



FOREIGN ENTANGLEMENTS

TRANSNATIONAL AMERICAN JEWISH STUDIES

(2021) №. 27

UNIVERSITÄTSVERLAG POTSDAM

PaRDeS

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EDITED BY

HASIA DINER, MARKUS KRAH, AND BJÖRN SIEGEL (BOOK REVIEWS)

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Am Neuen Palais 10, 14469 Potsdam | <http://verlag.ub.uni-potsdam.de/>

phone.: +49 (0)331 977 2533 | fax: -2292 | verlag@uni-potsdam.de

Editors:

Markus Krah, Ph. D. (markus.krah@uni-potsdam.de)

Prof. Hasia R. Diner, Ph.D. (hasia.diner@nyu.edu)

Dr. Björn Siegel (bjoern.siegel@igdj-hh.de)

Editorial address: Universität Potsdam, School of Jewish Theology

Am Neuen Palais 10, 14469 Potsdam

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Editors' Preface

American Jewry has been a largely neglected topic within the field of Jewish studies in Europe, and the transnational dimension of American Jewry has been of little interest to scholars in the US. The current issue of PaRDeS, the journal of the Association for Jewish Studies in Germany (Vereinigung für Jüdische Studien), aims to begin the process of rectifying this situation by bringing together a few American and European scholars to think with a transnational approach to the American Jewish experience. The contributions to this issue reflect some of the untapped potential of this approach, which has become a sustained focus of scholars only over the past decade or so. As transnational perspectives may complement existing scholarship on American and European Jewries, they can also offer a conceptual basis for increased cooperation among scholars situated and trained in different traditions on either side of the Atlantic.

The articles, and the analysis of a pertinent primary source, in this issue present the research of a group of mostly younger scholars in this field, who have formed a loose network intending to engage in such collaborations. We have assessed the state of the field in several workshops and offer this publication as an invitation to colleagues to explore transnational approaches in their own research. While transnationalism as an approach that can take various manifestations is too expansive to define a field, we hope that the articles can point to a research agenda that builds on and expands existing scholarship. To further this goal practically, a select bibliography indicates which subfields of American Jewish history have been explored, suggesting in turn lacunae that can profitably be addressed in future works.

We thank all members of our network whose articles form the core of this issue of PaRDeS, as well as everyone else who participated in the workshops and conferences out of which the group has developed over the past years. The articles went through numerous reviews and discussions in which outside participants made important suggestions that have improved the texts and the overall project behind them. We are particularly grateful to the scholars with the Leo Baeck Institute New York who joined us for an online workshop to discuss the research projects represented in this issue: Miriam Bistrovic,

director of Berlin operations; Renate Evers, director of collections; Frank Mecklenburg, research director; and William H. Weitzer, executive director. Andrew Gerstenberger of NYU provided crucial support, as he facilitated the workshop.

We also thank the book reviewers. The time they took to assess recent publications in Jewish studies makes this service to the scholarly community possible. They and the other individuals involved in this issue of the journal were affected by the ongoing Covid-19 pandemic. The burden this meant for authors, reviewers, editors, and all others makes their commitment to this project all the more impressive, and we thank them all.

Many people made the actual production of this journal a smooth, professional, and even enjoyable process. We thank our copy editor, typesetter, and proofreaders, as well as our colleagues at Potsdam University Press: Andreas Kennecke, Marco Winkler, Felix Will, and Kristin Schettler, who designed the cover of this issue, inspired by an illustration in *Tablet*, the New York-based online magazine of Jewish news, ideas, and culture. We gratefully acknowledge their permission to use a variation of their illustration. The support we received from each and every one of them has been impressive and touching.

This publication was made possible by the support of New York University's Goldstein-Goren Center of American Jewish History, which, along with University of Potsdam and the Fritz Thyssen Foundation, funded the earlier workshop that constituted the project. The financial and intellectual support provided by these institutions has been crucial to our project, as we aim to continue it for future forms of collaboration. Last but not least, we thank the board of the Association for Jewish Studies in Germany, which celebrates its 25th anniversary in 2021, for entrusting us with editing PaRDeS.

Hasia Diner/Markus Krah/Björn Siegel

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INTRODUCTION

Foreign Entanglements: Transnational American Jewish Studies

by Hasia Diner and Markus Krahn

This issue of PaRDeS points to the still largely untapped potential of transnational approaches to American Jewish history and to modern Jewish history more broadly.¹ It offers a very small number of incidents or examples which show how the history of the Jews of the United States unfolded in a transnational context, a dynamic universe in which people, ideas, institutions, and texts circulated across nation state borders. While the articles take the Jews of the United States as the focal point or initial subject, they show how their lives involved connections to other places across the globe – how American Jews constructed their Jewish lives entangled with issues and ideas and concerns of Jews elsewhere. These entanglements transcended not just political boundaries such as borders between countries (or within countries), but went beyond the nation state as the prime category shaping Jewish lives and as the dominant organizing principle of Jewish historiography.

The contributors offer case studies of their current research that all look at these multiple connections of American Jewry with other Jewries. Most of the pieces here take a particular focus on the Jews of the German-speaking lands, but that reflects merely the fact that one of the editors operates in a German university and the other in an American one, and as such, they tapped into the scholars in their own specific orbits. Similar volumes could link other places around the Jewish world to each other and they, like this one, would show that for Jews, living in one place did not mean inhabiting a hermetically sealed locale; rather much of their personal and communal lives reflected the constant

¹ “America” in this context and the entire issue of the journal stands in as a shorthand for the United States, with the understanding that transnational approaches in particular call for greater awareness of the importance of US Jewish entanglements with other Jewries in the Americas.

back and forth movements across borders – of bodies, concepts, texts, and political concerns.

The works of these scholars on these specific subjects not only tell important histories but also point to the rich field of analysis waiting to be ploughed. They suggest by example that other historians of the Jews ought to take up the transnational approach as they delve into their own subjects.

We as the editors made no effort to impose a uniform definition of transnationalism, but rather encouraged our authors to take the concept and use it to think about the Jewish women and men whom they study. We did this in large measure because we recognize not only the fluid nature of the concept but also its centrality to all historical research, not just the study of American Jews. The historical profession for several decades has turned its attention to transnational connections as a way to understand the past, and we certainly consider that Jewish history should enter into this now standard historic paradigm.²

We also contend that Jewish history offers a particularly rich canvas upon which to think about transnationalism. For millennia, Jews have migrated from place to place. Their migrations spread Jewish populations to multiple settings, with individuals and families making different choices as to destination. For these thousands of years, Jews have maintained connections, whether through family, trade, religious practice, texts, or politics, not only to the places they had left but also to their coreligionists who went to other new homes. As such, Jewish history provides a robust context for thinking about transnationalism.

² There is a plethora of works advancing parallel and sometimes competing understandings of transnationalism itself and its relations to other recent historiographical phenomena, such as post-colonialism, global history, diasporic history, connected histories, *histoire croisée*/entangled histories, history of transfers, etc. The most pertinent works in these fields include Dipresh Chakrabarty, *Provincializing Europe: Postcolonial Thought and Historical Difference* (Princeton: Princeton University Press 2000); Matthias Middell, *Cultural Transfers, Encounters and Connections in the Global 18th Century* (Leipzig: Leipziger Universitätsverlag, 2014); Shalini Randeria, “Entangled Histories of Uneven Modernities: Civil Society, Caste Solidarities and the Post-Colonial State in India,” in *Unraveling Ties: From Social Cohesion to New Practices of Connectedness*, ed. Yehuda Elkana, Ivan Krastev, Elisio Macamo, and Shalini Randeria (Frankfurt/New York: Campus/St. Martin’s Press 2002), 284–311; Michael Werner and Bénédicte Zimmermann, “Beyond Comparison: Histoire Croisée and the Challenge of Reflexivity,” *History and Theory* 45 (February 2006): 30–50. For an overview of the development of the concept of transnationalism (with a focus on European history), cf. Klaus Kiran Patel, “Transnational History,” *EGO: European History Online* (2013), accessed October 15, 2021, <http://ieg-ego.eu/en/threads/theories-and-methods/transnational-history>.

We recognize likewise that no one definition could possibly contain the dynamism of the construct of transnationalism and its multiple and varied implications for thinking about the past. Historians do not, and have no need, to converge on a single standard by which to measure and analyze transnationalism. It played itself out in so many ways as to be everywhere and therefore it allows for many different, sometimes conflicting, interpretations and uses by scholars. Our view has been that each of these can illuminate the basic contention here that the experiences of the Jews in the United States, the premier migration destination in the 19th and 20th centuries for European Jews and the largest, freest, wealthiest, and most institutionally plastic Jewish population center in the world by the early 20th century, provides a particularly fine lens through which to search out the ways that borders did not mean a severing of connections. Those connections persisted in multiple ways and these articles provide a few suggestive examples.

The projects reflected in the articles in this volume range from 19th-century physical mobility back and forth between Russia and California to the transnational dimensions of interreligious and legal dialogues in the post-1945 period. As just three examples of what unfolds in these pages, these pieces make clear that living in one place, the United States, did not limit Jewish options and self-definitions. They demonstrate how Jews in the United States lived in a multi-nodal Jewish world, and what happened to Jews elsewhere impacted them in many surprising ways.

All the articles share an understanding that transnationalism complements other approaches in focusing on dimensions of the Jewish experience, that rather than being a subject in and of itself, it enhances understandings of the religious, social, economic, cultural, and political lives of the Jews wherever they lived, and in whatever era. They contend that Jewish lives, like those of most people at most times, transcended the limitations of any one nation state and its borders. Rather in the cases explicated by these articles, American Jews inhabited worlds characterized by multiple exchanges and influence that went in various directions.

For the most part, American Jewish history, like so many others, has been narrated through the lens of one-way movements, journeys from some place of origin, often thought of as the sending society, or analytically even more problematic, “the Old World” – deliberately written out with capital letters as though it referred to a real, single place – and after that the narratives tell

what happened, how, and when within the geographic borders of the United States. As such, most of the historiography has given short shrift to reverse and multiple migrations, political demands, cultural influences, and the exchange of goods, both cultural and more quotidian, that linked Jews together beyond borders.

The collection of articles, and the emerging network of researchers who honed their approaches through several workshops, seek to highlight how transnational approaches can shed new light on key aspects of the American Jewish experience. They suggest, strongly, that analysis need not stop at any fixed national boundary.

Likewise, we contend as do the articles, that modern Jewish lives, whether on a personal or communal level – experienced outside of the United States (in the case of these articles essentially central Europe) were also fundamentally transnational and shaped by the involvement of American Jews, whether in the political, religious, or economic spheres. Jews around the world felt the impact of the options and expectations of Jews in the United States.

The editors and the authors here certainly did not invent the concept of transnationalism in Jewish history or stumble upon it on their own. A select bibliography of works taking transnational approaches makes it clear that many came before us. The listing of scholarly works included here provides a sampling of previous scholarship, offering an orientation as to the state of the field. This selective bibliography reflects that Jewish history has been constitutionally transnational, that scholars recognized it without affixing to it that label, but that only recently has the fact of the transnationalism become a broader interest and more deliberately interrogated.³ That is, by giving this concept its name, these articles and the others which we hope they will inspire help bring transnationalism out of the background. We think that the field should move it on to center stage.

Clearly the existing scholarship leaves much room for new projects and topics. Only in the past ten years or so have scholars of American Jewish history begun to reflect upon the chances for and the difficulties of doing

³ Cf. Micha J. Perry and Rebekka Voß, “Approaching Shared Heroes: Cultural Transfer and Transnational Jewish History,” *Jewish History* 30 (2016): 1–13, here 6. Significantly, the American Jewish Historical Society devoted its 2016 biennial scholars’ conference to the topic “Global Perspectives on Jews and the Americas.”

such work. They have started discussing the methodologies and theories of transnationalism as they approach to their subject. “It is useful [for historians of American Jewry] to pay attention to the transnational elements that have characterized Jewish history for centuries,” Paula Hyman pointed out in 2009. An edited volume published in 2014 was hailed as the first collection of articles to demonstrate “how transnationalism illuminates some of the classic issues in American Jewish history, as well as those that have been overlooked, and offers methodological approaches to be emulated.”⁴

American Jewish studies have lagged behind the transnational turn in history and social sciences for various reasons. Among them, the sheer size of the American Jewish community and the entanglement of scholarship with local and national Jewish communities, via donor funding, choice of study topics as identity expression, and scholarship in the service of communal concerns, have tended to focus scholarly attention on Jewish experiences in America, as do practical questions, such as language skills. The importance of Israel, again for scholarly and communal attention, can come at the cost of greater attention to other Jewries, especially European Jewries, whose relationship to American Jews is rarely studied beyond questions of migration, the Holocaust, or as a foil for American Jewry. The latter effect is related to yet another factor limiting American Jewish interest in transnational connections with other Jewries: a Jewish version of American exceptionalism that has been questioned and debunked in progressive academia as much as it has been maintained and cherished in civil-religious political rhetoric, particularly on the right side of the American political spectrum.⁵ We might say that the writing of American Jewish history has followed closely the patterns of the writing of American history more broadly, and as a field it has been notoriously national, assuming that what went on elsewhere had little

⁴ Paula E. Hyman, “We Are All Post-Jewish Historians Now: What American Jewish History Brings to the Table.” *American Jewish History* 95 (2009): 53–60, here 57; Riv-Ellen Prell, “Remapping American Jewish History as Transnational” [Review of Ava Kahn and Adam D. Mendelsohn, eds., *Transnational Traditions: New Perspectives on American Jewish History* (Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 2014)], *H-Net Review*, August 2015, accessed October 15, 2021, <https://www.h-net.org/reviews/showrev.php?id=43967>.

⁵ For a fuller version of these explanations for American and European scholars’ relative disinterest in transnational American Jewish studies, cf. Markus Krah, “Clinging to Borders and Boundaries? The (Sorry) State of Transnational American Jewish Studies,” *American Jewish History* 101 (2017): 519–533.

impact on what Americans did, said, or thought. The kind of isolationism that pervaded American rhetoric played itself out in the work of historians well beyond those who study the Jewish past. It can seem like historians of American Jewry took George Washington's 1796 warning against "foreign entanglements," a phrase we respectfully claim for this issue's title, to heart when it came to looking beyond the borders of the US.

Training our sights on the other side of the Atlantic, as Washington did, we find very limited interest in the American Jewish experience on the part of European scholars of modern Jewry. In Germany, in particular, the academic study of Judaism and Jewish history was shaped by its origins in the *Wissenschaft des Judentums* approach that defined its subjects, following the knowledge orders of the early 19th century, in relationship with ancient history, philology, and Oriental studies. An elite of European scholars of Judaism, due to the absence of counterparts in the US until well into the early 20th century, had few reasons, and resources to engage with American Jewry.

It behooves us to say something about the specifically German focus of the transnational articles included here, as it reflects yet another recent development in the field. Clearly the idea of studying how American Jews interacted with and exchanged ideas, texts, and practices with other Jewries offers much promise, and in the ideal a body of literature will emerge which connects movements back and forth to other nations and regions, eastern Europe, the Levant, North Africa, Canada, Latin America, and more.

But Germany and the German-influenced lands have indeed provided the first and heretofore most fruitful area for research for those interested in American Jewish transnationality. This may be explained by the fact that the subject benefits from its own inner exceptionalism. For multiple reasons, the German Jewish religious, cultural, intellectual, and social modernization and its horrific ending in the caesura of the Holocaust have made for an irrevocable special role of anything German in Jewish history, including the role of German Jewries in relation to other Jewish communities and in particular in the history of American Jewry. The efflorescence of Jewish scholarship in late-20th-century Germany also provides an explanation for why this topic has yielded so much new interest. The number of scholars in Germany who have taken up the study of Jewish history, and of American Jewish history, far outpaces the number in any other place outside the United States, a matter itself worthy of contemplation.

Migrations, large-scale and individual, have been the most important exception to the relative disinterest of American Jewish scholars in their subject's connections with other Jewries. Yet most studies which have taken migration as the starting point, have never gone beyond the description of where Jews left and where they then went. These histories essentially dropped from their analysis the constant transnational connections forged by those who left and settled in the United States, for example, and those who remained behind, or with their friends and family who chose other destination homes.

These connections among individuals, families, friends, and *landsleyt* form networks that are often personal and thus less visible to outside observers than the transnational relations between institutions and organizations. Rabbinical seminaries, as one contribution to this issue shows, were connected by religious ideologies and curricula that allowed for the transfer and exchange of students and scholars, who in turn formed their own transnational networks with ideas, knowledge, texts, and books flowing between nodes in different directions, making for modern Jewish epistemologies. In fact, one may argue that crucial processes of Jewish modernization occurred in transnational connections. Several landmark institutions can illustrate this argument: B'nai Brith was founded in New York in 1843, but over time spread across the Jewish world with its mission to provide comfort and security to the Jewish people. As such it fulfilled many functions of tradition-oriented premodern Jewish communities.⁶ On the other end of the political spectrum, the Bund, founded in 1897 in Vilna, brought a Jewishly flavored type of socialism from eastern Europe to the US, where it faced a complex constellation of social and political forces that reshaped the organization and its ideology.⁷ YIVO, the Jewish Scientific Institute, also founded in Vilna in 1925, de facto transferred its operations to New York in 1940 and aspired to be the guardian of the east European Jewish heritage in the New World, which required the fundamental recalibration of its original mission.⁸ Another institution engaging in

⁶ Cornelia Wilhelm, *The Independent Orders of B'nai B'rith and True Sisters: Pioneers of a New Jewish Identity* (Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 2011).

⁷ Jack Jacobs, ed., *Jewish Politics in Eastern Europe: The Bund at 100* (New York: New York University Press, 2001).

⁸ Cecile Esther Kuznitz, *YIVO and the Making of Modern Jewish Culture: Scholarship for the Yiddish Nation*. (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2014).

transnational issues, the Leo Baeck Institute is devoted to the preservation of the heritage of German-speaking Jewry.⁹

Material objects, depending on their size and other factors, texts, and ideas may travel lighter than institutions and ideas, but they, too, have to contend with restrictions, questions of acceptance or rejection, their transformation in new environments, and the dynamic interaction with national and transnational factors shaping Jewish lives, interests, and identities. Their study brings the additional consideration of commercial factors, as objects and ideas are produced, sold, traded, and discarded according to their perceived value. Given their greater mobility, they can acquire transnational dimensions more easily, if only by expressing or symbolizing commitments to ideas and ideals of Jewishness, Jewish authenticity, or the community transcending the realities of the present time and place. Books and other publications give physical expression to ideas, all of which become entangled in transnational processes, as various papers in this issue show. Their transnational claims and adaptability notwithstanding, texts and ideas can face difficult processes of translation – linguistic, cultural, and political – from one context to others. These contexts can differ in language, cultural sensibilities, and ideological commitments – all shaped by different *national* environments that can rub against or undermine the *transnational* ambitions and claims of texts and ideas circulating among them. In different cases, their transnational movements may serve to refine, adjust, adapt, and update ideas, as they are mediated into new contexts which in the process are changed by such transnational importations.

The potential insights gained from the study of the circulation and connections of people and institutions, objects and ideas, promise to be as richly diverse as their subjects. They are tied together by the overarching insight that transnational approaches to national experiences of a given Jewish community, like the American one, can supplement extant and future scholarship that focuses on what is distinctly American about American Jewry. They raise old-new questions about American Jewish exceptionalism and distinctiveness. As such, these insights should serve to prevent essentializing or reifying understandings of Americanness, Jewishness, or, for that matter Germanness, or the

⁹ Christhard Hoffmann, ed., *Preserving the Legacy of German Jewry: A History of the Leo Baeck Institute, 1955–2005* (Tuebingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2005).

qualities of yet other contexts of Jewish life past and present. They promise a better understanding of the Jewish experiences in various locations at various times, entangled as they have been among themselves and with their respective political, social, cultural, economic, and religious environments.

ARTICLES

Mobile Jews and Porous Borders: A Transnational History in the Nineteenth Century

by Shari Rabin

Abstract

This article explores the multi-directional geographic trajectories and ties of Jews who came to the United States in the 19th century, working to complicate simplistic understandings of “German” Jewish immigration. It focuses on the case study of Henry Cohn, an ordinary Russian-born Jew whose journeys took him to Prussia, New York, Savannah, and California. Once in the United States he returned to Europe twice, the second time permanently, although a grandson ended up in California, where he worked to ensure the preservation of Cohn’s records. This story highlights how Jews navigated and transgressed national boundaries in the 19th century and the limitations of the historical narratives that have been constructed from their experiences.

1. Introduction

Henry Cohn was born in 1831 in Dobrzyn, in the Russian empire; he was naturalized as a US citizen in California in the late 1850s; and in 1915 he died in Stettin, then part of Germany but now in western Poland and known as Szczecin. These might at first glance appear to be the mundane facts of an obscure and unremarkable life. And yet they gesture toward a richer story that sheds new light on the transnational dimensions of American Jewish history. Historians have amply documented the cultural, religious, and economic ties that 19th-century American Jews maintained with relatives and coreligionists across the Atlantic, but in terms of physical movement, the period has mostly been portrayed in terms of one-way “German” migration, followed by mobility within US borders.¹

¹ For example: Leon A. Jick, *The Americanization of the Synagogue, 1820–1870* (Hanover, NH: University Press of New England, 1976); Rudolf Glanz, “The Immigration of German Jews up

Cohn was in many ways a classic exemplar of this era, except for the fact that he came from the Russian empire, not the German lands, and he returned to the European continent twice, the second time for good. Two of his nephews settled in Utah and his grandson and son later moved to California themselves.² Cohn's story is one of multi-directional movement, which highlights how 19th-century Jews created a web of linkages to far-flung locales, even as they navigated shifting national boundaries.³ This movement was different in degree rather than in kind from the urbanization and westward migration occurring within the European continent, and was in fact often continuous with it.⁴

Historians working on the period after 1881 have already troubled the idea of an inevitable and permanent migration from Russia to the United States. Forty years ago, Jonathan Sarna described a "myth of no return" among eastern European Jewish migrants to the United States. He found that return migration blurred the boundaries with return travel and occurred more often than previously assumed: the return rate was as high as 26% between 1891 and 1900.⁵ More recently, historians have highlighted the barriers Jews faced

to 1880," in *Studies in Judaica Americana* (New York: Ktav, 1970); Hasia Diner, *A Time for Gathering: The Second Migration, 1820–1880* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1995). Note that Diner has since argued for a more expansive "century of migration," between 1820 and 1924, in *Jews of the United States 1654–2000* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2006).

² Magnes Collection of Jewish Art and Life, Bancroft Library, University of California, Berkeley (hereafter Magnes), Henry Cohn Papers, BANC MSS 2010/675.

³ Adam D. Mendelsohn, *The Rag Race: How Jews Sewed Their Way to Success in America and the British Empire* (New York: New York University Press, 2014); Adam Mendelsohn, "Tongue Ties: The Emergence of the Anglophone Jewish Diaspora in the Mid-Nineteenth Century," *American Jewish History* 93 (June 2007): 177–209; Tobias Brinkmann, *Sundays at Sinai: A Jewish Congregation in Chicago* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2012); Maria T. Baader, "From 'the Priestess of the Home' to 'the Rabbi's Brilliant Daughter': Concepts of Jewish Womanhood and Progressive Germanness in *Die Deborah* and the *American Israelite*, 1854–1900," *Leo Baeck Institute Year Book* 43 (1998): 47–72.

⁴ Steven M. Lowenstein, "The Rural Community and the Urbanization of German Jewry," *Central European History* 13 (September 1980): 218–236; Steven E. Aschheim, *Brothers and Strangers: The Eastern European Jew in German and German Jewish Consciousness, 1800–1923* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1982); Marion A. Kaplan, *The Making of the Jewish Middle Class: Women, Family, and Identity in Imperial Germany* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1994).

⁵ Jonathan D. Sarna, "The Myth of No Return: Jewish Return Migration to Eastern Europe, 1881–1914," *American Jewish History* 71 (December 1981): 256–268.

in gaining entry to the US, the infrastructure required to facilitate emigration, and the multiple destinations available to migrants.⁶

Cohn's experiences serve as a useful guide to transnational Jewish mobility in and beyond the United States in the 19th century, showing how Jews regularly transgressed borders, even as they remained acutely aware of their importance.⁷ While return travel and migration were not widespread phenomena, they usefully help us to understand 19th-century Jews as participants in what Peter Sloterdijk has called the "kinetic imperative of modernity."⁸ Women and families could engage in movement, but in this period it was closely associated with men and in many ways constitutive of a certain kind of Jewish masculinity. Not only did Cohn move, but his movement – as well as the forms of communication that followed in its wake – worked to extend and connect far-flung geographies.

2. The Multiple Migrations of Henry Cohn

We know about Cohn's life from a memoir he authored in 1914, a year before his death, titled *Jugenderinnerungen*, or Recollections of My Youth, and a handful of personal documents housed in one box and one oversize folder at the Bancroft Library in Berkeley, California.⁹ In the memoir, Cohn

⁶ Britt Tevis, "The Hebrews Are Appearing in Court in Great Numbers: Toward a Reassessment of Early Twentieth-Century American Jewish Immigration History," *American Jewish History* 100 (July 2016): 319–347; Rebecca Kobrin, "Current and Currency: Jewish Immigrant 'Bankers' and the Transnational Business of Mass Migration, 1873–1914," in *Transnational Traditions: New Perspectives on American Jewish History*, eds. Ava F. Kahn and Adam D. Mendelsohn (Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 2014), 87–104; Rebecca Kobrin, *Jewish Bialystok and its Diaspora* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2010); Devi Mays, *Forging Ties, Forging Passports: Migration and the Modern Sephardi Diaspora* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2020).

⁷ A number of essays in *Transnational Traditions* do address this era. Adam Mendelsohn describes an Anglophone diaspora, while Ava F. Kahn and Suzanne D. Rutland consider connections between Australia and California. Tobias Brinkmann's important essay considers the German ties of "German" Jewish migrants. Adam Mendelsohn, "The Sacrifices of the Isaacs: The Diffusion of New Models of Religious Leadership in the English-Speaking Jewish World," 11–37; Ava F. Kahn, "Roaming the Rim: How Rabbis, Convicts and Fortune Seekers Shaped Pacific Coast Jewry," 38–63; Suzanne D. Rutland, "Creating Transnational Connections: Australia and California," 64–83; Tobias Brinkmann, "'German Jews?' Reassessing the History of Nineteenth-Century Jewish Immigrants in the United States," 144–164.

⁸ Peter Sloterdijk, "Mobilization of the Planet from the Spirit of Self-Intensification," *TDR/The Drama Review* 50 (2006): 36–43.

⁹ Henry Cohn, "Memories from Yesteryear," May 24, 1914, trans. Lisette Georges, Magnes, Henry Cohn Papers, BANC MSS 2010/675.

is remarkably frank about his own limitations, admitting to “my weak memory” and confessing, “Of course I deleted some disagreeable happenings.”¹⁰ Nevertheless, it is useful for understanding the broad strokes of his movement and gives us some sense, however altered, of his experience of place. Cohn described his hometown of Dobrzyn as a Jewish space, split between Hasidim and their opponents. It was a Pomeranian river town, home to around 1,610 Jews, probably around half of the town’s population in 1857.¹¹ He was the sixth of eight children born to a tanner, and their home was a traditional one; his parents observed the Sabbath, which Cohn remembered fondly, and sent him to *heder*, against which he eventually rebelled, leaving as a teen to become an apprentice furrier.¹²

Dobrzyn was at the western edge of the Russian Empire, within the Pale of Settlement and sixty kilometers north of Wloclawek (Leslau). It was separated from Prussia by the Drewenz River, so Cohn learned early on about the significance – and the fungibility – of borders. In the late 1840s, when urbanization had already begun to deplete the Jewish community, he fled to neighboring Golub in Prussia to escape draconian Russian conscription policies.¹³ Cohn went next to Strausberg, a west Prussian town with a tiny population of Jews, where an uncle lived. He continued to train as a furrier, studied a bit of Polish, and, he recalled, had a bit part in an amateur production of the Friedrich Schiller play *Wilhelm Tell*.¹⁴ Before he joined the mass migration to the United States, then, Cohn first joined the migration of Jews westward within Europe. Leaving a Russian Jewish context defined by the institutions of the *heder* and the army, he began to linguistically Polonize and culturally Germanize.

The transatlantic journey to the United States was a significant undertaking that required both individual preparation and a developing infrastructure of emigration.¹⁵ Cohn offers no specific explanation for his decision to move to the United States, but at some point in the early 1850s, he joined a growing stream of young Jewish men whose economic and political options were

¹⁰ Cohn, “Memories,” 1, 65–66.

¹¹ Shmuel Spector and Geoffrey Wigoder, eds., *The Encyclopedia of Jewish Life Before and During the Holocaust*, vol. 1 (New York: New York University Press, 2001), 318, 439–40.

¹² Cohn, “Memories,” 5–7.

¹³ Spector and Wigoder, *Encyclopedia of Jewish Life*, vol. 1, 439–440.

¹⁴ In this period, Strausberg had less than 70 Jewish residents. Spector and Wigoder *Encyclopedia of Jewish Life Before and During the Holocaust*, vol. 3, 1251.

¹⁵ Kobrin, “Current and Currency”; Cian T. McMahon, *The Coffin Ship: Life and Death at Sea during the Great Irish Famine* (New York: New York University Press, 2021).

restricted by state policies in Russia, Prussia, and the German lands. Although usually treated separately by historians, in both central and eastern Europe young Jewish men faced limited opportunities for work and mobility and looked to the United States as a favorable destination.¹⁶ Phillip Whitlock, also from western Russia, was sent for by a brother and recalled the excitement “of going to a new country of which I sometimes heard through some people thus returned.”¹⁷

For Cohn, the first step was preparing his family. His parents objected strenuously and his mother “cried bitterly and begged me to change my mind.” They likely had personal and religious concerns; letters from the period document the unease older relatives had about the ability to practice Judaism in the United States.¹⁸ Nevertheless, the Cohns eventually agreed to provide their son with the resources for the voyage. They hosted a farewell party, but as Cohn recounts, “I bade my father farewell across the river Drewenz,” from a different country. He traveled to the port at Hamburg, where, despite the presence of rapid new steamships, he only had funds to pay for a less expensive sailing ship ticket.¹⁹

Now Cohn began the Atlantic Ocean voyage. Over six decades later, he recalled of his 64-day journey, “The passengers got along well and time was shortened by several interesting natural occurrences, jokes and fun.”²⁰ Not all were so lucky: in 1854 Bernhard Felsenthal, later to become a prominent Chicago rabbi, spent a full month on board “so sick, so terribly sick, and [with] such a bad bed, no medication, no water, nobody to take care of me.” Although there were occasionally sea animals, shipwrecks, and spectacular sunsets, Felsenthal paraphrased Deuteronomy 28:67, a classic text describing the state of exile, “I idle about, on deck, wishing in the morning it were evening, and in the evening, it were morning. Oh, God, when will this long sea-trip end?”²¹

¹⁶ Shari Rabin, *Jews on the Frontier: Religion and Mobility in Nineteenth-century America* (New York: New York University Press, 2017).

¹⁷ Philip Whitlock, *Recollections*, Virginia Historical Society (hereafter VHS), Richmond, VA, Mss 5:1 W5905:1, 38; Biography of William Flegenheimer, VHS, Mss 7:1 F6255:1, 11.

¹⁸ Cohn, “Memories,” 16; Benjamin M. Roth, “An Ethical Letter: Benjamin M. Roth to His Son Solomon, 1854,” trans. Albert H. Friedlander, *American Jewish Archives* 6 (1954): 6–12.

¹⁹ Cohn, “Memories,” 17.

²⁰ Cohn, “Memories,” 19.

²¹ Bernhard Felsenthal, Translation of travel notes, American Jewish Archives, Cincinnati, (hereafter AJA), Bernhard Felsenthal Papers, MS-153, Folder 15, Box 3; See also, William Frank, “William Frank: Pilgrim Father of Pittsburgh Jewry,” in *Memoirs of American Jews, 1775–*

Migrants faced extreme meteorological conditions, including oppressive heat during the summer and frightening storms.²²

Cohn remembered that there were 20 Jews among 200 people on board, “who of course kept to themselves and paid little attention to the others.” He kept kosher on the trip – he does not explain how but recalls that the food was “not very good” – and the group was given permission to cook a festive meal of meatballs and plums in honor of the holiday of Shavuot.²³ Other mobile Jews also lingered in their memoirs on the shipboard experience, and several remembered the formation of ad hoc Jewish communities. Phillip Whitlock’s ship had enough Jews to gather a minyan, a prayer quorum of ten men, so that a mourning in-law could recite the appropriate prayers.²⁴

As Paul Gilroy has written of the Black Atlantic, “ships were the living means by which the points within the Atlantic world were joined. They were mobile elements that stood for the shifting spaces in between the fixed places that they connected.”²⁵ The ship linked Jewish migrants’ European pasts to American futures. Jewish ties persisted on board and after landing. While historians have mostly cast these gendered networks as ethnic or familial in nature, they were also geographical, in some ways extending the reach of the tiny towns in Russia, Prussia, and elsewhere in central Europe that Jews came from.²⁶ Once in the United States, Cohn stayed in New York with a family from Dobrzyn and made his way economically with assistance from people he knew from there and from Strausberg. Other Jewish emigrants had similar experiences. When Abraham Kohn first arrived in New York, he “passed

1865, vol. 1, ed. Jacob Rader Marcus (Brooklyn: Ktav, 1974), 303–308; Abram Vossen Goodman, ed., “A Jewish Peddler’s Diary, 1842–1843,” *American Jewish Archives* 3 (1951), 81–111, here, 88–95.

²² See Whitlock, *Recollections*; Goodman, “Jewish Peddler’s Diary”; Felsenthal, Translation of travel notes; Isaac Leeser, “Discourse pronounced at the funeral of the Revd. Isaac B. Seixas by the Revd. Isaac Leeser of Philadelphia. Aug. 12 1839; Elul 3 5599,” Beth Ahabah Museum and Archives, Richmond Virginia, Isaac Leeser Papers [Original in American Jewish Historical Society (hereafter AJHS), New York, Isaac Leeser Papers, P-20, Folder 100].

²³ Cohn, “Memories,” 17–19.

²⁴ Philip Whitlock, *Recollections*. See also Goodman, “Jewish Peddlers’ Diary”; David Mayer to family, October 19, 1839, Cuba Family Archives for Southern Jewish History, Bremen Museum, Atlanta, Georgia, David Mayer Family Papers, 02–039 V/FM.

²⁵ Paul Gilroy, *The Black Atlantic: Modernity and Double Consciousness* (New York: Verso, 1993), 17.

²⁶ Mendelsohn, *Rag Race*; Michael R. Cohen, *Cotton Capitalists: American Jewish Entrepreneurship in the Reconstruction Era* (New York: New York University Press, 2017).

through Grand Street where, to my great joy, I met my old friend Friedmann." He peddled with his brothers and acquaintances from Fürth, his hometown, each going in a different direction and agreeing to meet up in one month.²⁷ Jews continued these hometown ties, but they also began to root themselves in their new locales; Cohn, for instance, became a mason.²⁸

A run-in with another acquaintance from Strausberg convinced Cohn to start peddling, itself an important transnational economic strategy among Jewish men, as Hasia Diner has shown.²⁹ He began in New Jersey but was soon on the lookout for new places to go.³⁰ First he sailed southward to Georgia, traversing regional boundaries that were becoming increasingly significant. In his memoir he described it as "a totally other world" with plantations, where "we often saw gruesome, but also very humane treatment of the negroes."³¹ Unsatisfied with the climate, he returned north:

"This was the time when a great many people immigrated from New York, to California and Argentina and so we were considering a change of climate for the next fall. We were hesitating between the two countries, but finally decided on California."³²

Mobile Jews regularly traversed regional boundaries and they also contemplated national and hemispheric ones.³³ Twenty years after Cohn, Solomon Kahn, an immigrant from Ingwiller, in French Alsace, relocated across the Mason-Dixon line in search of a place to run a dry goods store. After getting into financial trouble, he also contemplated heading off for California or Brazil, where one of his brothers had already moved.³⁴

²⁷ Goodman, "Jewish Peddler's Diary," 96, 104. See also Mayer to family, October 19, 1839.

²⁸ Cohn, "Memories," 37–45; Masonic Certificates, Magnes, Henry Cohn papers, BANC MSS 2010/675, Box 1, Folder 5.

²⁹ Hasia Diner, *Roads Taken: The Great Jewish Migrations to the New World and the Peddlers Who Forged the Way* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2015).

³⁰ Cohn, "Memories," 20–27.

³¹ Cohn, "Memories," 27–29.

³² Cohn, "Memories," 30.

³³ Anton Hieke, *Jewish Identity in the Reconstruction South: Ambivalence and Adaptation* (Berlin: de Gruyter, 2013); Adam Mendelsohn, "Tongue Ties," Suzanne D. Rutland, "Creating Transnational Connections: Australia and California," in *Transnational Traditions*, eds. Kahn and Mendelsohn, 64–83.

³⁴ Solomon Kahn to Lazard Kahn, March 24, 1874, and others from March to May, 1874, AJA, Lazard Kahn Collection, Box 2, Folder 1, MS-174.

These kinds of second or third migrations often involved returning to the water. Before the 1869 completion of the transcontinental railroad, the trip to California required a steamboat trip via Panama, where Cohn was laid over for fourteen days. After arriving in San Francisco, he took another steamer upriver to the Gold Country town of Marysville.³⁵ Having already sailed from Hamburg to New York to Savannah and back, he now ventured to new ports in Aspinwall, San Francisco, and inland river towns, where he continued to work as a peddler and merchant.³⁶

This whole time, letters and objects were going back and forth across the Atlantic, acting as proxies for their senders and vehicles of extending local geography across borders. Cohn remembered, "I regularly sent my parents letters as well as small presents, which gave me much joy. So I had sent every Easter to my father who was a tobacco smoker a beautiful but simple pipe, which pleased him greatly."³⁷

Letters could function as an extension of their authors. In February 1862, Dr. Israel Moses would write to his sister in New York from a U.S. Army camp in Maryland, "On this Sunday evening I propose to visit you by proxy in the shape of a small note."³⁸ Objects too were seen as capable of transporting emotion and connection across space; to give one example, it was not uncommon to ship slices of wedding cake to loved ones.³⁹

Sending his father a pipe allowed Cohn to provide him with a piece of America in Russia, burnishing the masculinity of both men.⁴⁰ At the same time, following a visit to Cohn, a friend "wrote home to his parents in Dobryzn

³⁵ Cohn, "Memories," 32–37.

³⁶ Cohn, "Memories," 37–45; Masonic Certificates, Henry Cohn.

³⁷ Cohn, "Memories," 64; David Henkin, *The Postal Age: The Emergence of Modern Communications in Nineteenth-Century America* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2006).

³⁸ Dr. Israel Moses to Lionel Moses, February 2, 1862, AJHS, Moses Family (of New York City) Papers, P- 1, Box 2.

³⁹ "We sent you a wedding cake by express, it will not leave San Francisco till the steamer of the 30th." Rosa Levy Newmark to Sarah Newmark, November 21, 1867, Magnes, Rosalie Meyer Stern Papers, BANC MSS 2010/604, Carton 4, Folder 4. "Receive piece wedding cake from David from San Francisco." Diary Entry, April 21, 1867, AJA, Lemann Family Papers, MS-383, Folder 4.

⁴⁰ On gender in this period, see Karla Goldman, *Beyond the Synagogue Gallery: Finding a Place for Women in American Judaism* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2001); Idana Goldberg, "'Sacrifices upon the Altar of Charity': The Masculinization of Jewish Philanthropy in Mid-Nineteenth Century America," *Nashim: A Journal of Jewish Women's Studies and Gender Issues* 20 (2010): 34–56.

of our encounter and how he found me baking bread. When my mother heard of this, it seemed she was very upset.”⁴¹ She was not the only parent to reassert proper gender roles across distant geographies. The parents of Jewish migrant Mendel Loewner regularly sent him assertive letters attempting to guide his decisions in business and in his personal life. They instructed him to “move to a larger city where a better religious life is possible and where people don’t ask what a Jew looks like,” apparently without success.⁴²

Letters and objects were not always enough though, and in 1859 it was Cohn himself who crossed the Atlantic to visit family and escort a local woman traveling to relatives in California; Jewish women’s mobility was dependent on family or trusted friends. Once home, Cohn again found reminders of the significance and fungibility of borders. He was detained by the police, which he noted was “not to my liking at all; I was no longer used to these depressing and unfree conditions, even in Prussia, where it was somewhat less restricted.” At the same time, he found that he “was assailed by everyone with questions about relatives in America, mostly about people I did not even know.” His parents expected him to stay, but were reassured when he told them that he would return permanently within the next few years.⁴³ This time he travelled to the United States on a 15-day steamboat trip: “the company was most agreeable and so we had a wonderful time.” He tried to find his old friends in New York but “found only a few of them,” indicating that they too had moved on.⁴⁴

Europe was not an abandoned “old world” but a place of ongoing relationship. Jews traveled back and forth across the Atlantic for varying amounts of time, motivated by considerations of business and family. In his 1911 autobiography, Henry Seessel, who had emigrated in 1843, described returning to the Rhineland in the late 1840s, soon after the death of his sister in a yellow fever outbreak in New Orleans. He felt compelled, he wrote, to check up on his other sisters. While there, he met “the niece of Mr. Rose, just seventeen years old, and knowing the whole of her family from my childhood, I at once made up my mind to ask her to become my wife and come with me to this

⁴¹ Cohn, “Memories,” 53.

⁴² Leib and Breindl Loewner letters to Mendel Loewner, 1850s, AJA, Loewner Family of Harrisonburg, VA, MS- 458, Folder 5.

⁴³ Cohn, “Memories,” 54–55.

⁴⁴ Cohn, “Memories,” 56.

country.”⁴⁵ Marrying a local woman brought him companionship and aid, but also a piece of home, back to Louisiana.

Others returned with male relatives to help with their business endeavors. This was how Julius Weis migrated to New Orleans in 1844, from a village near Landau in the Rhineland-Palatinate; later, he made plans to move to California, but changed course at the request of his parents. In 1857 Weis visited his parents, who had themselves moved southwest, to the village of Ingenheim. Weis “provided them with means with which to live comfortably,” bringing American prosperity to their village. He returned again ten years later with his wife and children; a niece and nephew accompanied them back to the United States.⁴⁶ Joseph Seligman went to Europe in the late 1850s “for the purpose of establishing a banking house there.” In the 1860s Seligman brothers also set up business in London, Paris, Frankfurt, and Berlin.⁴⁷

Scattered though it is, the evidence makes clear that, even before the Civil War, migration to the United States was not necessarily a one-way ticket. Soon Cohn did return to Europe permanently, thinking “of my parents and the promise I had made to them to return.”⁴⁸ This was not a common choice, although according to Cohn two of his relatives had already returned to Europe.⁴⁹ It helped that the bloom was off the rose of the Gold Rush and the Civil War was underway, which of course set up a new national boundary that Jews also crossed, licitly and illicitly. Cohn’s decision was apparently an emotional one: according to him, he had a “tearful farewell” with two Mexican men, Pedro and Juan, who worked on the crew of his mule pack-train, and he recalled, “[after] solemn farewells accompanied on horseback by ten friends I bid goodbye to the Sierra Nevada Mountains forever.”⁵⁰ He describes the departure wistfully, linking it to the fellow men who had helped him and to the place itself.

Traveling to New York during wartime was dangerous and required special precautions, but eventually Cohn made it to New York and arrived in

⁴⁵ Henry Seessel, “Henry Seessel,” in *Memoirs of American Jews*, ed. Marcus, 363–364.

⁴⁶ Julius Weis, *Autobiography*, n.d., Louisiana Research Collection, Tulane University Special Collections, Ida Weis Friend Collection, MSS 287, Box 7, 14.

⁴⁷ “Jesse Seligman: The Making of a Financier,” in *Memoirs of American Jews*, ed. Marcus, 351.

⁴⁸ Cohn, “Memories,” 58–59.

⁴⁹ Henry Cohn and Fritz Ludwig Cohn, “Saint Louis and Poker Flats in the Fifties and Sixties,” *California Historical Society Quarterly* 19 (December 1940), 289–298, here 292.

⁵⁰ Cohn, “Memories,” 59–60.

Liverpool in 13 days. He brought with him a US passport issued two years earlier; it described him as five feet, six inches, with dark grey eyes, black hair, and a florid complexion. He was refused a Russian visa because he had become an American citizen but was granted French and Prussian visas. Cohn was very attuned to the particularities and powers of state regimes, and yet he recounted this state of affairs with frustration, indicating that he understood these spaces as continuous ones to which he should have unimpeded access. He traveled to Paris before heading eastward and soon found himself back in Dobrzyn, but unhappy, “feeling nowhere at home.” Likewise, in the 1880s Julius Weis would try to move to Frankfurt, but after 40 years living in the United States, he found himself “dissatisfied with the German mode of living.”⁵¹

Cohn was changed, perhaps bringing some of California back with him.⁵² His original name was Chaim and he also used Heiman – including, notably, on his American passport – but apparently he used the name Henry after his return, indicating that an American layer of identity had been permanently added to already existing Jewish and European ones.⁵³ His experience must have given him local cachet because he was “burdened by many marriage proposals which troubled me.” In 1864 he married, and he and his wife, Rose, settled in Stettin, where he became a wine merchant.⁵⁴ Stettin, a Baltic port city, was home to a relatively new Jewish community that was growing rapidly due to migration from further east. In 1905 it had 3,001 Jews, amounting to two percent of the total population; demographically, then, it was much closer to his experience in the United States than in his Russian hometown.⁵⁵ Seven years later, Germany was unified, and its Jews granted political rights.⁵⁶ When he died in 1915, he was 230 miles west of his birthplace and less than 40 miles east of Strausberg, where he had initially settled in the 1850s.

⁵¹ Julius Weis, *Autobiography*, 20.

⁵² Cohn, “Memories,” 61–65.

⁵³ Cohn and Cohn, “Saint Louis and Poker Flats,” 289.

⁵⁴ Cohn, “Memories,” 65–66.

⁵⁵ Spector and Wigoder, *Encyclopedia of Jewish Life*, vol. 3, 318, 1244.

⁵⁶ David Sorkin, *Jewish Emancipation: A History Across Five Centuries* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2021), 172.

3. Transnational Afterlives

Cohn's memoir ends by describing a happy and fulfilling life that produced five children and 14 grandchildren. One of those grandchildren, Fritz Ludwig – his German name alone indicates a certain level of acculturation on the part of his parents – was born in 1903, moved to California in 1929, and was naturalized five years later.⁵⁷ The country he left was not the same one he had been born in; the Weimar Republic was created in the shadow of imperial Germany's defeat in World War I.⁵⁸ Perhaps he had heard stories of the American West at his grandfather's feet. He had lived in Berlin and emigrated via Houston, although it is unclear how he was able to obtain a visa just five years after the passage of the United States' newly restrictive immigration laws.⁵⁹ He studied at the University of California, Berkeley, where he became a German instructor and was married to a local woman, by a rabbi, in 1936.⁶⁰

His father Carl, a woodworker, emigrated in January 1939. By that point, the Jewish community of Stettin had shrunk by more than half, to just 1,117; on Kristallnacht, just over two months before Carl entered the United States, the local synagogue had been set on fire, Jewish homes and businesses looted, and a group of Jewish men taken to the Nazi concentration camp at Sachsenhausen.⁶¹ On his 1944 naturalization form, Carl's two other sons were listed as "in French Army, Morocco," and "Harbin, Manchuria."⁶² This branch of the

⁵⁷ Naturalization Records, National Archives at San Francisco, San Bruno, California, Records of District Courts of the United States, 1685–2009, RG 21, NAI Number 605504, accessed May 13, 2021, via <https://www.ancestry.com>.

⁵⁸ Michael Brenner, *The Renaissance of Jewish Culture in Weimar Germany* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1998).

⁵⁹ Libby Garland, *After They Closed the Gates: Jewish Illegal Immigration to the United States, 1921–1965* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2014).

⁶⁰ California, U.S., Marriage Records from Select Counties, 1850–1941, accessed via May 13, 2021, <https://www.ancestry.com>; "Oakland Girl to Wed Instructor," *Oakland Tribune*, October 28, 1935, 14; "Course to Be Started," *Oakland Tribune*, January 22, 1939, 40. He published a book review in the *Modern Language Quarterly* in 1945: Fritz L. Cohn, "Review of *The Vogue of Marmontel on the German Stage* by Lawrence Marsden Price," *Modern Language Quarterly* 6 (September 1945): 350–351.

⁶¹ Spector and Wigoder, *Encyclopedia of Jewish Life*, vol. 3, 318, 1244.

⁶² Naturalization Records, National Archives at San Francisco; San Bruno, California, Records of District Courts of the United States, 1685–2009, RG 21, NAI 605504, accessed May 13, 2021, via <https://www.ancestry.com>. Cohn is listed as being married to Breindel, a native of Tarnow, Poland, but it is not clear if she also emigrated or naturalized. On Harbin, see Jonathan Goldstein, "No American *Goldene Medina*: Harbin Jews between Russia, China, and Israel, 1899–2014," in *Transnational Traditions*, eds. Kahn and Mendelsohn, 185–202.

family had left the European continent altogether. Genealogical documents in Henry's papers show that other members of his family ended up in Israel, and that one of his children died in Theresienstadt.⁶³

Cohn crossed borders and waterways, entertaining various options for emigration before ending up close to where he started. Movement was not only a link between one place and another, but was an experience unto itself, one that required preparation and took time. Rarely were the places departed fully left behind. However much Cohn was personally changed by his experiences, he also set the template for his grandson to follow in his footsteps some 75 years later. It was Fritz, in fact, who ensured that his grandfather's papers would be preserved. He translated Henry's memoir and published a condensed version in the December 1940 edition of the *California Historical Quarterly* under the title "Saint Louis and Poker Flats in the Fifties and Sixties."

Although the last name "Cohn" would have communicated his family's Jewishness, Fritz never directly referenced it, instead emphasizing Henry's descriptions of everyday life and many adventures in gold mining towns. The footnotes describe a driving trip Fritz took in May 1940 to follow in Henry's footsteps; in the now sparsely populated towns, he found material ruins of his grandfather's store, including "two original iron doors lying in the grass." Saint Louis, he wrote, only had three residents, who "being without means of communication, knew nothing about the present war."⁶⁴ Just three months earlier, the majority of Stettin's remaining Jewish population had been deported.⁶⁵ Still a relative newcomer to California, at a time when his native Germany had become openly hostile to Jews but the US had not yet entered the war, Fritz was clearly invested in asserting his connection to the local Gold Rush mythology, whether in support of a personal or a political agenda.⁶⁶

Indeed, in the introduction to the memoir he changed the story of his grandfather's return migration, minimizing his preexisting intentions to leave California: "During a visit to his family in 1864, he married and decided to

⁶³ Family Tree, Magnes, Henry Cohn Papers, BANC MSS 2010/675, Box 1, Folder 1.

⁶⁴ Cohn and Cohn, "Saint Louis and Poker Flats," 296–297n2, 297n12, and 298n14.

⁶⁵ Spector and Wigoder, *Encyclopedia of Jewish Life*, vol. 3, 1244.

⁶⁶ Barbara Berglund, "'The Days of Old, the Days of Gold, the Days of '49': Identity, History, and Memory at the California Midwinter International Exposition, 1894," *The Public Historian* 25 (2003): 25–49; Glen Gendzel, "Pioneers and Padres: Competing Mythologies in Northern and Southern California, 1850–1930," *Western Historical Quarterly* 32 (Spring 2001): 55–79.

stay in Germany.”⁶⁷ More recently, Cohn’s memoir was republished in *Jewish Voices of the California Gold Rush* as “I had the Intention to Emigrate,” including descriptions of his early Jewish life and his travel to California. Even this framing is rather limiting, however, in light of Cohn’s return to Europe and the subsequent global dimensions of his family’s story.⁶⁸

Cohn’s story shows that Jews in the Gold Rush, and in 19th-century America more broadly, were embedded within a much broader and longer history of Jewish mobility, in which state borders were significant but rarely singularly determinative. Through Cohn, California becomes entangled with small towns in Russia and Prussia, with Liverpool and Paris, with Morocco and Manchuria, with Theresienstadt and Israel – in short with the major places and trajectories that make up the global Jewish experience in the modern era. Already in the 19th century, Jewish men like Cohn encountered and transgressed borders, reshaping Jewish communities and identities in ways that defy the often-parochial impulses of those who have written their history.

⁶⁷ Cohn and Cohn, “Saint Louis and Poker Flats,” 289.

⁶⁸ Ava F. Kahn, ed. *Jewish Voices of the California Gold Rush: A Documentary History, 1849–1880* (Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 2002), 127–133.

American Jewish Ideas in a Transnational Jewish World, 1843–1900

by Yitzchak Schwartz

Abstract

As mid-19th-century American Jews introduced radical changes to their religious observance and began to define Judaism in new ways, to what extent did they engage with European Jewish ideas? Historians often approach religious change among Jews from German lands during this period as if Jewish immigrants had come to America with one set of ideas that then evolved solely in conversation with their American contexts. Historians have similarly cast the kinds of Judaism Americans created as both unique to America and uniquely American. These characterizations are accurate to an extent. But to what extent did Jewish innovations in the United States take place in conversation with European Jewish developments? Looking to the 19th-century American Jewish press, this paper seeks to understand how American Jews engaged European Judaism in formulating their own ideas, understanding themselves, and understanding their place in world Judaism.

1. Introduction

In the 1840s and 1850s, Jewish communities across the United States began to adopt new liturgy, impose reforms in synagogue ritual, and challenge traditional narratives of Jewish history and Judaism's mission. Since at least the 1880s, historians of American Jewry have put forward a plethora of explanations for these changes and their what influenced them.¹ Since the early 20th century, most scholars have characterized them as the result of some combination of ideas brought from Europe by Jewish laymen as well as rabbis,

¹ The earliest explanations define Reform as a return to true, biblical Judaism, necessary for Judaism's preservation. See Max J. Kohler, "The German-Jewish Migration to America," *The Jewish Messenger*, January 12, 1900, 2–3; Max J. Kohler, "The German Jewish Immigration to America," *Publications of the American Jewish Historical Society* 9 (1900): 87–105.

and American sociocultural pressures that led Jews to try and make their religious observances more palatable to their Protestant neighbors.² More recently, scholars have focused on the way a lack of embedded Jewish religious traditions in America allowed Jews to experiment with creating new kinds of communities and practices.³ What these approaches have in common is that they conceptualize America as a religious black box of sorts, as if Jewish immigrants had come to America with one set of ideas that then evolved primarily, if not solely in conversation with their American contexts. Over the past two decades important studies by European scholars have begun to break this mold by focusing on the transatlantic and transnational activity of Jewish scholars and rabbis.⁴ But how can we assess the impact of European Jewish ideas on American Jews outside of this specialist scholarly sphere? To what extent did American Jews outside of that sphere engage with debates and conversations taking place in Europe after they'd made their homes in the United States?

² In his highly influential history of Reform in America, Leon Jick argues that the movement was motivated by a desire on the part of 19th-century American Jews to better fit into American culture rather than by any ideological influence from Europe. *The Americanization of the Synagogue* (Waltham: Brandeis University Press, 1972). The classic example of the dominant approach prior to Jick, which characterized American reform as the ideology-driven product of the teaching of German-educated rabbis, is David Phillipson's *The Reform Movement in Judaism* (London: Macmillan, 1907). Also see Moshe Davis, *The Emergence of Conservative Judaism: The Historical School in 19th Century America* (Greenwood Press, 1977). Michael Meyer's work on American Reform Judaism takes a medium ground between these approaches, as I discuss below: *Response to Modernity: A History of the Reform Movement in Judaism* (Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 1995). However, Meyer ultimately sees Reform Judaism as being "fully developed in Europe and merely transplanted to the United States," 226.

³ Hasia Diner, *A Time for Gathering: The Second Migration* (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1992), 118–119. Annie Polland, and Daniel Soyer, *Emerging Metropolis: New York Jews in the Age of Immigration, 1840–1920* (New York: NYU Press, 2012), 82–83. Shari Rabin, *Jews on the Frontier: Religion and Mobility in Nineteenth-Century America* (New York: NYU Press, 2019).

⁴ The work of Christian Wiese and Adam Mendelsohn are particularly notable in this regard. See, for example, Christian Wiese, "Translating Wissenschaft: The Emergence and Self-Emanicipation of American Jewish Scholarship, 1860–1920," in *American Jewry: Transcending the European Experience?*, eds. Christian Wiese and Cornelia Wilhelm (London: Bloomsbury Academic, 2016); Adam Mendelsohn, "Tongue Ties: The Emergence of the Anglophone Jewish Diaspora in the Mid-Nineteenth Century," *American Jewish History* 93 (2007): 177–209. These themes are dealt with in many essays in Adam Mendelsohn and Ada F. Kahn, eds., *Transnational Traditions: New Perspectives on American Jewish History* (Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 2014); and Christian Wiese and Cornelia Wilhelm, *American Jewry: Transcending the European Experience?*

It may perhaps be expected that practitioners of American Jewish history, a field rooted in immigration history, the study of the movement of people, would assume ideas to move with populations. Yet as Judaic scholar Christian Wiese notes, American Jewish historians are also impacted by narratives of American exceptionalism that have at times also led scholars of Christianity in the United States to overlook the transnational context of American religion. This phenomena has only recently been recognized.⁵ American Jewish historians have often cast the kinds of Judaism American Jews created as both unique to America and uniquely American.⁶ These characterizations are accurate to an extent. The lack of embedded Jewish communal traditions in the United States and the government's disinvolvement with religious affairs allowed American Jews to experiment in ways perhaps not paralleled in other areas of the world. It certainly allowed American Jewish communities and individuals to introduce novel ideas and practices at a pace not found in most European Jewish communities. And some American Jews did indeed introduce religious changes that were more radical and thoroughgoing than their European Jewish counterparts.⁷ That does not mean, however, that Jewish religious change during this period was entirely the product of these American realities.

⁵ Christian Wiese, Introduction to *American Jewry*, eds. Wiese and Wilhelm, 3. A good introduction to the ongoing attempt to bring transnational history into the field of American religion are the essays on religion in Paul Giles, *Transnationalism in Practice: Essays on American Studies, Literature and Religion* (Edinburgh University Press, 2010).

⁶ In particular, many historians argue American Judaism is uniquely creative because of the voluntary nature of religious association in America. See Jonathan Sarna, *American Judaism: A History* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2004), 36. Benny Kraut similarly argued that this was the defining and unique feature of American Judaism: "What is American About American Jewish History and American Judaism? A Historiographic Inquiry," in *What is American About the American Jewish Experience*, ed. Marc Lee Raphael (Williamsburg, VA: The College of William and Mary, 1993), 1–23; Wiese, Introduction to *American Jewry*. Rabin, *Jews on the Frontier* revives this idea, arguing, along the lines of Kraut, that what she terms the "unfettered mobility" of 19th-century America allowed for unique kinds of religious experimentation.

⁷ On the more radical nature of American Reform Judaism and its roots in Jewish mobility in America, see Karla Goldman, *Beyond the Synagogue Gallery: Finding a Place for Women in American Judaism* (Cambridge MA: Harvard University Press, 2009), 33–34, 74–75. This view was shared by German and American rabbis in the 19th century. Cf. Christian Wiese, "The Philadelphia Conference (1869) and German Reform: A Historical Moment in a Transnational Story of Proximity and Alienation," in *American Jewry*, eds. Wiese and Wilhelm, 136–158.

2. Jewish Ideas and Print Culture in the United States

The subject of American Jewish interaction with European Jewish ideas has often been confounded by attempts to create neat intellectual genealogies, a problem that dogs many practitioners of intellectual history. American Jewish thinkers rarely adopted European ideas wholesale, however, rendering elusive the chains of “influence” that some scholars have sought to trace. Distinct intellectual and ritual outcomes ought therefore not to be taken as demonstrate evidence of a lack of European influence.⁸ American Reform thinkers have been subject to a good deal of this kind of genealogical intellectual analysis by Jewish intellectual historians, even as thinkers who identified with other religious approaches, disseminated in less academically oriented publications, have received scant attention in this regard. Historians have given equally scant attention to both European and American Jewish writing outside the realm of formal religious thought when considering the origins of American Jewish thinking about religion. We would perhaps be better served by looking not only for *influence* but also for how European events and ideas shaped American Jewish conversations, even if the outcomes of those conversations were distinct from outcomes in Europe. How, then, did American Jews *engage* European Jewish developments in formulating their own ideas, understandings of themselves, and understandings of their place in world Judaism?

While not always consistent, and never monolithic, American Jewish newspapers of this period reveal the contours of the public conversations about Judaism taking place in the American Jewish community and the degree to which a transnational conversation took place. They suggest that American Jews were thoroughly curious about Jewish life in other countries and that they closely followed Jewish culture, religious life, and politics in Europe. They also demonstrate close engagement on the part of American Jews with European Jewish ideas. This took the form of interest in new ideas – mostly, but not exclusively from Western Europe – from both Sephardic and Ashkenazic spheres. And the European figures that captured the interest of the

⁸ Scholarship on Isaac Mayer Wise, for example, often paints Wise as an Americanizer, in contrast to academically trained German rabbis who took their ideas from the German Reform movement. See Meyer, *Response to Modernity*, 248–249. Jick’s *Americanization of the Synagogue*, similarly argues against the European roots of American Reform as the explanation for its being so different.

American Jewish press were mostly male but also included women, such as the English writer Grace Aguilar.

Four periodicals – two that existed during the 1840s and early 1850s, and two that endured through the end of the 19th century – offer a basis from which to gauge the extent of transnational engagement on the part of American Jewish thinkers. Nineteenth-century American Jewish newspapers almost always represented specific approaches to Jewish religion on the part of their editorial teams. The editors of these four publications all presented American Judaism as embryonic and charged American Jews to create a Jewish community that, they hoped, would one day stand on par with the great Jewish communities of Europe. Through the 1870s, writers in these papers uniformly lamented the state of American Jewish life, which they saw as underdeveloped, lacking literary creativity, and religiously bereft – although they defined that religious lack, and its remedies, in different ways. While none of the editors of these papers could have imagined the 20th-century events that would leave America the cultural center of the Jewish world, they all envisioned an American Judaism that would serve that role.

Isaac Leeser's (1806–1868) *Occident*, published between 1843 and 1869 in Philadelphia, aimed to promote what Leeser often referred to as “correct,” approaches to Judaism, which for him were those marked by his particular brand of Orthodoxy, through the publication of edifying sermons and polemical articles intended to refute the claims of Christian missionaries and would-be Jewish reformers. Robert Lyon (1810–1855), the editor of *The Asmonean* – founded in 1849, in New York, and published until Lyon's premature death – believed American Jews' path to greatness would be predicated on moderate religious reform as well as education, both in Jewish knowledge and high culture in general. For New York's *Jewish Messenger*, published from 1857 until it merged with *The American Hebrew* in 1902, the remedy for the state of American Judaism was edification through literary materials of a high caliber and for American Jews to see the timeless beauty of what its writers cast as Orthodox Judaism.⁹ Finally, for *The American Israelite*, Isaac Mayer

⁹ Writers in *The Occident* used the terms Orthodox and Reform and by this time these terms were well established in Europe. The terms were used much the way we use them today, Orthodox to refer to Jews insisting on traditional rabbinic understanding of Judaism and Reform referring to those Jews who wished, in various ways, to do away with rabbinic laws and customs.

Wise's (1819–1900) seminal newspaper, published first in Chicago and, from 1875, in Wise's adopted hometown of Cincinnati, American Judaism had the opportunity to seize greatness by creating a reformed Jewish community that would be thoroughly engaged in American bourgeois religious and political life.

These papers were aimed at young American Jews entering the middle class and catered to a literate audience. As such, they are artifacts of the middle class. Nonetheless, they provide a picture of the universe of discourse in which American Jews operated, at a time when middle-class ideas and writing increasingly set the tone and boundaries of public conversation in much of American life, especially in periodicals.

Looking to print culture provides a unique lens through which to understand American Judaism because, during this period, journals and periodicals were the chief means for sharing and debating opinions and research, including between personally acquainted individuals. The correspondence of American Jewish thinkers is surprisingly paltry when it comes to ideas. Isaac Leeser occasionally wrote to European rabbis but not nearly as often as one might think, given his extensive interest in and acquaintance with European Jewish affairs. Indeed, in a collection of almost 2,000 letters written to Leeser, only 63 are from outside of the Americas. Most of these letters concern charity efforts or offer congratulations on personal milestones, rather than intellectual matters. A good amount of them are letters from family members. In the limited correspondence preserved in Isaac Mayer Wise's papers in the American Jewish Archives, the same appears to be true of him.¹⁰ Even David Einhorn, the German-educated Reform rabbi known for his involvement in European Reform, communicated with his European counterparts chiefly through print rather than by post.¹¹

¹⁰ Leeser's foreign correspondence in the Isaac Leeser Collections at the University of Pennsylvania Libraries mostly concerns *The Occident* and personal matters. Most of Wise's correspondence with European and American Jewish figures consists of pleasantries and advice on communal politics.

¹¹ See Christian Wiese, "Samuel Holdheim's 'Most Powerful Comrade in Conviction': David Einhorn and the Debate Concerning Jewish Universalism in the Radical Reform Movement," in *Redefining Judaism in an Age of Emancipation: Comparative Perspectives on Samuel Holdheim*, ed. Christian Wiese (Leiden: Brill, 2007), 306–373.

Periodicals were where international debates took place. All of these publications displayed remarkable engagement with European Jewish affairs and politics, especially matters pertaining to Jewish emancipation. Even the *Occident*, which was mostly a magazine of sermons, contained impressive foreign news coverage, especially with regard to English Jewish news. Leaser's investment in foreign Jewish affairs was such that, in 1854, he hatched a short-lived plan to send American missionaries to China to save that Empire's dying Jewish community from imminent disappearance. *The Asmonean* likewise published on a wide array of world and Jewish news. *The Israelite* featured what was by far the most extensive coverage of Jewish life in Germany, while *The Messenger* carried a great deal of coverage pertaining to the Jewish communities of France and England.¹²

3. European Judaism in the American Jewish Press

The missions of each of these organs led them to engage with European Jewish life in unique ways. Each of them looked to European Jewish communities not only as newsworthy but as representing models and, in some cases, countermodels, for the nascent American Judaism. Looking to these communities, their writers and editors argued, could provide the directionless masses of American Jewry with lessons from recent and distant history for making their own way forward. The role models the papers picked thus reflected their own diagnoses of the maladies they believed were plaguing American Jewry.

The Occident regularly engaged in this kind of search for role models for American Jews. Writers glowingly reported on events such as synagogue dedications in the United Kingdom, emphasizing the decorum of the services at these events and the eloquent sermons given by England's dignified, worldly yet non-Reform rabbis. Leaser also frequently published sermons by modern

¹² For example: "On the Establishment of a Jewish Colony in the United States," *The Occident*, April 1, 1843, 28–30; S. M. Isaacs, "The Jews of Palestine," *The Occident*, January 1, 1854, 502; "Proposed Mission to China," *The Occident*, January 1, 1854, 510; Jewish Chronicle, London, "Consecration at Liverpool," *The Asmonean*, October 26, 1849, 3; "The Jews in Hungary," *The Asmonean*, November 23, 1849, 8; "Foreign Intelligence," *The Israelite*, October 17, 1856, 115; "Foreign Intelligence," *The Israelite*, September 1, 1854, 63; "Bordeaux – A Pastoral," *American Israelite*, August 30, 1867, 5; "Foreign Items: Galicia, The Franchise," *The Jewish Messenger*, May 31, 1861, 166.

German and English rabbis. The recently deceased chief rabbi of Great Britain, Solomon Hirschell (1762–1842), a fierce opponent of reform, as well as his successor Nathan Marcus Adler (1803–1890) were particular favorites.¹³

The Asmonean and *Jewish Messenger* took a much more explicit tone in their use of European Jewish communities as role models. Over and over again, their writers emphasized the oratorical skills, decorous bearings, and enlightened nature of the Orthodox rabbis of Germany, France, and the United Kingdom. The latter also frequently published sermons by these rabbis that dealt specifically with the themes of the virtues of worldly engagement, patriotism, and balancing both with loyalty to orthodoxy.¹⁴ *The Messenger* especially urged that American Jews adopt the model of English and French Orthodox communal organization and take a cue from their prolific Jewish literary production.¹⁵

Even as *The Messenger* and *The Asmonean* located role models in enlightened Orthodox and very moderate Reform Judaism in England and France, they found a countermodel in rapidly reforming Germany. A writer for *The Asmonean* maintained in an 1851 article that the example set by the rabbis of England had made it clear that American Jews could adopt greater decorum in the synagogue, including choirs and modern sermons, without embracing German-style reforms. An 1853 piece, reprinted from the *L'Univers Israélite*, summarized a speech given by a French rabbi in which he emphasized that the Jews of his country must not follow the lead of the Germans and turn the synagogue into “A Protestant Church.” An 1881 article in *The Jewish Messenger* similarly warned American Jews that English Jews found the rapid adoption of German-style reforms in America shallow and silly.¹⁶ As time went on,

¹³ “Gratitude Towards God, From the German,” *The Occident and American Jewish Advocate*, April 1, 1843. The paper ran a series called “Specimens of German Preachers,” featuring the sermons of German Orthodox rabbis in translation; see, for example: *The Occident and American Jewish Advocate*, April 1, 1844, 9.

¹⁴ See “English Judaism,” *The Jewish Messenger*, December 4, 1891, 117; “The Ethics of Judaism,” *The Jewish Messenger*, March 3, 1893, 5; “Jewish Thought in Germany,” *The Jewish Messenger*, March 10, 1893, 4.

¹⁵ “Berthold Auerbach,” *The Jewish Messenger*, Aug 10, 1888, 4; “Jews in English Journalism,” *The Jewish Messenger*, November 30, 1888, 76.

¹⁶ “The Future of Judaism,” *The Jewish Messenger*, February 16, 1872, 4; “The Modern Rabbis, Translated for the *Asmonean* from *L'Univers Israélite*,” *The Asmonean*, May 5, 1854, 20; Rabbi Dreyfuss, “The Two Elements, Translated for the *Asmonean* from *L'Univers Israélite*,” *The Asmonean*, May 12, 1854, 28.

however, *The Asmonean* began to take a more open attitude towards moderate reformers, even as *The Messenger* still lionized European modern orthodoxy.¹⁷

The Israelite, on the other hand, had an alternative set of role models. While Wise's paper celebrated the socioculturally integrated nature of England and France's Jewish communities, and while he frequently lauded their literary accomplishments, he cast German reformers as the ultimate model for American Jewry.¹⁸ Wise, as historians are increasingly noting, was not at all fundamentalist in his prescription for reform and welcomed all stripes of religious "improvement." He did, however, believe that American Jewry needed to embrace a more universal mission and thoroughgoing reform than the communities of England and France. In general, *The Israelite* covered German more than French or English Jewish life, often focusing on rabbinic conventions and reformers.¹⁹ Indeed, Wise's countermodels were the very role models of *The Messenger*, the Orthodox who stymied further religious change, the English chief rabbinate among them.²⁰

4. European Jewish History as a Usable Past

In seeking role models for their fledgling communities, American Jewish newspapers also turned to European Jewish history writing. In the late 19th century, various narratives of Jewish history competed for the minds of European Jews. At stake were not just accounts of past events, but questions of the Jews' future. As historians of the *Wissenschaft des Judentums* movement have argued, for 19th-century Jewish historians, writing Jewish history was a means of rediscovering the destiny of the Jewish people. American Jewish writers adopted and adapted European Jewish historical narratives, just as

¹⁷ See Robert Lyon, "Does the Orthodox Jew Believe in the Bible," *The Asmonean*, August 18, 1854, 140.

¹⁸ "Rev. Mr. De Sola's Remarks," *American Israelite*, December 7, 1855, 178; "Eighteen Hundred Fifty Five," *American Israelite*, December 28, 1855, 204.

¹⁹ "Modern Jews," *American Israelite*, December 18, 1863, 196; "Foreign Record," *American Israelite*, August 22, 1873, 6.

²⁰ "The Chachamim of Bevis Marks," *American Israelite*, August 19, 1887, 3; "Our Fanatics," *American Israelite*, August 21, 1857, 52; "A Modern Bigot," *American Israelite*, August 28, 1857, 58.

they did narratives of the Jewish present, in ways that spoke to their aspirations for the Jews of America.²¹

The Occident is an exception to this trend. It rarely published historical material aside from on American Jewish history, which Leeser sought to document through published correspondence with members of Jewish communities across the country. Allusions to Jewish history and the divine providence that it revealed appeared often in sermons published by the paper, but the historical references were generally vague and secondary to the homiletic arguments made by the writers. *The Asmonean*, however, pursued Jewish history in a much more serious fashion, even as much less of its content was homiletic, a fact perhaps shaped by its lay-dominated editorial staff. Although not very regular, *The Asmonean's* historical articles suggest that its readers had a keen interest in Jewish historical matters and were familiar with some of the religious debates taking place in Europe.²² Like their counterparts in Europe, writers for *The Asmonean* often marshaled European Jewish history writing in support of their religious agendas, in their case in support of moderate liturgical reform.²³ One piece, for example, emphasizing that instrumental music had originally been permitted on the Sabbath, came at a time when the paper was covering debates among American Jews about instrumental music in the synagogue. The same article argued that the rabbinic prohibition against men hearing women singing did not apply to sacred music. Another article, a translated selection from the German Jewish historian Isaac Markus Jost, focused on how Moses Mendelssohn's (1729–1786) example had led Orthodox Jews in Germany to introduce stronger secular education and more

²¹ On the ideology of the Wissenschaft des Judentums movement in the German-speaking lands, see Michael Brenner, *Prophets of the Past: Interpreters of Jewish History* (Princeton University Press, 2010), 8–11.

²² Arthur Beaugnot, "The Three Moses," *The Occident and American Jewish Advocate*, April 1, 1843, 23–26, consists of a biography of Moses Mendelssohn, excerpted and translated from his book *Les Juifs D'Occident*, which compares his views to those of Moses and Moses Maimonides on "the best manner for the passage of the Hebrew people through the vicissitudes of history." Max Lilienthal, "Sketches of Jewish Life in Russia," *The Occident and American Jewish Advocate*, October 1, 1847, 359; Abraham De Sola, "Notes on the Jews of Persia Under Mohammed Shah, Obtained from One of Themselves," *The Occident and American Jewish Advocate*, June 1, 1850, 141.

²³ D. Oppenheim, "On the Age of Jewish Ritual, Translated from the *Allgemeine Zeitung des Judentum*," *The Asmonean*, July 5, 1850, 145; M. H. Breslau, "Hebrew Poetry of the Middle Ages, Translated from the French," *The Asmonean*, Nov 29, 1850, 41–42. Marcus Heymann Breslau, an English lay intellectual and Hebraist, was frequently republished in *The Asmonean*.

orderly services into their communities. It was critical, however, of those who, under the influence of French Enlightenment authors, had endeavored to reform more than what “a due respect of established institutions, which are holy to every religious denomination, would allow.”²⁴

Both *The Israelite* and *The Messenger* carried more Jewish historical content than their predecessors, almost always either translated articles from the European Jewish press or summaries and selections from the work of European Jewish historians. From the 1850s to 1880s, historical articles in both papers generally followed the narrative of the German *Wissenschaft des Judentums* historians. That narrative celebrated Jewish involvement in the larger world in ancient times and in Islamic lands, especially in pre-expulsion Spain, while denigrating Jewish life during the Middle Ages, when, they argued, persecution had led European Jews to turn towards insularity and, intellectually, towards Talmudic casuistry over rationalistic, Bible-centered religious learning.²⁵

In *The Israelite*, for example, the Rev. Dr. Max Lilienthal published a series entitled “Synopsis of Jewish History” that featured articles translated from several German sources, augmented by Lilienthal himself. The installment on the Talmud emphasized the worldly knowledge of the Talmudic rabbis. It painted an image of these figures as closer to the model of the 19th-century enlightened Jew to which *The Israelite* aspired than to that of the insular village Jew that writers for the paper often disparaged.²⁶ Other articles described Jewish historical contributions to world philosophy, especially the Jews’ role in preserving Western philosophy during the Middle Ages through the translation and transmission of philosophical texts in the Islamic world. Translated historical articles bemoaned the ignorance of medieval and modern Jewry and held figures such as Mendelssohn, Benedict de Spinoza (1632–1677), and Uriel DaCosta (1585–1640) – all of whom, in *The Israelite*’s reading, had challenged rabbinic traditions – as heroes who had ushered Jews into a new, modern age. Many such articles made the common *Wissenschaft* argument that when Jews were tolerated, they had always made great contributions to the societies in

²⁴ For an example of the paper’s move towards moderate Reform, see Heman Hoesrachi, “Sacred Music of the Israelites: A Historical Sketch,” *The Asmonean*, December 31, 1852, 127; Isaac Markus Jost, “Modern History of Judaism,” *The Asmonean*, October 15, 1852, 260.

²⁵ Ismar Schorsch, “The Myth of Sephardic Supremacy,” *Leo Baeck Institute Year Book* 34: 47–66.

²⁶ “Synopsis of the History of the Israelites,” *American Israelite*, September 25, 1857, 93.

which they lived, a narrative that, as Ismar Schorsch has noted, at once served to encourage European nations to grant Jews emancipation and to charge modern Jews to shed their supposed insularity.²⁷

The Jewish Messenger evinced a similar narrative of Jewish history, celebrating the ancient and early medieval periods while decrying the medieval isolation of the Jews. Writers for *The Messenger* derided what they saw as medieval Jewish casuistry and likewise celebrated what they deemed the progress made by European Jews since the advent of the Enlightenment.²⁸ They did so, however, with marked Orthodox slant: writers celebrated Mendelssohn as a harbinger of Jewish cosmopolitanism but they also emphasized that he was, as one article put it, a model of “how an orthodox Jew may combine Judaism and science and acquire the esteem of his Christian fellow-citizens.” Indeed, some writers in the paper emphasized that Jews would *only* gain the respect of Christian neighbors when they were loyal to the rabbinic tradition.²⁹ As one 1868 editorial put it, the outside world, which judged Jews by reason, could never respect professors of a religion that disregarded its very central precepts.³⁰

Over time, the differences between *The Messenger* and *Israelite*’s approaches to engagement with European Judaism became even more pronounced. By the late 1870s, and especially in the 1880s, under the leadership of Wise’s son Leo,

²⁷ “Contributions to the Philosophic Literature,” *American Israelite*, March 30, 1855, 301. This survey of Jewish philosophy was heavily based on European Jewish historians of the time but appears to have been written by a layman, based on several inaccuracies, misunderstandings, and generalizations. Also see “Acknowledgment of Hebrew Talents,” *American Israelite*, August 31, 1860, 70; Jewish Chronicle, London, “The Jewish Pulpit,” *American Israelite*, April 18, 1862, 333; “The Life of Uriel Acosta,” *American Israelite*, April 25, 1862, 340; “Baruch Spinoza,” *American Israelite*, May 9, 1873, 5; “The Importance of the Jews in the Maintenance and Revival of Learning During the Middle Ages, From the German of M. J. Schleiden,” *American Israelite*, June 1, 1877, 4; “Post-Biblical History of the Jews,” *American Israelite*, August 13, 1869, 9; Friedlander [Trans.], “Jewish Literati of the Middle Ages,” *American Israelite*, May 16, 1879, 5; “Chachme Hadarot,” *American Israelite*, December 24, 1880, 204; “The Jews – Their Condition in the Past Compared with that of the Present, with Reflections on their Future,” *American Israelite*, April 9, 1869, 5. Schorsch, “Myth of Sephardic Supremacy.”

²⁸ “The Golden Age of the Jews,” *The Jewish Messenger*, July 30, 1869, 2; “Some Jewish Rabbis,” *The Jewish Messenger*, November 11, 1870, 4; “The Jews of Modern Times,” *The Jewish Messenger*, June 14, 1872, 4. The latter article focused on French medieval and early modern rabbis, who were not what the author termed “casuists.”

²⁹ See “The German Spirit,” *The Jewish Messenger*, December 30, 1870, 2. On Mendelssohn as an Orthodox reformer, see “Moses Mendelssohn,” *The Jewish Messenger*, July 21, 1871, 6; “Mendelssohn and the Rabbis,” *The Jewish Messenger*, January 29, 1886, 5

³⁰ “Misrepresentation,” *The Jewish Messenger*, July 10, 1868, 4.

The Israelite began to feature much less material about Germany and fewer pieces that cast German Judaism as a role model. Increasingly, the paper portrayed American Judaism in a much more self-confident manner, celebrating the community's successful adoption of Reform Judaism and congregational union. To *The Jewish Messenger*, however, the religious changes celebrated by their rival paper were decidedly unwelcomed. Its editors continued to lament American Judaism's move towards Reform, notwithstanding their enthusiasm for American Jewish embourgeoisement and acculturation. In *The Messenger*, France and England continued to be the role models of what American Judaism could be. For *The Israelite*, American Judaism was increasingly represented as the role model for everyone else, and European Judaism ceased to be as important a part of the conversation. As America became Jewish history's *telos*, late 19th-century writers created the understanding of the period this article seeks to revise.

5. Conclusion

Since the 1970s, most American Jewish historians have seen American Jewish religious change primarily as a consequence of Americanization, envisioning a process whereby Jews in America immigrated with various religious values and ideas that were then reshaped by life in the United States. The historians who have challenged this model have mostly been scholars of Reform Judaism, such as Michael Meyer, who posits that Reform in America was a product of what he refers to as both "Americanization and Germanization." Historians like Meyer, however, see German influence on Reform as coming from German-trained rabbis and late German immigrants who imported German ideas rather than from continuous engagement with such ideas. Analysis of transnational intellectual engagement among American Jews has most often been restricted to the ideas of German-born rabbis – and mostly those rabbis who were theologians or philosophers. Figures like Wise have often been dismissed as mere popularizers or even bastardizers of German Reform principles.³¹

Perhaps a better prism through which to approach American Jews during this period is that of historian Moshe Rosman, who proposes that when we

³¹ For examples of this kind of dismissal of popular Reform leaders, see Jick, *Americanization of the Synagogue*, especially 183–184; Benny Kraut, *From Reform Judaism to Ethical Culture: The Religious Evolution of Felix Adler* (Cincinnati, Ohio: Hebrew Union College Press, 1979), 5.

approach Jewish history in Poland, we think of Jews as functioning between two cultural poles – the Jewish tradition and transnational Jewish cultures on the one hand, and Polish history and culture on the other.³² In assessing the American Jewish intellectual and religious experience we can certainly observe a strong dialogue with American ideas and religious forms. Why would we expect anything else? Looking closely at popular sources, however, reveals an equally potent transnational engagement with European Jewish communities. There is no way to write an American Jewish religious history of this period that would not be transnational.

³² Moshe Rosman, *How Jewish is Jewish History?* (Oxford: Littman Library of Jewish Civilization, 2007), 92.

Instituting Transnational Jewish Learning: The Emergence of Rabbinical Seminaries in the Nineteenth Century

by Mirjam Thulin

Abstract

When the Jewish Theological Seminary in Breslau opened its doors in 1854, it established a novel form of rabbinical education: the systematic combination of Jewish studies at the seminary in parallel with university studies. The Breslau seminary became the model for most later institutions for rabbinical training in Europe and the United States. The seminaries were the new sites of modern Jewish scholarship, especially the academic study of Judaism (*Wissenschaft des Judentums*). Their function and goal were to preserve, (re)organize, and transmit Jewish knowledge in the modern age. As such, they became central nodes in Jewish scholarly networks. This case study highlights the multi-nodal connections between the Conservative seminaries in Breslau, Philadelphia, New York, Budapest, and Vienna. At the same time, it is intended to provide an example of the potential of transnational and transfer studies for the history of the Jewish religious learning in Europe and the United States.

1. Introduction

The call for modern, institutionalized rabbinical training grew stronger over the 19th century. Preceding American interest in this topic by decades, Jewish education and rabbinical training became state affairs in Europe in the early 19th century. While the first modern rabbinical seminary was founded in 1827 in Padua, in northern Italy,¹ it was the Jewish Theological Seminary (JTS)

¹ On the context of the institutions of rabbinical training, see: Julius Carlebach, ed., *Wissenschaft des Judentums: Anfänge der Judaistik in Europa* (Darmstadt: Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft, 1992); Carsten Wilke, *Den Talmud und den Kant: Rabbinerausbildung an der Schwelle zur Moderne* (Hildesheim: Georg Olms Verlag, 2003); Guy Miron, ed., *From Breslau to Jerusalem: Rabbinical Seminaries, Past, Present and Future* (Jerusalem: Schechter Institute of Jew-

in Breslau, opened in 1854, that launched an entirely new type of modern rabbinical education.² At JTS, each student not only had to complete “Jewish theological” studies at the seminary but in parallel had to attend the university in order to successfully complete his rabbinical training.³ This systematic combination of Jewish and university studies was completely new. Despite the priority given to the Protestant clerical education and, at the same time, the exclusion of Jewish theological studies from the general universities, the teachers and graduates of the seminary followed a self-imposed academic research imperative and claimed the mantle of leadership in the Jewish communities. JTS Breslau inspired reforms at existing seminaries and provided an example for most later institutions, including those founded in opposition to the Breslau model, such as the seminaries in Berlin. From the very beginning, JTS attracted students from all over central and eastern Europe and even the United States, and the short-lived Maimonides College in Philadelphia (founded in 1867), the National Rabbinical School in Budapest (1877), the Jewish Theological Seminary in New York (1886), and the Israelite Theological Educational Institute in Vienna (1893) not only followed the Breslau model regarding curriculum, but also in the values and premises of positive-historical or Conservative Judaism.⁴

ish Studies, 2009) (Hebrew); Asaf Yedidya, ed., *Ashkenazi Batei Midrash: Memoirs of Graduates of Rabbinical Seminaries in Germany and Austria* (Jerusalem: Schechter Institute of Jewish Studies, 2010) (Hebrew). The foundation of the first modern rabbinical seminary, in Padua, was the result of the emancipation policy in the crown lands of the Habsburg monarchy. On the Padua seminary, see: Magdalena Cotrozzi Del Bianco, *Il Collegio Rabbinnico di Padova: Un Istituzione Religiosa dell'Ebraismo sulla Via dell'Emancipazione* (Florence: Leo S. Olschki, 1995); Francesca Paolin, *Wissenschaft des Judentums zwischen Norditalien und Deutschland. Transfers, Debatten, Netzwerke im 19. Jahrhundert* (Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, forthcoming).

² From the large number of publications on the Breslau seminary, the key publication is Guido Kisch, ed., *Das Breslauer Seminar: Jüdisch-Theologisches Seminar (Fraenckelscher Stiftung) in Breslau 1854–1938: Gedächtnisschrift* (Tuebingen: Mohr Siebeck, 1963).

³ In the first phase of modern rabbinical training in Europe, violently ended by the Nazis, there were no female rabbinical students or professors at the seminaries, therefore my paper refers exclusively to male actors.

⁴ In the third section of this article, I discuss in more detail the interconnections of positive-historical and Conservative Judaism. The literature, on which my analysis is built, includes: *Protokolle und Aktenstücke der zweiten Rabbiner-Versammlung: Abgehalten zu Frankfurt am Main vom 15. bis 28. Juli 1845* (Frankfurt am Main: E. Ullmann, 1845); Andreas Brämer, “The Dilemmas of Moderate Reform. Some Reflections on the Development of Conservative Judaism in Germany 1840–1880,” *Jewish Studies Quarterly* 10 (2003): 73–87. For the American context, see

These rabbinical seminaries quickly became landmarks of advanced Jewish learning in Europe and the United States. Their stories reveal pathways of intellectual transfer, exchange, and interdependency, and questions of belonging and identity, patronage and protectionism, which are characteristic for scholarly communication in general and intellectual networks and institutions in particular. At the same time, the seminaries were fundamental for the formation and strengthening of modern Jewish denominational movements.⁵ Their histories shed light on the potential for a transnational framework understanding the transfer of knowledge and point to research perspectives for a network history of the rabbinical seminaries.

2. The Seminary Movement in Europe and in the United States

For the history of Jewish education and knowledge, the 19th century was the century of the “seminary movement.”⁶ Since the founding of the first modern institution, in Padua, others emerged in rapid succession, first in Europe and eventually also in the US. While the seminaries differed sometimes considerably in terms of regional context, religious orientation, and social setting, they were united by their commitment to the academic study of Judaism. Since

particularly: Moshe Davis, *The Emergence of Conservative Judaism: The Historical School in Nineteenth Century America* (Philadelphia: Jewish Publication Society, 1963); Marshall Sklare, *Conservative Judaism: An American Religious Movement* (Glencoe, IL: Free Press, 1955); Michael R. Cohen, *The Birth of Conservative Judaism: Solomon Schechter’s Disciples and the Creation of an American Religious Movement* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2012).

⁵ So far there have been no transnational studies of the various movements in Judaism. However, Michael A. Meyer, *Response to Modernity: A History of the Reform Movement in Judaism* (Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 1988) looks at various geographical contexts of Reform Judaism.

⁶ On the significance of academic institutions, see Timothy Lenoir, *Instituting Science: The Cultural Production of Scientific Disciplines* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1997); James McClellan, “Scientific Institutions and the Organization of Science,” in *The Cambridge History of Science*, vol. 4: *Eighteenth-Century Science*, ed. Roy Porter (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003), 87–106. On the relevance of scholarly networks, see Steven J. Harris, “Networks of Travel, Correspondence, and Exchange,” in *The Cambridge History of Science Early Modern Science*, ed. Lorraine Daston and Katherine Park (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006), 341–362; for the Jewish context, see Mirjam Thulin, “Jewish Networks,” European History Online (EGO), Leibniz Institute of European History, accessed September 29, 2021, <http://ieg-ego.eu/en/threads/european-networks/jewish-networks>; Mirjam Thulin, *Kaufmanns Nachrichtendienst: Ein jüdisches Gelehrtennetzwerk im 19. Jahrhundert* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck and Ruprecht, 2012), 160–226.

no country deemed Judaism worthy of academic study, for reasons ranging from straightforward anti-Semitism to milder disdain for the topic, the seminaries established close to universities, though they had no formal affiliation. Among the seminaries that were founded over the course of the 19th century, five institutions were largely based on the positive-historical or Conservative model of the Breslau seminary. Because of their close ties to one another, they can illustrate the transnational dynamics of the seminary movement.

The Jewish Theological Seminary in Breslau (1854–1938)

Until today, the Jewish Theological Seminary (JTS) in Breslau is considered the “mother institution” for at least four more organizations in central Europe and the US. The wealthy merchant and royal commercial councilor Jonas Fraenckel (1776–1846) provided an endowment that made the founding possible. The land on Wallstrasse, where the seminary was built, was also part of the foundation’s capital. In the early 1850s, a board of trustees and an advisory board crafted a statute that articulated the religious and academic requirements of a modern Jewish scholarship.⁷ The statutes paved the way for a new kind of rabbinical education and the academic study of Judaism.

The JTS consisted of two departments.⁸ The Lower Department (*Untere Abteilung*) was for high school education, and the Upper Department (*Obere Abteilung*) focused on “Jewish theological” training. The Lower Department offered an important service to the Jewish community because at that time there were no Jewish high schools in central Europe. Students who decided to become rabbis, Jewish religious teachers, or cantors entered the Upper Department after receiving their high school diploma. As soon as a student began his rabbinical training, he also enrolled as a student at the University of Breslau. This parallel education was part of the new, unique concept, which would become part of most rabbinical training institutions that emerged in

⁷ On the work of the boards, see particularly: *Programm zur Eröffnung des jüdisch-theologischen Seminars zu Breslau “Fränckel’sche Stiftung:” Den 16. Ab 5614, 10. August 1854* (Breslau: W. G. Korn, 1854); Markus Brann, *Geschichte des jüdisch-Theologischen Seminars (Fraenckel’sche Stiftung) in Breslau: Festschrift zum fünfzigjährigen Jubiläum der Anstalt* (Breslau: Th. Schatzky, [1905]).

⁸ On the structure and curriculum, see *Studien-Ordnung für das jüdisch-theologische Seminar in Breslau, festgestellt im Jahre 1873 und revidirt im Jahre 1885: Nebst einem Anhang: Vorschriften für die Prüfungs-Candidaten* (Breslau: Th. Schatzky, 1885).

Europe and in the US in the following years. Thus, the graduates had two degrees in hand when they finished their training. They were not only ordained as rabbis, but also had a university degree, usually a doctoral degree from a philosophy department. These double degrees distinguished the Breslau model from earlier seminaries in Padua, Amsterdam, and Metz/Paris.

However, the academic orientation of the Breslau institution had its limits. The first faculty members made sure of that, namely the founding director, rabbi Zacharias Frankel (1801–1875), and historian Heinrich Graetz (1817–1891), both of whom had a lasting influence on the course and orientation of the seminary. One guideline was that the curriculum of “Jewish theological” studies in the Upper Department did not include Bible criticism. This characteristic of all Conservative seminaries changed gradually only after World War I. In contrast, Talmud instruction, based on the historical method, occupied almost half of the curriculum. Jewish history and philological subjects like Hebrew and Aramaic were also emphasized. In Breslau, the language of instruction – term papers, lectures, trial sermons, and the seminary’s academic house journal, *Monatsschrift für Geschichte und Wissenschaft des Judentums* (Monthly for the History and Scholarship of Judaism) – was German. Until the founding of the *Hochschule für die Wissenschaft des Judentums* (Academy for the Scholarship of Judaism) in 1872 and the Orthodox Rabbinical Seminary in 1873 – on opposite sides of Berlin’s Artilleriestrasse, and therefore jokingly called “light” and “heavy artillery” – the Breslau Seminary shaped the thinking, understanding, and practice of academic Jewish studies and played the leading role among the seminaries.⁹

The Budapest National Rabbinical School (1877–1944, 1945–)

In 1877, the National Rabbinical School (called in the local languages “Országos Rabbiképző,” or “Landes-Rabbinerschule”) opened its doors in Budapest.¹⁰ This seminary would eventually become one of the few institutions of rabbinical training and Jewish scholarship accredited and partially financed by

⁹ Quoted in: Werner Schochow, *Deutsch-jüdische Geschichtswissenschaft: Eine Geschichte ihrer Organisationsformen unter besonderer Berücksichtigung der Fachbibliographie* (Berlin: Colloquium Verlag, 1969), 52, n. 140.

¹⁰ On this seminary, see Moshe Carmilly-Weinberger, ed., *The Rabbinical Seminary of Budapest, 1877–1977: A Centennial Volume* (New York: Sepher-Hermon Press, 1986).

the state. Over the course of the almost 150-year existence, it has been closed for only half a year, in 1944–45, during the Nazi period. After 1945, it was the only seminary in the Eastern Bloc which was permitted to train rabbis, and it exists to this day.

The founding documents from the 1860s show that the Rabbinical Seminary Commission (*Rabbinerseminar-Kommission*) had the statutes and study regulations of several seminaries before them when they designed their own institution, namely those from Metz and Paris and the two Berlin seminaries as well as the Breslau statutes.¹¹ As a result of the strong ties between the urban Jews of Budapest and the German Conservative Jews, the Breslau bylaws ultimately became the model for the Budapest statutes.¹² The most visible emulation was the division of the seminary into two departments. In Hungary, a Jewish high school provided an even greater service to the local Jews because they had very limited access to the still few and mostly Christian high schools. In addition to adopting the department structure, some of the Budapest faculty came from Breslau: Wilhelm Bacher (1850–1913) and David Kaufmann (1852–1899), both widely known scholars of Judaism, distinguished doctors of Oriental studies, and themselves graduates of the Breslau Seminary, were familiar with the daily routine of a seminary as well as with the organization and the general requirements of such an institution, a fact that contributed to the professionalization and standardization of rabbinical training.¹³ The curricula of both seminaries also show strong similarities. Like in Breslau, critical biblical studies were anathema in Budapest before World

¹¹ See the documents in Magyar Zsidó Levéltár (Hungarian Jewish Archives), Budapest, Box N 8/3 Rabbiképző, A Rabbiképző szervezését Eérvémjéző iratok Sogalmaz vánja 1863–1864, 33788/9568 II, 18/4, 864, 1864/VII – ad 17121.

¹² On the similarities in general, see Moshe Carmilly-Weinberger, “The Similarities and Relationship between the Jüdisch-Theologisches Seminar (Breslau) and the Rabbinical Seminary (Budapest),” *Leo Baeck Institue Year Book* 44 (1999): 3–22; Kinga Frojimovics, “Teachers and Students: The Rabbinical Seminary of Budapest and the Neologic Jewish Legacy in Hungary,” in *From Breslau to Jerusalem*, ed. Miron, 149–164 (Hebrew); Gábor Lengyel, *Moderne Rabbinerausbildung in Deutschland und Ungarn: Ungarische Hörer an Bildungsinstitutionen des deutsch-judentums (1854–1938)* (Berlin: LIT, 2012).

¹³ For example, on Kaufmann’s journey from Breslau to Budapest, see Mirjam Thulin, “Connecting Centers of Wissenschaft des Judentums: David Kaufmann in Budapest, 1877–1899,” in *Modern Jewish Scholarship in Hungary: The “Science of Judaism” between East and West*, ed. Tamás Turán and Carsten Wilke (Oldenburg: Walter de Gruyter, 2016), 157–174.

War I. Instead, Talmud classes accounted for nine hours per week in the upper department throughout the course of study.¹⁴

Students from Budapest moved between the seminaries, establishing close connections to the “mother institution” in Breslau. Since the curricula were similar, the seminaries usually accepted courses taken at the other institution for transfer credits. Such exchanges were relatively easy because the language of instruction in Budapest remained largely German until World War I. And in fact, exchanges happened in both directions. For example, Michael Guttmann (1872–1942), a graduate of the Budapest Seminary, taught in Breslau between 1921 and 1938.

Maimonides College in Philadelphia (1867–1873) and the Jewish Theological Seminary in New York (1886–)

In contrast to Europe, rabbinic education did not rank as a priority in the United States until the mid-19th century. By then, however, immigrant rabbis and Jewish scholars, mainly from a German-speaking background, called for a professional educational institution to train rabbis and teachers. Around the time the Hungarian seminary began, modeled after the Breslau blueprint, the Jewish Theological Seminary (JTS) opened its doors in New York.¹⁵ Like earlier institutions, the local committees did not have to come up with a brand-new canon of Conservative Jewish scholarship and rabbinic education. Instead, they considered the curricula of several existing seminaries, including the Hebrew Union College (HUC) in Cincinnati, which was affiliated with the Reform movement, as well as their first-hand experience with an earlier, failed project in Philadelphia.

Rabbi Isaac Leeser (1806–1868) had been the guiding spirit in the founding of Maimonides College in Philadelphia, which in 1867 was the first rabbinical seminary in the United States.¹⁶ Leeser, who originally came from the

¹⁴ For the Budapest statutes, see *Statuten der Landes-Rabbinerschule zu Budapest* (Budapest: Schlesinger and Wohlauer, 1877).

¹⁵ For a general overview of the JTS, see the institute’s history: Jack Wertheimer, ed., *Tradition Renewed: A History of the Jewish Theological Seminary*, 2 vols. (New York: Jewish Theological Seminary of America, 1997).

¹⁶ Still the best account of the college is Bertram Wallace Korn, “The First American Jewish Theological Seminary: Maimonides College, 1867–1873,” in *Eventful Years and Experiences: Studies in Nineteenth Century American Jewish History*, ed. Bertram Wallace Korn (Cincinnati: American Jewish Archives, 1954), 151–213.

province of Westphalia, Prussia, served as vice president of the board of the founding committee and taught homiletics and history.¹⁷ The Italian-born rabbi Sabato Morais (1823–1897) lectured in Bible and biblical literature; rabbi Aaron Bettelheim (1830–1890) taught Mishnah, the commentaries, and *Shulchan Arukh*, and rabbi Marcus M. Jastrow (1829–1903) taught Talmud, Hebrew philosophy, Jewish history, and literature.

From the beginning, the college had only a few students, and only three of them ever finished their studies and were ordained. Moreover, the college constantly lacked financial support. Although the Emanu-El Theological Seminary Association in New York subsidized the seminary beginning in 1865, it closed after little more than five years. Eventually, former teachers and students of the college helped to establish JTS, in 1886, as a more traditional alternative to the HUC.

The JTS curriculum was not initially based on the model of the Breslau seminary, but the naming clearly reflected a self-image as continuing the tradition in the New World. Moreover, members of the JTS advisory board were Breslau graduates, among them Alexander Kohut (1842–1894), Frederick de Sola Mendes (1850–1924), and Bernhard Drachman (1861–1945). Like its predecessor in Philadelphia, the New York seminary struggled with funding problems for years, and around 1900 JTS found itself in a crisis. The advisory board made efforts to address the issues by reorganizing the institution and modifying the curriculum, and thus attract more students and supporters.¹⁸ In 1902 the board managed to lure Solomon Schechter (1847–1915) from Cambridge to New York to succeed the first director, Sabato Morais. Schechter was a big name in the community of *Wissenschaft des Judentums*, and his name remains synonymous with the discoveries and editions of the Cairo Genizah.¹⁹ At the same time, Schechter was an advocate for the practice and teaching of a positive-historical approach Judaism. His ties to Breslau were primarily personal; his wife, Mathilde (1859–1924), came from the city. Regular trips took

¹⁷ On Leeser, see Lance J. Sussman, *Isaac Leeser and the Making of American Judaism* (Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 1995).

¹⁸ On the years until 1902, see Hasia Diner, “Like the Antelope and the Badger: The Founding Years of JTS, 1886–1902,” in *Tradition Renewed*, ed. Wertheimer, vol. 1, 1–42.

¹⁹ On Schechter’s expertise, instead of many, see Adina Hoffmann and Peter Cole, *Sacred Trash: The Lost and Found World of the Cairo Genizah* (New York: Schocken, 2011).

the Schechters to her old home, and the scholarly discourse there certainly shaped his own views.²⁰

Following his relocation to New York, Schechter began to work on adapting and raising JTS's educational criteria to the higher standards of the European rabbinical seminaries.²¹ He created new teaching subjects and elevated the entrance requirements for faculty and students. Similar to the Breslau and Budapest seminaries, JTS rejected historical Bible criticism. Schechter referred to "Higher Criticism" as "Higher Anti-Semitism."²² Unlike the European seminaries, the New York institution never offered high school or college diplomas. In order to begin their studies there, new rabbinical students were required to have a bachelor's degree or equivalent university degree in hand.

The Viennese Israelite Theological Educational Institute (1893–1938)

One last Conservative seminary founded on the Breslau model opened in Vienna in 1893, after decades-long talks.²³ The Austrian Ministry of Culture and Education and the local Jewish community had, since the first third of the century, been negotiating about a "Jewish Theological Institute," a "Jewish Theological Faculty," or a "Rabbinical Institute."²⁴ In Vienna, as in other places where rabbinical seminaries were established, a predecessor institution had existed: the *Bet ha-Midrash zu Wien* (Bet ha-Midrash of Vienna) had been established in 1863. Students, mostly future rabbis and teachers who studied at the University of Vienna, could gain specialized Jewish knowledge there and learn in study groups (*hevrotas*). The rabbis of the Bet ha-Midrash ordained several rabbis, including Schechter, 26 years before he became head of JTS.

²⁰ Mirjam Thulin, "Wissenschaft and Correspondence: Solomon Schechter between Europe and America," *Jewish Historical Studies* 48 (2016): 109–137.

²¹ Mel Scult, "Schechter's Seminary," in *Tradition Renewed*, ed. Wertheimer, vol. 1, 43–102; Shuly Rubin Schwartz, "The Schechters' Seminary," in *Text and Context: Essays in Modern Jewish History and Historiography in Honor of Ismar Schorsch*, ed. Eli Lederhendler and Jack Wertheimer (New York: Jewish Theological Seminary of America, 2005), 487–503.

²² Solomon Schechter, "Higher Criticism – Higher Anti-Semitism", in *Seminary Addresses and other Papers* (Cincinnati: Ark Publishing Company, 1915), 35–40.

²³ The debates over an Austrian or Viennese rabbinical seminary go back to the time of Joseph II (1741–1790). However, there is still no comprehensive account of the founding history. For a somewhat eclectic study on the subject, see Peter Landesmann, *Rabbiner aus Wien. Ihre Ausbildung, ihre religiösen und nationalen Konflikte* (Vienna, Cologne: Boehlau, 1997).

²⁴ Most of the sources on the founding of the seminary, which have still not been analyzed, can be found in the Austrian State Archives (OeStA) under the call number OeStA, AVA, Kultus NK, Akath. Israelitisch, D 5, box 43 Studien [1849]–1895.

However, the institution could never provide a complete modern rabbinical education and lacked both financial resources and clear support from the local Jewry.

In the 1880s negotiations for the establishment of a regular seminary intensified, not least because the founding of the Hungarian institution created the impression that things were going too slowly in the capital of the Habsburg Monarchy. Again, the organizers of the seminary had various curricula before them, for example the statutes from Padua, Paris, Breslau, the Jews' College in London, the two seminaries in Berlin, Budapest, and New York.²⁵ Ultimately, Breslau again became the dominant model. A closer look at the study regulations of the Viennese institution, however, shows that there were similarities with the reform-oriented *Hochschule für die Wissenschaft des Judentums* as well. These parallels primarily have to do with the central place of academic Jewish studies, in contrast to traditional religious knowledge. In the section on "name and purpose," the Viennese statute makes explicit reference to *Wissenschaft des Judentums*, which does not appear in the statutes of the Breslau or Budapest seminaries, but does in the statutes of the *Hochschule*.²⁶

The new emphasis in the statutes undoubtedly reflects the growing importance of academic Jewish studies, especially for rabbinical seminaries and their training programs. Like Budapest, Philadelphia, and New York, it was above all the hiring practices in Vienna that demonstrated the strong influence of the Breslau seminary. For example, when the plans for the institution solidified at the end of 1892, the board attempted to recruit David Kaufmann from Budapest to head the new institute in Vienna, but he respectfully declined the offer. Eventually rabbi Adolf Schwarz (1846–1931) from Karlsruhe became the first director of the Viennese seminary. He was a close friend of the chief rabbi of Vienna, Moritz Güdemann (1835–1918), and both had studied together with Wilhelm Bacher and David Kaufmann at the JTS in Breslau.

²⁵ Cf. OeStA, AVA, Kultus NK, Akath. Israelitisch, D 5, box 43 Studien [1849]–1895.

²⁶ On the statutes, see: *Statut der Hochschule für die Wissenschaft des Judentums* (Berlin: G. Bernstein, 1870), and *Organisations-Statut der Israelitisch-Theologischen Lehranstalt in Wien* (Vienna: F. Brueck und Soehne, 1893?).

3. Wissenschaft and Judaism: The Context of the Seminary Movement

The outline of the stories of the five Conservative rabbinical seminaries exemplifies the transnational aspects of the transfer of (Jewish) knowledge and science, education and religious history, and, not least, the dynamics of the seminary movement in the 19th century. For the Jews in Europe and the United States, the political upheavals at the end of the 18th century were decisive in this process. In the course of the 19th century, the nationalization of all European states, the process of bourgeoisification, and “academic” measurements, which increasingly determined the discourse of knowledge and science of the time, led to demands for the “civic improvement” of the Jews through education, the confessionalization of the Jewish religion, and the abandonment of the national-ethnic component within Judaism. In the 1830s, the term “emancipation” was applied to this kind of political-legal claim and the subsequent educational discourse.²⁷

The desire for emancipation and the different views on how to carry on the Jewish religion and tradition in modern times generated more and more conflicts among the Jews in Europe. The debates were particularly elaborate in the German lands, and especially in tone-setting Prussia, due, to the fact that Prussia was one of the most significant centers of the European Enlightenment and later bourgeoisification. An elite of political, social, and cultural leaders promoted ideas of education (*Bildung*), history, and progress in a distinctive way and endorsed them politically and financially.

This tense atmosphere affected the Jewish debates. The rabbinical conferences in Braunschweig (1844), Frankfurt am Main (1845), and Breslau (1846) eventually became important landmarks in the debates over a modern Judaism. Almost the entire elite of the German-speaking rabbinate attended the meetings or sent letters and rabbinical responsa to the assemblies. Jewish newspapers reported on the events and the minutes and records of the meetings inspired polemical writings, pitting the rabbis against each

²⁷ Andreas Gotzmann vividly traces the development on the territory of the later German Empire in *Eigenheit und Einheit: Modernisierungsdiskurse des deutschen Judentums der Emanzipationszeit* (Leiden: Brill, 2002). An additional internal perspective on Jewish academic discourses is provided in Kerstin von der Krone, *Wissenschaft in Öffentlichkeit: Die Wissenschaft des Judentums und ihre Zeitschriften* (Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, 2011).

other.²⁸ Among others, rabbi Abraham Geiger (1810–1874), who was to become the key figure of the Reform movement, and rabbi Zacharias Frankel, at that time chief rabbi of Dresden and supporter of more moderate reforms, attended the second rabbinical meeting in Frankfurt, in 1845. Contrary to all hopes and plans, this gathering deepened the disagreements among the different camps and cleared the way for the pluralization of Judaism as we know it today. A Jewish Reform movement emerged, following Abraham Geiger's ideas, while a more moderate Reform or Conservative Judaism appeared around Zacharias Frankel. Moreover, a Neo- or Modern Orthodoxy began to constitute itself around rabbi Samson Raphael Hirsch (1808–1888), and, finally, in eastern Europe, ultra-Orthodoxy, with its many sub-branches, took root.²⁹

The emergence of the academic study of Judaism, mainly under the label *Wissenschaft des Judentums*, is closely connected with the religious developments within Judaism. In the debates about modern Judaism, all the key participants engaged in discussions about the future structure of Jewish knowledge. By the time that Frankel and Geiger were debating the nature of halakhah and reforms, there was still no firmly established program of *Wissenschaft des Judentums*. Nevertheless, the sacredness of traditional Jewish texts, the basis of Judaism, was at the center of all debates. The approach to these texts as well as the use of the historical methods became the dividing point in modern Jewish scholarship, with the Reform movement, embodied by Abraham Geiger and the chief rabbi of Mecklenburg-Schwerin, Samuel Holdheim (1806–1860), on one side, and Neo-Orthodoxy on the other. Frankfurt rabbi Samson Raphael Hirsch and rabbi Esriel Hildesheimer (1820–1899), who had first been active in Eisenstadt, Burgenland, and since 1869 in Berlin, led Neo-Orthodoxy, which accused reformers such as Holdheim of going after the Jewish tradition heedlessly.³⁰ The same perception

²⁸ The minutes of Frankfurt meeting in particular contain many transcripts of newspaper articles, counter-pamphlets, and letters. See *Protokolle und Aktenstücke*.

²⁹ As a classic on Neo-Orthodoxy, see: Mordechai Breuer, *Jüdische Orthodoxie im Deutschen Reich 1871–1918: Sozialgeschichte einer religiösen Minderheit* (Frankfurt am Main: Jüdischer Verlag, 1986). On ultra-Orthodoxy, see Michael K. Silber, "The Emergence of Ultra-Orthodoxy: The Invention of a Tradition," in *The Uses of Tradition: Jewish Continuity in the Modern Era*, ed. Jack Wertheimer (New York: Jewish Theological Seminary of America, 1992), 23–84.

³⁰ For insight into the history and orientations of the *Wissenschaft des Judentums*, see: Kerstin von der Krone and Mirjam Thulin, "Wissenschaft in Context: A Research Essay on the Wissen-

led the Breslau historian Heinrich Graetz to his conclusion that “Holdheim beats Judaism to death with the Talmud.”³¹ In contrast, Graetz and Frankel understood *Wissenschaft des Judentums* as a “scholarship of faith” (*Glaubenswissenschaft*).³²

These debates about the reorganization of Jewish knowledge and its academization certainly also had its critics. Leopold Zunz (1794–1886), one of the founders of *Wissenschaft des Judentums*, witnessed these developments during his long life and lamented the fact that ultimately rabbis claimed and shaped not only Judaism but also academic Jewish studies.³³ His good friend, the Hebrew bibliographer Moritz Steinschneider (1816–1907), shared this attitude. Both were extremely skeptical of the rabbinical seminaries which emerged everywhere and claimed Jewish studies as their own. Zunz and Steinschneider perceived them as places of “systematic hypocrisy and academic immaturity.”³⁴

4. Conclusion

Over time, all Jewish denominations institutionalized their ideals and interpretations of religion and academic knowledge in rabbinical seminaries. For the denominations, it was clear that the rabbis would be the promoters of the new knowledge order. Like no other Jewish intellectuals, rabbis could have a great impact in the communities, and so from the first half of the 19th century

schaft des Judentums,” *Leo Baeck Institute Year Book* 58 (2013): 249–280. On the Orthodox positions, see Asaf Yedidya, *Criticized Criticism: Orthodox Alternatives to Wissenschaft des Judentums* (Jerusalem: Bialik Institute, 2013) (Hebrew).

³¹ Heinrich Graetz, *Geschichte der Juden: Vom Beginn der Mendelsohnschen Zeit (1750) bis in die neueste Zeit (1848)*, vol. 11 (originally 1870; Second edition Leipzig: Oskar Leiner, 1900), 533.

³² On Frankel’s understanding, see Andreas Brämer, *Rabbiner Zacharias Frankel: Wissenschaft des Judentums und konservative Reform im 19. Jahrhundert* (Hildesheim: Georg Olms, 2000), 255–275.

³³ In a seminal essay of 1818, Zunz described academic Jewish studies as a broad and utterly anti-clerical undertaking. See Leopold Zunz, “Etwas über die rabbinische Literatur. Nebst Nachrichten über ein altes bis jetzt ungedrucktes hebräisches Werk (1818),” in *Gesammelte Schriften: Herausgegeben vom Curatorium der “Zunzstiftung:” 3 Bände in einem Band*, ed. Leopold Zunz, vol. 1 (Reprint Hildesheim: Georg Olms, 1976), 1–31.

³⁴ Moritz Steinschneider to rabbi Moritz Meyer Kayserling (Budapest), Berlin, October 1, 1876, Archives of the National Library of Israel (NLI), Arc. Var. 894/274. Steinschneider’s position can also be found in Isidore Singer, “Eine Vogelschau über die Entwicklung der amerikanischen Judenheit in den letzten 250 Jahren,” *Ost und West* 10–11 (1905): 665–676, here 668.

onward, rabbis became the forces who shaped both the academic study of Judaism and the Jewish denominations.³⁵

Only after the Shoah did universities in central Europe accept Jewish studies as an academic field. Before that, the discipline and its scholars took refuge in the seminaries. Nevertheless, the emergence of *Wissenschaft des Judentums* coincided with general professionalization and standardization processes in the Western industrial states. The educational requirements of the states were essential for the development of both modern Jewish scholarship and religion in 19th-century Europe and led to the rapid academization of the rabbinate.³⁶ This caused much greater disputes and status definitions among European Jews than in the United States, where the state was in no way interested in the content and form of rabbinical studies. Instead, the position of the lay boards was much stronger, simply because, until the middle of the 19th century, there was still a lack of trained rabbis. Before the 1880s, America did not see the formation of distinct strands within Judaism. This came mainly with the arrival of intellectuals and, mostly seminary-trained, rabbis who transferred their European experiences into the debates in the American context. However, the question of the degree to which the Jewish European movements caused or affected the branches in American Judaism is still a matter of dispute today.³⁷ In recent years, researchers have emphasized the distinct context of the United States and the achievements and impact of individual intellectuals such as Solomon Schechter.³⁸ The extent to which European elements shaped Jewish scholarship and religion in the United States and vice versa still needs to be clarified.³⁹

³⁵ For instance, on the impact of academically trained German rabbis in eastern Europe, see: Tobias Grill, *Der Westen im Osten: Deutsches Judentum und jüdische Bildungsreform in Osteuropa (1783–1939)* (Goettingen: Vandenhoeck and Ruprecht, 2013).

³⁶ Ismar Schorsch, *From Text to Context: The Turn to History in Modern Judaism*, ed. Ismar Schorsch (Hanover: Brandeis University Press, 1994), 9–50; Carsten L. Wilke, “Modern Rabbinical Training: Intercultural Invention and Political Reconfiguration,” in *Rabbi – Pastor – Priest. Their Roles and Profiles Through the Ages*, ed. Walter Homolka and Heinz-Günther Schöttler (Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, 2013), 83–110.

³⁷ This can be seen in the example of so-called “Conservative” Judaism. See Davis, *The Emergence of Conservative Judaism*, 311–326.

³⁸ Cohen, *The Birth of Conservative Judaism*.

³⁹ On this perspective in general, see Ian Tyrrell, *Transnational Nation: United States History in Global Perspective since 1789* (Houndmills: Palgrave Macmillan, 2007); Ian Tyrrell, “Reflections on the Transnational Turn in United States History: Theory and Practice,” *Journal of Global History* 4 (2009): 453–474.

The rabbinical seminaries were the most visible landmarks of the Jewish scholarly and denominational movements and mapped their far-reaching, transnational networks. The briefly outlined histories of five Conservative institutions have shown that the conditions under which Jewish knowledge was produced and further refined were geographically varied. Moreover, it shows that the research on the study of the history and significance of the seminaries, especially in a comparative and transnational perspective, is still in its early stages. This history of knowledge, science, education, and religion cannot be told without its many transnational aspects, entanglements, networks, and circles.⁴⁰

⁴⁰ See Christophe Charle and Jürgen Schriewer, ed., *Transnational Intellectual Networks: Forms of Academic Knowledge and the Search for Cultural Identities* (Frankfurt am Main: Campus, 2004); Anna Nagurney, "Networks," in *Encyclopedia of Science, Technology and Ethics*, ed. Carl Mitcham, vol. 3 (Detroit: Macmillan, 2005), 1307–1310; Harris, "Networks of Travel, Correspondence, and Exchange."

In Search of Belonging: Galician Jewish Immigrants Between New York and Eastern Europe, 1890–1938

by Oskar Czendze

Abstract

More than 200,000 Jews left the Habsburg province of Galicia between 1881 and 1910. No longer living in the places of their childhood, they settled in urban centers, such as in New York's Lower East Side. In this neighborhood, Galician Jews began to search for new relationships that linked the places they left and the ones where they arrived and settled. By looking at Galicia through the lens of autobiographical writings by former Jewish immigrants who became established residents of New York, this article emphasizes the role of regionalism in the context of transnational conceptions of a new American Jewish self-understanding. It argues that the key to analyzing the evolution of "eastern Europe" as a common place of origin for American Jewry is the constant dialogue between the places of origin and arrival. Specifically, philanthropic efforts during and after the First World War and the proliferation of tourism both enabled these settled immigrants to gradually replace regional notions, such as the idea of Galicia, with a mythical image of eastern Europe to create a sense of community as American Jews.

1. Introduction

Saul Miler, a garment worker and union leader in New York, was born in 1890 in a small town in the Habsburg province of Galicia, Dobromil.¹ In 1907, after a year-long unsuccessful search for work as tailor, he emigrated, arriving in New York, settling on the Lower East Side. Twenty-five years later, Miler portrayed his native Galician town as follows:

¹ The Kingdom of Galicia and Lodomeria was a crownland of the Austro-Hungarian Empire from 1772 to 1918. Today, the historic region is located in southwestern Poland and western Ukraine.

“The little Jewish shtetl Dobromil was a little shtetl like all the other little shtetls of Galitsia [sic], but yet it lay in a setting of scenic natural beauty. It nestled there in a valley, this shtetl, ringed around with lofty green hills, with bountiful orchards, with flower gardens, an atmosphere fragrant with bracing fresh air.”²

Although Poles, Ukrainians, and Germans made up half of the population of this town before the First World War, Miler draws a picture of a genuine Jewish village in idyllic natural surroundings, a timeless island untouched by the disorder of the surrounding sea.

It is a picture of a Jewish place of origin that resembles much of how American Jewry today imagines the places their families came from. Much of this knowledge about eastern Europe comes via mass-produced cultural “texts” created in the postwar period, such as films, music, photographic and art books, and novels.³ The *shtetl* (small town), with its archetypical figures, has become the mythical model for Jewish communal life in eastern Europe. Monolithic and timeless, it evokes a culture disembodied from any notions of regional distinctions or social, economic, or political reality.⁴

In the same year that Miler portrayed his Galician hometown, 1932, a young woman named Rose Schoenfeld traveled to her native town Drogo-bych in the newly established Second Polish Republic. Twenty years passed since she had left her home and family in Galicia for New York. As she notes in her autobiography, submitted to the YIVO Institute for Jewish Research in 1942, she wanted to see her now 88-year-old mother, whom she had not said goodbye to before emigrating to the United States:

“I did not enjoy the trip at all [...] The houses were shot up and the people went around half-naked. [...] The whole city besieged me when they heard that the American had come. Each person cried, pleaded for help, and begged me to look up their friends and their landslaid [people from the same town] in America so they could help them. [...] Poverty showed on everyone’s face. My brother did not even

² Saul Miler, *Dobromil: Life in a Galician Shtetl 1890–1907* (New York: Loewenthal Press, 1980), 3.

³ Markus Krahn, *American Jewry and the Re-Invention of the East European Jewish Past* (Berlin/Boston: de Gruyter Oldenbourg, 2018).

⁴ For a detailed exploration of the myth and history of the *shtetl*, see Steven T. Katz, ed., *The Shtetl: New Evaluations* (New York: New York University Press, 2007); Antony Polonsky, ed., *The Shtetl: Myth and Reality*, Polin: Studies in Polish Jewry 17 (Oxford: Littman Library of Jewish Civilization, 2004); Jeffrey Shandler, *Shtetl: A Vernacular Intellectual History* (New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 2014).

have a tablecloth to lay on the table for the Sabbath. From all his wealth, only a mountain of ash remained, because the Russians had burned his houses.”⁵

Although Schoenfeld herself had experienced hardship and poverty in her childhood in Galicia, she remembered her hometown, like Miler, as a joyful place. After a 20-year absence, she was shocked to see Drogobych and her family in decay. While her emotional ties to Galicia never completely vanished, the visit had revealed how unfamiliar eastern European society and its environment had become, how different from her memories – a strangeness caused in part by her modestly successful life as a resident of New York.

This dialogue between imagination and reality, between life in the United States and the places Jews left, shaped Jewish immigrant life since the beginning of the mass migration in the 1880s. In the Lower East Side, Jews debated what it meant to be “American,” or from “eastern Europe,” or a distinct region, such as “Galicia.” While in the early decades of mass migration, regional labels, such as the *Galitsianer*, served the purpose of maintaining a sense of belonging to places of origin while navigating the densely populated and culturally diverse immigrant neighborhood, the interwar period brought dramatic changes to these affiliations. The First World War, changes in American immigration policy, processes of acculturation, the coming of age of a new generation, and tourism forced the settled Jewish immigrants to rethink their connection to the places they had left. This search for belonging, between New York and eastern Europe, stimulated an important process of modern American Jewry, namely the gradual disappearance of notions of regionalism. It ultimately consolidated an image of “eastern Europe” as a poor, simple, but genuinely Jewish homeland.

2. Regionalism: Jewish Life and the Idea of Galicia

Like the majority of Jews in the Austro-Hungarian Empire, Rose Schoenfeld lived in Galicia before emigrating to the United States.⁶ Born Roze Shryayer in 1884 in Drogobych, she grew up in a traditional, religious household. Her

⁵ Rose Schoenfeld, “What Drove Me to America and My Experiences in Europe and America,” in *My Future is in America: Autobiographies of Eastern European Jewish Immigrants*, eds. Jocelyn Cohen and Daniel Soyer (New York: New York University Press, 2006), 160–188, here 186.

⁶ The number of Jews in Galicia ranged between 575,433 in 1869 and 871,895 in 1910 (around 11 percent of the total population at both times). See Klaus Hödl, *Vom Shtetl an die Lower East Side: Galizische Juden in New York* (Vienna: Böhlau Verlag, 1991), 21–22.

father Yehude Shrayer came from a family that stood in a long tradition of rabbis, and her mother was related to the Zhidachover Hasidic rabbi Yitzhak Ayzik Eichenstein.⁷ Since the parents did not have a boy until their daughters reached young adulthood, Schoenfeld and her sisters un-customarily attended the *heder* until age 14 to ensure the continuity of a traditionally learned Jewish household.⁸ She later married Reb Hersh Meylekh Shenfeld, a descendent of a rabbinic family. In the United States, she changed the spelling of her originally Yiddish first and married last name into Rose Schoenfeld in order to increase her opportunities to become a professional writer.

Despite imperial pressures of enlightenment and secularization, Galician Jewry retained its religious identity throughout the 19th and early 20th centuries.⁹ The Hasidic movement, a mystic-orthodox branch of Judaism that stressed devotional joy, optimism, and spirituality, gained widespread popularity in the late 18th century, with Galicia becoming its center after 1815.¹⁰ Based on this religious and social movement, a distinct notion of the region emerged in the second half of the 19th century. Ironically, it was mostly anti-Hasidic Galician Mitnagdim who, in their writings, tried to transform the region's Jewry in the spirit of Jewish enlightenment but instead helped create the label of a Hasidic Galicia.¹¹ An additional Jewish intellectual elite emerged in the Lithuanian territories of the Russian Empire, who emphasized a scholarly approach to the study of biblical texts and forcefully distinguished themselves from their Galician Hasidic counterparts.

Between the 1890s and 1914, nationhood became another key category of Jewish self-understanding in Galicia. The region served as a venue for modern mass movements and activism for Jews across Europe.¹² In Drogobych, for example, Zionists owned a library from which Schoenfeld started to borrow books, after she had read all the books in the public library. She soon became

⁷ Schoenfeld, "What Drove Me to America," 160–162.

⁸ Schoenfeld, "What Drove Me to America," 165.

⁹ Cf. Rachel Manekin, *The Jews of Galicia and the Austrian Constitution: The Beginning of Modern Jewish Politics* (Jerusalem: Merkaz Zalman Shazar, 2015) (Hebrew).

¹⁰ For the Hasidic movement in Habsburg Galicia, cf. David Biale et al., *Hasidism: A New History* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2017), 262–273, 359–386.

¹¹ Cf. Nancy Sinkoff, *Out of the Shtetl: Making Jews Modern in the Polish Borderlands* (Providence: Brown Judaic Studies, 2004), 225–41.

¹² Joshua Shanes, *Diaspora Nationalism and Jewish Identity in Habsburg Galicia* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2012).

invested in local politics, collected ballots for the Zionist party during the Austrian parliamentary elections in 1911, and sent her children to Hebrew school.¹³

Like its geopolitical position between the German and Russian empires, in-betweenness became the defining feature of Galicia, a cultural bridge connecting central and eastern European Jewries. The idea of Galicia as a distinct region emerged at the beginning of its existence, in 1772. Austrian administrators intended this region to be “a non-national formation of a provincial Galician culture,” with a supranational father figure in the emperor, who stood above ethnic, religious, and cultural diversity.¹⁴ This cultural formation outside of any national framework enabled distinctive, hybrid identities among its Polish, Ruthenian (Ukrainian), German, and Jewish inhabitants. As a result, people of Galicia constructed regional identities with different meanings.

Poverty and hardship shaped most people’s everyday life in the Habsburg province and became another important marker of this region. Saul Miler worked in a tailor shop which closed before he was able to finish his apprenticeship. No tailor wanted to hire him again in Dobromil.¹⁵ Schoenfeld’s family moved often between Drogobych and Boryslav, a center of the oil industry where her father worked, while her mother cooked kosher food for Jewish patients in the town’s hospital.¹⁶ Schoenfeld’s husband “used to sit and study and did not want to know what was going on in the outside world.”¹⁷ She had to sew dresses to earn money to care for her newborn children. At the beginning of the 20th century, with development of the oil industry in Boryslav, large companies bought up houses in the city. Schoenfeld and her husband, along with many others in the town, received financial compensation from these firms. But the oil boom was short-lived. As the oil market flooded, some companies stopped drilling, and many other went bankrupt, with workers losing their jobs. Schoenfeld and her husband stopped receiving their monthly checks and ended up in poverty again.¹⁸

¹³ Schoenfeld, “What Drove Me to America,” 179–180.

¹⁴ Larry Wolff, *The Idea of Galicia: History and Fantasy in Habsburg Political Culture* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2010), 110.

¹⁵ Miler, *Dobromil*, 49.

¹⁶ Schoenfeld, “What Drove Me to America,” 163–166.

¹⁷ Schoenfeld, “What Drove Me to America,” 171.

¹⁸ For a detailed history of the oil boom in Galicia cf. Alison Fleig Frank, *Oil Empire: Visions of Prosperity in Austrian Galicia* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 2007).

3. Galicia in New York's Lower East Side: The Use of Regional Labels

Impoverishment, poor economic conditions, and anti-Jewish riots in 1898 were some of the factors that led to a mass migration from Galicia starting in the 1890s.¹⁹ Schoenfeld's husband, for example, reached out to his aunt in the United States who sent him a ship's ticket and money. Her husband emigrated to New York City in 1907, and five years later, 28-year-old Rose Schoenfeld "decided to flee Galicia" alone, joining him in the big city.²⁰ After staying with Schoenfeld's cousin for five months in Drogobych, their children followed. Her parents vehemently opposed her decision to emigrate to "*treyfene* [sic], impious, America."²¹ While her father wanted the husband to come back and take over his business in Drogobych, her mother feared that Rose "would die on the ship and would be thrown into the sea."²² She refused to say goodbye to her daughter.²³

Uprooted from their places of origin, Galician Jews, just like other Jewish and non-Jewish immigrants, encountered in all places of migration different languages and cultures. In this contested space, they all faced a common challenge to create a community with a sense of belonging to both the places they left and where they settled. In New York, the center of immigration in the United States, eastern European Jewish immigrants settled on the Lower East Side. An already established Jewish infrastructure, including institutions built and supported by immigrants who had arrived much earlier and experienced economic success, such as German Jews, helped support the newly arrived eastern European Jews, who later created their own cultural and social support systems.²⁴ They established, for example, hometown associations (*landsmanshaftn*) based on the cities and towns of origin. Between the early 1900s and late 1930s, there were thousands of such societies in the New York area

¹⁹ Daniel L. Unowsky, *The Plunder: The 1898 Anti-Jewish Violence in Habsburg Galicia* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2018). Around 236,504 Jews emigrated from Galicia between 1881 and 1910, about 85 percent of the total Jewish emigration from the Habsburg Empire. The majority came from western Galicia between 1891 and 1900. Cf. Hödl, *Vom Shtetl*, 35–36.

²⁰ Schoenfeld, "What Drove Me to America," 181.

²¹ Schoenfeld, "What Drove Me to America," 170.

²² Schoenfeld, "What Drove Me to America," 181.

²³ Schoenfeld, "What Drove Me to America," 178–182.

²⁴ Hasia R. Diner, *Lower East Side Memories: A Jewish Place in America* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2000), 47–49.

alone, and perhaps 20,000 in the rising industrial centers of the Northeastern and upper Midwestern United States.²⁵ Both the already existing Jewish infrastructure and the newly established networks of support promised Galician Jews a fast rise in economic sectors and supported a sense of cultural community and social stability.

These hometown organizations maintained both ties to and memories of the places immigrants left, while providing mutual help and orientation in the country where they had arrived. Landsmanshaftn created a sense of community not only by cementing the pattern of settling with people from the same place, but also by providing a steady stream of news from eastern Europe. Schoenfeld notes how landslajt approached her immediately after arrival to get news from their families and fellow townspeople. With the help of the landslajt, she started to write for various Yiddish periodicals in New York, such as *Yidisher Amerikaner*, a weekly for which many Galician Jews and representatives of the United Galician Jews of America wrote.²⁶

The density and diversity of people, religious and cultural customs, and languages on the Lower East Side helped to construct and redefine regional labels, such as the *Galitsianer*, as it made encounters between immigrants from various regions in eastern and southeastern Europe unavoidable. In American Jewish culture and memory, the *Galitsianer* evokes a wide series of images and emotions. In general, these vary from notions of backwardness to romantic glorification of an authentic Jewish past.²⁷ For many years, the notion of cultural divisions between regions in eastern Europe was limited to an intellectual debate within isolated circles in eastern Europe. Only the immigrant experience on New York's Lower East Side, beginning in the 1890s, made it possible for Jews to encounter different regional cultures and traditions on an everyday life basis. These regional labels helped Jews to navigate their present life, while maintaining a sense of stability and continuity.

²⁵ Daniel Soyer, *Jewish Immigrant Associations and American Identity in New York 1880–1939* (Cambridge, Mass.: 1997), 201.

²⁶ Schoenfeld, "What Drove Me to America," 185.

²⁷ Albert Lichtblau, "Galitsianer and the Mobility of Stereotypes," *Jewish Culture and History* 11 (2009): 84–105.

4. Galicia Imagined: The Work of Nostalgia

This sense of belonging to a specific region, based on a lived experience with other cultures and customs, experienced a major shift during the interwar period. On the one side, the National Origins Act in 1924 led to a radical decrease in the numbers of migrants from southern and eastern European countries to the United States.²⁸ The immigrant community stopped receiving crucial waves of new members, and thus lost a direct connection to the places from which they had come. On the other side, the First World War caused massive destruction in their former hometowns, especially in the region of Galicia. Famines and pogroms during the Ukrainian Civil War (1918–1919) shattered both communal organization and the possibility for immediate help within the Jewish communities.²⁹ In contrast, Jews in the American diaspora were spared from the experience of these events, which enabled them to be the helpers and rescuers of their former homes.

Being in a comparatively comfortable position, while friends and relatives suffered immensely across the ocean, motivated community organizations and settled immigrants to intensify their contacts and launch an effort to rebuild the Jewish communities in eastern Europe. Rose Schoenfeld, for example, started to receive letters from her family with “loud complaints about their misfortune and ruination.”³⁰ She tried to bring the five children of her sister who died in the war to the United States but succeeded with only one of them. A second child was stopped in the mid-trip and sent back. Schoenfeld helped her family across the ocean with money and packages of clothing and food.³¹ *Landsmanshaftn* mobilized an impressive amount of material help across their ideological, political, and religious differences and together with other Jewish organizations, like the American Jewish Joint Distribution Committee.³²

²⁸ Hasia R. Diner, *The Jews of the United States 1654 to 2000* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2004), 78.

²⁹ Annie Polland and Daniel Soyer, *Emerging Metropolis: New York Jews in the Age of Immigration 1840–1920* (New York: New York University Press, 2012), 165–166.

³⁰ Schoenfeld, “What Drove Me to America,” 185.

³¹ Schoenfeld, “What Drove Me to America,” 186.

³² Eli Lederhendler, *American Jewry: A New History* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2017), 130.

The immediate danger of a vanishing Jewish world brought eastern Europe into a central position in the immigrants' lives. It threatened to create a psychological gap between their life in America and the places they left, a gap perhaps more difficult to bridge than the geographic separation. This sense of a growing distance occurred at a time when the first generation of American-born children of eastern European Jewish immigrants came of age, while the immigrant generation started to project a longing for their youth onto the places they left. In response to this threat of discontinuity with the past, the immigrant generation now emphasized their common bond with the inhabitants, friends, and families in their hometowns. Solidarity shifted its focus from the newly arrived poor immigrants to the United States to Europe.

This turn, however, frequently led to an idealization of a lost past that reflected, as Svetlana Boym describes, a "longing for a home that no longer exists or has never existed, a sentiment of loss and displacement, but also a romance with one's own fantasy."³³ Nostalgic images of eastern Europe and a dream of the *shtetl* as a specific form of collective memory started to blur the reality of regional differences and replace them with a monolithic and static vision of "eastern Europe."

Rose Schoenfeld depicts Boryslav, the town of poverty and hardship in her childhood, as a place where:

"some made more, some less, but they did not worry. They were like family. Every holiday was a grand, joyful experience, being together in the synagogue and in the Hasidic prayer house. Those who were not so pious would get together on the porches and tell jokes, anecdotes, and whatever anyone knew that would help them be merry."³⁴

Former Jewish immigrants, such as Saul Miler or Rose Schoenfeld, created positive pictures of their towns, images full of charm, pictures that reflected their desires. A myth of the *shtetl* arose as a lost idyll of a simple and harmonious Jewish community destroyed by the modern world.³⁵

³³ Svetlana Boym, *The Future of Nostalgia* (New York: Basic Books, 2001), 19.

³⁴ Schoenfeld, "What Drove Me to America," 172.

³⁵ David Roskies, *The Jewish Search for a Usable Past* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1999), 43–44.

However, sometimes Jews were conscious of the contradiction nostalgia produced. Joachim Schoenfeld, unrelated to Rose Schoenfeld, reflects in his memoir on his Galician hometown, Sniatyn: “Actually, it may be wrong to call the place a *shtetl*, and not a city as it really was. However, having in mind the core of the city, where the Jews lived on a kind of isle, surrounded by a sea of Gentiles, I call it the *shtetl*.”³⁶ The historical small town, and thus regional and historical characteristics, like those found in Galicia, have to give way to the generic image of the *shtetl*. It is a reconstruction of a past that had never altogether existed, only in the way people imagined it.

Already in the 1920s and 1930s, the idea of the *shtetl* turned into a synonym for a timeless eastern European Jewish community, a world of authentic Jewishness. As a common place of origin, it became increasingly central to conceptions of self-understanding in American Jewry. This imagination of eastern European Jewish culture dominated depictions of the Jewish past in American popular culture after 1945, in fiction, theater, plays, music, paintings, and – best known – in the famous musical, and subsequent film adaptation, *Fiddler on the Roof*.³⁷ However, unlike this later mass production of nostalgia, which owes much of its power to the effects of the Holocaust, the earlier images, created by individuals, mainly expressed a sense of loss born out of an immediate fear of failing to maintain a connection to the places that the immigrant generation had left only a decade or two before. It was a personal story of finding a sense of belonging at a time when the ties to the homeland slowly began to vanish.

³⁶ Joachim Schoenfeld, *Shtetl Memoirs: Jewish Life in Galicia under the Austro-Hungarian Empire and in the Reborn Poland, 1898–1939* (Hoboken, NJ: Ktav Publishing House, 1985).

³⁷ For a detailed description of the invention of *shtetl* images in popular culture after 1945, cf. Shandler, *Shtetl*, 35–49, and Krah, *American Jewry*, 212–240. While Krah places the re-invention of the eastern European Jewish past and its distinctive significance for American Jewry in the decades after 1945, such developments can already be traced in the interwar period. For a more detailed exploration of interwar commemorative practices, cf. Oskar Czendze, “Between Loss and Invention: Landsmanshaftn and American Jewish Memory in the Interwar Era,” *Dubnow Institute Yearbook* 17 (2018): 35–56.

5. Imagination Meets Reality: American Jewish Tourism in the Interwar Period

A key force behind nostalgia is the notion of destruction and loss. While the increasing mental distance crystallized a mythical Jewish homeland in romanticized pictures, tourism to eastern Europe brought this fantasy in contact with the desperate reality of the former Austro-Hungarian province of Galicia, now a part of the Second Polish Republic. In the 1920s and 1930s, American Jewish tourists were part of a general increase in middle-class leisure travel.³⁸

Travelling to eastern Europe was by no means a new phenomenon. During the 1890s and 1900s, immigrants returned because of failure in business or employment, a sense of displacement, or the wish to participate in the politics and culture of the places they left. Some visitors went back to recruit new work forces. Miler recalls a visit of an “ex-Dobromiler” who saw him sewing pants at home and offered him a job as “pants operator” in his factory in New York.³⁹ As Schoenfeld writes, other men traveled to find wives in their hometown and bring them back to the United States. She was introduced by friends to a “handsome, rich young man who had worked his way up in America,” and brought “expensive gifts of fine jewelry and other fine things.”⁴⁰ This man visited his family in Drogobych in the early 1900s and Schoenfeld fell immediately in love with him. However, her parents opposed the relationship, and the young man left Drogobych to go back to New York, alone.

In addition to fears of losing connection with the places where Jewish immigrant communities came from, several other factors contributed to the boom of tourism to eastern Europe in the interwar period. Radical political changes in eastern and central Europe, such as the Russian Revolution in 1917 and the establishment of new nation states after 1919, made Europe an attractive destination for a wildly diverse set of visitors. Tourist agencies, such as Gustave Eisner in New York, specifically targeted middle-class Jews and promoted excursions to the Soviet Union, Poland, Lithuania, or Romania. *Landsmanshaftn* often raised funds to send delegates with financial relief and

³⁸ Daniel Soyer, “Back to the Future: American Jews Visit the Soviet Union in the 1920s and 1930s,” *Jewish Social Studies* 6 (2000): 124–159, here 124.

³⁹ Miler, *Dobromil*, 50.

⁴⁰ Schoenfeld, “What Drove Me to America,” 170.

personal letters to their hometowns. For some, including pioneers of Jewish labor movements, union presidents, journalists, or outspoken Communists, the Soviet Union represented a dynamic and, in many aspects, more innovative alternative to the monotonous life in the United States.⁴¹ For others, who were able to afford it, these trips meant a journey into one's personal past, a chance to bring the new generation of American-born children to see their hometowns. These personal journeys were by no means a phenomenon that is limited to the American Jewish experience. Irish, Italian, or German immigrants took part in the tourism boom to Europe, and often shared the same fears, hopes, and anxieties.

More than two decades after he emigrated to New York and after years of active service in various Galician immigrant organizations, the Yiddish writer and humorist Chune Gottesfeld made a journey that took him from Berlin to Warsaw, Lemberg, Tarnopol, and finally his Galician hometown, "his little shtetl," Skala, in 1937.⁴² Just like Schoenfeld in Drogobych, he was shocked to see destruction and poverty and wrote about the muddy streets and backward way of life he witnessed. He portrayed his cousin Kalman as a "man with a large, wild beard (the kind of beard you see in America in the movies, on a wild man wrestling with lions in Africa). And moreover, he had an abscess on his cheek and looked ancient."⁴³ Gottesfeld recalls how in his youth Kalman was a womanizer who recited poems by Friedrich Schiller to strangers on the street. Over 20 years later, his appearance had changed. However, both Schoenfeld and Gottesfeld perceived the poverty of people and their surroundings in the former Galicia through the lens of their successful lives in New York. In the end, this personal transformation in the United States shaped the settled immigrants' feelings of displacement and the way they saw the actual fate of the people in the place they had left behind.

American Jewish tourists captured these moments of alienation not only in diaries and travel reports, but also in photographs, which were often shared with family or friends in the United States. In these pictures, they pose, for example, in front of a farm, animals, or together with old friends, relatives, and the townspeople. They mostly depict a rural, religious, and simple life,

⁴¹ Soyer, "Back to the Future," 124–159.

⁴² Chune Gottesfeld, *My Journey Across Galicia* (New York: Signal Press, 1937), 48 (Yiddish).

⁴³ Gottesfeld, *My Journey*, 50.

scenes that were familiar to the audience in the United States from nostalgic accounts they had read and shared in the immigrant community. In addition, these photographs documented their personal transformations in American society and the growing cultural distance between them and the people they left. Likewise, Jews in former Galicia faced the obvious “otherness” of their friends and family members from America. In their elegant clothes and with their modern cameras, many American Jews were regarded as “the other” by their former neighbors.⁴⁴

Some wealthier tourists documented their experience in film. For example, in 1929, Pesach Zuckerman, who was sent as a delegate on behalf of the Kolbushover Relief Committee in New York, made a professional movie of his Galician hometown, Kolbushov.⁴⁵ Even more than photographs, movies could construct a narrative, and Zuckerman reproduced a sentimental image of an eastern European *shtetl* as a shared space of Jewish origin. Scenes of traditional Jewish everyday life appear throughout the film: Jews buying and selling at the marketplace, children going to the *heder*, and Jews waiting in front of the synagogue, often waving, and smiling into the camera. This intimate glimpse into eastern European Jewish culture is further intensified by the filmmaker’s personal appearance in front of the camera praying at the gravestones of his family members. This emotional tribute seemed not only to immortalize the towns as a past that needed to be remembered, but also to reproduce an image of a more authentic Jewish life, a key part of American Jewish nostalgia of the interwar period.

For the settled Jewish immigrants of New York, going back to their places of origin in Galicia was more than a journey across space; it meant travel through time. In an attempt to find a lost past, they faced their friends’ and families’ poverty and simple way of life. They realized how unrecognizable Galicia, which they all shared in their memories, had become. As American Jewish tourists they now encountered their hometowns through a different life. The range of nostalgic images they produced within their immigrant community offered a lens through which to cope with feelings of alienation and to give a meaning to this disruptive experience. In photographs and films, they immortalized a timeless and monolithic vision of an eastern European

⁴⁴ Cf. Roberta Newman, “Pictures of a Trip to the Old Country,” *YIVO Annual* 21 (1993): 223–239.

⁴⁵ Pesach Zuckerman, *A Pictorial Review of Kolbishev, 1929*, YIVO, New York, VM13.

past. Regional distinctions in American Jewish consciousness made place for a mythic image of “eastern Europe.”

6. Conclusion

In her autobiography, Rose Schoenfeld ends with a vision of what constitutes a true Jewish life in the United States in her eyes. She proudly mentions that her son studied at a yeshiva in New York, while her husband “is what he wanted to be. He is a pious Jew who sits and studies with other Jews. And that is his whole life – to be a Jew.”⁴⁶ It is an understanding of Jewish life that strikingly resembles the religious self-understanding of Galician Jewry, including the values upheld by her family. Even though she found comfort in her new role as American citizen and writer in New York, remnants of regionalism, specifically the idea of Galicia, can still be found in her narrative.

A region, such as the former Habsburg province of Galicia, offers a window into how Jewish immigrants and their children constantly negotiated both a reality and a sense of belonging between the places they left and where they settled, between the past and present. While at first regional labels helped immigrants to maintain social and cultural stability in the densely populated Lower East Side, the First World War and tourism made Jews aware of how vulnerable and how distant these regions were. In an attempt to bridge this growing alienation and to give meaning to the disruptive experience of feeling foreign in the places of their childhood, the former Jewish immigrants shaped the contested image of “eastern Europe” as a monolithic Jewish *shtetl*. Unlike regional labels which aimed to resemble life and culture of concrete places, a mythic homeland allowed the settled Jewish immigrants to maintain a sense of belonging and common heritage while accepting the fact that they became Americans. The work of imagining home and negotiating what it means to be a Galician Jew outside of Galicia, in New York’s immigrant neighborhood, continued with the purpose of creating a community as American Jews with a common sense of origin.

This story of searching and finding new belongings between New York and eastern Europe highlights the crucial role of regionalism in conceptions of a new American Jewish self-understanding. Links that Jews forged between

⁴⁶ Schoenfeld, “What Drove Me to America,” 188.

the places they left, crossed, and settled in reveal the complex transformation processes within American Jewry, such as the constant negotiations between notions of American, Jewish, and regional belonging. Illuminating these transnational processes helps to understand the inherent fluidity and plasticity of categories, specifically of “eastern Europe” in American Jewish culture.

A Secular Tradition: Horace Kallen on American Democracy in the United States and Israel

by Imanuel Clemens Schmidt

Abstract

This article focuses on the social philosopher Horace Kallen and the revisions he made to the concept of cultural pluralism that he first developed in the early 20th century, applying it to postwar America and the young State of Israel. It shows how he opposed the assumption that the United States' social order was based on a "Judeo-Christian tradition." By constructing pluralism as a civil religion and carving out space for secular self-understandings in midcentury America, Kallen attempted to preserve the integrity of his earlier political visions, developed during World War I, of pluralist societies in the United States and Palestine within an internationalist global order. While his perspective on the State of Israel was largely shaped by his American experiences, he revised his approach to politically functionalizing religious traditions as he tested his American understanding of a secular, pluralist society against the political theology effective in the State of Israel. The trajectory of Kallen's thought points to fundamental questions about the compatibility of American and Israeli understandings of religion's function in society and its relation to political belonging, especially in light of their transnational connection through American Jewish support for the recently established state.

1. Introduction

On March 1, 1945, Horace Meyer Kallen (1882–1974), social philosopher and professor at the New School for Social Research, wrote a letter to American president Franklin D. Roosevelt (1882–1945) articulating his concern about a phrase Roosevelt had used that day in an address to Congress about developments at the Yalta Conference of the previous month. Kallen singled out one sentence from Roosevelt's speech, in which he declared that, as Kallen

remembered the president's words, "There is no room in the world for German militarism *and* Christian decency." Roosevelt had thus, presumably without intending to do so, Kallen wrote, excluded a large number of non-Christians who had indeed acted morally and, on the battlefield, defended American democracy with their lives. Roosevelt instead should have invoked "human decency" rather than Christianity as the basis of morality.¹

Nearly two decades later, at the age of 80, Kallen noted that his concept of democracy as cultural pluralism, developed at the beginning of the 20th century, had finally taken hold. In support of this assessment, he pointed to the emergence of new modes of expression to characterize American society:

"Before the Second World War you never saw such a hyphenation as Judeo-Christian, and now especially our Romanist friends are using that phrase all the time. You never saw such a phrase as 'America is a pluralistic society.' Now that phrase has become very common."²

The joint and, it may seem, indiscriminate invocation of speech referring to a Judeo-Christian America, on the one hand, and a pluralist America, on the other, to equally illustrate the broad acceptance of Kallen's concept of cultural pluralism obscures the conflict that existed between two distinct visions of American democracy associated with each notion. As religious historian K. Healan Gaston has shown, the discourse on Judeo-Christian America, as well as the interdenominational alliances associated with it, were less inclusive than much of the earlier research literature had suggested. Reference to a Judeo-Christian America often implied an anti-secularist thrust.³ Kallen's

¹ Emphasis in original. Horace M. Kallen to Franklin D. Roosevelt, March 1, 1945, YIVO Institute for Jewish Research (hereafter YIVO), New York, Papers of Horace Meyer Kallen (hereafter Kallen Papers), RG 317, Folder 996: Roosevelt, Franklin D., 1945. The words Roosevelt actually spoke were: "And I know that there is not room enough on earth for both German militarism and Christian decency." Franklin D. Roosevelt, Address to Congress on the Yalta Conference, March 1, 1945, The American Presidency Project, accessed October 4, 2021, <https://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/documents/address-congress-the-yalta-conference>.

² Horace M. Kallen, Address on the occasion of becoming an honorary member of Farband, New York, 1963, n.p., American Jewish Archives (hereafter AJA), Horace M. Kallen Papers, MS-1 (hereafter Kallen Papers), Box 62, Folder 7.

³ K. Healan Gaston, *Imagining Judeo-Christian America: Religion, Secularism, and the Redefinition of Democracy*, (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2019), 1–18. Cf. William R. Hutchison, *Religious Pluralism in America: The Contentious History of a Founding Ideal*, (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2003), 196–215; Kevin M. Schultz, *Tri-Faith America: How Catholics and Jews Held Postwar America to Its Protestant Promise*, (New York: Oxford University Press, 2011).

reformulation of pluralism as a religion in the late 1940s and early 1950s might at first glance be interpreted as a mere adjustment of his thought to postwar realities, a turn to religion and suspension of the category of “nationality.” As it will become clear, however, Kallen’s theological elaboration of a democratic faith should be seen as an intervention in the face of contemporary attempts to tie democracy to an exclusively Judeo-Christian religious tradition.

In the early 20th century, the notion of transnationalism, popularized by Randolph S. Bourne (1886–1918) in his essay “Trans-National America” (1916), built on Kallen’s ideas and was closely linked to insights gained from Jewish historical experience and the diasporic condition.⁴ During World War I, Kallen parallelly shaped the understanding of Zionism as a kind of internationalism, secular American-Jewish self-understanding as “Hebraism,” and the notion of American democracy as cultural pluralism. He charted a European and global postwar order and offered an outline of the social and economic structure for a pluralistically constituted commonwealth in Palestine.⁵ In his 1921 work *Zionism and World Politics*, Kallen addressed how modern political projects were nourished by transvalued religious traditions and how to appeal to the biblical prophets in the establishment of a pluralist commonwealth in Palestine.⁶ His understanding of the political potential of secularizing tradition was significantly developed in connection with his work within the American Zionist movement before and during the First World War. But while the American discourse of the 1940s and 1950s led Kallen to reject the conflation of religion and democracy, his experience of Israel in 1956 provoked a distinct realization of the necessity to draw on religious traditions in a mediated, more thoroughly secularized manner than he had previously suggested.

⁴ Jakob Egholm Feldt, *Transnationalism and the Jews: Culture, History and Prophecy* (London: Rowman & Littlefield International Ltd., 2016), 1–41.

⁵ Sarah Schmidt, *Horace M. Kallen: Prophet of American Zionism* (Brooklyn: Carlson Publishing, 1995); Noam Pianko, “‘The True Liberalism of Zionism’: Horace Kallen, Jewish Nationalism, and the Limits of American Pluralism,” *American Jewish History* 94 (2008): 299–329; Noam Pianko, *Zionism and the Roads Not Taken: Rawidowicz, Kaplan, Kohn* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2010), 26–59; Imanuel Clemens Schmidt, “Politische Gestaltung aus Quellen der Tradition: Horace Kallens Pluralismuskonzept und das Schlüsseljahr 1918,” *Denkströme: Journal der Sächsischen Akademie der Wissenschaften* 21 (2019): 122–136.

⁶ Horace M. Kallen, *Zionism and World Politics: A Study in History and Social Psychology*, (Garden City, NY: Doubleday, Page & Company, 1921), 296–299.

While Kallen's earlier transnational thought and institutional engagement has received some attention, research so far hardly engaged with Kallen's later perspectives on the State of Israel. At the same time, Kallen's reframing of cultural pluralism as a religion in the 1950s allowed him to address what he perceived as an assault on the separation of church and state. By imagining an American civil religion, Kallen sought to preserve the idea of cultural pluralism and a secular self-understanding against postwar attempts at narrowly defining American belonging in terms of religion. Kallen's advocacy of secularism with regard to the State of Israel, however, elucidates how Kallen expanded his revision of cultural pluralism beyond the American context. When he turned to Israeli society, he observed it through the lens of his decades-long fight for secularism in the United States. Applying his experience with the American debate on the relationship of religion and democracy to the specific context of the political theological discourse in Israel, Kallen revisited his references to the biblical prophets, whom earlier he had claimed for his pluralist ideas and internationalist hopes.

Kallen here illustrated fundamental tensions within American Zionism and its aim to explain the transnational relationship between American Jewry and the Jewish polity in Palestine. As an American Zionist with a deep commitment to the separation of religion and state, Kallen found the fundamental nature of a "Jewish state" problematic. In light of these tensions, variants of which have played out implicitly or explicitly in the many conflicts between American Jews and Israel, Kallen had to renegotiate the impact of his distinctly American vision on his transnational one.

2. Democracy as Religion

Since the early 1940s, Kallen played a central role in public debates over America's self-image as a Judeo-Christian or pluralist nation. For instance, together with the philosophers John Dewey (1859–1952) and Sidney Hook (1902–1989), Kallen had opposed the Conference on Science, Philosophy, and Religion in Their Relation to the Democratic Way of Life (CSPR), founded in 1940 and organized by Louis Finkelstein (1895–1991), chancellor of the Jewish Theological Seminary in New York. The conference's stated goal of uniting Protestant, Catholic, and Jewish scientists and intellectuals to defend American democracy against totalitarianism pivoted around religion as the force best suited to engage in this struggle. Many of its participants regarded traditional

religious values as the sources of democracy. The conference promoted the notion that America's social order was based on the so-called Judeo-Christian tradition, while Nazism and Soviet Communism were declared the result of secular thought.

The pragmatist philosophers Dewey, Kallen, and Hook perceived this conference as a dangerous alliance forged with neo-Thomist Catholic thinkers, and in response they founded a counter-organization in 1943. Its name, Conference on the Scientific Spirit and Democratic Faith, suggested an alternative democratic faith that was secular and based on the scientific method.⁷

Ten years later, largely driven by Kallen's enduring perception of a threat the Catholic Church's transnational political claims posed to American democracy, he worked out "Secularism's" theology in detail. In his 1954 book-length essay, "Secularism Is the Will of God," Kallen described Secularism as a faith invested in the federalization of diversity and its God, a ceaselessly fluctuating orchestral configuration of differences. Kallen revisited his famous image of cultural pluralism as the performance of a symphony, developed 40 years earlier, but now integrated God into this image. He again imagined the orchestra as performing a symphony spontaneously and without the guidance of a conductor. But the process and the result of the interplay of different instruments figured as the God of Secularism. For Kallen, it was recognizable not by substance but by its effect, in the free association of diversities and the establishment of relations among constantly changing beliefs.⁸ While locating this deity's initial revelation in the American political tradition, he hoped for its transnational manifestation in ever-expanding networks of cooperation between differing groups.

⁷ The capitalization of "Secularism" as a specific faith is Kallen's. James B. Gilbert, *Redeeming Culture: American Religion in an Age of Science* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1997), 84–89; Matthew J. Kaufman, *Horace Kallen Confronts America: Jewish Identity, Science, and Secularism* (Syracuse: Syracuse University Press, 2019), 172. Cf. Sidney Hook, "Theological Tom-Tom and Metaphysical Bagpipe," *The Humanist* 2/3 (Autumn 1942): 96–102; Minutes of the [Planning] Committee Meeting of the Conference on the Scientific Spirit and Democratic Faith, March 24, 1943, YIVO, Kallen Papers, RG 317, Folder 99. On Finkelstein's vision for the CSPR and his specific understanding of the prophetic and rabbinic Jewish tradition as a model for a pluralist encounter of religion and science, cf. Cara Rock-Singer, "A Prophetic Guide for a Perplexed World: Louis Finkelstein and the 1940 Conference on Science, Philosophy, and Religion," *Religion and American Culture* 29 (2019): 179–215.

⁸ Horace M. Kallen, *Secularism Is the Will of God: An Essay in the Social Philosophy of Democracy and Religion*, (New York, 1954), 15–17, 140, 184, 191; Horace M. Kallen, *Culture and Democracy in the United States*, (New York: Boni & Liveright, 1924), 116.

Kallen's construction of a civil religion emerged from a functionalist understanding of religion, which he developed in his 1927 work *Why Religion*, building upon the psychological approach of his teacher William James (1842–1910). For Kallen, faith was the essential component of religion. It was at work in every area of life, on the individual and social level. Every person, religious or not, created symbolic representations of a saving power out of experiences of crisis and invested faith in what may be called God. However, Kallen believed that the attitude of faith itself – not the object of that faith – provided the decisive criterion for a religion.⁹ From this perspective, Kallen was able to claim the status of religion for Secularism. Based on the belief in the equal liberty of groups and individuals to be different, Secularism could in fact function as a common faith among all the particular religious and secular faith communities. Rather than an existing reality, Kallen's view of Secularism represented a hope realized through the act of faith that, in his eyes, democracy represented.¹⁰

At the center of Kallen's defense of American democracy's secular foundation stood his sharp criticism of the Catholic Church. In particular, he denounced the church's opposition to public schools and its attempts to secure state support of private Catholic schools, which Kallen saw as a vicious attack by clericalism on the separation of church and state.¹¹ More generally, in Kallen's texts, the Catholic Church represents the counter principle of priestly authoritarianism to secularism, which had evolved from the Protestant multiplication of faith communities. Furthermore, by suggesting structural analogies and historical ties between the Catholic Church, Nazism, and Soviet Communism, Kallen tried to counter contemporary claims that secularization caused totalitarian regimes and that they were expressions and consequences of godlessness.¹² Neither on its own nor as part of a broader

⁹ Horace M. Kallen, *Why Religion* (New York: Boni & Liveright, 1927), 82, 88–90, 93, 103.

¹⁰ Kallen, *Secularism Is the Will of God*, 11–12, 76, 90, 223. Cf. Horace M. Kallen, "How I Bet My Life," *The Saturday Review*, October 1, 1966, 27–30.

¹¹ Kallen, *Secularism Is the Will of God*, 5, 93, 165, 167, 171, 178, 182–183, 224–225. On the Vatican's transnational political action and support by American Catholics, cf. Peter R. D'Agostino, *Rome in America: Transnational Catholic Ideology from the Risorgimento to Fascism* (Chapel Hill, N.C./London: The University of North Carolina Press, 2004); Giuliana Chamedes, *A Twentieth-Century Crusade: The Vatican's Battle to Remake Christian Europe* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 2019).

¹² Kallen, *Secularism Is the Will of God*, 6, 158, 163–165.

Judeo-Christian tradition, Kallen argued, does the Catholic Church embody the religious tradition underlying democracy. Such a tradition was conceivable only as Secularism.

Perhaps the most distinct objection to Kallen's understanding of pluralism as religion was raised by the sociologist and theologian Will Herberg (1901–1977) in his influential 1955 work *Protestant-Catholic-Jew*.¹³ Herberg criticized the implicit secularity of contemporary American religion and attributed it to the very understanding of religion that Kallen (and others) had helped popularize. For Herberg, this secularity manifested itself in the sacralization of society and culture. Beliefs manifested in the everyday life of Americans, and their social values did not correspond to traditional religions but to the “American way of life,” which implicitly functioned as a religion. One of the central elements of this American way of life that Herberg especially criticized was his contemporaries' faith in faith, detached from a traditional focus on God.¹⁴

Kallen's outright formulation of Secularism as the religion of religions that transcends traditional faith communities marked a break, in Herberg's eyes, with the presuppositions of Judaism and Christianity and was to be regarded as “a particularly insidious kind of idolatry.” Herberg contrasted this with his own theological position in the final chapter of *Protestant-Catholic-Jew*, which, more or less openly, permeates the entire work. Herberg measured American religion against a normative Judeo-Christian tradition centered around a biblical God and derived from the religion of the prophets. He presented this supposedly “authentic” tradition of the prophets as the answer to what he diagnosed as the crisis of Western civilization, and in contrast to what he saw as an affirmative American civil religion.¹⁵

¹³ Will Herberg, *Protestant-Catholic-Jew: An Essay in American Religious Sociology*, (Garden City, NY: Doubleday & Company, 1955), 32–33, 35, 40, 49–53, 227. Cf. Laura Levitt, “Interrogating the Judeo-Christian Tradition: Will Herberg's Construction of American Religion, Religious Pluralism, and the Problem of Inclusion,” in *The Cambridge History of Religions in America*, vol. 3, ed. Stephen J. Stein (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009), 283–307.

¹⁴ Herberg, *Protestant-Catholic-Jew*, 14–15, 54, 64–68, 72–77, 87–104, 193.

¹⁵ Herberg, *Protestant-Catholic-Jew*, 7, 101–102, 262, 270–272, 276–285, 288, here 102. Herberg initially formulated his critique with regard to a shorter text by Kallen, published in 1951, that already provided a sketch of Kallen's Secularism: Horace M. Kallen, “Democracy's True Religion,” *The Saturday Review of Literature*, July 28, 1951, 6–7, 29–30. However, Herberg was fully aware of Kallen's detailed exposition of a theology of democracy from 1954: Herberg, *Protestant-Catholic-Jew*, 297.

Kallen, however, did not aim for a patriotic glorification of the status quo nor for an apotheosis of the state, as another of his critics alleged.¹⁶ With Secularism Kallen argued first of all for the continuing validity of “cultural pluralism” and, for American Jews, a secular Jewish self-understanding. During World War I, Kallen had derived the separation of citizenship and nationality from an expanded understanding of the separation of church and state while arguing for a reconfiguration of Europe according to the ideal of American democracy. In the 1940s and 1950s, he saw this basic separation – and the nucleus of cultural pluralism – under threat. That Kallen’s formulation of Secularism by no means constricted his earlier concept of religious pluralism but rather expanded the spectrum of cultural groups assembled into a cooperative relationship – “be they religious, occupational, cultural, recreational, etc. etc.”¹⁷ – is due to the scope of his concept of religion. Kallen’s 1954 writing and Herberg’s work published the following year represent contrasting poles within the negotiation of the relationship between religion and American belonging in the mid-20th century. With his reformulation of cultural pluralism as civil religion, Kallen opposed the derivation of American democracy from a Judeo-Christian tradition and implicitly objected to a notion of totalitarianism as conceived by European Catholic thinkers.¹⁸ Early on he applied his American understanding of religion, shaped by Jefferson and James alike, to the analysis of societies beyond the United States and to international relations. This American notion of secularism constituted the safeguard against illiberal religion, theistic or not, and the *sine qua non* for applying American democracy on the transnational level.

¹⁶ M. Whitcomb Hess, “Reviewed Work: Secularism is the Will of God by Horace M. Kallen,” *The Philosophical Review* 65 (January 1956): 121–124.

¹⁷ Kallen, *Secularism Is the Will of God*, 58.

¹⁸ Cf. James Chappel, “The Catholic Origins of Totalitarianism Theory in Interwar Europe,” *Modern Intellectual History* 8, no. 3 (2011): 561–590.

3. Secularism and the State of Israel

During World War I, Kallen had delineated a pluralist American self-understanding that accepted multiple cultural affiliations, encapsulated by the term “hyphenation,” and presented this as the general American experience and model for a new global order.¹⁹ After the founding of the State of Israel, the transnational reach that Kallen claimed for his ideas was tested from either side, as American Jews and Israel faced questions about secularism and religion as categories of belonging. He thus again found himself called upon to counter insinuations of the dual loyalty of American Jews with an explanation of what American belonging was based on:

“Now, to be an American is not an accident of birth but an act of faith. Although nationality accrues automatically to persons born in the United States, the responsibilities and privileges of citizenship do not. They are not functions of nativity. They come alive and actual when any person, wherever born or brought up, publicly commits himself to the faith and works of a certain way of life.”²⁰

Kallen based American belonging on the democratic faith and argued that a commitment to this faith was adequately expressed in the support of Israeli democracy. To American Jews he assigned a special moral obligation towards the “American Idea” of cultural pluralism, stemming particularly from the Jewish historical experience of the first half of the 20th century. From a *longue durée* perspective, Kallen underscored the Jewish experience of persecution and discrimination based on religious difference and the social positions theologically assigned to Jews in Christian Europe. Against this background, it would be, in Kallen’s words, “a blasphemy beyond pardon” if religious difference was punished in Israel.²¹

Kallen expressed his severe concern about Israel’s political and social development in a lengthy article titled “Whither Israel?,” which was published in the *Menorah Journal* in 1951, a few years after the founding of the State of Israel. The spirit of equal freedom that he considered inherent in the cooperative

¹⁹ Cf., most famously, Horace M. Kallen, “Democracy Versus the Melting-Pot: A Study of American Nationality,” *The Nation*, February 18 and 25, 1915, 190–194, 217–220.

²⁰ Horace M. Kallen, “Whither Israel?” *The Menorah Journal* 39 (Autumn 1951): 134, 109–143. On different approaches among leading American Jews to deal with the charge of dual loyalty in face of the State of Israel’s founding, cf. Zvi Ganin, *An Uneasy Relationship: American Jewish Leadership and Israel, 1948–1957* (Syracuse, NY: Syracuse University Press, 2005), 3–25.

²¹ Kallen, “Whither Israel?” 138.

communities of kibbutzim and moshavim was, as he saw it, at risk of being betrayed. The pacification of religious groups, he feared, would come at the expense of upholding the pluralist principles Israel had committed itself to at its founding. What was at stake for Israel in its first decade was not merely the legitimacy conferred by the United Nations but its fundamental moral integrity. In his 1951 article, Kallen laid bare the tensions between American Zionism, as he advocated it, and the one espoused by the young state's founding ideology: a Zionism that delegitimized the diaspora and exerted psychological pressure to move to – or at least to support – Israel. The basis for American Jews voluntarily supporting the State of Israel, Kallen argued, was primarily its “scientific spirit and the democratic faith.” The bond with Israel could not be based merely on a Jewish self-understanding per se, but rather required the Zionist ideal as he understood it, “the ethics of universal human brotherhood.”²² The stakes in this transnational debate about the meaning of Zionism could hardly have been higher.

Kallen's most extensive – and less alarmed – portrait of Israeli society, its secular faith, and the ongoing uncertainty of its realization, was published seven years later, in 1958, under the title *Utopians at Bay*. The book, first and foremost addressing American Jews, largely resulted from observations that Kallen had made in Israel two years earlier. From May to July 1956, he had traveled the country and conducted a study, sponsored by the Theodor Herzl Foundation and the American Association for Jewish Education, on the cultural and institutional factors that would shape a diverse population into a coherent Israeli society. In an analogy to the early-20th-century discourse on the Americanization of immigrants, Kallen was now writing about what he called “Israelization.” In interviews and spontaneous conversations, he surveyed the diversity of self-understandings and attitudes and the various “basic beliefs,” as Kallen put it, concerning Israel.

The most fundamental social tension he described in his 1958 study was the conflict between the principles set out in Israel's Declaration of Independence and the restriction of individual freedoms through Jewish Orthodoxy's claim to traditional authority. According to Kallen, every state that prescribed an orthodoxy was to be considered a church-state. The separation of church

²² Kallen, “Whither Israel?” 129–133, 140.

and state and an understanding of religious affiliation as a voluntary act, as first implemented in the United States, Kallen reminded his readers, constituted major prerequisites of democracy. As soon as any religious community is denied the same freedom and security, or as one religion is privileged over another, the term “democracy” no longer applies. Considering the diversity of religious and cultural affiliations, Israel could not at the same time be a Jewish state and apply the democratic principle of secularism.²³

Based on this distinctly American understanding of democracy, Kallen supported the work of organizations that strove for religious freedom and the separation of church and state in Israel. From 1964, he sat on the board of directors of the League for Religious Freedom in Israel, and in 1967 he was appointed president of the American Friends of Religious Freedom in Israel. In February 1967, Kallen was invited to join the Special Committee on Religious Rights in Israel, which consisted of reform rabbis and had been set up by the World Union for Progressive Judaism, the international umbrella organization of the Reform and affiliated movements. Chaired by Rabbi Maurice Eisendrath (1902–1973), president of the Union of American Hebrew Congregations, the committee discussed how the Reform movement’s precarious position in Israel could be improved and, more generally, how the lack of equal religious rights in Israel should be addressed.²⁴ An overwhelming majority of the committee favored commissioning a white paper, to be written by Member of Knesset Zalman Abramov (1908–1997), and presented to the Israeli prime minister personally but not to be used for public criticism. Kallen, on the other hand, advocated a long-term strategy: a public campaign and the exertion of political pressure. Rabbi Herbert A. Friedman (1918–2008), chairman of the board of the United Jewish Appeal, strongly disagreed. In his view, such a strategy would be perceived as an act of aggression, damaging to the Israeli government and leading to a culture war. For Kallen, this was no different than what Americans were willing to do in the United States; it represented nothing less than the democratic process. Moreover, a culture war, in his eyes,

²³ Horace M. Kallen, *Utopians at Bay* (New York: Theodor Herzl Foundation, 1958), 162–166. On the newly established State of Israel’s pivotal questions concerning the character and implications of a Jewish state, cf. Michael Brenner, *In Search of Israel: The History of an Idea* (Princeton, N.J./Oxford: Princeton University Press, 2018), 138–172.

²⁴ Rabbi Jacob K. Shankman to Horace M. Kallen, February 9, 1967, AJA, Kallen Papers, Box 43, Folder 12.

was already taking place.²⁵ Supporting Israel to him meant participating in its struggle for democracy according to the American secularist ideal.

The committee's work resulted in a document, dated July 4, 1968, that deplored the inequality among Jewish religious communities in Israel. In March 1970, it was presented to Prime Minister Golda Meir (1898–1978) by representatives of the World Union for Progressive Judaism during a convention of the Central Conference of American Rabbis in Jerusalem, the professional organization of Reform rabbis. The text criticized the lack of legal equality among the Jewish religious communities in Israel because the Orthodox rabbinate not only obstructed the free practice of religion, but also practically determined who was to be considered a Jew. Government instructions, in turn, ignored the Israeli Supreme Court's ruling that this question was not to be determined exclusively halakhically. The committee's text pointed out that the authority of the state was being invoked to enforce the policies of Orthodoxy and that a *de facto* state religion delegitimized other forms of Judaism. The document therefore proposed that the State of Israel recognize as Jews all persons whose conversion to Judaism had been carried out by non-Orthodox rabbis and grant them Israeli citizenship under the Law of Return of July 1950. It also argued that non-Orthodox Jewish communities should receive equivalent financial support from the Ministry of Religious Affairs and the local religious councils as Orthodox communities.²⁶

This latter proposal in particular illustrates how Kallen's position and strategies were largely ignored. As a matter of principle, he had strongly opposed asking the government for any subsidy. Since the first meeting of the committee, Kallen had called upon the representatives of American Reform to put pressure on the State of Israel, and he had once suggested threatening Israel with the termination of financial support unless their demands were met and a broad spectrum of Jewish denominations were granted equal rights. His

²⁵ Minutes of the Special Committee on Israel, May 18, 1967, 3–5, AJA, Kallen Papers, Box 43, Folder 12; Minutes of the Special Committee on Israel, November 17, 1967, Montreal [Kallen did not participate at this session], AJA, Kallen Papers, Box 43, Folder 12; Minutes of the Special Committee on Israel, April 10, 1968, New York, AJA, Kallen Papers, Box 43, Folder 12, 5–6.

²⁶ A Statement to the Prime Minister of Israel by the World Union for Progressive Judaism and the Committee on Religious Rights in Israel on the Occasion of the Convention of the Central Conference of American Rabbis, Jerusalem, March 10, 1970, AJA, Kallen Papers, Box 43, Folder 12.

keen commitment was not due to his advocacy of Reform Judaism but was based on his general conviction that only the multiplication of diverse religious communities would ultimately achieve a complete separation of church and state, and thus the democratization of Israel.²⁷ The standard he applied was consistently the American ideal of separating religious association and political belonging, the center of his transnational civil religion of American democracy.

4. Reappraising the Prophets

From his personal experience of Israel in 1956, Kallen revisited his earlier references to the biblical prophets. Instead of engendering a pluralist society with unifying ideals, he saw that the contemporary evocations of the prophets had increased antagonisms between the secular understanding of the present and religious eschatology. At first glance, Kallen's references to the biblical prophets in the 1950s seem to resemble those of his major work of 1921, *Zionism and World Politics*, which underlined the particularistic viewpoint as premise for their veritable universalism. In 1958 he again described them as rebels against a priestly establishment who condemned social injustice, including the oppression suffered by the Canaanite population in biblical times. But Kallen, notably, does not characterize the prophets as internationalist *realpolitiker* as he did earlier.²⁸ Most significantly, he now refrained from basing his understanding of pluralism on a biblical prophetic tradition. Kallen's texts on cultural pluralism from the 1950s underline consent instead of descent; that is, they emphasize the voluntary character and flexibility of an individual's association with a particular cultural group and of the relationships that cultural groups establish with one another.

In a notable passage in *Utopians at Bay*, however, Kallen now rejected the basic assumption that such notions of pluralism could be traced back to the prophets:

“One hears these sometimes referred to the pronouncements of the Hebrew prophets; indeed, such references may be read into Israel's Declaration of Independence.

²⁷ Horace M. Kallen to Jacob K. Shankman, April 29, 1970, AJA, Kallen Papers, Box 43, Folder 12; Minutes of the Special Committee on Israel, April 10, 1968, 3, 6.

²⁸ Kallen, *Zionism and World Politics*, 11–12.

But the prophets of the Old Testament although rebels, were authoritarians. The End-Time they envisioned was a time purposed by Jehovah, and mankind's acquiescence in Israel's preeminence.²⁹

Kallen, thus, turned away from a genealogy of prophetic internationalism he had constructed 40 years earlier, which was closely connected both to his idea of cultural pluralism and his outlines of a structure for global peace. In 1918 Kallen imagined the possibility that a prophetic vision of the future – secular in character, as it had been since antiquity – could instantly be realized with the establishment of a League of Nations. In 1958 he instead invoked a “fighting faith in an End-Time” as the realization of open societies characterized by cultural pluralism. However, with this belief he did not aim at a particular future event; instead, it was conceived as an instrument for constantly re-evaluating the present.³⁰

Kallen relocated the biblical prophets into a theocratic past. As sources of democratic ideas, he clarified, they could only be accessed through modern mediators. He continued to emphasize the perpetuation of prophetic messages in the American Declaration of Independence and the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. But he referenced a fractured genealogy that highlighted secular equivalents of past religious traditions. Kallen instead invested the canon of a democratic faith with modern American literary texts that represented the prophetic tradition as a residual tradition, void of a claim to unmediated religious authority.³¹

During the First World War, it was an affirmative reference to the prophets that allowed Kallen to legitimize a national and secular Jewish self-understanding and to locate it within the continuum of Jewish history. In line with this construction, Kallen had insisted that to achieve a pluralist commonwealth in Palestine, the secularization of religious hopes was to be actively perpetuated and more consistently applied to the work of Zionist organizations. With the

²⁹ Kallen, *Utopians at Bay*, 245. On the narrative of conquest and David Ben-Gurion's establishment, in 1958, of a Joshua study group that met at his home, cf. Rachel Havrelock, *The Joshua Generation: Israeli Occupation and the Bible* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2020), 97–161.

³⁰ Kallen, *Utopians at Bay*, 27, 29, 245, 281–284, 288; cf. Kallen, “Whither Israel?” 118–123, 127; Horace M. Kallen, *The Structure of Lasting Peace: An Inquiry into the Motives of War and Peace* (Boston: Marshall Jones, 1918).

³¹ Horace M. Kallen, *Cultural Pluralism and the American Idea: An Essay in Social Philosophy*, (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1956), 88.

founding of the Jewish state and the pivotal position accorded the prophets in Israel's cultural self-understanding, he now claimed that the prophets did not provide suitable role models and that secular Israelis – "Israel's authentic Utopians" – followed a thoroughly modern pluralist faith.³²

5. Conclusion

Less than a decade after the State of Israel came into being, Kallen recognized that a sufficiently secularized reading of the prophets might not prevail within Israel's social discourse. Their reference would rather support an unmediated linkage of the state's political ideals with Jewish religion. Kallen's study *Utopians at Bay* opened with a narration of his visit to the alleged tomb of King David on Mount Zion, which reveals Kallen's perception of the religious tradition's heightened efficacy and expectations of an imminent fulfillment of biblical prophecy in such spatial proximity to the sacred.³³ After observing its effect in the land of Israel in 1956, he most distinctly dissociated his ideas from the visions of the prophets. Still, his almost simultaneous outspoken stance in American discussions on the role of religion in culturally pluralist democracies decisively shaped his perspective on Israel. Likewise in the United States, where he confronted influential voices that argued for a Judeo-Christian tradition as the historical and normative basis of America's political and social order, references to the prophets of the Hebrew Bible no longer adequately represented his understanding of the secular foundation of democracy. Yet, regarding the United States and its vigorous civil religious tradition, he did not feel pressed to specifically articulate the distinctions between biblical and modern democracy's prophets.

Since the early 20th century, Kallen had been involved in the Americanization of America by reinterpreting its political, philosophical, and literary tradition in light of the secularist principle and pointing to its unfinished realization in cultural pluralism. Analogously, Israel's Israelization was supposed to signify a return to a firm commitment to secularism as envisioned in the Zionist thought of Kallen and Louis D. Brandeis (1856–1941), among others, during World War I. Echoing this specifically American Zionism and its convergence of the particular with the universal, Kallen imagined Israelization as

³² Kallen, *Utopians at Bay*, 245.

³³ Kallen, *Utopians at Bay*, 5–8.

an alignment with the ideal of American democracy as cultural pluralism. He did not doubt its transnational applicability and, even less, the necessity of transferring his American concepts of Secularism as a common civil religion to Israel or, for that matter, to any other place. But as he tested them in the young Jewish state, he carefully readjusted his approach to politically functionalizing religion in a polity at greater risk of conflating religious and cultural with political belonging. However, whether in the American scene or on the transnational level, Kallen's approach to the federalization of differences encouraged the active construction and expansion of secular traditions, facilitating each and all to join a common faith in the equal right to be different.

Exporting Jewish Ideas from Germany (via Palestine) to America: Salman Schocken and the Transnational Transfer of Texts, 1931–1950

by Markus Krah

Abstract

When he founded Schocken Books in 1945, department store magnate, philanthropist, and publisher Salman Schocken (1877–1959) called his new American publishing business an imitation of its German predecessor, which had functioned from 1931 until 1938. He intended it to replicate the success of the Berlin Schocken *Verlag* by spiritually fortifying a Jewish community uncertain in its identity. The new company reflected the transnational transfer of people, ideas, and texts between Germany, Palestine/Israel, and the United States. Its success and near-failure raise questions about transnationalism and American Jewish culture: Can a culture be imposed on a population which has its own organs and agencies of cultural production? Had American Jewish culture developed organically to the specific place where several million Jews found themselves and according to uniquely American cultural patterns? The answers suggest that the concepts of transnationalism and cultural transfer complement each other as tools to analyze American Jewry in its American and Jewish contexts.¹

1. Introduction

When Salman Schocken announced his plans for a new publishing house in New York to a Jerusalem audience in 1945, he suggested a line of continuity with his Berlin-based Schocken *Verlag*: “I am currently working to create a Schocken publishing house in America. That is an imitation of the German

¹ Much of the research for this project was made possible by a fellowship from the Alexander von Humboldt Foundation and by a fellowship at the Herbert D. Katz Center for Advanced Judaic Studies at the University of Pennsylvania.

publishing house.” He actually presented the relationship between the two endeavors as a transnational project *avant la lettre*: “Distances no longer exist, and the mutual influences between here and there are obvious.”²

The two statements in the speech, however, contain the kernel of a contradiction that shaped Schocken Books’ stated mission: a mere imitation of the German model is hardly a transnational endeavor. It points instead to an attempt at influencing another community by exporting cultural goods, as opposed to a transfer or exchange that gives the “receiving culture” agency in choosing what to accept, appropriate, and make its own. The tension between the claim of transnational exchange and the reality of a one-directional cultural exportation haunted the company in its early years, when Schocken offered American readers handsome and affordable books with English translations of texts he had successfully published in prewar Germany. Intellectuals and German-speaking immigrants welcomed this infusion of high-brow central European Jewish culture, affording Schocken Books cultural influence through journals such as *Commentary* and *Aufbau*. Still, the company sold nowhere near enough books to become profitable. An internal analysis in 1957 concluded that the company had faced commercial failure around 1950 because it had not taken into account the distinctly American needs of its target audience.

The simultaneous cultural success and commercial near failure of Schocken Books illustrate crucial questions that a transnational approach asks of American Jewish culture: How do national and transnational cultural forces interact in the shaping of a culture? What factors determine the acceptance and absorption of elements from a different culture? Does transnationalism offer ways to analytically disentangle the various forces shaping a transnational culture? More specific to the Schocken case, the fate of the enterprise poses the question of whether the Jewish element could have ever been enough to overcome the nationally specific cultural outlook of American Jews who had minimal connection to the German Jewish world which Schocken represented?

² Salman Schocken, Untitled Speech (German), Jerusalem, December 16, 1945, Schocken Archive (hereafter SchA), Jerusalem, section 83.

2. The Berlin *Verlag*: A Template to Elevate American Jewish Culture

During the first five years of its existence, from 1945 to 1950, Schocken Books, echoing its founder's announcement, adopted almost in totality the model of the German *Verlag*, from which authors, editors, books, and business practices were exported, via Palestine, to New York. Salman Schocken saw this triangular exchange between Germany, Palestine/Israel, and the US, three key loci of Jewish modernization, as the key to a transnational Jewish culture in which a positive Jewish identity could be grounded. That worldview, a product of German Jewish history in the modern era, assumed that the classic works of Jewish culture contained within them values that could sustain Jewish life and instill pride. Salman Schocken identified with German and Jewish "high" culture with the zeal of the autodidact. Many other Jewish immigrants, and later refugees, from Germany brought this bourgeois understanding of Jewish culture and *Bildung* as formation and cultivation of the self to the US and Palestine.

This notion also drove the Jewish cultural renaissance in interwar Germany, when Jews faced both new educational, economic, and cultural opportunities, but also struggled with the forces first of assimilation and then exclusion by state-driven anti-Semitism. Searching for alternatives to traditionalism and assimilation, they crafted new cultural expressions for traditional contents of Judaism and created a modern German Jewish culture.³ The Schocken *Verlag*, founded in 1931, was a key agent in these processes, trying to tap the richness of the Jewish tradition in order to spiritually fortify its readers.⁴ During its seven-year existence it published more than 200 books: fiction and non-fiction, translations, anthologies, almanacs, and editions of texts that had previously been inaccessible to broader audiences. A partial list of authors reads like a roster of the most eminent and respected European

³ Michael Brenner, *The Renaissance of Jewish Culture in Weimar Germany* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1998).

⁴ For the most comprehensive history of the Schocken *Verlag*, see Volker Dahm, "Das jüdische Buch im Dritten Reich; II: Salman Schocken und sein Verlag," *Archiv für Geschichte des Buchwesens* XXII (1982): col. 302–915. A revised version was published as *Das jüdische Buch im Dritten Reich* (Munich: C. H. Beck, 1993). See also Saskia Schreuder and Claude Weber, eds., *Der Schocken Verlag/Berlin: Jüdische Selbstbehauptung in Berlin, 1931–1938 [Essayband zur Ausstellung "Dem suchenden Leser unserer Tage" der Nationalbibliothek Luxemburg]* (Berlin: Akademie-Verlag, 1994); Ernst Simon, *Aufbau im Untergang: Jüdische Erwachsenenbildung im*

Jewish thinkers and writers, including Hermann Cohen, Martin Buber, Franz Rosenzweig, Heinrich Heine, Mendele Mokher Sforim, Sholem Aleichem, Yitzhak Leib Peretz, Franz Kafka, Shmuel Yosef Agnon, Leo Baeck, Gershom Scholem, and many others.

Many of these authors were published in the *Schocken Bücherei*, a series of attractively designed, yet affordable books, which presented treasures of the Jewish tradition and learned modern takes on religion and history. The series suggested the idea of a new Jewish canon. According to a Schocken memo, the series would “present from the vast and often inaccessible corpus of Jewish texts of all times and places [...] those which will immediately speak to the searching reader of our time.”⁵ The books repackaged these venerable texts in modern forms, designed to appeal to the aesthetic, intellectual, and spiritual tastes and needs of post-traditional Jews. The house published a total of 92 books, just missing the stated goal of 100 volumes. For some German Jews, the *Bücherei* volumes served functions beyond the texts they contained. As in the United States one generation later, displaying the colorful volumes on one’s bookshelf allowed individuals to highlight not only cultural refinement, but also to engage in a symbolic act of performing and displaying Jewishness. With this program, the Schocken *Verlag* had been if not commercially successful, then culturally influential, as it gave the most important writers a public voice in Germany, even through the first years of Nazi rule, up until it was liquidated in 1938.

In the early 1940s, Salman Schocken began exploring the idea of repeating this enterprise in the US, a place with many Jews with enough money to buy books.⁶ He had already left Germany in 1933 and immigrated to Palestine.⁷ He

nationalsozialistischen Deutschland als geistiger Widerstand (Tübingen: Mohr, 1959); Stephen Poppel, “Salman Schocken and the Schocken Verlag,” in *Leo Baeck Institute Year Book* 17 (1972): 93–113; Antje Borrmann, Doreen Mölders, and Sabine Wolfram, eds., *Konsum & Gestalt: Leben und Werk von Salman Schocken und Erich Mendelsohn vor 1933 und im Exil* (Berlin: Hentrich & Hentrich, 2016).

⁵ Bücherei (Dtld.) memo, n.d., Vanderbilt University Glatzer Collection (hereafter VU GC), Glatzer Papers, Box 23, Folder 839.

⁶ *The Memoirs of Nahum N. Glatzer*, eds. Michael Fishbane and Judith Glatzer Wechsler (Cincinnati: Hebrew Union College Press, 1997), 98. Glatzer mentions a first formal meeting to explore the founding of a publishing house in 1943: “Herrn Salman Schocken zum achtzigsten Geburtstag,” n.d. [1957], SchA 30.

⁷ For biographical information on Salman Schocken, see the comprehensive, yet flawed biography by Anthony David, *The Patron: A Life of Salman Schocken, 1877–1959* (New York: Metro-

settled in Jerusalem and founded a new publishing house in Tel Aviv.⁸ Among his many other activities was the chairmanship of the board of the Hebrew University, and it was in this capacity that he arrived in New York in 1940. It is unclear whether this was meant to be a fundraising trip of a few months, which turned into a five-year stay, or an unannounced decision to move to the US. Schocken used his time in the US to explore the intellectual and spiritual state of American Jewry. Hobnobbing with an intellectual elite of New York Jewry, with interlocutors as diverse as Salo Baron, Abraham Joshua Heschel, Philip Rahv, and Harold Rosenberg, he came to an assessment, widespread at the time among American Jewish elites, that the community needed guidance in creating and sustaining Jewish culture, not just to elevate it culturally to its new middle-class socioeconomic status, but to ground American Jewishness in its heritage as an antidote to the threat of assimilation perceived by many rabbis and Jewish intellectuals. “The American is proud to preserve the tradition, the Jew convulsively rejects it,” he claimed in a speech in Haifa in 1946. “In America, one is an enthusiastic galuth Jew, i.e. one is an American.”⁹

Schocken held 1940s American Jewish reading culture to his imagined standard of the cultural renaissance of 1930s Germany and found it wanting. He was blind to or dismissive of the existing Jewish culture, including a lively scene of book publishing, which included publishers like Behrman House, Bloch, the Hebrew American Publishing Company, Ktav, and the flagship Jewish Publication Society (JPS).¹⁰ Instead he saw American Jewry as a *tabula rasa* and predicted, “With Schocken Books in New York, the Jews of America will get for the first time representative samples of their Judaism at a level hitherto unknown in America, and scarcely available in any other country except Germany.”¹¹

politan Books, 2003); and Stefanie Mahrer, *Salman Schocken: Topographien eines Lebens* (Berlin: Neofelis, 2021).

⁸ The company was run by Salman’s son Gustav/Gershon Schocken (1912–90). The New York and Tel Aviv publishing houses did not interact closely, more like distant cousins in business relations than close siblings.

⁹ Salman Schocken, “Amerika 1945,” January 8, 1946, SchA 83.

¹⁰ Charles A. Madison, *Jewish Publishing in America: The Impact of Jewish Writing on American Culture* (New York: Sanhedrin Press, 1976); Jonathan D. Sarna, *JPS: The Americanization of Jewish Culture, 1888–1988: A Centennial History of the Jewish Publication Society* (Philadelphia: JPS, 1989).

¹¹ Quoted in Altie Karper, “A History of Schocken Books in America, 1945–2013,” in *Konsum und Gestalt: Leben und Werk von Salman Schocken und Erich Mendelsohn vor 1933 und im Exil*, ed.

German Jewish culture provided the main ingredient in the mixture of commitments and ideals that together formed the mission driving Schocken's publishing businesses. Another was his cultural Zionism, a belief that a Jewish cultural center in Palestine would be more important to the revitalization of the Jewish people, including in the diaspora, than a Jewish state. In the Haifa speech he argued that the source of American Jewry's spiritual nurturing would have to be the Jewish community in Palestine, noting, "It is the responsibility of this land, including its cultural producers, to adapt to the six to seven million people outside of it who will perish without a permanent supply."¹² Yet, Schocken deemed the diaspora Jewishly legitimate. He went even further, arguing that American Jewry would be essential to the future of world Jewry. In the 1945 Jerusalem speech he said, "we also have to cultivate America from the point of view of the future of Jewry, because the majority of our people are there and our future depends on it." While looking down on American Jewry, Schocken nevertheless saw cultural potential and the beginnings of its development: "We cannot hope for a Franz Rosenzweig to emerge in America, but some kind of reaction is going on there. We can practically grasp it with our hands."¹³ Schocken hoped to be part of this cultural development and thereby help American Jewry find its new role *as Jews* in American society. He tried to do so by founding another publishing house. Central to its mission was Schocken's commitment to a transnational understanding of modern Jewish culture in which a Jewish identity could be anchored.

3. Transnational Continuities? Translations and a Cultural Canon

With its earliest publications, in 1946, Schocken Books manifested – in texts, authors, and editors – continuities with its German predecessor, notwithstanding the historical ruptures and differences that separated 1930s German Jews from those of 1940s America. Among the editors, Nahum Norbert Glatzer (1903–90) represented both transnational continuities and transmutations. He

Antje Borrmann, Doreen Mölders, and Sabine Wolfram (Berlin: Hentrich & Hentrich, 1994), 272.

¹² Schocken, "Amerika 1945."

¹³ Salman Schocken, Untitled Speech, December 16, 1945.

had been a disciple of Buber's and Rosenzweig's in Germany, had worked as an editor and author for the German Schocken *Verlag*, lived in Palestine for several years, and in 1945 became one of two chief editors of Schocken Books, New York.¹⁴ The other chief editor, Hannah Arendt (1906–75), brought her own commitments to German Jewish thought and culture, but lasted only two years in the role.¹⁵ Schocken Books also benefitted from the leadership of Theodore Schocken (1914–75), Salman's Harvard-trained son, but the founder remained the most influential actor until his death in 1959.

Salman Schocken, Theodore, Glatzer, and Arendt exchanged hundreds, if not thousands of letters, memos, telegrams, and cables in the early years of the American company alone, discussing which books to publish, which translator to pick, the design and marketing strategies, choice of paper, and all the other details of publishing. Likewise, they corresponded with authors living on different continents and countries. When Schocken claimed that by running a transnational Jewish publishing network he helped create a transnational modern Jewish culture, he pointed to this roster of editors and authors, their texts and ideas, which he turned into books. Without much self-reflection or conceptual thought about the processes involved, he implied that these books constituted the building blocks of a transnational cultural edifice. Schocken believed that what had worked in Germany ten years before should work in the US.

Not surprisingly then, Schocken in these early years turned to his German backlist and selected books to be translated into English. The very first publication released by Schocken Books in 1946 was *In Time and Eternity: A Jewish Reader*, an anthology of classical texts from the postbiblical tradition, edited by Glatzer. It was an English reworking of the German anthology

¹⁴ Paul Mendes-Flohr, "Knowledge as Service: An Appreciation of Nahum N. Glatzer," *Jewish Studies Forum of the World Union of Jewish Studies* 31 (1991): 25–46; Paul Mendes-Flohr, "Scholarship as a Craft: Reflections on the Legacy of Nahum Glatzer," *Modern Judaism* 13 (1993): 269–276; Eugene R. Sheppard, "'I am a memory come alive': Nahum Glatzer and the Legacy of German Jewish Thought in America," *Jewish Quarterly Review* 94 (winter 2004): 123–148.

¹⁵ Barbara Hahn, "'Wesentlich ein Übersetzungsverlag': Hannah Arendt als Lektorin bei Schocken Books in New York," in *Konsum und Gestalt: Leben und Werk von Salman Schocken und Erich Mendelsohn vor 1933 und im Exil*, ed. Antje Borrmann, Doreen Mölders, and Sabine Wolfram (Berlin: Hentrich & Hentrich, 2016), 259–271. See also Arendt's memos at VU GC Schocken Files, esp. Boxes II, V, and VI, and Glatzer's correspondence (Glatzer Papers, Boxes 10 and 12, and Glatzer, *Memoirs*, 103).

Sendung und Schicksal (Mission and Destiny), co-edited by Glatzer and announced as the first publication of the German *Verlag* in 1931. Other translations and reworkings of German publications included Buber's *Tales of the Hasidim* (1947–1948), Leo Baeck's *The Pharisees and Other Essays*, Yitzhak F. Baer's essay *Galut*, Salomon Maimon's *Autobiography* (all 1947), as well as Ferdinand Gregorovius's *The Ghetto and the Jews of Rome* (1948). Schocken Books was originally, in Arendt's assessment, "essentially a publisher of translations."¹⁶

In the spirit of imitation, Schocken decided to replicate the *Schocken Bücherei* by creating the *Schocken Library* series. Like the German predecessor, it consisted of attractively designed, short books, typically 128 pages long, priced at \$1.50, and targeted at a broad readership. The multicolored set, like the *Bücherei*, was supposed to consist of 100 volumes. All 20 volumes published until 1949 were translations of texts originally written in other languages, and most had been previously published in German by Schocken. The continuity of the larger Schocken mission is most explicit in a programmatic foreword which Buber wrote in 1946 (in German) for the *Schocken Library*. He described it as a repository of a modernized version of the religious tradition, necessary to anchor post-traditional Jews in their heritage:

"The vital substance of the [Jewish] people can only be saved and preserved if [...] a great inner gathering takes place, a gathering of the dispersed Jewish spirit, the dispersed Jewish soul. [...] For millennia, we lived off of the power of an incredibly vital tradition, a tradition that immediately affected life, the whole life, proving to give strength, edify, and regenerate in any historical situation. We have lost the vitality of this tradition; the best of us should dedicate their efforts to regaining it for man today in a form that fits his nature and interests. [...] The call for gathering as the call of the hour is the foundation of Schocken Books and of this book series in particular."¹⁷

Echoing the trauma of living through an era of disruption and destruction, Buber presented books as a new way to transmit what he, and Schocken, defined as an authentic Jewish heritage to a community of tradition-rejecting "galuth Jews" in need of it. This idea in turn appealed to many American

¹⁶ Hahn, "Wesentlich ein Übersetzungsverlag."

¹⁷ Martin Buber, "Verlagsvorwort Schocken Library," November 29, 1946, SchA, 378/o.

Jewish intellectuals, as it promised to provide an infusion of profound Jewish culture to the US, something that they believed had long been lacking. “We have reached a stage of maturity where a low level of culture no longer becomes us,” *Commentary* editor Elliot Cohen stated in 1947, claiming this was a point “upon which the articulate in the Jewish community seem to agree.”¹⁸ In Schocken they welcomed a fresh voice into an ongoing conversation about the question what an American Jewish culture should look like. The 1947 *Commentary* symposium titled “Jewish Culture in This Time and Place,” in which Hannah Arendt and rabbi-philosopher Jacob Agus were prominent participants, illustrated the breadth of the discourse on the effort “to make Jewish experience in this country meaningful.”¹⁹ Salman Schocken tapped into this discursive network, and brought his own group of thinkers of different stripes – religious and secular, Socialists and conservatives, Hebraists and Yiddishists – to the conversation, who in different roles – as translators, members of an informal board, occasional authors of blurbs and advertising copy – supported the publishing house. Baron, Elliot Cohen, Moshe Davis, Clement Greenberg, Will Herberg, Heschel, Irving Howe, Joshua Loth Liebman, Rahv, Joshua Starr, Milton Steinberg, Max Weinreich, and even the young Norman Podhoretz populate the lists of correspondents and meeting partners in New York. Recent immigrants from central Europe constituted another support group. Their journal *Aufbau* enthusiastically hailed what seemed like a continuation of the German endeavor, again embodied in the *Library*: “Those who knew and loved the *Schocken Bücherei* in Germany can rejoice. The affordable little Schocken volumes are back, printed and bound as tastefully as before.”²⁰ An announcement of the series in the *Schocken Reader*, a catalogue brochure with excerpts of forthcoming publications (and as such another imitation of a German publication) in 1947 made explicitly transhistorical and transnational claims for the series:

“The Schocken Library series is devoted to Jewish writings of the past and present which are expressive of the great classical traditions of Judaism. The books selected

¹⁸ Elliot Cohen, “Jewish Culture in America: Some Speculations by an Editor,” *Commentary* 3, no. 5 (May 1947): 412–420, here 412.

¹⁹ “Jewish Culture in This Time and Place: A Symposium,” *Commentary* 4, no. 5 (November 1947): 423–431, here 423. The contributors responded to Cohen’s “Speculations by an Editor.”

²⁰ “Die Schocken-Bücher sind wieder da,” *Aufbau*, October 24, 1947. The article was signed “-ck,” likely editor Richard Dyck, who wrote several other stories on Schocken Books.

for publication will be central and pivotal works in the great body of Jewish literary production. [Works] that were in the past, and are today, of concentrated relevance for the thoughtful and the perplexed.”²¹

4. Lost in Cultural Translation: American Interests of American Jewish Readers

The main challenge for the Schocken vision was making texts accessible and relevant to American Jewish readers. This involved three related processes of translation. First, the previously published German books had to undergo a linguistic translation into English. Additionally, the Jewish religious traditions and themes had to be rendered into understandable cultural terms. Finally, the press had to translate the details and style of the original context of central Europe to the new American context. Each of these processes posed its own challenges. Schocken Books sometimes struggled to find the right translator for a German, Hebrew, or Yiddish book of literary complexity, like the work of Agnon or Kafka. It had to find new spiritual aesthetics, as in prayer collections, and had to transmit into new forms traditional religious knowledge such as in Buber’s Hasidica. This process of cultural translation proved to be the greatest problem. Glatzer, for all his experience and qualifications, confessed to being overwhelmed as a cultural mediator, beginning with *In Time and Eternity*. “I tried to adapt the material to what I believed to be the American Jewish mentality and receptivity for classical Judaic sources. I confess that I did not know enough for the job.”²²

If Salman Schocken had been a more modest man, he could have made a similar confession for the entire publishing program of his US company by 1950. At that time, the signs of an existential crisis, measured in sales figures, could no longer be ignored. Again, the *Schocken Library* was an indicator of larger developments. Schocken printed 5,000 copies of most of the works in the series but sold only between 1,000 and 2,000 copies of most of them.²³ Schocken had to end the series after 20 volumes, falling far short of the 92 volumes it had published in the German series. Schocken Books curtailed its

²¹ *Schocken Reader 1947*, 43.

²² Glatzer, *Memoirs*, 99. The latter remark attests to Glatzer’s modesty. *In Time and Eternity* sold much better than most other Schocken books published in the 1940s.

²³ Stock and Sales Analysis, 1946–1949, VU GC, Schocken Files, Box 6, Folder H.1.a.

operations to a minimum and entered a decade of near paralysis. Having published some 60 titles between 1946 and 1950, it brought out only 15 new books during the entire decade until 1960. It was only after the death of Salman Schocken, in 1959, that the company changed course and picked up its business in a serious way. Looking back at this period, then-executive vice president Peter Bedrick called 1960 “the year of Schocken’s re-birth as an active publishing house.”²⁴

Its ideology and publishing program were not the only causes of Schocken Books’ crisis. Economic factors sent the entire US book business into a deep crisis in the late 1940s. Inflation drove production costs up so high that publishers faced the choice between raising sales prices to prohibitive levels or losing money on making books.²⁵ But it seems equally clear that Schocken Books had seriously misread the interests of its target audience, resulting in a failed attempt at cultural translation.²⁶ The *Aufbau*-reading community of German-born Jews in the US, or at least those who wanted to read Schocken books in English, was apparently too small to sustain the press.²⁷ Sensing this, Salman Schocken from the beginning aimed at a native-reading audience. Here, he fundamentally erred by presuming that the product for sale needed to be translated in the first place, as opposed to something produced in the language of American Jews and engaging with their cultural needs in the American present. None of the 20 volumes of the *Schocken Library* was by an American author or dealt with a specifically American Jewish topic. Among the roughly 60 books Schocken published in the US before 1950, a generous assessment yields two titles fitting that bill: H. E. Jacobs’s *The World of Emma Lazarus* (1949) and arguably the 1950 anthology *A Treasury of Jewish Folk-songs*, whose editor, Ruth Rubin, who lived and worked in the United States,

²⁴ Peter Bedrick, “Living the Good Life,” memo, September 14, 1970, VU GC, Schocken Files, Box 24, Folder B.1.1.

²⁵ Sarna, *JPS*, 216.

²⁶ There is no indication that Schocken Books ever conducted systematic surveys or analyses of readers and their interests, something very few American publishers did during this period. For a rare exception, see Harold U. Ribalow, “Do Jews Read?,” *Congress Weekly*, October 8, 1951, 10–12.

²⁷ The number of German-speaking immigrants and refugees in the US in the 1940s is difficult to ascertain. It is estimated that between 1933 and 1945, some 100,000 German-speaking refugees arrived in the US, joining an extant community of earlier immigrants. In the early 1940s, *Aufbau* had a circulation of about 15,000.

made reference in her introductions to American culture.²⁸ JPS had as early as the 1930s made books on American Jewish history part of its program. It continued this focus during the war years, sensing a need for affirmation as well as for the continuing Americanization of Jewish culture.²⁹

In a retrospective analysis of the company's early years, Glatzer ruefully pointed to an overall lack of attention to the distinctly American interests and needs of its audience: "[There] were people who considered Schocken Books a predominantly European publishing endeavor, which did not see the need of adjusting to the American way of life."³⁰ *Congress Weekly*, the journal of the American Jewish Congress, charitably suggested that Schocken Books and American Jewry were both to blame for the company's failing, neither side *getting* the other:

"No doubt American merchandising of books and American reading tastes and habits were factors which were not always mastered by the men who ran Schocken in this country. On the other hand, the failure of the Schocken enterprise to become a permanent cultural feature of American Jewish life, just as it used to be in pre-war Germany, is also, and perhaps largely, the fault of the American Jewish community."³¹

The failed efforts to bring American Jewish voices into the Schocken program illustrate the complexities of assembling a program fitting the original mission, the hard-to-gauge needs of an audience in flux, and the practical realities of finding authors and texts to turn lofty ideas into actual books. Schocken Books did try to recruit American authors for books on American topics. Some of them declined. In other cases, Salman Schocken vetoed their proposals.³² It appears that he had failed to see the need to "Americanize" his company by publishing texts that spoke to the cultural needs of his intended audience. Large segments of the early post-World War II American Jewish community had very limited interest in books that spoke to the idea(l)s of a

²⁸ Despite its subject, the Lazarus biography is a translation, too, from the German original by the Berlin-born author Heinrich Eduard Jacobs (1889–1967).

²⁹ Sarna, *JPS*, 165, 189–204.

³⁰ Glatzer, "Herrn Salman Schocken zum achtzigsten Geburtstag," *SchA* 30.

³¹ "A Cultural Loss," *Congress Weekly*, January 28, 1952, 5.

³² Schocken Books tried to commission books from Elliot Cohen, Isaac Rosenfeld, and other American authors. According Antony David, Salman Schocken rejected Arendt's plan to bring in T. S. Eliot: *The Patron*, 360.

highbrow German Jewish *Bildung* and culture. Even though the up-and-coming voices of a distinctly American Jewish literature and theology in the 1950s were themselves elite phenomena, they nevertheless reflected the emergence of an American Jewish cultural sphere not shaped by models or predecessors from central Europe. The big issues facing post-1945 American Jewry – Jewishness in the suburbs, acceptance as a religious, as opposed to ethnic group, whiteness and the Black civil rights movement, remembrance of the Holocaust, urban crises, and Cold War liberalism – found very little reflection in Schocken publications.

Thus, after operating for five years in the US, Salman Schocken could look at a mixed balance sheet. No doubt, an intellectual elite of American Jewry welcomed the importation of books that made the European Jewish tradition and history more accessible than before. The praise by *Commentary* and *Aufbau* may have encouraged Schocken in his ambitious vision: by virtue of its transnational history and setup, Schocken Books would be both an agent of mutual influences among three Jewish cultures – Germany, Palestine/Israel, and the US – out of which a transnational Jewish culture would develop, taking material form in Schocken books that would form a new canon of Jewish cultural knowledge.

Realities looked different, at least in hindsight. Instead of a transnational canon emerging out of interactions among various Jewish cultures, we see an effort to export the cultural products of a supposedly superior, more productive culture to a less productive target culture. In this model, often called “cultural diffusion,” the target culture “receives” these goods, with very little agency in defining its own needs or identifying which cultural goods will best serve it, let alone actively integrating and appropriating them. Schocken Books repackaged the books on its backlist by translating them, but beyond that and some marketing efforts did little to address the actual needs and interests of the readers of its target audience, many of whom therefore ignored or even rejected what seemed like “foreign objects” in an emerging *American* Jewish culture.

5. Cultural Transfer and Transnationalism: Shaping American Jewish Culture

How does the understanding of American Jewry as the product of transnational cultural forces fit into this picture? The experience of Schocken Books seems to highlight the importance of distinct national Jewish cultures and the difficulties in transferring or meshing them with one another to form something new – a transnational culture. The Schocken story can serve as a case study to link a transnational approach with the model of cultural transfer, as a way to better understand some crucial aspects of American Jewish history.

“Cultural transfer” is defined against earlier approaches to cultural interaction, which were variously called “diffusionist,” “reception-focused” or “influence-focused.”³³ As described above, the early period of Schocken’s US operations provides a good example of such types of interaction. While these approaches focused on the *exportation* of cultural goods, “cultural transfer” focuses on the motives and circumstances around their *importation*. It assumes much greater agency among actors in the “receiving” culture who reflect on cultural needs and identify potential ideas, cultural objects, or patterns that will address those needs. Successful cultural translation by cultural mediators is necessary for such products to be integrated and appropriated into their new context.

To tap the potential of transnational approaches to American Jewish history, its combination with the conceptual tool of cultural transfers can be particularly helpful, especially as the concepts point in different, even opposite directions. Transnationalism may not negate the differences between various cultural contexts, but relativizes them by focusing on their entanglements rather than their differences. Cultural transfer, by focusing on the presence of elements of a “foreign” culture, also destabilizes the idea of fixed cultural, or even national, identities. But it takes as a starting point the existence of distinct and coherent cultural contexts between which transfers take place.

³³ Matthias Middell, “European History and Cultural Transfer,” *Diogenes* 48, no. 1 (2000): 23–30; Wolfgang Schmale and Martina Steer, eds., *Kulturtransfer in der jüdischen Geschichte* (Frankfurt: Campus, 2006); Christophe Charle, Jürgen Schriewer, and Peter Wagner, eds., *Transnational Intellectual Networks: Forms of Academic Knowledge and the Search for Cultural Identities* (Frankfurt/New York: Campus, 2004); Micha J. Perry and Rebekka Voß, “Approaching Shared Heroes: Cultural Transfer and Transnational Jewish History,” *Jewish History* 30 (2016): 1–13.

By holding transnationalism and cultural transfer in balance with one another – coherent and distinct cultures on the one hand, and their dynamic and fluid nature on the other – these concepts can be fruitfully connected and made relevant for American Jewish studies. Taken together, they can save each other from their respective pitfalls: the dissolution of national cultures that can be the extreme outcome of transnational exchanges, and the reification of cultures as static entities between which transfers take place.

Schocken Books learned the hard way that what they took to be transnational was actually a national Jewish canon, and that it did not speak to postwar American Jews' cultural needs. This experience suggests that cultural transfers resulting from the transnational nature of American Jewry involve processes of selection and adaptation that are deeply enmeshed in the distinctly *American* Jewish cultural context. If we can tease out, by using cultural transfer as a tool, which transnational cultural imports were integrated and which were not, we will know more about how American Jewry has been both transnational in its makeup and distinctly American at specific points in time. Without falling for static and essentialist understandings of what is transnationally "Jewish" and what is "American," or what is too specifically "German Jewish" to fit American Jewish culture at particular moments in time, such an analysis raises the question how one can speak meaningfully about what is American and what is Jewish in the American Jewish experience. This should be a crucial issue on the research agenda of transnational American Jewish studies.

Jewish-Christian Dialogue and American Visions of the Postwar World

by Jessica Cooperman

Abstract

American occupying forces made the promotion of Jewish-Christian dialogue part of their plans for postwar German reconstruction. They sought to export American models of Jewish-Christian cooperation to Germany, while simultaneously validating and valorizing claims about the connection between democracy and tri-faith religious pluralism in the United States. The small size of the Jewish population in Germany meant that Jews did not set the terms of these discussions, and evidence shows that both German and American Jews expressed skepticism about participating in dialogue in the years immediately following the Holocaust. But opting out would have meant that discussions in Germany about the Judeo-Christian tradition that the American government advanced as the centerpiece of postwar democratic reconstruction would take place without a Jewish contribution. American Jewish leaders, present in Germany and in the US, therefore decided to opt in, not because they supported the project, but because it seemed far riskier to be left out.

1. Introduction

In January 1949, Rabbi Simon Kramer, stationed in US-occupied Germany as Jewish liaison representative to the Religious Affairs Branch of the Office of Military Government, sent a letter to Rabbi Hirsch Freund, executive director of the Synagogue Council of America.¹ “My Dear Rabbi Freund,” Kramer wrote:

¹ The Synagogue Council of America was founded in 1926 to promote cooperation and collaboration between the Reform, Conservative, and Orthodox branches of American Judaism. Its work focused on the protection of church-state separation in the US, preserving and repatriating Jewish sacred objects after World War II, and the promotion of civil rights and Black-

“It will interest the Synagogue Council to know that the United States Military Government is making arrangements to send selected German representatives to the United States as part of a large scale plan of restoration and cultural exchange. [...] There will be a large delegation of Catholics, an equal number of Protestants, some under the auspices of the National Conference of Christians and Jews [...] and some Jews under the auspices of Jewish organizations.”

Kramer expressed his hope that the Synagogue Council would take responsibility for sponsoring and organizing the visits of these German Jews. He reassured his colleague that all expenses would be covered by the government. The sponsoring agency would only have to work with the Religious Affairs Branch to plan and implement visitors’ itineraries. “The entire purpose” of these visits, Kramer explained, “is to help in the process of the rebuilding and the reorientation of the various elements of the German population for life in a Democratic [sic] Germany.” Perhaps anticipating a question from Rabbi Freund, Kramer added, “Do not ask me about the worthwhileness of the entire matter. Suffice it to say the Military Government is doing it, and I do not want to see the Jewish group left out.”²

Kramer served in an American military government that saw the construction of a tri-faith model of religious dialogue, one in which Protestants, Catholics, and Jews all participated together, as a crucial component of the postwar re-education of German society. The Religious Affairs Branch, a subsidiary of the Division of Education and Cultural Relations, played a relatively small part in the massive administrative system that the United States and its wartime allies put in place to rebuild and denazify Germany in the late 1940s, but it played a significant role in exporting American models of tri-faith cooperation and Jewish-Christian dialogue to Germany. Even more significantly, it helped to validate and valorize American ideas about the connections between democracy and tri-faith religious pluralism in the United States.

Kramer’s skepticism reflected the uncertain future of Jews in Germany. Following the war, the United States estimated that only “156,705 ‘Persons

Jewish relations. The organization disbanded in 1994. See the Synagogue Council of America papers in the collections of the American Jewish Historical Society (hereafter AJHS), New York, accessed October 10, 2021, <https://archives.cjh.org/repositories/3/resources/13248>.

² Rabbi Simon Kramer, Nurnberg, to Rabbi Hirsch Freund, New York, January 6, 1949, AJHS, I-68 (Synagogue Council of America Papers), Box 23, Folder 12.

professing Jewish faith' [...] [resided] in the four zones and Greater-Berlin, plus an additional 112,013 Jews in DP camps."³ Eastern European Jews, displaced by the Holocaust, and unable or unwilling to return to their prewar homes, comprised the majority of these populations. By 1950, the Jewish population of West Germany fell to only 21,974 people as both eastern European and German Jews left Germany to settle elsewhere, particularly in the newly established State of Israel.⁴ This rapid decline in numbers seemingly confirmed the opinion of most American Jewish agencies, as well as of the World Jewish Congress, that following the Holocaust, Jews should not live on "the blood-stained soil of Germany."⁵ But Kramer's comments also reflected his reasonable understanding that once an institution as powerful as the US government adopts a particular strategy or position, risks accrued to those either left out or refusing to participate. Jewish leaders, skeptical or no, wanted to be sure they had a place in postwar conversations about religion and the structures of democracy.

2. Religion, Democracy, and Re-education of West Germany

In the postwar period, the US government embraced the idea that the "Judeo-Christian tradition" could serve as an antidote to what it saw as the dangerous political ideologies that had led the world to war. In place of conflict, American officials sought to spread a commitment to what future secretary of state John Foster Dulles described as "common standards of knowledge and morality," in the "Six Pillars of Peace" that he and the Federal Council of the Churches of Christ in America presented to President Franklin D. Roosevelt, in 1943, as the basis for postwar international cooperation. Dulles argued that this framework for peace had universal value, declaring: "[t]hese six pillars of

³ Beryl McClaskey, *The History of the U.S. Policy and Program in the Field of Religious Affairs Under the Office of the U.S. High Commissioner for Germany* (Historical Division, Office of the Executive Secretary, Office of the U.S. High Commissioner for Germany, 1951), Table I, 101.

⁴ Andrea A. Sinn, "We Have the Right to Exist Here: Jewish Politics and the Challenges of *Wiedergutmachung* in Post-Holocaust Germany," in *Rebuilding Jewish Life in Germany*, eds. Jay Howard Geller and Michael Meng (New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 2020), 30–47, here 30.

⁵ See Jay Howard Geller, "The Politics of Jewish Representation in Early Germany," in *Rebuilding Jewish Life in Germany*, eds. Jay Howard Geller and Michael Meng (New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 2020), 14–29, here, 16.

peace are derived from moral beliefs common to all religions and can equally be espoused by Protestants, Catholics and Jews – indeed by all men who have an enlightened view of self-interest.”⁶

American religious and political leaders embraced the idea of a “Judeo-Christian tradition,” which offered protection against secular political ideologies that theologians like Reinhold Niebuhr argued “had rushed into the vacuum created by Christianity’s abdication between the wars, claiming to offer ‘ultimate answers to the ultimate issues of human existence.’”⁷ American officials reasoned that to help Germany recover from Nazism, and to inoculate Germans against the allure of Communism, Judeo-Christian religious values had to be part of their plans for postwar reconstruction.

Even before the end of the war, American policies included religious re-education as part of the blueprint for rebuilding a democratic Germany. General Eisenhower’s Supreme Military Headquarters, focused on planning the military invasion of Europe, “contained a very small subsection for education and religious affairs which contributed plans for education policy to an overall field manual intended for the Supreme Commander and his troops.”⁸ When the Office of Military Government, United States (OMGUS), under the command of General Lucius Clay, was established in October 1945 to administer the US zone of occupation in Germany, the Religious Affairs Bureau became a branch of the Education and Cultural Relations Division. When direction of the American occupation transferred from the military to the State Department in 1949, the Religious Affairs Branch became part of the staff of the High Commission for Germany (HICOG).

Both OMGUS and HICOG instructed Religious Affairs personnel to oversee the denazification of German church bodies and the elimination of religious restrictions against Jews. The purview of their work, however, was limited to those areas of church life deemed to be secular in nature, primarily monitoring the people involved with, and the publications issued by, religious institutions. They were expected to review, and if necessary to censor materials that either promoted Nazism or challenged Allied regulations, but policies

⁶ “Churchmen Detail ‘Pillars of Peace,’” *New York Times*, March 19, 1943, 10.

⁷ Quote from K. Healan Gaston, *Imagining Judeo-Christian America: Religion, Secularism, and the Redefinition of Democracy* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2019), 142.

⁸ James F. Tent, *Mission on the Rhine: Reeducation and Denazification in American Occupied Germany* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1982), 16.

enjoined them to “permit and protect freedom of religious belief and worship” in their respective zones.⁹ Direction of “the constitutions, rituals or internal relationships of purely ecclesiastical bodies” was to be left to “German churchmen.”¹⁰

American officials firmly believed that if Nazi leadership within the churches could be removed, traditional religious structures would provide a stabilizing force in society and a bulwark against both fascist and Communist influences.¹¹ Guiding principles for the work in religious affairs stated that:

“[R]eligious institutions are recognized as a significant element in the social structure of Germany and shall be given commensurate consideration in the program of re-education and reorientation conducted for the building of a peaceful and democratic Germany.”¹²

OMGUS policies instructed Religious Affairs personnel to avoid direct intervention in religious practices and to promote contact with religious groups in other countries, in order to provide “a new stimulus toward democratization,” and to urge “democratic cooperation among the respective religious groups toward the realization of a peaceful Germany and toward the achievement of that toleration between diverse cultural and racial groups which is the basis of national and international tranquility.”¹³

The conviction that internal decisions of the churches should be led by “German churchmen” reflected a particular understanding of the actions of church leaders, particularly Protestant church leaders, under Nazism. The Americans knew that many Protestant clergy members had supported Nazism and joined the racist and nationalist German Christians (*Deutsche Christen*) movement in the 1930s and throughout the war. They perceived this, however, as an aberration and believed that the majority of Christian leaders sided with the Confessing Church (*Bekennende Kirche*) in opposing Nazism. Stewart W.

⁹ Draft Directive No. 12 of the US Delegation to European Advisory Commission (EAC), November 24, 1944, National Archives (hereafter NA), College Park, Maryland, RG260.4.11 (Records of the Education and Cultural Relations Division), Box 165, Folder “Religious Affairs Policy,” 1.

¹⁰ Draft Directive to EAC, November 24, 1944.

¹¹ See Marshall Knappen, *And Call It Peace* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1947).

¹² Revision of Title 8, Part 1, GENERAL, Section B: General Policies for Religious Affairs, NA, RG260.4.11 (Records of the Education and Cultural Relations Division), Box 165, Folder “Religious Affairs Policy, 1945,” 8–110.

¹³ Draft Directive to EAC, U.S. Delegation, EAC. November 24, 1944, 1.

Herman of the World Council of Churches, assured his American readers in 1946 that after the war “the Evangelical [or Protestant] Church in Germany [...] wasted no time in ridding itself of ecclesiastical officers who were maintained in power by the Nazi State.”¹⁴ Indeed, he explained, after travelling through Germany on behalf of the World Council, he could report with confidence that “it was common knowledge that the church had never been in sympathy with the German War [sic] of conquest.”¹⁵ Herman’s account, at best, displays naiveté about the far more complicated reality of Protestant and Catholic complicity during the war, but it served the interests of postwar clergy to burnish their image as moral opponents of Nazism, and present themselves as appropriate leaders to facilitate the social, political, and spiritual rehabilitation of Germany.¹⁶ American officials found it equally convenient to believe that German churches were now led by anti-Nazi Christians, prepared to embrace and spread the gospel of democracy.

3. Democracy and Jewish-Christian Dialogue

The promotion of Jewish-Christian dialogue as a tool for building German commitments to democracy emerged as a goal for the Religious Affairs Branch sometime in 1946, when General Clay agreed to allow “each of the three religious faiths in the United States – Protestant, Roman Catholic and Jewish – to send one liaison representative to the U.S. Zone to assist church leaders in German spiritual rehabilitation.”¹⁷ Liaison representatives offered advantages to the chronically understaffed Religious Affairs Branch: they had no official position within the military government but increased available manpower by serving as advisors and informants. Even better, rather than drawing on military budgets, sponsoring American institutions – the Catholic

¹⁴ Stewart W. Herman, *The Rebirth of the German Church* (New York: Harper & Brothers, 1946), 14.

¹⁵ Herman, *Rebirth of the German Church*, 98.

¹⁶ On Protestant Churches in postwar Germany, see Matthew D. Hockenos, *A Church Divided: German Protestants Confront the Nazi Past* (Bloomington: University of Indiana Press, 2004). On the German Christian movement, see Susannah Heschel, *The Aryan Jesus: Christian Theologians and the Bible in Nazi Germany* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2008).

¹⁷ McClaskey, *History of the U.S. Policy*, 21. On the promotion of dialogue groups, see Steven M. Schroeder, *To Forget It All and Begin Anew: Reconciliation in Occupied Germany, 1944–1954* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2009), 69–95; Noah B. Strote, “Sources of Christian-Jewish Cooperation in Early Cold War Germany,” in *Is there a Judeo-Christian Tradition? A European Perspective*, eds. Emmanuel Nathan and Anya Topolski (Boston: De Gruyter, 2016), 75–100.

Church, the Federal Council of the Churches of Christ in America, and the Synagogue Council of America – paid liaisons' salaries. By 1948 the World Council of Churches and the International Council of Christians and Jews (ICCJ) had also sent liaisons to Germany.¹⁸ The liaisons were charged with assisting German religious bodies to engage “in every way with the heavy task now confronting them, particularly with reference to the problems of spiritual and moral education and reconstruction.” They were additionally “expected to give particular attention to re-establishing relations between the churches of Germany and the religious resources of the United States.”¹⁹

The National Conference of Christians and Jews (NCCJ) and its president, Presbyterian minister Everett R. Clinchy, took a leading role in efforts to make Jewish-Christian dialogue an integral part of the United States' postwar mission in Germany. The organization had emerged from early-20th-century Protestant “goodwill” efforts to proselytize to Jews, but throughout the 1930s and 40s, under Clinchy's leadership, it managed to bring together Protestant, Catholic, and Jewish leaders, and move into broad public view by advocating for acceptance of a tri-faith model of American religious pluralism.²⁰ During the war, Clinchy spearheaded the establishment of the ICCJ, and in the years immediately following the war, he served as the president of both organizations. Carl Zietlow, a Methodist pastor from Minnesota, served as the ICCJ's liaison in Germany. Funding for his position, as well as for the establishment of local councils of Christians and Jews in Germany, came from the American NCCJ, with additional support provided by the US military government.²¹

In early 1949, Zietlow reported that he had overseen the establishment of four American-style councils for promoting Jewish-Christian understanding,

¹⁸ McClaskey indicates that the World Council of Churches sent a representative in 1947 and the NCCJ in 1948: *History of the U.S. Policy*, 21. Schroeder claims that the National Council of Christians and Jews (NCCJ) had a liaison in Germany in 1946: *To Forget It All*, 86. But this seems uncertain. Correspondence between NCCJ president Everett Clinchy and General Clay indicates that approval for an NCCJ liaison was given not later than August 1947. Letter from Everett R. Clinchy, New York, to General Lucius Clay, Germany, August 16, 1947, NA, RG260.4.11(Records of the Education and Cultural Relations Division), Box 163, File “Liaison Representative from [form or from?] the International Council of Christians and Jews.”

¹⁹ McClaskey, *History of the U.S. Policy*, 23.

²⁰ On the history of the NCCJ, see Benny Kraut, “Towards the Establishment of the National Conference of Christians and Jews: The Tenuous Road to Religious Goodwill in the 1920s,” *American Jewish History* 77 (March 1988): 388–412.

²¹ On the ICCJ, see Ruth Weyl and William Simpson, *The Story of the International Council of Christians and Jews* (Heppenheim: The International Council of Christians and Jews, 1995).

one in Munich, and others in Stuttgart, Frankfurt, and Wiesbaden. He described this accomplishment in his March report, explaining that “[t]hese Councils, composed of Protestants, Catholics and Jews, exist for the purpose of promoting tolerance, understanding, mutual respect and good will among peoples of different religions, races, and cultural backgrounds.” He had undertaken this work, he noted, at the invitation of the military government “because it was felt that the problem of reducing interfaith and intergroup tensions was an educational one, and could be solved only by an educational program similar to that conducted by the National Conference of Christians and Jews in America.”²²

To help explain the value of American-style interfaith cooperation to his German audience, Zietlow reported that he had hired Dr. Knud Knudsen, a book publisher from Berlin, to work on translations of NCCJ publications, in particular Sterling Brown’s *Primer on Intergroup Relations*.²³ Brown’s guide framed tri-faith religious pluralism as one of the central pillars of American democracy. As he described it, “from the first, America was something more than a one-group, one-culture nation. Protestants, Catholics, and Jews came here to seek religious freedom and economic betterment.” Through this unique partnership between Protestants, Catholics, and Jews, Brown argued, the establishment of the United States, ushered in a “world revolution in human relationship.” The idea of democracy had its roots in the Judeo-Christian tradition, Brown explained, but with the American Revolution, the “Founding Fathers” managed to take that tradition and create “something new under the sun.”²⁴

Brown’s description of American history projected an image of shared values and a celebration of tri-faith religious pluralism. According to him, religious prejudices reflected a failure to understand the true nature of American

²² Annual report, March 31, 1949. NA, RG260.4.11 (Records of the Education and Cultural Relations Division, Box 162, Folder “Interfaith Relations.”)

²³ Brown worked as the NCCJ’s director of publications during the war, then as assistant to Clinchy, NCCJ general director, and executive vice president, and in 1965 succeeded Dr. Lewis Webster Jones as the NCCJ’s third president. On Brown, see “Interfaith Group Elects President,” *New York Times*, April 8, 1965, 37; “President Emeritus of NCCJ Dies at 76,” *The Oklahoman*, December 19, 1984; “Dr. Sterling Brown Named National Conference Chief,” *Lubbock Avalanche*, April 7, 1965, 47.

²⁴ Sterling W. Brown, *Primer in Intergroup Relations* (New York: National Conference of Christians and Jews, 1949), 9–10.

democracy. The work of the NCCJ, Brown argued, was to protect and promote democracy by breaking down the artificial barriers and hostilities that some Americans erroneously chose to erect between religious groups:

“Protestants Catholics, and Jews in America practice ‘religious isolationism’ to a considerable extent. [...] Ignorance, which is one of the bases of this group antagonism, continues to beget social, economic, religious, and racial discriminations which are contrary to the Judeo-Christian tradition, to scientific knowledge, and to democratic ideal living.”²⁵

American Protestants, Catholics, and Jews, Brown asserted, failed to live up to the promise of the American Revolution when they remained separated from each other. So long as they persisted in staying trapped within their respective cultural boxes, they cut themselves off from democracy, modern ideas, and even from their own shared religious values. The NCCJ strove, therefore, to keep the spirit of the American Revolution alive. As Brown wrote, “[t]he struggle for better intergroup relations exists as a continuing phase of the American Revolution.” The present moment, he insisted, demanded redoubled efforts at promoting proper interfaith relations after “[h]aving won World War II with the help of Allied Nations, against the greatest counter-revolution American democracy has ever faced.”²⁶ While Zietlow planned to use Brown’s *Primer* to educate Germans about democracy, the text reveals ways that Brown and the NCCJ simultaneously used the example of Germany to educate Americans. Throughout his narrative, he poses fascism as a warning to those who fail to heed the NCCJ’s call for dialogue and insist instead on “cultural isolation,” which he described as “a bad habit with fascist implications.”²⁷ Brown noted that cultural diversity also demanded respect, as without it one would be faced with what he described as “cultural monism,” another sign of looming fascism.²⁸

²⁵ Brown, *Primer in Intergroup Relations*, 15.

²⁶ Brown, *Primer in Intergroup Relations*, 12.

²⁷ Brown, *Primer in Intergroup Relations*, 21.

²⁸ Brown, *Primer in Intergroup Relations*, 23.

4. The Place of Jews in Jewish-Christian Dialogue

In order to successfully import the tri-faith American model that they described as necessary to true democracy, Zietlow and the NCCJ sought Jewish participation in the interfaith programs it established in Germany, but disparity in numbers made this difficult. By HICOG's estimates, the Jewish population of all four zones of occupation represented only 0.2% of the total German population, while Protestants comprised 59.7% and Catholics 35%.²⁹ Most of the Jews in Germany, moreover, came originally from eastern Europe, where they tended to define Jewishness either in terms of religious orthodoxy, or as an ethnic, cultural, or national identity, rather than as a faith tradition akin to Christianity, which was more common among German and American Jews. And of course, all of the European Jews living in Germany after the war had survived the Holocaust but had lost much, if not all, of what defined their prewar lives. Many of them had come to the American zone in the hope of leaving Germany as soon as possible and settling in either the United States or Israel. Regardless of American policies focused on promoting democracy, reestablishing their own lives must have seemed far more pressing than engaging in dialogue with German Christians.³⁰

Throughout the spring of 1949, Zietlow submitted upbeat reports touting his accomplishments, but these reports unintentionally bore witness to additional difficulties in exporting American models of Jewish-Christian dialogue to postwar Germany. Referring to a recent interfaith conference, Zietlow wrote that all of those present had been "first rate German leaders," and that "[t]here was a wonderful spirit of give and take, such that [...] [o]ne was not conscious of who was Protestant, Catholic, or Jew." Discussions of religious education programs revealed, however, that in all existing Protestant and Catholic curricula "there is no reference to the religious development of Judaism since 70 A.D." Reflecting on the accomplishments of the meeting, moreover, Zietlow commented on the

²⁹ McClaskey, *The History of the U.S. Policy*, Table I, 101, Table VIII, 107.

³⁰ On Jews in postwar Germany, see Jay Howard Geller, *Jewish Life in post-Holocaust Germany, 1945–1953* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2005); Atina Grossman, *Jews, Germans and Allies: Close Encounters in Occupied Germany* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2009).

“agreement among the Christians that the problem of antisemitism and of Christian-Jewish relationships would still be a problem in Germany which the churches must be concerned with even though there were no Jews remaining. The problem is one that has to do with the recognition of the dignity and worth of the human being which is far deeper than antisemitism.”³¹

Zietlow seemed pleased with the outcome of the conference, but his report revealed that Protestant and Catholic participants knew next to nothing about post-biblical Judaism, and felt little need to discuss the many ways that Christian and Jewish experiences of the of the previous 15 years had differed quite profoundly. Moreover, they seemed agreed that discussions of “the Christian-Jewish relationship” did not really require Jewish participation.

Even in the United States, the NCCJ sought to advance discussion of the relationship between Christians and Jews, but did not necessarily perceive a need to include Jews in these conversations. As Everett Clinchy explained in a 1945 essay on the threat that Nazism posed to American values:

“Hitler discerned that an attack on the democratic revolution called for the annihilation of the Judeo-Christian tradition, and the destruction of all the values, the morals, and inspiration which were its source. Therefore, Hitler opposed the Jews – and yet not so much the Jews as the ideas of Judaism; but not so much the ideas of Judaism as the Christians who made those ideas potent; and not so much Christians as the standards, the disciplines, and the sanctities of Christianity.”³²

In Clinchy’s analysis, Hitler aimed his attacks primarily against Christianity. Programs to promote Jewish-Christian dialogue therefore served first and foremost to protect Christianity and democracy rather than to protect Jews, per se. As Clinchy clarified, “Hitler’s unerring cunning: to destroy the Jews and Judaism as the first step to the annihilation of Christians and Christianity.”³³ Clinchy’s formulation of the relationship between democracy and the Judeo-Christian tradition helps to clarify why the NCCJ placed such value on the creation of councils of Christians and Jews in US-occupied Germany.

³¹ Carl Zietlow, Activity Report for April, May, and June 1949, presented July, 1949, NA, RG260.4.11 (Records of the Education and Cultural Relations Division), Box 162, Folder “National Conference of Christians and Jews,” 4–5.

³² Everett R. Clinchy, “The Right to Be Different,” in *Religion and Our Racial Tensions*, ed. Dean Willard L. Sperry (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1945), 28–39, here 31.

³³ Clinchy, “The Right to Be Different,” 35.

Jews in the American zone, however, found themselves in an uncomfortable position within these US government-sponsored programs to promote inter-faith dialogue and engagement.

5. International Experts and American Models

The exchange program that prompted Rabbi Kramer's letter to Rabbi Freund at the Synagogue Council of America represented another facet of the work of the Religious Affairs Branch. In addition to working with religious communities, the Religious Affairs Branch also sponsored opportunities for German "experts" to visit the United States on the assumption that if they were immersed in the American milieu, these German visitors would come to appreciate the superiority of American social and political systems. Inspired by what they had seen and learned, visitors could then return to Germany and reconstruct their own communities along the American lines.

The Synagogue Council agreed to become the sponsor for German Jewish visitors and to help arrange itineraries supporting the goals of the program. Records for a handful of German Jewish "expert consultants" exist within files on the activities of the Synagogue Council. They offer limited biographical information and descriptions of the itineraries planned for each of their visits. The schedule of Jean Mandel, a leatherwares merchant born in Fürth, focused on teacher training, the administration of Jewish schools, and the influence of parents and home on Jewish education. That of Josef Warscher, a bookkeeper born in Poland but educated and employed, before and after the war, in Stuttgart, focused on issues related to Jews as citizens, with projected visits to national Jewish organizations and the offices of the NCCJ, in order to learn about American Jews' "interrelation with other religious groups in general community scene." Rabbi Wilhelm Weinberg, born in Austria and serving as the chief rabbi of Hesse, had a schedule focused on Jewish religious education. Plans for Ernst Landau, a journalist from Vienna, who had emigrated to Belgium before his arrest in 1941, included visits to synagogue centers and Young Men's Christian Associations in order to learn about the best ways to run youth activities. Rabbi Aaron Ohrenstein, born in Berlin and educated through gymnasium in Poland before attending the Jewish Theological Seminary of Breslau and earning a Ph.D. in Prague, served as a rabbi and teacher in Berlin until 1939. Now, as chief rabbi of Bavaria, Ohrenstein's schedule focused on the proper workings of the synagogue, the relationship

between the American Orthodox, Conservative, and Reform movements, as well as “the relation of the synagogue to the local churches and the interfaith movement.”³⁴ Leopold Goldschmidt and Dr. Hugo Nothman’s records describe only their educations at “University” and at the seminary at Breslau, respectively, and Goldschmidt’s career as a journalist. In all these cases, records offer little information about the selection of these men as representative experts, or about their interest in importing American ideas about tri-faith religious pluralism to Germany.

In his official report to the Synagogue Council, Rabbi Kramer parroted the military government’s language about these visits, describing them as giving visitors “the opportunity of learning the general democratic background of American living so that when they return to Germany they will be able to bring the ideals of democracy and the practice of American democratic life into the various fields of their interest in Germany.”³⁵ During their visits, however, the Jews selected as experts displayed a good deal of skepticism about the value this project for stabilizing democracy in Germany. At a ceremony during his visit, Jean Mandel presented Synagogue Council President Robert Gordis with three surviving Torah scrolls from Fürth, explaining that “(b)ecause the German people have not done anything to rehabilitate themselves after their crimes against humanity, we firmly believe that in *Eretz Yisrael* and in the United States of America these Torahs will find the right home.” Ernst Landau applauded American efforts to “re-educat[e] the Germans to a peaceful and democratic world,” but assured his audience that few Jews wanted to live there, while Rabbi Ohrenstein explained that he saw no future for a new community in Germany.³⁶

In a 1950 radio interview, Rabbi Kramer told American listeners that “a great many Germans are trying to better the relationships between Jews and non-Jews,” but lamented the limited number of participants in conversations between Jews and Christians. In private reports to the Synagogue Council he

³⁴ German Experts to the USA – Jewish, AJHS, I-68 (Synagogue Council of America Papers), Box 23, Folder 12–13; Projects No. 246, 247, 248, 249, and 250, 5077, E-5077, AJHS, I-68, Box 23, Folder 13.

³⁵ Rabbi Simon Kramer, undated report to the Synagogue Council of America, likely 1949, AJHS, I-68 (Synagogue Council of America Papers), Box 23, Folder 14.

³⁶ Speeches by Jean Mandel, Ernest Landau, and Dr. Aaron Ohrenstein, undated, all presumably from 1949, AJHS, I-68 (Synagogue Council of America Papers), Box 23, Folder 13.

offered more critical comments. Like the “expert” visitors to the United States, Kramer explained that he did not think that many Jews would remain in Germany and expected that “those that will be left will be mainly the aged and the sick who cannot get out.” Rather than the sort of upbeat assessment of the future of interfaith relations offered by Zietlow, who celebrated the lack of distinctions between Protestants, Catholics and Jews in his interfaith councils, Kramer described the unexpected risks of interfaith equality.³⁷ As the military government sought to equalize the treatment of Protestants, Catholics, and Jews in the name of democracy, he warned “Jews are beginning to feel pinched and the German population is becoming more and more arrogant and openly discriminatory and anti-semitic.”³⁸

Neither Kramer nor the Jewish experts whose trips he helped to organize expressed much confidence in the reconstructive or regenerative powers of religious pluralism or interfaith dialogue, but Kramer did express concern about Jews being left out of these conversations. In a report to the Synagogue Council, Kramer argued that “[a] good deal of the interfaith movement in Europe is concerned, certainly motivated by the possibility of missionizing among Jews.”³⁹ In a letter from August 1948, he urged the Synagogue Council to take the lead in organizing a national or even international organization to observe and represent Jewish interests at the International Council of Christians and Jews and upcoming international church conferences. Otherwise, he noted, “I am afraid that we will have to leave the Goyim to themselves.”⁴⁰

Kramer and the Synagogue Council had reason to suspect that at least some of those involved in promoting interfaith work would have happily proceeded without Jewish representation or engagement with Jews. They knew, moreover, that as a small minority, Jews could not set the terms of discussions about Christian-Jewish relations in Germany or elsewhere, and they expressed skepticism about what interfaith projects like those proposed by the NCCJ or ICCJ might accomplish. Opting out, however, meant that Christians

³⁷ For Zietlow’s comments, see Annual report, March 31, 1949.

³⁸ Liaison Representative, Education Cultural Relations, Religious Affairs OMGUC, appointed by SCA, undated report, AJHS, I-68 (Synagogue Council of America Papers), Box 23, Folder 15.

³⁹ Rabbi Simon Kramer, Paris, to the Synagogue Council of America, New York, August 16, 1948, AJHS, I-68 (Synagogue Council of America Papers), Box 23, Folder 14.

⁴⁰ Kramer to Synagogue Council of America, August 16, 1948.

alone would define the “Judeo-Christian tradition” that the American government advanced as the centerpiece of postwar democracy, and that must have seemed like a risk not worth taking.

FROM THE ARCHIVE

“Advocate of the Jewish People” Nehemia Robinson’s Legal Activism after 1945: An Introduction

by Elisabeth Gallas and Miriam Rürup

Source: Memorial Brochure “1898–1964: Dr. Nehemia Robinson,” World Jewish Congress, New York, 1965

In the field of international law in the US, a plethora of new or redefined concepts developed in response to the Second World War, the Holocaust, and the emergence of the Cold War. Many Jewish lawyers, often émigrés, participated in the preparation of perpetrator trials and filing indemnification claims against Germany. They assumed key roles in redefining human rights and refugee law standards and helped create tools to counter genocidal violence internationally. Recent scholarship has started to systematically explore this field, recognizing a Jewish angle in postwar legal history and international relations, that many of the innovative approaches and ideas involving human rights law came from Jewish legal scholars in the US, often refugees from Europe. Their work left a visible mark on conventions and legal documents for international forums like the United Nations,¹ reflecting their European experience and education from the interwar and war periods.²

¹ See for example James Loeffler, *Rooted Cosmopolitans: Jews and Human Rights in the Twentieth Century* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2018); James Loeffler and Moria Paz, eds., *The Law of Strangers: Jewish Lawyers and International Law in the Twentieth Century* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2019); Nathan A. Kurz, *Jewish Internationalism and Human Rights after the Holocaust* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2021); Gilad Ben-Nun, “How Jewish is International Law?” *Journal of the History of International Law* 23 (2020): 249–281; Philippe Sands, *East West Street: On the Origins of Genocide and Crimes against Humanity* (London: Weidenfeld & Nicholson, 2016).

² Rotem Giladi, *Jews, Sovereignty, and International Law: Ideology and Ambivalence in Early Israeli Legal Diplomacy* (New York/Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2021); Miriam Rürup, “Legal Expertise and Biographical Experience. Statelessness, Migrants, and the Shaping of New Legal Knowledge in the Postwar World,” *Geschichte und Gesellschaft* 43 (2017): 438–465; Leora Bilsky and Annette Weinke, eds., *Jewish-European Émigré Lawyers: Twentieth Century International Humanitarian Law as Idea and Profession* (Göttingen: Wallstein, 2021).

Historians created new awareness for this group of Jewish lawyers who, after experiencing the monstrous crimes of the Holocaust, turned to law and found consolation in making the world more peaceful. But this narrative has become imbalanced. As James Loeffler aptly describes it, “[a]rchetypal victims, Jewish lawyers come to represent avatars of international morality. This has then created a metanarrative in which exile and suffering spur moral revolution and global justice.”³ He calls for a more comprehensive and nuanced approach to Jewish legal biographies, giving room to the lawyers’ political interests, their prewar experiences and political activities, social factors, and personal sensibilities.⁴

With Loeffler’s caveat in mind, it is clear that for Jewish lawyers, having been forced to leave their homelands and familiar national legal systems for the international sphere, the law represented a matter of professional survival. For sure, most émigré lawyers and legal scholars did not turn to international law, but those who did deserve even more scholarly attention than they have so far received, and questions such as whether they took a specifically Jewish approach to international law – or even to law in general – ought to be considered.⁵

One person of note, Nehemia Robinson (1898–1964), has received too little attention in this growing field of interest. Robinson has often been overshadowed by his much more prominent brother, the lawyer Jacob Robinson. Yet he significantly shaped the legal activities of the World Jewish Congress (WJC) as well as other central Jewish organizations in the US that functioned as the motors of Jewish international advocacy from the 1940s to the 1960s. This Lithuanian-born jurist, trained at Jena University in Germany in the 1920s and practitioner of law in Kovno, Lithuania, in the interwar period, masterminded most of the important interventions in international criminal law launched by the WJC from New York.

On a theoretical as well as practical level, Nehemia Robinson actively commented on, shaped, and applied new legal instruments to confront the

³ James Loeffler, “Promise and Peril: Reflections on Jewish International Legal Biography”, in *Jewish-European Émigré Lawyers*, eds. Bilsky and Weinke, 35–50, here 43.

⁴ Loeffler, “Promise and Peril,” 44.

⁵ For the most recent publication addressing this broader question, see Michael Stolleis and Till van Rahden, eds., *Emanzipation und Recht: Zur Geschichte der Rechtswissenschaft und der jüdischen Gleichberechtigung*, (Frankfurt/M.: Vittorio Klostermann, 2021).

Nazi crimes and to fill gaps of international criminal law regarding the interests, claims, and needs of non-state collectives, especially those of Jews in distress.

Robinson demonstrates the transnational perspective in Jewish historical studies not only because of his work as a lawyer deeply committed to the Jewish cause and the struggle for justice, but by looking at his career, we can understand this specific form of commitment and its impact. He personified the worldwide dimension of Jewish legal activism as it evolved after World War II and under the impression of the growing divide between East and West.

By focussing on one specific document we want to highlight some of the main areas of American Jewish legal activism in the postwar period with its international implications, and to emphasize how the new definitions and concepts Robinson brought forward reflected the ideas and practices of his prewar life in central and eastern Europe. This document reveals much about how Jewish activists in the transnational sphere, one which linked Europe, Israel, and the US, understood Robinson's work and how they embodied the global connections which brought Jews together, across boundaries. The document is a memorial brochure created by his colleagues after Nehemia Robinson's sudden and unexpected death in January 1964 at the age of 66. It expressed their grief and collective dedication to further his work.

The 45-page long brochure, published by the WJC, consists of three parts: the “Tributes and Messages” of a few dozen colleagues, friends, and acquaintances form the centerpiece, supplemented by an opening biographical sketch and an unpublished article by Robinson at the end.⁶ The eulogies vary in length and include political tributes and individual messages from colleagues and fellow activists, such as from the WJC and the Zionist movement. The editors grouped these pieces according to Robinson's areas of activity as well as along national lines, with separate groupings of those from Israel, West Germany, and the US.

Featuring many characteristics James Loeffler identified as the later “mystification” of the group of Jewish international lawyers, this collective eulogy

⁶ We worked from a copy of the brochure held by the National Library of Israel (General Collection, system no. 990021985150205171), which indicates it formerly belonged to “Feinberg,” most likely Nathan Feinberg, himself an activist in the Comité des Délégations Juives and an expert in international law, who had immigrated to Palestine in 1924 and was a key figure in the establishment of the faculty of law at the Hebrew University of Jerusalem.

must certainly be assessed critically for a historically balanced reconstruction of Robinson's activities. Still, this collection represents an ideal starting point for a first biographical *tour d'horizon* of this multifaceted figure. An even closer reading could open up questions for future research in the area of American Jewish postwar advocacy from a transnational perspective, or rather within a transnational milieu.

Jewish Legal Activism in the Postwar Period

The first section of the brochure, entitled "Biography," together with the contribution of Robinson's WJC peer Maurice L. Perlzweig, which opens the second, main section, featuring the condolences of Robinson's colleagues, reveal the many facets of his political and professional commitments. He stands for an entire generation and network of scholars and activists involved in the postwar American endeavor to invest in international relations and peace with the aim of supporting Jewish sovereignty on the one hand, and a safe Jewish diaspora existence on the other. In advocating both, Robinson took a clear stand in the face of the postwar Zionist call for the "ingathering of the exiles," and just like his brother, his understanding of strengthening the Jewish diaspora went hand in hand with, for example, support of Israel in all claims with Germany. The brochure lists the eulogists from Israel, such as from Golda Meir, under the heading, "Robinson had won the love and affection of all Israel."⁷

Beginning in 1947 Robinson headed the Institute of Jewish Affairs in New York. The WJC's think tank for Jewish politics and legal problems had, since its establishment in November 1941, evolved into one of the strongest voices in the concert of Jewish international agencies and organizations striving to integrate the Jewish perspective into international negotiations about the postwar order.⁸

The brochure highlights four areas Robinson was especially involved in, whether through commentary, conceptualization, or practical initiatives: "con-

⁷ Memorial Brochure "1898–1964: Dr. Nehemia Robinson," World Jewish Congress, New York, 1965, 17.

⁸ Gil Rubin, *The Future of the Jews: Planning for the Postwar Order* (forthcoming); Zohar Segev, *The World Jewish Congress during the Holocaust: Between Activism and Restraint* (Berlin/Boston: De Gruyter, 2014).

temporary Jewish affairs, the United Nations, prosecution of war criminals, and indemnification of the victims of the Nazi terror.”⁹ Because of this dual approach – providing strategies and ideas but also working to implement them – Robinson stands as an example of what we want to call a Jewish legal activist. He published systematic commentaries on the UN conventions that were most important from the Jewish perspective, and provided pioneering work in the realm of restorative justice, especially concerning restitution and indemnification claims.¹⁰ But he also was involved in the “tracing of witnesses, who could testify to the crimes committed by the Nazi regime,”¹¹ helping the German and Austrian public prosecutors’ offices find and integrate into their investigations hundreds of testimonies.¹² As a significant number of the contributions in the brochure make clear, he never retreated to a scholarly existence, but rather was always equally absorbed in practical work.

His work was oriented towards creating a better future for the Jews in the diaspora. As the brochure implies, he prepared the documents for the WJC’s advocacy for the Jews in the Soviet Union and Arab countries, hoping to improve their situations at home or to assist in their migration to Israel or elsewhere. He was a global player in touch with representatives of Jewish communities all over the world, and his knowledge of the living conditions of Jews from Argentina to Australia proved indispensable to the WJC’s political strategies.¹³ Beyond the context of Jewish politics, he “made innumerable contributions in the field of human rights and in the development of an international community in which such rights would be developed and protected” in the ranks of the UN.¹⁴ Convinced that “Jewish rights were best protected if the human rights were assured,” as historian Nathan Kurz recently put it,

⁹ Memorial Brochure, 8.

¹⁰ Comments on the Declaration of Death of Missing Persons, the Convention Relating to the Status of Refugees, the Convention to the Status of Stateless Persons, the Genocide Convention, and the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. His most important work regarding restitution issues is: Nehemia Robinson, *Indemnification and Reparations: Jewish Aspects* (New York: Institute of Jewish Affairs, 1944).

¹¹ Memorial Brochure, 9.

¹² Dagj Knellessen, “Zeugen gesucht. Nehemia Robinson und die Zentrale Stelle,” *Jüdische Geschichte & Kultur. Magazin des Dubnow-Instituts* 3 (2019): 22–23.

¹³ See Kurz, *Jewish Internationalism*.

¹⁴ Memorial Brochure, 12.

Robinson took part in many UN meetings, including the 1951 Refugee Convention where he pushed for the implementation of the principle of *non-refoulement*, negotiated and signed on Israel's behalf by his brother Jacob.¹⁵

At the same time, Nehemia Robinson meticulously confronted the catastrophe of the past in his urge to bring Nazi perpetrators to trial and to ensure victims their rightful indemnifications. The voices collected in the brochure underline Robinson's vast efforts in this sphere, in particular emphasizing that the pathbreaking treaties concluded with Germany on the issue of reparations in 1952, which led to the famous Luxembourg Agreement, would not have been concluded without his commitment and knowledge.¹⁶

European Roots

Robinson's activities and profile can be understood as deeply rooted in European Jewish traditions of diplomacy and political intervention that took off in the 19th century and came to fruition in the interwar period. Many jurists, mostly those stemming from eastern European countries, after the First World War were deeply invested in creating the means to improve the legal situation of the Jews worldwide, supporting and enforcing Jewish minority rights and legal equality in the new nation states born in the former Habsburg and Russian empires, and protecting Jews from violent assaults and pogroms. The so-called *Gegenwartsarbeit*, "work in the present," aimed at supporting Jewish national minorities (as opposed to the future-oriented Zionist projects that turned all attention towards Palestine and, after 1948, Israel) should be understood as the main political influence on activists like Robinson.¹⁷ The Institute of Jewish Affairs can be seen as an heir to the *Comité des Délégations Juives*, active at the 1919 Paris Peace Conference and representing Jewish interests in various states and at the League of Nations in the interwar period. People who contributed to the brochure embodied this continuous line of activity, most prominently then president of the WJC, Nahum Goldmann. While Robinson's commitments echo those of his predecessors working for the *Comité* in Paris

¹⁵ Kurz, *Jewish Internationalism*, 2; Gilad Ben-Nun, "From Ad Hoc to Universal: The International Refugee Regime from Fragmentation to Unity 1922–1954," *Refugee Survey Quarterly* 34 (2015): 23–44; Rürup, "Legal Expertise," 438.

¹⁶ Dan Diner, *Rituelle Distanz: Israels deutsche Frage* (München: DVA, 2015).

¹⁷ Dimitry Shumsky, "Gegenwartsarbeit", in *Enzyklopädie jüdischer Geschichte und Kultur*, vol. 2, ed. Dan Diner (Stuttgart/Weimar: Metzler, 2012), 402–406.

and Geneva, we learn from the testimonies in the brochure that he was fully aware of the flaws in international law after the First World War that had failed to adequately protect the Jews of Europe. As his peers suggest, this failure drove him to think of different legal means that might be more successful and, just as importantly, protect all minority groups in the world.

Most prominently we can see this shift in perspective in his work for indemnification and restitution claims. Rooted in European traditions of legal advocacy, Robinson at the same time was in search of new forms and instruments that would address new global challenges. In the brochure, colleagues praise his involvement in this area above all others. Moses A. Leavitt, treasurer of the Conference on Jewish Material Claims against Germany, emphasizes in his eulogy that the innovative idea of installing Jewish trustee and successor organizations to claim and manage heirless or unidentifiable Jewish property that had been stolen, “aryanized,” dispersed, or left behind during the war, and found in Germany by the Allied troops, was mainly Robinson’s. And he takes his tribute even further, claiming, “without him, I am convinced, we could not have secured the indemnification law as it was finally adopted by the German Parliament – without his knowledge and effort.”¹⁸ What was pioneering in Robinson’s intervention into existing international regulations on restitution was firstly to challenge the territorial principle that foresaw the return of war booty to the countries of origin, and secondly to give non-state actors, such as the Jewish people, a voice and representation in negotiations that by principle only allowed for states to take part in. In his long and comprehensive 1944 study, “Indemnification and Reparations: Jewish Aspects,” he laid down this new approach to restitution and indemnification procedures and provided an innovative perspective in international law, opening a greater role for NGOs and non-state representatives. His vision clearly echoed the legal acknowledgement of Jewish national autonomy and minority status pressed for by Jewish politicians and activists in eastern Europe and elsewhere during the interwar period. But it also bears the traces of its time and place of creation. Without the Holocaust as a motor *ex negative*, and without the US government opening up to new forms of legal representation (certainly also motivated by Cold War sensibilities), Robinson’s ideas would hardly have succeeded.

¹⁸ Memorial Brochure, 14.

As the brochure clearly shows, a wide field of legal activity existed in the aftermath of World War II, but it was shaped in part by prewar antecedents. By focusing on the networks of people in combination with their biographical backgrounds we can deepen our understanding of how international law was transformed in the postwar period. Nehemia Robinson can serve as an example, both in his personal and professional biography but also with the network in which he operated, mirrored in this brochure. It assembles many different people from, so to speak, opposing factions and legal traditions: judges and lawyers from West Germany, which at this point was not known for being keen on prosecuting former Nazi perpetrators, as well as Zionist activists and Israeli politicians, who had not yet established diplomatic relations with either of the two Germanies. Robinson's function as a mediator between East and West, the old and the new world as well as different fields of legal activity become evident in this brochure. Historians now can use his example as a lens through which to view some of the understudied connections of Jewish legal history, to broaden our understanding of postwar legal activism by non-state actors, and appreciate the transnational dimensions of American Jewish legal history.

Transnational American Jewish Studies A Select Bibliography

The impulse driving this issue of PaRDeS is the recognition that transnational approaches to the American Jewish experience hold an enormous heuristic potential. It has not been tapped to anywhere close to its extent. This is not to deny or minimize the existence and importance of scholarship based on transnational perspectives. The editors and contributors to this issue have compiled a list of such publications (with no claim whatsoever to comprehensiveness) as a resource for colleagues wishing to explore ways to look at American Jewish history from transnational perspectives. The works listed here reflect the elasticity of transnationalism seen as an approach rather than a narrowly defined concept. (The contributors' focus on German-American-Jewish transnational entanglements is reflected in the choice of entries and their language.)

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BOOK REVIEWS

Daniel B. Schwartz, *Ghetto: The History of a Word* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2019), 288 p., \$35.00.

In this monograph, Daniel B. Schwartz traces the peregrinations of the word “ghetto” through a multitude of contexts ranging from early modern Italy, where the term was coined in Venice in 1516, through Germany and Eastern Europe in the 19th and first half of the 20th century up to contemporary America. He provides a very broad and overall very convincing range of examples, how “ghetto” was used in various contexts and debates, and how the meaning assigned to the word shifted over the course of time.

After the introduction, he divides his study into five chapters dealing with different episodes and contexts: Early Modern Italy, the term’s transformation in the 19th century, early American debates before 1918, the German occupation of Eastern Europe during the Second World War, and the discussions in the postwar United States. In his conclusion, he adds a short side note on the use of “ghetto” in the context of the Israeli-Palestine conflicts after 1948.

Five main chapters are all about the same length, about 40 pages each, and the notes appear after the text (pp. 205–239). There is a very well-edited index, which covers not only places and persons, but a broad range of subjects as well. This subject index is all the more important, as it brings the various connotations of “ghetto” together and highlights discursive traditions that might get lost in reading the multitude of examples given in the chapters.

In the introduction, Schwartz writes about the difficulties in defining “ghetto” by referring to descriptive as well as prescriptive (normative) approaches. Even the most common connotations, such as compulsion, homogeneity, spatial segregation, immobility, and socioeconomic deprivation, do not always appear together. 19th century debates have added a temporal dimension: “ghetto” as a symbol of the “old” Jewish life before emancipation; and the migration of the word to America has even loosened the ties to the Jewish experience. This sets the frame for the central question of the book: why has the term become so seminal (p. 6)?

Chapter 1 reviews the early modern Italian experience. Based on Benjamin Ravid’s definition of the early modern ghetto as “legally mandatory, exclusively Jewish and physically cordoned off via gates and walls” (p. 13) the author argues for a clear distinction between Jewish quarters and ghettos and discusses examples from Venice, Rome, and Florence. Nevertheless, Schwartz

shows that even in those times “ghetto” was more than a technical term. His remarks on the Jewish appropriation of “ghet” (as spelled in Rome) by equating the term with the Hebrew for a bill of divorce (“get”) are inspiring. The sources he presents in this part prove that the debates on the metaphorical level of the word, and thus the way “[f]rom Geographical Realia to Historiographical Symbol”¹, began well before Emancipation.

“The Nineteenth Century transformation of the Ghetto” is discussed in Chapter 2. After the French Revolution, compulsory areas of Jewish settlement were dismantled, but the term continued to play a vital role in Jewish debates. Schwartz traces the word on its journey to north-alpine Europe through encyclopedias, the so-called “ghetto literature” and journalistic works, mostly in the German-language realm. Again referring to Ravid, he views “ghetto” as more than a word with multiple connotations even in this period, but still defines it as a place – even though “ghetto” writers of that time placed it in rural settings and emphasized the temporal dimension. The chapter also discusses the prolonged process of emancipation in Italy – the ghetto of Rome ended only in 1870 – and deals with early American discussions, in which “ghetto” became “[o]nce again, a physical place in the big city” (p. 85). To Schwartz, the link between “ghetto” as a term and a physical place is essential, and thus the transalpine debates of the 19th century appear to be problematic to his argument. Moreover, the author neglects recent publications on the spatial dimensions of Jewish history, which also cover the topic of this chapter.²

Chapter 3 follows the US-American debates at the end of the 19th century. Here, Schwartz skillfully collects a wide range of mostly journalistic sources and shows, how immigrants familiar with Eastern European Jewish life redefined the term to match conditions in US cities. Based on a great variety of sources, Schwartz convincingly works out the importance of “ghetto” for the self-positioning of Jewish migrants. This part is the most innovative part of the book. Debates on the density of Jewish settlements and the prospects of assimilation or the question of why a quarter inhabited exclusively by

¹ Benjamin C. I. Ravid, “From Geographical Realia to Historiographical Symbol: The Odyssey of the Word Ghetto” in *Essential Papers on Jewish Culture in Renaissance and Baroque Italy*, ed. David B. Ruderman (New York: New York University Press, 1992).

² Simone Lässig and Miriam Rürup, eds., *Space and Spatiality in Modern German-Jewish History* (New York, NY: Berghahn Books, 2017); Alina Gromova, Felix Heinert, and Sebastian Voigt, eds., *Jewish and non-Jewish Spaces in Urban Context* (Berlin: Neofelis, 2015).

Christians could not be a ghetto, shed an interesting light on the reconceptualization of “ghetto” in a migration society. The chapter sometimes lacks some distance to the descriptions in the quoted sources, especially when it comes to accounts from travelers. Was the equation of the Jewish quarter in Paris with poverty and dirt (p. 107–108) really rooted in observation, or is it rather a literary topic? Schwartz gives little attention to the narrative strategies of the authors he quotes, which leads to the impression that the changes in terminology just happened.

In the fourth chapter, the author returns to Europe to discuss the impact of Nazi Germany on the “ghetto” debates. He starts his observations in the early days of the NS-regime and convincingly relates how the exclusionary German politics led to an intensification of the debates among German Jews. Briefly he touches on anti-Semitism in Poland and Hungary (p. 130–132); more attention is given to voices in the USA discussing “ghetto” as a “Jewish space” (p. 132–137). On the politics of ghettoization in the German occupied territories, Schwartz confirms the findings of Dan Michman³ and adds an important perspective by tracing Jewish voices from within the ghetto walls.

Chapter 5 turns the attention to post WWII-USA, where the motif of “ghetto” as a compulsory area of settlement now focused on the black population. Describing the debates on the “black ghetto” and the role of racism in perpetuating the ghetto, Schwartz convincingly analyzes the narrative strategies and the processes of borrowing arguments among the authors.

The book presents the changes and changeability of “ghetto” in the course of half a millennium. Throughout his work, the author presents a kaleidoscope of different voices on “ghetto”; every page turns the reader’s attention to yet another facet, using sources and research literature in English, Italian, French, German, Yiddish and Hebrew. His narrative is strongest when he describes “ghetto” as a place of compulsory settlement. In chapters 1, 4 and 5, he draws fascinating pictures of the interplay between compulsion from the non-Jewish society and appropriation by the inhabitants. When dealing with periods in which the connection between term and place loosens, in chapters 2 and 3, he needs to argue differently. In chapter 3 Schwartz builds his argument around the notion of ghetto as an element of metropolitan urbanity. The short remarks

³ Dan Michman, *The Emergence of Jewish Ghettos During the Holocaust* (Cambridge/Mass.: Cambridge University Press, 2011).

on 19th century transalpine Europe in chapter 2 undervalue the importance of these debates. The variety of connotations to which Schwartz refers in his introduction develops in these discussions. Schwartz himself underlines how American Jewish authors in the late 19th century drew upon their European experiences, but it was not the places, it was the discourse that shaped their views. Thus, a stronger focus could have been devoted to the fact that “ghetto” was and is always “man-made”. Politicians, writers, journalists, historians – they all produce and reproduce “ghetto”.

Schwartz’ rich presentation of voices and reflections on “ghetto” provides an insight to the multitude of its contexts. It shows the importance of the term over centuries and continents. However, in this book all too often “ghetto” appears foremost as a place, as something that just “is” and has to be analyzed or dealt with. Future studies can rely on Schwartz’ history of the word to study the human factor in the creation and recreation of “ghetto”. This book constitutes a fundamental reference for those efforts.

Jürgen Heyde, Halle

Karl Erich Grözinger, Jüdisches Denken: Theologie – Philosophie – Mystik, Band 5 Meinungen und Richtungen im 20. und 21. Jahrhundert (Frankfurt/New York: Campus Verlag, 2021), 857 S., 41 €.

Michael Marmor and David Ellenson (eds.), American Jewish Thought Since 1934: Writings on Identity, Engagement, and Belief (Chicago: Brandeis University Press, 2020), 352 p., \$ 29.

Im Jahr 2004 erschien der erste Band und nach siebzehn Jahre ist das Vorhaben abgeschlossen. Der Potsdamer Judaist und Religionswissenschaftler Karl Erich Grözinger legt mit der fünften und letzten Studie seiner, das Wort ist hier unvermeidlich: monumentalen Geschichte des „Jüdischen Denkens“ nicht nur „sein“, sondern *das* Hauptwerk auf diesem Feld vor. Es gibt keine vergleichbare Gesamtdarstellung weltweit: nicht was den bloßen Umfang betrifft, aber auch nicht, was die geistige Flexibilität angeht, die jeden der fünf Bände als eigenständige Lektüre lohnenswert macht – um das Mindeste zu sagen.

Der Rezensent ist, das darf nicht verschwiegen werden, dabei vor allem eines: parteiisch. Er hat das Vorhaben von Anfang an kritisch begleitet und

es mehrfach ausführlich gewürdigt. Und während er an diesem Text schreibt, darf er die Freude teilen, dass die international maßgebliche Philosophiegeschichte, die unter dem Namen ihres Begründers kurz „Ueberweg“ genannt wird, gleich mehrere Bände zur jüdischen Philosophie plant und dabei dann nicht zuletzt Grözingers „lange Geschichte“ berücksichtigen müssen.¹ Dass zur Realisierung des „Ueberweg“-Plans Wissenschaftlerinnen und Wissenschaftler aus aller Welt zusammenkommen werden, ist dabei selbstverständlich. Wer kann schon alles von Torah und Tanach bis hin zur Gegenwart überblicken? Grözinger tut es offensichtlich, nahm das Risiko auf sich und kann sich dabei, ohne jede Eitelkeit, am Ende auch einen Rückblick auf sein Werk erlauben.

Parteiisch ist der Rezensent aber nicht nur angesichts von Grözingers Werk und den zu erwartenden Folgen, die seine Geschichte für die Forschung hat und noch haben wird. Die bloße Tatsache, dass nun die fünf Bände „Jüdisches Denken“ existieren, rechtfertigt im Nachhinein die Anstrengung Vieler, die Erforschung dieses Feldes vorangetrieben zu haben, ohne dabei auf akademische Anerkennung in Deutschland hoffen zu dürfen. Das jüdische Denken ist für die maßgeblichen Personen innerhalb der Judaistik, bis auf sehr wenige Ausnahmen, kein förderungswürdiger Gegenstand, was man nicht zuletzt an den Schwerpunkten erkennt. Ausgebildete Philosophen, wie etwa Daniel Krochmalnik und Christoph Schulte, bilden bis auf weiteres die Ausnahme in einem Zusammenhang, der sich quasi natürlich auf jüdische Geschichte und die jüdischen Traditionen bezieht, aber oftmals nur wenig Vertrautheit mit den (religions-)philosophischen Grundlagen des Judentums zeigt. Grözingers Werk ist also auch nicht zuletzt ein Appell, hier mutiger zu werden.

Nun zum Abschlussband. Grözinger bleibt darin seinem bisherigen methodischen Vorgehen treu und das heißt in allererster Linie: er ist hermeneutisch offen. Das heißt im Weiteren, dass die Faktizität von „Meinungen und Richtungen“ anerkannt wird. Grözinger ist hierin ein aufmerksamer Chronist. Die Akzentsetzungen sind stets verschmolzen mit dem Nachweis der Bedeutung der Positionen. Grözinger schaut genau hin, dazu gleich, ohne grundstürzende Behauptungen über vermeintlich Übersehene(s) oder bewusst Ignorierte(s) in den Raum zu stellen. Das noch immer gerne gespielte Spiel von *maiores* versus

¹ Laurent Cesalli und Gerald Hartung (Hgg.), *Grundriss der Geschichte der Philosophie* (Basel/Berlin: Schwabe, 1983–).

minores ist seine Sache nicht. Die hermeneutische Offenheit ist keine Beliebigkeit, was bedeutet, dass sich die referierten „Meinungen und Richtungen“ an der Idee der Bewahrung der Judentümer als gemeinsamen, von Gott garantiertem Grund für die fortdauernde Existenz von Jüdinnen und Juden bis zum Erscheinen des Messias, zu messen haben. Nicht im Sinne eines nur schlecht verdeckten, traditionalistisch-orthodox abgesichertem Telos, sondern im Sinne der Dialektik von Traditionsbewahrung und Traditionsstiftung. Diese Dialektik sieht Grözinger gefährdet. Der stärker werdende weltweite Antisemitismus und die aus seiner Sicht sich verschärfende „Israelkritik“, beim Autor in distanzierenden Anführungszeichen gesetzt, bilden die Gefährdungslagen, denen sich ein gegenwärtiges, „jüdisches Denken“, wenn es lebendig bleiben will, stellen muss.

Diese Minimalbestimmungen sind keine künstlichen Gesten nachträglicher Rechtfertigung, vielmehr das Ergebnis der vorgestellten Forschungen selbst. Jedwede Essentialisierung oder an einem imaginierten Begriff der „Religion“ oder des „Judentums“ entlang sich orientierende Geschichte jüdischen Denkens lehnt Grözinger ab. Die Pluralisierung des Judentums in Judentümer ist für den Kenner der antiken und mittelalterlichen Denkformationen kein Spezifikum der Moderne, die dann gerne nach dem simplifizierenden Schema „Athen vs. Jerusalem“ modelliert wird oder gemäß der immer wieder anzutreffenden Behauptung, Spinoza sei der Zerstörer eines vermeintlichen Konsens darüber gewesen, was Judentum sei. Das Moderne ist für Grözinger die Gleichzeitigkeit vom Ältesten, dem Offenbarungsglauben, und dem Jüngsten, also den jeweiligen Auseinandersetzungen der wiederum historisch bedingten Fragwürdigkeit der Traditionsbestände und dem darin Unumstößlichen – eben dem Offenbarungsglauben.

Was bezüglich dessen im fünften Band besonders auffällt, neben ebenso knappen, wie präzisen Darstellungen zu Martin Buber und Franz Rosenzweig sowie eindrucklichen, monographielangen Studien zu Joseph Dov Soloveitchik und vor allem der Herzkammer des Buches, den „jüdischen Denominationen der Gegenwart in Selbstdarstellungen“, ist die festgestellte und gedeutete Selbsthistorisierung des jüdischen Denkens. Diese Selbsthistorisierung ist durch zwei geschichtliche Ereignisse notwendig geworden, die beide Eingriffe von fundamentaler Bedeutung in die Selbstwahrnehmung der Judentümer waren und sind: die Rede ist natürlich von der Shoah und der Gründung des Staates Israel. Sie bilden auf eine unauflösbare Weise die

Klammern, die jeweils bis in die Anfänge zurück und bis in die offene Zukunft hineingreifen. Beide geschichtlichen Ereignisse werden nicht als Ersetzung der Traditionen verstanden; da Traditionen immer Konstrukte sind, fordern sie vielmehr in ihrer Faktizität und in den durch sie entstandenen historischen Bedingungen von selbst zu einer Überprüfung der bisherigen Denk- und Glaubensinhalte auf. Insofern müssen sie als „Geschichtszeichen“ (Immanuel Kant) begriffen werden, deren nackte Faktizität für die Orthodoxien, wie die konservativen, liberalen und säkularen Bewegungen innerhalb der Judentümer maßgeblich sind.

Die Selbsthistorisierung vollzieht sich dann noch einmal, nämlich in Grözingers Erzählung selbst. Die von ihm behandelte umfangreiche Palette an „Meinungen und Richtungen“ ermöglicht und verlangt vor allem zugleich den Rückgriff auf die vorherigen Bände. Die Rede von „Meinungen und Richtungen“ ist dabei bewusst gesetzt. Ernsthaft wahrgenommene Pluralisierung bedeutet immer auch, dass die Vielheit der Stimmen nicht in die Einheit eines Großbegriffs, also einer tatsächlichen Reduktion des zuvor Ausgefalteten, zurückgeführt werden darf. Solche praktizierte Offenheit erfordert Geduld beim Autor, wie bei den Leserinnen und Lesern. Bei Grözinger kann man im Vollzug der Analysen lernen, wie Selbsthistorisierung schützt: Indem die Geschichte des jüdischen Denkens nach und nach zu einer eigenen Geschichte wird, gleicht sie sich den „toledot“ aus dem Ersten Buch Mose an – und wird damit Teil der Überlieferung.

Die Lektüre des fünften Bandes lohnt sich besonders da, wo Grözinger die Erwartungshaltung positiv enttäuscht. Wer hat hierzulande schon von Micah Goodman gehört? Einem 1974 geborenen israelischen Wissenschaftler und viel beachteten *public intellectual*, der mit seinen in schneller Folge erschienenen und stets auf Grundsätzliches abzielenden Büchern sehr viel Aufmerksamkeit erfährt? Tatsächlich spielen die Bücher mit stets weitausgreifenden und ideologisch hochaufgeladenen Narrativen über Maimonides und dessen philosophisches Hauptwerk „Führer der Verirrten“, den sogenannten „Sechstagekrieg“ und zuletzt den „Wondering Jew“ und seine Identitätsfindungsschwierigkeiten eine sehr wichtige Rolle in den israelischen Diskussionen um die politische Zukunft des Landes.² Grözinger ist hier ebenso gut informiert,

² Micah Goodman, *Maimonides and the Book That Changed Judaism: Secrets of the „Guide for the Perplexed“* (Philadelphia: Jewish Publication Society, 2015); derslb., *Catch-67: The Left, the*

wie aktuell. Aktuell in genau jenem Sinne, durch den sich auch die anderen Kapitel zu Denkerinnen und Denkern der Gegenwart auszeichnen, nämlich durch ausgewogene Einbettung in die Gesamtheit der Erzählung, wie es weiter oben dargestellt wurde.

Dadurch, dass sich das Interesse des „Jüdischen Denkens“ an der Rezeption der Traditionen orientiert, werden die lediglich *prima facie* auf die Gegenwart bezogenen Argumente rückwärts verlängert. Das trifft bei Goodman, aber auch bei den Abschnitten zur „feministischen Revolution“ (hier werden nach einer profunden Einführung Rachel Adler, Tamar Ross, Judith Plaskow und schließlich Lynn Gottlieb behandelt), Sherwin T. Wine, vor allem aber bei den problembezogenen Zusammenschauen zu, die Grözinger unter der Überschrift „Stimmen aus der Academia“ vorstellt. Die Abschnitte belegen die These, dass das israelische und das amerikanische Judentum die beiden aktivsten und innovativsten Denkerinnen und Denker stellen. Und in Europa?

Diese von Grözinger selbst nicht gestellte Frage führt zurück zu dem, was hier die „Herzkammer“ des Buches genannt wurde. Grözinger gibt in dem Abschnitt zu den „Denominationen“ einer Ausdifferenzierungsgeschichte des amerikanischen Judentums im 20. Jahrhundert Raum, die so noch nicht in deutscher Sprache geschrieben wurde. Wie jede Ausdifferenzierungsgeschichte umfasst sie mehrere auf einmal: die von Institutionen, Glaubensrichtungen, Positionen und ihren Revisionen und Weiterentwicklungen. Diese Geschichten sind sozusagen der antreibende Motor für die Stabilisierung der Wahrnehmung von Pluralisierungsschüben, die sich sowohl ausbreiten, wie diffundieren. Der Abschnitt ist in gewisser Weise eine Rechtfertigung für das Unternehmen des fünften Bandes. Denn das US-amerikanische Judentum wird hier zum lebendigen, das heißt: praktizierenden Modell für die Aufmerksamkeitserweiterungen, die Grözinger im Weiteren vornimmt. Dass Pluralisierung Raum schafft für Experimente, für „rechte“, konsensuale und „linke“ Auslegungen, für Synthesen und schärfste Abgrenzungen zwischen „Denominationen“, es also keinen Grund gibt politisch-ideologische oder von scheinbaren „rechtgläubigen“ egal welcher Richtung vorgegebene Begriffe von Judentum, Jüdinnen und Juden zu akzeptieren, belegt dieser Band eindrücklich.

Und überhaupt sei festgehalten: Grözingers Judentümer sind in diesem Sinne demokratisch verfasst. Das mag gelegentlich wie eine Überdehnung der Realitäten wirken, doch wer sich der Halachah und ihrer Variationen stets bewusst ist, wird die Freiheit in den klar gezogenen Grenzen der einzelnen Abschnitte finden und über sie hinaus reflektieren können.

Wie sehr dies gerade innerhalb des amerikanischen Judentums gelungen ist, belegt ein Sammelband, der wie ein einziger Beleg zu Grözingers „Denominationen“-Kapitel wirkt. Mit David Ellenson (Brandeis University) haben der wichtigste Rabbiner und Theologe des sogenannten „Reform movement“ und Michael Marmor (Hebrew Union College), ebenfalls Rabbiner und Theologieprofessor, eine ebenso knappe, wie aussagekräftige Anthologie jüdisch-theologischer Abenteuer des Geistes erstmals seit dem Erscheinen von Mordecai M. Kaplans „Judaism as a Civilization“ 1934 arrangiert. Das Eindrückliche an Marmors und Ellensons Band sind nicht die kurzen Texte selbst, die meisten von ihnen haben kanonischen Status und sind insofern in der Kompilation vor allem für *Undergraduates* geeignet, sondern die darin zum Ausdruck kommende, bereits angeführte Vielfalt der Stimmen. Ein gut bis sehr gut abgestimmter Chor von Solisten tritt hier auf und lässt einen zu Karl Erich Grözingers Geschichte des „Jüdischen Denkens“ zurückkehren. Dankbar und, wie es sich für Philosophen gehört, staunend!

Thomas Meyer, Berlin/München

Debra Kaplan, *The Patrons and Their Poor: Jewish Community and Public Charity in Early Modern Germany (= Jewish Culture and Contexts)*, (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2020), 239 p., 75 \$ (USA), 60 £ (außerhalb der USA)

In ihrer Studie untersucht Debra Kaplan das System der jüdischen Wohlfahrt in drei bedeutenden Gemeinden der Frühen Neuzeit: Frankfurt a.M., Worms und Altona-Hamburg-Wandsbek. Das Besondere daran ist, dass die Autorin sorgfältig eine Vielzahl innergemeindlicher Quellen auf Deutsch, Hebräisch und Jiddisch auswertet, die bislang kaum beachtet wurden: Einnahme- und Ausgaberegister, Memorbücher, Protokollbücher sowie beschreibende Quellen. Explizit wie implizit bietet sie damit zugleich eine Einführung in die Bürokratisierung der jüdischen Gemeindeverwaltungen seit dem 16. Jahrhundert.

Das erste Kapitel stellt die drei Gemeinden mit ihrer je besonderen Geschichte und Struktur vor. Worms und Frankfurt weisen einige Parallelen auf, wie z. B. die Einrichtung eines Ghettos im 15. Jahrhundert, die ungewöhnliche Siedlungskontinuität sowie den kaiserlichen Schutz. Doch die Wormser Gemeinde war älter und sticht hervor durch ihre Bedeutung im Mittelalter und ihre vielen Gelehrten. In Frankfurt hingegen ermöglichte die boomende wirtschaftliche Entwicklung im 16. Jahrhundert jüdischen Händlern und Kaufleuten, wichtige Rollen in der Messestadt einzunehmen. Als es kaum noch städtische Gemeinden im Reich gab, entwickelte sich Frankfurt zu einem Zentrum mit etwa 3.000 Personen, vielen Institutionen und Gelehrten.

Die Gemeinden im Hamburger Raum entstanden erst um 1600, auch hier waren wirtschaftliche Gründe ausschlaggebend. Ashkenasische Zuwanderer folgten den zuerst aufgenommenen Sefarden. Sie wohnten vor allem im dänischen Altona. Über die Territorialgrenzen hinweg gründeten die Ashkenasen der drei Orte 1671 die Dreigemeinde Altona-Hamburg-Wandsbek (AH'U).

Im mittelalterlichen Ashkenas wurde Wohltätigkeit primär durch Privatleute geleistet (Kap. 2). Stiftungen am Lebensende zielten auf ein liturgisches Gedenken nach dem Tod. Die Frühe Neuzeit brachte eine starke Institutionalisierung, beginnend mit der (Wieder-)Begründung eines Hekdesch in den drei Gemeinden. Männer aus der Elite der Gemeinde, die Gabbaim, waren für Organisation und Buchführung der Wohltätigkeit zuständig. Außer der Kasse für die Armen und für die Ausgabe von Pletten, den Gutscheinen für Mahlzeiten und Übernachtungen, gab es Kassen für Spenden für das Heilige Land, für arme Bräute und Studenten.

Wohltätigkeit und Gemeindefinanzen hingen eng miteinander zusammen (Kap. 3). Die enormen Kosten wurden über Steuern, Spenden und Straf gelder sowie durch den Verkauf von Synagogensitzen und ehrenvollen Aufgaben finanziert. Die Gabbaim und die Govim, die Steuereintreiber, erhielten Disziplinierungsinstrumente im öffentlichen Raum der Synagoge, um Zahlungen durchzusetzen.

Die jüdische Ethik gebietet die Unterstützung der Armen (Kap. 4 und 5). Doch bereits im Mittelalter differenzierte man zwischen würdigen und unwürdigen Armen. In der Frühen Neuzeit wurde dies gleichgesetzt mit sesshaft (= bekannt) und nicht sesshaft (= unbekannt, verdächtig). Sesshafte Arme unterschied man nach arbeitenden und nicht arbeitenden und stellte die Gemeindeglieder unter ihnen besser. Etwa 10–20% der Bewohner gehörten

nicht zur Gemeinde, darunter Dienstboten, Schüler und Gemeindepersonal. Im Ghetto lebten die Bewohner jedoch zusammen in den Häusern. Deshalb dienten v. a. Rituale dazu, Status-Differenzen zu markieren, wie z. B. bei den Begräbnisorten, den Hochzeitsritualen und den Ritualen der Wohltätigkeit. Die wachsende Zahl der Vagierenden etikettierte man als Betteljuden und versuchte, sie durch Kontrollen an Stadtgrenzen und -toren aus der Stadt herauszuhalten. Dabei arbeiteten die jüdischen Gemeinden eng mit den städtischen Stellen zusammen. Um trotz Kontroll- und Abwehrpolitik auswärtige Gäste aufnehmen und würdigen Vaganten, wie z. B. Gelehrten, armen Schwangeren und Gebärenden, helfen zu können, entstand eine umfassende Buchführung. Reisende und Vaganten versahen sich ihrerseits mit Dokumenten, die ihren guten Leumund bewiesen.

Den Registern, die die Wohltätigkeit dokumentieren, widmet sich die Autorin in Kap. 6 und stellt für jede der Gemeinden ein Beispiel vor. Für Hamburg ist es ein Register mit den Spenden für Eretz Israel. Anders als in den vorläufigen Listen zeigen die Reinschriften Spender fast ausschließlich als männlich, der Beitrag der Frauen wird verschleiert. Die Spender stammen aus der reichen Oberschicht.

Für Worms und Frankfurt sind es Memorbücher. Spenden rund um den Tod gehen den Einträgen darin voraus, sie begründen Gedenken und Gebete für die Seelen der Verstorbenen und werden in der Synagoge verlesen. Standard in den Memorbüchern sind Listen von Märtyrern, bedeutenden Rabbinern, Gemeindegründern etc. der aschkenasischen Judenschaft seit 1096. Im Wormser Memorbuch setzen sich im 17. Jahrhundert Einträge nach Familien durch, auch hier werden Frauen nur noch als Teil ihrer Familie sichtbar. Im Lauf der Zeit wächst der Umfang der Einträge zu individuellen biographischen Artikeln.

Das Frankfurter Memorbuch deckt die Zeit von 1628 bis 1901 ab und wurde nach dem Brand von 1711 nach dem Register der Beerdigungsbruderschaft neu erstellt. Auch hier kommen Frauen nach 1648 als Spenderinnen nicht mehr vor. Ein Vergleich mit dem (umfangreicheren) Beerdigungsregister zeigt, dass das Gedenken im Memorbuch nur Gemeindegliedern galt.

Der Epilog widmet sich Formen der grenzüberschreitenden Wohltätigkeit. Zum einen diente sie der gegenseitigen Unterstützung jüdischer Gemeinden, zum anderen hatte das Sammeln und Übermitteln von Spenden für das Heilige Land eine große Bedeutung. Die Logik dieser Spenden glich dem bekannten

Muster von Leistung (Spenden) und spiritueller Gegenleistung (Gebete aus dem Heiligen Land), die jüdischen Gemeinden übten die Kontrolle aus.

Das Fazit der Studie findet sich in ihrer Einführung wie auch im Epilog: Wohltätigkeit war ein zentraler Aspekt jüdischer Frömmigkeit, diente jedoch zugleich den Interessen der jüdischen Gemeinden wie auch der Demonstration von familiärem Status. Deshalb waren öffentliche Rituale des Gebens so wichtig. Die Muster des Gebens sagen etwas aus über Geber und Nehmer – ihre Werte, ihre Rolle in der Gesellschaft und ihre Macht.

Die öffentliche und gemeindliche Wohltätigkeit und ihrer Praxis – und nur darum geht es – sagen also viel aus über die jüdische Gesellschaft der Frühen Neuzeit: ihre sozialen Gruppen, Geschlechterdifferenzierung, die schwindende Sichtbarkeit der Frauen und der Unverheirateten. Bürokratisierung und Professionalisierung reagieren auf eine wachsende Zahl von Armen, für die die Ressourcen zu knapp sind. Das Bedürfnis, diese zu differenzieren und zu disziplinieren, wächst. Werte und Hierarchien der jüdischen Gesellschaft offenbaren sich in diesen Prozessen und zeigen zugleich ihre Einbindung in die Kultur der Gesamtgesellschaft. „These parallels among Jews and Christians strongly suggest that the specific character of public charity in early modern Germany was very much a reflection of regional cultural influences.“ (S. 164)

Mit ihren 166 Seiten Text (ohne Endnoten) weist die Studie eine leser:innenfreundliche Länge auf. Sie bietet ein Glossar, Quellen- und Literaturverzeichnisse sowie ein kombiniertes Register für Namen, Orte und Sachen. Die Druckqualität der Abbildungen lässt leider zu wünschen übrig.

Das Buch besticht auch dadurch, dass es zu Fragen anregt: Wie wurde Wohltätigkeit außerhalb dieser großen Gemeinden praktiziert? Und wie stand es um die Sichtbarkeit von Frauen außerhalb der Gedenkpraxis? Wir dürfen Debra Kaplan nicht nur für eine herausragende Studie zu einem zentralen Thema auf Grundlage bislang kaum beachteter Quellen danken, sondern auch für Impulse für die weitere Forschung.

Rotraud Ries, Würzburg

Jörg Osterloh, „Ausschaltung der Juden und des jüdischen Geistes“: Nationalsozialistische Kulturpolitik 1920–1945 (= Wissenschaftliche Reihe des Fritz Bauer Instituts 34), (Frankfurt/New York: Campus, 2020), 644 S., 45 €.

Jörg Osterloh ist sich der Tatsache bewusst, dass es sich zum Teil um „intensiv bearbeitet[e] Forschungsfelder“ (S. 25) handelt, die er in seine ambitionierte Studie integriert, um, „die Ausschaltung der Juden aus dem Kulturleben im NS-Staat sowohl auf Basis der Forschungsliteratur als auch der Quellen umfassend in den Blick zu nehmen“ (S. 33). Begrüßenswert ist sein weit gefasster Kulturbegriff, der die Ausschlussmechanismen nicht nur in Oper und Theater, Kino, Rundfunk und Presse, sondern auch im Literaturbetrieb und in den bildenden Künsten untersucht. Ein weiterer Gewinn der Studie ist, dass sie gleich mehrere Zäsuren umspannt und damit vom Kaiserreich – wenn auch vergleichsweise cursorisch – bis zum Ende des Zweiten Weltkriegs reicht.

Für das Kaiserreich wird klar herausgearbeitet, wie Journalisten, Professoren, Hofprediger und eine Vielzahl von Vereinen und Parteien den ideologischen Grundstein für einen radikalen Antisemitismus legten, inklusive der Etablierung von Schlagworten wie „Verjudung“, „Entartung“ und „Zersetzung“. Im unmittelbaren Nachgang des Ersten Weltkrieges kam mit „Kultur bolschewismus“ ein weiterer Begriff hinzu, der bald zum antisemitischen Standardrepertoire bei der Diskreditierung jüdischer Kulturschaffender gehörte.

Wenngleich es sich bei der Gründung der NSDAP um eine „rechtsradikale Partei unter vielen“ (S. 104) handelte, weisen bereits die frühen Reden Hitlers auf die besondere Aufmerksamkeit hin, welche die Partei dem deutschen Kulturbetrieb, beziehungsweise den ihn vermeintlich zersetzenden Elementen, widmete. Osterloh führt eine Vielzahl an Theaterskandalen und Krawallen aus dem gesamten Reichsgebiet auf, mit denen vor allem die Nationalsozialisten während der Weimarer Republik gegen ihnen unliebsame Stücke – ob in Theater, Kino oder Konzerthaus – und Personen Stimmung machten. Die Konsequenz dieses rücksichtslosen Vorgehens war, dass schon bald die Ankündigung eines Protests genügte, um bestimmte Stücke von den Spielplänen zu streichen. Die Reaktionen des Publikums, insbesondere des (nichtjüdischen) Bürgertums, auf dieses immer radikalere Vorgehen zeichnete

sich durch eine Mischung aus Ignoranz, mehr oder weniger unverhohlener Zustimmung und bereitwilliger Unterstützung aus. In diesem Zusammenhang sieht Osterloh eine der zentralen Thesen seiner Studie bestätigt, nach der Konkurrenzdenken und Vorteilnahme unter Kolleginnen und Kollegen im Kulturbetrieb eine besondere Rolle spielten und zu einer bereitwilligen Unterstützung der Forderung nach dem Ausschluss jüdischer Kunstschafter führte. Allerdings nutzten die Nationalsozialisten auch ihr politisches Gewicht in Stadträten und Länderparlamenten aus, um ihre Vorstellung eines „deutschen Kulturbetriebes“ durchzusetzen. Beispiele, wie die Regierungsbeteiligungen der NSDAP in Thüringen und Braunschweig, bei denen sich die Partei 1930 jeweils das Ministerium für Inneres und Volksbildung sicherte, oder die Tatsache, dass der 1932 zum Reichskanzler ernannte Zentrumspolitiker Franz von Papen in seiner Regierungserklärung zum Kampf gegen den „Kulturbolschewismus“ aufrief (S. 264), belegen die herausragende Rolle, welche die Kulturpolitik für die Nationalsozialisten spielte – und dass sie bei konservativen, nationalliberalen wie deutschnationalen Parteien auf Unterstützung hoffen konnten, wenn es darum ging, Bühnen und Säle vom „jüdischen Einfluss“ zu befreien.

Bezeichnenderweise stellt gerade das Identifizieren des „jüdischen Einflusses“ eine der zentralen Herausforderungen der Studie dar. Bereits die Einleitung stellt klar: In dieser „Studie geht es vor allem um die Täter“ (S. 16). Zwangsläufig orientiert sich Osterloh darum an der Art und Weise, mit der die Nationalsozialisten die Kategorisierung ihrer Gegner vornahmen. Dabei wird vor allem die Wahllosigkeit antisemitischer Zuschreibungen deutlich, mit der die Nationalsozialisten ihre Verachtung, beispielsweise für ein Theaterstück, zum Ausdruck brachten: entweder lag es daran, dass der Autor, Regisseur oder Theaterinhaber jüdischer Herkunft oder er durch die entsprechenden Einflüsse „verjudet“ sei. Gerade für die Zeit der Weimarer Republik stellt sich darum die Frage, warum in der Studie zum Teil so akribisch nachgewiesen werden muss, wer *tatsächlich* Jüdin oder Jude war oder wer lediglich durch nationalsozialistische Zuschreibungen dazu gemacht wurde. Theoretische Überlegungen und Arbeiten zur Antisemitismusforschung hätten helfen können, Beobachtungen wie: „Einige der weiteren [...] angeprangerten Autoren und Intendanten waren entweder jüdischer Herkunft, wie etwa Alfred Döblin, oder galten als ‚verjudet‘, wie etwa Erwin Piscator“ (S. 242) einzuordnen und zu strukturieren.

Für die ersten Monate nach Hitlers Ernennung zum Reichskanzler gibt Osterloh einen guten Überblick über die vielfältigen und zum Teil widersprüchlichen bürokratischen, legislativen Maßnahmen, „revolutionäre“ Aktionen und innerbetrieblichen Umwälzungen, mit denen der Ausschluss von jüdischen Deutschen aus dem Kulturbetrieb vorangetrieben wurde. Die organisatorische Grundlage für den *systematischen* Ausschluss aus sämtlichen Kulturbereichen bildete die im November 1933 als berufsständige Zwangsvereinigung gegründete Reichskulturkammer, auf die sich in den Kapiteln zu Nationalsozialismus und Zweitem Weltkrieg der Hauptfokus der Studie richtet. Auch wenn Joseph Goebbels als Reichsminister für Volksaufklärung und Propaganda die Reichskulturkammer bereits 1935 für „judenfrei“ erklärte, macht die Korrespondenz des verantwortlichen Sonderreferats unter der Führung von Hans Hinkel mit den Vertretern der Einzelkammern deutlich, dass es bis zum Ende des Krieges, wenn auch nur vereinzelt, jüdischen Kulturschaffenden möglich war, Mitglied der Reichskulturkammer zu bleiben. Dies war vor allem durch Sondergenehmigungen, Interventionen führender Nationalsozialisten oder aufgrund von „Mischehen“ möglich. Dabei handelte es sich jedoch immer um Ausnahmen und Zugeständnisse, die jederzeit widerrufen werden konnten. Osterloh ist vor allem an dem quantitativen Nachweis über den Ausschluss jüdischer Mitglieder aus den Einzelkammern interessiert und gibt sehr detailliert die Abfragen zu den ausgeschlossenen Mitgliedern wieder, einschließlich des ihnen zugeschriebenen Status als „Voll-“, „Dreiviertel-“, „Halb-“ oder „Vierteljuden“ (z. B. S. 479). Namen und individuelle Lebensläufe drohen dabei gelegentlich hinter den statistischen Datenangaben verloren zu gehen. Die Studie kann diesen Eindruck allerdings dadurch vermeiden, dass sie die Entwicklungen in der Reichskulturkammer mit der Geschichte des Jüdischen Kulturbundes parallelisiert und dadurch auch die Erfahrungen der jüdischen Kulturschaffenden selbst in den Blick nimmt. Wenngleich der Kulturbund schon früh unter der Kontrolle von Hinkels Sonderreferat stand, bleibt er doch ein wichtiges Beispiel für einen Akt der Selbsthilfe seitens der jüdischen Kulturschaffenden, der einigen von ihnen – zumindest vorübergehend – eine berufliche und dem jüdischen Publikum eine kulturelle Perspektive anbot.

Osterloh hat eine quellengesättigte, souverän den Forschungsstand synthetisierende Studie über die nationalsozialistischen Ausschluss- und Verdrängungsmechanismen gegenüber jüdischen Kulturschaffenden vorgelegt.

Sie wird zweifellos eine zentrale geschichtswissenschaftliche Grundlage für kultur-, medien- oder sozialwissenschaftliche Forschungen zum Thema bilden, die weiterhin notwendig sind.

Anna Ullrich, München

Tim Corbett, Die Grabstätten meiner Väter: Die jüdischen Friedhöfe in Wien (= Schriften des Centrums für Jüdische Studien 36), (Böhlau Verlag: Wien/Köln/Weimar, 2021), 1041 S., 64,99€ e-book/80,00€

Dort, wo Menschen leben und arbeiten, bestatten sie ihre Toten und gedenken ihrer. In allen Gesellschaften erfüllen Friedhöfe diese Funktion. Sie sind aber ebenso Orte der sozialen Differenz und Präsentation, manchmal gar ein Störfaktor oder vergessener Ort.

Die österreichische Metropole Wien beherbergt auf ihrem heutigen Gebiet fünf Friedhöfe, die vom jüdischen Leben in der Stadt seit der Mitte des 13. Jh. berichten. Während der älteste Begräbnisort am Kärntnertor nur noch durch archivalische Quellen und wenige Grabsteine (1247–1444) erfahrbar ist, sind die Friedhöfe in der Seegasse (16. Jh. bis 1783), im Stadtteil Währing (1784–1879) sowie bei Tor I (1879–1917) und bei Tor IV des Wiener Zentralfriedhofs (seit 1917) im Stadtbild präsent. Zudem gibt es parallel zu ihnen eine „israelitische Abteilung“ auf dem überkonfessionellen Friedhof im Stadtbezirk Döbling.

Tim Corbett hat sich mit seinem Buch zur Aufgabe gemacht, „erstmal eine integrierte Geschichte“ dieser Orte durch die vergleichende Analyse und Nutzung ihres „zuvor weitgehend vernachlässigten Quellenkorpus“, der Grabdenkmäler samt Inschriften, darzustellen und „einen fundamental neuen und integrativen Zugang zur jüdischen Geschichte der Stadt Wien seit ihren ersten dokumentierten Anfängen“ anzubieten. Jeder Friedhof soll dabei als sozial- und kulturhistorischen Raum in seiner Komplexität und Variabilität erfasst werden: hinsichtlich seiner Einbettung in die Stadttopografie, seiner Anlage und Gestaltung, seiner Bauten, der Gestaltung und Aussagen der Grabmale sowie des Umgangs mit diesen durch Zeitgenossen und nachfolgende Generationen. Der Autor verspricht sich davon Aussagen über „die soziokulturelle Zusammensetzung der unterschiedlichen Wiener Judenheiten in ihren jeweiligen synchronen wie diachronen Kontexten über die *longue durée* ihrer Geschichte“ (S. 13).

Konkret geht es Corbett um „die Wechselwirkungen zwischen individuellen und familiären Selbstauffassungen und [...] kollektiven Zugehörigkeitsmustern, die an diesen Orten [...] verhandelt wurden, im Kontext sowohl der ‚innerjüdischen‘ Gemeinschaftsgeschichte wie der breiteren Wiener und österreichischen Geschichte.“ Darüber hinaus liegt sein Fokus auf der „Rezeption und Wertung der Friedhöfe sowie die damit verbundenen Initiativen zu ihrer Dokumentation und Bewahrung oder eben den Schändungs- und Vernichtungsaktionen“ und damit auf dem „zentralen, aber oftmals angefochtenen Stellenwert der lokalen jüdischen Gemeinschaften und Kulturen.“ (Ebd.)

Um diese Ziele zu erreichen, stützt sich der Autor neben der Dokumentation von ausgewählten Grabsteinen aller vier Friedhöfe auf sehr umfangreiches Archivmaterial, das vor allem im United States Holocaust Memorial Museum (USHMM) lagert. Außerdem analysierte er zahlreiche zeitgenössische Periodika internationaler Provenienz sowie unveröffentlichte Quellen des Leo Baeck Instituts in New York. Beeindruckend ist die breite Rezeption der zum Thema erschienenen Primär- und Sekundärliteratur aus dem englischsprachigen Raum. Dies alles bietet eine im Vergleich zu anderen jüdischen Orten komfortable Ausgangssituation, die im großen Stil ermöglicht, Zeitgenossen und originale Artefakte zu Worte kommen zu lassen.

Die Arbeit ist in zehn Abschnitte untergliedert. Das erste Kapitel stellt anhand einer anschaulichen Beschreibung der Vorgänge rund um die Beerdigung des österreichisch-jüdischen Schriftstellers Arthur Schnitzler theoretische Überlegungen zur Bedeutung von Friedhöfen und insbesondere zu jüdischen Friedhöfen an. Diese werden als „jüdische Topografien“ verstanden, an denen Bräuche praktiziert und Lebenskonzepte wie auch verschiedene Identitäten verhandelt wurden. Zugleich bilden sie auch einen „Gemeinschaftsraum“ ab, dem ein kompliziertes Beziehungsgeflecht zugrunde lag.

Der spezifischen, jüdischen Sepulkralkultur widmet sich das zweite Kapitel mit seiner Darstellung der Entwicklungsgeschichte jüdischer Friedhöfe im urbanen Raum. Sehr informativ sind die Ausführungen zur Chewra Kadischa, die sich dicht an der Wiener jüdischen Gemeinschaft orientieren, und die Erläuterungen zur Dokumentation der Friedhöfe. Die antiken Ursprünge jüdischer Friedhöfe und Grabsteine sowie die Erklärungen zur Epigraphik, zur jüdischen Trauerpraxis und zur Sprache der Grabinschriften hätten aber zusammengefasst oder durch Verweise auf inzwischen vorhandene, sehr gute Einzeldarstellungen gekürzt werden können.

Kapitel drei bis sechs gelten den vier Wiener Friedhöfen. Der detaillierten Darstellung ihrer einzelnen Entwicklungsgeschichten voran geht stets ein Rekurs auf die Geschichte der in der Stadt jeweils lebenden Judenheiten im Spannungsfeld individueller bzw. gruppenspezifischer Befindlichkeiten und sich verändernder, gesellschaftspolitischer und sozialer Rahmenbedingungen. Sichtbar werden diese Aspekte in der Analyse markanter Grabmale der einzelnen Friedhöfe. Um bestehende Parallelen und Differenzen zur Stadtgesellschaft herauszuarbeiten, werden abschließend jeweils zeitgenössische, nichtjüdische Friedhöfe vergleichend herangezogen. Den beiden jüdischen Abteilungen auf dem Zentralfriedhof wird indes das eigene Weltkriegsgedenken bzw. die jüdische Sepulkralkultur der voran gegangenen k. u. k.-Zeit vergleichend gegenübergestellt.

Im Zentrum des siebten Kapitels steht der fast in Vergessenheit geratene wissenschaftliche, öffentliche und stadtopografische Umgang mit den historischen Friedhöfen Wiens seit dem frühen 19. Jh. Das Kapitel zeigt Konflikte auf, die sich zwischen Bewahrung und Zerstörung bewegten und zwischen der Israelitischen Kultusgemeinde (IKG), der städtischen Denkmalpflege und der Stadtplanung ausgetragen wurden. Im Anschluss wird ausführlich das Schicksal der jüdischen Friedhöfe nach dem Anschluss Österreichs an das nationalsozialistische Deutschland im März 1938 geschildert.

Das achte Kapitel befasst sich mit der Zeit der Shoa als grundlegender und brutaler Zäsur. Anhand zahlreicher Egodokumente beschreibt Corbett, wie der aktive und als einziger nicht vollständig „arisierte“ Friedhof bei Tor IV eine neue Zuschreibung als „Haus des Lebens“ erhielt und wie sich der Alltag des Friedhofsamtes der IKG entscheidend veränderte: durch die massenhaft notwendige Beerdigung von Ermordeten und durch die erzwungene Beerdigung von „Nichtglaubensjuden“. Die Analyse zeigt zudem, dass der Verfolgungsdruck die in der Zwischenkriegszeit begonnene „Orthodoxierung“ der Sepulkralkultur weiter begünstigte.

Das folgende neunte Kapitel untersucht die nach 1945 einsetzende Erinnerungskultur, die in unzähligen Denkzeichen die Tragik der Shoa widerspiegelt und den Friedhof bei Tor IV für viele Jahre zum wichtigsten, aber auch umstrittenen jüdischen Erinnerungsort in Wien machte. Das Kapitel setzt die individuellen bzw. familiären Erfahrungen und Bedürfnisse nach Erinnerung mit den Intentionen der IKG in Beziehung, über kollektives Gedenken eine neue Tradition und Identität zu konstruieren. Deutlich wird aber auch das

Spannungsverhältnis zur nichtjüdischen Mehrheitsgesellschaft. Gleichzeitig würdigt dieser Abschnitt Ernst Feldsberg, der sich als langjähriger Leiter des Friedhofsamtes nicht nur für Pflege und Erhalt der jüdischen Friedhöfe Wiens und für ein würdiges Gedenken engagierte, sondern auch maßgeblich die Friedhofspolitik im Sinne der IGK prägte.

Das abschließende zehnte Kapitel thematisiert den Umgang der Nachkriegsgesellschaft mit den jüdischen Friedhöfen und den sich hierbei artikulierenden unterschiedlichen Erinnerungskulturen. Während es der IGK zunächst um die Restitution ihrer in der NS-Zeit enteigneten Friedhöfe ging, rückte der Schutz, die Pflege und Instandhaltung der oft beschädigten und verwahrlosten Orte in den Vordergrund. Diese Aufgaben überforderte jedoch die nun verkleinerte und verarmte jüdische Gemeinde. Ihre Führung sah vielmehr die Stadt Wien und die Republik Österreich in der Verantwortung, für die Beseitigung der von ihnen verursachten Schäden zu sorgen. Da diese von beiden jahrzehntelang nicht umfassend anerkannt wurde, entwickelte sich eine Auseinandersetzung, in der bezeichnenderweise die Denkmalpflege eine entscheidende Position zugunsten des jüdischen Sepulkralerbes einnahm. Erst die Waldheim-Affäre setzte am Ende der 1980er Jahre einen gesamtgesellschaftlichen Prozess in Gang, der eine kritische Rezeption der belasteten österreichischen Geschichte zuließ. Dies führte zu einer positiven Wahrnehmung der jüdischen Erinnerungsorte sowie zur Bereitschaft, diese auch zu erhalten und sich deren Geschichte anzueignen.

Das vorliegende Buch bietet verschiedene Einblicke in die Geschichte und Bedeutung der Wiener Friedhöfe. Zu ihrer geografischen Verortung wären jedoch Lagepläne bzw. ein erklärender Stadtplan Wiens hilfreich gewesen. Ebenso vermisst man Fotos der besprochenen Grabsteine, die wesentliche Merkmale auf einen Blick veranschaulicht hätten; ein Manko, dass die genannte Datenbank der IKG (S. 55) und die digitale Präsentation der Grabmale nebst Inschriften und Übersetzungen sowie Fotos ihrer Vorder- resp. Rückseiten hoffentlich auflöst.

Im Text erschweren leider unzählige Bandwurm- und Schachtelsätze den Lesefluss; Sinneinheiten fehlt oft die Abgrenzung durch Absätze oder kleinteiligere Gliederungen. Redundanzen, Füllwörter, Klammern für unnötige Erklärungen oder Berufsbezeichnungen ziehen den ohnehin sehr langen Text unnötig in die Länge. Einige Verknüpfungen sind zudem eher pauschal: Was hat z.B. das antike Volk der Vandalen (S. 158, 526) mit dem neuzeitlichen

Wien zu tun? Die Behauptung, dass das Mittelalter finster (S. 113) gewesen sei, ist wissenschaftlich nicht belegt. Desgleichen muss die Behauptung, die DDR habe sich durch eine „ansonsten recht antisemitische Öffentlichkeit“ ausgezeichnet (S. 804), zurückgewiesen werden.

Dagegen wären einige Erklärungen für den nicht mit Österreich vertrauten Leser hilfreich gewesen, wie z. B. zum „roten Wien“ (S. 384), zur „Theresianischen Ära“ (S. 153) oder zum „Israelitengesetz“ von 1890 (S. 205). Auch fehlen Bezüge zur Friedhofsreformbewegung am Beginn des 20. Jh., die für die Gestaltung der Friedhöfe im deutschsprachigen Raum zentral gewesen ist sowie Bezüge zu den Sammlungsaktivitäten des Reichssippenamtes ab 1938.

Bei den Übersetzungen der vielen hebräischen Grabinschriften bleibt darüber hinaus unklar, warum die verwendeten Abkürzungen transkribiert und dann mit geklammerten Übersetzungen stets von neuem kommentiert werden. Hierfür gibt es publizierte Standardwerke.

Insgesamt ist das Buch aber ein wichtiger Beitrag zur Erforschung jüdischer Friedhöfe und der sich hierin spiegelnden Geschichte. Dies gilt umso mehr, als die Erfassung der in ihrer sensiblen, materiellen Substanz archivierten Informationen ein Wettlauf gegen die Zeit darstellt. Diese Publikation zeigt, welch enormer Erkenntnisgewinn mit gesamtgesellschaftlicher Relevanz bei einer großzügigen Unterstützung durch wissenschaftliche und politische Institutionen möglich ist.

Anke Geißler-Grünberg, Frankfurt/Oder

David Sorkin, *Jewish Emancipation: A History across Five Centuries* (Princeton/Oxford: Princeton University Press, 2019), 528 p., \$ 35,00.

Es ist zu begrüßen, dass nach vielen Jahrzehnten geschichtswissenschaftlicher Beschäftigung mit der jüdischen Emanzipation endlich eine Überblicksdarstellung der unter diesem Oberbegriff gefassten Prozesse in synthetischer Form angeboten wird. David Sorkin, der dieses Unternehmen wagt, ist Professor der modernen jüdischen Geschichte an der Yale University. Sein bisheriger Schwerpunkt lag vor allem auf der europäischen Aufklärung, insbesondere auf der deutschen Haskala-Bewegung. Im nun vorliegenden Werk erweitert der Verfasser seine Forschungsperspektive und bietet einen globalen und zeitlich weitreichenderen Überblick an.

Als Emanzipation wird in der Studie der Prozess der Gewinnung ziviler und politischer Rechte verstanden, darunter die Freizügigkeit, die Berufsfreiheit, die Religionsfreiheit, das Recht zu gerichtlichen Tätigkeiten sowie das aktive und passive Wahlrecht. Dargestellt werden sowohl Fälle, in denen es sich um weitreichende, mehrere dieser Aspekte umfassende Gesetzesänderungen handelte wie auch solche, bei denen es nur um einzelne Aspekte ging. Die Ausrichtung der Studie als Politik- und Rechtsgeschichte bedingt es, dass nicht nur Vorschriften selbst, sondern auch, soweit möglich, Spannungen bei deren Umsetzung ausgeführt werden (S. 1–4). Das Letztere wird allerdings wegen des breiten geographischen und chronologischen Umfangs des Buchs meistens lediglich schlagwortartig angesprochen.

Der geographische Rahmen umfasst Europa, Nordafrika, Nahost und die USA. Der Zeitrahmen erstreckt sich vom 16. bis in das 21. Jahrhundert. Der Verfasser betont, dass die in der Geschichtsschreibung übliche Beschränkung auf den Zeitraum von 1750 bis zum Ersten Weltkrieg zu kurz greife, da zum einen die Vorgänge seit dem 16. Jahrhundert „integral“ zur jüdischen Emanzipationsgeschichte gehörten („integral elements“) und keineswegs lediglich deren Vorläufer („precursors“) seien. Zum anderen müsse die Epoche der Emanzipation bis ins 21. Jahrhundert hineingedacht werden, weil die Gleichberechtigung als eine fragile Konstruktion stets zu verteidigen bzw. zu verhandeln bleibe (S. 5–7).

Die Studie setzt in der Darstellung der emanzipatorischen Prozesse auf eine geographische Unterteilung des Untersuchungsgegenstands: 1) Westeuropa, darunter die Niederlande, England und Frankreich, 2) Zentraleuropa mit vornehmlich den deutschen Staaten, 3) Osteuropa mit Polen-Litauen und Russland. Zudem wird das Osmanische Reich als eine vierte Region charakterisiert und die Entwicklungen in den USA und Israel als weitere Variationen in Bezug gesetzt. Als rote Fäden lassen sich die folgenden Fragen erkennen: 1) Inwieweit wurde durch die jeweiligen Gesetzesänderungen eine Emanzipation im Rahmen eines modernen Staates („out of the estates“) oder einer mehr oder weniger „reformierten“ Ständegesellschaft („into the estates“) beabsichtigt?; 2) Inwieweit nahmen die jeweiligen Rechtsakte Juden als Individuen bzw. als Gruppe wahr und beabsichtigten die Gleichstellung „des Judentums“?; 3) Was war das Verhältnis zwischen lokalen Bürgerrechten und universalem Staatsbürgerrecht?; und 4) War das „ius soli“ oder das „ius sanguinis“ die Grundlage für die Konzipierung eines neuen Bürgerrechts?

Dem Verfasser ist es gelungen, einen synthetischen und stringenten Überblick über zahlreiche Staaten und Regionen durch die Jahrhunderte zu geben. Eine stichwortartige Kontextualisierung jeweiliger Gesetzesänderungen und den damit verbundenen Vorgängen bietet einen wertvollen Einblick in die innen- und außenpolitischen Zusammenhänge und Bezüge zum Hauptgegenstand der Studie und ist an keiner Stelle zu detailliert oder abweichend. Die konsequente Fokussierung auf die Bereiche Recht und Politik ermöglicht es, gegenseitige Beeinflussungen und Ähnlichkeiten von Gesetzgebungsvorgängen und emanzipatorischen Ideen auch in ungewöhnlichen Konstellationen zu erkennen. Die Lage der algerischen Juden im 19. Jahrhundert – so der Verfasser – sei etwa eher mit der Lage der Glaubensgenossen in Galizien als in Frankreich zu vergleichen (S. 221). Wiederum erinnere die Lage arabischer Bürger Israels an die der Juden im Osteuropa der Zwischenkriegszeit (S. 341).

Bei einer solch großen Vielzahl an Untersuchungsräumen und -zeiten sind einige Fehler bzw. Schwachstellen im Detail zu erkennen. An manchen Stellen wird nicht unbedingt auf die aussagekräftigste Literatur verwiesen. So wird z.B. Mordechai Breuers fehlerhafte Aussage zitiert, dass der Status preußischer Generalprivilegierter im Judenreglement 1750 festgelegt worden sei (S. 48). Eine Lektüre der neuesten Literatur, wie z.B. von Tobias Schenk, hätte gezeigt, dass es sich bei diesem Status um eine vom König individuell verliehene Ausnahme vom Gesetz und damit um einen Ausdruck des königlichen Willens handelte, die gesetzlich nicht verankert wurde.

Darüber hinaus kommt es aufgrund der schieren Quellenmenge, den unterschiedlichen Sprachkontexten und geschichtswissenschaftlichen Ursprüngen zuweilen zu begrifflichen Ungeschicktheiten, Formatierungsfehlern, Übersetzungs- bzw. Tippfehlern. Es wird etwa in der Einleitung über den „Gewinn“ und „Verlust“ der Emanzipation, z.B. im Fall von Italien, gesprochen: „In Italy Jews gained emancipation five times (1796–99, 1801, 1848, 1870, 1944) and lost it four times (1800, 1813–15, 1848, 1938)“ (S. 5). Damit verwendet der Autor zum einen implizit eine andere Bedeutung des Emanzipationsbegriffs als sonst in der Studie, denn Emanzipation als Prozess kann nicht „gewonnen“ oder „verloren“ werden. Zum anderen geht es jeweils um die Erweiterung bzw. Einschränkung gewisser ziviler und politischer Rechte und nicht um deren vollständigen Verlust oder Gewinn. An einer anderen Stelle werden die staatsbürgerlichen Rechte als nicht weiterführende „state rights“ (S. 165)

übersetzt, obwohl sonst der passendere Begriff von „state citizenship“ verwendet wird (z.B. S. 117).

Unter technischen Fehlern ist die Formatierung von zwei Karten zu nennen. Die Karte Nr. 2 (S. 16) zeigt etwa nicht wie beschrieben die Konturen Polen-Litauens und verfehlt damit, das Größenverhältnis zum Heiligen Römischen Reich darzustellen. Die Karte Nr. 4 (S. 57) verfügt über eine fehlerhafte Legende, die die jeweiligen Teilungen Polen-Litauens in einer chronologisch umgekehrten Reihenfolge kennzeichnet. Auch einige Tippfehler und sprachlichen Unvollkommenheiten fallen auf, wie z.B. „Stadtbürgerrecht“ bzw. „Stadtbürgerschaft“ (S. 10, 108, 148, 290) oder die uneinheitliche Nutzung bzw. Verwechslung polnischer Buchstaben (z.B. S. 142, 169, 195, 295, 387, 404).

Neben diesen kleinen Fehlern bleibt zudem eine grundsätzliche Frage unbeantwortet: Warum setzt die Studie mit dem 16. Jahrhundert an? Da der Verfasser es für berechtigt hält, Privilegien innerhalb der Ständegesellschaft als Emanzipation zu betrachten, sollte nichts dagegensprechen, auch jüdische Privilegien im Mittelalter – zum Teil deutlich umfangreicher als diejenigen in der Frühen Neuzeit – einzubeziehen. Sorkins Antwort ist eher kurz: „Yet after the prolonged period of expulsions [towards the end of the Middle Ages] such privileges were unquestionably novel“ (S. 17).

All diese Unvollkommenheiten erscheinen relativ unwichtig im Verhältnis zu den deutlichen Verdiensten dieses Werks. Sorkins Werk bietet eine riesige Sammlung von grundsätzlichen Fakten zur jüdischen Emanzipation in und außerhalb Europa an. Die zitierte Fachliteratur verweist zudem auf detailliertere Forschungen, die zum Ausgangspunkt genommen werden können, um Emanzipationsgeschichte in den jeweiligen Kontexten besser zu verstehen.

Michael K. Schulz, Potsdam

Karin Schutjer, Goethe und das Judentum: Das schwierige Erbe der modernen Literatur (aus dem amerik. Engl. übers. v. Ulrike Bischoff), (Göttingen: Wallstein Verlag, 2020), 288 S., 39,90 €.

Bereits 2015 erschien Karin Schutjers anregende Studie über Goethes Verhältnis zum Judentum und zur – hebräischen wie auch christlichen – Bibel auf Englisch (Goethe and Judaism: The Troubled Inheritance of Modern Literature, Evanston, Illinois: Northwestern University Press, 2015). Nun ist sie in einer ausgezeichneten Übersetzung von Ulrike Bischoff auch auf Deutsch

verfügbar. In fünf großen Kapiteln schreitet Karin Schutjer vielfältige Themenfelder ab, anhand deren sich jüdische Einflüsse auf Goethe zeigen. Von im Buch erörterten Schwerpunkten sollen im Folgenden zwei herausgegriffen werden: „Wanderschaft“ und „Kabbala“.

Die Autorin geht von einer engen Verflechtung von Goethes Konzeption der Moderne mit derjenigen, die er vom Judentum hatte, aus. Sie verfolgt dies in seinem Werk anhand des „Wanderdiskurses“, wie Schutjer es nennt. So schien ihm das Bild von den wandernden Patriarchen auch auf das unstete Leben seiner jüdischen Zeitgenossen zu passen. Auch plante Goethe eine epische Erzählung „Geschichte des ewigen Juden“ (FA 1.14, S. 692–694)¹, in der Baruch Spinoza, der zeitweise sein Lieblingsphilosoph war und den Schutjer auch behandelt, eine Hauptrolle zugekommen wäre. Goethe beschreibt in seinem autobiographischen Werk *Dichtung und Wahrheit* zudem ausführlich, welchen Eindruck die Lektüre der hebräischen Bibel auf ihn gemacht habe. Neben den Patriarchen oder Erzvätern spielten auch Hiob, Salomon und Moses eine Rolle für sein Werk. In den Geschichten der Patriarchen, so Schutjer, las Goethe „nicht nur von Wanderern, sondern seine Leseerfahrung wurde auf tiefster Ebene selbst zu einer erforschenden, heterodoxen Wanderschaft“ (S. 32). Goethe selbst beschrieb die Erzählung von den Patriarchen als einen Raum, in dem er sich „Abschweifungen“ und eine „nach allen Seiten durchkreuzende, kindische Lebhaftigkeit“ erlauben konnte (FA 1.14, S. 142).

Nun ist das Wandern bei Goethe ohnehin ein prominentes Thema, wie nicht zuletzt Norbert Miller in seiner voluminösen und minutiösen Studie *Der Wanderer* (2002) demonstrierte. Es ist jedoch ein wichtiger Hinweis, dass Goethe für das Bild des „Ewigen Juden“ ein existentielles Verständnis hatte und es seine Empfindungen des Unsteten und der Ruhelosigkeit ergänzte und bestätigte. Allerdings beschreibt Goethe an anderen Stellen die gegenteilige Wirkung. So beruhige ihn die Bibellektüre und diene ihm als Hilfsmittel, da er „gern nach jenen morgenländischen Gegenden“ flüchte und sich „dort unter den ausgebreiteten Hirtenstämmen zugleich in der größten Einsamkeit und in der größten Gesellschaft“ befinde und so Ruhe finde in Zeiten innerer Verwirrung (FA 1.14, S. 155). Es handelt sich also um eine durchaus ambivalente Lek-

¹ Für die zitierten Stellen siehe die so genannte *Frankfurter Ausgabe* [FA] (Johann Wolfgang von Goethe, *Sämtliche Werke, Briefe, Tagebücher und Gespräche*, hg. von D. Borchmeyer u. a., 40 Bde. Frankfurt a. M. 1985–1999).

türewirkung, derer sich Schutjer bewusst ist, wie auch des überhaupt ambivalenten Verhältnisses Goethes zum Judentum und den Juden. Dem Unbehagen angesichts solcher Ambivalenz will die Autorin dadurch begegnen, dass sie das verflochtene Neben- und Gegeneinander verdeutlicht, statt sie einem veröhnenden Dualismus zu unterwerfen, wie er in dem Bild von den zwei Seiten einer Medaille zum Ausdruck kommt. Stattdessen will sie die Gegensätze und Widersprüche verdeutlichen. Darin liegt eine Stärke ihrer Studie.

Schutjer ist davon überzeugt, dass die Begegnung Goethes mit der hebräischen Bibel nicht nur für sein Verständnis des Judentums, sondern auch für sein gesamtes literarisches Programm von herausragender Bedeutung“ (S. 22) gewesen ist, etwa durch die Erkenntnis, dass die Bibel ein „zusammengetragenes, nach und nach entstandenes Werk“ (FA 1.14, S. 554) sei. Die Bibelstudien Goethes, der im Übrigen einen Widerwillen gegen die christliche Religion empfand und dies oft zum Ausdruck brachte, zeigten nicht nur sein Interesse an den Geschichten, sondern auch an Textdetails und -varianten, also an der Struktur, die er, wie nur die avanciertesten Bibelforscher seiner Zeit, als etwas Zusammengesetztes wahrnahm. Schutjer folgert daraus, dass ihm „die Bibel zu einem Vorbild für manche der formal innovativsten Werke“ (S. 37) wurde, wie beispielsweise für *Wilhelm Meister* mit seiner un abgeschlossenen, uneinheitlichen Kompositionsform, und sie ihm als „paradigmatischer Text“ (S. 39) gedient habe. Die un abgeschlossene Form und das wiederholte Überarbeiten eigener Werke wären damit auch Elemente des „Wanderdiskurses“.

Ein zweiter Komplex, dem die Autorin große Aufmerksamkeit zuteilwerden lässt, ist Goethes Rezeption der lurianischen Kabbala. Bekannt ist, dass sich Goethe, wie zahlreiche seiner Zeitgenossen, unter anderem mit der Kabbala, ebenso wie mit Alchemie und anderen esoterischen Wissenschaften beschäftigte. Allerdings, darauf weist die Autorin auch hin, vor allem mit der so genannten *Christlichen Kabbala*. Für Goethes Kenntnis oder direkte Lektüre der Kabbala von Isaac Luria, die dieser in der zweiten Hälfte des 16. Jahrhunderts in Safed entwickelte, gibt es keine direkten Zeugnisse. Schutjer vermutet dies aber und versucht in einem besonders spannenden Exkurs die Leser hier von zu überzeugen. Sie verweist auf Lexikonartikel und mehrere zeitgenössische Bücher, wie J. J. Bruckers *Historia Critica Philosophiae* (1742–44), die davon handeln und die Goethe besaß oder habe lesen können. Auch seine intensive Beschäftigung mit Spinoza könnte ihn mit der lurianischen Kabbala vertraut gemacht haben. Nach Schutjer könnte Goethe gewusst haben, „dass

die kabbalistische Schöpfungskonzeption eine Variation des neuplatonischen Emanationsbegriffs ist“ (S. 76 f.). Vorrangig macht sie das an der Idee des *Zimzum* fest, derzufolge ein mystischer Hohlraum durch Selbstkontraktion oder das Zusammenziehen Gottes entstehe, der die Existenz des Alls erst möglich mache. Von hier schlägt Schutjer eine Verbindung zu einer Äußerung Goethes in seiner *Farbenlehre*, wo er schreibt: „So setzt das Einatmen schon das Ausatmen voraus und umgekehrt; so jede Diastole ihre Diastole. Es ist die ewige Formel des Lebens, die sich auch hier äußert“ (FA 1.23.1, S. 41). Schutjer hält es für möglich, dass die Quelle für diesen Gedanken in der lurianischen Kabbala zu sehen sei (S. 82), obwohl nach allgemeiner Auffassung andere Quellen in Frage kommen.² Verwunderlich ist hier und an anderen Stellen, dass die Wirkung des Islam auf Goethe überhaupt keine Berücksichtigung findet (im obigen Zusammenhang fiele einem gleich das Gedicht „Talismane“ aus dem *West-östlichen Divan* ein).

Schutjer thematisiert stattdessen noch das „Zerbrechen der Gefäße“ (*Shevirat Ha-Kelim*) – laut Gershom Scholem „der entscheidende Vorgang im Weltgeschehen“ – und dessen Wirkung auf Goethe. Dazu führt sie eine berühmte Szene aus *Dichtung und Wahrheit* an, in der Goethe erzählt, wie er als kleiner Junge, von den Nachbarjungen angestachelt, Geschirr auf die Straße geworfen habe. Sigmund Freud hat dies bekanntlich als eine „magische Handlung“ interpretiert, deren Ursache er in der Geburt des jüngeren Bruders Hermann Jakob sah, der symbolisch „fortgeschafft“, also exekutiert werden sollte. Schutjer, die Freud nicht erwähnt, bringt dieses In-Scherben-Gehen nun mit der kabbalistischen Vorstellung des *Shevirat Ha-Kelim* in Verbindung und deutet Goethes närrisches Verhalten als „erste[n] künstlerische[n] Schöpfungsakt“, da „im Austausch für die Zerstörung eine ‚Geschichte‘“ hervorgebracht wird (S. 92). An einer späteren Stelle bezeichnet Goethe sein gesamtes dichterisches Schaffen als „Bruchstücke einer großen Konfession, welche vollständig zu machen dieses Büchlein ein gewagter Versuch ist“ (FA 1.14, S. 310). Schutjer hält es für möglich, dass er diese Metapher „der kabbalistischen Vorstellung des *Tikkun* als Wiederherstellung des Zusammenhangs“ entlehnt habe (S. 92).

Nicht jede Schlussfolgerung Karin Schutjers mag gleichermaßen überzeugen und mitunter verliert sich inmitten der Ambivalenz die Kontur der Ar-

² S. dazu Gabriele Malsch, „Systole – Diastole“, in: *Archiv für Begriffsgeschichte* 41 (1999), S. 86–118, zu Goethe S. 112–118.

gumentation, doch erhellt die Autorin in ihrer tiefschürfenden Studie viele mögliche jüdische Einflüsse auf Goethe, die bisher noch wenig oder gar nicht beleuchtet worden sind, und bietet zahlreiche neue Lesarten, Anregungen und Denkanstöße. Am überzeugendsten ist sie dort, wo sie eine Verstärkung oder „Unterstützung“ bereits bestehender Tendenzen bei Goethe vermutet.

Rafael D. Arnold, Rostock

Tobias Freimüller, Frankfurt und die Juden: Neuanfänge und Fremdheitserfahrungen, 1945–1990 (Göttingen: Wallstein, 2020).

Eine Erfolgsgeschichte? Eine Migrations- und Integrationsgeschichte? Eine Nachgeschichte des Nationalsozialismus? – Mit seiner 2020 erschienenen Studie *Frankfurt und die Juden. Neuanfänge und Fremdheitserfahrungen, 1945–1990* hat der Historiker Tobias Freimüller eine detaillierte Analyse jüdischen Lebens in der „alten Bundesrepublik“ vorgelegt, die Vielgestaltigkeit und Widersprüchlichkeiten der jüdischen Nachkriegsgeschichte Westdeutschlands am Beispiel eines Ortes nachzeichnet, der „von jeher als Zentrum jüdischen Lebens in Deutschland wahrgenommen wurde, vor 1933 ebenso wie nach 1945“ (S. 16). Im Mittelpunkt dieser differenzierten Lokalforschung zur jüdischen Geschichte, die der Autor als integralen Teil der Geschichte der Bundesrepublik präsentiert, stehen die Interaktion von in Frankfurt lebenden und aus Frankfurt stammenden Juden mit Politikern und nichtjüdischen Funktionsträgern sowie Institutionen der Stadt und in aller Welt und das Bemühen durch die doppelte Perspektive auf Frankfurt als Beispiel- und Sonderfall die Komplexität jüdischer Geschichte ohne zu große Vereinfachungen zu dokumentieren.

In seinem 568 Seiten umfassenden Werk verknüpft der Autor, seit 2017 stellvertretender Direktor des Fritz Bauer Instituts, gewinnbringend die äußeren Lebensumstände der Juden in Frankfurt, die Institutionen des Gemeindelebens und die Präsenz von jüdischer Kultur im Leben der Stadt. Nach einer fundierten Einführung bietet das auf die unmittelbaren Nachkriegsjahre ausgerichtete zweite Kapitel erste inhaltliche Orientierung; es beleuchtet die Bemühungen um *Rekonstruktion und Neuanfang (1945–1949)* in Frankfurt vom Moment des Kriegsendes im März 1945 bis zur Gründung der Bundesrepublik im Mai 1949. Mit Fokus auf wichtige Akteure und Gruppen in der Mainmetropole wird das Spannungsfeld im Nachkriegsdeutschland ausgeleuchtet. Be-

sondere Aufmerksamkeit widmet der Autor hier den Beziehungen zwischen amerikanischen Besatzern und deutschen Besiegten, dem Aufeinandertreffen von jüdischen Displaced Persons und deutschen Juden, und dem Nebeneinander von Juden und Nichtjuden. Wie viele Studien zum jüdischen Leben in der unmittelbaren Nachkriegszeit betont Freimüller die Gegensätze innerhalb der heterogenen jüdischen Gemeinschaft, vor allem im Hinblick auf Zukunftsvorstellungen, analysiert den Aufbau institutioneller Strukturen (darunter auch die Neu- bzw. Wiedergründung der jüdischen Gemeinde) und hebt eine Frankfurter Besonderheit im Vergleich zu anderen westdeutschen Städten und Universitäten hervor: die Rückkehr vieler jüdischer Intellektueller, die er an dem spektakulärsten Fall, der Rückkehr Max Horkheimers und der damit verbundenen Neugründung des Instituts für Sozialforschung, ausführlich nachzeichnet.

Die folgenden fünf Kapitel konzentrieren sich auf die Entwicklungen in den 1950er und 1960er Jahren. Hier trifft der Leser auf bekannte Protagonisten und neue Figuren. Der Joint und der Jüdische Weltkongress sowie die neu entstandenen jüdischen Gemeinden und der Zentralrat der Juden in Deutschland, dessen Gründung 1950 zusammen mit der Etablierung anderer Institutionen wie der Zentralwohlfahrtsstelle der Juden in Deutschland, dem Jüdischen Frauenverbund und dem Jüdischen Studentenverband auch ein nach außen sichtbarer Ausdruck der formalen Etablierung der Juden in Deutschland war, werden als wichtige Akteure im Prozess der Restitution vorgestellt. Der Staatskommissar für rassistisch, religiös, und politisch Verfolgte und einer der bekanntesten Repräsentanten jüdischen Lebens in der Bundesrepublik, Philipp Auerbach, und der Rechtsanwalt Joseph Klubanski stehen im Mittelpunkt von Aufsehen erregenden Prozessen und Skandalen. Weitere Schwerpunkte der detaillierten Darstellung sind Sozialfürsorge und Religion sowie die Auseinandersetzung mit der NS-Vergangenheit und dem jüdischen Gedächtnis. Besonders erfreulich sind die immer wieder eingestreuten Außenperspektiven, wie z. B. die Einbeziehung der Ansichten von Schriftstellern und Emigranten und ihre Beziehungen zu Frankfurt, wenngleich die Stimmen der „einfachen Leute“ und die ausführlichere Diskussion des besonderen Verhältnisses zu Israel stärker hätten gewichtet werden können.

Das auf die Generationenkonflikte in den 1960er Jahren konzentrierte achte Kapitel bietet dem Leser spannende Einblicke in die innerjüdische Entwicklung und stellt prominente Mitglieder der zweiten Generation und Proteste

um 1968 vor. Am Beispiel Frankfurts zeichnet der Autor aber nicht nur die verschiedenen Debatten über Identität, Religion, Liberalismus und Orthodoxie nach. Im mit *Krisen und Konflikte* überschriebenem neunte Kapitel veranschaulicht der Autor anhand verschiedener Kontroversen in der Gemeinde, dass das Verhältnis zwischen Juden und Nichtjuden besonders konfliktreich war; nicht wenige, gerade Mitglieder der zweiten Generation, fühlten sich, so der Autor, „fremd im eigenen Land“ und suchten neue Wege der Selbstverwirklichung. Für manche bedeutete dies ein Verlassen der Bundesrepublik, für andere markierten diese Auseinandersetzungen einen ersten Schritt aus den sprichwörtlich gewordenen Hinterhöfen in die – jüdische und nichtjüdische – Öffentlichkeit. Es erscheint passend, dass sich im letzten inhaltlichen, auf die 1980er Jahre ausgerichteten Kapitel dieser Studie die aufsehenerregende Blockade der Uraufführung des Theaterstücks „Der Müll, die Stadt und der Tod“ von Rainer Werner Fassbinder durch die jüdische Gemeinde im Herbst 1985 und der Börneplatzkonflikt 1987, zwei Frankfurter Skandale, der feierlichen Eröffnung eines neuen jüdischen Gemeindezentrums, häufig verstanden als Zeichen einer gelungenen Etablierung jüdischen Lebens in Deutschland, gegenüberstehen.

Es ist eine zerrissene Geschichte der Juden in der Bundesrepublik, die Tobias Freimüller am Beispiel Frankfurts nachzeichnet. Das Buch zeugt von der historischen Kompetenz des Autors und profitiert vor allem von seinen reichen Kenntnissen über Frankfurt und die jüdische Gemeinde der Stadt. Gerade die gelungene Verknüpfung von Zeitgeschichte und jüdischer Geschichte in dieser als Habilitationsschrift eingereichten Studie wirft die Frage auf, ob eine intensivere Reflexion über Geschlechterrollen und -verhältnisse in einer von männlichen Protagonisten dominierten Nachkriegsgeschichte und eine verstärkte Einbeziehung von Quellen aus staatlichen Archiven und dem Bundesarchiv andere Perspektiven zutage befördern und dieses Portrait um weitere Einblicke bereichern könnte. Aber auch ohne die Auswertung dieser Quellenbestände stellt dieses fundierte Werk, dessen Untersuchungszeitraum sich bis zur deutschen Wiedervereinigung 1989/90 erstreckt, zweifellos eine gelungene, wichtige und willkommene Ergänzung der Forschung zum jüdischen Leben in Deutschland dar.

Andrea A. Sinn, Elon/North Carolina

Rolf Kießling, Jüdische Geschichte in Bayern: Von den Anfängen bis zur Gegenwart (= Studien zur jüdischen Geschichte und Kultur in Bayern, Bd. 11), (Berlin/Boston: De Gruyter Oldenbourg Verlag, 2019).

Wenn die Rezension des Buches eines geschätzten Kollegen unversehens zum Nachruf wird, schreibt man mit schwerem Herzen: Rolf Kießling, dessen summarischer Blick auf die jüdische Geschichte in Bayern hier vorgestellt werden soll, ist im Juni 2020 nach langer Krankheit gestorben. Sein Werk wird damit zum Vermächtnis.

Es geht um nicht weniger als einen Überblick über 1100 Jahre jüdischer Geschichte im Raum des heutigen Bayern. Denn in Regensburg – aber auch nur dort – ist jüdische Siedlung wohl bereits um 900 nachzuweisen. Das Buch gliedert sich überzeugend in drei große Teile, die in etwa gleicher Länge dem Mittelalter, der Frühen Neuzeit sowie dem 19. und 20. Jahrhundert als Großabschnitten der jüdischen Geschichte im deutschen Raum gewidmet sind. Jede dieser Epochen wird mit einem Zwischenfazit abgeschlossen. Kießling ist der erste Fachhistoriker, der sich mit großer Erfahrung und Kompetenz in der (jüdischen) Landesgeschichte der Herausforderung stellt, die vorliegende Fachliteratur zu einem Gesamtüberblick zu verarbeiten. Dass dieser nicht lückenlos sein kann, benennt er im Vorwort: so bleibt z. B. der lange zu Mainz gehörige Raum am Untermain (Aschaffenburg) weitgehend ausgeklammert. Und es ergibt sich aus der Sache selbst, denn nicht jede Region ist gleich gut oder überhaupt erforscht.

Bezeichnenderweise beginnt der Autor den Teil zum Mittelalter mit Pogromen, nämlich den Verfolgungen der Juden zur Zeit der Kreuzzüge. Schade. Denn so entsteht gleich zu Beginn der Eindruck, als handle es sich einmal mehr um eine Darstellung, die jüdische Geschichte vor allem als Verfolgungsgeschichte begreift. Die Siedlungsentwicklung markiert den zweiten Schwerpunkt. Hier gelingt Kießling ein Überblick, den er durch weitere Informationen zur Entwicklung des Landes und seiner Wirtschaft kontextualisiert. Die Ansiedlung von Juden erweist sich als eng eingebunden in den Prozess der Urbanisierung, sie war politisch gewünscht.

Das Spannungsverhältnis zwischen den benannten Polen zieht sich durch das gesamte Mittelalter bis hin zu den Vertreibungen an seinem Ende. Die gesellschaftlich-politische Entwicklung und besonders die wachsende religiöse Propaganda gegen die Juden hatten das Fundament ihrer Duldung zum

Erodieren gebracht. Dies wird an vielen Beispielen aus den Städten in Bayern, Franken und Schwaben illustriert. Wie anderswo im Alten Reich endete die Epoche für die jüdischen Gemeinden in einer existentiellen Krise. Die jüdischen Zentren und ihre Infrastruktur in den Reichsstädten gab es nicht mehr, aus den altbayerischen Landesteilen war die jüdische Bevölkerung vertrieben. Der bayerische Raum und seine Juden nahmen nun eine zweigeteilte Entwicklung, mit Nachwirkungen bis ins 20. Jahrhundert.

Für die nächsten drei Jahrhunderte konzentrieren sich Geschichte wie Darstellung auf Schwaben, Franken und die Oberpfalz und auf die Juden auf dem Land. Denn nur dort, in den stark territorial zersplitterten Gebieten, konnten diese noch leben. Und die unterschiedliche demographische Entwicklung in diesem Raum bestimmte mit über Formen und Entwicklungspotential der jüdischen Infrastruktur und Selbstorganisation. In großen Gemeinden wie in Schwaben und in wenigen Orten in Franken konnte sich der Typus der lokalen Doppelgemeinde ausbilden. Für prozentual kleinere Gemeinden scheint das nicht zu gelten. Das Potential in Richtung einer pragmatischen rechtlichen Annäherung, das in den Doppelgemeinden steckte, blieb allerdings im Rahmen des gebremsten staatlichen Emanzipationsprozesses seit Anfang des 19. Jahrhunderts ungenutzt.

Neu war, dass es nun eine einheitliche staatliche Politik innerhalb des Königreichs Bayern gab. Geleitet wurde diese Politik von dem Ziel, die Juden vor der Gewährung weiterer Rechte einer Erziehungspolitik zu unterziehen, und ihre Selbstorganisation zu beschneiden und stärker zu kontrollieren. Für knapp 60 Jahre fror der Staat den Siedlungsstatus ein und verspielte damit viel Entwicklungspotential. Erst die Aufhebung des Matrikelparagraphen 1861 und die Reichsgründung 1871 verhalfen der jüdischen Minderheit zur erstrebten rechtlichen Gleichstellung. Und setzten durch ihre Urbanisierung große Dynamik für einen wirtschaftlichen Aufstieg frei. Die neuen jüdischen Zentren in München, Würzburg, Augsburg, Nürnberg und weiteren Städten wuchsen rasant, ebenso die Infrastruktur und Ausdifferenzierung ihrer jüdischen Gemeinden.

Eine ermutigende Entwicklung. Wäre da nicht parallel der neue Rassenantisemitismus propagiert worden, der das gesellschaftliche Klima unter Rückgriff auf die überlieferte kirchliche Judenfeindschaft erneut zu vergiften begann. Wie überall im Reich brach sich das Misstrauen gegenüber der erfolgreich aufgestiegenen Minderheit im 1. Weltkrieg in Form der erniedrigenden

„Judenählung“ Bahn. Dass unter den Revolutionären von 1918/19 einige Juden identifiziert wurden, wusste die politische Rechte, die sich in Bayern früh und stark formierte, gründlich zu instrumentalisieren.

Auch in der NS-Zeit gab es noch immer jüdische Gemeinden auf dem Land – mit einem hohen Anteil von Viehhändlern und kleinen Kaufleuten. Sie erlitten das gleiche Schicksal wie ihre Glaubensgenossen in den Großstädten. Wer nicht rechtzeitig fliehen konnte, wurde deportiert und fast ausnahmslos ermordet. Als „Brandbeschleuniger“ vor Ort hatten v. a. Parteiorgane und ihre Propaganda gewirkt.

Nur wenige Jüdinnen und Juden kehrten nach der Shoa zurück oder waren als Partner oder Kinder einer gemischt-religiösen Ehe der Deportation entgangen. Durch die Aufnahme von Displaced Persons besonders in der amerikanischen Zone wuchs der Anteil der jüdischen Bevölkerung in Bayern jedoch für einige Jahre wieder deutlich an. Nach ihrer Ausreise blieb etwa ein Dutzend, meist kleiner, wiederbegründeter jüdischer Gemeinden übrig. Mit Ausnahme von Nürnberg und Würzburg kam die Mehrheit ihrer Mitglieder aus Osteuropa – anders als im Norden und Westen Deutschlands. Erst die Zuwanderung aus den ehemaligen Ländern der Sowjetunion seit den 1990er Jahren ließ jüdisches Leben auch in Bayern wieder wachsen.

So weit in extremer Verkürzung der Fluss der chronologischen Darstellung, deren Konzeption ich als exemplarische Vollständigkeit bezeichnen möchte. Autor bzw. Herausgeber müssen sich dazu die Frage gefallen lassen, an wen sich das Buch eigentlich richtet. Für ein breiteres Publikum ist es recht umfangreich und z. T. zu anspruchsvoll, für wissenschaftliche Nutzer hingegen fehlen weitgehend die Forschungsdiskussion und ausführlichere Nachweise. In Abhängigkeit von den zur Verfügung stehenden Quellen und Forschungen trägt die Studie deren Ergebnisse zusammen. Es geht um die klassischen Themen Verfolgungen/Antisemitismus, Rechtsgeschichte, Wirtschaft und Politik, also überwiegend um den Blick von außen auf die jüdische Minderheit. Die innerjüdische Entwicklung nimmt vergleichsweise wenig Raum ein, ebenso modernere Fragestellungen. Insgesamt ist das Buch jedoch ein in seiner Breite und Fülle beeindruckendes Überblickswerk!

Dass dieses Werk ein Handbuch wird für jeden, der sich über die Geschichte der Juden in Bayern und seinen Landesteilen informieren möchte, ist gewiss. Dafür bietet auch die vorbildliche Ausstattung mit Abbildungen und Tabellen, allen denkbaren Verzeichnissen, Orts- und Personenregistern sowie

das reiche Literaturverzeichnis eine gute Grundlage. Noch größer würde sein Nutzen aber, wenn auch das Vorwort von Michael Brenner Gehör fände: dass Historikerinnen und Historiker der nächsten (und übernächsten) Generation den Wissensstand erweitern und – so möchte ich ergänzen – neue, andere, mithin ihre eigenen Fragen stellen.

Rotraud Ries, Würzburg

Contributors

Rafael D. Arnold has been Chair of Romance Linguistics at the University of Rostock since 2010. He studied Romance and Jewish Studies in Heidelberg, Rome and Madrid. Selected publications: edition and translation of *Jewish Rites, Customs and Traditions* by the 17th century Venetian Rabbi Leon Modena (Wiesbaden: Marix, 2007); “El judeo-español en contacto: Préstamos e interferencias como señal de vivacidad,” *LaborHistórico* 7 (2021): 204–220; and “Confluent and Conflictual Traditions in the Lagoon: Ashkenazic and Sephardic Tombstones in Venice from the Sixteenth to the Eighteenth Century,” in *Sephardim and Ashkenazim: Jewish-Jewish Encounters in History and Literature*, ed. Sina Rauschenbach (Berlin/Boston: de Gruyter, 2020), 103–123.

Jessica Cooperman is an Associate Professor of Religion Studies and Director of Jewish Studies at Muhlenberg College in Allentown, Pennsylvania. Her research focuses on American Judaism and Jewish culture, and on connections between religion and state policy. Her book, *Making Judaism Safe for America: World War I and the Origins of Religious Pluralism*, was published by NYU Press and received an honorable mention for the biennial Saul Viener Book Prize in American Jewish History. Her current research explores the dynamics of Jewish-Christian dialogue and engagement in the post-World War II United States.

Oskar Czendze is a PhD Candidate in the History Department and a TEP Fellow at the Carolina Center for Jewish Studies at the University of North Carolina, Chapel Hill (USA). His research focuses on the cultural and social history of Jews in East Central Europe and the United States, modern Jewish migration, and questions of memory, belonging and place in the modern era. Among his recent publications is “Between Loss and Invention: Landsmanshaftn and American Jewish Memory in the Interwar Era,” *Dubnow Institute Yearbook* 17 (2018): 35–56.

Hasia Diner is the Paul and Sylvia Steinberg Professor of American Jewish History at New York University (NYU) where she also directs the Goldstein-

Goren Center for American Jewish History. With a joint appointment in the departments of History and Hebrew and Judaic Studies she has written extensively in a number of fields, including U.S. immigration history, women's history and American Jewish history. She has contributed to the field of transnational Jewish history largely through her 2015, *Roads Taken: The Great Jewish Migration to the New World and the Peddlers Who Led the Way* (Yale University Press).

Elisabeth Gallas is deputy to the director and head of the research unit "Law" at the Leibniz Institute for Jewish History and Culture – Simon Dubnow in Leipzig, Germany. She received her Ph.D. in Modern History from Leipzig University in 2011 with a thesis that was turned into her first book: "*Das Leichenhaus der Bücher: Kulturrestitution und jüdisches Geschichtsbewusstsein nach 1945*" (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht); a revised and translated English version was published in 2019 with NYU Press: *A Mortuary of Books: The Rescue of Jewish Culture after the Holocaust*.

Anke Geißler-Grünberg is a research assistant at the Department of Monument Studies at the European University Viadrina Frankfurt (O.) and studied at the University of Potsdam. Her research focuses on the social history and documentation of Jewish cemeteries. She published: *Spurensuche auf dem jüdischen Friedhof Potsdam: Eine Handreichung für den Unterricht* (2nd ed., Potsdam: Universitätsverlag Potsdam, 2017), and most recently: "Judaica als NS-Raubgut im Bestand der Universitätsbibliothek Potsdam," in *Provenienzforschung in deutschen Sammlungen: Einblick in zehn Jahre Projektförderung*, ed. by Deutsches Zentrum Kulturgutverluste (Berlin/Boston: de Gruyter, 2019): 171–178.

Jürgen Heyde works as project leader and research associate at the Leibniz Institute for the History and Culture of Eastern Europe (GWZO) in Leipzig and is professor of East-European History and Jewish History at the University of Halle-Wittenberg. He received his doctorate at Freie Universität Berlin in 1998. His research focuses on the history of non-dominant and migrant populations. Recent publications include „*Das neue Ghetto*“? *Raum, Wissen und jüdische Identität im langen 19. Jahrhundert* (Göttingen: Wallstein, 2019), and "The Beginnings of Jewish Self-government in Poland: An entangled history,"

in *Polin: Studies in Polish Jewry* 34 [Jewish self-governance in Eastern Europe, eds. François Guesnet, Antony Polonsky] (2022), pp. 54–69 (forthcoming).

Markus Krahn is a lecturer in Jewish religious and intellectual history at University of Potsdam. He is a scholar of American Jewish history. His book *American Jewry and the Re-Invention of the East European Past*, based on his Ph.D. thesis at the Jewish Theological Seminary in New York, was the finalist for the 2019 Jordan Schnitzer Book Award in modern Jewish history and culture. His current project is the role of *Schocken Books* in post-1945 American Jewish culture. He spent the academic years 2019–21 at Vanderbilt University and at the Herbert Katz Center for Advanced Judaic Studies in Philadelphia.

Thomas Meyer wurde an der LMU München 2003 promoviert und habilitierte sich dort 2009. Nach zahlreichen Stationen im In- und Ausland ist er seit 2020 Professor am dortigen Philosophy Department. Autor und Herausgeber zahlreicher Bücher zur jüdischen Philosophie- und Ideengeschichte, darunter, als Herausgeber, Hannah Arendt, *Die Freiheit, frei zu sein* (München: dtv, 2018). Seit 2020 Herausgeber der Arendt-Studienausgabe im Piper Verlag, München (bisher fünf Bände). Ende 2022 wird bei Piper Meyers intellektuelle Biographie Arendts erscheinen.

Shari Rabin is associate professor of Jewish studies and religion at Oberlin College. She is a scholar of modern Judaism and American religions who received her PhD in Religious Studies from Yale University in 2015. She is the author of *Jews on the Frontier: Religion and Mobility in Nineteenth-century America*, which won the National Jewish Book Award in American Jewish Studies.

Rotraud Ries is the director of the Johanna Stahl Centre for Jewish History and Culture in Lower Franconia. She received her doctorate from the University of Münster/Westphalia. Her research focuses on German-Jewish history, especially in the early modern period, Jewish regional history and the culture of remembrance. She designed an extensive online memorial portal, denkort-deportationen.de, for the “DenkOrt Deportationen 1941–1944” in Würzburg. Among other things, she published *Selbstzeugnisse und Ego-Dokumente frühneuzeitlicher Juden in Aschkenas: Beispiele, Methoden und Konzepte*, ed. with Birgit E. Klein (Berlin: Metropol, 2011).

Miriam Ruerup is a historian of German-Jewish history, the director of the Moses Mendelssohn Center for European-Jewish Studies and Professor at Potsdam University. She received her Ph.D. in History at the Technical University of Berlin in 2006 with a study on Jewish student fraternities at German universities. She also published on the history of statelessness and on Jewish emigré lawyers. She heads the Research Working Group of the Leo Baeck Institute in Germany.

Immanuel Clemens Schmidt is a Research Associate at the Leibniz Institute for Jewish History and Culture – Simon Dubnow, in Leipzig. In his Ph.D. dissertation, he examined Protestant historiographies of the Jews from the early 18th to the early 19th century. Currently, he is conducting a postdoc project on Horace Kallen’s concept of Cultural Pluralism. Among his recent publications is “Historiographie juive et conversion séculière: Préfigurations protestantes de l’œuvre d’Isaak Markus Jost,” in: *Juifs et protestants: Entre affinités électorales et dialogue impossible*, eds. Laurence Guillon, Heidi Knörzner, and Katja Schubert (Louvain-la-Neuve: EME Éditions, 2020), 137–158.

Michael K. Schulz is a research assistant at the Chair of Modern History (German-Jewish History) at the Institute of History at the University of Potsdam. He studied history in Gdansk, Tübingen and Florence; research stays in Jerusalem, Tel Aviv and Warsaw. His most recent publication is *Sozialgeschichte der Danziger Juden im 19. Jahrhundert* (Berlin: be.bra Verlag, 2020).

Yitzchak Schwartz is a cultural and intellectual historian focusing on nineteenth-century religion and popular religious thought. He is currently a doctoral candidate at NYU. His dissertation explores attempts to define and redefine the nature and purpose of Judaism by American Jews during the mid-to-late nineteenth century and what these tell us about popular American notions of religion during that period.

Björn Siegel is a research associate at the Institute for the History of German Jews in Hamburg. He received his doctorate from the Ludwig Maximilians University in Munich. His research interests include Jewish migration, economic and maritime history. His most recent publications include “‘We Were Refugees and Carried a Special Burden’: Emotions, Brazilian Politics and the

German Jewish Émigré Circle in São Paulo, 1933–1957,” *European Judaism* 54 (2021): 27–44 or “The Gerusalemme and Tel Aviv: Two Ships for Palestine,” in *Das Schiff als Thema der Moderne: Schiff und Zeit – Panorama Maritime*, Beiheft 1 der DGS, ed. Maike Priesterjahn/DSGM (Bonn: Kölln Druck+Verlag, 2020), 155–176.

Andrea A. Sinn is the O’Briant Developing Professor and Associate Professor of History at Elon University/NC. Since 2017, she has served as Director of the Jewish Studies Program at Elon University. Her research interests revolve around Modern German and Jewish History, with an emphasis on the Third Reich and the immediate post-Holocaust period. Recently, her research has focused on German women and religion in the home front during World War I. Among her publications are *Jüdische Politik und Presse in der frühen Bundesrepublik* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2014); and “*Und ich lebe wieder an der Isar:*” *Exil und Rückkehr des Münchner Juden Hans Lamm* (Munich: Oldenbourg, 2008).

Mirjam Thulin is an associated researcher at the Leibniz Institute of European History (IEG) in Mainz and teaches at Goethe University, Frankfurt am Main, in Germany. In 2019–20, she was a visiting scholar at Vanderbilt University, and in 2020–21 at the Herbert D. Katz Center for Advanced Judaic Studies at University of Pennsylvania. She received her Ph.D. in Modern History in 2011 at Leipzig University. Her first book was *Kaufmann’s News Service: A Jewish Scholarly Network in the 19th Century* (in German, Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2012). Among her recent publications is “Resuming Contact after World War I: Epistolary Networks of Wissenschaft des Judentums,” *Jewish Quarterly Review* 108 (2018), 94–10.

Anna Ullrich is a research associate at the Center for Holocaust Studies at the Leibniz Institute for Contemporary History in Munich and project coordinator at the European Holocaust Research Infrastructure (EHRI). She holds a Ph.D. from Ludwig-Maximilians-University in Munich (2016) and her research interests include German-Jewish History and the History of the Holocaust. One of her recent publications is *Von ‘jüdischem Optimismus’ und ‘unausbleiblicher Enttäuschung’: Erwartungsmanagement deutsch-jüdischer Vereine und alltäglicher Antisemitismus 1914–1938* (München: de Gruyter, 2019).

The field of American Jewish studies has recently trained its focus on the transnational dimensions of its subject, reflecting in more sustained ways than before about the theories and methods of this approach. Yet, much of the insight to be gained from seeing American Jewry as constitutively entangled in many ways with other Jewries has not yet been realized. Transnational American Jewish studies are still in their infancy.

This issue of PaRDeS presents current research on the multiple entanglements of American with Central European, especially German-speaking Jewries in the 19th and 20th centuries. The articles reflect the wide range of topics that can benefit from a transnational understanding of the American Jewish experience as shaped by its foreign entanglements.