the shorter title *Travel-Pictures*, but this episodic narrative is known by many names in the secondary literature: Ruth Wisse calls it "Impressions of a Journey through the Tomaszów Region in 1890 (*Bilder fun a provints rayze in tomashover paviat in yor 1890*)," Marc Caplan calls it both "Impressions of a Journey through the Tomaszow Region (*Bilder fun a provints rayze*)" and "*Rayze-bilder*", Helena Frank "Travel-Pictures," and Dan Miron "Sketches from a Tour of the Provinces (*Bilder fun a provints rayze*)". Probably contributing to this confusion is that this story was republished in Yiddish under different titles. Even the first publication, which is entitled *Bilder fun a provints-rayze in Tomashover paviat in yor 1890* on the main title page, simply yields "*Rayze bilder*" as the heading on the first page of the story. Y. L. Peretz, "Bilder fun a provints-rayze in Tomashover paviat in yor 1890 | 1890 יאָהר אַלס פּאַוויאַט פּאַרצאָלען אין טאַמאַשאָווער אַין פּראָווינץ־רייזע פּון אַ פּראָווינץ־רייזע [Sketches from a Tour of the Provinces in Tomaszów County in the year 1890]," *Di yidishe bibliotek: A zshornal far literatur, gezelshaft un ekonomie* 2 (July 8, 1891).

improved on my looks. ...Like Monish, I heard 'Maria' singing to me from the ruins, but in my case, there was more than one Maria."¹ Dan Miron points out that in Yiddish fiction "the unexpected visitor [to the shtetl] is either the author himself or his slightly fictionalized proxy."² Peretz's conflation of author and fictitious narrators/characters in "Monish" provides useful background for reading Peretz's views about himself.

Peretz's contemporaries also would have read the story as autobiographical. As figure 2.1 shows, the artist Yosef Troyber uses the text of "Monish" in the creation of a micrographic portrait of Peretz.³ This artist's work builds on Peretz's statements, inscribing the words of "Monish" into the body of Peretz. The two are intertwined, explicitly collapsing the author-text, and perhaps, the author-main character divisions.

¹ Peretz, *The I. L. Peretz Reader*, 267; Y. L. Peretz, *Mayne zikhroynes: Baarbet far yugnt* [My Memories: Edited for Youths] (Paris: Bibliotek "B" far undzere kinder, 1952 (1929)), 7, <http://www.archive.org/details/nybc202936>; Y. L. Peretz, *Mayne zikhroynes* [My Memories] (Warsaw: Idisz Buch, 1965), 13, <http://www.archive.org/details/nybc204087>.

² Miron, *The Image of the Shtetl*, 28.

³ Nakhmen Mayzel, (נחמן מייזל), *Perets: Lebn un shafn* [Peretz: Life and Work], 2 vols., vol. 1 (Vilna: B. Kletskin, 1931), 72, <http://archive.org/details/nybc201600>.

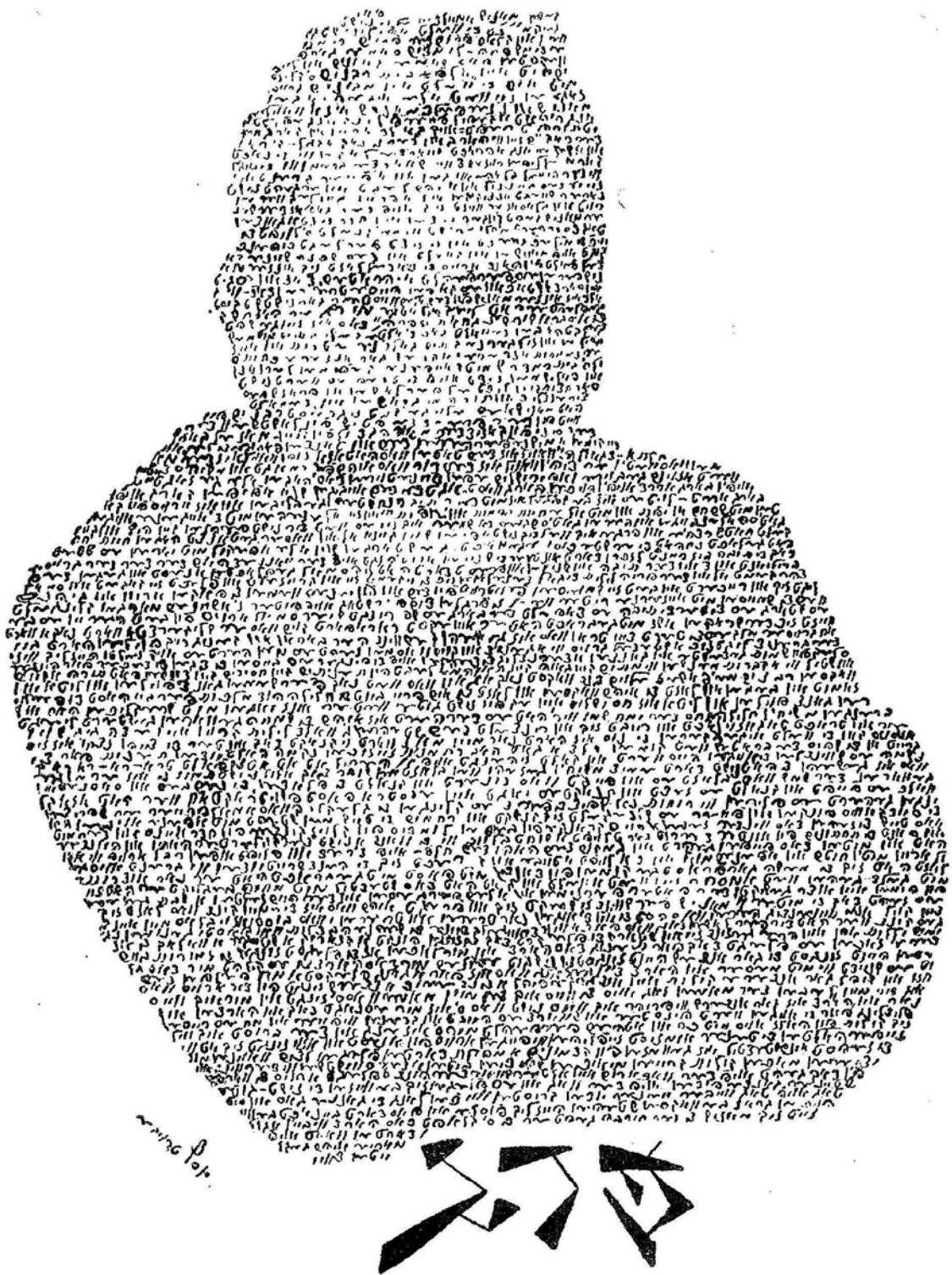


Figure 2.1 Micrographic portrait of Y. L. Peretz with the words of "Monish," Yoysef Troyber

This image is significant in its mode of illustration. Micrography has Jewish artistic roots in the early seventh century. The art form usually utilizes a selection of holy script (e.g., a section of the Torah, prophets) to create an ornate picture, sometimes illustrating the topic in the text but sometimes not. Differing from today's photomosaic, micrography is traditionally black and white.¹ This picture of Peretz ironically uses a traditional, religious art form to portray a modernist Yiddish author with the words of a licentious tale on the corruption of religious youth.²

The daytsh in *Travel-Pictures* also has some intentionally autobiographical similarities to Peretz. *Travel-Pictures* was written as a result of Peretz's experience as a census taker among rural Jews.³ In the story that Peretz wrote after this experience, a westernized Eastern European Jew travels into little shtetls conducting research on the townspeople. The story unfolds as the visitor studies a revolving door of shtetl archetypes: the saint (*tsadik*), the enlightened Jew (*maskil*), the rabbi's wife, etc. The twist is that the researcher is not actually a German Jew per se, just a *Germanized* Eastern European Jew. The author-narrator fusion is explicit. As the worker goes through town asking residents for information about themselves and their households, the inhabitants start talking about the newcomer. The narrator writes that the shtetl dwellers see him as a daytsh.⁴ The shtetl perspective of this new arrival is narrated to the reader by the worker himself, who overhears the townspeople talking. Previous focus has been given to

¹ Leila Avrin, "Note on Micrography: A Jewish Art Form," *Journal of Jewish Art* 6 (1979): 115-117.

² David Mazower points out that other Yiddish authors also had micrographic portraits, including Sholem Aleichem, Mendele, Avrom Goldfaden, Avrom Reyzn, Nokhem-Meyer Shaykevitsch, and Yoysef Opatoshu. David Mazower, "The Goldfaden Micrograph (1897): Portraiture and the Formation of Yiddish Literary Celebrity," *The Mendele Review: Yiddish Literature and Language* 9, no. 7 (June 9, 2005), <http://yiddish.haifa.ac.il/tmr/tmr09/tmr09007.htm>.

³ Nahum Sokolow, "Jan Bloch: The Loyal Convert," in *The Golden Tradition: Jewish Life and Thought in Eastern Europe*, ed. Lucy S. Dawidowicz, First Syracuse University Press ed. (Syracuse, NY: Syracuse University Press, 1996 (1967)), 344.

⁴ Isaac Loeb Perez, (Y. L. Peretz), "Travel-Pictures," in *Stories and Pictures*, trans. Helena Frank (Philadelphia: Jewish Publication Society of America, 1906 (1891)), 275.

the first sighting of the foreign Jew (in “The daytsh,” *Reise in Polen*, etc.). The following will also show how the newcomer is first revealed in a mythic light. As the first-person narrator¹ stares out his window in the first scene, he overhears the shtetl’s perceptions of the westernized Jewish visitor:

My first stop was Tishewitz. ...I stood by the window and observed the market-place. ...Pushing out from the veranda and not far apart, one from the other, stand the huckstresses over the stalls with rolls, breads, peas, beans, and various kinds of fruit. The market-women are in a state of great commotion. I must have impressed them very much. “Bad luck to you!” screams one, “don’t point at him with your finger; he can see!” “Hold your tongue!” The women know that I have come to take records. They confide the secret to each other so softly that I overhear every word, even inside the house. They say, “it is really him!”; “It is a good thing the poor sheep have shepherds who are mindful of them;” nevertheless, “if *that* Shepherd won’t help—drats!” One woman could not understand “why *that* Shepherd should require such messengers”... this is an allusion to my shaven beard and short-skirted coat.²

A focus on this first encounter again intriguingly illustrates the common themes throughout the literature. Not only does the narrator expose the supposed prejudice of the Eastern European Jews against shaving and Western-style clothes, but he also overhears them connect the arrival of the daytsh into the shtetl with the coming of the Messiah. As he hears the women exclaim: “‘It is really him!’ ... One woman cannot understand ‘why *that* Shepherd should require such messengers.’” Later editions of this work explain “*that* Shepherd” in footnotes with the one-word translation “God.”³ It is difficult to tell how many women are speaking, but there are apparently conflicted about this savior. One woman says, “It is really him!” and another responds, “It is a good thing the poor sheep have shepherds who are mindful of them.” Meanwhile another woman does not see it this way: “One woman could not understand ‘why *that* Shepherd should require

¹ Marc Caplan distinguishes between the narrators in the text, noting that there is a first-person and a third-person narrator. See Marc Caplan, “The Fragmentation of Narrative Perspective in Y. L. Peretz’s *Bilder fun a Provints-Rayze*,” *Jewish Social Studies* 14, no. 1 (Fall 2007): 76.

² The following translations of *Travel-Pictures* are edited versions of Helena Frank’s. Perez, “Travel-Pictures,” 224-225.

³ *Ibid.*, 225; Y. L. Peretz, *Rayze-bilder* [Travel-Pictures] (Moscow: Der emes, 1947 (1891)), 5, <http://www.archive.org/details/nybc210717>.

such messengers.” This last woman seemingly does not doubt that the visitor is a messenger of God; however, she seems to not understand the reason why the messenger must come as an irreligious daytsh with a “shaven beard and short-skirted coat.” Here, Peretz reflects on the earlier nineteenth-century representations of the daytsh as the messenger of God, while, at the same time, he positions himself, the census worker, as the object of the fascination.

The many biographical similarities between the author and the narrator of the story, led editors of a 1947 edition of the text to conflate author and narrator in their illustrations. One such illustration depicts Peretz interviewing the townspeople.¹ (See figure 2.2)



Figure 2.2 Illustration of Peretz as the narrator of *Travel-Pictures*, H. Inger, 1947

In this drawing the westernized, bemoustached Peretz holds a cane in hand and sits on a chair with a back. Across from him sits a bearded, religious Eastern European Jew with flowing coat on what appears to be a simple bench. They sit knee to knee. Peretz, with his finger touching the man’s arm, sits forward attentively listening to the man speak. The history of portraying westernized Jews is present in this picture. Peretz is not only shaven with a Western suit, but he

¹ See also the main image on the inside cover. Peretz, *Rayze-bilder*, 3.

also carries the characteristic cane. As shown in the introduction to this dissertation, the cane was common in portrayals of German Jews. (See figures 0.1, 0.4, 0.5, and 0.7) This picture was drawn some years after Peretz's death, and I would like to complicate this strict association between Peretz and the daytsh characters that he portrayed. Peretz does identify with his characters, but not always does he choose to identify with the daytsh in his stories. The relationship between Peretz and the daytsh in his 1888 "Monish" and in this 1891 work are fundamentally different. The Eastern European Jew Monish, with whom Peretz identifies in his autobiography, is situated vis-à-vis the daytsh, namely as its victim. In *Travel-Pictures*, however, Peretz can be seen behind the autobiographically inflected daytsh census taker. Figures 2.1 and 2.2 suggest that Peretz is both the shtetl Jew (Monish) and the invading daytsh (census taker). Peretz, according to the logic of a breakdown between author and narrator/main character, straddles both the Eastern and Western Jewish divide.

One character from *Travel-Pictures* can help further this assessment. In a later scene, the researcher interviews the town Maskil¹, described as a middle-aged, unkempt, but sufficiently secular man. This Maskil should be understood within the framework of the daytsh figure. And yet Peretz uses the figure of the young researcher to juxtapose a new generation of daytsh with that of the traditional Maskil daytsh figure. The first-person narrator describes the scene in the following manner:

And don't imagine Tishewitz to be the world's end! It has a Maskil, too. And a real Maskil, one of the old style, of middle age, uneducated and unread, without books, without even a newspaper, in a word a mere pretense at a Maskil. He lets his beard grow. To be a Maskil in Tishewitz it is enough only to trim it, but they say "he attends to his hair during the ten Days of Penitence!" He is not dressed German fashion [*daytsh geht er oykh nisht*]... Our Maskil stops at blacking his boots and wearing a black ribbon round his neck. He has only sorry remnants of ear-locks, but he wears a peaked cap.²

¹ An adherent of the Jewish Haskalah, i.e., a Western-influenced Jew.

² Perez, "Travel-Pictures," 237-238.

Peretz vividly exhibits how, in 1891, a Maskil was a dated concept. The humorous description informs the reader of the typical characteristics of a Maskil: educated, well read, shaven, and “German” dress. Peretz significantly distances the demographic researcher as daytsh from the Maskil as daytsh: “As I heard later, the Maskil took me for another Maskil and was sure that I should lodge with him, or, at any rate, that he would be my first entry.” The Maskil thought he had found someone who understood him; however, a comic scene ensues in which the Maskil follows the visitor throughout town only to be repeatedly rebuffed. In turn, the Maskil spreads a rumor that the visitor, rather than a private employee of a pro-Jewish organization, is actually a government employee with plans to use the provided information for tax collection.¹ This tension between the two characters serves to contrast the middle-aged, shlubby Maskil as a representative of the outmoded Haskalah with the next generation of young westernized Eastern European Jews. Peretz’s *Travel-Pictures* consequently breaks with maskilic literature to introduce a more modern Yiddish literature. As Marc Caplan writes:

Whereas most earlier Yiddish narratives, particularly extended ones, chose as their protagonist a figure from the shtetl whose experiences and encounters serve to bring together the various elements that constitute traditional Ashkenazi life, Peretz’s protagonist here is an outsider and a stranger—a peripheral figure who neither reflects the values of the shtetl, even in the parodic manner of maskilic satire, nor shares with his interlocutors a common perspective.²

Thus, Peretz’s *Travel-Pictures* can be read as a rejection of the dichotomy of the pro-Haskalah and anti-Haskalah traditions of Yiddish literary production. It promotes a modern self-

¹ Ibid., 238-239.

² Caplan, “The Fragmentation of Narrative Perspective in Y. L. Peretz’s *Bilder fun a Provints-Rayze*,” 67.

understanding, one reflected by the tenuous positioning of the first-person narrator/author against previous literary norms of understanding the guests from the West.¹

Peretz also questions his place in modernity in his earlier piece “Monish.” Intriguingly, Ruth Wisse reads the last scene, where Monish’s ear is nailed to the door of Satan’s ark, as a *voluntary* enslavement to modernity:

It would not have been lost on Peretz’s readers that being drilled by the ear to the doorpost was the fate meted out by the Bible to the slave who voluntarily relinquishes his freedom. In spite of its playful wit, “Monish” is a painful parable about the makings of the modern Jew out of compounded acts of betrayal—his betrayal at the hands of Maria after he himself had betrayed the Jewish commandments in an attempt to win her heart.²

I would like to carry Wisse’s reading of Peretz and modernity further in light of the fact that, as previously mentioned, Peretz changes the story. In its original version, the ending leaves Monish chained to Satan’s ark, not nailed. The ending was thus changed *to* this more biblical reference in 1908. Taking this important alteration into account, Peretz’s voluntary slavery of the Eastern European Jew to modernity (as Wisse reads it) must be delayed some twenty years (from 1888 to 1908). If Peretz’s later ending is understood to be a voluntary slavery, would this indicate Peretz’s recognition that the slavery *at first* in 1888 is actually involuntary? Peretz’s relationship to modernity was not as easy as Wisse’s reading implies. By 1908 Peretz had given himself over to modernity as its willing Jewish slave.

¹ Israel Bartal writes that starting in the 1880s, Haskalah adherents were becoming anachronistic: “While the European model in its German [universalist, enlightened] version was agreed upon by all as an alternative way of life, it sometimes stood in the way of acculturated Jews who sought to identify themselves with their native state. Both Russian and Polish cultures were very different channels of acculturation. The German nature of East European Haskalah was not consistent with the Russifying policy of the Russian government. Until the eighties there was no clear decision what would be the right cultural model. Furthermore, as in the case of German Haskalah, the East European Maskilim stuck to universal concepts at a time when nationalism and romanticism became popular in non-Jewish society. *Thus their adherence to the German model might have provided a kind of anachronistic refuge for their rationalistic expectations*, which could no longer find any substantial basis in East European reality, let alone the years of the great reforms carried out by Alexander II.” (my emphasis) Bartal, “Image of Germany and German Jewry,” 11.

² Wisse, *I.L. Peretz and the Making of Modern Jewish Culture*.

As detailed in chapter one, Peretz edits the German daughter's name, Maria, out of the poem and, more importantly, edits her name out *at the same time* that he changes the ending. His last version, the only version in which a voluntary enslavement is suggested, elides any mention of a character named Maria. Here she is only known as the *daytshke*. Thus the modern Jew who Weiss reads into the 1908 version was not exactly betrayed "at the hands of Maria" as she goes on to write. This elision of the non-Jewish name, as already expounded upon, leaves open the possibility that the harbinger of modernity, the daytsh, could indeed be Jewish—a gentile-Jewish hybrid, if you will. Whereas in the first edition of "Monish" (1888) the unwilling slavery to modernity is brought about by a gentile,¹ the modernity as brought by the gentile-Jew in this last edition is willingly accepted, but the consequences are nevertheless damning. The Eastern European Jew is thus readily enslaved by this mongrel Jewish and gentile daytsh.

In Yiddish modernism, 1908 was a significant year with the convening of the Yiddish Language Conference in Czernowitz. In the wake of being confronted with the Austrian Jew Nathan Birnbaum, who oddly led the Yiddish Language Conference after having learned the language, Yiddish authors were actively questioning the next stage of Yiddish on multiple levels. The blurring between German Jew and Eastern European Jew was omnipresent here. Peretz notably attended the conference in the same year that he revisited his first Yiddish published work. He reworked and intensified the role of the *daytshke* in "Monish" and published "Seven Good Years" characterizing another daytsh in the same year. This suggests a deep reflection on his own growth as a Yiddish writer specifically in relation to the dated notion of the *daytsh* as a Jewish Other. The lines had become too fuzzy to speak in such terms anymore.

The growth present in the works of Peretz and Döblin justifies this comparison. The wild ambivalences of Döblin's *Reise in Polen* become blunted as he came to an epiphany of sorts after

¹ According to Simon Dubnov's interpretation. See earlier.

his Eastern European travels. Working through a depiction of the Ostjude functions as an examination of his German-Jewish identity. Likewise, Peretz's career seems to be bookended by "Monish," and by association, the work on the German Jew. When Chava Turniansky lays out the many "reincarnations" of "Monish," she shows the evolution's importance in understanding Peretz's literary development.¹ I broaden her argument to include not only a treatment of Peretz's Yiddish and literary evolution, but also a treatment of the daytsh in "Monish," and by extension, the daytsh in all his works as a way of understanding Peretz's relationship with modernity. Peretz and Döblin, arguably the most modernist of the authors here, seem to be the most struck by the Jewish Other and the meaning he holds for self-understanding.

Conclusion

Israel Bartal writes that by the 1880s, the Eastern European representations of German Jews had become more realistic.² This seems hard to reconcile with the many mythic representations presented here by Sholem Aleichem and Y. L. Peretz that extended into the early twentieth century. This chapter concludes that despite the mythic representations at this time in Yiddish literature, a strong sense of irony or distance behind their employment does suggest a move toward realism. A brief summary of the last mythical representation of the German Jew that I found, from Sholem Asch, will exemplify this turn to realism.

In 1926, Sholem Asch (1880 - 1957) published the short story "The Little daytsh" (Der kleyner daytsh) in the Warsaw-based newspaper *Haynt*.³ Asch tells of a group of young writers

¹ Turniansky, "Di gilgulim fun Y. L. Peretses 'Monish'."

² "There is no doubt that with the increase in real contacts between Germany and East Europe, the image of אשכנז [Ashkenaz = Germany] became less utopian in the eyes of the Maskilim giving way to a more realistic view." Bartal, "Image of Germany and German Jewry," 13.

³ Asch, "Der kleyner daytsh."

who meet regularly in a coffee house “on one of the Jewish streets in Warsaw.” (The first-person narrator, one of the writers, tells the reader that this cafe is “actually more of a dairy (*milkhike*) restaurant than a coffee house.”) There, the literary group often finds itself in need of the old daytsh, Herr Albert Borenshteyn, who sits in the corner with his coat full of books, speaks a German learned only from the quintessential enlightenment text, Gotthold Ephraim Lessing’s *Nathan der Weise* (*Nathan the Wise*). The group relies on this daytsh to cover the cost of their drinks when they run out of money:

The “little *daytshl*” was a life saver from all bad situations. Today when I think about him from quite some distance, it seems to me that he sat there at that table specifically to wait and help out any of our brothers who were bad off. It was some sort of Elijah the Prophet who sent him there into that coffee house. Because if not, how is it possible for a person to always have change? And it never happened to him once [to be without change]. Every time that someone turned to him—which, by the way, he understood merely from a wink, from a grumble—he would always respond with the delightful, cheery words: *Aber, bitte sehr!*

The daytsh, in turn, is glad to exchange a few lines with anyone who will listen. On the fantastic level, when the narrator reflects on his past and first introduces “the little daytsh,” he questions whether “it was some sort of Elijah the prophet who sent him into that coffee house” just to provide for the group’s financial needs. Familiar characteristics of the daytsh—a Germanized Jew associated with money and Elijah the Prophet—follow Yiddish literature well into the interwar period. By the end of the story, the young idealists visit the daytsh on his deathbed, where a neighboring widowed Jewess tends to him. As they watch the man die, in place of the hallowed words of the “*Shema*” that Jews traditionally say before they pass away,¹ the daytsh

¹ “Hear, O Israel, the Lord is God, the Lord is one!” (Deut. 6:4)

dies with the words of Lessing's *Nathan der Weise* on his lips. Death comes before he is able to finish and the younger generation never hears what was to him so important.¹

Continuing the legacy, Asch further responds to previous notions of the daytsh, but this time the response is to Peretz. This story exclusively nods to Peretz while starkly breaking with his message. Indeed, besides the brief mention of Elijah the Prophet, nothing else about Herr Borenshteyn is mythical. The motif of the rich, mythic daytsh is turned on its head by this daytsh who, magically, always has mere change. This mortal Elijah the Prophet is underwhelming at best. What does it mean that Asch's response to Peretz describes a young generation of Eastern European Jews who do not identify with the old daytsh on any level, cannot even hold a conversation with him, and ultimately witness his death? Where Peretz modifies the tension between German Jews and Eastern European Jews of the nineteenth century by defining himself in *Travel-Pictures* for example, as a newer generation of daytsh set against older notions of the German Jew embodied in the town Maskil, Asch's message is more radical: The tension has been released; there is neither conflict nor identification with the daytsh any longer.² The middle-aged Maskil described in Peretz's 1891 *Travel-Pictures* had by 1926 in "The Little daytsh" developed into Asch's frail and ultimately dead character.

These first two chapters have laid out some representative fantastic depictions of Jewish difference in German-Jewish and Yiddish literatures. Though ostensibly the portrayals are inverses of each other, with the German Jew represented as irreligious (questionably not even

¹ It should be noted that Asch never says that the daytsh is Jewish, but the context makes him undoubtedly so—he is taken care of by a Jewess (*yidene*), has learned German, is fascinated with *Nathan der Weise*, and sits all day in a dairy (kosher?) restaurant located on "the Jewish streets" of Warsaw. As I have been showing, it was not necessary for Asch to explicitly state that the daytsh was a Jew; this would have been understood through the archetypal context.

² Though the association with the daytsh might have been dead for Asch, this story demonstrates that it was still on his radar, so to speak. Indeed while Asch and his wife were living in Berlin years earlier in 1912, Asch's wife receives a letter from her brother who advises her to "Learn German...but don't become German. Live like a Jewish daughter." RG 1139, Abraham Cahan Papers, F65. (YIVO) cited in Joseph Sherman, "Asch, Sholem," in *YIVO Encyclopedia of Jews in Eastern Europe* (2010), http://www.yivoencyclopedia.org/article.aspx/Asch_Sholem.

Jewish) and the Eastern European Jew represented as hyper-religious, the underpinnings of these representations rely on similar tropes, including the utilization of mythic/fantastic elements alongside narrated fear of this Jewish Other. More than simply focusing on the similarities in depictions between the Yiddish and German-Jewish texts, this chapter has focused on the parallels in *function* of these representations. I have shown how these were conceived as responses to previous fearful representations. The cases of Sholem Aleichem and Y. L. Peretz highlight the Yiddish literary side of the inter-European Jewish relationship in illustrating that the Haskalah was outdated by the end of the nineteenth century in Eastern Europe. The incorporation of the Haskalah in the traditional foil of the daytsh turns into a point of identification. Among the German-Jewish cultural Zionists, the Eastern European Jew served as fertilizer to counter Western European Jewry's malaise. That the writers here comprise an all male cast choosing to represent almost exclusively other Jewish men, the two corpuses together speak to a specifically male Jewish identity-formation invested in this project.¹ Moreover, the participation of authors like Kafka, Döblin, Peretz, and Asch speak to the significance of these representations in the European Jewish modernist project.

I have focused on examining a variety of Yiddish works to better understand the daytsh archetype. On their own, both Peretz's magician and his researcher in *Travel-Pictures* are Jews, but not necessarily German. Sholem Aleichem's Herr Hertz Hertenhertz is only borderline Jewish. Peretz's *daytshke* Marie, Sholem Aleichem's daytsh in "The daytsh", and even Sholem Asch's in "The Little daytsh" are not necessarily Jewish at all. Yet when read together in chorus, the ambivalence becomes the message itself. These modernist authors developed the earlier Eastern European myth, which had blurred the lines between German Jew and non-Jew and used

¹ Consider that Else Lasker-Schüler, probably the first female to come to mind when thinking about the Jewish identification with a Jewish Other, writes not on Eastern European Jews, but on Jews of the Middle East. See the conclusion to this dissertation.

Germany as a catchall term for the blighted West. One of the results was the portrayal of the German Jew as the devil at the same time that he is the messiah.¹ The traditional view of the German Jew as sometimes referring to the Western Jew and other times to the enlightened Eastern European Jew became transformed and concentrated in these modernist representations until the poles of German Jew and Eastern European Jew were bent together in what ultimately equated to a meeting of the Jewish Author and the Jewish Other.

The German-Jewish depictions were more programmatic in their approach to this message than were the Yiddish texts. Zweig and Kafka deliberately attempted to collapse the binary by using the second person and calling the reader into action. Arnold Zweig's heroic, eternal Ostjude was intended to uncannily remind the German-Jewish reader of himself. This message is reiterated in Franz Kafka's introductory lesson to Yiddish that evoked fear by ironically bringing the two Jewish groups together. Döblin shifts from being helplessly unable to stop the collapse to becoming an advocate for it. This discussion of certain authors in the German-Jewish Renaissance has been selective and excludes, for example, the group of authors like Else Lasker-Schüler and Eugen Hoeflich who fantasized about Jews from the Middle East rather than Eastern Europe. But as is amply illustrated in the secondary literature on the German-Jewish Renaissance's central concern with the Eastern European Jew specifically, a phrase by Benjamin Segel is often repeated that aptly captures the import of this foreign Jew as opposed to the Middle Eastern Jew: "the cult of the Ostjuden."² Taking into consideration all of the texts

¹ For another example of the modernist imagination that takes Germany as paradigmatic for the West, see Moyshe Kulbak, "Disner Tshayld Harold [Childe Harold of Dzisna]," in *Geklibene dertseylungen: Poemes un lider, Geklibene verk* (New York: Tsiko, 1953 (1933)), <http://babel.hathitrust.org/cgi/pt?id=mdp.39015031054425>.

² Aschheim seems to indicate that Benjamin Segel coins the phrase in 1921. (Aschheim, *Brothers and Strangers*, 210.) Segel writes, "Ein förmlicher Kultus des 'Ostjuden' grassiert." See Benjamin Segel, [Verax, pseud.], "Jüdische Rundschau," *Im deutschen Reich* 7, no. 1 (January 1921): 24, <http://www.compactmemory.de/>. David Brenner attributes the popularization of the phrase "cult of the Ostjude" to Gershom Scholem after WWII. See David Brenner, "Out of the Ghetto and into the Tiergarten: Redefining the Jewish Parvenu and His Origins in *Ost und West*," *The German Quarterly* 66, no. 2 (Spring 1993): 189, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/407467>; Gershom Scholem, *Von Berlin*

from Yiddish literature that extend back into the nineteenth century and are seemingly fascinated with the German Jew evokes the question, can one speak of an inverse “cult of the daytsh”?

Such a transnational comparison does not seek to flatten the difference between the literary corpuses. The main difference is the timing—Yiddish mythical imagery of the German Jew halts around 1908 right when German-Jewish imagery starts on the heels of Buber. That these Yiddish works were written between 1886 and 1908 and the German-Jewish texts between 1906 and 1926 corresponds to the westward migration of Eastern European Jews in large numbers around WWI.¹ At the time Peretz and Sholem Aleichem were writing, Yiddish literary modernism was tied to an idea of the German Jew. By Sholem Asch’s time, the strings of this relationship had been cut. Whereas Yiddish authors were distancing themselves from the mythical representations of an earlier period as an expression of their modernism, German-Jewish authors were doing the exact opposite, *beginning* to use over-the-top mythic imagery to counter negative reports on the Ostjuden.²

Ultimately, however, similar underpinnings belie the geographical, linguistic, genre, and even political differences that separate the texts. Both of these authorial groups imagined the

nach Jerusalem: Jugenderinnerungen (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 1977), 60, 100. See the chapter entitled “The Cult of the Ostjuden” in Aschheim, *Brothers and Strangers*.

¹ “A Premature Passover,” the last of Sholem Aleichem’s writings here to depict the German Jew, reflects this population shift. Written in 1908, again the year of the Czernowitz Yiddish Language Conference and the year in which Peretz himself publishes his final two pieces on the daytsh, this comical piece does not have the German Jew visting the East, but just the opposite, the Polish Jew has come to Germany. Another text that deals with the German Jew in his own country from this time period is Abner Tannenbaum, *Der getoyfter yid: A roman fun virklikhn yidishn lebn in Daytshland in 4 teyl* | טהייל 4 אין די יטשלאַנד אין 4 ווירקליכען יודישען לעבען אין די יטשלאַנד אין 4 טהייל [The Baptized Jew: A Novel about Real Jewish Life in Germany in 4 Parts], 4 vols. (Vilna: M. Katsenelnbogen, 1902), <http://www.archive.org/details/nybc211340>. See also Bartal for his discussion of how the meeting of the two populations in Germany affects the realist turn in Bartal, “Image of Germany and German Jewry.”

² Another difference is genre choice. Zweig’s *Das ostjüdische Antlitz* and Peretz’s *Travel-Pictures* detail a physical meeting of the Jewish Other on expeditions, but these have been placed into conversation with Kafka’s introductory speech to a performance. Children’s stories and folktales could not be more different than an ethnography. Kafka’s and Peretz’s pieces are much more ironic than Zweig’s work, in which the older tropes of the Ostjude are simply inverted rather than sublated, one might say. A narrated subjectivity plays an important role among the German Jews in comparison to the almost absent first person of the Yiddish writers. Nevertheless, it has been argued here, with the counterexample of Peretz’s fictional narrators, that narrated subjectivity by a clear authorial voice does not yield a deeper identification with the foreign Jew. Looking at the author-narrator collapse in the Yiddish texts, it is clear that Yiddish authors saw themselves in the foreign Jew and were becoming this Jewish Other.

collapse of the binary to the point that the German Jew and Eastern European Jew, or Jewish Author and Jewish Other, became indistinguishable.

PART II
Cultural Exchanges

CHAPTER 3

Ex Libris and Exchange: Immigrant Interventions in the German-Jewish Renaissance

At the beginning of the twentieth century, an atavistic interest in Eastern European Jewry served as an aesthetic propeller for the German-Jewish renaissance. “The cult of the Ostjuden,” a phrase popularized by Gershom Scholem in his autobiography from the 1970s, is used to describe the perceived discovery of an authentic Jewish life in Eastern Europe by a generation of young German Jews around WWI.¹ Some authors often associated with the longing gaze eastward are Franz Kafka, Martin Buber, Franz Rosenzweig, and Alfred Döblin. It is with a work by Arnold Zweig, however, that the cult reached an ecstatic register in its apotheosis of the Eastern European Jew. Opening his 1920 illustrated work *Das ostjüdische Antlitz*, Zweig’s first-person ekphrastic narrative brings to life a drawing of a romanticized Eastern Jewish figure with beard and yarmulke: “Er wendet sein Auge von mir fort in eine Ferne, die nichts sonst ist als Zeit. Sein Profil gleitet wie ein fallendes Wasser in den Bart, der sich in Gischt und Wolke löst.”² (See figure 1.4) Such portrayals of traditional Eastern European Jews afforded German-Jewish authors and artists an avenue to explore their own Jewish identity. This chapter argues that behind this image at the center of the Jewish renaissance was twenty years of collaborative work and cultural exchange between German Jews and Eastern European Jews who were already

¹ Scholem, *Von Berlin nach Jerusalem: Jugenderinnerungen*, 60, 100. See the chapter entitled “The Cult of the Ostjuden” in Aschheim, *Brothers and Strangers*.

² “He turns his eye away from me into a distance that is nothing else but time. His profile slides like falling water into his beard which dissipates into froth and clouds.” Arnold Zweig and Hermann Struck, *Das ostjüdische Antlitz* (Berlin: Welt, 1920), 13.

living in Germany. I aver that a transnational examination of German-Jewish modernism reveals how Eastern European Jews themselves helped to fashion their own image in German culture.

Certainly, many factors went into the evolution of the German-Jewish renaissance and its investment in the *shtetl*-Jewish archetype. Scholarship by Steven Aschheim, Sander Gilman, Michael Brenner, Shulamit Volkov, and others has shown that this phenomenon represented a radical shift after more than a century in which acculturating German Jews rejected the more traditional Jewry of Eastern Europe.¹ During the Weimar republic, the acceptance of “Ostjuden” among mostly Zionist-leaning thinkers nevertheless ran against a lingering rejection of them by other German-Jewish groups.² The research on the idealization (or rejection) of this Eastern population has yet to give a voice to the immigrant Jews from various parts of Eastern Europe who lived in Germany watching this turn of events. In examining this marginalized group, it becomes clear that Eastern European Jews who had come to Berlin and Vienna in the 1880s and 1890s began publishing idyllic writings and drawings of traditional Jewish life in Eastern Europe around 1900.³ These stories and pictures became the building blocks upon which native-born German Jews constructed the “cult of the Ostjuden” around WWI. With this chapter, I shed light on the process of cultural exchange that allowed immigrant Jewish culture to shape German-Jewish life. I analyze the bookplate, or *ex libris*, as an unlikely record of how the idealized picture of the *shtetl* Jew crossed over from Eastern European immigrants’ hands into those of

¹ See Gilman, "The Rediscovery of the Eastern Jews: German Jews in the East, 1890-1918," 338-365; Aschheim, *Brothers and Strangers*; Volkov, "The Dynamics of Dissimilation: Ostjuden and German Jews," 195-211; Wertheimer, *Unwelcome Strangers*; Grossman, *Discourse on Yiddish*. See also select essays in Kalmar and Penslar, eds., *Orientalism and the Jews*.

² The Verband nationaldeutscher Juden is a notable example from that section of German-Jewish society that did not accept the cult. See Naumann, *Vom nationaldeutschen Juden*, 21-22.

³ Gabriele von Glasenapp and Hans Horch suggest that immigrants began the German literary shift from “Ghettoliteratur” into a more positive “Shtetl-literatur.” See Gabriele von Glasenapp and Hans Otto Horch, "Ghettoliteratur: Ein hybrides Genre der deutsch-jüdischen Literatur," in *Ghettoliteratur: Eine Dokumentation zur deutsch-jüdischen Literaturgeschichte des 19. und frühen 20. Jahrhunderts*, ed. Gabriele von Glasenapp and Hans Otto Horch, 2 vols., vol. 2: Autoren und Werke der Ghettoliteratur, *Conditio Judaica* 55 (Tübingen: Max Niemeyer, 2005), 1119.

native-born German Jews. Exposing an earlier history to the WWI and early Weimar period gives agency back to these immigrants in the historical record as the curators of their own idealized image.

This argument pivots on a unique piece of historical evidence that vividly illustrates the evolution of this cultural exchange, namely bookplates. An *ex libris* is a piece of paper adhesively attached to the inside front cover of a book, which at a minimum states the book owner's name and often includes a decorative design or picture of the owner's choosing. Since its inception in the 1500s, the bookplate has not significantly changed its form, typically ranging in size from about 4 x 2 inches to 5 x 8 inches. Designed to juxtapose one's own name alongside a chosen image, bookplates ideally showcase how identity is selectively expressed—through occupation, hobby, and even sexual orientation.¹ Though it might be an unfamiliar cultural object today, ornate artistic bookplates were not uncommon for Western European men at the beginning of the twentieth century. When discussing the owners of *ex libris*, certainly class must be considered. For these owners of private libraries, the cost of commissioning a bookplate could soar into the thousands of dollars.² Here, however, I will specifically be reflecting on bookplates owned by Jews in *fin de siècle* Germany and the aesthetic transformation that these *ex libris* underwent. Not only did this period see the rise in popularity of Jewish iconography on bookplates, but, thanks to immigrant Eastern European Jews living in Germany who first produced and circulated the positive image of the bearded Jew with yarmulke, broader German-Jewish society acquired a visual vocabulary for conveying their own idealized selves.

¹ A collectable genre of bookplates, still popular today, is known as *ex libris eroticis*.

² In 1907 E. M. Lilien charged 200 Mark for one bookplate (in today's value, \$1,161). In 1912 Lilien charged 300 Kronen (in today's value, \$1,392). In 1948 Marc Chagall charged 1,000 dollars for a single bookplate (in today's value, \$9,536)! See Hermann Simon, "Jüdische Exlibris," *Marginalien: Zeitschrift für Buchkunst und Bibliophilie*, no. 101 (1986): 62; Ephraim Mose Lilien, *Briefe an seine Frau, 1905-1925*, ed. Otto M. Lilien and Eve Strauss (Königstein im Taunus: Jüdischer Verlag Athenäum, 1985), 127; Benjamin Harshav, *Marc Chagall and His Times: A Documentary Narrative* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2004), 648, <http://books.google.com/books?id=WXI6K9vPLfkC>.

The material for this study comes from the Klau Library at the Hebrew Union College in Cincinnati, which houses the world's largest collection of Jewish bookplates.¹ This collection yields over ten-thousand bookplates from across the world and spanning two centuries. On file are the bookplates of many famous personalities, including those belonging to Albert Einstein, Martin Buber, Max Brod, Franz Rosenzweig, and Sigmund Freud. (See appendix A²) As is apparent from even a cursory glance at the collection, many of the Jewish-owned bookplates did not have Jewish themes.³ A Star of David appears on the bookplates of Max Brod and Martin Buber, but overtly Jewish iconography is lacking from many of the ex libris. Those explicitly carrying a Jewish message, usually characterized by Jewish symbols—menorah, Star of David, Hebrew writing, etc.—thus constitute only a subset within the collection. On balance, the most popular bookplate in the collection is one with a drawing of a quintessential Jew from the shtetl, sitting and learning from a large religious text, with beard, yarmulke, and prayer shawl. Jewish men and women from across the world have used this same image. (See appendix B) Of significance to the topic at hand is that this bookplate originates in the German-Jewish renaissance, yet continued to be used by various Jewish owners for the greater part of a century. An interpretation of the material provided at Hebrew Union College can give an historical overview of the rise of the image of the traditional Eastern European Jew on German-Jewish

¹ Jonathan Rodgers. *Inventory to the Jewish Bookplate Collection*. Hebrew Union College Library, 1979, <http://www.huc.edu/libraries/collections/inventories/Bookplate%20inventory.pdf>. The Jewish Theological Seminary has 3,000.

² For sources relating to these bookplates, see Gerd Pichler, "Bertold Löffler's Bookplate for Sigmund Freud," *Psychoanalysis and History* 12, no. 1 (2010), <http://www.eupublishing.com/doi/abs/10.3366/E1460823509000518>; Otto Lilien, "The Bookplate Designs of E. M. Lilien," *The Bookplate Journal* 4, no. 2 (September 1986). For a reading of Martin Buber's bookplate, see Richard V. Benson, "Modernity, Marginality, and Redemption: German and Jewish Identity at the Fin-de-siècle" (PhD diss., University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, 2009), 161-164, <https://cdr.lib.unc.edu/indexablecontent?id=uuid:b9710e9f-6206-43e3-8b87-4e641fae87b5>.

³ The collection contains bookplates owned by non-Jews, when the theme of the bookplate displayed some Jewish iconography or the owner had some Jewish connection. Adolf Hitler's bookplate is here, for example.

owned bookplates and identify multiple discourses of the Jewish renaissance taking place within a single bookplate.

Analyzing artistic bookplates as a case study for trends in the visual arts of this moment, my research highlights how Eastern European Jews living in Germany sought to identify with and own the idealized images for themselves. This argument does more than shed light on the engagement of Eastern immigrant Jews with the German-Jewish discourse on the Eastern European Jew; it demonstrates that they were the main curators of the mythic image that came to be so entrenched in later interwar German-Jewish culture. With this research I would ultimately like to question the following historical narrative of the German-Jewish renaissance: In the late nineteenth century with anti-Semitism on the rise, Zionism ushered forth out of the ethnic contexts of the Austro-Hungarian Empire as a Jewish response to European nationalism. The fin de siècle saw the subset of cultural Zionism enter into more mainstream German-Jewish culture, bringing with it Orientalist-inflected notions of the New Jew to reject Diasporist Jewry, Eastern European Jewry in particular. But the encounter with Eastern Jews on the warfront in WWI by German-Jewish soldiers led to a reversal in thinking about Ostjuden, an aggrandizement of this group, which came out in full force at the beginning of the Weimar Republic. This narrative places Eastern Jews thoroughly in a passive position: they *are rejected*, then they *are encountered*, and finally they *are appropriated*. In contrast, I am upending this view of the passive Eastern Jew and arguing that immigrant Eastern European Jews in Germany, who numbered 35,000 by 1900,¹ played a central role in the creation and distribution of idyllic images of East European Jewish life. In their negotiation of identities, these immigrant Jews at the turn of the century—perhaps knowingly, maybe unwittingly—initiated the cult of the Ostjuden a decade before the German-Jewish encounter in WWI. This research moves along

¹ Wertheimer, *Unwelcome Strangers*, 79.

East-West, artist-patron, text-image, Jewish-Christian, and public-private axes, to speak to the larger idea that German-Jewish and East European Jewish modernist projects were intrinsically linked in a dialectic relationship of cultural exchange.

Jewish Bookplates as Western Engagement

A brief historical overview reveals the rise of the bookplate practice among Jews as an engagement with modern Western culture. Even though the illustrated *ex libris* appeared in sixteenth-century Western Europe after the advent of the printing press, Avrom Weiss identifies the earliest Jewish-owned and Jewish-designed bookplates from 1746 in England and 1790 in Germany. Weiss notes that during the nineteenth century, no notable Jewish artist designed bookplates with a Jewish theme, but by the twentieth century the use of Jewish themes was widespread, especially in the United States with its “hundreds of [Jewish] cultural and religious institutions.” He traces the rise in Jewish bookplate usage to artists in Germany, who played a significant, almost singular role in his historical narrative, notably E. M. Lilien, Hermann Struck, Joseph Budko, and Jakob Steinhardt.¹

A bookplate, crafted for the individual with printed name and select picture at some cost, might represent some of the most characteristic Western values—individuality, commercialism, and private ownership. As is apparent from the highly artistic bookplates in the appendices, these were meant to be seen by others. And they were. Jewish *ex libris* were not merely found on bookshelves, but were also collected, discussed at *ex libris* society meetings, and printed in

¹ Avrom Weiss, “The Jewish Book-Plate,” in *Tave sefer Yehudiyim* [Jewish Book-Plates (Ex Libris)], ed. Abraham Meir Habermann (Safed: Museum of Printing Art, and Massadah, 1972), xv-xix.

Jewish and non-Jewish periodicals.¹ Thus ostentation, or more specifically, conspicuous ownership, should be placed in its modern Western context. As a point of comparison, rabbinical authorities from pre-modern Jewish society seem to have looked down upon ostentatiously asserting ownership of an item, books in particular. The influential medieval rabbi Yehudah HaChasid (1140-1217) from Regensburg wrote, “One should not write in a book ‘This is mine,’ instead he should write his name without ‘This is mine.’”² This prescription outlines the acceptable level of claiming ownership and signaling it to others. Even today, there is a custom among traditional Jews to preface his/her written name in a book with the acronym for the following biblical verse: “The world in its fullness belongs to God.”³ (Psalms 24:1) Brent Spodek avers that this custom demonstrates how traditional Judaism shuns consumerism and “validates simple ownership.” As he interprets the message being conveyed to the Jewish owner: “one’s ownership of a book is really just a limited stewardship.”⁴ Under this reasoning, humbling thoughts of the divine should temper one’s display of book possession.⁵ From the time of Yehudah HaChasid to the fin de siècle, the German-Jewish community underwent a radical transformation. By the nineteenth century, canonical German rabbinical figures from across the religious spectrum, like Abraham Geiger and Samson Raphael Hirsch, were using bookplates as much as the laymen to boldly declare their ownership of a work.⁶ The slight signature or book

¹ They commonly appeared in the ex libris journal *Zeitschrift für Bücherzeichen - Bibliothekskunde und Gelehrten-geschichte: Organ des Ex-libris-Vereins zu Berlin*.

² “לא יכתוב אדם על ספר שלי הוא אלא יכתוב עליו שמו בלי שלי הוא” Yehudah HaChasid, “צוואת רבי יהודה החסיד” [The Will of Rabbi Yehuda HaChasid], in ספר חסידים [Book of the Pious] (New York: Pardes, 1953), 10, <http://hebrewbooks.org/14561>.

³ “לה' הארץ ומלוואה” This is often abbreviated לה"ו. See Menachem Mendel Shneerson, *Likute Sichot al parshiyot hashavua, chagim umoadim* | הגים ומועדים, חגים ומועדים על פרשיות השבוע, חגים ומועדים [Collected Conversations on the Weekly Torah Portions, Festivals, and Holidays], vol. 14, Devarim (New York: Vaad L'hafotzos Sichos, 1997 (1988)), 279, note 13.

⁴ Brent Chaim Spodek, “Who is Rich?,” *Sh'ma: A Journal of Jewish Responsibility* (February 2012): 1-2.

⁵ It is of note that only books are within the purview of these *Halachic* discussions. Other property which one might also want to mark as one’s own—say, a coat or an animal—is intriguingly not mentioned. Books specifically hold a unique place in Jewish custom.

⁶ Philip Goodman, *Illustrated Essays on Jewish Bookplates* (New York: KTAV, 1971), 12.

stamp that takes up little space on a page is replaced with an almost full-page artistic advertisement in Western Europe.¹

Over time, Jews living in Germany came to adopt the use of the bookplate. Even at the turn of the twentieth century, however, differences between Jewish groups within Europe show bookplates to be a specifically Western, and not an Eastern, European phenomenon. At this time the bookplate was not nearly as popular in Eastern European society at large. At the Hebrew Union College collection, very few come from pre-WWII locations east of Prague.² This is important as we keep in mind the cultural differences between Western and Eastern European Jews. Immigrant Jews who commissioned bookplates in Germany were tapping into a Western European practice. We can now turn to how cultural exchange was achieved once these immigrants made this cultural object their own.

¹ See A[braham] M[eir] Habermann, *Tave sefer Yehudiyim [Jewish Book-Plates (Ex Libris)]* (Safed: Museum of Printing Art, and Massadah, 1972), 19; Albert Wolf, "Jüdische Ex-Libris," *Monatsschrift für Geschichte und Wissenschaft des Judentums* 42 (November 1898): 522-524, <http://books.google.com/books?id=skpgIaR9go8C>; Dovid Katz, *Windows to a Lost Jewish Past: Vilna Books Stamps* (Vilnius: Versus Aureus, 2008).

² Two of the few bookplates in the collection from Eastern Europe belonged to Maksymilian Goldstein and Maxim Gorki. Notably though, the artists for these two bookplates were living at the time in Western European capitals, however—in Paris, Berlin, and Vienna.

Immigrant Interventions

Among the bookplates at Hebrew Union College owned by German Jews, work by the artist Ephraim Moses Lilien (1874 – 1925) appears again and again.¹ The artist of the nascent Zionist movement, E. M. Lilien was praised in the newspapers as the founder of a new Jewish art. With his distinctive use of Jugendstil and clean black, sweeping lines, he almost single-handedly illustrated the discourse on the New Jew of *Muskeljudentum*.² Lilien's Eastern Jewish background (born in Drohobycz, Galicia) provided central authenticity to his idyllic images of Eastern European Jews, which he consistently produced after his 1902 illustration of Morris Rosenfeld's *Lieder des Ghetto*.³



Figure 3.1 Portrait of Ephraim Moses Lilien, 1905

¹ The picture of E. M. Lilien is taken from Regener, *E. M. Lilien*.

² Presner, "Clear Heads, Solid Stomachs, and Hard Muscles': Max Nordau and the Aesthetics of Jewish Regeneration," 269-296.

³ Rosenfeld, *Lieder des Ghetto*.

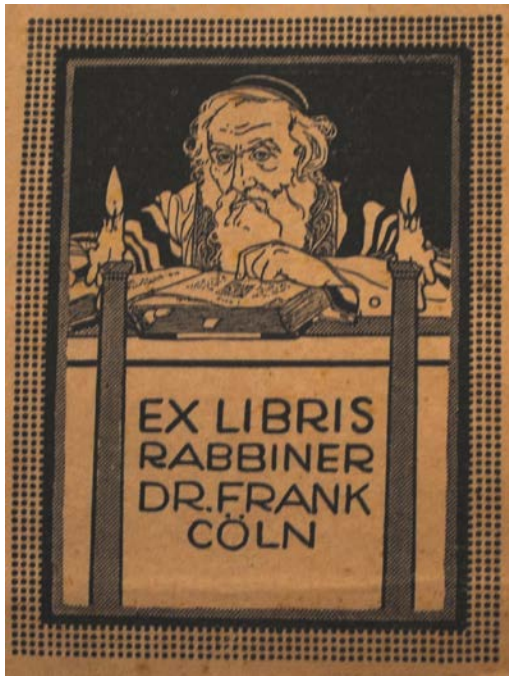
Lilien, who has been called “the father of the Jewish bookplate,” made over 50 bookplates, some 40 of which were drawn in the decade between 1898 and 1908.¹ His patrons included Martin Buber, Maxim Gorki, and Stefan Zweig.² (See appendix A) Showcasing Lilien’s bookplates became a pet project of the first largely illustrated German-Jewish periodical, *Ost und West*. In its first few years, the Berlin-based Zionist journal displayed both Lilien’s generic and Jewish-themed bookplates in an effort to show the new direction of Jewish art.³ Lilien’s bookplates were so significant that Buber explicitly mentioned them in recognition of Lilien at the Fifth Zionist Congress in 1901: “His book and Hebrew ex libris have won our love, and we imbue him with all our hope, which is worth more than the greatest pride.”⁴ Indeed, Buber’s love of Lilien’s bookplates was shared by others. Among more than ten-thousand internationally Jewish-owned and Jewish-themed bookplates in the collection, the most popular is one specific image by Lilien of an elderly, bearded man bent over a religious tome wearing a yarmulke and a traditionally striped prayer shawl.

¹ Philip Goodman. "Bookplates," *Encyclopedia Judaica*, IV (1972), cols 1219-20. Cited in Lilien, "The Bookplate Designs of E. M. Lilien," 78. Hermann Simon writes that Lilien made a total of 55 bookplates, Otto Lilien says 52. See Simon, "Jüdische Exlibris," 61; Lilien, "The Bookplate Designs of E. M. Lilien," 73.

² Lilien’s bookplate patrons are listed in Lilien, "The Bookplate Designs of E. M. Lilien."

³ For the significant impact of this journal on German-Jewish identity, see Brenner, *Marketing Identities*; Gavriel Rosenfeld, "Defining 'Jewish Art' in *Ost und West*, 1901-1908: A Study in the Nationalisation of Jewish Culture," *Leo Baeck Institute Yearbook* 39, no. 1 (1994), <http://leobaeck.oxfordjournals.org/>. For some of the bookplates printed in *Ost und West*, see for example, M. Hirschfelder, "E. M. Lilien," *Ost und West* 1, no. 7 (1901), <http://www.compactmemory.de/>; M. Hirschfelder, "Zwei neue Lilien'sche Ex-Libris," *Ost und West* 1, no. 11 (1901), <http://www.compactmemory.de/>; Martin Buber, "Jüdische Kunst," *Ost und West* 2, no. 3 (1902), <http://www.compactmemory.de/>; Regener, "Zionistenstolz und Sehnsucht," 846.

⁴ Cited in Stanislawski, *Zionism and the Fin de siècle*, 108. With time, other Jewish artists would vie for the love of Jewish book owners. An art critic, Karl Schwarz, preferred Joseph Budko’s ex libris as “the only real Jewish ex libris,” criticizing the “misdirected formalism” of Lilien. See Goodman, *Illustrated Essays on Jewish Bookplates*, 38.



Figures 3.2 and 3.3 *Left, Ex libris Frank Cöln. Right, Ex libris Wilhelm Freyhan.*

Jews from pre-WWI Germany to post-WWII America took this image, oftentimes adapted it to their tastes, and attached their name. (See appendix B) Two such adapted examples by German Jews can be seen with the bookplates of Rabbi Frank and Wilhelm Freyhan. (See figures 3.2 and 3.3) Before turning to the original drawing, I want to first focus on how these German-Jewish owners appropriated this image of the shtetl Jew. One can see from these two examples that the male figure drawn with ink is the center of both plates; however, there are many features that differ between the two images and have been modified from Lilien's original drawing. Rabbi Frank's bookplate presents a stark black background in contrast to the man sitting in the foreground, while Wilhelm Freyhan personalizes his image's background to add factory smoke stacks and a harp. A frame around Frank's ex libris is absent from Freyhan's. Significantly, the text in the book on Freyhan's ex libris is changed so that the Jew reads not from the Talmud with its characteristic page layout as at left, but from a book by the Orthodox German rabbi Samson

Raphael Hirsch. The Hebrew text changed from the original bookplate drawing, now yields Hirsch's motto *Torah im derech erez*, which roughly translates to "Torah with Worldliness."¹ Considering that Freyhan was a founding member of the political arm of European Jewish Orthodoxy, Agudas Jisroel, his reasons for choosing to identify with such a religious, bearded man may not be as outlandish as with other German Jews.² Perhaps Rabbi Frank and Wilhelm Freyhan had beards themselves. This was not the case, however, for the first owner of this idealized picture.



Figure 3.4 Ex libris Leo Winz, 1901

¹ Samson Raphael Hirsch, *Jewish Education*, vol. 7, The Collected Writings (New York: Philipp Feldheim, 1997), 4; Samson Raphael Hirsch, "Jüdisches Schulwesen," *Jeschurun* 1, no. 1 (1854): 55-56, <http://www.compactmemory.de/>.

² See the "Lebenslauf" in Wilhelm Freyhan, "Die Entwicklung Breslaus im Eisenbahnzeitalter in ihrer Beeinflussung durch die geographische Lage: Ein anthropogeographischer Versuch" (PhD diss., Universität Breslau, 1922). The harp in the background is a redrawing of another image by Lilien. See cover of Rosenfeld, *Lieder des Ghetto*.

Tracing the history of this bookplate back, we find that the original owner was not a German Jew, but an East European Jewish immigrant to Berlin, Leo Winz (1876 – 1952). Born in Hlukhiv, present-day Ukraine, Winz was a transplanted Eastern European Jew like Lilien. He was the editor of the journal *Ost und West*—the same journal which published many of Lilien’s bookplates for public consumption. In 1904, Winz used the forum of the journal to print his own bookplate made by Lilien.¹ (See figure 3.4) Looking past his bookplate avatar, the real face of Leo Winz is dramatically different.² (See figure 3.5) Winz, like Lilien, was not a religious Jew in appearance and did not have a beard. These two were thoroughly acculturated Jews, in terms of appearance, who chose to identify—to a certain extent—with a religious, distinctly Eastern Jew.



Figure 3.5 Portrait of Leo Winz, 1935. Courtesy of Philipp Messner.

Let us consider just one variation between the original bookplate as owned by Winz and the altered bookplates as owned by Frank and Freyhan to bring out the differences between the two groups of Jews that we are discussing—immigrant cosmopolitan Eastern European Jews and

¹ Thon, "Ein Beitrag zur Geschichte der zeichnenden Künste," 835-836.

² Picture from "Leo Winz." *Gemeindeblatt der jüdischen Gemeinde zu Berlin*, February 2, 1935. Courtesy of Philipp Messner.

dissimilatory German Jews.¹ One might notice that the yarmulkes on the three bookplates are slightly different from one another. Frank's yarmulke is somewhat thinner. Frank's and Freyhan's yarmulkes are black in comparison to the decorative, woven yarmulke that Lilien draws for Winz. Changing the color of a yarmulke might seem insignificant, but it is actually an important political statement. However many inordinate number of words the Eskimo might have for snow, Jews have just as many for hats. The differences among head gear signify religious affiliation, observance level, and geographic location, among other things. A black yarmulke signifies a religious Jew; though not necessarily worn only by Orthodox Jews, it is most commonly found among them. The woven yarmulke on Winz's ex libris is traditionally worn by Jews of the Caucasus Mountains and Bukhara (Uzbekistan). The Bukharian yarmulke on an otherwise Ashkenazi (Central/Eastern European) religious Jew suggests that either Lilien or Winz was orientalizing this Eastern European Jew, imagining him geographically displaced further in the East. In contrast, the Jewish figure in the revised versions by Frank and Freyhan is brought closer to home with the black yarmulke. Especially given the new inscription by the German rabbi Hirsch on Freyhan's bookplate, this revision suggests that the Jewish figure is to be read as German and Orthodox, like Freyhan himself. These three examples demonstrate how the same Eastern Jewish representation was employed to fit into disparate discourses of Jewish authenticity. (Again, see appendix B for six other bookplates carrying this image.) Beyond a demonstration of the differences between German Jews and the Eastern Jewish immigrants living in Germany, this context where bookplate images were circulated and exchanged contributes to our understanding of the communal nature of German-Jewish book culture and the cultural transfers that underpinned it.

¹ For a discussion of dissimilation, see Volkov, "The Dynamics of Dissimilation: Ostjuden and German Jews."

Further examples from other cosmopolitan Eastern European Jews can demonstrate that Winz and Lilien were not alone in their attachment to the shtetl Jewish image. Reuben Brainin (1862 – 1939) was born in Liady, present-day Belarus. An author of Hebrew literature, he resided for a few years in both Vienna and Berlin before moving to the United States. During his time in Berlin, he commissioned Lilien for his ex libris. Brainin’s bookplate was the first all-Hebrew Jewish-centric bookplate to be displayed in *Ost und West*, appearing in one of the first issues of the journal, three years earlier than the issue that showcased Winz’s.¹ (See figure 3.6) Besides carrying Brainin’s Hebrew name (Reuven ben Mordechai Brainen), it also yields Lilien’s Hebrew neologism *misifre*, a translation of the Latin *ex libris*. The issue in which it was included offered a reading of the bookplate, which provides us with insight into its German-Jewish reception (see figure 3.6):

¹ Brenner, *Renaissance of Jewish Culture*, 166.



Figure 3.6 Ex libris Reuben Brainin, 1900

Das zweite hier abgebildete Bibliothekzeichen trägt unten in hebräischer Sprache und Schrift die Bezeichnung “Missiphre” (aus der Bücherei), oben ebenso den Namen des Eigentümers „Ruben ben Mordechai Brainin“. Brainin ist ein jetzt in Berlin lebender, bedeutender hebräischer Schriftsteller, dessen Muttersprache hebräisch ist und dessen Bibliothek fast ausschliesslich aus hebräischen Büchern besteht. Deshalb finden sich auf der Zeichnung auch nur durchweg hebräische Worte. Das Motive ist einfach, aber charakteristisch. Umrahmt von kahlen Dornenranken, dem ewigen Symbol des jüdischen Volkes, das seit langer, langer Zeit nichts mehr von Rosen weiss, sehen wir die Bilder von zehn hervorragenden Hebräern, die durch ihre Schriften ihr ganzes Leben lang für das Judentum gewirkt und gestrebt haben. Ernst und Milde, Würde und Weisheit liegt in ihren durchgeistigten Gesichtern. Als die schönsten und markantesten ragen unter den Köpfen hervor: der grosse Karlsruher Rabbiner Thias Weyl; Rappoport, der geistvolle Kritiker und einstige Rabbiner von Prag, und Spinoza.¹

This reading by Moritz Hirschfelder, a writer and doctor from Berlin whose own bookplate was drawn by Lilien, demonstrates the nascent German-Jewish fantasies of the holistic life of the Eastern Jew.² Hirschfelder sees Brainin as a thoroughbred Hebrew. In this short paragraph, the word *Hebrew* appears five times. Brainin is a Hebrew writer with a library exclusively of

¹ “The second bookplate illustrated here includes, below, the Hebrew term “Missiphre” (from the library of), as well as above, the name of the owner ‘Ruben ben Mordechai Brainin.’ Brainin is a significant Hebrew writer now living in Berlin, whose native language is Hebrew and whose library consists almost exclusively of Hebrew books. For this reason, here too on the drawing there are only Hebrew words to be found throughout. The motif is simple, but characteristic. Framed by barren thorn tendrils, the eternal symbol of the Jewish people, which for a long, long time has not known of roses. We see the pictures of ten exceptional Hebrews, who through their writings worked and strove for Judaism their whole lives. Severity and mildness, dignity and wisdom rest on their spiritually imbued faces. The most beautiful and prominent of the heads stand out: the great Rabbi Thias Weyl of Karlsruhe; Rappoport, the spiritual critic and former rabbi of Prague, and Spinoza.” Hirschfelder, “Zwei neue Lilien'sche Ex-Libris.”

² See Lilien, “The Bookplate Designs of E. M. Lilien,” 75, 79.

Hebrew books, which will soon be decorated with this bookplate of “ten exemplary Hebrews.” To top off Hirschfelder’s description, he writes that Hebrew was Brainin’s native language. Certainly, the Hebrew in which Brainin wrote was not spoken at home, and this should be understood as a misunderstanding/idealization on Hirschfelder’s part.

The bookplate imagery here is strongly rooted in Brainin’s Eastern European home while also drawing on the westernizing forces within modern Jewish thought, of which Brainin himself is a product. Spinoza, the Jewish figure representative of modern Western Judaism, is supposedly at the top of the heap of bearded Jews.¹ Not only including Spinoza in the bookplate, but also privileging his picture at the top indicates Brainin’s desires to affiliate with a pan-European Jewish identity. The immigrant Brainin’s use of the bearded men is more than the product of a simple unidirectional gaze; it simultaneously draws on both an eastward and westward gaze. Not coincidentally, Brainin founded a short-lived Hebrew-language journal called *Mimizrach umimaarav* (From East and From West) published in Vienna. This title echoes the name of Winz’s journal *Ost und West* (East and West) published in Berlin. These were immigrants actively positioning themselves and their modern sense of Jewish self between the poles of East and West. Even when for all intents and purposes, the immigrant’s use of the bearded men represents a synthesis of cultures, the German Jew reads Brainin via his bearded Jews in a simple Orientalist fashion that ignored the complexities of the discourses involved.

E. M. Lilien, Reuben Brainin, and Leo Winz, respectively the artist, patron, and publicist of these ethnically marked bookplates, were all immigrants. Native-born German Jews themselves played a very marginal role in this initial phase of Ostjude idealization around 1900.

¹ When Hirschfelder identifies a few of the figures for the reader, it must be assumed that he asked Lilien or Brainin, since this would not have been otherwise apparent. Others have interpreted this figure as Solomon Herschell (1762-1842), Chief Rabbi of the German and Polish Jews in England. See Goodman, *Illustrated Essays on Jewish Bookplates*, 147-149.

This is significant in that these images and bookplates are at times subsumed under historical narratives of the “cult of the Ostjuden” without a consideration of who these gazers upon the Eastern European Jew were. The forces behind this affinity for, or identification with, romanticized shtetl Jews are fundamentally different depending on whether the person is from Eastern Europe or a native-born German. This distinction contributes to an understanding of the cultural exchange at stake here. Once Lilian, Brainin, and Winz are situated within their broader European context as immigrants, the cultural baggage they brought with them can be unpacked. We know that beginning roughly in the 1880s, cosmopolitan Eastern European Yiddish writers had an attraction to the “shtetl Jew.” City-dwelling Eastern European Jews, like Yitskhok Leybush Peretz, and later S. Ansky, were staking out expeditions into Jewish shtetl life, which prefigured similar excursions by German Jews in the coming decades.¹ Peretz’s Yiddish travelogue, *Travel-Pictures* from 1891, shares many characteristics with Alfred Döblin’s *Reise in Polen* from 1926. Like Döblin, Y. L. Peretz and Sholem Aleichem were not the shtetl Jews they portrayed.²

¹ Some of these German Jews who visited East European Jewish centers: Theodor Lessing in 1910, Hermann Cohen in 1914, Felix Salten in 1925, and Alfred Döblin in 1925.

² Peretz, "Bilder fun a provints-rayze."; Döblin, *Reise in Polen*. See also Miron, *The Image of the Shtetl*, 1-80.



Figure 3.7 Ex libris Yitskhok Dov Berkowitz

Thus the appearance of the shtetl Jew on bookplates made by and for immigrant Eastern European Jews in Germany should not be perceived as a specifically immigrant phenomenon, a sign of homesickness. Instead, these immigrants were bringing pre-existing romantic notions of the shtetl along with them. In order to understand the cultural exchange that I am claiming, one should consider the bookplate of Yitskhok Dov Berkowitz, an Eastern European Jew who did not live in Germany. [See figure 3.7] In the background of this bookplate made with a woodcut, the gabled houses suggest a hamlet. The window or door to the bottom left at an awkward angle could be read as poverty, if not simply expressionist angst. Depicted are a tall non-Jewish soldier in an aggressive stance vis-à-vis a hunched-back bearded Jew. The non-Jew has blond hair, the Jew black hair.

Berkowitz, a Hebrew and later Yiddish author as well as Sholem Aleichem's son-in-law, clearly identifies here with the shtetl (and when speaking of identifying, it might be better to say that these bookplate owners were placing the shtetl Jew into the framework of their self-

understanding). With no information provided at Hebrew Union College's Jewish bookplate collection, Berkowitz's bookplate is hard to date. Some clues from the ex libris itself, in combination with biographical information, position this bookplate before Berkowitz's 1928 move to Palestine. The artist's name in Latin letters and the words "ex libris" written in Latin rather than in Hebrew suggests that it was designed either during Berkowitz's stay in the United States from 1913 to 1928 or in his pre-1913 life in Europe. The possibilities are endless as to what the image represents—a pogrom, WWI, or maybe a literary allusion to one of his father-in-law's stories. At the heart of this discussion is the fact that Berkowitz, a Westernized Jew who did not wear a yarmulke nor a beard, chose to place his own name alongside a bearded Jew with long frock. The image of a shtetl Jew as utilized by a cosmopolitan Eastern European Jew, not an immigrant to Germany, again adds context to the idyllic appearance of the shtetl Jew in German-Jewish life, brought in by immigrant Jews around 1900. At this time, immigrant Eastern European Jews were creating the positive image of the Ostjude central to what would become the German-Jewish renaissance. Certainly these images intervened in the negative discourse on the Eastern Jew begun in nineteenth-century German-Jewish society. But to these bookplate owners, the images represented a reflection inwards.

The Private in German-Jewish Book Culture

At this point, I have laid out how the bookplates of E. M. Lilien displayed Eastern European Jews in a positive light. Lilien belongs to a constellation of immigrant artists in Berlin and Vienna, whose emphasis on drawing traditional Jews, "shtetl Jews," influenced such canonical works of the interwar period as *Das ostjüdische Antlitz* [*The Face of East European Jewry*]. Transnational interventions were integral to German-Jewish renaissance discourse. This

idea of an intervention, combined with the loaning practices of books with their bookplates, along with the publishing of the bookplates in journals, all imply an outward, extrinsic performative practice. Such an emphasis alone would ignore the space, however, that immigrant Jews were making for themselves as individuals. The public discourse has to be brought in conversation with the private aspect of bookplate ownership. Imagine the following scenario: Leo Winz sits alone at home with a book, takes one of a pile of bookplates that were personally made for him, attaches it to the inside cover of the book resting on his lap, and then closes the book to nestle the ex libris away on a bookshelf. This scene evokes intimacy and needs to be examined as such. For this internal examination of private space, or of the inward-looking aspect of this immigrant culture, we can turn to one of the bookplates that Lilien designed for himself in 1898.¹ [See figure 3.8] Unpacking the elements of the overdetermined bookplate can demonstrate how Lilien himself expressed his East-West identities.

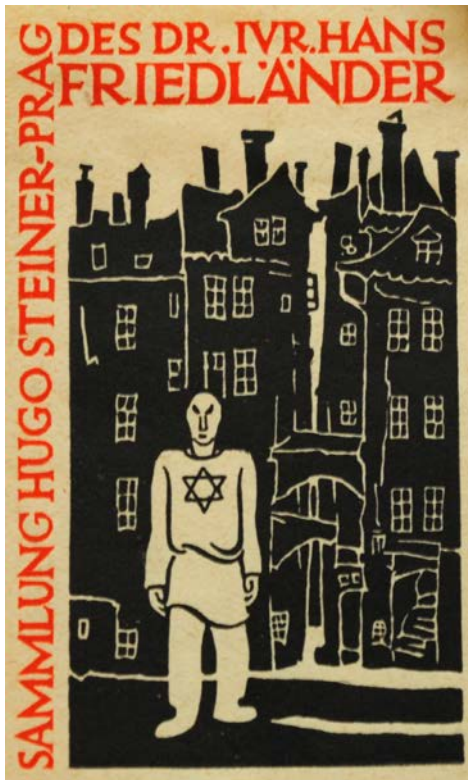
¹ This was the first of three bookplates Lilien made for himself. See Lilien, "The Bookplate Designs of E. M. Lilien," 80; Stefan Zweig, *E. M. Lilien: Sein Werk* (Berlin: Schuster & Loeffler, 1903), 81, <http://books.google.com/books?id=vhRaAAAAYAAJ>.



Figure 3.8 Ex libris Ephraim Moses Lilien, 1898

On the bookplate at left, the Hebrew words seem to be an appendage to the image, an afterthought. Clear demarcations, borders, and color contrasts separate the two parts of Lilien’s bookplate. Running down along the left side is first the word *misifre*, again, Lilien’s neologistic Hebrew translation of the Latin *ex libris*. Moving down the left margin, we find the text, “To the pure, everything is pure” (*L’tahorim kol tahor*). Underneath is Lilien’s Hebrew name, Efraim Moshe ben Yakov HaKohen Lilien. Lilien’s name includes a titular reference to his priestly lineage that adds to the sanctified message carried over from the Hebrew epitaph. Lilien, a kohen, is a descendent of the priestly class of Jews, a direct descendent of Aaron, the brother of Moses. Given that the priestly class is biblically the Jewish group most governed by the laws of

purity (*tahara*), purity comes to join the epitaph with Lilien's name. With this background, one cannot help but notice the tension between the main frame of the bookplate with its words in Latin letters, and the Hebrew part of the bookplate, which is not part of the image and only located on the borders. The Hebrew wording espousing purity and priestly heritage is rather jarringly placed alongside a naked nymph. Her hair gingerly wraps around her body to cover her nakedness.



Figures 3.9 and 3.10 Expressionist bookplates from the HUC collection. (*Left*) Ex libris Hans Friedländer, (*Right*) Ex libris Hannele, Arnošt Hofbauer, 1924.

Jewish bookplates often employed modern art. While Lilien, of an earlier generation, opts for Jugendstil/Art Nouveau, Yitskhok Dov Berkowitz and other owners in the collection use

Expressionism.¹ (See figures 3.7, 3.9, and 3.10) Michael Stanislawski writes in *Zionism and the Fin de Siècle* that the Jewish nationalist movement was greatly indebted to its European art and heritage. Commenting specifically on the artwork of Lilien as a case study, he writes, “Lilien’s ‘Judenstil’ was not a break, departure, opposition, or nationalistically inspired ‘purification’ of Jugendstil or art nouveau, but a seamless extension of genre, approach, and technique from the German and cosmopolitan to the specifically Jewish arena.”² Working briefly with this bookplate, Stanislawski identifies the verse as a Hebrew version of Paul’s statement to Titus, “To the pure, all things are pure, but to those who are corrupted and do not believe, nothing is pure.”³ Stanislawski uses this as his introductory point in the chapter to show how indebted Jewish Zionism was to non-Jewish European cultural mores: “Why was a self-consciously Zionist, avant-garde artist borrowing such a New Testament homily in the service of a new nationalist Jewish art?” Stanislawski rhetorically poses the question in order to hone in on the fact that this particular bookplate can stand in for any of Lilien’s artwork, since each was deeply beholden to the European fin de siècle and to its cultural reference points.⁴

¹ E-mail correspondence with the Jewish historian Saul Friedlander on January 23, 2012 confirms that this ex libris in all likelihood belonged to his father, who was a lawyer (“doctoris juris”), was friends with the Steiner-Prag, and collected his works. Hans Friedländer’s bookplate confirms Gabriele von Glasenapp’s observation that the golem was read at the beginning of the twentieth century (and even today) as a “perception of the Jewish self” (“jüdisches Selbstbild”). Gabriele von Glasenapp, “Populäritätskonzept jüdischer Folklore: Die Prager Märchen, Sagen und Legenden in der Sammlung *Sippurim*,” in *Populäres Judentum : Medien, Debatten, Lesestoffe*, ed. Christine Haug, Franziska Mayer, and Madleen Podewski, *Conditio Judaica* 76 (Tübingen: Niemeyer, 2009), 44-45, <http://books.google.com/books?id=qPzRvJgrMkEC>. The card in the card catalog for this bookplate lists Steiner-Prag as the artist, but stylistically this seems unlikely. Compare with what can be assumed to be the original picture: Hugo Steiner-Prag, “Die Erscheinung des Golems,” in *Der Golem: Prager Phantasien* (Leipzig: Kurt Wolff, 1916), <http://digital.cjh.org:1801/webclient/DeliveryManager?pid=129473>. Another of Friedlaender’s bookplates is at the Bookplate Collection at the Jewish Theological Seminary, vol. 6, page 72, http://sylvester.JTSA.EDU:8881/R/-?func=dbin-jump-full&object_id=11144&silole_library=GEN01. For other bookplates that carry ambiguous/ambivalent Christian/Jewish imagery as in Hannele’s bookplate, see appendix C. For other bookplates like Hans Friedländer’s bookplate that carry images of a Jewish body other than the bearded shtetl Jew, see appendix D.

² Stanislawski, *Zionism and the Fin de siècle*, 105.

³ Titus 1:15

⁴ Stanislawski, *Zionism and the Fin de siècle*, 100.

One misreading by Stanislawski covers over the significance of Lilien’s cross-cultural move. Stanislawski misses the mark in suggesting that the Hebrew phrase is simply Lilien’s “rather stilted Hebrew” translation of the Letter to Titus. The Hebrew quotation found on Lilien’s personal bookplate directly draws from a bookplate ascribed to Albrecht Dürer.¹ (See figure 3.11)



Figure 3.11 Ex libris Hector Pömer, 1525

¹ Karl Emich Count zu Leiningen-Westerburg, *German Book-plates: An Illustrated Handbook of German & Austrian Exlibris*, trans. G. Ravenscroft Dennis, The Exlibris Series (London: George Bell & Sons, 1901), <http://books.google.com/books?id=ucwYAAAIAAJ>, 110. There is a debate about whether this was actually drawn by Dürer himself or was drawn by one of his students as part of the “Dürer School.” See *ibid.* and Leiningen-Westerburg, K. E. Graf zu. “Bibliothek-Zeichen.” *Zeitschrift für Bücherzeichen - Bibliothekskunde und Gelehrten-geschichte: Organ des Ex-libris-Vereins zu Berlin* 6, no. 2 (1896): 61 and Verzeichnis, <http://books.google.com/books?id=mFIxAQAAMAJ>.

The famous sixteenth-century artist (1471-1528) is often cited, at least in ex libris circles, as “the father of the bookplate.” The etching to the right, made for a church official in 1525, is considered by some to be Dürer’s most exquisite ex libris. Like other Dürer bookplates, this one is multilingual, including Greek, Latin, and Hebrew. The Hebrew text is the same that we find in Lilien’s bookplate: “To the pure, everything is pure.” Lilien was consciously aware in 1898 that he was charting new territory with his Jewish ex libris. In his very successful bid to be the “father of Jewish bookplates,” Lilien turned to the source of bookplates and, in so doing, tapped into one of the central German cultural icons, Dürer.

The tension in Lilien’s bookplate between the Hebrew border and image mainframe starts to be undone within this contextualization. I started out by proposing some antinomies present in the bookplate: Jewish-Gentile, Hebrew-Latin, religious piety-sexuality, text-image. However, the Hebrew text here cannot be read simply as a traditional Jewish element, used by Lilien to make his mark on the Western phenomenon of the bookplate. Indeed, this Hebrew citation is not Jewish, but Christian. Likewise, the image of the bookplate is more complex than a pagan graven image. The woman with flowing hair is undoubtedly high Jugendstil; however, the vines at the bottom left represent Lilien’s intervention, marking it, as Stanislawski terms it, “Judenstil.” Lilien took the vines, snakes, tendrils, and wispy hair common to Jugendstil/Art Nouveau and imbued them with a Zionist message to represent Jewish exile. In many pictures, thorns are set in a corner, partially wrapped around a person. (See figure 3.12)¹

¹ Börries von Münchhausen, *Juda* (Gosler, Germany: Lattmann, 1900), n.p., <http://sammlungen.ub.uni-frankfurt.de/freimann/content/titleinfo/785750>. Republished in Regener, *E. M. Lilien*, 76. See also *Der jüdische Mai* in Morris Rosenfeld and Ephraim Mose Lilien, *Lieder des Ghetto | Lieder bukh*, ed. Berthold Feiwel, trans. Berthold Feiwel (Berlin: B. Harz, 1920 (1902)), 95-97.



Figure 3.12 *Passah in Juda* (von Münchhausen), E. M. Lilien, 1900

Reuben Brainin’s bookplate above depicts the group of shtetl Jews ensconced in a bed of thorns. This theme was so common in Lilien’s drawings that Stefan Zweig, Lilien’s close friend, complained that Lilien used the thorns to represent Jewish exile “vielleicht zu oft.”¹ The thorns that cross over the feet of the naked woman ultimately undo a binary reading of the ex libris. Lilien’s personal bookplate, like all of his bookplates, demonstrates the intersection of private and public, Christian and Jewish, religious and secular, and Eastern and Western spheres. This bookplate is not a counter to Western bookplates, but actually an homage to the original Western

¹ “perhaps too often.” Zweig, *E. M. Lilien*, 25.

bookplate father Dürer. As a cultural product from the “contact zone,” it has echoes of the dominant culture.¹

Conclusion

After a century of Western and secular influence that had reached far into the Pale of Settlement, mass westward migration of Eastern European Jews into the Austro-Hungarian Empire and Germany during the fin de siècle and interwar period secured the direct impact of Western European culture on Eastern Jews. The focus of the argument here has centered on the immigrants’ engagement with Western culture and intervention in certain discourses that framed Western Jewish identities. The bookplate as a cultural product dramatically shaped by immigrant Eastern European Jews can be a prism through which one views the phenomenon of transnational engagement. Positioned in a semi-public space in the German-Jewish community, the ex libris was at the crossroads of cultural exchange between East and West.

Various levels of exchange are at play in the bookplates at Hebrew Union College. First, with the introduction of bookplates into Western Jewish society at large, Jews adopted a practice which would have been frowned upon in earlier generations. Whereas pre-modern Jewish authorities warned against conspicuous book ownership, modern Jews welcomed it with open arms. Not coincidentally, the first Jewish-owned and Jewish-made bookplates appeared in the eighteenth century as Jews began the secularization process en masse in Western Europe. Second, an internal exchange expressed itself as Eastern European Jews in the twentieth century reworked the content of German-Jewish bookplates and altered their iconography. Ephraim Moses Lilien’s appropriation of Albrecht Dürer’s work is an example of one such layering effect, as he reached into the Western past (even a Christian one) and appropriated it for the affirmation

¹ See Mary Louise Pratt, "Arts of the Contact Zone," in *Profession 91* (New York: MLA, 1991).

of a twentieth-century Jewish identity. The story of a Galician Jew who brought Dürer into Zionist propaganda illustrates the transnational, multidirectional, and overdetermined nature of these bookplates.

To complement the significant amount written on the topic of Ostjuden in Germany, I am advocating for a broader, transnational evaluation that acknowledges the active cultural contributions of immigrant Eastern Jews. David Brenner in his book *Marketing Identities: The Invention of Jewish Ethnicity in Ost und West* comes closest to providing this voice by focusing on the immigrants involved on the editorial board of *Ost und West*. Though Brenner's work is significant, he backpedals on some of his assertions, leading to an ambivalent message about what these immigrants accomplished. For example, he repeatedly asserts that the editors of the journal sought to package East European Jewish authenticity for a Western audience. The suggestion that these immigrants were trying to sugarcoat Eastern Jewishness in "marketing" it to German Jews only reinforces the binary thinking of the nineteenth century, which these immigrants were dialectically collapsing. Performing for German Jews as part of the immigrant Eastern Jewish story should not overshadow the effort by those who truly were wrangling with their own identity and seeking a synthesis for themselves. I have argued here that the immigrants were more concerned with their own identities than programmatically changing German-Jewish reception.

The examination of the bookplates brings out this alternative narrative. Much of the scholarship on Ostjuden relies on German-Jewish reception—in Brenner's case, the reception of the journal *Ost und West*.¹ The intended audience for literary and artistic representations of

¹ The subtitle to Aschheim's book is "The East European Jew in German and German Jewish Consciousness." In her article on "cultural transfers," Delphine Bechtel writes that her focus is "on reception and interpretation of Yiddish literary culture by German- and Austrian-Jewish intellectuals." See Delphine Bechtel, "Cultural Transfers between

Eastern European Jewry has to be rethought in the context of these bookplates. Though the ex libris were published in a journal for German Jews, each bookplate was ultimately intended for its Eastern European owner. The bookplates prominently displaying the shtetl Jew were, at least initially, in the first few years of the 1900s, made by immigrants for immigrants. When Reuben Brainin or Leo Winz attached their ex libris to a book, they were making a statement for themselves, and essentially reaffirming it each time they affixed it. These bookplates were highly personal and private affairs at the same time that they represented a bridge into the public sphere. Imagining an Eastern Jewish culture entwined with Western Jewishness was a reflective act by these immigrants, a project primarily directed inward rather than outward.

'Ostjuden' and 'Westjuden': German-Jewish Intellectuals and Yiddish Culture, 1897-1930," *Leo Baeck Institute Year Book* 42 (1997): 70.

CHAPTER 4

Autoethnography in the Cult of the Eastern European Jew

In the half century between the 1880s and 1930s, the mass westward migration of Eastern European Jews radically reconfigured the way in which Western and Eastern Jews related to each other. The close contact between these groups led to a reevaluation of Jewish identity by authors in German and Yiddish literatures. To place the historical migration patterns briefly into perspective, the Jewish population of Germany in 1933 was 20% foreign born—almost triple the percentage from 1900.¹ This foreign element was overwhelmingly Eastern European, leading to a clash of cultures between traditional and acculturated Jewries. Culturally, Eastern European Jews and German Jews differed significantly from each other. In the nineteenth century, German Jewry had successfully distinguished itself from Eastern European Jewry on several fronts: linguistic (turning away from Yiddish, even Western Yiddish), religious (Reform Judaism), and cultural (shaven faces, Western modes of dress). Steven Aschheim, among others, has detailed how the encounter with migrant Eastern European Jews fed an interwar “cult of the Eastern European Jew” that raised the ethnic awareness among German Jewry. The Eastern European Jew became mythic in his artistic appropriation by German Jews, most notably by Martin Buber in his serialized collection of Chassidic folktales, which he began publishing in 1906.²

¹ Bennathan, "Die demographische und wirtschaftliche Struktur der Juden," 98.

² Buber, *Die Geschichten des Rabbi Nachman*.

The influx of migrant Jews strengthened the ties between foreign writers and the German genre that had started in the 1840s, now known as *Ghettoliteratur*.³ Newly arrived Eastern European authors, like Karl Emil Franzos (1848 – 1904) and Joseph Roth (1894 – 1939), provided for authentic flavor in this genre marketed to the German-Jewish middle class that portrayed Jewish life in Eastern Europe. In this article, I analyze the writings of Franzos and Roth as immigrants to Austria and Germany who explicitly and implicitly countered German-Jewish representations of Jews living to the East. These two wrote during the Wilhelmine era and Weimar Republic respectively and bookend the German-Jewish cultural renaissance of the early twentieth century, which was fueled by representations of the Eastern European Jew.⁴ Both authors were born and raised in Galicia at the edge of the Austro-Hungarian Empire in Eastern Europe. Both of them moved to the Austrian and German capitals and wrote in German about Yiddish-speaking Jews of Galicia. Despite their similar biographies, they differ significantly in their self-representations as Western or Eastern Jews and in their stylistic modes of portraying Jewish life in Eastern Europe. Franzos was an advocate of Jewish enlightenment and westernization, while Roth had a more sympathetic view towards traditional Jewish life. Franzos' autobiographical statements have contributed to his reception as a German-speaking stranger among his native Galician Jews. Roth's autobiographical comments, on the other hand, have shaped his reception in the secondary literature as an immigrant outsider to the German-Jewish milieu. Unpacking their writings offers us insights into the movement of East-West

³ See von Glasenapp and Horch, "Ghettoliteratur: Ein hybrides Genre der deutsch-jüdischen Literatur."; Aschheim, *Brothers and Strangers*, 3-31. Into the 1930s, while some immigrant Eastern European Jews were writing German novels based on Eastern European Jewish life, other immigrants were doing ethnographic work on Eastern Jewry. Some of these later authors include Chajim Bloch, *Priester der Liebe: Die Welt der Chassidim* (Zurich: Amalthea, 1930); Immanuel Olsvanger, *Rejte Pomeranzen: Ostjüdische Schwänke und Erzählungen* [Red Oranges: East European Jewish Folksy Farces and Tales] (Berlin: Schocken, 1935); Michelson, *Jüdisches Kind aus dem Osten*.

⁴ It might seem strange to reference two Galician/Austrian authors in terms of German historical markers, yet all of the works to be discussed here were published in Germany (Roth's *Job* and *The Wandering Jews* in Berlin, Roth's critique of Döblin in a Frankfurt newspaper, and Franzos' *The Clown* in Stuttgart and Berlin). These two authors are almost exclusively considered within Austrian contexts. Germany's role has been undervalued.

cultural streams. In my examination of these texts, I highlight the dynamics of historical Jewish identity formation in the space between Western and Eastern European Jewish cultures. I argue that their representations of Eastern European Jewish life present a dialogue between Yiddish and German portrayals.

For this comparison, I will engage in Mary Louise Pratt's analysis of the "contact zone" as a tool to examine cultural exchange. As part of a larger study on Spanish colonial arts and literature, Pratt details how the genre of autoethnography functions as a cultural product originating in the contact zone between two societies. Her interrogation of autoethnography informs my analysis of early twentieth-century German literature authored by Eastern European Jewish immigrants. Positioning the questions that Pratt raises alongside the German literature on Eastern Jews *by* Eastern Jews can both nuance her argument and provide a framework for discussing cultural exchange among European Jewry. Her approach to autoethnography stems from an inquiry into a Spanish text entitled *New Chronicle*, which was written in the seventeenth century by a native Andean colonial subject to King Philip III of Spain. Based on this material, Pratt defines *autoethnography* as follows:

Guaman Poma's *New Chronicle* is an instance of what I have proposed to call an *autoethnographic* text, by which I mean a text in which people undertake to describe themselves in ways that engage with representations others have made of them. Thus if ethnographic texts are those in which European metropolitan subjects represent to themselves their others (usually their conquered others), autoethnographic texts are representations that the so-defined others construct *in response to* or in dialogue with those texts. Autoethnographic texts are not, then, what are usually thought of as autochthonous forms of expression or self-representation.... Rather they involve a selective collaboration with and appropriation of idioms of the metropolis or the conqueror. These are merged or infiltrated to varying degrees with indigenous idioms to create self-representations intended to intervene in metropolitan modes of understanding. Autoethnographic works are often addressed to both metropolitan audiences and the speaker's own community. Their reception is thus highly indeterminate.⁵

⁵ Mary Louise Pratt, "Arts of the Contact Zone," in *Ways of Reading*, ed. David Bartholomae and Anthony Petrosky, 3rd ed. (Boston: St. Martins, 1993), 445-446.

At the core of autoethnography lie a sense of cultural possession and the question of who has the right to represent a certain people. Pratt's main insight is that a counter-representation is a collaboration of representational modes from both cultures. Autoethnography is more than a representation of one's own culture; it simultaneously works through foreign representations.

In the following I argue for Pratt's understanding of the multidirectionality of autoethnography to counter Franzos' and Roth's claims to an outsider status. I read each author's portrayal of Galician Jews with and against other German and Yiddish authors. My reading ultimately positions Roth well within German-Jewish literature and highlights affinities between Franzos and Yiddish literature. In the final analysis, this methodological approach, informed by postcolonial studies, brings about a more balanced understanding of cross-cultural streams in migrant literature.

The Case of Karl Emil Franzos

Secondary literature has given little attention to the ways in which Karl Emil Franzos' background as a Galician Jew comes through in his writing. Franzos, born in Czortków, Galicia, thoroughly aligned himself with German Jews and unabashedly furthered an assimilationist agenda for the Jews of Eastern Europe. As Carl Steiner writes, Franzos "had gone on record, time and again, praising 'the unlimited beneficiality of German culture, emphasizing German thoroughness, selflessness, adaptability, and above all, productive, physical labor.' He favored a greater Austria as a 'deutscher Kulturstaat' and as a 'deutscher Nationalstaat.'"⁶ Franzos derogatorily termed Galicia "half-Asia," a barbaric, Oriental place tempered by Western influences. In this binary of West and East, Germany and Eastern Europe, Franzos' self-

⁶ Carl Steiner, *Karl Emil Franzos, 1848-1904: Emancipator and Assimilationist*, North American Studies in Nineteenth-Century German Literature 5 (New York: Peter Lang, 1990), 170.

representation as a German Jew, merely born in Eastern Europe, has shaped a discourse on his work that ignores the similarities between Franzos' writing and Yiddish literature.⁷ In collapsing these binaries, I first position his portrayal of Yiddish-speaking Jews within a constellation of other derisive German writings on Yiddish to demonstrate Franzos' relatively neutral stance vis-à-vis Yiddish. A focus on his stylistic choices in representing Yiddish speech, rather than on his vitriolic metadiscourse on Yiddish as a "corrupted" language, positions Franzos closer to his immigrant Eastern European brethren than his German-Jewish compatriots. I then turn to a comparison of the shtetl in his works and the modernist Yiddish author Y. L. Peretz to demonstrate the parallels between Franzos' writings and Yiddish literature.

In the 1890s Franzos wrote *Der Pojaz: Eine Geschichte aus dem Osten* (*The Clown: A Story from the East*). In the introduction, Franzos lays claim to his Germanness in ways that stand in stark opposition to those of Joseph Roth. Franzos writes how alienated he felt growing up as a German in Eastern Europe: "I grew up as if on an island."⁸ He calls for the furthering of German culture in Galicia to counteract not only the barbaric Polish, Ruthenian, and Russian inroads, but also the French (!) influence. These statements, especially the anti-French sentiment, typify the position of nineteenth-century Eastern European Jews, who considered the German-speaking empires the better options to Poland, Russia, etc.

The plot of *Der Pojaz* centers on a Jewish boy who unsuccessfully attempts to move out of the narrow confines of religious life in a Galician shtetl to become an actor.⁹ The novel is

⁷ See, for example, in Carl Steiner's above cited *Karl Emil Franzos, 1848-1904*, the chapter entitled "A German Jew or a Jewish German?" The either-or structure of the chapter title entirely overlooks Franzos' shtetl background.

⁸ Karl Emil Franzos, *Der Pojaz: Eine Geschichte aus dem Osten* (Hamburg: Europäische Verlagsanstalt, 1994 (1905)), 6.

⁹ *Ibid.* Even though his widow writes in the introduction to *The Clown* that Franzos stopped working on the book in 1893 and it was not published until 1905, a year after his death, later research has shown that *The Clown* was indeed published in his lifetime, but not in German: "a Russian translation of *Der Pojaz* had been published earlier with the author's blessing. It came out in serialized form in 1894 in the Petersburg journal *Woschod*. One year later, in 1895,

known for its negative depiction of shtetl Jewry and the message of Jewish enlightenment that runs throughout the text as the main character humorously tries to set himself free. It reflects the paradigm of nineteenth-century Haskalah, harmonizing with German-Jewish sentiment of the time. The main Eastern Jewish marker in his texts is precisely this exaggerated maskilic viewpoint that leaves the reader with an unintended parody of comparable German-Jewish writings, especially at this late date at the turn of the twentieth century.

Autoethnography underpins much of Franzos' writings in works like *Der Pojaz* and *Aus Halb-Asien*, an earlier collection of stories that take place in Galicia. In the introduction to *Aus Halb-Asien*, Franzos writes that his childhood experiences offer him a unique perspective to position these stories against the depictions of "Western tourists." His representation is thus a counter-representation, a key component of autoethnography:

The purpose of my book is to portray this strange twilight. It is fundamentally distinguishable in its content and flavor from the travel descriptions that Western tourists publish on these countries, and just as fundamentally different from those portrayals that Eastern writers have given about their homeland. Because to the native patriot, everything in Romania and Bessarabia appears splendid; to the tourist, however, for whom the interminable alien nature is oppressive and who is often repelled to the deepest level, everything still appears coated in and drowning from the deepest darkness.¹⁰

Franzos explicitly sets himself against both the "Western tourist" and the "native patriot." His expressed desire to give a portrayal that does not simply wallow in "the deepest darkness" of Galicia intriguingly implies that he wants to ensure a more sympathetic reading. His purpose in writing provides nuance to his espoused monolithic German identity. Examining *Der Pojaz* further demonstrates an overlooked complexity in Franzos' characterization of Yiddish.

When the German press and literature addressed the topic of Eastern European Jewry, writers often transliterated Yiddish into the Latin alphabet, approximating German sounds.

the novel appeared as a book also in Russian under the title *Sender Glatteis* in the publishing house of Adolf F. Landau." Steiner, *Karl Emil Franzos, 1848-1904*, 117.

¹⁰ Franzos, *Aus Halb-Asien*, 1.

Because of the similarity in the two languages, it only took a glossing of certain words in order for the reader to understand. Thus we find that the German-Jewish Theodor Herzl, in his 1902 *Altneuland*, transliterated the Yiddish of one of his immigrant characters living in Vienna: “Ich wart’ auf mein’ Taten.”¹¹ (I am waiting for my father.) Likewise, the German-Jewish journalist Theodor Lessing, in his travel log to Galicia, mocked Yiddish by writing it in German phonetic approximation. Unlike German-Jewish authors, immigrant Eastern Jewish authors tended to translate Yiddish more completely into German. For example, the Minsk-born Alexander Eliasberg attempted to render a pure German translation from Yiddish texts in his writing.¹² Immigrants did not recreate the Yiddish for German readers by leaving Yiddish syntax and word choice in place.

It is therefore significant that in *Der Pojaz*, Franzos does not imitate the sound or cadence of Yiddish via sentence-length transliteration. Some of his transliterations of individual words do make Yiddish look like “bad” German, or as he termed it, a “corrupted” form of German.¹³ For example, Franzos’ rendering of the Yiddish term *der daytsh* (a non-religious, westernized Jew) as “der Deutsch” necessarily makes it seem to his German readers that Yiddish is only a grammatically incorrect version of German. The Yiddish omits the final “e” in what is “der Deutsche” in German. However, Franzos does not choose to mimic Yiddish speech wholesale as do many German Jews.

The lack of Yiddish imitation or parody is striking considering his portrayal of a non-Jewish soldier elsewhere in *Der Pojaz*. Franzos uses transliteration to imitate the “broken”

¹¹ Herzl, *Altneuland*, 20-23.

¹² Lessing, “Eindrücke aus Galizien,” 611. For a discussion of Eliasberg and others, see Jeffrey A. Grossman, “Sholem Aleichem and the Politics of German Jewish Identity: Translations and Transformations,” *Studia Rosenthaliana* 41 (2009).

¹³ For example, he points to the Yiddish word *Sellner* as the “corrupted” (korrumpiert) form of the German word *Söldner*. Franzos, *Der Pojaz*, 141.

(gebrochen) German of a Czech soldier in his fictional shtetl as follows: “Mir springsme alle auf, Wild auch. Ober da follt ihm Büchel heraus, was hot getrogen unter Hemd.”¹⁴ (We all jump up, Wild [the name of a character] too. But then he dropped a book, which [he] was carrying under [his] shirt.) The grammatically incorrect and heavily accented German demonstrates the author’s intent to portray the character negatively. The choice, therefore, not to imitate the Yiddish of his Jewish characters may demonstrate some sympathy with them.

This benevolent gesture is nonetheless dulled when Franzos’ framework for construing the “broken German” of the non-Jewish soldier is revealed to be the Yiddish that he heard growing up.¹⁵ The soldier’s German uncannily sounds like Yiddish: “mir” stands in for the German “wir” (we), the “o” sound maps onto the “a” sound in “ober” for “aber,” and “was hot getrogen” for “was hat getragen” (which [he] was carrying).¹⁶ Although the text declares Yiddish a corrupted German, it refrains from wholesale imitation of Yiddish speech patterns as would have been expected in a work by a German Jew. Franzos’ hyper-German nationalism and over-application of a proper German translation of Yiddish ironically positions him outside German-Jewish norms. Previous analyses of Franzos have overlooked the ambivalences in his portrayal of Yiddish, yielding instead to his strongly worded metacommentary. Ambivalences and tensions between his stylistic choices and discourse attest to his intercultural stance.

Franzos’ representations of Galician Jews not only contrast with typical German-Jewish depictions, they also share striking similarities with Yiddish literature. Literary scholars have barely touched upon the comparisons between Franzos and Yiddish authors, and the work that

¹⁴ Ibid., 84-85.

¹⁵ See introduction to *From Half-Asia* where Franzos discusses not being able to understand the Yiddish spoken to him when he was a child.

¹⁶ See also Grossman, *Discourse on Yiddish*, 150. For a reverse representation in a Yiddish portrayal of a German Jew that centers on this “a” vs. “o” difference between German and Yiddish, see Sholem Aleichem, “Dos meserl: A mayse far yidishe kinder,” 15.

has been done aims at showing the dramatic differences between them rather than their similarities.¹⁷ By taking the potentially bolder approach of finding the Ostjude in Franzos, one finds parallels between their portrayals of westernizing, less traditional Jews of the East, and in the fact that they portray them at all.¹⁸ Unlike his contemporaries whose literature on the shtetl demonstrate a lack of interest in westernizing Jews, Franzos expresses a deep commitment across his works to Jews seeking to learn Western European modes. German-Jewish authors like Martin Buber and Theodor Herzl preferred the exotic and religious to those more like themselves.¹⁹ This trend continued for decades, from the end of the nineteenth century until the late 1920s, and become apparent even to Eastern European Jews.²⁰ For major Yiddish writers like Y. L. Peretz, westernizing Jews form the literary landscape alongside traditional Jews. In Peretz's *Travel-Pictures*, the narration is driven by the tension that builds when the Jews in the story's shtetl grow suspicious of the thoroughly westernized first-person narrator. Similarly, Peretz's first Yiddish literary piece, "Monish," thematizes the westernization of an Eastern European Jew as symbolized by a German girl who moves to town and seduces the rising rabbinical star.²¹

The comparison between the westernizing character that Franzos portrays in *The Clown* and the one Peretz portrays in "Monish" goes even deeper to raise questions of Eastern European Jewish cultural codes. Beyond the *type* of characters who are represented, similarities in the

¹⁷ For an almost singular treatment of this topic, see Miriam Roshwald, "Ghetto, Shtetl, or Polis: The East European Jewish Community in the Works of K. E. Franzos, Sholom Aleichem, and S. Y. Agnon," *Contemporary Jewry* 4, no. 2 (1974), <http://www.springerlink.com/content/ph76184376n44525/>.

¹⁸ The Yiddish word *veltlek*, which literally means worldly or open to the world, was used to describe those Jews with non-Jewish education. In the Eastern European context of this time, "secular" would be a bad translation of this Yiddish word, since *secular* has come to suggest anti-religious. The common association between *veltlek* Jews and a perception of them as *daytsh* (literally, "German") in Yiddish literature has informed my term *westernizing*. Admittedly, I am hesitant.

¹⁹ See Buber, *Die Geschichten des Rabbi Nachman*; Herzl, *Altneuland*.

²⁰ See Shneurson, *Grenadir-shtrase*, 16-17.

²¹ Perez, "Travel-Pictures," 275; Peretz, "Monish: A roman-balade." For a later Yiddish example from a contemporary of Joseph Roth, see Kulbak, *Disner Tshayld Harold: Poeme*. It should be noted that *The Clown* is actually a historical portrayal set around the year 1852 whereas Peretz's *Travel-Pictures* is set in 1890. This necessarily leads to a distinction between the types of westernizing Jews being portrayed.

manner in which the westernization process is represented span across both works. Franzos and Peretz both provide a spatial characterization as to where the sin of westernization occurs. Sender Glatteis, in *Der Pojaz*, despairs of his lot in the shtetl Barnow where he was unable to find a suitable German instructor. He yearns for the city of Czernowitz: “that was his Mecca, there everyone was a ‘daytsh.’” With thoughts of “his Mecca,” Sender sets out on the path of westernization and secularization first within his hometown. Franzos narrates this into the physical layout of the shtetl: “He pursued a path, which he would have surely otherwise avoided. On the left bank of the Sered...there arose a hill, which the entire region called the ‘Barnow Mountain’ ... On its peak stood the ruins of a castle...everything laid in rubble and dust, and many a scary legend was connected to this bleak ruin.”²² Sender’s pilgrimage takes him to the outskirts of the town, described as physically separate and ominous, where he finds his teacher of German literature. Among the dilapidated ruins, the place for the immoral act of learning secular subjects, supernatural and demonic imagery abound. The narrator describes three supernatural apparitions that live on the mountain: a mother rocking a lifeless baby, a young man carrying his head under his arm, and a pale monk ringing a bell. Sender ascends to the castle and sees the young headless man sitting on the grass next to his sword. Upon closer inspection, Sender realizes it is a soldier hunched over reading a book of German poems. This is to be Sender’s savior as the two befriend each other and hold readings every Sabbath as diligently as an aberrant weekly Torah reading.

This scene is strikingly similar to Peretz’s “Monish” in that westernization is provided a space within the shtetl, even if only a marginalized space. “Monish,” written in 1888 five years before *Der Pojaz*, thematizes the allure of the West for the shtetl Jew. In a personification of the

²² Franzos, *Der Pojaz*, 70-71.

West, a *daytshke* (German girl) lures the eponymous young rabbinical scholar, Monish, to the outskirts of town to break his moral virtue:

Now from olden days
there was a ruin in that place
(I won't attempt to say
whether church or castle;
let that much remain in doubt,
I can tell you only what I've read about it.)
There are goblins in the ruin,
imps that crow and laugh for spite,
bark, meow,
and haunt at night,
hurl stones through the air
from their lair
at the houses underneath;
and on the roof
in the dark
a wild dog with tangled fell,
always on the prowl,
who never has been heard to bark,
he only grinds his teeth.
Flesh and blood tremble.
Jews and Christians both
stay well away from that street
and its tumbledown houses overgrown with weeds.²³

Here too ruins present themselves and, dramatically, demonic forces are at play. Adding to the otherworldly nature of the place, Monish is accompanied on his journey by one good and one bad angel. Ultimately, the *daytshke*, who sings to him like a siren from one of the ruin's windows, is revealed as none other than Satan's messenger, Lilith. The tears of the good angel flow as "love burns in the ruin." Peretz's "Monish" utilizes, in harmony with Franzos' *Der Pojaz*, the same descriptors for the location of westernization in Eastern Europe: a demonic playground among ruins at the edge of town. The mirrorlike similarities in describing where the

²³ I. L. Peretz, (Y. L. Peretz), *The I. L. Peretz Reader*, ed. Ruth R. Wisse, trans. Ruth R. Wisse (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2002 (1990)), 12; Peretz, "Monish: Tragi-komische poeme; nay baarbet," no. 13, p. 11.

act of westernization occurs (be it studying German literature or succumbing to the sexual mores of a German) bespeak cultural codes that cross over from Yiddish into German literature.

The connections between *Der Pojaz* and “Monish” are indicative of the East European Jewish characteristics that permeate Franzos’ works. His literary portrayal of Eastern Jews and Yiddish at times runs counter to his direct statements on these topics in the introductions. Whereas his autobiographical introductions to works like *Der Pojaz* and *Aus Halb-Asien* have long held weight in the secondary literature’s understanding that Franzos was raised fully severed from Jewish society, this investigation of his literary portrayal solidly places him within an Eastern European cultural framework with intimate knowledge of how, for example, Eastern Jews interpreted westernization. As I move on to discuss Joseph Roth, it is not my goal to position Franzos as a Galician Jew or Roth as a German Jew, but rather to show that each of them maintained an intercultural position that complicates their self portrayals.

The Case of Joseph Roth

In 1926 the well-known novelist Joseph Roth wrote an essay critiquing a work by the modernist writer Alfred Döblin. In his essay, Roth strongly condemns the book *Reise in Polen* (*Journey to Poland*) for its typically Western European, “cookie-cutter” (Schablone) description.²⁴ Döblin, who had converted to Protestantism and later would convert to Catholicism, traveled to Poland to explore his Jewish heritage. He subsequently wrote *Reise in Polen*, an episodic work of travel literature that reflects on Eastern European Jewry through a

²⁴ Joseph Roth, “Döblin im Osten,” in *Das journalistische Werk*, ed. K. Westermann, vol. 2 (Cologne: Kiepenheuer & Witsch, 1990 (1926)), 533. Originally published in the January 31, 1926 issue of the *Frankfurter Zeitung*.

largely ethnographic lens.²⁵ The Jewish figures who appear in Döblin's expressionist masterpiece *Berlin Alexanderplatz* are foreshadowed in *Reise in Polen*, written only a few years earlier. I will use this point of tension between Roth and Döblin to compare the writings of the two authors. Roth positions himself as an Eastern European vis-à-vis the Western European Döblin, yet stylistic elements in Roth's writings belie such a binary.

Roth, born in Brody, Galicia, is but one example from this interwar period rife with German-speaking authors of Eastern Jewish background. What distinguishes Roth is the paper trail he leaves in trying to counter Western European opinion of Eastern Jews. Roth followed this brief critique of Döblin with two larger works, one a piece of reportage and one a novel, that further responded to the German-Jewish interpretation of East European Jewish life. In 1927, a year after his Döblin article, Roth wrote *Juden auf Wanderschaft* (*The Wandering Jews*) and in 1930 *Hiob: Roman eines einfachen Mannes* (*Job: Novel of a Simple Man*).²⁶ In the foreword to *Juden auf Wanderschaft*, Roth explicitly positions his piece on the migrant communities from Eastern Europe as a retort to the eastward gaze:

This book does away with the 'objective' readers who peer down on the near East and its inhabitants from the swaying towers of Western civilization with a cheap, sour benevolence, pitying the inadequate sanitation systems out of pure humanity, and who, out of fear of infection, lock poor emigrants into barracks where the solution to a societal problem is left over to mass death. This book is not written for those readers who will fault the author for treating the matter of his portrayal with love instead of with 'scientific sobriety,' which is otherwise called boredom.²⁷

Roth's critique of false Western "objectivity" and "scientific sobriety" employs the same words in his piece on Döblin from a year earlier; in both places he sets the terms in quotation marks:

Just as *Juden auf Wanderschaft* is an explicit response to foreign representations of Jews from

²⁵ Döblin, *Journey to Poland*. The body of German-Jewish travel literature reflecting on Eastern European Jews stretches back to Heinrich Heine.

²⁶ Joseph Roth, *Juden auf Wanderschaft*, *Berichte aus der Wirklichkeit* 4 (Berlin: Die Schmiede, 1927); Roth, *Hiob: Roman eines einfachen Mannes*.

²⁷ Roth, *Juden auf Wanderschaft*, 7.

the “near East” (Eastern Europe), so too does *Hiob* take on the portrayal of Eastern Jews as its central motif.

Evoking the superlative suffering of the biblical figure of Job, unparalleled in Jewish literature if not world literature, Roth’s *Hiob* is reminiscent of *Tevye the Dairyman*, a work by the Yiddish author Sholem Aleichem made more famous in its later film adaptation as *Fiddler on the Roof*. Roth’s main character in *Hiob* is a father who lives in a fictional shtetl on the Galician border. The religious man loses his children to various societal forces: the Russian military, a relationship with a non-Jew, and assimilatory pressure in America. Taking Roth’s three pieces together, the critique of Döblin, *Juden auf Wanderschaft*, and *Hiob: Roman eines einfachen Mannes*, Roth makes clear that he is providing a sympathetic reading of Eastern Jews to counter the unfavorable portrayal of Döblin and other authors (i.e., Western Jews).²⁸ The titles of *Juden auf Wanderschaft* and *Hiob*, with their allusions to two Jewish archetypes, further lend the texts to an interpretation as counter-representation. In the former, Roth appropriates the Christian mythological archetype of the wandering Jew as a fitting title to respond to the West’s gaze. In the latter, the title *Hiob* lays out Roth’s opaque attempt to confront negative Western opinions of Eastern Jews with a glorification of the downtrodden East European Jew.

Roth scholars tend to read *Juden auf Wanderschaft* and *Hiob* to position Roth as an outsider to the German-Jewish milieu.²⁹ Indeed Roth was fond of saying himself that he was an outsider to any milieu: “I have no homeland, if I disregard the fact that I am at home in myself and feel homey with myself.”³⁰ He spoke of Western Jews as if he was not one, and when he

²⁸ To see Roth’s sympathy with his subject matter, note how he uses the phrase “the little *Ostjude*” in *The Wandering Jews*: “Der kleine Ostjude hat eine übertriebene Furcht vor einer ganz fremden Sprache. Deutsch ist beinahe seine Muttersprache. Er wandert viel lieber nach Deutschland, als nach Frankreich.” Ibid., 75.

²⁹ Roth is often cited as an outsider, sometimes an “outsider among outsiders,” and even, “an outsider three times.” See Kati Tonkin, *Joseph Roth's March into History: From the Early Novels to Radetzkyarsch and Die Kapuzinergruft* (Rochester, NY: Camden House, 2008), 22.

³⁰ Wilhelm von Sternburg, *Joseph Roth: Eine Biographie*, 2nd ed. (Cologne: Kiepenhauer & Witsch, 2009), 20.

wrote to the Austrian-Jewish novelist Stefan Zweig, Roth even referred to himself as an “Ostjude.”³¹ In the interwar period in which Roth was writing, the literary figure of the Ostjude had already risen in authentic value and the cult of the Eastern European Jew was securely established. Nevertheless, if one considers these pieces as autoethnographic texts, one must also consider the way in which Roth takes on tropes common to German-Jewish representations, not just the way he counters them. The new question that arises from this approach is, in what way is Roth a German-Jewish author? By engaging in this inquiry, one begins to see these two works as cultural products emanating from the contact zone in that Roth’s representations actually parallel Döblin’s account in several ways. I will briefly explore three similarities of Roth’s works to German-Jewish portrayals of Eastern Jews: the itinerary in visiting the shtetl, a focus on the suffering of Eastern European Jews, and the portrayal of Yiddish in German transliteration.

The first such parallel is Roth’s cliché visit to a Chassidic rabbi in *Juden auf Wanderschaft*. A requisite item on the itinerary for ethnographic trips into chassidic Eastern Europe was the visit to the local rabbi of a shtetl. This German-Jewish gaze upon the Chassidim and their “rebbe” was so outrageous that it became the object of critique in the Yiddish press. In 1921, just a few years before Döblin’s pilgrimage to the Polish Chassidim, the essayist Hersh Dovid Nomberg wrote a satirical article in the Warsaw Yiddish newspaper *Der moment* about what an Eastern Jew needs to do to succeed in German-Jewish circles:

The German Jews are yearning for Jewishness.... It is therefore understandable that he demands of us, Eastern Jews, to quench his thirst. Anyone who comes over from that side of the border with aspirations to be heard and seen, it needs to be first of all genuinely Jewish, Jewish of the 84th proof.... From a painter it is required that he paint “Jewish,” that is to say: beard and earlocks, a face contorted by suffering, mad eyes after a pogrom. At the very least – a menorah, a synagogue, gravestones. From literature nothing else is required but deep mysticism, starry eyes, God, angels, rebbes, and Chassidim. And from

³¹ Wolfgang Treitler, *Zwischen Hiob und Jeremia: Stefan Zweig und Joseph Roth am Ende der Welt*, Religion - Kultur - Recht 6 (Frankfurt am Main: Peter Lang, 2007), 152.

theater – give them at least some kind of a synagogue mysteria. *The Dybbuk* will probably satisfy his taste.³²

Out of a similar sense of repulsion, Joseph Roth questions Döblin's need for rebbes in *Reise in Polen*. Roth criticizes Döblin for visiting the rebbe rather than meeting the political personalities of Eastern Europe: "When it was suggested to Döblin that he go out to the road and see [Józef] Pilsudski for himself, he declined with the reason that he was not cut out for making honor guards.... Döblin seeks out the Jewish, Hebrew schools, the miracle-working rebbe."³³ It is therefore ironic, if not bizarre, that Roth goes himself to see a rebbe and records the occasion in *Juden auf Wanderschaft* a year later. Roth pays the rabbi's assistant for the visit and even justifies this custom with romantic notions of what the rabbi does (or rather, does not do) with the pilgrims' monetary donations: "The rabbi does not utilize them for himself. He lives more modest than the last beggar. His nourishment only serves to keep him scarcely alive. He only lives because he wants to serve God. He gains nourishment from small scraps of food and from small drops of drink." Without a hint of sarcasm, it seems that Roth wants to believe this is the case. Even contradictions to this notion of the humble rebbe do not disturb Roth's idealization. A couple of pages later, he notes that a rebbe usually lives in a mansion compared with the other houses, yet Roth justifies this with the words "not to enjoy it, but rather in order to represent."³⁴ When compared to German-Jewish expeditions to the East, where visits to the rebbe abound, Roth's work contains some of the same Western "cookie-cutter" experiences.³⁵ In line with

³² Hersh Dovid Nomberg, "Dos lekhtsenesh nokh yidishkayt [The Yearning for Jewishness]," in *Dos bukh felyetonen* [The Feuilleton Book] (Warsaw: Sz. Jaczkowski, 1924), 136-137, <http://www.archive.org/details/nybc208777>. This translation is based on Mikhail Krutikov, "'Oberflächenäußerungen' and 'Grundgehalt' – Weimar Berlin as a Memory Site of Yiddish Literature," in *Transit und Transformation: Osteuropäische-jüdische Migranten in Berlin, 1918-1939*, ed. Verena Dohrn and Gertrud Pickhan, Charlottengrad und Scheuenviertel 1 (Göttingen: Wallstein, 2010), 276.

³³ Roth, "Döblin im Osten," 534.

³⁴ Roth, *Juden auf Wanderschaft*, 33-39.

³⁵ For other such trips to a Chassidic rabbi, see Aschheim, *Brothers and Strangers*, 153; Hugo Ganz, "Ein Besuch bei einem Wunderrabbi," *Die Welt* 7, no. 7 (1903), <http://www.compactmemory.de/>.

Pratt's definition of autoethnography, Roth's counter-representation takes on tropes essential to the supposed foreign representation.

Even the crux of Roth's narrative, the focus on Eastern Jewish suffering, fails to provide a new perspective or a supposed first-hand Eastern European perspective. German-Jewish literature and reportage had been concerned with Jewish suffering to the East since before the pogroms of 1905.³⁶ Publications by German Jews at the time of Roth's autoethnographies were overwhelmingly pro-East European Jewry.³⁷ Among the ambivalences of *Reise in Polen*, one also finds Döblin's sympathy with and praise for Polish Jews. Thus, the focus in *Hiob* on Jewish suffering positions Roth strongly *within* the German-Jewish mainstream rather than against it.

In the previous section, I discussed how Franzos and Peretz gave attention to the westernizing of Eastern European society. Differences between their portrayals and Roth's can further align him with Western European writers. In Roth's *Hiob*, the Singer family begins as traditional and religious, but things change as the next generation comes of age. The children have lost their place in Eastern European Jewish society, and the effects of westernization separate them geographically from the shtetl. The daughter dates a non-Jewish Cossack, the oldest son willingly throws off the yoke of religious life as he is drafted into the Russian army, and the second eldest son leaves Eastern Europe completely to live like an American in the United States. Such a portrayal focuses on how they westernize by leaving the shtetl. These characters contrast with the main character in Franzos' *Der Pojaz*, Sender Glatteis, who actively and painstakingly seeks to learn Western literature and German while in his hometown, from within the fold of Jewish society. Minor characters are also described as learning German or adopting German ways for business purposes, which fills in the picture about the extent of

³⁶ "Ostern in Kischinew," *Schlemiel: Illustriertes jüdisches Witzblatt* 3, no. 5 (May 1, 1905).

³⁷ For a fascinating exception to this, see Naumann, *Vom nationaldeutschen Juden*.

westernization in Jewish Eastern Europe. While Peretz's and Franzos' characters westernize while within the towns of Eastern Europe, Roth's depiction is rather reductive in its suggestion that Western culture cannot fuse with the shtetl. In Roth's *Job*, the Jews who are westernizing are excised from the shtetl.

Another contrast to Franzos is Roth's utilization of transliteration in *Juden auf Wanderschaft* for two short Yiddish songs: "Ynter die griene Beimelach / sizzen die Mojschelach, Schlojmelach, / Eugen wie gliehende Keulalach," and "Kim, kim, Jisrulekil aheim / in dein teures Land arain."³⁸ ["Under the green trees / sit Moischelach, Shloimelach / eyes like glowing coals," and "Come, come, Yisrulekil, home / to your dear land.] German Jews often used the transliteration of Yiddish to parody it, and one can see a similar motivation here with Roth's choice to spell the Yiddish word "to sit" as "sizzen." Though the word "to sit" is the same in Yiddish and in German, Roth chooses to write the word differently. Phonetically, there would have been no difference had he chosen the German spelling "sitzen." Orthographically, "sitzen" would have matched directly onto the German spelling of the same word. His choice of a transliteration that distances the Yiddish from the German strengthens the case that he was attempting to "other" Yiddish in front of a Western audience—a move taken by many German-Jewish translators.

Sarah Bailey has examined the portrayal of Yiddish in Roth's works to question the interpretation that Roth was defending Eastern Jews. Bailey asserts that Roth's portrayal should more appropriately be placed within the context of negative perceptions of the Eastern European Jews: "By failing to take into account Roth's silencing and foreignization of the Yiddish language, literary critics have allowed Roth's work to be interpreted as a purely romantic paean

³⁸ Roth, *Juden auf Wanderschaft*, 74.

to eastern European Jewish culture.”³⁹ Roth’s “(mis)treatment” of Yiddish and his desired eradication of it upsets his reception as having a cozy relationship vis-à-vis the Eastern Jews. These streams of representation at ostensible odds with each other reflect the works of autoethnography, which allows for such collisions. The transnational contextualization of German-Jewish literature reveals a cultural exchange in which Roth expresses his commitment to countering the hegemonic gaze of the major culture, while at the same time reinscribing some of its same tropes.

Conclusion

In this essay, I have proposed examining literature of migration with an eye towards autoethnography. The authors Karl Emil Franzos and Joseph Roth serve as ideal case studies, since they wrote at the crossroads of two worlds colliding, one in which Galician Jews moved west to contribute to German literature and German authors staked out expeditions to eastern shtetls in search of their Jewish identity. What does this consideration of autoethnography contribute to Jewish studies, a field that has engaged in transnational studies long before the term existed? Like any reading, tools for literary analysis allow us to ask a different set of questions to explore new territory. Autoethnography, as Mary Louise Pratt defines it, implies two streams merging—the minor and major cultures, or the subjugated and hegemonic cultures. Here, by analyzing Franzos and Roth as authors with similar biographies working within the contact zone, new paths for inquiry open up. Certain assumptions based on the Enlightenment ideals in Franzos’ works as well as Franzos’ own statements attesting to his outsider status in Eastern Europe have positioned him as a German Jew. For Roth as well, literary scholars have tended to

³⁹ Sarah Bailey, "Cultural Translation and the Problem of Language: Yiddish in Joseph Roth's *Juden auf Wanderschaft*," *Transit* 1, no. 1 (2004): 11, <http://escholarship.org/uc/item/4v0947ch>.

accept his self-portrayal, considering him an outsider to the German-Jewish milieu—even to the point of invoking the authentically laden and culturally charged term *Ostjude* in describing him. In contradistinction, this case study in autoethnography begins with an understanding of cultural simultaneity (certainly not a balance) in works by authors such as these. This approach interrogates new questions to complement old ones and considers Franzos' ties to Yiddish literature and Roth's place in the German-Jewish canon.

The reverse question might then be raised: What can Jewish studies offer Pratt's work on the contact zone? Essentially, an attempt has been made to present autoethnography with a limit case to explore the circumscribed area that can be defined as autoethnography. I locate this discussion within the cultural exchange between the two geographically close, yet profoundly distinct populations of German Jews and Eastern European Jews. One problem for such a comparison with Pratt's study is that these two populations might not be distinguishable enough from each other. These are a specific group of Ashkenazi Jews—those from Germany, the Austro-Hungarian Empire, and the Russian Empire—and not, as in Pratt's example of the Spanish and the Andeans, two populations who came into contact from across the globe. It would be problematic to place these two Jewish groups into a master-slave or colonialist-colonized subject binary as Pratt presents. Furthermore, the very term *autoethnography* might not apply to works by authors such as Franzos and Roth who did not grow up speaking the same language as the Jews they represented.⁴⁰ Central to Pratt's inquiry was the use of Spanish, a foreign language, by an Andean to represent his people to the colonizing king. When these German-speaking Jews write about the Yiddish-speaking Jews in their Galician hometowns, is

⁴⁰ See Franzos' introduction to *The Clown*. As for Joseph Roth, it has been stated that he might have learned a little Yiddish later in life. See *ibid.*, 8.

this autoethnography or simply ethnography? These questions aim at furthering the discussion on autoethnography within the genre of *Ghettoliteratur* and broader German migrant literature.

PART III

The Embodiment of European Jewish Modernism

CHAPTER 5

Nathan Birnbaum and the Internalization of the Jewish Other

In the first third of the twentieth century, the so-called Jewish renaissance, with its focus on developing the Jewish arts, swept Zionist-leaning German and Austrian Jews off their feet. Defining the parameters of Jewish art and literature often boiled down to positioning the broadly defined German Jew alongside or against the Ostjude. When dealing with these factors—Jewish renaissance, Zionism, and Ostjuden—the Austrian Nathan Birnbaum must be engaged. Nathan Birnbaum was born in 1864 in Vienna to immigrant Galician parents. He grew up speaking German, attended the University of Vienna, and had a significant political life. He died of natural causes in the Netherlands in 1937. Birnbaum's role has often been overlooked despite the wealth of scholarship on the German-Jewish renaissance, some of which even points to Birnbaum as the first in the Jewish renaissance to use all three of these terms around which the cultural movement pivoted—"Jewish renaissance," "Zionism," and "Ostjuden."¹ Birnbaum, when mentioned, is remembered for having coined the word *Zionism* (in German, "*Zionismus*"). Past this, he might

¹ He has been credited with casting the building blocks of the period's discourse in coining the German words *Zionismus*, *Ostjude*, *Westjude* and the Yiddish word *yidishizm*. To add to the list, Paul Reitter points to Birnbaum's coinage of a term related to Jewish self-hatred, "antisemitelnde Juden." See Nathan Birnbaum, "Antisemitelnde Juden," *X-Strahlen* (Vienna), April 1, 1901; Paul Reitter, *On the Origins of Jewish Self-Hatred* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton UP, 2012), 145 n. 39. See Nathan Birnbaum, "An iberblik iber mayn lebn: Oytobiografie | אנ'איבערבליק אן אַיבערביק אַגראַפֿיע" [An Overview of My Life: Autobiography], in *Yubileum-bukh tsum zekhtsiksten geburtstog fun Dr. Nosn Birnboym* | נתן בירנבוים פֿון דר. זעכציגסטען געבורטסטאָג פֿון דר. נתן בירנבוים [Jubilee Book on the Sixtieth Birthday of Dr. Nathan Birnbaum], ed. Y. L. Orlean and Nosn Hasofer (Warsaw: Jeszurun, 1925), 12, <http://sammlungen.ub.uni-frankfurt.de/jd/content/titleinfo/1791940>; Fishman, *Ideology, Society & Language*, 17, 24, and 80.

be referenced as a precursor to Theodor Herzl or in relation to the 1908 Czernowitz Yiddish Language Conference. Essentially, Nathan Birnbaum is not considered.²

Here is a brief overview of Birnbaum's political accomplishments: After taking a second seat to Theodor Herzl at the First Zionist Congress, he turned away from Zionism towards Diasporism and Yiddishism. Only a few years after having started to learn Yiddish, he convened the Yiddish Language Conference of Czernowitz in 1908 and was elected its President.³ Around 1912 he became religiously observant, and in 1919, he became the Secretary General of Agudath Israel, the political arm of Ashkenazi Jewish Orthodoxy. Birnbaum's strikingly active and manic political life is actually secondary here to the discussion of his cultural function. His parallel cultural activities relayed information on foreign Jews both in the German-Jewish and Yiddish spheres. Around WWI when he was authoring pamphlets and articles such as "What are *Ostjuden*?" and "Rights for the *Ostjuden*!" in German, Birnbaum was simultaneously writing articles in a variety of East European Yiddish newspapers with titles like "Viennese Jews," "On the West," and "Is German Jewry Dying?"⁴ A testament to his political significance is the wide reception of his message across Eastern and Western European Jewish circles. (See figure 5.1⁵)

² Birnbaum's significance is glossed over, for example, in Michael Brenner's otherwise comprehensive *The Renaissance of Jewish Culture in the Weimar Germany*. It contains a single reference to Birnbaum and that in the context of Franz Rosenzweig's Frankfurt Lehrhaus. Brenner, *Renaissance of Jewish Culture*, 86.

³ Birnbaum begins publishing in Yiddish in 1904. Fishman, *Ideology, Society & Language*, 43. See also "Der yidisher kultur-vogn. | דער יודישער קולטור־וואָגן [The Jewish Culture-Wagon]," *Der fraynd* (St. Petersburg), sec. Der bezm | דער בעזים, September 3 (16), 1910.

⁴ Nathan Birnbaum, *Was sind Ostjuden?: Zur ersten Information*, Flugschriften zur Aufklärung über ostjüdische Fragen 1 (Vienna: R. Löwit, 1916), <http://sammlungen.ub.uni-frankfurt.de/freimann/urn/urn:nbn:de:hebis:30-180013684008>; Nathan Birnbaum, *Den Ostjuden ihr Recht!* (Vienna: R. Löwit, 1915), <http://sammlungen.ub.uni-frankfurt.de/freimann/urn/urn:nbn:de:hebis:30-180013584003>; Nathan Birnbaum. "Viner yidn | ווינער יודען [Viennese Jews]," *Der moment* (Warsaw), August 11, 1911; Nathan Birnbaum, "Fun mayrev: Goles-mayrev, 'yidnshmerets' un di yidishe yerushe | יודישע ירושה | וידענשמערץ' און די יודישע ירושה [On the West: Diaspora-West, 'Jewish Pain' and the Jewish Legacy]," *Di yidishe velt: Literarische-gezelschaftlike monatsshrift* (January 1913), <http://www.epaveldas.lt/vbspi/biRecord.do?biExemplarId=183377&biRecordId=35056> and <http://www.epaveldas.lt/vbspi/biRecord.do?biExemplarId=183387&biRecordId=35056>; Nathan Birnbaum. "Tsi shtarbt dos dayshe yidntum? | צי שטארבט דאָס דייטשע אידענטום [Is German Jewry Dying?]," *Haynt* (Warsaw), November 4, 1911.

⁵ "Der yidisher kultur-vogn." This reprint is a revised version from Max Süssig (?), "In dem yidishn kultur-vogn | אין דעם יודישען קולטור־וואָגן [In the Jewish Culture-Wagon]," *Der yidisher gazlen* | דער אידישער גולן (Aug 26, 1910).

דער יודישער קולטור-וואגן

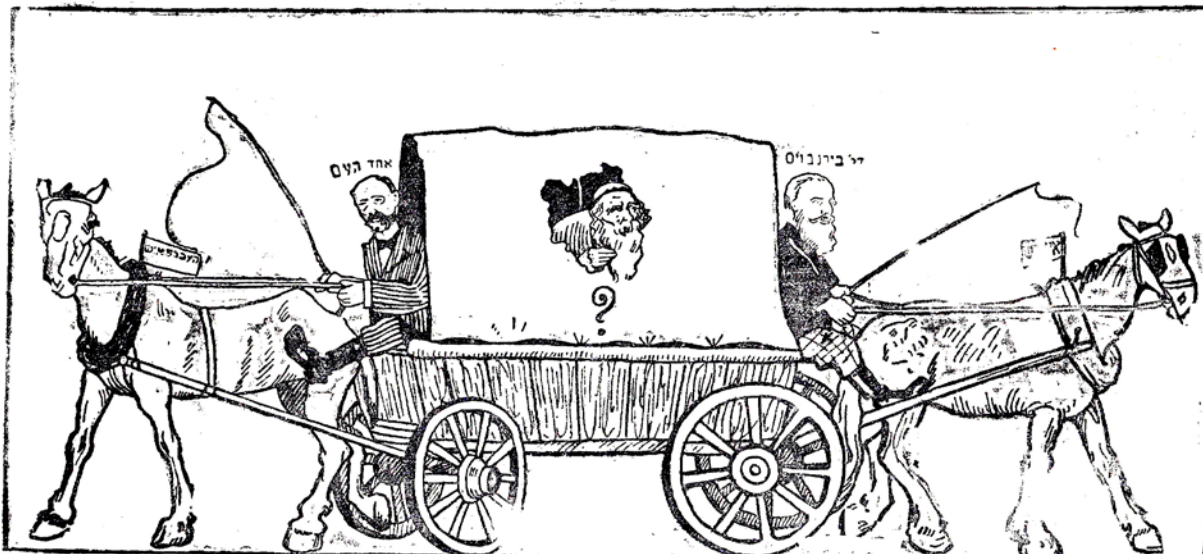
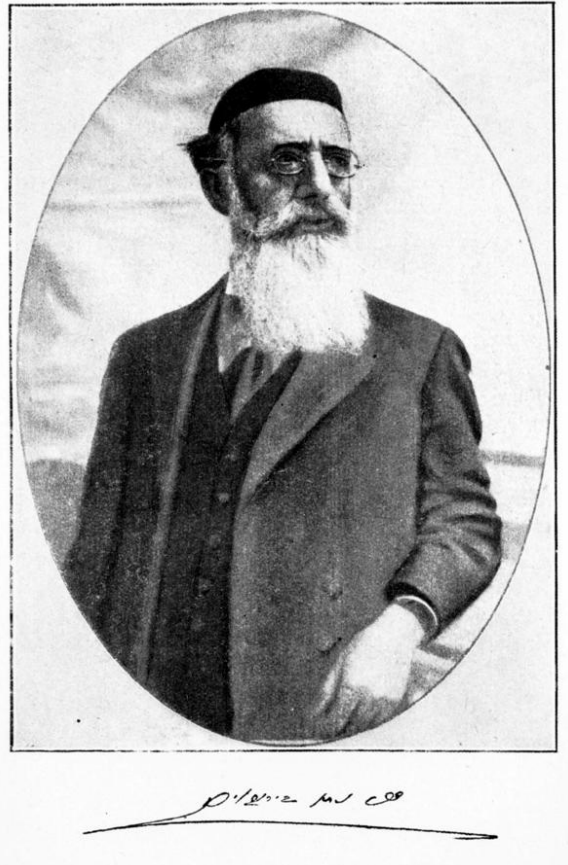
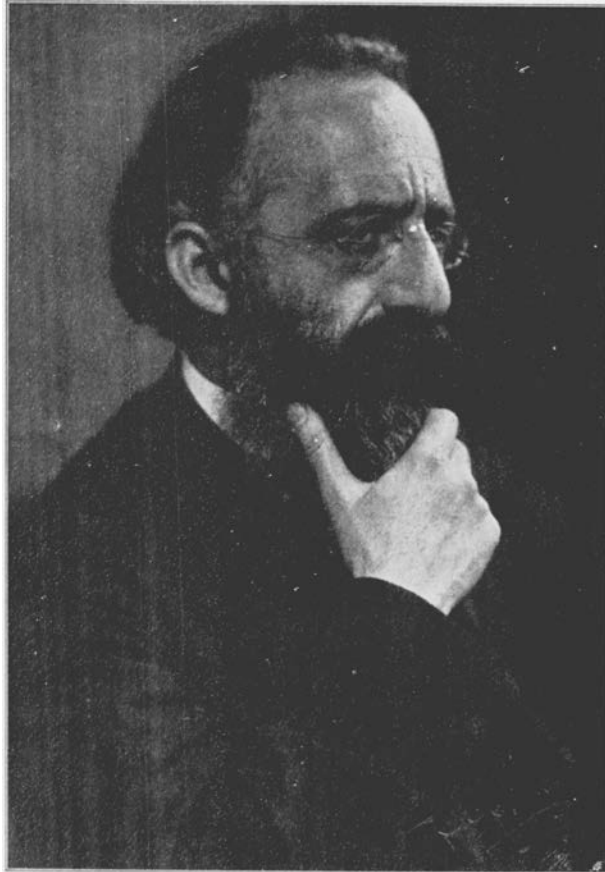


Figure 5.1 "The Jewish Culture-Wagon," *Der fraynd*, 1910. Cartoon showing how the everyday Eastern European Jew in the center is faced with a decision between Achad Ha'am's Hebraicist path (*left*) or Nathan Birnbaum's Yiddishist path (*right*).

The structure of this chapter takes as its organizing principle the modern Jewish breakdown of the binary between Eastern and Western Jewry. The initial part of the chapter considers how Birnbaum inverts the poles of the maskilic binary between Eastern European and German Jewry, thus making Eastern Jews the Jewish ideal. Birnbaum fears the death of German Jewry by assimilation and proposes his aesthetic-driven Ostjude paradigm as a cure for Western Jewry's demise. His drive to create Jewish art comes to push the binary into dialectic motion, since Western Jews are meant to actualize the raw potential of Eastern Jewry in their art. In the end, Birnbaum's self-fashioning as an Eastern Jew in one literary body and a messiah from the

West in another exemplifies his inner clash of Western and Eastern Jewish identities, approaching a collapse of the binaries in this modern era of Jewish identity formation.⁶



Figures 5.2 and 5.3 Photographs of Nathan Birnbaum in 1910 (*left*) and in 1925 (*right*). Birnbaum had a religious awakening in 1912.

⁶ For photographs of Birnbaum, see Nathan Birnbaum, *Ausgewählte Schriften zur jüdischen Frage*, 2 vols., vol. 1 (Czernowitz: Buchhandlung Dr. Birnbaum & Dr. Kohut, 1910), <http://sammlungen.ub.uni-frankfurt.de/freimann/urn/urn:nbn:de:hebis:30:1-104525>; Y. L. Orlean and Nosn Hasofer, eds., *Yubileum-bukh tsum zekhtsiksten geburtstog fun Dr. Nosn Birnboym* | יובילעאום-בוך צום זעכציגסטען געבורטסטאָג פֿון דר. נתן בירנבוים [Jubilee Book on the Sixtieth Birthday of Dr. Nathan Birnbaum] (Warsaw: Yeshurun, 1925), <http://sammlungen.ub.uni-frankfurt.de/jd/content/titleinfo/1791940.s>

The Death of German Jewry

The Yiddish Writings

Birnbaum's writing persistently focuses on the supposed demise of German Jewry. His scolding articles on Westjuden and concomitant praise for the Ostjuden appeared in a variety of German and Eastern European Yiddish publications before WWI. To demonstrate this, a few examples from his Yiddish writings will be brought into conversation with several of his German writings. As background to Birnbaum's Yiddish publications, it should be noted that he almost exclusively wrote articles. These appeared in various Eastern European newspapers and journals, mainly in Czernowitz and Warsaw. Birnbaum himself started *six* newspapers in his life, one of which was the Yiddish newspaper *Dr. Birnboym's vokhnblat* in Czernowitz in 1908.⁷ This was only four years after having published for this first time in Yiddish. Besides the articles, the remainder of his Yiddish double life consisted almost exclusively of a few Yiddish translations of his brochure-length German political pamphlets.⁸

Birnbaum's Yiddish writings contain a steady, frank message that focuses on the perilous state of acculturated German-Jewish life. Three such articles can be brought into the discussion. In 1911 Birnbaum wrote a Yiddish article entitled with the rhetorical question "Is German Jewry Dying?" Here Birnbaum refers to his critics when he writes, "They often claim that I hate German Jews with a passion, and I answer, no. Just the opposite, it hurts me to let go of them. I

⁷ *Selbst-Emancipation!* (Vienna, 1885), *Neue Zeitung* (Vienna, 1906), *Dr. Birnboym's vokhnblat* (Czernowitz, 1908), *Das Volk* (Czernowitz, 1910), *Der Aufstieg* (Berlin, 1930), and *Der Ruf* (Rotterdam, Netherlands; 1934). In its seventh volume in 1894, *Selbst-Emancipation* became *Jüdische Volkszeitung*. See Jess Olson, "The Late Zionism of Nathan Birnbaum: The Herzl Controversy Reconsidered," *AJS Review* 31, no. 2 (2007): 241 n. 2, <http://www.proquest.com/>. In its fourth volume in 1937, *Der Ruf* became *Der jüdische Volksdienst*. See David Birnbaum, "Solomon A. Birnbaum," in *Guide to the Archival Materials of the German-speaking Emigration to the United States after 1933* [Verzeichnis der Quellen und Materialien der deutschsprachigen Emigration in den USA seit 1933], ed. John M. Spalek and Sandra H. Hawrylchak, vol. 3, Part 1 (Bern: K. G. Saur, 1997), 65.

⁸ A listing of most of Birnbaum's publications before 1925 are listed in A. E. Kaplan and Max Landau, eds., "Bibliographie der Schriften Nathan Birnbaums," in *Vom Sinn des Judentums: Ein Sammelbuch zu Ehren Nathan Birnbaums* (Frankfurt a. M.: Hermon, 1925), <http://sammlungen.ub.uni-frankfurt.de/freimann/urn:urn:nbn:de:hebis:30:1-101046>.

would be happy if they did not sink into the great abyss of history. I would be greatly excited if I were to again find signs of life in them...”⁹ He is unapologetic in his answer to Eastern European critics. Birnbaum writes that he is “let[ting] go of them” and that he cannot “find signs of life in them.” Birnbaum notably separates himself from German Jewry, referring to them in the third person plural “them.” Birnbaum goes on in this article to cite the Zionist Felix Theilhaber’s *Der Untergang der deutschen Juden* (The Decline of the German Jews) as proof for his assertion that German Jews are an endangered species. Theilhaber’s statistics prognosticated the death of German Jewry through high assimilation rates within a short time period.¹⁰

Jewish intermarriage and apostasy were the two main issues against which Birnbaum fought. The extent to which he spoke against them, however, is rather striking. In another article from 1911, “What Is Being Done about Jews Converting to Christianity?” he goes so far as to suggest that Jews who convert to Christianity are comparable to “murderers.” As Birnbaum writes, “Of course, I don’t agree with those who act indifferently or [act] even with a bit of compassion to the converts. Really, everything needs to be understood. Even a murderer needs to be understood, too.” Birnbaum goes on to provocatively play with the idea that lists of converted Jews should be published so that the public at large might participate in a boycott of them.¹¹ “Radical assimilation” is often discussed in German-Jewish historiography; this might be seen as an instance of “radical anti-assimilation.”

In a third Yiddish article “On the West,” from 1913, Birnbaum imagines German Jewry, and by extension Western Jewry at large, as a corpse: “The situation of the German and of

⁹ Birnbaum, “Tsi shtarbt dos daytshe yidntum?”

¹⁰ Felix A. Theilhaber, *Der Untergang der deutschen Juden: Eine volkswirtschaftliche Studie* (München: Kraus, 1980 (1911)). This perennial argument is reincarnated in a work like Alan Dershowitz’s much later *The Vanishing American Jew*. See Alan M. Dershowitz, *The Vanishing American Jew: In Search of Jewish Identity for the Next Century* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1997).

¹¹ Nathan Birnbaum. “Vos tut men kegn shmad? | וואָס טוהט מען געגען שמד? [What Is Being Done against Jews Converting to Christianity?],” *Haynt* (Warsaw), December 9 (22), 1911.

Western Jewry at large can be seen just for what it is. One sees how it's lying there spread out, dried up, and its good friends are standing around taking bets as to when they'll have the honor of giving it a tug and bringing it to Esau's grave."¹² Birnbaum again references assimilation here as that which will be the final death blow to German Jewry. The comment that the "friends" of an anthropomorphic German Jewry are waiting impatiently to bring him to Esau's grave would have been understood as meaning to the grave of Christianity. In Jewish thought, Esau, the brother of Jacob/Israel, represents Christianity.¹³ Birnbaum repeatedly cites conversion and intermarriage as the symptoms of an unraveling Western Jewish culture. Again and again, Birnbaum imagines a dying German-Jewish culture.

To be fair, Birnbaum does throw a bone to German Jews every now and then. He liked the German-Jewish author Max Brod,¹⁴ and even with his doomsday tone, Birnbaum nevertheless at one point writes for his Yiddish-speaking audience, "Among the Western Jews, German Jews are still the most Jewish."¹⁵ This apparent approbation is qualified of course, lest Birnbaum be misunderstood, with reasons why Eastern Jewry must still run away from their neighbors to the west like the plague. Western Jewry can at times constitute a heterogeneous entity in Birnbaum's thinking. The one group of Western Jews that he disliked most was seemingly assimilated Hungarian Jews. His rhetoric on this group reveals a visceral reaction, not evoked in his discussions of German Jews. Not only were Hungarian Jews assimilated, but they also had dirty mouths [*nivlpe*], which they acquired from "Budapest coffee houses." As evidence of his repulsion, he repeats this observation no less than three times in the same article.¹⁶ For

¹² Birnbaum, "Fun mayrev," 67.

¹³ R. J. Zwi Werblowsky and Geoffrey Wigoder, "Christianity," in *Encyclopaedia Judaica*, ed. Michael Berenbaum and Fred Skolnik, 2nd ed. ed., vol. 4 (Detroit: Macmillan Reference USA, 2007 (2007)), 678, <http://go.galegroup.com/ps/i.do?id=GALE%7CCX2587504287&v=2.1&u=umuser&it=r&p=GVRL&sw=w>.

¹⁴ Birnbaum, "Fun mayrev," 115.

¹⁵ Birnbaum, "Tsi shtarbt dos daytshe yidntum?."

¹⁶ Birnbaum, "Viner yidn."

Birnbaum, Western Jews were composed of bad and worse. From Birnbaum's Yiddish writings, it is clear that the East European Jewish audience was receiving an image of German Jews as apostates couched in language comparing them to murderers and corpses.

The German Writings

Turning to one of the few belletristic pieces Birnbaum wrote, a fragment of his German novel called "After a Thousand Years" can demonstrate that his representation of German Jews did not vary with language and audience. The novel is set some centuries after the year 2374, a year that is remembered for a deadly battle [Todeskampf] in Frankfurt when German Jewry was lost.¹⁷ From the title of the piece, it can be assumed that the story is set in 2907, one thousand years into the future from when he wrote it in 1907, but this date is not explicitly given. The messiah-like main character of the story visits the Jewish quarter of Vienna. In a café, which is otherwise filled with Yiddish speakers, he hears a group near him speaking German. He asks the waiter who they are. The waiter responds that he does not know, since they are not regulars, but he says that he can tell that they are German Jews. Upon hearing this, the visitor inquires further, as if hearing about an exotic race:

"Oh, the remnants of this misfortunate branch of our people! Are there many here?"
"Oh, no! They are becoming fewer and fewer in number. My grandfather told me that in his youth there were still three thousand in Vienna."
"And today?"
"Today there can't be more than a thousand or twelve hundred."
"And where are they disappearing off to? Are they emigrating?"
"I don't think it's that. It's probably intermarriage that's decimating them."¹⁸

¹⁷ The narrator references a battle that takes place in the Jewish year 6134. Birnbaum, "Nach tausend Jahren."

¹⁸ *ibid.*, 336-337.

The reader is to take away from this questionably utopian novel fragment that the demographics of Vienna have changed. German Jews are being “decimated” by intermarriage, which has led to the void being filled with Eastern European Yiddish speakers. Keeping tally, future German Jews are killed in Birnbaum’s fiction in two ways: for the majority of German Jewry, in a fatal battle [Todeskampf] in Frankfurt, and for the remainder in Vienna, through intermarriage. This piece, which is addressed to a German-speaking audience, shows that Birnbaum did not try to hide behind Yiddish to spread his ill tidings about fellow German Jews. Birnbaum portrayed German Jews negatively in both languages.

Another similarity that emerges from a comparison of Birnbaum’s German and Yiddish writings on German Jewry is his attempt to distance himself from German/Western Jews. In a German essay dated two years later in 1909, Birnbaum assumes an Eastern Jewish identity in his disdain for German Jewry. The piece entitled “The Emancipation of Eastern Jewry from Western Jewry” includes the line: “We are life, you are in your death throes [Todeskampf]. We are the life form, you are its shadow. We are the trunk, you are the splinters.”¹⁹ His aggressive tone comes through here when he uses the second person to speak directly to Western/German Jewry: “you are in your death throes.” This sentence uses the word *Todeskampf* for the second time as above in the novel fragment to describe the perilous situation of the German Jew. It also positions Birnbaum as “we,” the Eastern Jews. This parallels his Yiddish writing when he speaks about Germans as “them.”²⁰ Birnbaum tried to capitalize on the fact that his parents were Galician-born Jews.

These foreboding passages make it seem unlikely that Birnbaum himself could imagine *ostjüdische Kultur* somehow transforming German Jewry or the building of a “bridge” between

¹⁹ “Wir sind das Leben, ihr seid der Todeskampf. Wir sind das Wesen, ihr seid der Schatten. Wir sind der Stamm, ihr seid die Splitter.” Birnbaum, “Die Emanzipation des Ostjudentums vom Westjudentum,” 28.

²⁰ See above, Birnbaum, “Tsi shtarbt dos daytshe yidntum?.”

the two communities as Joshua Fishman writes.²¹ From the scene in the Viennese coffee house in “After a Thousand Years,” it is clear that Birnbaum dreams of Eastern European Jewish culture thriving in the *absence* of Western Jewry. The aggressive tone in the German article “The Emancipation of Eastern Jewry from Western Jewry” does not suggest that Birnbaum was seeking reconciliation between the two groups. In the Yiddish piece “On the West,” he has already signed Western Jewry’s death certificate. As can be seen from these articles, Birnbaum’s message did not change regardless of whether his audience was German or Yiddish speaking. It might have been expected that in this East-West exchange, Birnbaum would have softened his message of the demise of German Jewry when addressing a German-Jewish public, but this apparently was not the case.

Just as his straightforward message did not vary between audiences, Birnbaum’s message likewise did not seem to change with time throughout his many political associations. Birnbaum composed the Yiddish and German writings outlined here between 1907 and 1913 during his post-Zionist, Diasporist/Yiddishist period and at the beginning of his religious phase. We can return however to his earlier Zionist episode to read the same message. At the First Zionist Congress in Basel in 1897, Birnbaum said:

The main thing, the existential question, the Jewish question is only for those truly and immediately affected, for us ourselves, for us, for whom it’s a matter of body and soul – in the East and in the West. We have to then think about its solution. Our concern must be allowing Eastern Jews to again make progress, and to enliven [beseelen] the Western ones from their dead Europeanism. This is only possible on the Zionist path through the resurrection of the Jewish nation to a people with a state.²²

²¹ Fishman, *Ideology, Society & Language*, 101.

²² “Hauptsache, Daseinsfrage ist die Judenfrage ja nur für die eigentlich und unmittelbar Betroffenen, für uns selbst, für uns, welchen sie eben an Leib und Seele geht - im Osten und im Westen. Wir müssen denn auch an ihre Lösung denken. Unsere Sorge muß es sein, die östlichen Juden dem Fortschritte zurückzugeben, den westlichen ihr totes Europatum zu beseelen. Das ist aber nur auf zionistischem Wege möglich, durch die Wiedererhebung der jüdischen Nation zu einem Staatsvolke.” Nathan Birnbaum, “Zionismus als Kulturbewegung,” in *Ausgewählte Schriften zur jüdischen Frage*, vol. 1 (Czernowitz: Buchhandlung Dr. Birnbaum & Dr. Kohut, 1910 (1897)), 74, <http://sammlungen.ub.uni-frankfurt.de/freimann/urn:urn:nbn:de:hebis:30:1-104525>.

Clearly Birnbaum had mapped out an idea of East and West, life and death, at an early stage in his development. Eastern Jews should be given the chance to continue making progress on their own Jewish cultural pursuits without any additional influence from European *Zivilisation*. For Western Jews, it was almost too late. They would have to be “enlivened” from their “dead Europeanism.” This message would not change until Birnbaum’s own death in 1937.

Birnbaum’s mediation of the Eastern European Jews to German Jews has been discussed in the context of the Jewish renaissance at times, but this is only one aspect of Birnbaum’s work. He was simultaneously relating German Jewry to Eastern European Jewry. Birnbaum enters into this study as one of a limited number of German Jews to publish in Yiddish and is perhaps the singular voice that went one step further to actively intervene in Yiddish discourse on German Jewry. The common underpinnings between the two representations—his representations of Eastern European Jews and of German Jews—can be found in his discussion of how these groups are to be positioned as sites for Jewish identity formation. The uncomplicated binary that Birnbaum arranges suggests German Jews, as the paradigmatic Western Jew, should be rejected, and the Eastern Jew should be fully internalized.

I will conclude this section by briefly discussing the larger implications. A major focus within the scholarship on the Jewish renaissance and Jewish Orientalism has been on how German Jews were represented foreign Jews in their creation of a Jewish sense of self. Autoethnographic writings by Eastern Jews writing in German, oftentimes writing in the genre of *Ghettoliteratur*, have been credited with influencing German-Jewish reception of Eastern European Jews.²³ From the early nineteenth century into the 1930s, authoritative Eastern Jewish voices shaped the German discourse on Eastern European Jews. The investigation into Birnbaum

²³ Gabriele von Glasenapp and Hans Otto Horch, eds., *Ghettoliteratur: Eine Dokumentation zur deutsch-jüdischen Literaturgeschichte des 19. und frühen 20. Jahrhunderts*, 2 vols., vol. 2: Autoren und Werke der Ghettoliteratur, *Conditio Judaica* 55 (Tübingen: Max Niemeyer, 2005).

here can place such transnational interventions into a clearer context. Karl Emil Franzos (1848 – 1904), an example of a *Ghettoliteratur* author, uses strikingly similar descriptors in depicting his fellow Eastern European Jews as Birnbaum does in depicting German Jews. The *Zivilisation* and *Kultur* debates play out in expected antagonistic fashion between Franzos and Birnbaum.²⁴

These two authors both sought acceptance by their respective Jewish role models through their negative representations of their own Jewish origins. The two authors worked against each other on the same binary so persistently that Birnbaum significantly referred to Franzos as his “opponent.”²⁵ Franzos is just one point of intersection within this study on Birnbaum that shows the significant similarities in the East-West Jewish exchange. The consideration of Birnbaum’s portrayal of the German Jew to a Yiddish readership allows for an interrogation of how European Jews were more broadly defining a modern Jewish self through a foreign Jewish Other.

Birnbaum’s Ostjude Paradigm as Intervention

Having articulated Birnbaum’s problematic, which he repeatedly laid out across languages, audiences, and time, I will now discuss his proposals to stave off Jewish cultural death. Birnbaum’s definitive intervention into the German-Jewish relationship to Eastern Jewry was his “Ostjude paradigm.” I argue that he was one of the first to redeem Eastern European Jewry as a radically different notion of Jewish authenticity. Through his focus on Eastern Jewry, his perspective inherently “revealed” the weaknesses of Western Jewry, thus enabling a start to a

²⁴ Compare Franzos’s comments on the “deutscher Kulturstaat” to Birnbaum’s idealization of “ostjüdische Kultur” devoid of European “Zivilisation.” See Mark H. Gelber, “Ethnic Pluralism and Germanization in the Works of Karl Emil Franzos (1848-1904),” *The German Quarterly* 56, no. 3 (May 1983): 378; Birnbaum, “Zionismus als Kulturbewegung,” 71.

²⁵ See Nathan Birnbaum, [B., pseud.], “Russische und deutsche Juden,” *Selbst-Emancipation* 5, no. 2 (Jan. 18, 1892): 16, <http://www.compactmemory.de/>.

“solution.” (Common to this time period was to speak of “solutions” to the “Jewish Question,” or taking the anti-Semitic variant, to the “Jewish Problem.”) The argument here will briefly outline the etymology of the term *Ostjude* to show how Birnbaum changes the definition. A discussion of Martin Buber’s early writings will exemplify how Birnbaum’s paradigm shift truly stood at the beginning of the Jewish renaissance’s fascination with Eastern Jewry and influenced Buber himself, who is considered the main curator of the aesthetic Ostjude project,. Finally, looking at Birnbaum’s aesthetic push for a Jewish “*Wiedergeburt*” demonstrates how he called for Yiddish literary endeavors to serve as models for German-Jewish writers.

The main thrust of Birnbaum’s cure to premature German-Jewish death was through a changed conception of the East. Mizrahi Jews of the Middle East and Sephardic Jews of Spain and North Africa had long held a place of authentic authority in the minds of German Jews, reaching back to the seventeenth century but this idea became thoroughly entrenched with the Haskalah. These authentic Jewish groups, and not Eastern European Jews, would be subsumed under labels such as “Oriental Jews” and even “Ostjuden.” *East*, it should be remembered, has always had the connotation of religious redemption in Judaism, due to Jerusalem’s location to the east of Europe.²⁶ As Ismar Schorsch writes, the Haskalah of the late eighteenth and nineteenth centuries typically rejected Ashkenazic forms of Jewish life in deference for the Sephardic.²⁷ One only needs to look at the Oranienburger Straße synagogue in Berlin built in 1866 to see the influence of Orientalist architectural style. Similarly, Ashkenazic Haskalah and Zionist leaders at the end of the nineteenth century adopted the Hebrew pronunciation of the

²⁶ The term “Mizrahi Jew” itself means “Eastern Jew” and should be thought of in this Zionist/Maskilic conception of authenticity. Birnbaum’s own proto-Zionist organization that he founded in 1885 was “Kadimah,” which in Hebrew has two definitions: “forward” (think of socialism) and “eastward.”

²⁷ Ismar Schorsch, “The Myth of Sephardic Supremacy,” *The Leo Baeck Institute Yearbook* 34, no. 1 (January 1, 1989): 50, <http://leobaeck.oxfordjournals.org/content/34/1/47.short>.

Sephardic Jews as the correct pronunciation, thus casting aside their own Ashkenazic pronunciation of Hebrew and proclaiming it incorrect.

Birnbaum was one of the first to turn away from this entrenched belief in Sephardic supremacy and to gaze upon the Ashkenazic Jews of Eastern Europe for their potential salvation properties. At least as early as 1897, Birnbaum began writing about Eastern European Jewry in a way that shifted the German-Jewish discourse.²⁸ The recasting of the already existent word “ostjüdisch” to now refer to Eastern European Jews would play a significant role in shaping German-Jewish Orientalism at the beginning of the twentieth century, when the authentic Jewish locus of the “Jewish Orient” becomes bifurcated in a shared power struggle between the Middle East and Eastern Europe.²⁹ Birnbaum’s shift was intrinsically anti-Haskalah, and it is in this light that Birnbaum’s revamping of *Ostjude* for the purposes of reviving Western European Jewry should be thought of as transgressive, or even radical.

This paradigm shift is demonstrable in a brief analysis of Martin Buber’s early writings. Turning to Martin Buber shows that Birnbaum’s drive to reclaim the Eastern European Jews pushed the Jewish renaissance into a direction in which it was not originally intending to go. Buber’s 1901 essay “Jüdische Renaissance” clearly demonstrates that the Eastern Jew had not yet entered as a site for a Jewish renewal. In giving an historical background to the current sad state of Jewish affairs, for which a renaissance is necessary, Buber writes:

²⁸ One of the earlier essays on this topic would be Nathan Birnbaum, “Deutsche und polnische Juden,” *Die Welt* (August 6, 1897), <http://www.compactmemory.de/>. Within a month of this article he would use the word “ostjüdisch” for the first time at the First Zionist Congress.

²⁹ Just one example where the exotic- and religiously laden word *East* came to be associated with Jews from Eastern Europe comes in the renaming of an aid organization to Eastern European Jews. Birnbaum worked for this organization originally named “Komitee zur Befreiung der russischen Juden” [“Committee for the Liberation of Russian Jews”]. This was renamed “Komitee für den Osten” [“Committee for the East”]. Here, “Russian Jews”—a term similar to “Polish Jews” that meant Eastern European Jews at large—had become the equivalent to “the East.” Martin Buber, *Briefwechsel, 1897-1918*, ed. Grete Schaefer, *Briefwechsel aus sieben Jahrzehnten 1* (Heidelberg: L. Schneider, 1972), 371 n. 2.

Das Exil wirkte wie eine Folterschraube: das Lebensgefühl wurde verrenkt. Die äussere Knechtung des "Wirtsvölker" und die innere Zwingherrschaft des Gesetzes trugen in gleichem Masse dazu bei, das Lebensgefühl von seinem natürlichen Ausdruck, dem freien Schaffen in Wirklichkeit und Kunst, abzulenken; es verirrte sich in krankhafte Erscheinungen, wie Chuzpe und Chassidismus.³⁰

Chassidism, the Jewish religious movement with roots in eighteenth-century Eastern Europe, was, according to Buber, "a sickly phenomenon," an aberration of Jewish history that prevented Jewish art! Buber's negative perspective of Chassidism here is an aspect of his foundational essay that seems to have been ignored in the secondary literature.³¹ Buber did not originally see that Chassidism, an East European Jewish manifestation, should be appropriated. This is important considering that Buber is the figure most associated with originating the myth of the Ostjude, and Chassidism in particular. In 1901, at a time when Birnbaum's views were in the definitive minority, Buber was towing the Zionist line of his time and rejecting Diasporic forms of Judaism, like Chassidism. As Buber writes in his autobiographical work, *Mein Weg zum Chassidismus* [*My Path to Chassidism*], it was only at the age of 26 (i.e., 1904) that he began to be invested in this religious movement.³² Paul Mendes-Flohr's research might question Buber's memory just slightly and suggest that this was 1903.³³ Either way, Buber's turn came after he wrote his 1901 essay "Jüdische Renaissance." Undoubtedly in these first years of the new

³⁰"Exile acted like a torture instrument: our sense of life became distorted. The external slavery of the 'host people' and the internal slavery of the Law contributed in equal measure to the deflection of our sense of life from its natural expression, from free creation in reality and art; it lost itself in pathological manifestations such as *chutzpa* (nerve) and Hasidism." Buber, "Jüdische Renaissance," 10; Martin Buber, "Jewish Renaissance," in *The First Buber Youthful Zionist Writings of Martin Buber*, ed. Gilya Gerda Schmidt, trans. Gilya Gerda Schmidt (Syracuse, NY: Syracuse University Press, 1999 (1901)),

<http://www.netLibrary.com/urlapi.asp?action=summary&v=1&bookid=33885>.

³¹ Asher Biemann writes about the similarities between Buber's 1901 and 1905 essays on the Jewish renaissance: "Common to both essays is Buber's emphasis on Hasidism and *Haskalah* as liberating undercurrents in Judaism." I am arguing that there are vast differences between the two essays with regard to Chassidism. Martin Buber, "On the [Jewish] Renaissance," in *The Martin Buber Reader: Essential Writings*, ed. Asher D. Biemann, trans. Gilya Gerda Schmidt (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2002 (1905)), 144, <http://books.google.com/books?id=BTzPiYZUIPwC>.

³² Buber, *Mein Weg zum Chassidismus: Erinnerungen*, 19.

³³ "In his introduction to this work, *Jüdische Künstler* (1903), he spoke for this first time of Hasidism as a source of the spiritual vitality necessary for the Jewish renaissance." Paul R. Mendes-Flohr, *Divided Passions: Jewish Intellectuals and the Experience of Modernity* (Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 1991), 94.

century, Birnbaum's thinking was circulating among Buber's circles. Not incidentally, Buber wrote an article on Birnbaum's Zionist thinking in 1904, the same year in which Buber states that he was converted. In this same article on Birnbaum, Buber uses the words *Westjude* and *ostjüdisch* for what seems to be the first time.³⁴ Two years later in 1906, Buber published the first in his series of Chassidic tales, *Die Geschichten des Rabbi Nachman (The Stories of Rabbi Nachman)*.³⁵ His thinking took such a turn that in 1918, he wrote that "nirgends in den letzten Jahrhunderten hat sich die Seelenkraft des Judentums so kundgegeben wie im Chassidismus."³⁶

That secondary literature has missed the rather abrupt shift in Buber's tone from his keystone essay most likely stems from one cause. The essay from 1901 was reprinted in a 1916 collection of Buber's writings entitled *Die jüdische Bewegung (The Jewish Movement)*. Most readers have accessed the article "Jüdische Renaissance" through this republication rather than through the original *Ost und West* issue. The problem, however, is that this reprint does not contain the inflammatory line rejecting Chassidism: "es verirrt sich in krankhafte Erscheinungen, wie Chuzpe und Chassidismus."³⁷ By 1916 Buber had made a name for himself with the mediation of Chassidism to a German-Jewish audience. This original/pre-1903 way of imagining a Jewish renaissance turning away from Chassidism was vastly out of step with Buber's thinking in 1916, which—I argue—was strongly shaped by Birnbaum either directly or indirectly. The simple elision of the sentence in the reprint points to a revisionist history, one that

³⁴ Martin Buber, "Herzl und die Historie," *Ost und West* 4, no. 8/9 (August/September 1904): 589, <http://www.compactmemory.de/>. This is of course not to say that Buber's only impetus to turn to Chassidism/Mysticism was Birnbaum. Mendes-Flohr indicates that his wife's studies in Orientalism and Eastern religions had a large impact. Mendes-Flohr, *Divided Passions: Jewish Intellectuals and the Experience of Modernity*, 93.

³⁵ Buber, *Die Geschichten des Rabbi Nachman*.

³⁶ "Nowhere in the past few centuries has the spiritual strength of Judaism been so expressed as in Chassidismus." Buber, *Mein Weg zum Chassidismus: Erinnerungen*, 8.

³⁷ Martin Buber, *Die jüdische Bewegung: Gesammelte Aufsätze und Ansprachen, 1900 - 1915* (Berlin: Jüdischer Verlag, 1916), 14, <http://sammlungen.ub.uni-frankfurt.de/freimann/urn:urn:nbn:de:hebis:30:1-104612>.

has seemingly persevered until today. Where Herzl stole Zionism away from Birnbaum, Buber stole the Ostjude.³⁸

In earlier chapters, I discussed the multifaceted ways in which the Eastern Jew was an aesthetic project for the German Jew, both on a literary and a visual level. Birnbaum's turn to the Ostjude centered on the making of a Jewish aesthetic, which was part and parcel of a movement for Jewish renewal. His programmatic call for a new Jewish aesthetic preceded his first usage of *ostjüdisch* in 1897. However, once the Ostjude paradigm was thoroughly in place, the new Jewish aesthetics could be easily situated, as will be seen, so that the Ostjuden would serve as the productive raw materials for this aesthetic project.

As early as 1897, Birnbaum calls for a revitalization of Jewish artistic endeavors in the essay "Künstlertum."³⁹ His ideas for Jewish art remained throughout his life over-generalized and vague. Birnbaum gives the impression that Jewish art is simply art made by Jews that bluntly thematizes a Jewish topic. One of the few aesthetic arguments he does produce takes an uncomplicated stand against *l'art pour l'art*.⁴⁰ Sometimes he pushes simultaneously for the visual arts, music, theater, and literature among other art forms. Despite his open attitude, one that could optimistically be called "holistic," Birnbaum had a special place for literature, and more specifically for Eastern Jewish literature. His favoring of literature can most likely be reconciled with his interest in the development of the Yiddish language as a literary language.

One logical critique of any treatment of Birnbaum, especially one like this that seeks to boil Birnbaum down to a few key ideas, is to question how one can write anything on Birnbaum

³⁸ At the first Zionist Congress in 1897, a delegate said in Herzl's presence, "Ohne Birnbaum wäre kein Herzl." <http://babel.hathitrust.org/cgi/pt?id=mdp.39015009382725;view=image;seq=193;num=187;q1=birnbaum;start=1;size=10;page=search>. See also Ritchie Robertson, "Western Observers and Eastern Jews: Kafka, Buber, Franzos," *The Modern Language Review* 83, no. 1 (January 1988): 97, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/3728546>.

³⁹ See Birnbaum, "Künstlertum."

⁴⁰ Angelika M. Hausenbichl, "Nathan Birnbaum – Seine Bemühungen um das jüdische Theater und die jüdische Kultur" (Magister, Universität Wien, 2001), 10-16.

that covers more than a few years time, since his opinions vacillated so wildly. To this question, previous authors have pointed to the few consistencies in Birnbaum's writings that bridged his politics. Steven Aschheim writes, "In all Birnbaum's transformations, however, the Ostjuden remained central."⁴¹ And Joshua Fishman writes that one of the most enduring messages throughout Birnbaum's life was the need to develop the Jewish arts.⁴² To demonstrate his lifetime commitment to this topic while also showing the breadth of his aesthetic drives, one of Birnbaum's final publications contains an essay that he dedicates to the topic of culling Jewish architects for a new, specifically Jewish form of building.⁴³ Again, Birnbaum talks in very broad terms without any specifics as to what that might mean. Nevertheless, from the 1890s to the 1930s, roughly the span of his entire career, Birnbaum's aesthetic push was clearly foregrounded.

A Jewish aesthetic was meant to create a special sense of Jewish culture, free from "Europeanism." For Birnbaum, the Jewish arts should intersect with the Ostjude paradigm, the heart of the Jewish Orient. Birnbaum's main message reflected the argument that I have made throughout this dissertation about the essence of the Jewish renaissance. Eastern Jewry is the purer Jewish group, and further, the German Jew should appropriate Eastern Jewish culture, including their arts:

Ein grandioses Beispiel dieser lebenerzeugenden Macht des Golus stellen die neuen Kultur- und Wirtschaftstatsachen der Ostjudenheit dar—dieses Blocks, der drei Viertel des ganzen jüdischen Volkes umfaßt. Vieles ist da noch roh, unfertig, ja manches unerfreulich, einiges sogar schon im Verfall, aber alles zusammen bietet doch das Bild einer ursprünglichen Bewegung von Energien, einer natürlichen Schaffung und Ausbildung von Organen, einer gewaltigen Beseeltheit. Was noch fehlt, ist nichts als mehr Erkennen, Anerkennen und Organisieren dieser Kraft. Und diese Lücke auszufüllen, planvolles Arbeiten für die Erhaltung und Gestaltung, Stärkung und Steigerung der jüdischen Positionen in der ganzen Welt halte ich für eine Aufgabe, bei

⁴¹ Aschheim, *Brothers and Strangers*, 114.

⁴² Fishman, *Ideology, Society & Language*, 100.

⁴³ See Nathan Birnbaum, "Auf ewigem Fundamente," in *Rufe: Sieben Aufsätze* (Antwerp: Messilo, 1936).

der jeder mithelfen kann und muß, der die Eigenart des Volkes am besten im schreitenden Leben verbürgt sieht.⁴⁴

Birnbaum writes about Eastern Jewish culture as a diamond in the rough: “raw, unfinished.” The only thing left to do is the “systematic work on the preservation and shaping, strengthening and elevation of this power.” Of course this work is to be done by Western Jews. Said’s *Orientalism* helps to put this in perspective. As Said writes about Oriental cultural goods, they are “silent shadows to be animated by the Orientalist.”⁴⁵ Birnbaum’s view is also purely atavistic. Some words that appear in this work are “raw,” “original movement of energies,” “creation,” and “formation.” It begins to sound as if Birnbaum is writing on the creation of the universe.

One distinction that can be made between Birnbaum’s aesthetics and the Jewish aesthetics of other German Jews is that Birnbaum does not necessarily favor the visual over other art forms. Some token interest in the subject can be seen from his statements on Eastern Jewish visual arts: “Zeigt nicht selbst die ostjüdische bildende Kunst verheißungsvolle Anfänge?”⁴⁶ The Yiddish theater, if it can be considered a visual genre, also plays an integral role for Birnbaum’s understanding of the Jewish Other. He begins to use his essentialist terms *ostjüdisch* and

⁴⁴ “A grand example of the life-producing power of Diaspora are the new cultural and economic factors of Eastern Jewry—this block that encompasses three quarters of the entire Jewish people. Much is still raw, unfinished, even some joyless, some already even in decay, but everything together however offers the picture of an original movement of energies, of a natural creation and formation of organs, of an awesome soulfulness. What is still missing is nothing more than recognition, acknowledgment, and organization of this power. And I think filling this gap, strategically working for the preservation and shaping, strengthening and elevation of the Jewish positions in the whole world is a task for which everyone who sees the uniqueness of the people hidden best in the forward-moving life can and must help.” Nathan Birnbaum, “Jüdisches Wesen und jüdisches Leben,” *Die Freistatt* 2, no. 2 (1914): 68, <http://www.compactmemory.de/>.

⁴⁵ Edward W. Said, *Orientalism* (New York: Pantheon, 1978), 208.

⁴⁶ “Aren’t the Eastern Jewish visual arts showing promising beginnings?” Nathan Birnbaum, “Zur Kritik des politischen und kulturellen Zionismus,” in *Ausgewählte Schriften zur jüdischen Frage*, 2 vols., vol. 1 (Czernowitz: Buchhandlung Dr. Birnbaum & Dr. Kohut, 1910 (1905)), 187, <http://sammlungen.ub.uni-frankfurt.de/freimann/urn:urn:nbn:de:hebis:30:1-104525>.

westjüdisch in a 1902 article on the Yiddish theater.⁴⁷ Even though two of his sons became visual artists, Birnbaum's own aesthetics do not dwell on the visual.

Birnbaum concentrated on writing Jewish literature influenced by Yiddish authors. In an article "Können Juden Dichter sein?" Birnbaum defends Jews from the anti-Semitic attack against unskilled Jewish literary writing. Birnbaum supports Jewish literary efforts in an awkward way that is emblematic of his paradigm. In the article, he suggests that the anti-Semite look to ancient Hebrew poetry, poetry of the Middle Ages, or contemporary Eastern Jewish literature for evidence of Jewish literature. Birnbaum seems to implicitly agree with the anti-Semite that specifically German Jews do not have literary skills.⁴⁸ Birnbaum does write elsewhere about certain talented German-Jewish authors, namely Max Brod, but most of his literary interest is expressed through the translation of Yiddish belletristic into German. Birnbaum translated the works of many Yiddish authors, including Sholem Aleichem and Y. L. Peretz. Rather than writing much belletristic of his own, translating the quintessential Jewish literature (by Jews on Jews for Jews in the/a Jewish language) served as his way of providing German Jews a demonstrable Jewish aesthetic. This was Jewish art in action.

Nathan Birnbaum's nationalistic Jewish rebirth was anchored in formulating a Jewish aesthetic. Bound to the Ostjude paradigm, the aesthetic push was the solution to the death of German Jewry. The binary nature of much of Birnbaum's thought begins to collapse when placed into context with Jewish aesthetics. Both groups are participating in the Jewish renewal. Eastern Jews are a "Künstlerspezies" (an artistic species).⁴⁹ They are the raw material, and the

⁴⁷ Nathan Birnbaum, [Mathias Acher, pseud.], "Eine ostjüdische Bühne in Wien: Ein kleiner Beitrag zum jüdischen Kulturproblem," *Ost und West* 2, no. 4 (1902), <http://www.compactmemory.de/>.

⁴⁸ Nathan Birnbaum, [Mathias Acher, pseud.], "Können Juden Dichter sein?," *Die Welt* 16, no. 11 (1912): 329, <http://www.compactmemory.de/>.

⁴⁹ "Then too will our own Eastern Jewish artistic species, whose contours we are already seeing ausgeprägt today, be brought to full-blooded truth." Birnbaum, *Ausgewählte Schriften zur jüdischen Frage*, 1: 275.

German Jews could actualize this strength. Having laid out Birnbaum's problematic and proposed solutions, I will now turn to Birnbaum's actualization of his project's goals and his transformation into his Jewish Other.

Birnbaum's Transformation: The daytsh Meets Ostjude

To this point, Birnbaum's paradigm has been elucidated: The holistic Ostjude was to be the aesthetic quarry for German Jews. With this message, Birnbaum was on the front lines of the Jewish renaissance, expressing these opinions some five years previous to Martin Buber and almost a generation before the message would be widely accepted among Zionist-leaning German-Jewish artists. What further sets Birnbaum apart is that he clearly began to internalize his own message. An investigation into Birnbaum's famous move towards "*Ostjudenheit*" reveals some complicated layering of inter-Jewish stereotypes. This section, which highlights the development of Birnbaum's internalization of the Jewish Other, will first look to the differences in how he positioned himself in his German and Yiddish writings as either German or Eastern Jew. Then a brief revisit to his translations of short stories on the supernatural/prophetic daytsh will provide necessary background for his knowledge of Eastern Jewish perceptions of German Jews. Birnbaum's internalization of the Jewish Other, the Ostjude, is complicated by the fact that he also internalizes the persona of the messianic/prophetic daytsh by professing to be on a mission of God. He simultaneously internalizes a stereotype held by Western Jews while he simultaneously enacts a stereotype held by Eastern Jews.

Birnbaum's new life as a Yiddish-speaking, religious Eastern Jew was accompanied by a new focus on his parents' Galician roots. He thus began suggesting that he himself was an Ostjude. This turn came at a time when the Ostjude began gaining cultural capital in German-

Jewish eyes. Many German Jews in the later renaissance, when writing on Jewish topics, especially Eastern Jewish topics, began to authenticate their credentials by stating their ostjüdisch pedigree. Martin Buber, for example, called himself a Polish Jew in *Gog und Magog*. A similar shift is noticeable in Birnbaum's writings by at least as early as 1909, when he began using the first person "we" to separate himself from Western Jewry and to speak as an Eastern European Jew. As mentioned earlier, Birnbaum writes to a German-Jewish audience: "Wir sind das Leben, ihr seid der Todeskampf. Wir sind das Wesen, ihr seid der Schatten. Wir sind der Stamm, ihr seid die Splitter."⁵⁰ A 1914 biographic article printed in *Die Freistatt* clearly emphasizes his Eastern European legacy in its opening statement: "Nathan Birnbaum ist am 10. Ijar (damals 16. Mai) 5624 (1864) in Wien als Sohn ostjüdischer Eltern geboren..."⁵¹

In German, he consistently separated himself from Western Jewry. He seemed more reluctant, however, when writing in Yiddish to position himself an Eastern European Jew. In 1911, for example, after starting to position himself as an Ostjude in German, he refers to himself, in Yiddish, as a Viennese Jew.⁵² This did not preclude Birnbaum from distancing himself from German Jews when writing in Yiddish. In 1910 Birnbaum writes the Yiddish article "Among Strangers," which contains his thoughts on unbearable German Jews. Birnbaum relates an episode that he had at a Zionist delegation meeting to show that German Jews, even those German Jews involved in Eastern European Jewish affairs, simply cannot think kindly of Ostjuden. He recalls the train to a Zionist conference in Lemberg (Lviv) in 1893 where he met a "purebred German Jew" (a "Datsch ben Datsch"⁵³) from Prague going to the same meeting.

⁵⁰ "We are life, you are battling death. We are the life form, you are its shadow. We are the trunk, you are the splinters." Birnbaum, "Die Emanzipation des Ostjudentums vom Westjudentum," 28.

⁵¹ "Nathan Birnbaum was born on the 10th of Iyar (at that time, May 16th) 5624 (1864) in Vienna as the son of East European Jewish parents." "Biographische Daten über Dr. Nathan Birnbaum (Mathias Acher)," *Die Freistatt* 2, no. 3 (1914), <http://www.compactmemory.de/>.

⁵² Birnbaum, "Viner yidn."

⁵³ Birnbaum writes *daytsh* in that Yiddish accent which pronounces the word without a diphthong.

Using the phrase “a purebred German Jew” to distinguish himself from his traveling companion, Birnbaum follows his custom of writing as if he is not a German/Western Jew. This is important to the recounting of events as Birnbaum observes the purebred daytsh’s fear of the bustling, loud Jews upon his arrival in Lemberg. One should recall the experiences of Theodor Lessing and Alfred Döblin from the first chapter. There too, the German Jew expresses the horror at being jostled in a crowd of these Jews.⁵⁴ Birnbaum, in narrating his own contrast with the daytsh, brushes the scene aside as if it does not bother him. However, the meeting becomes too much for the unnamed German Jew, who gets on a train to return home after screaming:

Ich ging Brüder suchen, aber ich ich fand sie nicht. Jene Leute sind Fremde für mich. Ihr Geschrei und ihre Geberden [sic!] beleidigen meine Ohren und meine Augen. Sie sind tausende Meilen von mir entfernt. Ich kann mit ihnen nicht zusammengehen, auch einen Schritt nicht, geschweige einen ganzen Weg, ein ganzes Leben... Vorbei! Vorbei!⁵⁵

Birnbaum narrates the scene with significant space in order to distance himself from this German Jew, whose senses are offended by Eastern Jews. As Birnbaum quotes the daytsh: “Their screams and their gestures offend my ears and my eyes.” Birnbaum’s employment of “datsh ben datsh” in 1910 to describe the German Jew distances himself from the term. Birnbaum might in fact be a daytsh, but he had the redeeming characteristic that his father was born in Galicia and thus could call himself in this same Yiddish article only a half “Datsch.”⁵⁶ Writing about the eleventh Zionist congress held in Vienna in 1913, Birnbaum would again write in Yiddish about the daytsh as if he is not one. He comments that the conference was overrun with *daytshn*:

“‘Daytshn’ from the East and ‘daytshn’ from the West... ‘those that didn’t know Joseph,’ the

⁵⁴ Döblin, *Reise in Polen*, 104; Lessing, "Eindrücke aus Galizien," 611.

⁵⁵ “I went looking for brothers, but I didn’t find them. Those people are strangers to me. Their screams and their gesticulations offend my ears and my eyes. They are thousands of miles distant from me. I can’t walk with them, not even a step, let alone an entire road, an entire lifetime... Gone! Gone!” Birnbaum, "Unter Fremden," 354-355. Originally written in Yiddish, 1910.

⁵⁶ *Ibid.*, 353.

born dejudaised ones, the ‘daytshn.’ And Zionism is getting ‘daytsher’ and ‘daytsher’ from day to day, ‘daytsher’ its meaning, ‘daytsher’ its work, ‘daytsher’ its workers.”⁵⁷ Of course, both of these articles were written during Birnbaum’s post-Zionist days, so juxtaposing the assimilated German Jew with the Zionist conferences provided a convenient double-pronged critique.

Birnbaum’s unease with presenting himself as an Eastern European Jew in Yiddish is fully understandable. How could he claim to be a full Eastern European Jew when he could not speak or write Yiddish flawlessly? Even after twenty years of publishing in Yiddish, Birnbaum would be called out for writing *daytshmerish*—an unacceptable use of German words while communicating in Yiddish.⁵⁸ The editors of his 1925 Yiddish jubilee volume wrote a note on his essay “An Overview of My Life,” explaining that they were intentionally not correcting Birnbaum’s spelling mistakes.⁵⁹

All of this bespeaks the unease with which Birnbaum defined himself. In German, he spoke as if he was an Eastern European Jew, but in Yiddish he only tried to distance himself from German Jews. He wanted to be an Ostjude, yet knew he could not truly claim to be one in front of a Yiddish-speaking audience. A photograph from 1931 shows quite clearly this uneasy relationship. He and his family incorporated East and West, the Ostjude and the daytsh. Note in figure 5.4 that the religiously clad Nathan sits alongside his grandson in yarmulke and lederhosen!⁶⁰

⁵⁷ Nathan Birnbaum, "Nokhn elftn tсионistn-kongres | נאכ'ן עלפטען ציאניסטען-קאנגרעס [After the Eleventh Zionist Congress]," *Di yidische velt* [די יודישע וועלט], no. 9 (September 1913). Republished in German translation Nathan Birnbaum. "Nach dem elften Zionistenkongress," *Die Freistatt*, Nov. 15, 1913, <http://www.compactmemory.de/>.

⁵⁸ Moyshe Shalit, "Dr. Nosn Birnboym: Dos bukh lekoved zayn yubiley [Dr. Nathan Birnbaum: The Book in Honor of his Jubilee]," *Literarische bleter*, no. 78 (October 30, 1925): 204.

⁵⁹ Birnbaum, "An iberblik iber mayn lebn: Oytobiografie," 9.

⁶⁰ Picture courtesy of David Birnbaum at the Nathan and Solomon Birnbaum Archives in Toronto. See Birnbaum, "Der Nosn un Shloyme Birnboym-arkhiv in Toronte," 44. Fishman, *Ideology, Society & Language*, 72-73. On Birnbaum’s switch in dress from Western to Eastern clothes, see Fishman, *Ideology, Society & Language*, 72-73



Figure 5.4 Nathan Birnbaum with his son Salomon and grandson Jakob. Hamburg, 1931.

Birnbaum had intimate knowledge of how Eastern Jews perceived German Jews.⁶¹ Birnbaum seems to have internalized the stories of the *daytsh*, which he also translated into German. Not only did he translate Yiddish writing, but Birnbaum specifically translated the Yiddish literary pieces on German Jews discussed in the first chapter, like Peretz's "The Magician" and "Seven Good Years."⁶² For a German volume of collected Peretz stories, Birnbaum notably selects these two stories that thematize the gaze on the Jewish Other. Even beyond a simple awareness of the literary representations, intertextual references emanating from these Yiddish works on the Jewish Other start to be apparent in Birnbaum's own writing. He also directly quotes another work by Sholem Aleichem discussed in the first chapter. Birnbaum tells the reader that the phrase "*daytsh ben daytsh*," which he used above to describe the German Jew he met on the way to the Zionist conference, comes from Sholem Aleichem: "Aus Prag! Nicht zu glauben, aus Prag! Also 'Datsch ben Datsch', würde unser Schulem-alejchem sagen."⁶³ Birnbaum is most likely referencing a line in Sholem Aleichem's "A Premature Passover," published just two years previous.⁶⁴

Birnbaum clearly read in Yiddish literature about their Jewish Other, the *daytsh*. He also felt that these stories were worth translating into German, even if he intentionally mistranslates them so that in the end it would not have been clear to a German reader that the stories were

⁶¹ As early as 1897, Birnbaum knew that the stereotype of the German Jew included those characteristics brought up in the first chapter: "like a Christian but not," a fool, and he used the word "Datsch." See Birnbaum, "Deutsche und polnische Juden."

⁶² J. L. Perez, (Y. L. Peretz), "Die sieben guten Jahre," in *Volkstümliche Geschichten: Heiligen- und Wunderlegenden*, trans. Nathan Birnbaum, [Mathias Acher, pseud.], Vom alten Stamm: Eine Sammlung jüdischer Bücher 3 (Berlin: Jüdischer Verlag, 1913 (1908)); J. L. Perez, (Y. L. Peretz), "Der Zauberkünstler," in *Volkstümliche Geschichten: Heiligen- und Wunderlegenden*, trans. Nathan Birnbaum, [Mathias Acher, pseud.], Vom alten Stamm: Eine Sammlung jüdischer Bücher 3 (Berlin: Jüdischer Verlag, 1913 (1908)).

⁶³ "From Prague! Unbelievable, from Prague! So, a 'pure-bred *daytsh*' as our Sholem Aleichem would say." Birnbaum, "Unter Fremden," 354.

⁶⁴ The Ostjude Pinches Pinkes calls the waiter "*daytsh ben daytsh*." Sholem Aleichem, "A frier peysekh," Mar. 30.

about German Jews. Whereas in the Peretz's original stories, the shtetl Jew confronts a "daytsh," in Birnbaum's translations the shtetl Jews meet "Fremde" (strangers).⁶⁵ Furthermore, he utilizes some of the antagonism present in Yiddish literature between Eastern Jews and German Jews in his own writings to distance himself from German Jews and to try to garner some Eastern Jewish authenticity. Birnbaum also seems to have tapped into other themes of Yiddish literature. Taking all of this as background information, two themes from Yiddish literature on the daytsh can help place Birnbaum's transition into perspective—the daytsh as prodigal son and the daytsh as supernatural figure.

As Dan Miron schematizes in his book *The Image of the Shtetl*, the prodigal son was a theme commonly found in Yiddish literature. The native son leaves town to come back many years later. This plotline sometimes intersects with the daytsh plotline in that the visiting daytsh in the shtetl turns out to be the prodigal son.⁶⁶ Even though Birnbaum was not born in Galicia, he tries to claim as much Eastern European authenticity as possible. In his narrative he fashions himself as the prodigal son: his parents leave Galicia and have a child abroad, and that son returns to save the town. Thus, a necessary component of this self-fulfilling prophecy would be a need for Birnbaum to claim his Eastern Jewish roots. Positioning himself as an Ostjude—in Yiddish, by speaking about German Jews as if he is not one—would serve to fulfill the prophecy of the prodigal son returned. His self-representation as Western Jew but also Eastern Jew becomes so interchangeable that certain Eastern European Jews who worked with Birnbaum, like Hersh Nomberg, become confused about whether Birnbaum was born in Galicia or not. In two

⁶⁵ Birnbaum was not the only one to do this. See Blumenthal's translation in J. L. Perez, (Y. L. Peretz), "Sieben gute Jahre," *Wiener Jüdische Volksstimme* (May 2 1912): 1-2, <http://www.compactmemory.de/>. However, Albert Katz translates Dos Meserl into German and translates daytsh directly without changing it to "stranger." Albert Katz, "Aus dem Leben eines Knaben," *Die Jüdische Presse* 38, no. 48, 49, 50 (November 28, December 5, December 12, 1907): (Illustrated Feuilleton-Supplement) 189-190, 193-194, 197-198.

⁶⁶ Miron, *The Image of the Shtetl*, 27.

pieces, written several years apart, Nomberg writes conflicting descriptions of Birnbaum as both a Viennese-born Westjude and as a native-born Galician.⁶⁷ The storylines of the daytsh and the prodigal son intersect here in the figure of Nathan Birnbaum.

Similarly, Birnbaum's familiarity with the stories in which the daytsh comes to save the Eastern European Jew as a supernatural intruder—Elijah the Prophet, for example—also provides context for his messianic aspirations. On several occasions, Birnbaum states that he felt a divine calling. A review entitled "The New Birnbaum" by Moyshe Shalit centers on Birnbaum's religiosity and brings us back to one of the tropes in the literary figure of the daytsh in the first chapter of this dissertation. Birnbaum came to Vilna on the last day of 1911. Shalit describes Birnbaum's arrival. The scene, in which the Austrian Jew Birnbaum descends from the train onto the platform, harkens back to the first sighting of the daytsh in Sholem Aleichem's "Der daytsh," or the sighting of the census worker at the shtetl market in Peretz's *Travel-Pictures*: "From 'Haolam,' A. M. Borokhov and I came to the train to meet him. Dr. Birnbaum came out of the train car in a thin, short coat and was shivering from the cold. His tall prophet-like (*novieshe*) figure with the quite characteristic face, the forehead, the nose, and the beard made us have to look up..."⁶⁸ The observation of Birnbaum's typically Western short jacket suggests that Birnbaum is dressed in clothes, not only ill-chosen for the weather, but also conspicuously foreign—Western European. Once again, the daytsh is necessarily associated with mythic imagery: Birnbaum has an apparent "prophet-like" figure.

⁶⁷ Compare Hersh Dovid Nomberg, "D'r Birnboym's iberkerung [Dr. Birnbaum's Repentance]," in *Mentshn un verk: Yidishe shrayber*, vol. 9, Gezamelte verk (Warsaw: Kultur-lige, 1930 (1918)), 203, <http://www.polona.pl/dlibra/doccontent2?id=8566&from=editionindex&dirids=4>, and Hersh Dovid Nomberg, "D'r Nosn Birnboym: Tsu zayn yubileum [Dr. Nathan Birnbaum: On his Jubilee]," in *Mentshn un verk: Yidishe shrayber* [People and Works: Yiddish Writers], vol. 9, Gezamelte verk [Collected Works] (Warsaw: Kultur-lige, 1930 (1914)), 207-208, <http://www.polona.pl/dlibra/doccontent2?id=8566&from=editionindex&dirids=4>.

⁶⁸ Moyshe Shalit, "Der nayer Birnboym [The New Birnbaum]," in *Literarische etyudn* [Literary Studies], vol. 1 (Vilna: Sh. Shreberk, 1920), 69, <http://www.archive.org/details/nybc201380>.

Shalit describes Birnbaum as a prophet in passing as a lead-in to the main encounter with Birnbaum during that visit at the cusp of 1911 and 1912. Shalit relates a conversation in which Birnbaum tells Shalit and the writer Sh. Gorelik in no uncertain terms about his plans to be the messiah:

“Zionism has missed the mark, and the other movements can’t help either. There needs to be a new powerful religious movement of believers, a movement at the head of which stands a messiah. Do you know what?” He lowers his voice – “I feel called to it. I want to set myself up as the head of such a movement. I want to be the messiah of the Jews!... I can’t tell you all the details, but you will hear about it. The time will come.” I looked over to Gorelik—and we both decided, as if on our own, not to say a word. We just looked at Birnbaum and understood that in this guy’s head some deranged thoughts were growing, to which it is difficult to say if they were going to take on a dangerous or a productive character. Nevertheless something irrational planted itself into this guy’s brain. And there was also something funny sounding about the “I,” the obsession with “I.” Gorelik’s relationship to Birnbaum from that time on was especially negative. As an aside, Gorelik was carrying around religious ideas of his own then. Birnbaum didn’t say a single word about it and did not make anything else known, as if he never had the discussion with us. As far as we were concerned, we also left the subject alone. It wasn’t anything more than an episode, a secret conversation among three people.⁶⁹

The awkwardness in the air, as Birnbaum tells Shalit and Gorelik that he wants to be the messiah, is tangible in Shalit’s retelling eight years later. 1912, the year Birnbaum started with this visit to Vilna, has been noted as a turning point in Birnbaum’s thought as he began to produce more religiously-infused works, beginning with “Wir haben gesündigt...” (We have sinned...).⁷⁰

Birnbaum’s messianism was not as secret as Shalit made it out to be. Birnbaum would more than hint at this himself in his writing. The article “Auf dem Meere: Gedanken und Erinnerungen” (On the Ocean: Thoughts and Memories) is Birnbaum’s recounting of a religious experience/encounter on a ship on the way to the United States in 1907/1908. He compares his

⁶⁹ Ibid., 70-71.

⁷⁰ David Bondy. "Dr. Nathan Birnbaum," *Jüdische Presse* (Vienna/Bratislava), April 9, 1937, <http://www.compactmemory.de/>. See Nathan Birnbaum, "Wir haben gesündigt..." in *Um die Ewigkeit: Jüdische Essays* (Berlin: Welt, 1920 (1912)), <http://ebooks.library.ualberta.ca/local/umdieewigkeitj00birnuoft>.

experience with the biblical figure of Jonah, the prophet famous for his encounter with God on the open seas.⁷¹ More directly, however, Birnbaum wrote in *Gottes Volk* in 1918, “Ich habe Gott nicht gesucht, wie man das heute so schön und so verlogen ausdrückt, ich brauchte ihn nicht zu finden. Er hatte sich in mir angekündigt und trat dann plötzlich in mein Bewußtsein ein. Unmittelbar erkannte ich ihn.”⁷² He translated this work shortly thereafter into Yiddish.⁷³

Taken in this condensed form, it would seem that Nathan Birnbaum was acting out both literary figures of the daytsh and the Ostjude. Obviously Birnbaum was not completely alone in his drive to live as the Jewish Other. There was the small group of German Jews discussed above who took a similar route and became religious in an Eastern European Orthodox manner, rather than the neo-Orthodox German fashion.⁷⁴ Birnbaum distinguishes himself, however, from the newly observant—like Jiri Langer or Ahron Marcus.⁷⁵ Birnbaum, above all others, combined the two aspects of taking on the foreign Jewish life itself—linguistic, religious, and cultural—as well as the literary portrayals of the Jewish Other—the Ostjude and the daytsh as supernatural redeemer—and weaved these aspects into his Jewish identity. Birnbaum’s life was the culmination of his message to Western and Eastern Jewries.

⁷¹ Nathan Birnbaum. "Auf dem Meere: Gedanken und Erinnerungen," *Der Israelit* (Frankfurt am Main), sec. Feuilleton-Beilage, January 4, 1923, <http://www.compactmemory.de/>.

⁷² “I did not find God, as one says today so nicely and so dishonestly. I did not need to find him. He announced himself in me and then entered suddenly into my consciousness. I recognized him immediately.” Nathan Birnbaum, *Gottes Volk* (Vienna: R. Löwit, 1918), 5, <http://sammlungen.ub.uni-frankfurt.de/freimann/urn/urn:nbn:de:hebis:30-180014084002>.

⁷³ Nathan Birnbaum, *Gots folk*, trans. Nathan Birnbaum (Berlin: Welt, 1921 (1918)), <http://www.archive.org/details/nybc201665>.

⁷⁴ See Birnbaum, *Ausgewählte Schriften zur jüdischen Frage*, 1: 51 and 243.

⁷⁵ See Gilman, "The Rediscovery of the Eastern Jews: German Jews in the East, 1890-1918."

Conclusion

Nathan Birnbaum has been brought into this dissertation as the only individual to be discussed at length for several reasons. Most notably, he is one of the few people to definitively have shifted the discourse on the Jewish Other. He recasts the word *Ostjude* to focus on Eastern European Jewish authenticity. It is not incidental that he is also the theorist of the “Jüdische Moderne” in a work by that title.⁷⁶ His efforts were integrally tied just to not one vision of modern Jewish life, but two—a Central European and an Eastern European. Through an investigation of Birnbaum’s main arguments on the regeneration of Jewish life in Western Europe, one finds that his “solutions” to the German-Jewish death lie in the Jewish Other. In crossing over into Eastern Europe with his Yiddish texts to spread his theses on dying German Jews and vibrant Eastern Jews, Nathan Birnbaum becomes the most significant figure among both Eastern European Jews and German Jews to cross the East-West divide and present information to *both* sides about the Jewish Other.⁷⁷ Though Birnbaum is not representative of German Jewry, he does represent a microcosm. He is possibly the logical conclusion of German-Jewish fantasies about the *Ostjude* he shaped.

An effort has been made to uncover the collapse in binary thinking about Eastern and Western Jewry. This might seem an untenable task considering Birnbaum’s *Ostjude* paradigm is almost without argument the ultimate binary. His binary was an inversion of a preexisting one, but with heavy reinforcement. Joshua Fishman, Birnbaum’s biographer, writes in one place, “Birnbaum constantly attempted to bridge the gulf that separated Western European Jewry and

⁷⁶ Birnbaum, *Die Jüdische Moderne: Vortrag gehalten im akademischen Vereine "Kadimah" in Wien*. See Spector, "Modernism without Jews: A Counter-Historical Argument."

⁷⁷ Indeed it seems the only other person who acted as mediator on the topic of the Jewish Other to both German Jews in German and Eastern Jews in Yiddish would be Schemarja Gorelik (1877 – 1942). Certainly he has to be considered a less-significant figure. Birnbaum was acquainted with Gorelik (see the quote from Shalit above and the obituary that Gorelik wrote). See Bechtel, "Cultural Transfers between 'Ostjuden' and 'Westjuden': German-Jewish Intellectuals and Yiddish Culture, 1897-1930," 79-80.

Eastern European Jewry.”⁷⁸ Elsewhere Fishman writes, “Birnbaum may well have coined the terms Ostjuden and Westjuden and established them as polar opposites (but bridgeable ones, from his point of view).⁷⁹ I maintain, with what has been shown in the first section here, that Birnbaum clearly desired a European Jewry free of Western Jewish influences. He never imagined a melding of the two cultures, something the term *bridge* suggests. Birnbaum in 1897 does discuss the “chasm” that exists between the two groups, which will inevitably be bridged.⁸⁰ When Birnbaum writes about the inevitability of this chasm closing, however, he speaks about it regretfully. He did not want an eastward move to be matched by a westward one. This should be understood as what he explicitly said. Nevertheless, looking underneath at his own transformation and his own modes of portrayal tempers this strict binary.

This chapter, like the dissertation at large, has benefited from the approach to Birnbaum as a multilingual author. An overview of Birnbaum is impossible without an examination of both his Yiddish and German writings and how they work with and against each other. This approach exposes greater complexity in his internalization of the Jewish Other, the Ostjude persona. At the same time, Birnbaum, informed by knowledge of the daytsh stereotype, also formed a Jewish identity around his Jewish Other’s Jewish Other. He embodied the mythical daytsh for many as seen by his reception by several people as a prophet or messiah.⁸¹ Even the name “Nathan”

⁷⁸ Fishman, *Ideology, Society & Language*, 101.

⁷⁹ *Ibid.*, 22.

⁸⁰ Birnbaum, "Deutsche und polnische Juden," 5.

⁸¹ Shemarya Gorelik writes that Birnbaum embodied the prophet Jeremiah by being “a Jew in Jeremiah’s mold [*a yid in Yirmiyahus geshtalt*]” and having a “Jeremiah countenance [*Yirmiyahu-ponim*].” Sh. Gorelik, "Dr. Nosn Birnboym [Dr. Nathan Birnbaum]," in *Eseyen* [Essays] (Los Angeles: Mariv, 1947 (1937)), 266, 270, <http://www.archive.org/details/nybc206604>. Chaim Nagler, leader of the Zionist youth group Blau-Weiß, writes in 1914 that when he first saw Birnbaum at the age of 15 he seemed like a prophet to him: “damals erschien er mir wie ein Prophet” Chaim Nagler. "Über Birnbaum," *Die Freistatt* (Vienna), May 28, 1914, <http://www.compactmemory.de/>. See also Simon Dubnow, "Ein Gruß aus dem Osten dem Ritter des Ostjudentums," *Die Freistatt* 2, no. 2 (May 28, 1914), <http://www.compactmemory.de/>.

would have carried weight among Eastern European Jews as embodying the German Jew.⁸²

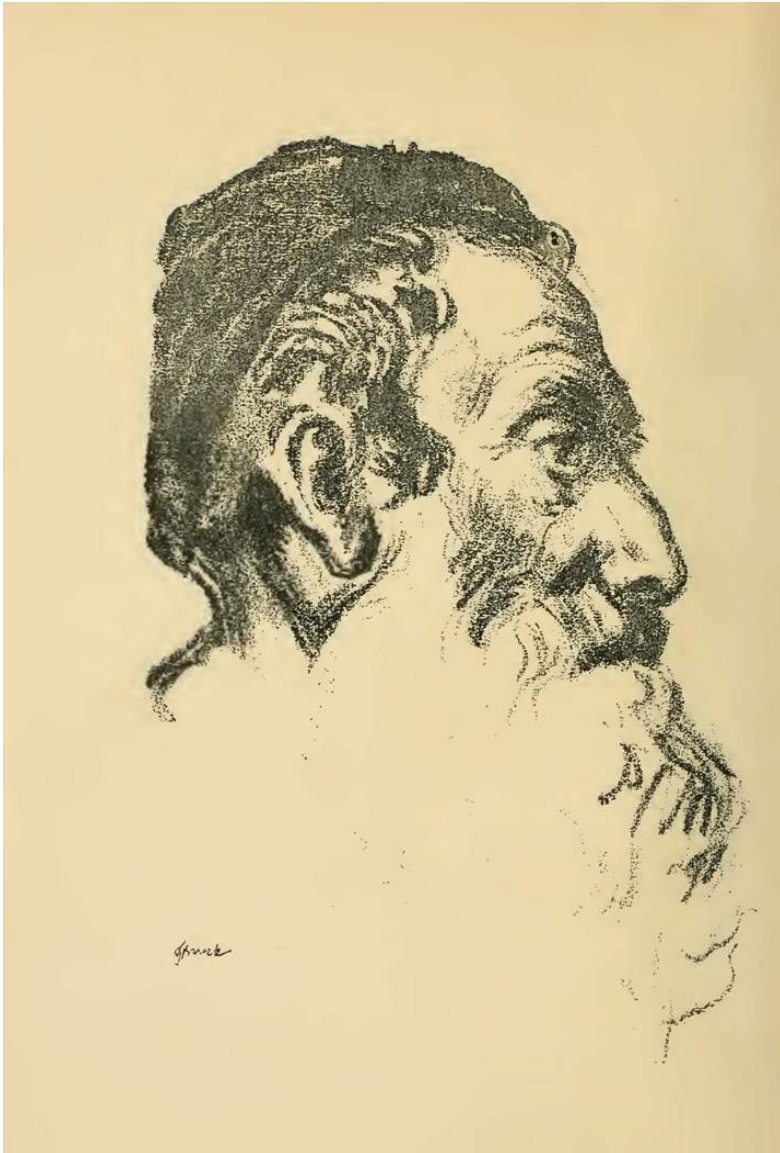
Birnbaum writes that he was named by his Galician parents after that role model of the German-Jewish enlightenment, Lessing's *Nathan der Weise*.⁸³ At the bottom of figure 5.3, Birnbaum signed his name in Hebrew letters. Although writing his name in Hebrew, Birnbaum signs his German name, Nathan, rather than his given Hebrew name, Nachum. His conflicted self-descriptions as both Western and Eastern Jew demonstrate the struggle of living between Jewish Others. In this stacking of binaries on top of binaries, one might—with caution—begin to speak of a collapse.

In chapter one, I discussed Arnold Zweig's reading of the first picture in *Das ostjüdische Antlitz*. An intriguing fact that brings this dialectical relationship between German and Eastern European Jews into relief is that Hermann Struck, the artist of that picture of a bearded Polish Jew whom Zweig describes in divine terms, also drew Nathan Birnbaum. Putting the two pictures side by side demonstrates not only the mirror image that Birnbaum saw in the Ostjude, but also the fantastic layers with which the Berlin Jew Hermann Struck draws the now Easternized Nathan Birnbaum.⁸⁴ (See figures 5.5 and 5.6)

⁸² See Asch, "Der kleyner daytsh."

⁸³ Orlean and Hasofer, eds., *Yubileum-bukh tsum zekhtsiksten geburtstog fun Dr. Nosn Birnboym*, 10. Birnbaum writes that he was named after Lessing's enlightenment work *Nathan der Weise*.

⁸⁴ Jane Rusel, *Hermann Struck, 1876–1944: Das Leben und das graphische Werk eines jüdischen Künstlers*, Judentum und Umwelt 66 (Frankfurt am Main: Peter Lang, 1997).



Figures 5.5 and 5.6 The first picture in *Das ostjüdische Antlitz* of an old Jewish man with beard as paired together with Birnbaum's portrait. Both drawn by Hermann Struck

Hersh Nomberg, a Yiddish observer of Birnbaum's many life changes, insightfully called him "ultramodern."⁸⁵ This seemingly would not make sense on its own, considering that when Nomberg wrote this in 1918, Birnbaum was deeply entrenched in Orthodox Judaism, a movement not often associated with forward, modern thinking. Nomberg, however much of a critic he was, saw Birnbaum's Jewish experience as more than some quirk in Western Jewry. As this dissertation has shown, Birnbaum's efforts paralleled other figures in Eastern Jewry, namely autoethnographic Eastern Jews writing in German. Similar to Franzos, from the last chapter, who writes that the job of German Jews is to spread culture to the Eastern European Jews, Birnbaum appeals to Eastern Jews to spread their culture to German Jews. Showing that similar underpinnings girded both the representations and their concomitant political messages across the increasingly porous East-West divide ultimately exposes the interconnected, multidirectional nature of Jewish representation by Jews in both German and Yiddish literatures. Birnbaum stood for that moment in history when Central European Jews and Eastern Jews entered into a contract of modernity.

⁸⁵ "*ibermoderner mentsh*" Nomberg, "D'r Birnboym's iberkerung," 203.

CONCLUSION

A Jew sits, wearing standard garb from Eastern Europe—a long frock, boots, and a hat with a visor. (See figure 6.1) Lilien’s characteristic vines wrap around the man, symbolizing the Diaspora’s hold on the Jew. Distinct from his other depictions of sad and earnest Diaspora Jews, however, the tone here is distinctly romantic. The vines have lost their thorns and they have given way to flowers. The vines themselves seem to be part of a tree growing up around the man from behind. The Jew is the eternal Jew who sits and waits while the world moves and grows around him. As the German-Jewish reader closed the book on this picture, the question might have run across his/her mind for a split second, “What is this Jew looking at?”

The 1902 publication of *Lieder des Ghetto* was the German translation of a work by the New York Yiddish writer Morris Rosenfeld. E. M. Lilien’s artwork accompanied the text, and led to the wide reception of the work.¹ On the final page, the German-Jewish reader encountered this picture. His eyes stare directly into the eyes of the reader. This Eastern European Jew does not cast his eyes down or to the side. The finger on the cheek, the head resting on the hand, and the arm resting on the knee suggest contemplation. He stares and thinks. This image distinguishes itself from the Jewish heads of Reuben Brainin’s bookplate with its almost ethnographic catalog of Jewish male types as also found later in *Das ostjüdische Antlitz* (see figures 3.6 and 5.5). Though the Jew is viewed from the front as in other depictions, his

¹ Rosenfeld, *Lieder des Ghetto*.

contemplative stance has turned the Jew from the passively viewed to the viewer. He gazes upon the reader. Whereas the



Figure 6.1 An idealized Eastern European Jew stares back at the German-Jewish reader of *Lieder des Ghetto* (Morris Rosenfeld), E. M. Lilien, 1902

rest of the pictures in *Lieder des Ghetto* are illustrative of Rosenfeld's poems, this one stands by itself at the end. The German-Jewish reader who had spent the previous moments immersed in Lilien's Jewish eye candy is confronted by this Jew staring back.² I would like to suggest with this drawing that Lilien was consciously aware of his intervention into the German-Jewish eastward gaze. Lilien, a shaven westernized Jewish immigrant living in Germany, might have seen a little of himself in this bearded frock-wearing shtetl Jew who gazes back.

An imbalance in research on German and Eastern European Jewish cultures has stressed the German-Jewish reception, rejection, or appropriation of the Eastern European Jew. A critical intervention of my research has been decentering such historiography by focusing on the exchange in glances between East and West. This work has shown the mutuality of constructing a self-identity based on a portrayal of foreign Jews. In German-Jewish culture, the image of the religious, bearded Eastern Jew in yarmulke served as a polarizing figure, which German Jews both rejected and admired at various points in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. In Yiddish literature the inverse image of the assimilated, westernized German Jew (*der daytsh*) was a standard feature during the same period that the religious *Ostjude* underpinned much of German-Jewish cultural production. In chapter 1, I showed the similarities in these cross-directional Jewish representations by focusing on their ironic employment of fantastical/mythic imagery as a means of implicitly confronting fear in previous portrayals. In chapter 2, I analyzed the literary and visual images in the works of Alfred Döblin and Y. L. Peretz as case studies in the centrality of self-definition *through* the Jewish Other. In chapter 3, I focused on the dialectic nature of these representations with a consideration of Eastern Jews as curators of their own

² This artwork with its reverse gaze is comparable to Manet's *Olympia*. Manet's 1863 piece was criticized, among other things, for the nude woman's confrontational pose vis-à-vis the viewer.

image through the dissemination of bookplates in German culture. Immigrant Eastern European Jews living in fin de siècle Germany and Austria transferred the Yiddish folklorist trend of portraying a romanticized shtetl life into German-Jewish literature and art. Chapter 4 considered the autoethnographic texts of Karl Emil Franzos and Joseph Roth. This move showed that the portrayals of Eastern Jewish life by Eastern European immigrants intervened in German-Jewish discourse on the Jewish Other even as the portrayals reflected some of the same representational tropes. Finally in chapter 5, Nathan Birnbaum's writings in German and Yiddish on the Ostjude and the daytsh situate him as paradigmatic for the East-West double-bind.

Ultimately, I have attempted to explore the interwoven nature of European Jewish modernism. To name just a few ways in which the migration of Eastern European Jews westward came to impact German modernism, we can name two important movements of German modernism: *Jugendstil* and Expressionism. E. M. Lilien, a Galician Jew, came to Munich to work for the magazine *Die Jugend*, which was responsible for the canonical modernist art movement *Jugendstil*. Lilien's early art, with its trademark wispy curly q's, vines, and tendrils, shaped the face of the German Zionist aesthetic. Furthermore, Alfred Döblin's ethnographic trip to the Jewish communities of Poland set the stage for his writing the first scene in the expressionist masterpiece *Berlin Alexanderplatz*, where Franz Biberkopf meets red- and black-bearded *Ostjuden* on his way out of prison.

This work also considers the multidirectionality of this migration, and the ways that German-speaking Jews influenced Yiddish modernism. For this, we can name two political movements that were bound up with the aesthetics of Yiddish writing: Zionism and Yiddishism. Theodor Herzl, the daytsh with a beard, came with messianic aspirations to a generation of willing in Eastern Europe and brought with him the German work *Der Judenstaat*. Nathan

Birnbaum, another daytsh with a beard, came to the East and headed the Czernowitz Yiddish Language Conference in 1907. This act by Birnbaum points to the vitality of these cultural exchanges. A Jew born in Vienna came to Eastern Europe and officially established Yiddishism!

I situate my work within the developments of Jewish literary studies that theorize a multilingual, interdependent Jewish modernism. My project contributes to a fuller discussion of a transnational European Jewish renaissance. Apparent from the geographically-determined titles of works such as Michael Brenner's *The Renaissance of Jewish Culture in Weimar Germany* and Ken Moss's *Jewish Renaissance in the Russian Revolution*, Jewish studies will need to start discussing the European Jewish cultural renaissance and the ties that bound the neighboring, contemporary Jewish groups.³ Though much research has focused on distinct geographic-national centers, my project reconsiders the porous nature of these regions and their cultural contacts. The implications for such a transnational view of the early twentieth century European Jewish renaissance allows us to ask various questions in future research.

Counterpoint Inversions

When discussing the similarities between German-Jewish writers and Yiddish writers, one fruitful avenue of comparison would be to examine the writers after this time period of the 1930s. Further looking at canonical German works and seeing what parallels there might be in Yiddish literature, Paul Celan's "Todesfuge" (Death Fugue), written in 1945, serves this comparison well. Celan's well-known line "Der Tod ist ein Meister aus Deutschland" is echoed throughout contemporary Yiddish literature. In a Yiddish poem from 1945, the same year as

³ Brenner, *Renaissance of Jewish Culture*; Moss, *Jewish Renaissance in the Russian Revolution*.

“Todesfuge,” Kadia Moldovsky equated the German with death in “Der daytsh yimakh shemoy”

(The German, May His Name be Erased):

Es iz a daytsh do geven, un a daytsh iz der toyt.
Geharget dem shnayder, geshtokhn zayn froy.
Es iz a daytsh do geven, a daytsh yimakh shemoy.
...
Es veynen di faygl a vistn geveyn:
zol der daytsh un zayn land, un zayn nomen fargeyn.

There was a German here, and a German is death.
Murdered the tailor, stabbed his wife.
There was a German here, a German—his name should be wiped out.
...
The birds cry a bitter cry:
The German, and his country, and his name should rot.⁴

This poem is sorrowfully published in a volume of Moldovsky’s poems called *Jewish Children*.

In the larger context of this dissertation, clearly the meaning of *der daytsh* had shifted from its earlier usage. Earlier the usage had often referred to a German Jew, with the intention to denigrate the Jewishness of westernized German Jews. In essence, to call a German Jew a “daytsh” was to call them “just” a German. Here in Molodovsky’s poem, the word *daytsh* lacks this ambivalence so integral to the stories of Sholem Aleichem and Y. L. Peretz from before WWI. In the 1930s, assumably with the rise of the National Socialists, Yiddish stopped referring to German Jews as *daytshn*. One might read into this disassociation of the German Jew from Germans or Germanness that Yiddish speakers no longer wanted to compare their victimized brethren with their enemies. As Moldovsky reflects later on her poetry from the Holocaust and the word *daytsh*,

⁴ Kadia Molodowsky, “Der daytsh yimakh shemoy [The German, May His Name be Erased],” in *Yidishe kinder* [Jewish Children] (New York: Central Committee of the Jewish Folk Schools of the Jewish National Workers Alliance and Poale Zion in the United States and Canada, 1945), <http://archive.org/details/nybc200049>.

For us, the concepts of the earth, and of the heaven, and of man had changed. We even saw nature different. The travails of the world changed their shape. There came into our consciousness a concept: a daytsh, a term of terror. In Yiddish Holocaust poetry, seldom is the word “daytsh” mentioned, as if one should avoid it. The horror of the word is more horrible than death. It comes out of the framework of man.⁵

Eastern European Jewry began writing sympathetic pieces to draw attention to the suffering of German Jews. “Lullaby of a Jewish Child in Germany,” from Warsaw on the eve of World War II (July 28, 1939), is one such poem:

Sleep, my child, the stars are already out,
No one today knows, what is going to be.

Neither he who hurts, nor he who laughs
We all grow like a tree in the night.

Even a black tree can give beautiful fruit:
So it should be, child, with your small hands.

Your hands are one day going to pay back the sinner his punishment.
In the meantime sleep, my dear one, my little child, sleep.⁶

The child’s mother tells her/him to take revenge on Germans for what they have done to them:

“Your hands are one day going to pay back the sinner his punishment.” This sentiment was expressed in the US Yiddish scene by recent Eastern European immigrants. In February 1939, again the eve of WWII, a Polish-Jewish immigrant to America writes the work *Baytshland: Dertseylungen fun yidishn lebn in natsi-land* (Land of the Whip: Tales of Jewish Life in Nazi-Land). (See figure 6.2)

⁵ "Nur das Auge weckt mich wieder...": *Erinnerung - Text - Gedächtnis*, ed. Anil Kaputanoglu and Nicole Meyer (Münster: LIT, 2002), 283.

⁶ Yisroel Shtern, "Vig-lid fun a yidish kind in daytshland," in *Lider un eseyen*, ed. H. Leyvik (New York: Tsiko, 1955 (July 28, 1939)).



Figure 6.2 Title page illustration for *Baytshland* (Khayim Margoles Davidzon), Y. Zeldin, 1939

The title plays on the word *Daytshland* (Deutschland) to rhyme *daytsh* with the Yiddish word for whip, *baytsh*, thus condemning Nazi Germany as the Land of the Whip, *Baytshland*. Both the author of this work, Khayim Margoles-Davidzon, and at least one of the artists, Samuel Reindorf, were born in Warsaw and moved to New York in the 1920s and 1930s, respectively.⁷

⁷ Khayim Margoles Davidzon, *Baytshland: Dertseylungen fun yidishn lebn in natsi-land* [Land of the Whip: Tales of Jewish Life in Nazi-Land] (New York: Signal, 1939), <http://archive.org/details/nybc208482>.

Pushing the timeline of this research forward into the Nazi and Holocaust periods, one begins to see times when the two Jewish groups mirrored each other, even though decades apart. Just as Yiddish writers and artists began to portray German Jews sympathetically when the Nazis came to power, so too had German Jews expressed their sympathy about Eastern Jews earlier during WWI and the pogroms. Just as Nazi Germany was portrayed with a whip in 1939 by Yiddish authors, German Jews represented Eastern Europe twenty years earlier with barbed wire on the cover of Otto Abeles's *Jüdische Flüchtlinge* from 1918. (See figure 6.3)

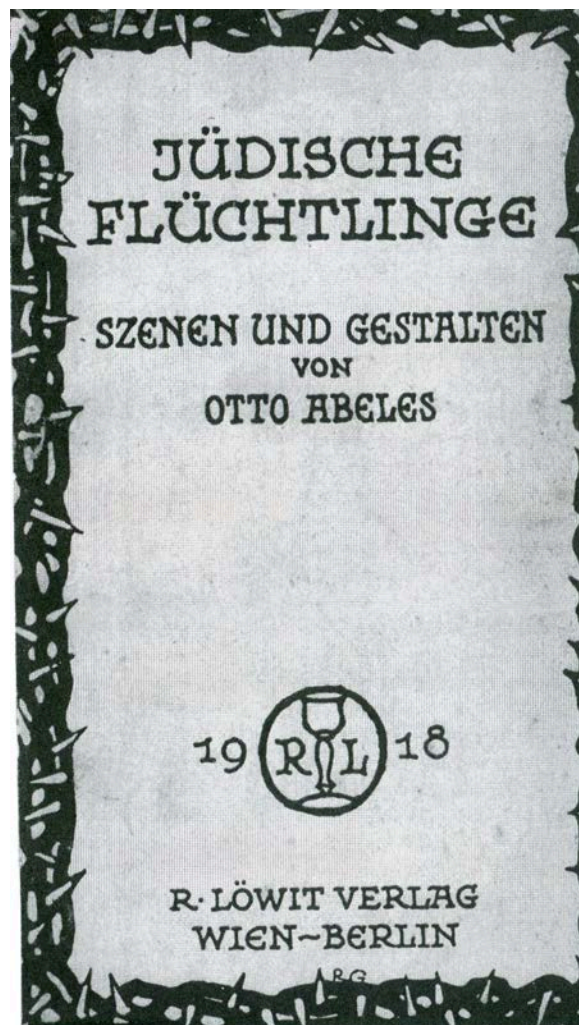
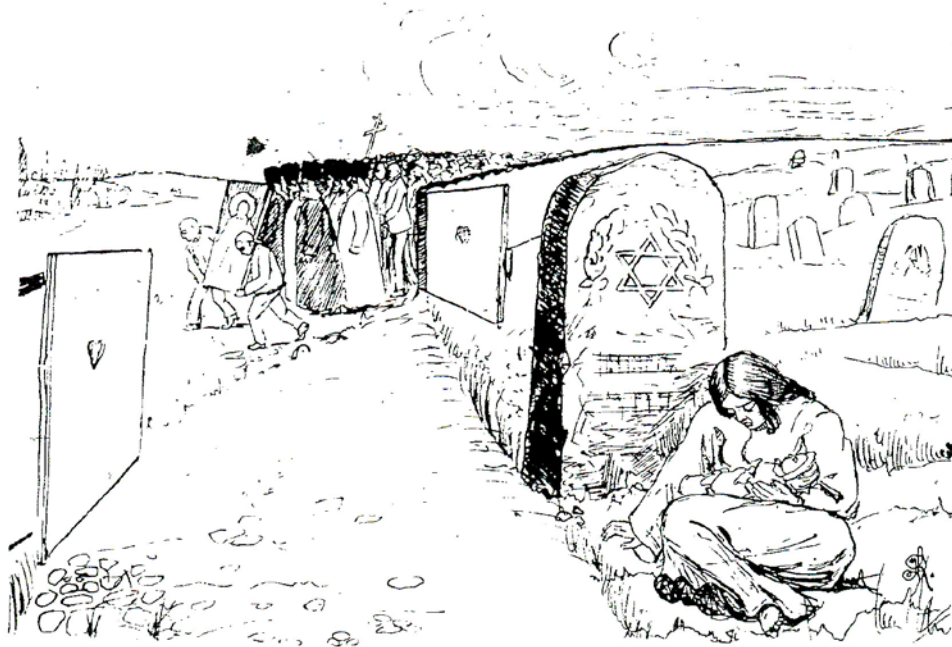


Figure 6.3 Cover illustration for *Jüdische Flüchtlinge* displaying barbed wire.

The 1905 cartoon, "Ostern in Kischinev" (Easter in Kishinev) also demonstrates this rhetoric regarding the pogroms.⁸ (See figure 6.4)

Ostern in Kischinev.



Die Prozession (jubelnd): Er ist erstanden! Er ist erstanden!
Jüdin im Friedhof: Er wird nicht auferstehen.

Figure 6.4 "Ostern in Kischinev," *Schlemiel*, 1905

This drawing in the Berlin-based publication *Shlemiel* references the Easter pogrom of two years earlier in Kishinev (present-day Moldova). As the church procession walks by celebrating the resurrection of Jesus, they cry "He is risen! He is risen!" Sitting in the Jewish cemetery is a woman with a child on her lap stroking the grave of, what can be presumed to be, the child's

⁸ "Ostern in Kischinev."

father. The woman reflects on her husband and says in response to the church procession, “He will not rise.” The ethnic tensions are conflated with religious tensions and persecution.

In this dissertation women have been mostly absent in portrayals of Jewish difference between Eastern and Western Jewry. When the aim was to portray Jewish similarity and the unity of Eastern and Western Jewry in times of suffering, however, women become the center of these portrayals. In “Lullaby of a Jewish Child in Germany,” it is the mother who rocks the child to sleep with vengeful words. On the cover of *Baytshland*, a man protects a woman from the Nazi’s whip. Here in *Ostern in Kischinew*, the woman with child also takes center stage as victim. Bruno Frei’s 1920 *Jüdisches Elend in Wien* (Jewish Misery in Vienna) also forefronts women and children in displaying the destitution in which Jewish immigrants lived in the Austrian capital after WWI.⁹ (See figure 6.5) In one image a seven-year-old girl stands naked on a chair in front of the camera that will evidence her emaciated, tuberculosis-ridden body.

⁹ Bruno Frei, *Jüdisches Elend in Wien* (Vienna: R. Löwit, 1920), <http://www.archive.org/details/jdischeselendi00frei>. Picture is captioned, “Finsteres Gangkabinett von Blitzlicht erhellt. XX. Rauscherstraße 10.”



Figure 6.5 Photograph of Jewish immigrants in Vienna, *Jüdisches Elend* (Bruno Frei), 1920

The German-Jewish press was invested in the eastern pogroms in first years of the century and thereafter in the plight of migrants fleeing from Eastern Europe.¹⁰ The 1930s therefore became a time period with the Yiddish press and literature could return the favor and start expressing sympathy for German Jews.¹¹

When I began this project, I had expected to hover around the Weimar period, instead I found myself increasingly writing about the fin de siècle and the years leading up to World War I. The stories of the daytsh that had played out in the nineteenth century become ironically questioned in the portrayals of Sholem Aleichem and Y. L. Peretz at this time. Specifically, the

¹⁰ See also "The Ostjude: A Play of Suffering." J. M. Blaustein, *Der Ostjude: Ein Spiel von Leiden* (Leipzig: M. W. Kaufmann, 1920).

¹¹ Yakov Vigodski explicitly called upon Polish Jewry to come to the defense of German Jews in 1933 because of what German Jews had done for him/them earlier in WWI. See Yakov Vigodski. "Di daytshe yidn | די דייטשע אידען [The German Jews]," *Haynt* (Warsaw), Dec. 1, 1933.

year 1908 seems to be a pivotal year in the idealization of the foreign Jew in the two literary corpuses. In 1908 Peretz ends his portrayals of the *daytsh* by writing “Seven Good Years” and a final revision of “Monish.”¹² Significantly, Sholem Aleichem also writes his last story about German Jews in 1908 with “A Premature Passover.”¹³ On the other side, Buber begins his interest in Chassidism around this time in 1906 and publishes the first of his serialized Chassidic tales with *Die Geschichten des Rabbi Nachman*.¹⁴ This work kicks off the widespread German-Jewish fascination with Eastern European Jews. In 1908 Birnbaum also convenes the Czernovitz Yiddish language conference. Again, these two literatures and cultures parallel each other, but in reverse mirror-like fashion. The fascination and centrality of the *daytsh* figure in Yiddish literature stops just as the centrality of the Ostjude in German-Jewish literature is established.

The historic ruptures and increased mobility between 1880 and 1930 broke down the categories of Eastern Jew and Western Jew that might once have been true in the nineteenth century. Yiddish literature is replete with examples where the term *daytsh* referred to a westernized Jew born in Eastern Europe. Correspondingly, German-speaking countries saw the effects of easternization on its population of native-born Jews (e.g., Buber and Birnbaum). The gaze upon the Jewish Other, the *daytsh* and the Ostjude, that informed European Jewish identities was multidirectional and codetermined. In highlighting border figures in both German-Jewish and Yiddish literature, the analysis of Central Europe beyond national and linguistic borders provides insight into the cross-pollination of the modernist period.

¹² Peretz, “Zibn gute yor.”; Peretz, “Monish: Tragi-komishe poeme; nay baarbet.”

¹³ “A Premature Passover: A Story That Could Happen Anywhere in the World” by Sholem Aleichem is different from the others discussed in chapter one on two counts—neither is the German Jew represented supernaturally, nor is the German Jew a visitor to Eastern Europe. In this story, the roles are reversed when a Polish Jew is the trickster on a visit to “Narenberg” (Foolsberg) in Germany. The Polish Jew preys on the religious gullibility of the German Jews by selling them old Jewish calendars. Sholem Aleichem, “A frier peysekh.”

¹⁴ Buber, *Die Geschichten des Rabbi Nachman*.

APPENDICES

Hebrew Union College (HUC) Jewish Bookplate Collection

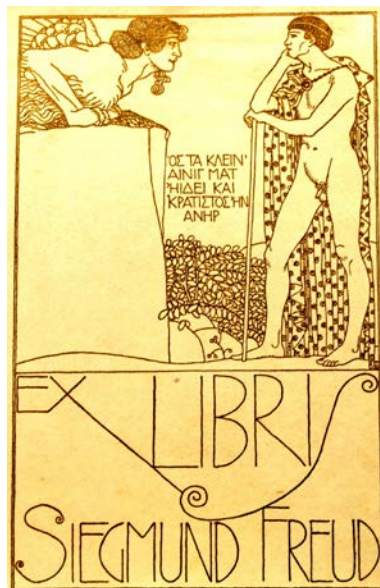
A. Famous Owners of Bookplates



Max Brod



Martin Buber
Artist: E. M. Lilien, 1902



Sigmund Freud
Artist: Bertold Löffler, 1901



Albert Einstein
Artist: Erich Büttner



Maxim Gorki
Artist: E. M. Lilien, 1902



Franz Rosenzweig
Artist: Hanna von Kästner

B. Most Popular Bookplate Image

Originally drawn by E. M. Lilien, this bookplate is the most common Jewish-themed bookplate in the collection. A sampling of some of the bookplate owners that used this image shows great geographic distance and a spread over the twentieth century. Most owners changed the image slightly. Little is known about these owners other than their names.



Emanuel Elzas. The artist here who used Lilien's image, B. J. Joseph, wrote a note in English "with apologies to Lilien." Many features are slightly different from the original. Image appears to have been traced.

Meir Lipman. The artist here writes the owner's name using a font similar to that found in a Torah scroll.

Neshamah Ehrlich daughter of Shmuel. A rare woman owner of this bookplate.

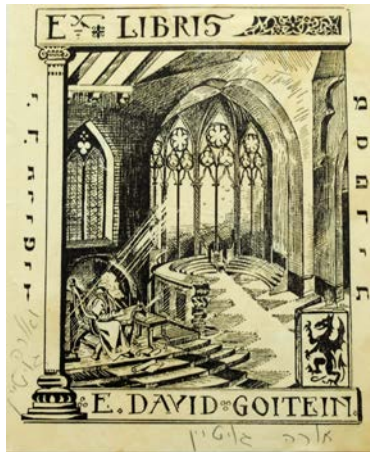


Leyzer Ran. Lilien's image was used by a Yiddish speaker. The inscription states: "From Leyzer Ran's collection." The bottom half of the original image was cut.

Rabbi Joseph Gitin. San Jose, California. The Hebrew word *library* appears above the Latin *ex libris*.

Lewis Browne. Candles in background have disappeared. The Latin words *ex libris* are to the left; the Hebrew *this is from the books of* to the right.

C. Ambiguous Christian/Jewish Imagery



E. David Goitein with signature of his wife Orah in Hebrew at bottom.



Paul von Loewenberg
Artist: Ludovika von Loewenberg



Luiz G. Curio.
Artist: Alberto Lima, 1952

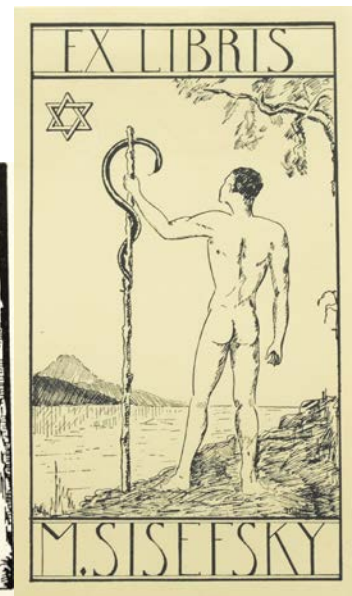
D. Alternative Jewish Bodies to the Bearded Shtetl Jew



Marco Birnholz
Artist: Michel Fingesten, ~1927



Max Goitein
Artist: Emma Dessau Goitein, 1928



M. Sisefsky

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